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The Rev^d

J. A. Mendenhall D.D.

with grateful respect

from the Author.

DISCOURSES

ON

PUBLIC OCCASIONS.

BY

WILLIAM SYMINGTON, D.D.

GLASGOW.

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CONTENTS.

	Page
PREFATORY NOTE,	v
SERMON I.	
THE EVIL OF IGNORANCE,	1
SERMON II.	
THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL,	29
SERMON III.	
THE CHARACTER AND CLAIMS OF THE SCOTTISH MARTYRS,	72
SERMON IV.	
SALVATION BY GRACE,	101
SERMON V.	
THE REBUILDING OF JERUSALEM,	124
SERMON VI.	
THE FIRST PIOUS YOUTH,	157
SERMON VII.	
LOVE ONE ANOTHER,	184

SERMON VIII.	
THE SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR,	Page 205
SERMON IX.	
CHARITY TO THE POOR EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED,	241
SERMON X.	
POPERY THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY,	268
SERMON XI.	
POPERY THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY,	295
SERMON XII.	
PLEAS IN BEHALF OF POPERY, AND DUTY OF PROTESTANTS,	310
SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE,	328

PREFATORY NOTE.

MOST of the Discourses included in this volume have appeared before as separate publications. Many of them, however, have been long out of print. Inquiries are occasionally made for them, which it is impossible to meet. I have even found some difficulty myself in making up a complete set for the purpose of this reprint. It is to be presumed, therefore, that few of those for whom the present volume is chiefly designed are in possession of all; and many, it is believed, are in possession of none of them. I have consequently been induced to republish them in this form, principally for the use of my own congregation. Almost all the Sermons having been printed prior to my connection with the congregation, and the greater number of those who are now members having been admitted since my pastoral relation with it was formed, the Discourses are likely to be in the hands of comparatively few. I have persuaded myself that the people of my charge may wish to possess some of the *written* compositions of one to whose *spoken* addresses they are in the constant practice of listening. To gratify

this natural wish, I have resolved on this volume, which, if favourably received, may ere long be followed by another, composed of matter which has not been formerly given from the press. The Discourses have been all carefully revised; the style of printing adopted is such as to comprehend a large quantity of matter within a limited number of pages; and the price is greatly below what is usually charged for similar volumes.

I shall not conceal that I have had another object in view in venturing on the present publication, namely, to generate and foster, if possible, a taste for profitable reading. I am not aware that an effort of this kind is more needed amongst my own people than it is amongst others; probably the reverse is the case. But, it is too manifest that a manufacturing and commercial population, such as is that of this city, have exceedingly little time for the perusal of works requiring application and study: The newspaper and the magazine are apt thus to become the great staple of their reading. In the natural course of things, want of time begets want of taste or of inclination, perhaps even want of capacity, for writings of a higher class. This is a state of matters, which, it will be allowed by all, is much to be deprecated, and to be carefully guarded against. Works, to the perusal of which there may be supposed to be a considerably powerful motive, ought, therefore, to be placed in the hands of the people; and such surely those may be presumed to be which are the production of their own ministers.

Those who read this volume continuously may, per-

haps, observe an occasional repetition of sentiment, and even of expression. But, in the case of Discourses, treating of kindred subjects and prepared at considerable intervals of time, something of this kind could scarcely be avoided. Nor is it, after all, much to be regretted, especially where, as here, the compositions are such as are likely to be read separately. I have, therefore, not taken much pains to have those repetitions corrected, as it could not well be done without impairing, to some extent, the texture and effect of the individual Sermons.

It was my original intention to have prefixed to the Sermons, a pastoral address to the members of my own congregation, on the subject of personal religion and vital godliness, suitable to the season of the year when the publication happens to take place. The volume, however, has extended so far beyond what was designed that I have found it necessary to abandon this part of my plan, which I do, not without reluctance. Throughout these pages there will be found several direct and close appeals to the conscience, which I can only now pray God may be blessed for supplying the deficiency. That the whole may be made a means of confirming my readers in general in the faith—of directing them in duty—of sustaining them under trials and temptations—of ministering to them consolation amid the glooms of life—and of ripening them for a higher and a brighter state of being, is my most sincere and fervent prayer. To the people of my own ministerial charge in particular, I dedicate the volume, with much affection and pastoral solicitude, and

with humble dependence on the promised grace of the Most High. 'Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.'

W. S.

ANNFIELD PLACE, *December*, 1850.



SERMON I.

THE EVIL OF IGNORANCE, AND MOTIVES TO ITS REMOVAL.

Preached April 11, 1821, in aid of the Stranraer Sabbath School Society.

PROV. XIX. 2.

'That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good.'

SUCH is the unambiguous testimony of one universally celebrated for his wisdom to the evil of ignorance. Solomon, the famous monarch of the East, was distinguished above all the men of his age for the extent and variety of his information. Naturally possessed of large capacities, his circumstances afforded every opportunity for their improvement, development, and exercise. In addition to his natural endowments, he was liberally supplied with the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit—a combination which operated to produce a character of more extensive and varied accomplishment than is perhaps to be met with in the history of the species. He was a keen and narrow observer at once of external nature, divine providence, and human character; 'a poet and a naturalist; a metaphysician and a moralist; an orator, a politician, and a man of the world.' 'God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And he spake

three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.'

His book of Proverbs is itself sufficient to warrant this high encomium. It discloses the deepest mysteries of wisdom and understanding, and is calculated to lead to an accurate knowledge of the divine character, and to a sincere fear of the Lord. It abounds with the most choice sententious adages, which infinitely surpass all the ethical sayings of the sages of old; and which, taken together, constitute a system of morality, more simple, copious, and pure, than any of which heathen philosophy can boast. The exalted duties of piety to God, the relative duties of equity and benevolence to men, and the personal duties of temperance and sobriety, are here delineated with a precision, acuteness, and force quite unequalled, except it be by the elegance, variety, and sublimity of the language in which they are expressed.

The design of the book is, as might be inferred from the character of the writer, to stimulate men to the pursuit, and assist them in the acquisition of knowledge. 'The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel; to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man wisdom and discretion.' The object thus professed at the outset is throughout kept distinctly in view, and the text is only one among many commendations of knowledge: 'That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good.'

The subject—the evil of ignorance, and motives to its removal—is one of vast importance. The *existence* of ignorance is generally acknowledged, although there is reason to apprehend that the *extent* to which it exists, even among ourselves, is very imperfectly known. But the great and fatal EVILS which spring from the want of knowledge, there is ground to fear, are seldom thought of, and but little understood. It is only, however, by leading men to a sense of the evil of

ignorance that we can expect to secure their assistance in attempting its removal.

The kind of knowledge, the want of which is here said to be not good, we take to be—the knowledge of divine things. For although the attainments of Solomon were so diversified that we cannot suppose him to have been an enemy to knowledge in general, yet the scope of the book is such as to convince every attentive reader that it is *religious* knowledge—that knowledge which leads to ‘the fear of the Lord’—of which he is throughout so lavish of his praises. We need scarcely add that the scriptures are the only source from which religious knowledge is to be derived; and that the teaching of the divine Spirit is indispensable to render even these effectual. The truth of these statements, we beg it to be observed, is to be understood as taken for granted in the whole of the following discussion.

We shall endeavour, with the divine assistance, to explain how the want of religious knowledge is not good for man, and to point out some of those principles by which christians ought to be actuated in seeking the religious instruction of the rising generation.

I. I am first to attempt an illustration of the text, by showing how the want of religious knowledge is not good for man.

Here it will be necessary to survey the prominent features of the human character. A view of man in general would afford us but a vague idea of our subject. That our conceptions may be luminous and comprehensive, we must enter a little into detail; we must dissect the human constitution into its principal parts, and take a separate consideration of each.

1. Let us then begin with the *intellectual* nature of man.—This feature is one by which he is distinguished from the beasts of the field, of which it is emphatically said, they have ‘no understanding.’ These we are accustomed to regard as devoid of reason, and of course of knowledge, whatever actions they perform being referrible to instinct. Reason or

intelligence belong solely to man, and those beings which occupy a higher rank in the scale of creation. It is the possession of this principle which renders him capable of acquiring constant accessions of information; whence it necessarily follows that without knowledge his intellectual nature is of no manner of use, the very purpose for which it was given is defeated, and the man sinks to the level of the brute. What is thus true of knowledge in general loses nothing of its force when applied to religious knowledge in particular. For, as the latter exceeds the former in essential and relative worth, so, in the proportion in which it is wanting, does the human being approximate the humiliating condition of which we have just now spoken; not to say that the highest attainments in literature and science are ultimately useless without the knowledge of divine truth. To be without knowledge, therefore, particularly religious knowledge, is not good for man, as it leaves one of the finest and most distinctive parts of his constitution unappropriated. Nor will it affect this conclusion in the smallest to say that the intellect of man cannot exist as a perfect blank; that if it is not occupied with what is of the highest importance, it will still be furnished with materials of some kind or another: for, passing over the fact that the minds of the grossly ignorant seem, in many instances, to approach very near to an absolute vacuity, we think it may fairly be asked, in reply, whether the intellectual part of our nature would not be less degraded by being wholly unemployed, than by being occupied with matters of the most childish, trivial, and sinful kind? If a thing is not put to its proper use, rather than that it be put to an improper one, we should judge it better that it were put to no use at all.

Nor is knowledge necessary to man as an intelligent being, only that this peculiar part of his nature may find appropriate employment, but also that it may be duly strengthened and improved. Every attainment, besides being an addition to the intellectual store, is accompanied with a fresh accession of vigour, by which the mind is enabled to make further exertions, to push its way into regions formerly unexplored,

and to enrich itself with new acquisitions. In proportion as knowledge increases, both the faculty and the desire of knowledge are expanded. The more we know, the more we are rendered capable of knowing. The mind is not, like the instrument of the mechanic, blunted by use; but the greater its exercise, the more is its power of investigation improved. 'Knowledge,' says the wise man, 'is easy unto him that understandeth.' And as the more we know, the more we learn how much there is that we do not know, every new acquisition serves as a stimulus to pursue the noble and unlimited career of intellectual advancement. Hence it is that the *passive possession of knowledge* affords us no delight comparable to that of the *active exercise of acquiring it*; as the pleasure of the sportsman, to make use of a borrowed figure, is nothing when the prey is at his feet, compared with what he feels when 'the ardour of his soul is kindled amid the hopes and fears, the tumult and the competition of the chase.'

The accuracy of these remarks, as applicable to literary and scientific pursuits, no one, at all acquainted with the philosophy of the human mind, will presume to question; and a little reflection will serve to show that they are not less applicable to the knowledge of religion. If knowledge of an inferior kind has the improving influence on the rational nature of man which we have asserted it to have, the knowledge of divine things must have the same effect in a degree proportioned to the magnitude of its objects. As no subjects can occupy the understanding so important, elevated, and sublime, as those which religion supplies, so it is an established fact, that even among the lowest classes of society, by creating a habit of close and serious thought, it tends to increase the measure of the intellectual faculty with marvellous rapidity. As there is nothing that withdraws us so much from the power of our senses, so it advances us more than anything else 'in the dignity of thinking beings.' Nor is there, we presume, any species of intellectual pursuit in which an increase of desire is so infallibly secured, as that of divine truths. There is much justness as well as beauty in the testimony of a venerable writer: 'He who hath once

tasted their excellences will desire to taste them yet again; and he who tastes them oftenest will relish them best.'

2. View man further as a *moral* being.—This part of his nature is still more exalted and distinctive than the former: nor does it afford a less decisive verification of our text. An intelligent and reflective christian has only to look around him, among the ignorant of his own city, or parish, or neighbourhood, to be convinced how degraded the moral sense has become, from the want of knowledge. A very little investigation will serve to show him, that the eternal and immutable distinction between right and wrong, virtue and vice, sin and holiness, is little if at all understood in theory, and seldom if ever regarded in practice, among the class to whom we allude: and were he to attempt to reason or remonstrate with them on the subject, in relation to some particular act, he might find it next to impossible to bring them to any distinct or adequate notion of moral principle. Nor will this greatly surprise us, if we consider how feeble a sense the ignorant in general entertain of that Divine Being, whose nature is the foundation of all true morality, and whose presence, when duly felt, is the strongest stimulus to holiness, and the best preservative from vice.

Need we enter into any lengthened detail of particulars to confirm these general statements? Only think, my brethren, of the little regard paid to veracity among the ignorant. It can easily be shown to be more *natural*—we use the term in its philosophical, not its theological sense—to speak truth than the opposite. Yet what a melancholy perversion of human nature does this one subject lay open to our view! How few of those who are uneducated seem to have the slightest scruple of violating truth; nay, of how many thousand deliberate falsehoods are they guilty, without seeming to feel the smallest compunction! We speak not now of the perjuries committed in the election of public functionaries, in giving evidence in civil courts, and in taking custom-house oaths; nor of that *lying on a broad scale*, if we may be allowed the expression, which is perpetrated by princes and nations in the formation and breach of the most solemn en-

gements; but we make our appeal to the personal experience of our hearers. Who, that is at all acquainted with the world, has not had the most glaring untruths told to him with unblushing effrontery, and repeated and maintained with dreadful hardihood, in cases where the object to be gained bore an astonishingly small proportion to the vast expenditure of truth and character that was made for its attainment? The lies, too, that are every day told to indulge a slanderous disposition, or to increase, perhaps, an individual's fancied importance, or, it may be, only to gratify a taste for the marvellous—of which the number is incalculable—indicate a still higher degree of moral pravity. And, what comes nearer to our present purpose, how is the melancholy truth we are illustrating confirmed by the deliberation, boldness, and frequency, with which children are found to utter known, wilful, and notorious falsehoods! Scarce a day passes in which, in the limited sphere of my own observation, I do not meet with a sad verification of the assertion of holy writ, 'The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.'

The habit of profane swearing affords another illustration. To how great an extent this heaven-daring crime prevails among the ignorant, you need not to be told. The nature of their oaths and imprecations is in many cases such that they can neither be heard nor thought of without horror. And the frequency with which they indulge in the practice, not confining it to occasional paroxysms of anger—in which case many are foolish enough to suppose it excusable—but introducing it into the language of their sport and civil transactions, shows how deeply rooted it is in their fallen nature. To such a degree, indeed, does this shocking vice prevail, that it is no uncommon thing to hear the children at play in our streets uttering their profane oaths, and lisping the most infernal imprecations with a fluency only to be accounted for on the principle that it has been familiar to them from their very cradle. O who does not wish to be foremost in plucking these little ones as brands from the

burning, for which they seem already in a state of such forward preparation !

To these we might have added the well-known tendency of ignorance to foster the baser passions of our nature, to give loose reins to every irregular propensity, and to plunge the human being into the mire of licentiousness ; for there is nothing more natural than for men to ‘fashion themselves according to their lust, in their ignorance.’ But without dwelling on this disgusting fact, the very morality of the ignorant furnishes a proof of the point in hand. Is it not notorious that what morality they conceive themselves to have, is limited exclusively to the outward act ? If the external performance only is effected, they care little or nothing about the principle from which it flows ; and, provided they can lay such a restraint on their bodily members as shall prevent them from doing an injury to their neighbours, it forms no part of their calculations what character their thoughts, imaginations, or volitions may have held in the sight of God. No : the dominion of the Great Supreme over the *internal* constitution of man is a thing of which they never dream ; his omniscience is an attribute of which they seem never to think ; and that an *irregular desire* should, in the eye of Him who searches the heart, be an *irregular act*, is an idea greatly too metaphysical and refined for their gross understandings.

Now, to convince us that all this defectiveness of moral character springs from the absence of religious knowledge, we have only to consider how far religious instruction would go to remove it. Not that we mean to refer the moral delinquency of which we have been speaking, to deficiency of intellectual discernment ; for it will often be found, that those who are most distinguished for their immorality, display in their wickedness a sharpness and dexterity that would do credit to a better cause : ‘They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.’ But what we mean is, that the primary deficiency lies in the intellect being left ignorant of those divine truths, which, if known and felt, would have led to conduct of an opposite character. Were

mankind properly instructed concerning the moral relation in which they stand to God—the infinite majesty and inviolable rectitude of the Supreme Being—the spiritual nature of the obedience he requires—and the awful account which he will at last demand, how much of that falsehood, profanity, and vice, of whose prevalence we have been speaking, might be prevented!

3. Let us next contemplate man as a *social* being.—That society is essential at once to his existence and comfort, cannot, we think, reasonably be denied. His helplessness in childhood proves the one; and the diversity of endowment that exists among the different members of the human family affords ample evidence of the other. Nor do we deem it necessary to demonstrate how natural and useful is a diversity of rank in the body politic. Suffice it to say, that the human body would not present a more frightful or monstrous aspect, were it all head or foot or hand or eye, than civil society, were all possessed of the same power, dispositions, or office. But what we wish to impress upon your minds is, that whatever shape the social principle assumes in the natural and political distinctions of mankind, the assertion of our text will be found to hold good.

Where men are enveloped in the shades of ignorance, the duties of domestic life are very imperfectly discharged, rule and subordination are but ill understood, and the members of a family differ little from one another, except in the muscular vigour of their bodies, and the savage ferocity of their dispositions. If from such as are domestic, you pass to the duties obligatory on all as members of the same community, the pernicious influence alluded to will be found more strikingly displayed. The absolute destitution of all those little civilities, concessions, and accommodations, which are so essential to the comfort of social life, forms but a trifling part of the evil, compared with the acts of dishonesty, cruelty, and rapacity of which the ignorant are every day guilty. The spirit of plunder, in all its diversified shapes of petty theft, burglary, and highway robbery, prevails to an amazing extent, even in countries styled civilized. As examples of

cruelty, we need not to refer you to the 'half-brutal wanderers of forests and deserts, whose ferocious ignorance seems to know little more than how to destroy and be destroyed,' nor even to the shocking barbarities and horrid murders with which the depredations before enumerated are often accompanied; the very amusements of the ignorant afford sufficient evidence of what we are now attempting to illustrate. The bull-fight, the cock-pit, the horse-race, the pugilistic ring; and, indeed, most of the pastimes dignified with the name of *sport*, show how rank and luxuriant is this principle of fallen humanity, among those who are without the true knowledge of religion. The frequency of child-murder, and the disgraceful barbarities perpetrated on the most serviceable of the brutal creation, form melancholy additions to the catalogue of cruel deeds. Nor must it here pass unnoticed, how early the disposition referred to manifests itself in the young; not merely in the mutual blows to which their little quarrels give rise, but in the fiend-like gratification they receive from contemplating the agonies of animals slaughtered for the use of man, and the horrid satisfaction they seem to derive from the voluntary infliction of torture and death on those more immediately within their reach. If all this holds true, in a land where the natural ferocity of ignorance is greatly restrained, what can we expect but that 'the dark places of the earth' should be 'full of the habitations of cruelty?'

Turning our attention to the more dignified arrangements to which the social principle gives rise, the habits of disorder, turbulence, and insubordination which prevail among the uneducated, show how necessary is religious knowledge to the peace and good order of society at large. In addition to all that we have said, we might advert to those habits of idleness and prodigality, which are almost the invariable accompaniments of ignorance. For, to awaken man to a proper sense of independence, and rouse him from sloth and inactivity—the hot-beds of every crime—nothing short of what we are endeavouring to recommend can prove effectual.

4. Man may further be considered as a being, capable of

religious feeling ; formed for the worship and service of his Maker.—This view is inseparable from his nature, as appears from his displaying symptoms of a religious disposition, however mistaken, fanciful, and wild, even in his most uncultivated state. This, indeed, is probably what distinguishes him most from the inferior animals, which occasionally display indications of something like reason, but never the slightest sense of a Supreme Being. Yet in no point of view in which he can be contemplated are the sad effects of ignorance so hideously apparent as in this. The other parts of his nature have, without the aid of true religious knowledge, been cultivated to a certain extent ; while that which is of all others the most noble, interesting, and sublime, presents nothing but the gloom and desolation of absolute sterility.

The notion of a Divine Being, which lies at the foundation of all religion, is, in many cases, dissipated among the diversified forms of an endless mythology ; and even where the unity of God is currently received, the vulgar notion of his existence is at best ‘a gross approximation to the likeness of man.’ His power is associated with something rather ‘prodigiously huge’ than ‘sublimely glorious.’ His providence bears in their conception a near relation to the heathenish notion of fate ; and if they ever think of him as a judicial moral governor, they conceive of him as so very capricious in his approvals and dislikes, as to render it unnecessary that these should be taken into account in regulating their conduct. Nor is it among the most uncultivated heathen alone, that ‘having the understanding darkened, they are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them.’ It was when Greece and Rome were at the zenith of their glory, that in one of the most celebrated cities of the former ‘was found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD,’ and of the inhabitants of the latter it was declared, ‘Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened : professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God

into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.'

Where such gross conceptions are entertained of the Deity himself, the worship that is offered him must partake of the same character. In not a few instances deeds of cruelty and licentiousness have been considered the most acceptable offerings by which his wrath was to be appeased; and in every case where ignorance prevails does it prepare the mind to receive as religious truths the most glaring absurdities, and to practise as religious acts the most superstitious and fantastic rights. 'They have no knowledge' surely, 'that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.' Even in countries where christianity prevails, and where, of course, the fooleries of heathenism have no place, the uneducated manifest the most confused and erroneous conceptions respecting the character of its Founder, and the way of salvation through him; and if, on their death-bed, you question them concerning the history of that Christ on whom they are ready enough to tell you they trust for salvation, their answers evince, too distinctly, alas! that they know little more about him than the name, to which they seem to ascribe some mystic power like that of a charm; while, perhaps, they dwell with complacency on some fancied good deed of generosity or outward worship, as the ground of their hope: 'for they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.' To convince us of the effect of ignorance in leading to the neglect of religious institutions, we have only to consider how few, compared with any given population, give a regular attendance on the duties of public worship; and how many either loiter at home in slothful indifference, or wander about the fields in quest of their own pleasure on God's holy day.

Add to all this, the effect of ignorance in limiting the attention to the present world, obscuring the prospects of

futurity, and shutting out from the view all those blissful scenes which the enlightened believer anticipates with rapturous joy in a state of immortal existence ; and that it is not good for man, as a religious being, to be without knowledge will appear fully demonstrated. If more were necessary to confirm what we have said on this department of our argument, we should refer you to the importance God himself has been pleased to stamp on knowledge, in employing it to indicate the whole of religion : ‘ This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.’

5. Hitherto we have said nothing of the influence of ignorance on the *happiness* of man, his susceptibility of which is an original part of his nature. He is so constituted as to receive pleasure or pain from the exercise of all his powers, and the influence of all the diversified circumstances in which he is placed. Of course everything we have already said may be made subservient to the elucidation of this part of our subject. That intellectual cultivation is calculated to afford exquisite delight, is attested by the ardour with which men of literary taste pursue their favourite employments ; the preference they give to the lucubrations of the study over the splendid formalities of fashionable company or ‘ the tumultuous pleasures of the chase ;’ and the spontaneous bursts of joy to which they give vent in their solitude, on the occurrence of any new conception or brilliant discovery. Nor is this limited to men of eminent attainments. The poor man who has acquired a taste for reading, and who after the labours of the day sits down with his book or his tract in the midst of his humble family, feels the same species of enjoyment which rendered Archimedes insensible to the presence of the enemies that plundered his city. The pleasure arising from the exercise of morality in general, and the social virtues in particular ; the sweet complacency and heavenly calm which it sheds over the soul, as they are felt in common by men of every rank, need not to be illustrated. And the eternity of unspeakable bliss which is connected with religion forms a theme so boundless and glorious, that nothing short of endless duration itself can suffice to develop its magnitude and excel-

lency. Now, the whole amount of this temporal and eternal happiness must be lost to those who are without knowledge ; and not only so, but the awful, the indescribable reality of the opposite misery experienced. Wherever ignorance prevails, there will be vice ; and wherever there is vice, there must, by an eternal and unalterable law of Heaven, be misery ;—fretful *ennui*, peevish discontent, and piercing convictions here, with tribulation, anguish, and fiery indignation hereafter.

Such is a rapid survey of the influence of religious ignorance on the different features of the human constitution. Had time permitted, we should have illustrated our general remarks by a particular reference to the state of heathen nations, and of those countries where the popish superstition prevails. We might have called upon you to transport yourselves in imagination to India, and behold the tender, and delicate, and affectionate mother, in a fit of religious phrensy, throwing her infant child into the streams of the Ganges ; or the new-made widow burying herself alive in the grave of her husband, or throwing herself calmly on the funeral pile, to which her eldest boy puts the fatal match, while friends and spectators witness the spectacle with yells of infernal delight. We might also have asked you to pay a visit to the neighbouring island of Ireland, where the religion which regards *ignorance* as the mother of devotion so extensively prevails, and to behold a verification of Solomon's aphorism in the sloth and wretchedness, the poverty and filth, the credulity and misery, which characterise the lower orders in that fine but sadly-neglected country. But on these and such-like scenes, however apposite, circumstances forbid us to dwell. Nor do we need to travel quite so far to obtain a confirmation of our remarks. In our own country, nay, in our own town and neighbourhood, late investigations have served to discover among its inhabitants too near an assimilation to what we have been describing. Individuals have been found in the very heart of our population, well advanced in life, without so much as a knowledge of the alphabet ; and grossly ignorant, not merely of the leading doctrines of the

gospel, but even of the existence of a Saviour. The extent of ignorance that prevails could not have been imagined, had not the late erection of Sabbath schools given it the palpable shape of an undeniable fact. And considering the woful effects of ignorance we have been attempting to describe, we may certainly calculate on the eager desire of every christian to do what in him lies to meliorate the condition of those who, in the very vicinity of christian light and christian institutions, are sitting in gross darkness and perishing for lack of knowledge.

II. Hoping that all who now hear me feel such a disposition, I go on to point out some of those principles by which christians ought to be actuated, in seeking the religious instruction of the rising generation.

1. The first of these principles is *a pious respect for the Divine glory*.—The glory of God, essentially considered, is, like himself, necessary, eternal, independent, and immutable. It is the intrinsic worth or excellence of his nature, and cannot be affected by the actions of his creatures, by the lapse of ages, or the changes of empire. But God has been pleased to make a display of his intrinsic glory, by external works, and every creature of his hand beams with the visible manifestation of his essential attributes: ‘The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy²-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.’

It is capable of demonstration, that the display of his glory was the end which the Deity designed, in giving existence to the creatures of his hand. A Being infinitely wise must always pursue the highest possible end; but no end terminating *without* himself can equal that which terminates *in* himself; whence it necessarily follows, that the end of all the Almighty’s works must terminate in himself, that is to say, must respect the manifestation of his intrinsic excellence, whether consisting in knowledge, holiness, or felicity. Nor can it, after this, require much reasoning to show, that every

individual, possessed of true pious feeling, must have it as his chief desire and unwearied aim, to promote, to the extent of his ability, the design of God in giving existence to all things.

If these things are admitted, the truth of the remark we are now illustrating will readily be allowed; for in nothing is the glory of the Great Supreme so fully displayed as in that which is the grand end of religious instruction, namely, the salvation of sinners. It is true, the invisible doings of God are clearly seen from the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; and, in the operations of his providence are to be beheld the stately steppings of his majesty. Far be it from us to deny to any of the Almighty's works the power to manifest the glorious perfections of its Author. But allowing to creation and providence their full share, we must be permitted to give the decided pre-eminence to grace. The work of redemption brings into view features of the divine character which must otherwise have been hid, while on such as his other works serve to discover it throws a lustre and brilliancy formerly unknown. The wisdom, the power, the holiness, and the justice of God were never displayed with such effulgent splendour, as in that work by which man is freed from the load of condemnation, emancipated from the shackles of corruption, and elevated to a state of unmingled purity and eternal bliss. Where will you find such displays of wisdom, as in the union of the divine and human natures in the person of the Mediator? Where such manifestations of power, as in the construction of a spiritual temple from the moral ruins of human apostacy? Where such discoveries of holiness and justice, as in the obedience, sufferings, and death of God's only-begotten Son? Compared with these, creation and providence must for ever abandon their claims, and yield, in respect of ability to proclaim the divine glory, to the superior, the overpowering demands of sovereign grace. Nor only in degree, but also in duration, does this superiority hold. The orbs of heaven shall one day cease to shine, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up, and the catalogue of providential dispensations shall ere long be completed; but

the wonders of redeeming love shall not cease to reflect the glory of their Author while roll the endless ages of eternity.

From all this it irrefragably follows, that, in seeking the salvation of our fellow-men—which all are supposed to do who desire to promote their religious instruction—we best advance the glory of God. And as this high end is, as we have already said, the grand aim of every well-regulated mind, it must be allowed to lie at the foundation of that concern for the religious education of the young, with which every true christian is more or less actuated. Every individual who has himself felt the saving power of divine grace is strongly prompted to seek the salvation of others; for every soul that is saved adds to the declarative glory of the Saviour, every brand plucked from the burning is a gem added to the diadem of the Redeemer, every ransomed captive a new trophy of his conquest, and every redeemed child an additional voice to swell that anthem of praise with which the temple above is for ever to resound.

O christians! do you not feel the power of these considerations? Are you not impatient to promote an end so worthy, so dignified, so sublime? If, by your exertions in behalf of the Society whose cause I now plead, you shall be made instrumental in rescuing from ignorance and eternal destruction the poorest child in all your population, you shall do more for the glory of God than the warrior or the statesman who saves his country from temporal ruin. Yes, the laurels that deck the brow of the conqueror must wither and decay, moulder with the dust and be scattered on the breeze, and the result of his achievements must soon cease to benefit mankind; but the honours won in the cause of converting souls shall never fade away, and its effects shall run parallel with the ages of eternity.

2. Another principle by which christians ought to be actuated, in seeking the religious instruction of the rising generation, is, *a benevolent regard for the best interests of the young themselves.*—The principle of benevolence is one of the noblest that can actuate the human breast, and religion, so far from restraining or eradicating it, not only gives it a more elevated

and refined sensibility, but supplies additional motives to its exercise. Nor can we conceive a finer field for the employment of this god-like principle, than in imparting that knowledge which is fitted to deliver perishing immortals from impending destruction.

By nothing, indeed, even in a worldly point of view, can you confer a richer benefit on the rising generation than by furnishing them with the means of religious instruction: 'For godliness has the promise of *the life that now is,*' as well as of 'that which is to come;' and by teaching them to 'seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,' you put them in the way of having 'all other things added unto them.' By its effects on the health, the character, the friendship, and the estate of individuals, religion has a mighty influence on their external circumstances; while, by suppressing or moderating those turbulent passions which occasion so much internal anguish and confusion, it has the most beneficial effect on the temper of the mind. Of all the joys allotted to man in this vale of tears, there are none so pure, none so exquisite, as those which arise from the exercise of christian graces, and the discharge of christian duties: 'Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.'

But the influence of religion on the present condition of mankind is nothing in comparison with its influence on their future felicity. It provides at once for their deliverance from eternal misery and exaltation to eternal bliss. That the whole human family are by nature under an awful sentence of condemnation, no one who attentively reads the scriptures or even looks round him with an enlightened eye can fail to perceive. Nor is it in the power of language to convey an adequate idea of the nature and duration of that misery to which all are exposed. The worm that never dies, the fire that is never quenched, the outer darkness where is nothing but weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, the lake of fire burning with brimstone, are but faint images of that never-ending anguish, remorse, and despair, which they must experience who are doomed to bear the righteous vengeance of heaven. Nor, could we ransack the kingdom of nature

and collect into one view all that is terrific in the lightning, the thunder, and the tempest, or all that is appalling in mountains of combustible matter, and oceans of liquid fire. should we do anything to give you proper impressions of the wrath of an angry God. Yet such is the unutterable weight of misery to which every child of Adam is exposed, and from which nothing can serve to deliver him but the sacrifice of Christ. Nor is deliverance from misery the whole or even the principal part of the benefit connected with religion. Great as it is, it may be said to derive its chief value from being preparatory to the bestowment of positive bliss—bliss of which, as it consists in full, immediate, uninterrupted, and eternal communion with God, it is truly said, ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive,’ and for the attainment of which nothing short of an interest in the meritorious obedience of the Son of God can suffice. But to an acquaintance with the sacrifice and obedience of the Redeemer, a knowledge of the christian revelation is indispensable. There, and there only, can that information be obtained which ‘makes wise unto salvation.’

Think, then, of these things, my hearers! Think of the tendency of religious instruction to rescue the young from the condemning power of a broken covenant, to raise them from the mire of moral defilement, to prevent their being tossed into the gulf of perdition, to pluck them as brands from the tormenting flames of everlasting burning; think too of its tendency to make them acquainted with the imputation of Christ’s perfect righteousness, the implantation of his free Spirit, and the possession of an inheritance which is in its riches incalculable, in its extent immeasurable, and in its duration without end; and tell me whether the man can have a spark of christian philanthropy in his breast, who does not feel concerned for the religious education of the rising generation?

3. *An enlightened zeal for the prosperity of the church of Christ* ought also to stimulate christians to the duty in question.—Every believer is necessarily a lover of Zion. The interests of the church, as they stand intimately connected

with the glory of God, and the welfare of the human family, are dearer to him far than any personal or domestic concerns. 'How do they affect the church?' is a question which the dispensations of providence never fail to suggest, whether it be the revolution of states, the rise or fall of empires, the removal or succession of monarchs. Her prosperity awakens within him sensations of the purest delight, while her adversity gives him feelings of the most pungent sorrow. When he beholds her advancing on her high and dignified career, making rapid inroads on the confines of Satan, and dissipating with her light the gloom of ignorance, superstition, and ungodliness, he exults with exceeding joy. And when, on the other hand, he beholds her oppressed, despised, contemned; her progress arrested, her injunctions neglected, her ordinances profaned; and the men of learning and rank enlisted on the side of her enemies, he bewails, with bitter grief, her hapless condition, and, like the captive Hebrews by the streams of Babylon, suspends his tuneless harp on the drooping willows. In the day of calamity there is nothing for which the heart of a christian trembles so much as the ark of the Lord; nor would the report that the ark of the Lord had been taken produce on him a different effect from what it had on the venerable Eli, who could survive the death of his sons but not the desolation and disgrace of the church. The church, in short, is the subject of the christian's daily thoughts, his most fervent wishes, his constant prayers; and, even when laid waste by the ravages of the spoiler, he casts an eye of fond attachment over her desolations, and takes pleasure in her rubbish and her stones.

If the church is thus dear to the christian, it will follow that his exertions in her behalf will be strenuous and unremitting. Nor in these exertions can the state of the rising generation be possibly left out of view. To whom but to the young are we to look, under God, for conducting her affairs, defending her rights, maintaining her institutions, and perpetuating her privileges? Only a short time and the generation that now is shall have ceased to exist. Every day, almost every hour is hurrying away the faithful ministers and useful members of the church into the world of spirits; nor is the

period far distant when, with respect to those who now live, it may be said—‘The fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?’ On whom, then, but the children are we to depend for occupying the places of the fathers? To whom is it that the hoary-headed patriarch looks for perpetuating the church, but to his sons, whom he sees ranged in pensive silence around his couch, to witness his exit from the world? Who can doubt the pleasure David must have felt when dying, in being able to repose the concerns of Israel on his beloved Solomon? Or who can question that Jacob, when he blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, was comforted in considering the part they might yet act in prospering the interests of Zion?

It requires but the lapse of a few short years, and all the grand, the paramount concerns of the church of Christ will be in the hands of those who are now amusing their relatives with their innocent prattle, or enlivening our streets with their harmless sport. And it depends on present exertions whether they shall rise into public life qualified by knowledge, piety, and zeal, for their important trust; or ignorant, ungodly, and indifferent about everything in which either the glory of God or their own best interests are concerned. It depends, I say, on the exertions of those who are now advanced, whether the generation to come shall prove themselves honourable members of the church of Christ, and active and enlightened supporters of true religion, or shall rise into maturity the bold and daring enemies of everything that is good—whether, enlisting under the banners of Zion’s King, they shall come cheerfully and manfully forward to fight his bloodless battles, or, under the Prince of darkness, join the ranks of infidelity, and make common cause with the supporters of all that is impious, injurious, and disorderly.

What an argument does this consideration supply in favour of institutions which have for their object the religious instruction of the young! And what an inducement does it bold out to every lover of Zion to see that such institutions be established, wisely conducted, and furnished with adequate support! ‘A seed,’ it is true, ‘shall serve the Redeemer, and

be accounted to the Lord for a generation :’ nor shall any opposition of earth or hell prevent the accomplishment of this encouraging promise. But this certainty of the final issue ought in no degree to relax our exertions for promoting its fulfilment. It must never be forgotten that He who has decreed the end has decreed also the means. Nor will it perhaps be unseasonable here to remind you that, while the Spirit of God describes in glowing colours the future glory of the church on earth, he, at the same time, predicts that this state of things is to be brought about by means : ‘ Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased ;’ and issues forth the command, ‘ Walk about Zion, and go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generations following.’

4. The only other principle I shall mention is a *patriotic concern for the good of civil society*.—Of the social principle in general we have already spoken. Civil society is indispensable to the comfort, if not the being of man ; and it requires civil government for its support, regulation, and defence. Now, what we wish you to observe is, that the christian religion is hostile neither to civil society nor to civil government, but on the contrary prescribes the best terms for their proper organisation, and lays additional obligations on all who embrace it to seek the welfare of both. Every sincere christian is a true patriot, and bound to employ his talents for the good of his country. Nor can he ever, we believe, fulfil this solemn duty to better purpose than by endeavouring to promote the spread of religion among the young.

Religion is essential to the good of civil society, because it is essential to the good of the individuals of whom it is composed. Every religious man is a good man, and no man can be good who is destitute of religion. If, then, society is made up of men, and religion is necessary to make men good, it follows of course that religion is necessary to the good of society. Nor is the truth of this remark limited to one class, but applies equally to all ranks and degrees, to the rulers as well as to the ruled. If these premises are admitted, the conclusion cannot be denied, that religious legislators alone

can be good legislators, religious magistrates alone good magistrates, and religious subjects alone good subjects. Christianity extends its sovereign authority alike to all. 'Religion,' says an able writer, 'walks without fear into the palace of the king; she approaches him with dignity as he sits upon his throne; and she proclaims, with the tone of authority, *He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God!* She goes from thence into the hall of judgment, and, with the mien of a superior, addresses herself to the judges as they sit on the tribunal: *Ye shall not respect persons in judgment. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy: deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.* From the courts of justice she goes out to the multitude of the people, and she proclaims through the streets of the city: *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.'**

Without religion justice cannot be administered, crimes cannot be prevented, nor can relative duties properly be discharged. To the right administration of justice, fidelity, which nothing short of true religion can secure, is indispensable, both in the judges and in the witnesses. The fear of punishment without religion is not enough to prevent the commission of even open and atrocious crimes; while, on the other hand, wherever it exists in active operation not only are these prevented, but a powerful check furnished to such as are secret, whose influence on society is often not less pernicious than that of the former. Besides, religion, by inspiring a love of duty, provides for the faithful discharge of every relative obligation; while, by teaching patience, forbearance, and forgiveness, it

* See 'An Essay on the Divine Authority of the New Testament,' by Dr Bogue of the Independent persuasion, at Gosport. The whole section from which the extract is taken, we would heartily recommend to the attention of our readers, as containing a clear and judicious statement of scriptural sentiments, on a very delicate and much-controverted point.

goes far to banish from the world both civil and foreign war, whose pernicious effects on society no language can describe.

But that religion may have these salutary effects on society, it is necessary, as we before said, that it extend its influence over all classes. It is a grand mistake, which we are afraid has met with too general a reception, that, for the good of civil society, it is only necessary that the lower orders be under the power of religion. This were, of a truth, to degrade christianity from its natural dignity by reducing it to a mere engine of state policy, of use only to subjugate the minds of the inferior ranks to the will of their governors. With the opinion that civil society can never flourish while the multitude are sunk in ignorance and depravity, we most heartily concur; but we deem it a maxim not less obvious, that true national prosperity can never exist without enlightened, virtuous, and pious rulers. It is 'righteousness' in men of all ranks that 'exalteth a nation:' while 'sin,' wherever it appears, 'is a disgrace to any people.' It is unreasonable ever to expect a general reformation among the lower walks of life while men of rank are graceless, wicked, and profane. In vain do we think of purifying a stream if we carry not our operations to the fountain head.

What reason would lead us to expect, scripture and experience demonstrate to be true. We cannot shut our eyes to the plain language of holy writ, 'The wicked walk on every side, while the vilest men are exalted.' Nor can we easily forget the great moral lesson the civil convulsions of the last half century have taught the world, of the inadequacy of even mere human wisdom and learning, not to speak of ignorance and depravity, to support the edifice of civil society against the united attacks of infidelity and vice. And we have not the slightest hesitation in asserting that not till religion extends its influence to all ranks, high and low, rich and poor, ruler and ruled, shall 'the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ,' and the golden age, which has hitherto existed but in the dreams of poets, be fully realised.

The application of these remarks to our present purpose

must be obvious to all. The rising generation are those who in a short time are to fill the respective stations of magistrates and subjects in the body politic; and it is only by imbuing their minds with early piety that they can be qualified for discharging their relative duties. The true secret of *radical reform* lies in bringing the minds of the community under the influence of religious principle. While others are attempting it by turbulence and disorder, let *us* throw open the doors of our schools; let us circulate our bibles and catechisms and tracts; let parents assemble their children on the evening of the Lord's-day, and store their minds with the only true antidote against the influence of bad example and the power of inward corruption; and the time shall come when these children, rising into public life, and regulating their actions by the salutary principles of the christian religion, shall occupy with ability and faithfulness the different stations in society.

I have thus shown you the influence of ignorance on various interesting features of the human constitution, and specified some of those principles by which christians ought to be stimulated to take an interest in the religious welfare of the young. On both parts of the subject, particularly the latter, I have endeavoured to exhibit the sentiments expressed, as much as possible, in the light of *principles of action*, or arguments in favour of institutions for the religious instruction of the young. That for which I now plead is, we presume, known to most of you. It stands on a common footing with similar establishments throughout every part of the country. In support of its claims I have addressed your piety, your benevolence, your christian zeal, and your patriotism: and if such arguments fail to make a favourable impression, I must abandon the task.

Before concluding, however, I beg your attention to one or two short remarks.

The first is that Sabbath schools, though indispensably necessary in the present state of society, are neither natural nor permanent institutions. They arise solely from the ina-

bility of some and the negligence of others in regard to the religious instruction of their offspring. They are mere remedial schemes, occasioned by an existing evil, and so soon as the evil is removed they ought to disappear. The parent is the natural guardian of his children in religious matters; nor ought he, if adequate himself—and every parent ought to be adequate—to yield up the matter to a stranger. Every christian family ought to be a Sabbath school. Nevertheless, while there are so many parents who are either unable or unwilling to superintend the religious instruction of their children, it is every way proper, rather than that these children should be neglected, to provide for them by a public institution. In conducting such institutions, however, every attention ought to be paid, that nothing be done to relax the exertions of the natural instructors; and everything should be managed with the express design of bringing matters to their proper state. Indeed this must be the necessary consequence of present exertions, as the children now receiving instruction in Sabbath schools will be prepared for superintending, in due time, with care and fidelity, families of their own.

Another remark, which particularly respects the *teachers* of Sabbath schools is, that their chief concern ought ever to be for the salvation of such as are placed under their charge. To make them active members of the church, and industrious and peaceable members of the civil community, are important matters indeed; but they must ever be held subordinate to their eternal welfare. This last must never be forgotten. It should stand prominently out before the eye of the teacher as the grand aim of all his labours: nor ought he ever to content himself with anything short of its attainment. And allow me to remind you that you can never more successfully gain the objects just now named than by endeavouring this. If, with the divine blessing, you succeed in making any of your scholars christians, you secure, as far as they are concerned, both the good of civil society and the prosperity of the church of Christ. O then, you who superintend the instruction of the young, aim above all things at their spiritual good! While you look with affection on your interesting

little charge, reflect that each of them is possessed of an immortal spirit, a soul whose value is greater than that of ten thousand worlds. Try deeply to impress them with a sense of their radical corruption, of the necessity of their being born again, and of the need in which they stand of a Redeemer. Open before them the volume of Divine Revelation, and produce from it convincing and affecting proofs of everything you say; and when their little hearts are agitated with grief and their eyes moistened with the starting tear at a view of their natural condition as sinners, O then seize the happy opportunity of leading them to Christ, of unfolding to them his excellency and suitableness and willingness as a Saviour, and teaching them to rely implicitly on his merits for their everlasting welfare. Instruct them also to revere the great and terrible name of Jehovah, to sanctify his holy day, to give strict obedience to all his commands, and to make their little wants known to him in prayer. And thus will you confer on them a benefit and an honour compared with which earthly titles and earthly estates are unworthy of a name. They will thus become the children of God, and of course 'noble princes' indeed, and heirs of 'an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.'

Allow me, in conclusion, to remind you that the foundation of all true concern for the religious welfare of the young lies in having experienced the benefit of religion on our own hearts. Let me, therefore, urge upon you the duty of cultivating practical godliness, and maintaining a close walk and fellowship with God. Without this your present zeal will soon be exchanged for indifference; your duty will ere long become a task; you will feel disposed to hurry over the business of teaching in the way that will give least trouble to yourselves; and the children will go from your schools, instead of edified and improved, with feelings of coldness if not of disgust towards everything religious. But by attending to personal piety your interest in their religious improvement will be constantly increased, they will gain new importance in your estimation every day, and you will come forth from your closet perfumed with the incense of the Spirit, and

ready to scatter around you, in your intercourse with those under your charge, the sweet and wholesome odour of every christian grace.

And O let all be convinced of the importance of practical godliness. Personal piety, believe me, my dear hearers, is the true spring of zeal and activity in every department of duty. Treat it not, then, as a visionary thing fit only for the weak or the fanatical. Without it peace is stupidity, affliction misery, and duty of every kind downright slavery. But wherever it exists, it imparts to the soul the most serene satisfaction, enables to perform things otherwise disagreeable with cheerfulness, renders the most trying calamities not only tolerable but useful, and prepares for a state of never-ending glory and felicity.

May the time speedily arrive, when 'they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; but they shall all know him from the least unto the greatest:' and may we all at last meet in that blessed society in which toilsome exertions to acquire and to impart religious knowledge will be no longer necessary, but 'we shall know even as we are known!' Amen.

SERMON II.

THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL.

Preached at Annan, Sept. 25, 1825, on behalf of the Annandale Jewish Society.

ROM. x. 1.

‘Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.’

IN nothing are mankind more harmonious than in their approbation of benevolence. However many may have failed in the proper manifestation of this disposition, all have agreed to applaud its excellence. It is certainly one of the noblest and most useful feelings of our nature, prompting to acts of disinterested generosity, binding together in indissoluble union the different parts of society, and throwing over the whole the charm of a heavenly attraction. Its extinction from the human breast would produce effects not unlike those which might be supposed to follow from the annihilation of the principle of attraction in the material world; a complete disruption of all the ties of honour, gratitude, friendship, religion, and natural affection would necessarily ensue; each individual, becoming actuated with a feeling of hateful selfishness and utterly regardless of all but himself, would be prepared to perpetrate, without scruple or remorse, whatever deeds of shame or of horror seemed to promise the advancement of his own narrow interests; society would be for ever at an end

and the elements of which it is composed converted into a mass of repulsive atoms.

The principle of benevolence is not only deeply inherent in our nature, but sanctified, expanded, and enforced by religion. Nothing more strongly characterises the religion of Jesus than the benevolent spirit which it breathes. Its doctrines, its precepts, its rewards, and even its threats, wear a friendly aspect towards its disciples, and all beautifully accord with the burden of the celestial anthem sung on the plains of Bethlehem at the birth of its Founder: 'Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and GOOD-WILL TOWARD MEN.' Love—pure disinterested love—is everywhere spoken of as the source of its gracious discoveries: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' The same is required as the principle of all the obedience it demands of its votaries: 'Love the Lord thy God; love thy neighbour as thyself; on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others,* is the generous maxim by which it binds its disciples to regulate their social transactions. The feeling with which it inspires all who receive it is—*none of us liveth to himself*; whilst, whatever blessings it confers, it disposes, not only to invite kinsmen and friends and citizens and countrymen to participate, but to say to our worst enemy, 'Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.'

The history of christianity confirms and illustrates this view of its character. The noblest examples of philanthropy are to be found among christians. The number of public charities that exist in christian communities, mark its decided superiority, in this respect, over every other religious system. If more were necessary to corroborate this statement, a single reference might suffice to the existence and labours of those associations for the temporal and spiritual amelioration of our race, which have effected an establishment in every corner of our land, presenting a channel in which every diversified form of the benevolent feeling may flow.

Such is the generous feeling expressed by Paul in these well-known words: 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.' Previously to his conversion, the sympathies of his nature appear to have been chilled by the malignant influence of party spirit; he 'breathed threatenings and slaughters against the christians.' Mark the change effected by the grace of God. The antipathies of his soul are melted like wax; his heart, as if touched with a live-coal from the altar of God, glows with the warmest attachment to his fellow-men; and the whole tide of his energies is turned into the channel of disinterested beneficence. Of this, his unwearied labours, his unheard-of sufferings, and his generous sacrifices, on behalf of the *Gentiles*, might be deemed satisfactory proof. But, though invested with a commission only to the *Gentiles*, the motions of his charity could not be so restrained. It operated wherever he went with not less energy toward the *children of Abraham*. And this appears the more remarkable when we consider the opposition he met with from this people; how they reviled his character, spoke contemptuously of his person and his discourses, inflamed the multitude against him in every city, hunted him from place to place, laid plots for his life, brought accusations against him before the civil authorities, had him apprehended, bound, scourged, and cast into prison, and shouted after him in the violence of their rage, 'Away with this fellow from the earth!' All this, however, could not quench the flame of tender affection which he cherished for the Hebrew race; but, as if growing in intensity with the opposition it had to encounter, it burst out in some of the noblest expressions of philanthropy that are anywhere to be found: 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.'—'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.'

Such, brethren, are the objects whom we are now to recommend to your benevolent regard, and such the example

according to which we wish you to regulate the character and degree of your benevolence toward these objects. Let me, in the sequel, solicit your attention to a series of observations arising out of the text itself.

I. THE OBJECTS OF PAUL'S BENEVOLENT DESIRE AND PRAYER TO GOD WERE THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL.

The term 'Israel' signifies *a Prince with God*. This name was originally given to the patriarch Jacob, in commemoration of his remarkable interview with the angel at Peniel, when 'as a prince he had power with God and with men, and prevailed.' Of this we have the following account:—'And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but *Israel*; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.'* The grant appears to have been afterwards renewed at Bethel: 'And God appeared unto Jacob *again*, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob; but thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but *Israel* shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.'† It is also applied to the *natural descendants* of Jacob, as in the address of Moses to Hobab long after the death of the patriarch: 'Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning *Israel*.'‡ It is moreover, employed to denote the *spiritual members* of the church: 'They are not all *Israel* which are of Israel'—'And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the *Israel* of God.'§

Some understand the apostle, in the text, to refer to the *spiritual Israel*. But the whole context is against this view. The persons spoken of are called his 'kinsmen according to the flesh;' are described as 'not having attained to the law of righteousness, for they stumbled at the stumbling-stone laid in Zion,' as 'fallen,' 'cast away,' 'broken off,' and those to whom 'blindness in part has happened:—features which can

* Gen. xxxij. 27, 28.

† Gen. xxxv. 9, 10.

‡ Num. x. 29.

§ Rom. ix. 6; Gal. vi. 16.

be viewed as belonging only to the natural descendants of the patriarch; while the matter is put beyond all dispute by Israel being expressly *contrasted with the Gentiles*, and even denominated *Jacob*. *

It is thus abundantly plain that the objects of Paul's benevolent desire were the natural seed of Jacob. Whether *all* or only a *part* of them, remains to be determined. It is well known that, after the death of Solomon, ten of the Hebrew tribes revolted from their allegiance to the family of David, and formed themselves into a separate kingdom under Jeroboam. As the other two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, preserved their proper organisation, the kingdoms were distinguished by the names *Israel* and *Judah*. This distinction may be viewed as designed to be pointed out whenever the two are mentioned together. But about two hundred and fifty years after its erection, the kingdom of Israel, that is, the kingdom of the ten tribes, was destroyed by Tiglath-pileser and Shalmaneser, kings of Assyria, who successively invaded it, besieged Samaria the capital, slew many of the people, and carried the remainder away captive beyond the Euphrates. From the overthrow of this kingdom, the confusion of particular tribes which followed, and withal, the political ascendancy of Judah, the distinctive appellations of the two kingdoms as such, appear to have been afterwards laid aside, and to have merged into the common name of *Jews*. Hence there is reason to conclude that the term 'Israel' is sometimes used to denote, not the people of the ten tribes merely, but all the descendants of Jacob, to whatever tribe they may happen to belong. That it is to be understood in this sense in the passage under consideration, we think sufficiently obvious from the context, where Israel is contrasted, not with *Judah*, but with the *Gentiles*, and also from the phrase '*all Israel*.'

The descendants of Jacob, whatever their particular tribe, were the objects of Paul's pious benevolence. They had many attractive features in *his* view: they were his kinsmen according to the flesh; they were beloved for the fathers' sake,

* Rom. ix. 3, 31, 33; xi. 12, 15, 17, 25, 26.

and he looked upon them as destined by God to the attainment of unspeakable privileges.

Nor ought they to be regarded as less interesting objects of benevolence by christians in the present day. Whether we contemplate their past history, their present condition, or their future prospects, they will be found to be the most remarkable people on earth. The length of time they have existed, the vicissitudes through which they have passed, our early acquaintance with their history through the medium of the Jewish scriptures, the obligations we owe them for the inspired writings of the Old Testament, and, above all, their consanguinity, according to the flesh, to Him in whom centre all our hopes of salvation, cannot fail to give them an interest in the heart of every enlightened christian surpassing that which is felt for any other people on the face of the globe. It is this which has drawn forth such a succession of visitors to the land of their former residence, every spot of which is hallowed by some affecting recollection, and which, more than any other country, is fitted to awaken in the bosom of the christian the most lively, solemn, and melting associations. The extraordinary and mysterious circumstances of their present state, together with the peculiar character of their future prospects, add not a little to the interest arising from their past history. In short, to the philosopher they present a moral prodigy; to the natural observer, an historical wonder; to the christian, a standing miracle. Nor is there any point in which they can be viewed, individually or collectively, with reference to their temporal or to their spiritual condition, which does not serve to illustrate the claims of the people of Israel to the benevolent attention of the religious world.

In speaking of Israel as objects of benevolence, their *numbers* cannot be overlooked. This is a matter about which no small diversity of sentiment prevails. There being no certain data on which to proceed in making calculations, the utmost that can be attained is at best but a shrewd guess at the truth. By some the number of the Jews has been estimated as low as *three* millions, by others as high as *thirty* millions. In a late tabular view of the population of the globe, according

to the different professions of religion, drawn up by an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Jews are put down at *twelve* millions, which may be supposed nearer the truth than either of the numbers just mentioned.

The general opinion seems to be, that at present they are fully as numerous as at the most flourishing period of their history, during the reigns of David and Solomon. Making all allowance for the operation of those natural causes to which their continued numbers have been ascribed—their abstinence, their exemption from wars, their frequent and early marriages—it is impossible to reflect on the havoc made of them by the Romans, or on the persecutions and massacres to which they have been subjected by the Turks, not to speak of the cruelties perpetrated by nations bearing the christian name, without regarding the fact as something altogether extraordinary. Nor can christians reflect aright on this singular circumstance, without being led to express their feelings in some such language as that of Moses of old, when the cloud of Jehovah rested on the tabernacle, ‘Return, O Lord, to the MANY THOUSANDS OF ISRAEL.’*

Such, then, is the character, and such are the numbers of that interesting people, whom we wish to recommend to your benevolent regard. They are the natural Israel, the lineal descendants of the patriarch Jacob, to whatever tribe they may belong, and in whatever situation they may happen to be found. The distinction of tribes, it is well known, is now lost. The Jews who inhabit Europe are understood to belong to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; while, with respect to the descendants of those who revolted, different opinions are entertained. Some think they have now no separate existence, many of them having returned to their own land at the restoration from Babylon, and united with Judah; and such as remained having been dispersed throughout different nations, and gradually absorbed in the mass of the heathen world. Others again suppose that the descendants of the ten tribes still exist, in a distinct state, in or near to the country

* Num. x 36.

of their original captivity. While a third class, admitting the fact of their existence, pretend not to know the geography of their residence, but suppose them to be lost among the nations of the East. Without entering into this controversy, or presuming to determine among these conflicting opinions, it is enough for our present purpose to observe that *all Jews*, from whatever tribe they may have descended, or wherever on the face of the earth they may be found, are to be considered as entitled to the benevolent attentions of christians. And in confirmation of this remark, it may be worth while to observe that the inspired writers, in referring to the fulfilment of God's purposes of mercy, with respect to this people, describe the objects under the most comprehensive phraseology—'ALL *Israel*; ALL *the house of Israel*; *the WHOLE house of Israel.*'*

II. THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL NEED TO BE SAVED.

The change this people are destined to undergo is represented in scripture by a diversity of language. It is described as *fulness*, in opposition to diminishing; *reception*, in opposition to being cast away; *grafting in again*, in opposition to being cut off; *obtaining mercy and salvation*, which, being general expressions, may be viewed as opposed to the whole of that forlorn state from which they are to be recovered. In the text, and the 26th verse of the following chapter, the expression 'saved' is used, obviously in some such general sense. Salvation, though having a specific definite meaning in reference to the soul, admits of a greater latitude of interpretation, according as it relates to corporate bodies, or to external circumstances. It was in reference to a temporal deliverance that the people said to Saul, 'Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great *salvation* in Israel?' † And on a similar occasion we find it written, 'The Lord *saved* them by a great deliverance.' ‡ In short, salvation is a relative term; its meaning, in any particular instance, must depend on the connection; and when this includes a compli-

* Rom. xi. 26; Ezek. xx. 40; xxxvii. 11; xxxix. 25.

† 1 Sam. xiv. 45.

‡ 1 Chron. xi. 14.

cation of evils, it must be understood as opposed to all of these. Hence the need in which the people of Israel stand of being saved, may be viewed in different lights.

1. They need to be saved from *hardened infidelity, dangerous error, and gross ignorance*.—It is now considerably upwards of eighteen hundred years since the Son of God appeared in the nature of man, and offered himself to the Jews as the Messiah in whom the promises and the predictions, the types and the ceremonies of their religion were to be fulfilled. But, not meeting their carnal views of temporal deliverance and worldly aggrandizement, they despised and rejected him. Lovely as were the moral features of his character, they saw no beauty that they should desire him; benevolent as were his miracles, they could not conciliate their regard; holy as was his life, it did not serve to disarm their malice. With malignant hatred they cried out, ‘Away with him, away with him, crucify him, crucify him!’ and proceeded with deliberate cruelty, to imbrue their hands in his blood: while, with mad infatuation, they invoked on themselves and their posterity the tremendous curse, ‘His blood be on us, and on our children!’ In the providence of God, this dreadful imprecation appears to have been fulfilled. They continue as blind as ever to the claims of the Messiah, and equally stubborn in their opposition. ‘Blindness hath happened to Israel.’ ‘Even to this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.’* Posterity approve of the iniquitous deeds of their fathers, and, cherishing the same malignity, act them over again in their hearts. The claims of the christian religion they reject with abhorrence; and the name of its Founder—that ‘name which is above every name’—they load with every opprobrious epithet; being scarcely able to hear it pronounced without discovering signs of indignation. These sentiments are carefully instilled into the children in early life; as they advance they hear only what is calculated to confirm their prejudices, and when they arrive at maturity they are prepared to join in the universal scoff, and to exhibit symptoms of the most envenomed

* Rom. xi. 25; 2 Cor. iii. 15.

hatred. Nor is there any reason to suppose, were the Son of God again to appear on earth and to exhibit the same powerful evidences of his character and mission, that he would be treated with less virulence than before. Nay, such is their infidelity with respect to the Messiahship of Jesus, that there is ground to conclude the horrid vociferation of impatient malice would be renewed—‘Away with him, away with him, crucify him, crucify him!’ This infidelity, too, is not a simple disbelief of his claims. It is accompanied with an inveterate obduracy of heart, a callousness of moral feeling, a sullen obstinacy of disposition, which render all prospect of a change, without the interference of divine power, utterly hopeless. They are case-hardened in unbelief.

The belief, no less than the unbelief, of the Jews renders salvation necessary. Their faith embraces many monstrous and dangerous errors. Believing, as matter of course, that the Messiah is yet to come, they entertain the same carnal views of his person and reign which led their fathers to reject Jesus of Nazareth. Some even expect two Messiahs; one, Ben-Ephraim, who is to appear in a mean and afflicted condition; another, Ben-David, who is to sustain the character of a powerful and victorious prince. Prayers for the dead are practised, and the absurdities of purgatory mixed up with their views of a future state. Notwithstanding the bright examples of female wisdom, fortitude, and piety, which adorn their early history, their women are now greatly undervalued, and kept in a state of the lowest degradation. Salvation appears to be thought attainable on the very easiest terms, by all who only stand aloof from the scandalous crime of apostacy from the Jewish belief. And such is the importance attached to the foolish reveries of the Talmud, that their rejection is considered deserving of being punished by death.

Add to these considerations the ignorance which prevails among this people. This feature of their character is of the darkest description. In Germany, and elsewhere, some are to be found who are considerably enlightened; but generally speaking, the Jews are not only without ordinary information, but grossly deficient in the knowledge of their own scrip-

tures and history; and even some synagogues have been discovered to be without the book of the law.

2. They need to be saved from their *wide dispersion*.—No part of their history is more singular than this. It is the subject of several distinct predictions: ‘I will bring the land into desolation; and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen.—And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you.—And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other.—They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations.’* How remarkably have these predictions been fulfilled! Although once a most compact society, inhabiting one land, governed by one king, acknowledging one code of laws, professing one religion, and holding their most holy convocations in one sacred place, they are now scattered over every nation, ‘from one end of the earth even unto the other,’ living under every form of government, mingling with persons of every religious profession, and placed in situations the most remote from that holy mount where their fathers celebrated their solemn festivals. They are to be found in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, and in America. They abound most in the Turkish empire; yet have they penetrated into the remotest parts of China and the most inaccessible wilds of Central Africa, and have even emigrated to the very heart of the Western Continent. In short, though ‘not reckoned among the nations’ and having no country they can call their own, they yet mingle with every people under heaven; thus, while they reject christianity in their own persons, exhibiting to every age and nation, in this anomalous feature of their history, an irrefragable argument in its support.

3. They need to be saved from the *contumelious reproach* and *grievous oppression* to which they have been subjected.—These also were foretold: ‘Thou shalt become an astonish-

* Lev. xxvi. 32, 33; Deut. xiv. 27; xviii. 64; Luke xxi. 24.

ment, a *proverb*, and a *bye-word* among all nations whether the Lord shall lead thee. And among these nations shalt thou find *no ease*, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there a *trembling heart*, and *failing of eyes*, and *sorrow of mind*; and thy life shall hang in doubt, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life.* Was ever prediction more exactly fulfilled than this? All nations seem to have agreed to pour contempt on this hapless people. Wherever they have gone they have met with nothing but reproach; and the very name 'Jew' has been regarded as the symbol of whatever is deserving of execration. Their enemies have said, 'Bow down that we may go over you;' and Israel, wanting the power to resist, has tamely assumed the attitude of prostration; 'she has laid her body as the ground, and as the street to them that go over.' For rejecting the Saviour, they have been 'trodden down of the heathen,' have been treated with shameful indignity and wanton cruelty by the Hindoo and the Mussulman, who care nothing for the Saviour. Even christians, unmindful of the merciful and forgiving character of their religion, have joined in the general proscription and sternly refused to naturalise the devoted nation. The compassion shown to the inferior animals has, in many instances, been withheld from the children of Abraham.

'The wild-dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,
Mankind their country—Israel but the grave.'

In the arrangements of pious benevolence for evangelising the world, till of late, they have been greatly overlooked, as if any attempt to convert them were to be regarded as visionary.

Nor is this all. Compared with the calamities that have befallen this outcast people, neglect and contumely might have been easily borne. Sad and long is the tale of Israel's oppressions. Insufferable hardships, and unjust confiscations, and cruel banishments, and shocking massacres are among the miseries they have been called to endure. Thousands and tens of thousands have fallen victims to the relentless

* Deut. xxviii. 37, 65, 66.

hate of their barbarous oppressors. In Turkey, Persia, Germany, Hungary, France, Spain, Portugal, and England, their history up to the period of the Reformation, when the inveterate hostility began to abate, presents one uninterrupted series of calamities, in describing which, no language can be found more appropriate than that of holy writ: 'The Lord hath sent upon them *cursing, vexation, and rebuke*, in all that they have put their hands unto; they have been *only oppressed and spoiled evermore*.' To this day they continue an oppressed people, in being shut out from the common privileges of the nations among whom they live, and, with only one exception, being refused naturalisation wherever they have been scattered. In all this we see, no doubt, the retributive justice of God avenging the crime of Calvary; but we see also a strong proof of the need in which the children of Israel stand of salvation.

4. They need to be saved from the lowest state of *irreligion* and *immorality*.—Most deplorable in both these respects is the present condition of the Jewish people. The reproach in which they have been held, has contributed to sink them to a state in which it is deserved. Though once the possessors of a religion of divine origin and supreme authority, and the only people on earth who could lay claim to the right knowledge and worship of the true God, they have now scarce the semblance of piety. The flame of devotion that once glowed in their hearts, appears to have been extinguished with the sacred fire that burned on their altars. Many, according to the testimony of their own writers, have become absolute infidels, and, rejecting the substantial verities of divine revelation for the crude uncertainties of a deistical philosophy, have as little faith to place in the authority of Moses as in that of Jesus. Amongst those who still profess to adhere to the tenets of their fathers, religion, both public and private, seems to be at a low ebb.

Their temple-worship is described by an eye-witness, as presenting only 'a rabble transacting business, making engagements, and walking to and fro in the midst of public prayers; children at their sports; every countenance, with a

very few exceptions, indicating the utmost irreverence and unconcern; and their chief rabbi sitting by and seeming to care for none of these things;’ while the modern synagogue is spoken of as exhibiting ‘an appearance of very little more devotion than the Stock Exchange, or the public streets of the metropolis at noon-day.’ They are now also entirely ‘without a sacrifice.’ And surely, taking all these things into the account, were it possible that the Jewish fathers could rise from their graves, and survey the corrupted and pitiful mockery of their ancient worship presented in the modern services of their descendants, there could not fail to be a recurrence of the affecting scene exhibited on the return from Babylon, when the fathers and princes of Israel wept with a loud voice as they compared the faded beauty of the second temple with the splendour, and magnificence, and glory of the first.

From the state of *public* worship we may judge what must be that of their *private* devotions. Nor, after what we have seen, will it surprise you to hear that personal religion among the Jews is either wholly omitted, or reduced to some superstitious performance or unmeaning ceremony.

Immorality is the natural and unavoidable consequence of the want of religion. The people of whom we are speaking are ‘children of disobedience’ in a sense peculiar to themselves; and it is expecting nothing more than is warranted by scripture when we consider that Satan will be found ‘working in’ them more strongly than is usual among the other members of our degenerate family. Facts accord with such an expectation. The fraud and deceit for which they are proverbial, the petty thefts to which the children of the lower orders are trained from their infancy, the insatiable avarice shown by the higher ranks, and the unbounded indulgence given by all to their criminal passions, evince too clearly, alas! that the pure morality of the Decalogue, originally spoken by the voice and written with the finger of God, is now no longer regarded, but overlooked, violated, and contemned, without compunction or dread.

Such are some of those things which prove the need in

which Israel stand of salvation. They will serve to give you some idea of the present condition of those whom we now hold up as objects of christian benevolence. The picture we have drawn is gloomy; but it is faithful and scriptural. It is, after all, but a mere outline, a simple sketch, which those who have leisure for historical research will find no difficulty in filling up. Enough has been said, however, to prompt the pathetic lamentation, 'How is the gold become dim, the most fine gold changed! How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!'^{*} Nor is it possible to view the contrast between the present and former condition of this people, without being irresistibly reminded of the name which the wife of Phinchas gave to her child in the anguish of her soul, 'ICHAEON—the glory is departed from Israel.' Departed indeed! 'The outward glory is trampled under foot—the inward spirituality is evaporated—the land has cast out its inhabitants, and the Spirit of God has deserted the polluted dwelling.'

'Can these bones live?' Such was the question suggested by the striking emblematical representation of the state of the Jews given to the prophet Ezekiel; and it is not improbable that a similar inquiry may have been suggested to some, by the preceding statements. Can a people so hardened in infidelity, so ignorant, so reproached, so sunk in impiety and vice, ever be reclaimed? Can bones, not only from which the flesh without has been stripped off, but of which the marrow within has been completely dried up, and which have been bleached for ages by the tempest of divine wrath—can such bones ever be resuscitated? The question, we admit, is natural and reasonable. But do not despond, my hearers! We are not allowed to entertain a doubt on the subject. 'The present state of this interesting people is not the last. A cheering ray darts across the gloom. The blessed light of prophecy, streaming through the opening clouds, settles on the

^{*} Lam. ii. 1.

distant prospect, and brings to view a scene on which the eye of benevolence and piety rests with delighted anticipation.'

III. ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED.

Paul's desire and prayer, there is reason to believe, were prompted by the Spirit of all grace; of course they must be viewed as in accordance with the divine purposes of mercy respecting their objects. Here three things naturally fall to be considered—the nature, the certainty, and the manner of Israel's salvation.

1. The NATURE of Israel's salvation must bear a relation to their present state. The one must be the opposite of the other. They shall have fulness where they have had diminishing, reception where they have been cast away, grafting in again where they have been cut off, mercy instead of wrath, and salvation instead of a curse. But these are all general terms. It will be necessary to be more particular.

Their salvation will doubtless include *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the true Messiah*. There will be a universal acknowledgment of his claims by them as a nation, and a saving belief in his person and righteousness on the part of many as individuals. The following passages assert thus much: 'Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and *David their king*; and shall *fear the Lord*, and his goodness in the latter days.—And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *the spirit of grace* and of supplications; and they shall look upon ME whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for HIM, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for HIM, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.—For as ye (Gentiles) in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these (Jews) also now not believed, that through your mercy they also *may obtain mercy*. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, *that he might have mercy upon all*.—Nevertheless, when it (*i.e.* the heart of the people of Israel) *shall turn to the Lord*, the vail shall be taken away.'*

* Hos. iii. 5; Zech. xii. 10; Rom. xi. 30-32; 2 Cor. iii. 16.

Their being *gathered together* must also be included in this salvation. Of this much is said in the prophetic writings: 'And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again *the second time* to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and *shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.* The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.—In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and *they shall come together out of the land of the north* to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.—*And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.* Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which *brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries whither I had driven them;* and they shall dwell in their own land.—For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring *again* the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.—And the word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick and write upon it, *For Judah and for the children of Israel his companions:* then take another stick and write upon it, *For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:* And join them one to another in one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which

is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and *they shall be one* in mine hand.* Whether these prophecies are designed to intimate that there will be a literal reunion of the two rival kingdoms, an amicable adjustment of all their differences, and an actual restoration of the whole descendants of Jacob to their own land, there to enjoy an independent national existence, or are intended to describe their being brought together within the bosom of the christian church, admits of dispute. Each of these interpretations has its difficulties, yet neither is without its strenuous advocates. It is perhaps one of those subjects on which no one ought to dogmatise. The day will declare it. There seems to be a general leaning, among the writers of the present day, to the literal view of these and similar predictions. But whether, according to them, 'Kidron's vale and Jordan's banks, the mount of Olivet and the waters of Siloam, shall ever again echo with the songs of salvation' from the lips of native Jews, it is at all events certain, that the latter of these interpretations shall be fully accomplished. With this we may rest satisfied in the meantime, as to enter into the controversy would carry us too far away from our present object, and to offer an opinion without proof would serve no important purpose.

Besides these, *honour* and *renown* must be taken into the account. Their reproach will be completely wiped away, and a reputable distinction assigned them among the nations of the world. To this part of their salvation the following predictions seem to refer:—'The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to *beautify* the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet *glorious*. The sons also of them that afflicted thee, shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The City of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken

* Is. xi. 11-13; Jer. iii. 18; xxiii. 3, 7, 8; xxx. 3; Ezek. xxxvii. 15-19.

and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal *excellency*, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breasts of kings; and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.—And I will raise up for thee a *plant of renown*, and they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, *neither bear the shame of the heathen any more*. Neither will I cause men to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause the nations to fall any more, saith the Lord God.—I will get them *praise and fame* in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you; for I will make you a *name* and a *praise* among all the people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord.*

Without *piety and holiness*, their salvation would be incomplete indeed. That these are to be included, there can remain no doubt on the mind of any one acquainted with the prophecies respecting this people. Take these as a specimen:—‘And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first. And I will *cleanse them from all their iniquity*, whereby they have sinned against me, and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.—I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall *be clean*: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I *cleanse* you. A *new heart* also will I give you, and a *new spirit* will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will *put my Spirit* within you, and cause you to *walk in my statutes*, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land

* Is. lx. 13–16; Ezek. xxxiv. 29; xxxvi. 15; Zeph. iii. 19, 20.

that I gave to your fathers ; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.—Neither shall they defile themselves any more with idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions : but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and *will cleanse them* : so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.—And so all Israel shall be saved : as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall *turn away ungodliness from Jacob*. For this is my covenant unto them, *when I shall take away their sins.** Some of these are the very passages we are accustomed to apply to the work of sanctification in believers. The context determines their primary reference to the people of Israel. To affirm that they are to be literally fulfilled in the case of *all*, would perhaps be stretching the matter too far ; but, if language has any meaning, they unquestionably must be understood as intimating that a *very great number* shall be spiritually justified and sanctified, really converted, saved from going down to the pit, delivered from the wrath to come. So glorious and comprehensive is the nature of Israel's salvation ! Surely it will be admitted that the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.

2. The CERTAINTY of Israel's being saved, rests on several grounds, the chief of which we shall briefly state.

The relation in which they stand to their honoured fathers, and their separate preservation, afford presumptive evidence that they will be saved. The distinction conferred on the ancestors, the promises made to them, and the covenant by which these promises were confirmed, all lead us to indulge the strongest hopes respecting their descendants. It is scarcely possible to think of the honour put on their progenitors by the call of Abraham—the covenant made with him, and renewed to Isaac and Jacob—the miraculous deliverance from Egyptian oppression—the triumphant passage of the Red Sea—the singular protection enjoyed in the wilderness—the dividing of Jordan—and the final settlement in Ca-

* Jer. xxxiii. 7, 8 ; Ezek. xxxvi. 24-28 ; xxxvii. 23 ; Rom. xi. 26, 27.

naan, amid visible tokens of the divine presence and regard; it is scarcely possible to think of these things, and yet suppose that the Jewish race are to be left in the wretched condition in which they now exist. We proceed, it is apprehended, on the soundest principles, when we conclude that 'the seed of Abraham, *God's friend*,' will not always be forgotten. This mode of reasoning is adopted by the apostle in the context:—'I say, then, hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.—If the *first fruit* be holy, the *lump* is also holy: and if the *root* be holy, so are the *branches*.—As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake: but as touching the election, they are BELOVED FOR THE FATHERS' SAKE. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.'—The same thing is confirmed by the name by which Jehovah made himself known to Israel of old, by means of Moses: 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, THE LORD GOD OF YOUR FATHERS, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB, hath sent me unto you: this is my name *for ever*; this is my memorial unto *all generations*.' This name never has been, never can be repealed: and its continuance affords to the friends of Israel ample security for the fulfilment of their fondest hopes.—Besides, what other conclusion can be drawn from the *separate preservation* of this people? This is, at all events, a most wonderful fact. Kingdoms, empires, religions, after flourishing apace and receiving the most powerful support, have languished and gradually sunk into total extinction. But here are a people, who though comparatively small at first, invaded by the most powerful enemies, and pursued with every instrument of extermination—royal edicts, cruel banishments, seditious plots, outrageous massacres—have, nevertheless, survived them all; and not only survived, but multiplied and increased so remarkably, that no emblem can be found so expressive of their state as that which their own legislator beheld of old in the land of Midian—'a bush burning, and not consumed.' It is a circumstance not the least worthy of notice in this connection, that, while they showed so inveterate a

propensity to apostatise from their religion and laws when they had every possible inducement to be faithful, they should now obstinately adhere, not only in the absence of every such inducement, but in resistance of those of an opposite character. While living in a state of entire separation from the other nations of the world, and enjoying, moreover, miraculous intimations of the divine will, they seemed ever disposed to adopt the sentiments and copy the manners of others; but now, when living among the nations, coming in daily contact with their opinions and actions, and having every possible inducement to change, they rigidly preserve their distinctive character. There is in this something so extraordinary, so opposite to what has happened in other instances, so much calculated to baffle all human calculations, as to leave no doubt on the minds of those who believe in the operations of an overruling Providence that they are preserved for some important ends—ends worthy of the wise Disposer of all events, and involving their own temporal and spiritual good.

The prophecies and promises of Revelation assert the salvation of Israel. Some of these have already been brought forward in speaking of the particular parts of this salvation. There are others of a more general character, to which we shall now advert; premising, however, that the prophecies which remain to be fulfilled are distinguished from such as have received their accomplishment at former periods of the Jewish history, by one or other of the following marks:—their speaking of *both* Judah and Israel—the blessings promised being said to be *permanent*—the time of fulfilment being called '*the latter days*'—their making mention of *universal* peace, purity, and happiness—or their referring to a *restoration from all countries*. This test will apply to the following: 'When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the *latter days*, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God), he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which he sware unto them.—And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee,

and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from *all the nations*, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee: and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it, and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.—But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob; and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and *none shall make him afraid.** But the field of unfulfilled prophecy is so wide that we must not venture on it farther. Enough, surely, has been said to show the certainty, arising from this source, of Israel's salvation. These are the true sayings of God—the promises of One who cannot lie. Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than one word of all that he has spoken fail of its accomplishment.

The power of God is able to secure the fulfilment of these predictions. Many things, it is true, in reference to this event, appear discouraging. The prejudices, the sentiments, the condition of the Jewish people, are such as might induce hopeless despondency, had we to look only to man. But we look to God; and with God all things are possible. His power has been asserted to be sufficient, and actual proof of his ability has been given in cases not less difficult. 'God is able to graft them in again,' says our apostle in the context; and surely when we call to mind the deliverance from Egypt, the emancipation from Babylon, and the overwhelming wonders of Pentecost, we have every reason to place the fullest confidence in the predicted event. You may feel disposed to regard the Jews as 'trees without fruit, *twice dead*, plucked up by the roots;' but 'why should it be thought a thing in-

* Dent. iv. 30, 31; xxx. 1-5; Jer. xlvi. 27.

credible with you that God should raise the dead?' Have you forgotten the delightful promise, 'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise; awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead?'

Present appearances, both in the christian world, and among the Jews themselves, hold out encouraging prospects that the time is at hand, when the power of God is to be exerted for the fulfilment of the promises in question. The religious world, which long displayed the most callous indifference to the claims of Israel, has lately been roused from its apathy. The societies that have been formed in different quarters, the frequent inquiries that are made, and the writings that are put in circulation, serve to show that the prejudices against the Jews are giving way, that christians begin to be actuated by a better spirit towards the seed of Abraham, and that a general interest of considerable intensity, has been excited on their behalf. According to the argument of the royal psalmist, we may augur good from these appearances: 'Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come: *for thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.*'—The state of things among the Jews themselves strengthens this conclusion. An unusual excitement has certainly taken place in some parts of the globe, particularly the continent of Europe. They display, in many instances, an altered temper. Their willingness to receive tracts, and copies of the New Testament, and to enter into conversation with christians on their religious differences, shows that the barriers of prejudice are beginning to yield. Expectations of the near approach of some great crisis in their history seem to be pretty generally diffused. And, then, occasional instances occur of apparently real conversion—actual shakings among the dry bones, which we deem ourselves fully warranted in regarding as blessed harbingers of that glorious day of mercy to the house of Jacob, when the vivifying Spirit of Jehovah shall 'breathe into them, and they shall live, and stand up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.'

Such are the grounds of our assurance with respect to the event in question. Taken together they cannot fail to satisfy the most incredulous, and to encourage the most desponding.

3. The MANNER of Israel's salvation remains to be considered on this branch of the subject. Here it will be necessary to direct our attention to the agency of the Divine Spirit, and the instrumentality of human means. After all that we have seen of the grounds of certainty, it is possible the question may occur, 'By whom shall Jacob arise?' Nor can any reply be deemed satisfactory which does not embrace the two points now mentioned.

The agency of the Holy Spirit is indispensable. The change to be wrought is, both in its general character and individual parts, such as nothing short of omnipotence can accomplish. It is a resurrection, a creation indeed. To produce a firm and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is the peculiar work of the Spirit of all grace. By nothing less than a divine afflatus can the Jews be gathered together in a state of reconciliation and peace. Nor is there any other source from which true piety and holiness can ever proceed. Every individual conversion, and every great general revival in the church, has owed its existence to the Spirit's operation. The promise of Christ to his disciples, and the history of the wonders of Pentecost accord with this remark; 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.—When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place; and they were all *filled with the Holy Ghost*, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*' We are assured the salvation of Israel will be effected in the same way: 'Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will *cause breath to enter into you*, and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon

you, and cover you with skin, and *put breath in you*, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall *put my Spirit within you*, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.* Oh yes! copious will be the outpourings, and glorious the effects of the Spirit's influences, when this prediction is accomplished. The prophecy of Joel will receive a new and more extensive fulfilment: 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the hand-maids, in those days, will I pour out my Spirit.' †

Whether, besides what we have mentioned, there will be miraculous influences of the Spirit, is a question not easily determined. It is the opinion of many eminent writers that there will. Some even expect extraordinary signs in the heavens, awful convulsions of the material world, and a personal appearance of the Saviour in splendid majesty. But whether anything essentially different from what has been employed in the conversion of the Gentiles, shall be requisite in the case of the Jews, is not so obvious, at least, as to supersede all reasonable doubt. One thing is certain, that the power of the Spirit is adequate to subdue the depravity of the human heart in its most inveterate form.

The doctrine we have been teaching respecting the necessity of the Spirit, does not, by any means, supersede *human instrumentality*. Some, it is true, have been foolish or wicked enough to draw this absurd and pernicious conclusion; and, leaving the Almighty, as they say, to accomplish his own work, have certainly taken care to avoid the imputation of seeming interference. Surely it is unnecessary to say that such is an impious perversion of the appointment of Heaven. When, we ask, since the original creation of all things, did

* Ezek. xxxvii. 5, 6, 13, 14.

† Joel ii. 28, 29.

God ever act without means? Not even in the most extraordinary of his works, the incarnation of the Messiah, and the conversion at Pentecost—works in which, of all others, this might have been expected; yet in the former case there was the body of Mary, in the latter the preaching of Peter. Certainly not in rescuing Israel from Egypt, or in delivering them from Babylon. Nor have we any ground to conclude it will be different when the Lord binds up the breach of his people, and heals the stroke of their wound. We have express evidence of the contrary: ‘Again he said unto me, *Prophesy upon these bones*, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. So *I prophesied as I was commanded, and as I prophesied there was a noise*, and, behold, a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to bone. Then said he unto me, *Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy*, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So *I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them*, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.’* Two things are here worthy of remark; first, that the instructions to prophesy are in close connection with the assertions respecting the Spirit; secondly, that nothing is effected till the means are put in operation: thus demonstrating the perfect compatibility of these things, the folly of expecting the blessing without using the means, and the criminality of overlooking the Agent who alone can render them effectual. Our exertions ought never to diminish our confidence in God, as our confidence in God ought never to relax our exertions. The necessity of means in the work in question is also plainly taught by Paul: ‘For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these now not believed, that *through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.*’ The mercy of the Gentiles, it is clear from this passage, is to be the mean of conferring mercy on the house of Israel. But there is no way in which Gentile mercy can come to bear on

* Ezek. xxxvii. 4. 7. 9. 10.

Jewish infidelity, excepting as a principle of action, a powerful motive prompting to the use of every possible means of conferring benefit on those who are its objects. And what, it may be asked, are the means which Gentile christians are to employ in expressing their mercy for the seed of Abraham?

A prominent place is certainly due to *the sacred scriptures*. These form the grand instrument in the hand of the Spirit, for converting sinners, and effecting a moral change on any class of mankind. 'The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' 'Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' The Jews, in many places, are in want of even the Old Testament, and it would not be easy to calculate the beneficial consequences that might result from providing them with their own scriptures. But the New Testament, in their own tongue, to which they are enthusiastically, and even superstitiously attached,* is what they principally need. This was long unaccountably overlooked. Of late, however, the religious world has been awakened to a sense of its importance. The Hebrew New Testament is now extensively circulated, and some delightful instances are on record in which it has been apparently successful.

The preaching of the gospel must also be allowed to hold a conspicuous place in the rank of means for promoting the conversion of the Jews. This is one of the most distinguished instruments of conferring spiritual benefit on mankind. The looks, the gestures, the tones of love which the living speaker is enabled to employ, give to this means inconceivable advantages, and impart to it a subduing charm, of which the cause in question stands greatly in need and ought not certainly to be deprived. Many missionaries have gone out from the

* An excellent illustration of this occurs, Acts xxi. 40, compared with xxii. 2, where we are told that although the Jews 'made a great silence' when Paul offered to address them from the top of the castle stair; 'when they heard that he spake in the *Hebrew* tongue, they kept the more silence.'

societies which exist in this and other countries, whose labours among the Jews have been unwearied ; whose success, considering the difficulties with which they have had to contend, has been, perhaps, as great as could reasonably be expected : and whose periodical accounts are among the most deeply interesting articles of intelligence with which the hearts of christians, in this age of pious benevolence, are cheered.

The erection of *schools* for the instruction of Jewish children, with whom christians may expect to be more successful than with those whose prejudices have been strengthened by age ; and the circulation of appropriate *tracts*, are also deserving of attention.—The *removal of hinderances*, both moral and political, and the *affording of facilities* to such as show a disposition to adopt and profess the religion of Jesus, must not pass unnoticed. National restrictions, the inconsistencies of professing christians, both in principle and practice, and the contempt with which they have been treated, are stumbling-blocks which it is now time to take up out of the way of God's ancient people, and the removal of which is among the duties commanded, and signs held out with reference to their future restoration. It seems necessary also to afford positive facilities, by extending protection, and even in some cases furnishing pecuniary support to those who, by avowing christianity, expose themselves to all the otherwise disastrous consequences of a cruel proscription from their brethren and former associates.

To all these must be added that powerful instrument of spiritual good—*prayer*. Prayer must precede, must accompany, must follow the use of every other mean. This, by 'a mysterious link in the chain of moral causes and effects, connects the weakness of the creature with the almightiness of God.' Unless the friends of Israel thus look to Jehovah, they will be loudly rebuked for their impiety and presumption, by a total failure of all their designs ; and they will deserve to be so rebuked. But it shall not be so. The sacred prediction must be fulfilled : 'I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night : ye that make mention of the Lord,

keep not silence ; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.' Great is the efficacy of fervent, importunate, believing prayer. It can remove mountains ; and why should it not be employed to displace those towering prejudices which prevent the return of God's ancient people to the bosom of the true church ? It has brought fertilising showers on the parched earth ; and why should it not be laid hold of to irrigate with the rain of celestial influences the barren fields of Israel and Judah ? It has shaken, as with an earthquake, the foundations of a prison ; and why should it not be used to overturn that stronghold of unbelief which has so long retained millions of our fellow-men in spiritual bondage, and to let the children of Jacob go free ? It has raised the dead ; and why should it not be resorted to for the purpose of awakening to all the energies and enjoyments of spiritual life, the exanimate sons of Abraham ? Be assured, that to the fulfilment of the hopes we have been this day contemplating, there must be frequent, earnest, united, and believing prayer. Christians in their closets, in their families, in their private fellowships, and in their public assemblies, must agree to cry with their whole soul, ' COME FROM THE FOUR WINDS, O BREATH, AND BREATH UPON THESE SLAIN, THAT THEY MAY LIVE.'

IV. THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL IS A THING GREATLY TO BE DESIRED.

That it was viewed in this light by the apostle, his language strongly expresses. Besides the ties of kindred, there must have been other reasons of a more enlarged and general nature, by which he was influenced in this matter—reasons similar to those which still operate in rendering the event in question a most desirable object to the hearts of christians.

1. *The tendency of Israel's salvation to reflect the glory of the Godhead and the honour of the Redeemer*, is here deserving of a primary place. The glory of God, which is indeed the end of all his works, is spoken of in scripture as especially the design of his interpositions in behalf of the Israelites. This is expressly stated as the object of their original choice, their

deliverance from Egypt, and their return from Babylon: ‘I have caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord; that they might be unto me for a people, and *for a praise, and for a glory*.—I wrought *for my name’s sake*, that it should not be polluted before the heathen; among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.—Therefore say unto the house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for *mine holy name’s sake*, which ye have profaned among the heathen.’* Nor is it different with the greatest of all his interpositions, their final restoration: ‘So will I make *my name known* in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One of Israel.’† It is not easy to conceive anything better fitted to reflect the divine glory than this event. What a striking exhibition must it give of the mercy, the patience, and the faithfulness of God!—what an illustration of his overruling providence!—what a confirmation of the truth of christianity! Nor will it redound less to the honour of the Redeemer. How will it illustrate the efficacy of his blood, when it shall be seen removing the guilt of the descendants of those who put him to death, and who have cherished toward him for ages a most deadly and malignant hatred; and the power of his intercession, when it shall appear that he has prevailed with the Father, for those who have so long slighted his best, his unspeakable gift; and the omnipotence of his grace, in constraining such implacable enemies to bow to his sceptre; and the depths of his condescension, in receiving them into his favour! The salvation of Israel cannot fail, on all these accounts, to appear one of the brightest gems in Emmanuel’s crown. The glory of the Divine Spirit also must be rendered conspicuous, in his working efficaciously in the hearts of those who have so long grieved him with their infidelity, and provoked him with their obstinate rebellion. Considered in this

* Jer. xlii. 11; Ezek. xx. 9; xxxvi. 22.

† Ezek. xxxix. 7.

light, viewed as a focus in which so many scattered rays of divine glory are to converge, where is the christian who would not have it as his heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel, that they might be saved?

2. *The benefit that must result to themselves*, is another consideration worthy of notice in this connection. To illustrate this, we need do little more than recall to your minds the description of their present condition and account of their future prospects, already submitted. Although no glory were to redound to God—which, however, is impossible—to diminish the weight of human calamity, to lessen the extent of human wretchedness, to augment the sum of man's enjoyment, were an object worthy of our ardent desire; and, whether, as respects the depth of previous misery, or the amount of expected good, it will be difficult to find a case to surpass that of the outcast nation of Israel. The general points in which their salvation is to consist are great in themselves, besides each of them being pregnant with many blessings of inconceivable importance and value. Faith in Christ, restoration viewed in whatever light you please, spiritual renown, personal piety, and practical godliness, are favours the worth of which it will be difficult to overrate. But from faith in Christ must spring pardon of sin, peace of conscience, reconciliation to God, an interest in the promises, and a well-founded title to the eternal inheritance of glory; from restoration all the endearments and sympathies of brotherly affection, and all the strength and energy and protection arising from organised society; and from personal piety and holiness, all the honour and support and consolation and enjoyment which are peculiar to the saints of God. Those whom considerations like these fail to move to a benevolent desire for the salvation of Israel must be strangers to every generous emotion, and whatever their pretensions, have reason to question their relation to Him who wept over Jerusalem, as he thought of the sins and the miseries of its devoted inhabitants.

3. *The blessings to result to the world at large* show, farther, the desirableness of Israel's salvation. From the peculiar character of certain passages of holy writ, it is impossible to

deny that God has fixed an important connection between the conversion of the Jewish nation and the complete illumination of the Gentile world. So early as the call of Abram the father of this people, was it said, 'I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.' We have high authority for believing that 'salvation is of the Jews:—a statement which, besides meaning that the true salvation was symbolised by the rites of that people, foretold by their prophets, and purchased by Him who belonged to them according to the flesh, may include that to which we now advert. Such, at all events, is the reference of Paul in these well-known expressions: 'Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, *how much more their fulness?* For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, *what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?*'—The meaning of the apostle in this passage is very explicit; it cannot be mistaken; he asserts that the conversion of the Jews is destined to exert a most extensive and salutary influence on the other nations of the world. The principle on which he reasons is worthy of peculiar notice, namely, that all God's dispensations toward the Jews, of whatever character, were designed to be productive of good to the Gentiles. Does not history illustrate and confirm this principle? What blessing did they ever enjoy in which the other nations of the earth are not ultimately to share? Nay, has not the greatest calamity that ever befel them been made to redound, in a signal manner, to the salvation of others? 'The fall of them has been the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles.' We may apply to them the words of the apostle on another occasion: 'Whether they be *afflicted*, it is for our consolation and salvation; or whether they be *comforted*, it is for our consolation and salvation.' Hence the peculiar force with which the conclusion is drawn: 'What shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?' Such an influence will the event in question have on the state of the Gentile world, that it is compared to a resurrection from the grave. The pagan

and Mahometan nations shall thus be awakened from the torpor of death, to all the activities and enjoyments of spiritual life. With this agrees the current language of prophecy. Many predictions seem to intimate that the full conversion of the Gentiles will be late; while not a few unequivocally assert that it is to be brought about by Jewish instrumentality: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it; *for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*—The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And *the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.* The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, and the forces of *the Gentiles shall come unto thee.*—Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is *a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.*'* 'Whenever,' says an eloquent advocate of the cause of Israel, 'Whenever the hand of prophecy rends the veil from future events, and displays to us the glories of the last days, it always points to the Jews as first in the procession of worthies—as leading the march of universal victory—as resuming their lost precedency over an evangelised world. The ultimate triumphs of christianity itself are represented as in a measure suspended on the conversion of the Jews. The world is to wait for them. The hand of eternal mercy is to be unchained only by their conversion. The earth is not to be watered by the richest dews of heaven till the vine flourishes upon the holy hill.' Nor can we omit here to remark the confirmation this part of our subject receives from the small success which has hitherto attended the great, united, and persevering efforts of christians among the heathens—a success comparatively so slow and trifling as almost to compel us to adopt the conclusion, that the means in operation for

* Is. ii. 2, 3; lx. 2, 3, 5; Zech. viii. 23.

the conversion of the Gentile world, wait, as to any grand result, the conversion of the Jews to give them efficacy.*

And what influence, it may be now asked, can the conversion of the Jews exert on that of the Gentile world? What is the nature of that connection between the two, of which so much has been said? Why, my brethren, on a point like this, it would not become us to speak positively, or to pretend to unfold the whole of what shall afterwards be seen. But it seems reasonable to expect that the restoration of God's ancient people will have a powerful influence on Gentile conversion, from the palpable, impressive, and irresistible proof of christianity it will present—a proof which, from their diffusion, must have all the advantages of universality, and from its peculiar character, cannot fail to attract the notice of the most indifferent and to silence the most plausible cavils of scepticism.—Besides, such an event must have a tendency to invigorate the faith, and inflame the love, and enlarge the zeal, of those previously christianised, and indeed 'provoke them to emulation,' in every benevolent undertaking; while it may safely be anticipated that the converted Jews, feeling the long arrears of gratitude and duty under which they lie in consequence of their past preservation and rebellion, and roused by the overwhelming display of the divine mercy given in their salvation, will be animated to the most zealous efforts in behalf of the injured Redeemer.—And, judging from the case of Saul of Tarsus when *he* became a preacher of 'the faith which before he destroyed,' they may be expected to prove the most faithful preachers, the most disinterested missionaries, the most undaunted heralds of the cross. Grasping the sacred banner, they will unfurl it to all nations under

* See on this topic Faber's Sermon before the London Society (1822.) It may also be proper here to state that there is some little difficulty in reconciling the obvious meaning of the apostle (Rom. xi. 12–15) with his expression in the 25th verse of the same chapter, 'blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in.' The whole difficulty lies in explaining what is meant by the 'fulness of the Gentiles.' The different views taken of the phrase are accurately stated, and a satisfactory explanation suggested by the Rev. Daniel Wilson, in his anniversary sermon before the London Society (1816).—pp. 13–16.

heaven, nor cease their noble efforts, till men of every tongue have been taught to chaunt the praises of that name, on which they and their fathers have for ages poured the contempt of their impious execrations.

Let me now, in conclusion, submit a few PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

In the *first* place, the benevolent zeal of Paul, in the instance before us, presents a *model for our imitation*. The same interesting objects exist at the present time; their need is as great as it ever was; and the reasons for exertion operate still with all their force. In holding up Paul's zeal as worthy of imitation, it may be well to bear in mind its prominent characteristics.—It was an *enlightened* zeal which he exercised for the salvation of Israel, springing from correct views of prophecy, an accurate knowledge of facts, and the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. Such also must be ours; a blind ignorant zeal will not do, it must be a zeal according to knowledge; nor does it admit of a doubt that much of the apathy that prevails on this subject is to be ascribed to a sad deficiency of information.—Paul's zeal was *active*; it was indicated not merely by desire however strong, or by prayer however fervent, but by constant and unwearied and laborious exertions. The sermons he preached, the disputations he held, the fatigues he underwent, bear witness to the activity of his zeal; and whoever would pretend to an imitation of his example must contribute towards providing the Jews with schools, with preachers, with tracts, and with copies of the holy scriptures, especially those of the New Testament.—Paul's zeal was *persevering*. Many things, calculated to damp his ardour, occurred; but he was not easily discouraged. It becomes us to remember that *duty* only is ours; success belongs to another; and whatever difficulties may appear, we must cease from man, and put our trust in the Lord.—Paul's zeal was *pious*; not a natural, but a gracious principle. None else can cause us to feel as we ought for the outcasts of Israel, can direct us to the proper source of hope, can enable us to wait with patience, or prompt to the use of pro-

per means. It is not the mere feeling of natural compassion we wish to excite by the representations formerly submitted; it is a feeling of gracious compassion, flowing from the sense of your own wretchedness by nature; and, let me tell you, you can never feel aright for the Jews if you do not feel aright for yourselves. Such is the zeal we exhort you to exercise for the house of Israel; and while you profess to admire and approve that of the apostle, see that you imitate him in one of the noblest traits of his character.

In the *second* place, learn the *futility of every objection* that can be brought against endeavouring to promote the salvation of Israel. Man never wants an excuse for neglecting his duty, but on few subjects has his corrupt ingenuity been more fertile than on this. Some will tell you, *We have nothing to do with the Jews.* Who are they who make such an objection? *Professing* christians they may be; but their objection is essentially infidel, breathing not a spark of that heaven-born philanthropy which forms so distinguishing a feature of the religion of the cross. Those who support other religious institutions cannot consistently use this objection, as it requires no great sagacity to perceive that it applies with equal force to any benevolent undertaking whatsoever. What have we to do, it might with equal propriety be asked, with the Hottentots, the Hindoos, or the South Sea Islanders? 'Nay, it requires but an extension of the principle to place an embargo on every species of benevolence, however limited; for may it not with as good reason be asked, What have the inhabitants of one country to do with those of another, or the occupant of one house with the occupant of that in its immediate vicinity? Thus the tendency of this heartless objection is to dry up all the streams of beneficence, to extirpate philanthropy, and to substitute in its place a cold and withering selfishness.

Others will say, *The time is not come* that the Jews are to be converted. Besides the evidence to the contrary which we have already seen arising from the interest taken in this people by the religious world, and the presumption of pre-

tending to know the times and the seasons, it were sufficient, in reply to this objection, to say, that, admitting the time to *save* Israel is not yet come, it by no means follows that the time to *exert* ourselves with a view to promote this end is not come. The time to use the means must surely precede that in which the end is to be accomplished; and the objection in question is as utterly destitute of force as that of the husbandman who should decline sowing his seed in spring, because the harvest was not come. Besides, although the *national* restoration of Israel be yet remote, who will say that present exertions are not amply rewarded by the *individual* conversions that occasionally take place? But the objection, in its spirit, is the very same with that of certain murmurers in the days of Haggai, who said, 'The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built;' and it may be sufficient, in reply, to remind you how it was then answered: 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. Consider now from this day and upward, from this four-and-twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid: from THIS DAY will I bless you.'

Another objection is, *That the conversion of the Jews is a supernatural work, which must be left to the Lord, and with which it would be presumptuous to interfere.* We have already shown that means are to be used. It is questionable whether anything preternatural or miraculous is to be employed. But admitting it to be the case, it does not follow that human instrumentality is, on this account, superseded. Signs and wonders were used in the deliverance from Egypt, yet were not the services of Moses dispensed with. The dividing of the Red Sea was a preternatural work, yet the servant of the Lord required to stretch out his rod. Nor does it become us, after having shown no backwardness to be instrumental in fulfilling the divine judgments on this people, to shrink from all connection with the accomplishment of the designs of *mercy* toward them, and disingenuously to shelter our indifference

behind a pretended pious dread of interfering with the prerogative of Heaven.

Many excuse themselves by saying that *the Jews are under the curse of God, and otherwise so hardened, that there is no likelihood of success.* Must we remind you again that *duty* only is ours, that *success* belongs to another? Are not all men by nature under the curse as well as the Jews? Hardened indeed they are; but what reason have we to believe them more so now than in the days of the apostle, or than many Gentiles, to exertions for whose salvation we never think of objecting? And be they ever so much hardened, is there any thing impossible with God, whose blessing is allowed to be necessary to render the means efficacious?

After all, we may be told that *the Jews are so deceitful that no dependence can be put in them, even when they pretend to be converted.* Deceitful they certainly are; but unless those who bring forward this objection are prepared to assert that Jewish deceitfulness is of such a nature that it never can be overcome—that sincerity in a Jew is a thing impossible—or at least that it is impossible for any one of this nation to give sufficient evidence of his sincerity, the argument is good for nothing. Some indeed have apostatised, after making a profession of christianity; but this is nothing to the purpose, unless it can be proved that no one has ever persevered—that all who have died in the profession and apparent belief of the christian faith have died hypocrites, and gone down to the pit with a lie in their right hand. Moreover, might not the same objection be urged against the propagation of the gospel among any people? Where is the people professing christianity, among whom many are not to be found who have belied their profession by their practice? Simon Magus, and Ananias, and Sapphira, and Demas, all turned out to be hypocrites, but surely no one will contend that the apostles ought, on this account, to have suspended their labours. No. The objection will not stand. The subject rises triumphant above this and every other objection. Such excuses as these may give men, who care nothing for the object, a pretext for standing aloof; they may even go a certain length in quieting

an ignorant conscience ; but, be assured, they will never relieve you from the sacred obligation under which you lie to God, nor stand for a moment the awful scrutiny of the judgment to come.

In the *third* place, no one who has given ordinary attention to what has been advanced, will feel any difficulty in inferring *the duty of the christian world with respect to the people of Israel.* If things are as we have represented them to be, it will obviously appear the duty of all professing christians to investigate fully the divine mystery respecting this people : ‘ I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.’ Inquire, therefore, into their present state ; make yourselves acquainted with the prophecies which announce their restoration ; acquire what information you can respecting the movements that are going on amongst them. Indifference to these things is greatly criminal ; it is indifference to the glory of God, to the honour of the Saviour, to the purposes and prophecies and promises of Jehovah, to the salvation of souls, and to the extensive advantage of the Gentile world. Is there one who lays claim to the christian name, who is nevertheless indifferent to these things ? Say not, you are not *hostile* to them. It will be difficult, on christian principles, to escape from the charge of hostility by pleading indifference : ‘ He that is not *for* me is *against* me.’ Neutrality, however, is the very thing of which we complain ; and besides the denunciation pronounced on it in the words of our Saviour just quoted, it may be proper to remind you of its danger, as it is awfully set forth in the well-known passage in the song of Deborah : ‘ Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord ; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ; because they came NOT to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.’ Awaken, then, to a due interest in the people of Israel. Too long have they been neglected. Read, investigate, inquire into their present condition and future prospects. Seriously ponder the obligations you are under to regard them with a benevolent eye. Owe

you no debt of gratitude to this people? Were not the patriarchs, and the prophets, and the apostles, and the evangelists, Jews? Was not the Saviour of the world himself a Jew, in respect of his human descent? Yes; the volume of inspiration was penned by Jewish hands; the gospel was first preached by Jewish lips; nay, the atonement for sin may, in a sense, be said to have been made by Jewish blood! Consider, moreover, the hardships, the cruelties, and oppressions to which they have been subjected by christians, and for which it surely becomes us to make what compensation we can, by using every effort to promote their spiritual good. View the blessings derived from the Jews in connection with the wrongs with which they have hitherto been repaid; and the united claims of justice and gratitude will be allowed to form an obligation of the most overwhelming weight. Mournful evidence will it afford of your having benefited by either the oracles of God or the sacrifice of Christ, if you refuse to acknowledge these obligations and wrap yourselves up in the panoply of indifference to the claims of Israel.

The estimation in which I am disposed to hold the cause of Israel, may be guessed from what I have already said. There is none, in short, which I feel inclined to rate higher; and, if I am not greatly mistaken, it has the foremost claim of all on the liberal encouragement of the christian public. Not that I would wish to see diminished the efforts that are making in other departments of religious benevolence, or that I would wish to divert from them one penny of the support to which they are so well entitled. There is no department, perhaps, whose encouragement can be said to equal, much less to exceed its claims. There are many, whose support must be allowed to fall far below what may be considered a just proportion. The Jewish cause appears to me to be of the latter description. But an interest seems now to be awakening, in this cause, somewhat more proportioned to its great and growing importance.

In the *last* place, this subject is calculated to have a salutary influence on *the concerns of our own souls*. It sets before us the depravity of the human heart; the love, mercy, and

long-suffering of God ; the need in which we all stand of grace ; and the duty of using means to promote our own immortal interests. In the state of the Jews, behold, sinners ! a picture of your own natural condition. *They* are unbelievers ; so are *you*. They are far from God ; so are you. They are in a disgraceful and oppressed state ; you are glorying in your shame, in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity. They are impious and immoral ; you are enemies to God in your heart by wicked works, and far from righteousness. You profess, perhaps, to pity the Jews ; do not omit to pity yourselves.

In the purposes and promises of God respecting Israel, behold a specimen of the divine mercy toward our fallen race. There is salvation for others as well as the Jews. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from *all* sin. Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of *the world*. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek—neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision. To you, Gentiles, therefore, we preach a perfect Saviour—a finished salvation. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved.

Nor is the manner of Israel's salvation different from that of the salvation of other sinners. There is no salvation for any but by the agency of the Spirit, and the instrumentality of human means. While, therefore, you contribute to send bibles to the Jews, see that your own are not suffered to remain unperused. While you pray for the children of Abraham, do not neglect to pray for yourselves. And as you believe in the necessity of the Spirit to impart life to the dry bones of the house of Israel, Oh ! remember that nought else can revive your own souls. Pray for the Spirit of all grace to breathe on you that you may live ; otherwise your final ruin will be greatly more deplorable than even that of the unbelieving outcasts we have been recommending to your attention. 'Is he the God of the Jews only ? is he not also of the Gentiles ? Yes, of the Gentiles also. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek ; for the same Lord over all is rich unto *all* that call upon him : for *whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. If ye be

Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Precious and encouraging sayings! May we all be made personally acquainted with their gracious import; and be thus prepared to join in the devout exclamation with which the apostle concludes his account of the rejection of the Jews, and the admission of the Gentiles:—'O THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES BOTH OF THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS, AND HIS WAYS PAST FINDING OUT! FOR OF HIM, AND THROUGH HIM, AND TO HIM, ARE ALL THINGS; TO WHOM BE GLORY FOR EVER. AMEN!'

SERMON III.

THE CHARACTER AND CLAIMS OF THE SCOTTISH MARTYRS.

Preached in St Michael's Church-yard, Dumfries, June 16, 1831; on occasion of a Collection for a Monument to some who suffered in the cause of Reformation.

REV. xii. 11.

'They loved not their lives unto the death.'

WE are met, my hearers, in circumstances of very peculiar interest. The object of our meeting may be presumed to be well known to you all. It is to manifest our attachment to the Scottish Reformation, by contributing to preserve the memory of some who fell in that cause; to have our minds instructed, or at least our memories refreshed, with the history and principles of that magnanimous struggle for religion and liberty in which they acted so noble and conspicuous a part; and to have our hearts awakened to some proper concern in what stands so closely connected with our dearest interests and hopes.

The very spot where we meet has its interest.* 'The place of our fathers' sepulchres' never fails to call up the most tender emotions. Death, when it breaks up living connexions, cannot sever those ties of memory which continue to twine around the heart, rendering the dead dearer to us in some

* St Michael's church-yard is one of the most remarkable cemeteries in Britain; containing monuments to the value of seventy or eighty thousand pounds sterling.

respects than the living, hallowing their ashes, and converting their graves into an inviolable sanctuary. Hence the irresistible desire felt to visit the melancholy spot where repose the mortal remains of former generations, and the disposition to distinguish the resting-place of departed friends, by some 'frail memorial,'—from the touching but expressive rite which obtained in past ages of strewing the grave with flowers, to the gorgeous mausoleums of sculptured marble which are the fashion of modern times. With such monuments we are here surrounded, of every varied form, according to the rank and character of the persons commemorated :—humble virtue, noble station, splendid achievement, profound learning, and towering genius. And we should regard the man as nothing less than a disgrace to humanity, who could walk among these tombs with stoical indifference, or who would not prefer the cloud of sadness the scene is fitted to bring over the mind, to the brightest gaiety which the song of pleasure or the burst of revelry can inspire. But amid all these monuments, vieing with each other in the power of attracting a melancholy attention, there is one particular spot, outwardly unattractive as any, to which the heart of the Scottish patriot points to-day with a feeling of overpowering intensity; and, in the estimation of every true friend of religion and liberty, even the costly mausoleum of the Bard must yield to the simple, rudely-lettered grave-stone of the Martyr.*

Grave, and even solemn, are the reflections which such a meeting and such a scene are fitted to produce. And should there be any present who have come hither in a spirit of levity, or with a view to censure or to scoff, may the object and circumstances of our assembly rebuke them away, or rather, awe them into a frame of mind more befitting their situation, as well as more honourable and profitable to themselves. The very subjects of which we must treat ought to induce the heart to seriousness, while the feelings awakened by the contiguity of a martyr's grave are calculated to deepen the hallowed impression.

* A monument to Burns stood a little to the right of the speaker; and the Martyrs' graves were within sight.

No language can be more descriptive of the men of whom we are now to speak, than that of the text: 'They loved not their lives unto the death.' Whether the words refer originally to those who fell victims to the bloody persecutions of Rome Pagan, or to those of Rome Antichristian—which has been keenly contested by interpreters—it is of no manner of consequence for us to determine, it being our design to confine our attention to those of our countrymen, who, in the struggle for reformation which took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, certainly gained for themselves the character of men who 'loved not their lives unto the death.'

These men we are accustomed to distinguish by the honourable and significant appellation of MARTYRS. The term signifies literally *witnesses*; more particularly witnesses to the truth of the gospel; and, in a more restricted sense still, persons who have sealed their testimony to the truth of the gospel with their blood. In the former sense, it occurs very commonly throughout the scriptures; in the latter we meet with it in only three passages of the New Testament:—Acts xxii. 20, 'When the blood of thy *martyr* Stephen was shed, I also was standing by.' Rev. ii. 13, 'In those days wherein Antipas was my faithful *martyr*.' Rev. xvii. 6, 'And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the *martyrs* of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.' The Jews were witnesses for Jehovah, the true God, against heathen idols. The primitive christians were witnesses for Christ, against both Jews and pagans. But there was a small band of faithful witnesses for the truth as it is in Jesus, many of whom 'loved not their lives unto the death,' to whom the word has been more particularly appropriated in modern times. Men may die for unscriptural principles in religion, and the popular usage of language may style such men *martyrs*; but the designation properly belongs only to such as were slain for the word of God, and the testimony which they held agreeably to that word. 'It is not the *blood*, but the *cause* that makes the martyr.'

That the appellation is to be regarded as an honourable

one, will appear when you consider, that in the only three instances in which it occurs in the New Testament, the persons to whom it is applied are represented as standing in a particular relation to Christ. Look back at the verses before cited. In the first, Paul is relating the words in which he addressed the Redeemer at the time of his conversion, and he says, 'When the blood of *thy* martyr Stephen was shed.' In the next, Christ is himself the speaker,—'Antipas was *my* faithful martyr.' Nor are John's words less explicit,—'The blood of the martyrs of *Jesus*.' This is surely not without significance. It at least imports that the cause in which they suffered was Christ's,—that their qualifications and support proceeded from him,—that the character is one to which he is peculiarly attached, of which he highly approves, and which he greatly delights to honour. The persecutors might claim them as their victims, and speak of them consequently as *theirs*; but ah! there is another who claims an interest in them; they are 'the martyrs of *JESUS*;' and the relation in which they are thus shown to stand to the exalted Redeemer, gives them a moral elevation, throws around them a halo of real glory, which completely neutralises the disgrace their enemies designed to cast upon them.

The text is descriptive not merely of those who actually suffered death, but of many whom the Head of the church preserved alive amid the snares that were laid for them, who, nevertheless, possessing as much of the spirit of martyrs as those who fell, are entitled to be spoken of as *loving* not their lives unto the death. 'Every hour they stood prepared to die;' and many times the crown of martyrdom would have been preferred to the life of wretchedness and peril they were doomed to lead. The spirit of the Reformers in general was that of martyrs; and it burned both purely and intensely in the bosoms of many whose blood never hallowed either the scaffold or the heath.

In what follows, we shall submit a few considerations, which seem deserving of notice, relative to those in Scotland who 'loved not their lives unto the death;' and then point out the treatment to which these considerations seem to en-

title them from us. In other words, we shall call your attention to the *character* and *claims* of the Scottish Reformers and Martyrs.

I. The considerations worthy of notice, relative to the Reformers and Martyrs of Scotland, may be included in the following arrangement: What they were—what they did—what they suffered—the spirit which they manifested—and the cause they had at heart.

Consider what they *were*. They were not, as their enemies have represented them, visionary fanatics; but men of varied information, sound understanding, and correct scriptural knowledge. They were opposed both in principle and in practice to the base maxim of a corrupt hierarchy which teaches that ignorance is the mother of devotion. They were well instructed in the doctrines of the gospel; knew perfectly the connection of their cause with the glory of God and the best interests of men; and were, some of them at least, persons of polite literature and elegant accomplishments. They had zeal, but it was a zeal according to knowledge.

They were not men of doubtful faith. They firmly believed in the principles they professed. They would not have suffered and died for what was not an object of belief. Faith was the very basis of their character. Every other constituent quality was connected with this. They believed and therefore testified; they believed and therefore died. It was given them in behalf of Christ, 'to believe on him,' as well as 'to suffer for his sake.'

They were not canting hypocrites, who professed what they did not feel, and made a show of outward devotion which had no counterpart within. They were men of sterling piety. Their devotion was a hallowed fire the flames of which were penitence, faith, gratitude, and love. This led them to value and improve those ordinances by which the fire was fed and kept alive. They were accustomed to wrestle with God in secret; they retired to their closets for closer fellowship with heaven, and poured forth their souls in strains of heartfelt, unaffected devotion. Family worship

they regularly practised. And such was their attachment to the public means of grace, that at the risk of their lives and immense sacrifices they waited on the preaching of the word and the dispensation of the sacraments. At the dead of night, or when the storm raved loud, would they steal away into some sylvan retreat where they might enjoy undisturbed the gospel of salvation. Nothing could repress their ardour in this respect. They gathered in crowds to hear their favourite preachers; and, when the Supper was dispensed, great multitudes attended. One case of this kind which happened in Teviotdale and at which Blackader and Welsh and Riddel assisted, is spoken of as remarkable. Another at Maybole in Ayrshire, is particularly noted. And in your own immediate neighbourhood, the stones are still to be seen ranged on the bleak hill-side, where the persecuted wanderers were wont to snatch an occasional opportunity of partaking of the 'bread of life' and of the 'cup of salvation.' On some of these occasions several thousands partook of the consecrated symbols, at the risk of having their own blood mingled with the wine which represented that of the Saviour. Indeed so decided was their piety, that the marks given to the bloodhounds of persecution by which to discover them, were their having a bible in their hands, their being found at prayer, or going to a conventicle. Nor, was there anything more common than for them to be surprised, when they were apprehended, at some exercise of religion, either secret or public.

They were holy as well as devout. Their conduct was no way equivocal. Their morals were unimpeachable. They were

'A virtuous race to godliness devote.'

The duties of religion were as faithfully discharged as its ordinances were regularly waited upon. They studied to keep aloof from the corruptions of the times, to maintain a blameless conversation, and to lead irreproachable lives. Their principles some may be inclined to dispute; their prudence some may call in question; their public deeds some may even condemn; but their private deportment none dare

accuse; *it* was unsullied by the breath of slander. The charge of *preciseness* in morals which was often brought against them by their enemies, is the best attestation on this point that could have been desired; and, having stood the scrutiny of their lynx-eyed persecutors, they may be supposed to have been about as free from blame as the necessary imperfection of our present state of being will admit. The fiery ordeal to which they were subjected would seem to have served only to carry off the baser principles, and to heighten the lustre of the more noble elements of their being.

Such was the personal worth of those men 'who loved not their lives unto the death.' They were 'Worthies' indeed—men 'of whom the world was not worthy;' whose personal excellence was such as to entitle them to the highest respect and closest imitation of posterity.

Consider what they *did*. They did much that ought not to be forgotten by their descendants. To enumerate all is impossible; to select from their doings the more prominent and important, would be a difficult task; even to exhibit the grand result, which is all we dare attempt, is no easy matter.

They emancipated their country from the galling yoke of popish and episcopal domination. Long and hard did the friends of these systems struggle to impose them on our countrymen. But they nobly resisted, till popery was abjured by the whole nation, the representatives of the three kingdoms were pledged to reformation by solemn confederacy, and papists were excluded from places of power and trust both supreme and subordinate. They delivered the church from a tyrannical and debasing superstition; from a wicked hierarchy which sought to enslave the minds and consciences of men; from heretical tenets, destructive of the soul; from burdensome imposts which could not easily be borne; and from unauthorised rites and ceremonies whose only tendency was to keep back the influence of pure and undefiled religion. They rescued the holy scriptures from the iron grasp of a profligate and designing priesthood, who wished to keep the people in ignorance of what was sure to expose their own corruptions and to lead to an overthrow of their power—

even that word of God, which is as a lamp to the feet and a light to the path, and fit to make the simple wise unto salvation. They secured for themselves and others freedom to think, to speak, and to act, without being shackled with the fetters of mental and corporeal slavery.

In short, they maintained a noble and successful struggle for religion and liberty with the avowed enemies of both. with a prudence and hardihood and valour which can never be too much admired. In doing this they were exposed to wiles, threats, snares, and open violence; their situation resembled 'the lions' dens, and the mountains of leopards;' their enemies assumed the properties of beasts of prey, and hunted them down with merciless rapacity. Yet did they not shrink from the struggle on account of the danger which attended it; even when they saved their lives by retreat, it was not from cowardly timidity, but from a dutiful respect to their cause. and to the authority of Him who had said, 'When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another.' When called to it, they waxed valiant in fight. Like Joshua and Barak and Gideon and David of old, they buckled on their armour, slept in the tented field, and met the assaults of their foes with manful resistance. What though they were sometimes overpowered by superior numbers and greater skill in arms, they showed even then the true spirit of heroes. Many of them fell, but such as survived were not backward to resume the combat, and the issue was at times such as to reflect the highest credit on their valour. Airmoss and Drumelg will long continue to call up recollections of their fearless magnanimity.

Some have manifested a disposition to condemn this part of our forefathers' conduct, adducing in support of their opinion the words of Christ, 'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' But before quoting the scriptures people ought to be sure that they understand them; and a very slight inspection of the circumstances in which these words were uttered *as a dissuasive from personal revenge* would have shown their unfitness for the purpose for which they have been brought forward. Who does not see that, taken literally

and absolutely, they go to condemn an appeal to arms in defence not merely of religion but of our civil liberties and possessions—a principle which, as tending directly to throw open our country to the power of every ambitious invader, will never, we trust, become a favourite sentiment with Britons. Nor is it by any means a general truth in defensive warfare on account of religion, that those who have been obliged to resort to the sword have perished by it in the end; for while the protestants of Germany, Switzerland, and Scotland, who resisted unto blood, were not exterminated, those of Italy and Spain, who did not resist, met with that fate. And as to our reforming ancestors, it ought to be remembered that when they had recourse to arms in defence of all that was dear to them, it was always reluctantly; never indeed till they were driven to it. So far from seeing anything here to blame, we are much of the opinion that the man who would refuse, in similar circumstances, to fight for his religion or liberty, deserves to enjoy the benefits of neither. However an ungrateful posterity may frown upon those men who loved not their lives unto the death, and talk of them as having ‘suffered upon their own principles,’ one thing we know, that God smiled upon them in his providence by granting them success; and that had they acted on the slavish principles of their modern revilers, the Scottish Reformation, like that of Italy and Spain, should have been finally overthrown. The Almighty himself ‘taught their hands to war, and girded them with strength, so that bows of steel were broken by their arms.’ At Entrekinn and Drumclog they, by the blessing of heaven, were enabled to put to ‘flight the armies of the aliens’—aliens to everything good and great and holy, strangers to the covenants of promise, and sworn enemies to the cause of Christ among men. It was a pointed, though unintentional tribute to the principles of the Reformers in this particular, which was paid by him who presented Cameron’s head and hands to the king’s council at Elinburgh: ‘These,’ said he, ‘are the head and hands of one who lived praying and preaching, and died praying and fighting.’ And the nation at large added their sanction at

the memorable Revolution, when all rose as one man and drove the bloody persecuting family of Stuart from the throne and the kingdom.

What they *suffered*, ought also to be considered. And here I must confess myself at a loss how to proceed. Their sufferings were so many as to defy enumeration, and so varied as to render classification difficult. Yet without some attempt to classify them, it would be next to impossible to go forward.

They suffered reproachful mockery. 'They had trial of cruel mockings'—an instrument of persecution of very ancient and common use, yet severe and ill to be endured by persons of generous minds. It was employed by Ishmael against Isaac, by the children of Bethel against Elisha, and even by the children of Israel against the messengers of God. The Saviour himself and the primitive christians were not exempted from it. The men of whom we speak, too, had their full share of this trial. Their religion, their language, their exercises, their conduct, their spirit, and even their God, were made the objects of ribald scorn and contempt. The ignorant soldiers were accustomed to amuse themselves with the devotions of the poor people who fell on their knees to pray before being shot. It will be remembered by many of you, how Claverhouse, on the morning of the affair at Drumclog, jeered the prisoners he had taken the preceding day, and whom he was driving before him like beasts tied two and two together, telling them they were going to hear the sermon. And the impious and barbarous sarcasm of Lauderdale, when consenting to the execution of Mitchel for a supposed attack on the life of the infamous Sharp, ought not here to be omitted—*Then let him glorify God*, said he, *in the Grassmarket!*

They were subjected to the most ignoble bondage. The Philistines' treatment of Samson, or that of Jeremiah by the king of Babylon, was nothing to theirs. They were bound with cords, heavily manacled, and thrown into dungeons. The common jails were crowded: places of close confinement, as the rocks of the sea, were filled: and the walls of many a prison, like that of Philippi, echoed to the midnight voice of prayer and of praise.

But, as if this were not enough, they were either sent into cruel exile, or compelled to banish themselves. Letters of intercommuning were issued by which the nearest relations, husband and wife, parent and child, brother and brother, were prohibited from assisting each other or conversing either by word or writing. They were thus necessitated to flee, and as if it was not sufficient to have to leave the land of their birth and all the sweet endearments of kindred and of home, numbers of respectable members of society and even ministers were shipped off to the West Indies and sold for slaves to work in the plantations.

To these add the wanton barbarities to which they were exposed. Those practised by the highland host are almost incredible. The faithful Covenanters had their ears cropped, and their faces branded with hot irons; their bibles were pulled from their hands, and they were struck with canes on the scaffold; they were forced, for no end but to gratify a spirit of infernal wickedness, to swear oaths at which their souls revolted; and children under ten years of age were collected and soldiers ordered to fire over their heads in order to extort information from them regarding their parents,—an expedient of Claverhouse which in callousness of heart equals we believe whatever has been thought of by the familiars of the inquisition.

Great were their privations. They were deprived not only of religion, liberty, and law, but of the common necessaries of life. Their estates were confiscated; heavy fines were exacted; the most extensive plunder was commonly practised; prisoners were stripped naked, and thrown upon the cold ground; sometimes for asking a morsel of food or a cup of water, they were shot; while their friends were strictly interdicted, under the severest penalties, from carrying them supplies. As a specimen, we may remind you how twelve hundred of the Bothwell prisoners were confined five months in Greyfriars' churchyard without shelter and with only such supply of provisions as was barely fit to sustain their wretched existence.

How shall we speak of their tortures? They were tor-

mented in every possible form. But the horrors of the thumbkin, the boot, the wheel, the rack, and the faggot are not for recital here.

As they 'loved not their lives unto the *death*,' many of them had their principles put to this severest of trials. And, not content with depriving them of their lives, their enemies put them to death in the most barbarous forms. By shooting, hanging, quartering, beheading, burning, were these cold-blooded murders perpetrated. The common soldiers were empowered to shoot any whom they might suspect of attachment to the cause of the covenant. In some places permanent gallows were erected. The affecting case of John Brown of Priesthill may be referred to as an example of a private execution; and that of Hackston of Rathillet as an instance of a public one. This gentleman who was taken prisoner at Airmoss, was after the mock form of a trial executed at Edinburgh. His hands were first cut off by the executioner; his body was then drawn up to the top of the gallows by a pulley; after being let down his palpitating heart was torn from his bosom, exhibited on the point of a knife as the heart of a traitor, and then thrown into a fire prepared for the purpose; whilst his head, along with that of Cameron, was exposed on the gates of the city!

Such is but a faint recital of the wrongs done to those who loved not their lives unto the death in our land—men who were denied the common charities of life, and driven from society to skulk in mosses and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth; who were oft compelled to make the heath their bed, the rock their pillow, and to take for their curtain the canopy of heaven; who were pursued as beasts of prey, and doomed to worse than the death of traitors: but men who shall live in the memory of the good when the names of their persecutors are forgotten, or are remembered only to receive the execration they deserve.

The *spirit* in which all these things were done and suffered must not be overlooked.

It was a spirit of faith. Trust in God, in Christ, in the promises of scripture, can alone account for their activity and patience.

With this there was combined a patriotic attachment to the good of their country. In them piety and patriotism were kindred feelings, as they indeed are in the breasts of all genuine and enlightened christians. Theirs was not the infidel patriotism of modern times. No man can properly love his God without loving his country, or love his country without loving his God. These feelings are more closely connected than many seem to be aware. Nehemiah, sitting down and weeping, and with saddened countenance praying and fasting before the God of heaven because the place of his fathers' sepulchres lieth waste, the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and the gates thereof burnt with fire, supplies us with a fine instance of this combination in ancient times. The men of whom we are treating, furnish a no less striking example in modern times. *God and our country!* was the motto inscribed on their blood-stained banners. *God and our country!* was the watch-word which echoed through the battle-field. *God and our country!* was the governing sentiment of their patriot hearts. They have been represented as traitors;—their persecutors were the traitors. At the time they lived there existed not a spark of true liberty in our land but what burned in the bosoms of these traduced and persecuted wanderers. By their patriotic exertions and sufferings and writings and prayers, they laid their country under obligations which the most lavish tributes to their memory can never repay.

Their spirit was marked by an enlightened and unextinguishable zeal. They knew it to be good to be zealously affected in a good thing. Their zeal was active, steadfast, devoted. The degree in which it existed has led many to charge them with fanaticism; but there were about them a coolness of purpose, a correctness of aim, a suitableness of selected means, and an intrinsic excellence of cause, which in the estimation of every one able to judge will be deemed sufficient to wipe away the foul imputation.

Their valour was truly irrepressible. Strong were they and of a good courage. They behaved valiantly for their people, and for the cities of their God. That in the proper sense of the word, they were no strangers to fortitude, ample

proof was given, in the declarations issued at Sanquhar and at Lanark, in the manifesto known by the name of *The Apologetical Declaration*, and in the heroic act of excommunication at Torwood by which the highest censures of the church were passed on their royal persecutors. The manner in which they met their death may further be adduced in proof of their bravery. 'The Lord knows,' said Cargill, 'I go up this ladder with less fear and perturbation of mind than ever I entered a pulpit to preach.' 'Well,' said Renwick, 'I shall soon be above these clouds! then shall I enjoy thee, O God, and glorify thee, without interruption or intermission for ever.' Nor was this the case merely with such men as Cameron and Cargill and Renwick;—even peasants and women manifested the same noble spirit. Andrew Hislop, who refused to cover his eyes before being shot, is an instance from the former class; and as instances from the latter, you need only be reminded of Marion Harvey and Isobel Allison who on the scaffold sung the twenty-third psalm, in so full a tone as to drown the voice of the wretched curate who in derision of their scruples would compel them to hear him pray.

Incorruptible fidelity marked the spirit of those 'who loved not their lives unto the death.' Neither smiles nor frowns could shake their constancy or cause them recant. No means were left untried for this purpose; but they stood firm as the rock amid the raging billows of the ocean. Rather than do violence to their honest convictions they chose to suffer and to die; rather than forego the blessing of social worship they sought the retirement of the mountain and the cave—the warmth of their devotion being unchilled by the damps of night, and the melody of their praise mingling with the sound of the tempest. Nothing could induce them to save the body by a sacrifice of the conscience. Neither the horrors of imprisonment, nor the terrors of the branding iron, nor the hootings of the mob, nor the ribald scorn of perjured sycophants and lordly ecclesiastics, could shake the purpose they had formed of working out the cause of their country's reformation. They partook largely of that 'intrepid spirit,'

Which even in *woman's* breast withstood
The terrors of the fire and flood.'

They could, in the face of menaces and of tortures, appropriate the words of the apostle: 'None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy.' In some instances they resisted attempts to force a confession by means of the boot, till their physical nature was overpowered and they fainted away. The case of the women who were drowned at Wigtown is well known. One of them, after the water had flowed over her, was pulled out and offered life if she would comply with some ensnaring requirements, when, preferring to die rather than violate her conscience, she was plunged again into the stream.

Add to all these, a spirit of believing hope, which bore them up amid all their afflictions. Like the ancient sufferers of whom Paul speaks, they expected a 'better resurrection,'—a resurrection to eternal life and glory. Suffering *not* as evil-doers, they had nothing to fear with regard to a future world. Into their cup everything bitter was mingled which man could infuse; but there was nothing penal in it. Their worst enemies were unable to bring on them the wrath of God, or even to shut out from their souls divine consolations in the present state. Faith and hope enabled them to take such a view of the 'exceeding and eternal weight of glory' that awaited them, as to cause their present affliction feel 'light, and but for a moment.' Nothing—neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword—was able, they knew, to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. If in this life only they had had hope in Christ, they should have been of all men the most miserable. But their hope extended to the life to come. The cloud of suffering was tinged with the light of heaven,—the scaffold was the stepping-stone to glory,—and the pile by which their bodies were consumed they regarded as a chariot of fire to waft their souls to the sinless and sorrowless mansions of the blessed. 'This is the day we shall get the crown,' were the words of Cameron a

short time before he fell: so that the youthful poet has correctly pictured it:—

‘When the righteous had fallen, and the combat had ended,
A chariot of fire through the dark cloud descended;
And the souls that came forth out of great tribulation,
They mounted the chariots and steeds of salvation.
Glide swiftly, bright spirits, the prize is before ye.
A crown never-fading, a kingdom of glory!’

To these considerations, the *cause* in which all this spirit was shown, these sufferings borne, and these deeds performed, must be added.

The cause on account of which our fathers ‘loved not their lives unto the death’ was the cause of God, the cause of Christ, the cause of truth, the cause of religion and liberty;—a cause worthy of their best exertions, and sufficient to warrant their dearest sacrifices. But the nature of this cause will be best understood from a specification of some of those leading principles for which they contended and died. We say not that those we are to state were reduced to a written, systematic form, or expressed and arranged exactly as we have done them. But we do say, that they are principles which entered essentially into their testimony for truth, principles which they received as binding, considered as axiomatic, and constantly acted upon. These we can do little more than state, having left ourselves no time to descant on them, either in the way of explanation or defence.

Salvation by the free sovereign grace of God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, was the first of these principles. This is what was held by Luther and the first friends of the Reformation, as the article of a standing or falling church. It may be regarded as having produced the original revolt from the Church of Rome. It was afterwards incorporated with all the sentiments and discourses of the Reformers; and when once it comes to be forgotten, or denied, or perverted, or concealed, whatever external observances may remain, the spirit of the Reformation has fled, and you may write upon it ‘*ICHAOD*, the glory is departed.’

Another of these principles was *the sole authority of the Holy*

Scriptures in matters of religion, and the right of all men to peruse them. Traditions and the priesthood were discarded as grounds of faith, and the bible alone elevated to this rank. Wearing the seal of divine attestation, it was reckoned worthy of implicit and universal reverence. It was deemed a maxim of self-evident truth, that that which all are to believe, according to which all are to act, and by which all are to be judged, ought to be in the full and undisputed possession of all. Ignorant and worthless priests might have reasons of their own for shutting out the light of revelation, skulking like moles and bats into hiding-places, and preferring the darkness or the twilight; but the Reformers had no such instinctive abhorrence of light, resembling rather 'the bird of heaven, which meets the full unclouded blaze with an eye that never winks and a wing that never tires.'

The right of men to form their religious opinions from the word of God, flowed as a native result from the foregoing; such a right being clearly implied in the supreme authority of revelation, in the impossibility of controlling the human mind by anything but scriptural evidence or rational argumentation, and in the accountable nature of man.

In opposition to the tyrannical claims and blasphemous assumptions of popes and kings, they held *the sole headship of Christ over the church, and its consequent independence of all political control.* The prerogatives of Zion's King they viewed as peculiar and inalienable; no mortal, without the most daring impiety, could venture to invade them. Christ was given to be Head over all things to the church, and it was not for man to rob him of his glory or share with him his honours. The church they regarded as a free independent society, having no head but one; and therefore all who presumed in this capacity to regulate her order, interfere with her management, prescribe her forms of worship, or lay restrictions on her office-bearers, were looked upon as wicked intruders, ungodly and tyrannical usurpers. **HEAD OF THE CHURCH,** whether inscribed on the papal crown or the regal diadem, they held to be one of 'the names of blasphemy.'

In connection with this they maintained another principle :

The Headship of Christ over the nations, and the consequent duty of conducting civil affairs on religious principles, and subordinating them to the interests of the church. The restriction of the mediatorial power to the church is comparatively a modern doctrine, the natural growth of a desire to harmonise religious sentiments with political interest. Our Reformers knew nothing of it. They had not learned those ingenious criticisms by which some of their descendants have been able to explain such passages as the following in conformity with a restricted dominion:—‘Thou hast put ALL THINGS in subjection under his feet. For in that he put ALL in subjection under him, HE LEFT NOTHING THAT IS NOT PUT UNDER HIM.’ Esteeming Christ as ‘Prince of the kings of the earth,’ and ‘Governor among the nations,’ they showed no wish to blot out, or even to tarnish the lustre of his glorious title, ‘KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.’ Nor had they any knowledge of the boasted discovery of modern times, that things civil and religious should be kept entirely separate,—that they have nothing to do with each other,—and that church and state ought to be completely and for ever divorced. They considered that things might be *connected* without being *confounded*. They knew that civil and religious matters were united by many a powerful tie; they viewed them as inseparable in point of fact; and finding them recognised in the same scriptures—tending to promote the glory of the same Lord—obligatory on the same persons—and a connection between them predicted as characteristic of the millennial state of the world when ‘kings shall be nursing fathers and queens nursing mothers’ to the church, when ‘the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ,’ and when the most common affairs of life and articles of use shall be ‘holiness to the Lord;’—finding these things to be so, they scrupled not to recognise the connection both in their deeds and public standards. It is only when the church is degraded to a mere instrument of state policy that the union in question is objectionable; not when the civil affairs of the world are so ordered as to advance the interests of Christ’s kingdom.

The Reformers also held *the right of resisting such civil rulers as usurp the prerogatives of Christ, oppress the church, tyrannise over the people, and lend the weight of their authority and example to the subversion of equity.* A principle consonant alike to reason and scripture, which none but the most slavish and interested parasites of the 'powers that be' will venture to deny, and which afterwards received the high sanction of the whole nation when the house of Stuart was expelled and the Prince of Orange called to the throne.

Alongst with these, they held, in fine, *the importance and obligation of public covenanting as a means of professing, advancing, and maintaining the cause of reformation; and of comforting and fortifying the church in troublous times.* This principle our Reformers viewed as involved in the relation subsisting between God and his people, as countenanced by the spirit of other religious institutions and duties, recognised in prophecies regarding New Testament times, and expressly required by holy writ. Hence those famous vows entered into from time to time by the nation and the church, more especially the National Covenant of Scotland and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms, now fallen into such unmerited neglect.

These are some of the leading principles of the Scottish Reformers, from which an idea may easily be formed of the nature of that *cause* for which they loved not their lives unto the death; and, without being called upon implicitly to approve of all they said or wrote or did, an approval of the general maxims which they held, as based on sound scriptural views of the relations and duties of man, must be implied in a professed respect for their memory.

The above enumeration may serve to rescue them from the charge of having busied themselves about trifles, and squandered their lives on matters of small moment. Some of the points, indeed, for which they contended may seem of little importance to many in the present day, and far from justifying the sacrifices they made to secure them. But they durst not dispense with any part of divine truth; their consciences would not allow them, for the sake of purchasing exemption

from pain, or even of saving their lives, to acknowledge as true what they knew to be false; nor did they deem it safe to make compliances in one department which might have the effect of inducing their persecutors to demand them in another in which they could not be so safely granted. If they believed the *presbyterian form of church government* to be agreeable to the word of God, how could they abjure it, as they were required to do, and tamely submit to a lordly prelacy? If they esteemed *kneeling at the sacrament* to have its origin in the idolatrous reverence claimed for the *host* by the Church of Rome, and calculated to give countenance to that impious claim, how could they but lift up their voice against it? If the *form* in which they were required to *pray for the king*—for they never refused to pray for the blessing of God on his person, or for salvation to his soul—was such as to imply an acknowledgment of his blasphemous and tyrannical encroachments on the prerogatives of Christ and the liberties of the church, were they not fully justified in refusing to comply? Yet these are things which the men of an easy generation are apt to reckon of no moment. Our ancestors thought otherwise; and they well knew what they were about. The line of conduct they chose to pursue had been duly weighed. While the attempts that were made to ensnare their consciences in such matters show the unfeeling and wanton tyranny of the times, their resistance evinces a strength of principle and correctness of thinking worthy of the highest esteem.

II. These remarks naturally lead us to point out the treatment to which the considerations we have submitted seem to entitle those who ‘loved not their lives unto the death.’ The claims of the Scottish Reformers on posterity may be summed up in respect, commemoration, and imitation.

If we have correctly delineated their character and sufferings, they have established an undoubted title to the highest *respect* of posterity. They deserve even to be venerated. Veneration is a feeling compounded of awe and of love, a state of mind awakened by objects that are at once dignified

and endearing. The highest emotions of this kind are due to Him who is at once infinitely *great* and infinitely *good*. But inferior states of it may warrantably be entertained toward those who, in these qualities, bear a resemblance to God. And if ever there were human beings who had a right to be so regarded, it was certainly so with those whom we have at present in our eye—men who to all that was *excellent* in private personal character added so much that was *great* in the public cause with which they were inseparably associated. Do you ask, then, for what they are to be venerated? We refer you, in reply, to the considerations that have been already laid before you. It is impossible for a person of a well-constituted mind to reflect on what they were—what they did—what they suffered—the noble spirit they displayed—and the glorious cause to which their lives were devoted, without entertaining the highest respect for their memory. Their private virtues and public deeds and generous sacrifices, alike support their claims to respectful attention. Lost to all right principle must they be who can suffer themselves to utter an irreverent word, or to cherish an irreverent feeling, towards men possessing such indisputable claims to esteem.

Far are we from wishing to have it thought that we regard them as perfect characters. To the ordinary failings of humanity they added perhaps others inseparable from the times in which their lot was cast. But, unless peremptorily called for by some particular purpose, we would scorn the indelicacy which scruples not to unveil the faults of departed worth; while we would reckon ourselves bound, by all the obligations of filial piety, to throw the mantle of charity over the minor infirmities of men who were honoured by God to break the spell of superstition and to crush the rod of tyranny in our land. We are not ambitious to rob the grave of its prerogative of consigning to oblivion the weaknesses of the great and the good: and we dissent entirely from the spirit of those who, in the present age, seem to have been smitten with a disgusting propensity to 'rake up the ashes of their fathers.'

But respect is not all to which they are entitled. It will itself lead to something more. Grateful *commemoration* must

naturally follow wherever respect is sincere and of the proper degree of intensity. Something will be done to keep the objects of our respect in lively remembrance.

To commemorate departed worth is a thing right and warrantable in itself. The disposition to it is a part of our nature, and is everywhere to be met with. It is no less scriptural than natural to indulge this disposition. ‘The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.’ ‘The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.’ To ‘cut off their memory from the earth’ is one of the judgments with which the wicked are threatened; and the displeasure of God against the workers of iniquity is expressed by his making ‘all their memory to perish.’ Jacob testified his respect for his beloved partner after her decease, by rearing a monument to her memory: ‘And Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave, that is the pillar of Rachel’s grave unto this day.’ And what is the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews but a noble commemorative tribute to the transcendent excellence of men of whom the world was not worthy? Besides, the practice of commemorating departed worth is fitted to exert the happiest influence on posterity. Though *due* to the dead, it is *beneficial* only to the living. Those who are gone are placed without the reach of either praise or blame. It matters not to them whether their ashes repose undistinguished beneath the clod of the valley, or are surmounted by the sculptured column. Their sleep is as sweet on the solitary moor where the sighings of the breeze are their only requiem, as in the crowded cemetery where art has been tasked to pronounce their panegyric. But instructive and improving to survivors are such touching memorials. Many a son of genius has had his feelings awakened and directed at the tomb of some departed father.

‘Even from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Even in our ashes live our wonted fires.’

Is it then expecting too much that future generations may be benefited by attempts to commemorate those who did

valiantly for the truth in the earth? Who can tell what inquiries they may prompt, what sympathies they may excite, what kindred glow of hallowed feeling they may inspire?

‘ Their names shall nerve the patriot’s hand
 Upraised to save a sinking land;
 And piety shall learn to burn
 With holier transports o’er their urn.’

And surely they deserve to be commemorated. They are gone. Many of them fell in the struggle the fruits of which we are now reaping; their blood watered the Plant of renown under whose ample shade we now repose in peace and safety. The world which thought so lightly of their worth, was destined soon to lose them. But ought nothing to be done to perpetuate their memories, and to secure as far as possible the benefits arising from a pious recollection of their character and example? Is it not due to *them*, if not to ourselves, that something should be done? Who deserve to be commemorated if they do not? What ground of claim for such distinction can be put forth which may not be preferred on their behalf? Is it personal worth? It was theirs. Is it valuable services? Such were theirs. Is it generous sacrifices for a public good? Here too their claims are unrivalled. Is it connection with a cause of great and general interest? Neither here have they to dread competition. To say that poets, and heroes, and statesmen deserve to be commemorated, while those who loved not their lives unto the death in the cause of their country’s religion and liberties are to be left to sink into oblivion, is to pay no compliment to either the discernment or the gratitude of the age. By all means, let the poet have his wreath, and the hero his monument; but, Oh! deny not the martyr of Jesus his simple tomb-stone!

The best commemoration of all, however, is that which our own principles and conduct can alone supply. They deserve to be *imitated*, as well as treated with respect and held in grateful remembrance. This is the proper result of the others. Unless this take place, as far as we ourselves are concerned, our professions of esteem and attempts to commemorate go for nothing. They stamp upon us rather the

brand of self-condemnation. Those who loved not their lives unto the death are to be respected and remembered as *examples*. From their tombs we are to hear ourselves addressed,—‘Be ye followers of us, even as we also are of Christ.’

But do we require to follow the example of such men? We do. We are not, it is true, placed in precisely the same circumstances as they; but still the resemblance is sufficiently strong to enable us to profit by the pattern they have set before us. As far as personal character is concerned, we have equal need of intelligence, faith, piety, and holiness. As to what they did, we are to follow them in the way of preserving and extending the blessings which they struggled to secure. In regard to suffering, if we are not exposed to banishment, torture, and death, we shall not be exempted, if we act a faithful and conscientious part, from privations, mockery, and scorn. The same spirit of faith, of patriotism, of zeal, of valour, of fidelity, and of hope, it concerns us to cherish, as the only spirit that can animate us to sustain the hardships and bear us up against the dangers of the christian profession. The cause, too, of religion and liberty is still the same,—involving the same principles, and carrying along with it the same eventful consequences.

But how shall we ever be able to imitate the worth, activity, patience, and spirit of these men? Their ability, be it remembered, was not of their own production. They were just flesh and blood like ourselves, possessed of the same nature, having to struggle with the same infirmities, and having no better motives or encouragements than we have. We, as well as they, may expect a better resurrection, and look forward to a crown of immortal bliss. We, as well as they, can lay hold by faith on the promises of God, and avail ourselves of the aid of the omnipotent Spirit. To us, as well as to them, is it said, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, and my strength is made perfect in weakness:’ and, by seizing on this all-gracious assurance, we also may ‘triumph in Christ.’

See to it then, my hearers, that besides respectful feelings and commemorative attempts, you form decided resolutions to

imitate. Deceive not yourselves here; imbibe the spirit of the good old times; follow the footsteps of the reforming heroes; espouse the cause for which they bled and died; like them, be faithful to the death, and God shall give you a crown of life. Study their character closely, that you may be the better prepared to follow their example. For this end read those writings in which their character and sufferings and sayings are recorded; and visit, as opportunity offers, the places of their sepulchres. Speak of them respectfully to others; and try to enlist the judgment and feelings of your countrymen in behalf of the cause they had so deeply at heart. Be not yours the execrable hypocrisy of those who 'build the tombs and garnish the sepulchres' of the martyrs, while, by their principles and spirit, they prove themselves to be 'the children of them that killed them.' and that if 'they had been in the days of their fathers, they would have been partakers with them in their blood.'

In drawing this discourse to a close, allow me to offer a very few additional exhortations.

Examine, my hearers, how far you resemble the men of whom we have been speaking, in your character, spirit, and deeds. Is there anything about you that can entitle you to be regarded as their descendants? Have you, in this respect, the common resemblance of children to their fathers? You have seen what *they were*, you know what *you yourselves are*. Are there many features common to both? Are there any? For an answer to these questions you must look within. On a severe and impartial scrutiny, how many, alas!—is there not reason to fear?—will be found to exhibit, instead of the brilliant qualities of the martyrs, stupid ignorance, base neutrality, disgraceful cowardice, and time-serving treachery! Remember that for the properties by which they were distinguished, they were indebted to Heaven. By the grace of God they were what they were. Whatever they did, it was not they, but the grace of God that was in them. They did all things through Christ strengthening them. If you are ever to resemble them, you must draw from the same source.

Pray for that divine Spirit who alone can renew you in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness; that, being renewed in the spirit of your minds, you may walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.

Lament the neglect into which the history, example, and principles of the martyrs have fallen in the present day. They set us a commendable example of enlightened zeal for the glory of God, unextinguishable attachment to the interests of Zion, manly boldness in asserting their rights, indomitable courage in maintaining, and exhaustless patience in pursuing them. But it requires only a glance at the prominent features of the public mind now, to perceive the change that has taken place. An age of loose opinion and easy virtue and soft and silken manners, has succeeded to one of stern integrity and unbending steadfastness. Ever since the Revolution, the principles of the Reformers may perhaps be viewed as having been on the wane. By how many is the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ impugned, denied, or neglected! Have not the headship of Christ and the independence of his church, been forgotten amid the encroachments of an Erastian supremacy! The subjection of the nations to Messiah is denied altogether by some, and practically overlooked by all. There is a manifest leaning, especially among professors of religion, towards the monstrous absurdities of passive obedience and non-resistance. Public vowing is not only not practised, but the obligation of the duty is denied, and the deeds of our forefathers are openly and wantonly assailed. Two principles of the Reformation still remain, for which we ought to be grateful, and which were we sure of their continuance might afford some hope of the revival of the rest; we mean the sole authority of God's word, and the right of private judgment. But we cannot conceal our fears that by the late concessions to papists, even these have been placed in some degree of jeopardy. 'All that generation were gathered unto their fathers, and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that

spoiled them, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.'

The cause in which our forefathers died was the cause of protestantism, in opposition to the tyrannical claims and superstitious mummeries of the Romish Sec. But we are not without many evidences in modern times of a declining sense of the value and importance of this cause. What other inference can we draw from the countenance extended to Popery by men of all ranks; from the late strange enactments, by which there has been given to the abettors of that bloody and intriguing system control over the interests of this reformed, covenanted, protestant land; from the annual support contributed from the public purse to Popish seminaries to enable them to send forth their yearly supply of well-trained agents to spread the pestiferous and ensnaring tenets of jesuitism among our people; from the small sensation excited, even in the religious world, by the unexampled efforts and alarming progress of the interest of the Man of Sin amongst ourselves; from the lethargy into which even the avowed friends of the protestant cause appear to have sunk; and from the profane and ungodly ridicule which has been unblushingly poured on the principles and agents of the Reformation by fashionable novelists and pretended antiquarians?

These are all so many grounds of deep lamentation. Let your grief be sincere and godly, not hypoeritical and formal. Like Nehemiah, in similar circumstances, not only let your countenance be sad, but sit down and weep and mourn and fast and pray to the God of heaven. Who knows but that thus he may be pleased to return and revive us as in the days of old? for 'he keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him; he is slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.' Follow up your lamentations with prayer. For these things he will be inquired of the house of Israel to do them for them. In the closet, the family, the sanctuary, Oh! see that you forget not Zion. 'Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silenee, and give him no rest till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the

earth; till the righteousness thereof go forth as light, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.' 'O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? Remember thy congregation which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion wherein thou hast dwelt. Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary!'

Amid these exercises, we must not forget the gratitude due to God for the restraints he has been pleased to lay on the persecuting fury of the Church of Rome, and for the privileges we thus enjoy. It is not with us as it was with our fathers, when they had to 'whet the broad sword as a severe but necessary preparation for the public worship of God.' It is not now as it was then, when they could meet only 'when the wintry storm raved fierce, and compelled the men of blood to couch within their dens;'—when 'by the gleam of sheeted lightning' the man of God opened the sacred book, and

—'leaning on his spear,

The lyart veteran heard the word of God,
By Cameron thundered, or by Renwick peured
In gentle stream.'

It is not now as it was then, that when they met on some green hill-side or in some deep romantic dell, sentinels required to be posted on the heights to watch the approach of the enemy. No: we now sit every one under his vine and under his fig-tree, none daring to make us afraid. Here we are met in circumstances which in those days of blood would have subjected us to the pains reserved for such as were guilty of the enormous crime of conventicling; and which would have been sufficient to set all the blood-hounds in the district on the scent. But there is now no unprincipled Claverhouse, no blood-thirsty Dalziel, no tyrannical Bruce, prematurely to disperse our assembly, to hunt us to the mountains, or to deprive us of our lives on the high places of the field. Let us remember to whom we are indebted for the change, and let us not by our ingratitude provoke the Almighty to withdraw from us our privileges.

Look forward, christians, with joyful anticipation to the

period when the spirit of the martyrs shall be poured out on all ranks, and everything antichristian shall be put away from the church. The witnesses must be slain; but there is a resurrection to follow: 'And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.' We expect not a literal but a spiritual fulfilment of this prophecy. What a blessed era will it be, when the martyrs shall rise and live and reign in a race of successors animated with their spirit, and pursuing the same glorious career! Before this time, however, there is a prayer to be heard and answered: 'And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?' Let us join trembling with our mirth.

And now, brethren, I have done. Let me hope that our present meeting shall be followed by good effects. I trust you will show your gratitude for the privileges you enjoy, by contributing to preserve the memory of those by whom, under God, they were secured. I trust also, that many present shall, from this time, be roused to cultivate personal piety and public zeal, and to revere the memory of the great and good of former times: and that, whatever may become of their graves, although they should sink into concealment and cease to be distinguished from the surrounding earth, their deeds and their virtues shall be embalmed in many a Scottish heart, and yet wake to kindred feelings of zeal, of freedom, and of glory!

May the Lord God of the fathers follow his word with a blessing, and prosper the work of our hands! To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

SERMON IV.

SALVATION BY GRACE.

Preached at Springholm, Kirkeudbrightshire, April 3, 1831.

EPHES. ii. 5.

'By grace ye are saved.'

THE terms that are here employed by the apostle cannot surely need to be explained to a christian audience. *Salvation* must be understood in that peculiar sense in which it is commonly used by the inspired writers, to denote the amount of those spiritual and eternal benefits which believers derive from the mediation of the Son of God; comprehending in it, deliverance from the curse of the violated law, from the obligation of the covenant of works, from the pollution and power of sin in the present life, and from its consequences and being in the future state of existence; together with all the positive holiness and felicity which are essential to the perfection of moral and immortal creatures. It is clear, too, that the word *grace* occurs in this passage in its proper radical acceptance, of God's free unmerited favour and love, exclusive of all human worth or power. The text thus presents a plain, but most important statement, which may be regarded as a brief summary of the gospel, and which deserves the diligent, candid, devout study of all who would be delivered from the wrath to come.

The manner in which the statement is introduced is somewhat striking. The apostle is contrasting the present happy condition of the Ephesian converts with their former state as

Gentiles when they 'walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.' And, in the course of his description, while speaking of their having been, through the goodness of God who is rich in mercy, 'quicken'd together with Christ, and raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,' the clause which forms the text is thrown in, in the midst of the sentence, by way of parenthesis, showing how powerful a hold the sentiment it breathes had taken of the writer's own mind, and how impossible it was for him to speak to others of the kindness of God to guilty men, without giving it utterance. The sentiment was, as it were, uppermost in his thoughts. It pervaded his whole views of the christian faith. He could speak of nothing without having it suggested. His train of thinking and mode of expression were shaped and moulded by it. The very utterance of the sentiment gave him heartfelt delight. It was not more natural for him as a man to breathe, than as a saint and apostle to bear testimony to the riches of divine grace. 'By grace ye are saved.'

Yet the doctrine of the text, however scriptural and congenial to the renewed heart, is far from being agreeable to the natural man. It is liable to be misrepresented by its friends as well as by its enemies, and requires to be clearly stated and strongly urged on the attention of all. I therefore purpose to submit to you some brief illustration of the assertion, 'By grace ye are saved.'

I. Salvation is of grace as respects God's *original determination to save man at all.*

The determination to save must have originated with God. Everything that exists, with the exception of the Deity himself, must have a cause; and everything, sin alone excepted, can easily be traced to God, the great First Cause of all. That the salvation of sinners should flow from any other source, is therefore contrary to all analogy, and contradicts all our principles of reasoning.

But when we thus trace the origin of man's salvation to God, we are to beware of supposing that he was urged to it by any necessity of nature. Free agency, in the strictest sense of the term, must belong to him 'of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things.' Every conception of the supreme Being which excludes the notion of volition is not only defective but absurd. Blind fatality, or involuntary operation, can with no propriety be ascribed to an *agent* or a *cause*, inasmuch as to act necessarily, is, properly speaking, not to *act* at all, but to be *acted upon*. It therefore follows that the great First Cause cannot, in the matter of man's salvation, be said to have acted from necessity, as, even supposing him capable of being acted upon, there existed no being by whom he could be so influenced in the eternal determinations of his infinite mind. When we speak, then, of salvation originating with God, we are to be understood as meaning that it originated in the exercise of his *will*.

But what moved the Divine will to resolve on man's salvation? It was not a regard to his own happiness by which he was prompted. No. Had mankind been left to perish in their sins, he would have been ineffably happy in the felicity of his own existence. His perfections should have remained uninjured, nay, should have been awfully glorified in the righteous punishment of his apostate children and malicious enemies. He is literally independent of the creatures he has made. In the purity and happiness of his moral subjects, he is represented indeed as taking a high delight, yet so far is he from being dependent on *them* for this, that the very qualities which occasion it proceed from himself; so that, when taking delight in the holiness and felicity of his creatures, he is, strictly speaking, taking delight in himself.

Nor was the divine will influenced to the salvation of man, by any abstract respect to the inviolable principles of justice. Had misery been the everlasting doom of the human family, they must have submitted to it with passive silence as the just reward of their demerit. The blame of their fall could, in no sense, attach to the Almighty. Moral ability to keep their first estate had been conferred on them at their creation;

confirmation in holiness was not only never promised, but quite incompatible with the probationary state in which they were placed; they were left to the freedom of their own will; this freedom they abused for the wicked purpose of rebelling against God; and on their own heads alone could the guilt and misery of such rebellion descend. In the state into which they were thus precipitated, every perfection of Deity was arrayed against them, but their mouths were shut from all extenuation of their guilt or solicitation of deliverance; and, but for God's determination to save, this state of things must have been eternal.

The origin of salvation must, therefore, be resolved into a sovereign act of the divine will, determining its existence. This conclusion is supported by scripture: 'I have loved thee with an *everlasting love*, THEREFORE with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' (Jer. xxxi. 3.) 'God so *loved* the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' (John iii. 16.) 'God, who is rich in mercy, *for the great love wherewith he loved us*, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.' (Eph. ii. 6.) These plain declarations—and there are many more to the same purpose—leave us without a doubt that the *love* of Jehovah is the *moving cause* of man's salvation. But love in God is not a passion or affection such as exists in the human breast. In the connection in question, it can mean nothing else than the divine *benevolence*, the eternal *will*, purpose, or determination, of God to save. The passages quoted are thus parallel to that of our apostle, when he describes the spiritual blessings of salvation, as conferred by God 'according to the *good pleasure of his WILL*.'

That this eternal resolve of the divine will was entirely free or gracious is apparent from the circumstances of the case, as well as from the language adduced. There was not only, as we have seen, nothing *in God* to render it necessary—neither dire necessity, nor a selfish regard to his own happiness, nor a consistent respect to the claims of equity—but there was nothing *in man* to determine its existence. Man was dead in

trespasses and sins ; inclined to pursue a course of the vilest apostacy, and blackest ingratitude ; and cherished in his heart the most malignant enmity to God. What was there here to awaken love, or call for an expression of good-will ? Nor will the *foreseen* repentance and future amendment of the sinner any better account for the eternal love of Jehovah. The disposition to repent and the ability to act according to the divine law are gifts of God, conferred *in consequence of his love* ; and the effects cannot very consistently be assigned as a reason for the existence of the cause. If more were necessary to show the gracious character of God's determination to save, an appeal might be made to that numerous class of texts in which salvation is ascribed to *mercy*—‘according to his mercy he saved us,’ etc.—for to suppose any reason for the bestowment of the blessing to exist in its subjects, destroys at once the character of *mercy*, and resolves it into an act of *justice*. ‘Grace,’ as it has been well said, ‘is directly opposed to all legal claims, and is an extra dispensation for which the mere principles of moral government make no provision.’

It is necessary, however, to guard you against supposing that the sovereignty or grace of God resembles the arbitrary or capricious determinations of an earthly despot, who resolves without reason, and acts without law. Distant for ever from your minds be the unworthy thought. Jehovah is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ? In the most gracious purposes of his infinite mind, he acts on principles of the strictest rectitude, and the soundest wisdom. The intelligence and the equity of all his appointments are alike unimpeachable. For determining as he does he has reasons, and the best of reasons too. ‘Even so, Father, for so IT SEEMED GOOD in thy sight.’ But, in the case of salvation, these reasons are not in man, but in God ; the cause is not any thing external, but wholly and absolutely something *within the Supreme Being* himself ; He is altogether *self-moved*. This is what we understand by the sovereignty of God in the salvation of men. This is what we mean by the origin of sal-

vation being of grace. And it is a view in which we are fully borne out by the tenor of scripture language: 'I will have mercy on whom *I will* have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom *I will* have compassion.' 'The Lord did not set his love on you nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but BECAUSE THE LORD LOVED YOU.'

II. The grace of God is further apparent, in the *choice of those who are the subjects of salvation.*

The same sovereign will which determined the *being* of salvation, determined also *who* should be its subjects. God's gracious purpose is not a vague and general decree, determining merely that salvation shall take place, but leaving the persons and the number who shall enjoy this blessing undetermined. No. It is special and limited in respect of its subjects, and this speciality and limitation are a further proof of its graciousness.

Indeed salvation and its subjects cannot but in idea be separated. Salvation is a quality which has no existence apart from that in which it resides. Qualities cannot be conceived of without substances. You might as well suppose greenness to exist without a substance that is green, or roundness without something that is round, as salvation to be the object of a divine purpose irrespective of the persons who are to be saved. The decree of God regarding the one, must necessarily have a respect to the other. In any other light, salvation is a mere metaphysical abstraction, an absolute nonentity.

The perfections of God require that this view be taken of the subject. His knowledge of salvation existed from eternity, for 'known unto God are all his works from the beginning;' but this necessarily supposes a knowledge of those who were to be the individual subjects of salvation. His love existed from eternity; but as the object of this affection is a person and not an abstract quality, the divine love must have had some determined subjects on whom it was fixed. Besides, the means of grace, instituted by God, are all adapted

to individuals, and are made effectual only to some; but as the dispensations of grace are just the evolution of God's eternal plan, we conclude that his original design had a respect to individuals, and to only some individuals of the human race. Moreover, the august proceedings of the last day, as related in scripture, give confirmation to the same truth. We are infallibly assured that on that awful day 'some of them that sleep in the dust shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt,' that 'some shall go away into everlasting punishment,' and that 'they that have done evil shall come forth unto the resurrection of damnation.' But it were impious to suppose that these God originally designed to save, for in this case all his designs would not be infallibly accomplished, and it would not be true that 'his counsel stands, and he will do all his pleasure.' Of course, those only who *are* saved, did God design to save.

Thus does it appear from the attributes of God, the dispensations of grace, and the facts of the final judgment, that God must have determined from eternity what persons were to be the subjects of salvation. And is not this the plain doctrine of scripture? Innumerable are the passages in which particular election is affirmed. We shall content ourselves with adducing three in which salvation is spoken of as the immediate end of the decree, and sovereign grace as the originating cause. 'As many as were ORDAINED TO ETERNAL LIFE believed.' (Acts xiii. 48.) 'God hath from the beginning CHOSEN YOU TO SALVATION,' (2 Thess. ii. 13.) 'Having PREDESTINATED us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, ACCORDING TO THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL.' (Eph. i. 5.)

How, but on the principle of sovereign grace, is it possible to explain this distinction in respect to the subjects of salvation? What other reason can be assigned why some are chosen and others left—why God in his eternal purpose fixed upon those who are finally saved, and passed over others to die in their sins? Some, we are aware, who profess to believe in the doctrine of election, deny that the divine decree was unconditional. They allow that such as are saved

were 'chosen of God to salvation;' this, for the reasons before assigned, they cannot get denied; but they would have us to believe that the choice in question was on account of their foreseen good qualities and behaviour; in short, that the decree of God was conditional. But how is it possible to entertain for a moment such a sentiment? Is it not impious and even absurd to suppose that the determinations of the divine will are suspended on that of his creatures? If this be true, how can we avoid regarding man as the author of his own salvation, and robbing God of the glory said to be due to him on this very account? What, on this hypothesis, are we to make of the scripture expression 'the ELECTION OF GRACE?' Would not *election of justice* be language more accordant with the facts of the case? and then, how are we to get rid of the pointed language of the same inspired writer, by which he limits and explains the meaning of the preceding phrase, 'And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work,' (Rom. xi. 5, 6.)—than which it seems impossible to conceive how words can be more strongly framed to express the utter incompatibility of grace and works? Conditional grace is a contradiction in terms. The following passages will serve to show that the expression in question is not a solitary and unusual one. 'God hath *saved* us, and called us with an holy calling, NOT ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS BUT ACCORDING TO HIS OWN PURPOSE AND GRACE.' 'NOT BY WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH WE HAVE DONE, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS MERCY HE SAVED US.' (2 Tim. i. 9; Titus iii. 5.) On the whole, then, it appears that the subjects of salvation are chosen from eternity to the enjoyment of this unspeakable blessing; and that this choice depends neither upon the will nor the conduct of the individuals themselves who are so chosen. Human agency and human merit are thus again entirely precluded, and we have another proof that 'by grace we are saved.'

III. The grace of God is manifested in the discovery, pro-

vision, appointment, and revelation of the *medium* of salvation.

We have seen that God in his grace has *willed* the salvation of sinners, and *chosen* a certain number of the human family to the enjoyment of this great benefit. But it must not be supposed that in order to this he lays aside his character of moral governor. This is impossible. As infinitely wise and holy, he cannot but support the honour of his law, punish the transgression of his precepts, and vindicate the rectitude of his every appointment. The law being founded in righteousness, and its sanctions appended in equity, to suffer the violation of it to pass with impunity, would either reflect dishonour on its original constitution, or argue pitiable imbecility in its Author. The former is irreconcilable with the wisdom and justice of God—the latter with his almighty power. But the law *has* been violated, or salvation would not be required, and the destined subjects of salvation are of course involved in the guilt of its violation. ‘The scripture hath concluded *all* under sin.’ ‘We know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that *every mouth* may be stopped, and *all the world* may become guilty before God.’ It follows, then, that if *mercy* requires the salvation of sinners, *justice* demands that this shall be effected in a way by which the divine moral government shall be upheld. In the exercise of his sovereign grace, God may do *more* than the perfection of justice requires, but he cannot do *less*; by no act of his will can he be supposed to set aside the claims of eternal equity, for this would be to act in direct contradiction to his nature.

And how is the salvation of man to be effected in consistency with the demands of infinite rectitude? What common ground can be found on which justice and mercy may be brought to harmonise—on which mercy and truth may meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other—on which the claims of the divine government may receive satisfaction, while those who have offended against these claims shall escape the curse of disobedience? Ah! this, my hearers, is the difficulty from which we can be

extricated only by the grace of God. For, great as is the stretch of human intellect, mighty as are its artful inventions and scientific discoveries, schooled though it be in recondite research, and expanded by the light of philosophy, this is a question which it cannot solve—a problem which the concentrated wisdom and genius of man cannot master. Man wants both disposition and ability for such an achievement. Sunk low in depravity, and cherishing a hateful despoite of God's law, and an implacable enmity to the Lawgiver, it is not supposable that he should ever set himself about the discovery of a way by which the demands of the one should be answered, and the honour of the other supported. And supposing him *inclined*, he has no data on which to proceed, no experience on which to reason, no ground on which to build. Should he look to apostate spirits, whose state indeed in respect of *sin*, resembles his own, he beholds them reserved in chains of darkness, receiving, without hope of deliverance, the just award of their rebellion; and analogy would only lead him to anticipate the permanent duration of his own miserable state. Should he turn his eye to himself, he could see nothing but a heart of wicked device, and a life of foul iniquity, from which no atonement could be gathered to appease the wrath of offended majesty, no excellence derived to merit even the happiness of a moment; and, but for the discovery of a God of grace, the attempt must be abandoned for ever, only to relapse into anguish and despair. But what the mind of man could not effect, was done by the wisdom of God. In the depths of his infinite mind, the MEDIATORIAL SCHEME was devised—a scheme by which the guilt of the sinner being transferred to an adequate Surety whose sufferings satisfy the demands of justice, mercy should be freely dispensed to man on the footing of the Surety's righteousness.

But a scheme will do nothing unless it be executed; the mediatorial system can be of no use without a mediator. And where, among the creatures of God, shall one be found qualified to fill up this want? Men cannot furnish such a one as is required. Every member of the human family is alike involved in the guilt which renders a mediator neces-

sary. Besides, every action he can perform is previously due to the moral government under which he is placed, and can have no retrospective merit to cancel the debt of his own disobedience, much less supererogatory merit which may admit of being transferred to others. Nor can the angelic hosts furnish a mediator to man. They too, as moral creatures, are under a righteous government, which has a claim on every action they can perform. In order to salvation, the grace of God must do more than *discover* the mediatorial plan: a mediator must be provided: and till this is done, contemplating the scheme of Jehovah's device, we may say like Isaac when he beheld the preparations on mount Moriah, 'Behold the fire and the wood, but *where is the lamb* for a burnt-offering?' My brethren, 'God has provided himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.' 'BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD THAT TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.' In Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was found a suitable mediator, to remove all legal obstructions to the exercise of divine mercy. His mysterious incarnation qualified him for subjection to the divine law, while the supreme dignity and perfection of his character gave efficacy to his atonement and worth to his obedience. God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by him. He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

That for the discovery and appointment of a mediator we are indebted to God, we have the most ample scripture testimony: '*I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one chosen out of the people. Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David. Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found out a ransom.*' And to what but sovereign grace can such a glorious provision be ascribed?

The appointment of a mediator has been thought by some

to be at variance with 'salvation by *grace*,' as it seems to place the redemption of sinners on a footing of *justice*. If the moral government of God receives complete satisfaction for the sins of men, where, it has been thoughtlessly asked, is there *grace* or favour in pardoning these sins? Had only the original cause of man's salvation been kept in view, this question had never been put. Let me remind you that the *love of God* is the originating cause of man's salvation; and, because this love operated in a way of righteousness, it can never be justly concluded that its sovereign character is destroyed. The necessity of a mediator to the salvation of man, may be referred to the claims of justice; but then there is no necessity, apart from the merey and grace of God, for the salvation of man at all. This must be referred to the sovereignty of God, as must also the provision and appointment of the mediator, whose existence justice, in this case, rendered necessary. Had God not willed the salvation of sinners, there had been no need for the mediatorial appointment; but the purpose of God respecting salvation supposed, equity required that such a provision should be made, to prevent any infringement of its claims. God does not choose to save sinners because Christ has given satisfaction for them; but because he has chosen to save, Christ has been appointed to give satisfaction. The satisfaction is not that which occasions the choice, but the choice is that which occasions the satisfaction. The mediation of Christ is the *consequence* not the *cause* of the divine favour to sinners. In this point of view, instead of detracting from the divine sovereignty, it ought to be regarded as the most powerful and overwhelming evidence of Jehovah's free and everlasting love. Indeed, so great is his love, so rich his grace, that as men cannot be saved without satisfaction, he himself provides for that satisfaction being given, that there may be no legal obstacle to the free bestowment of saving benefits. Hence says John, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.' (John iii. 16.) And Paul places the subject in the same light, when he says, 'To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.'

In whom we have *redemption through his blood*, the forgiveness of sins, according to the *riches of his grace*.' (Eph. i. 6, 7.) 'Being justified freely by his *grace*, through the *redemption* that is in Christ Jesus.' (Rom. iii. 24.) Redemption by Christ, and salvation by grace, instead of being at variance, are thus seen to be perfectly and gloriously harmonious.

To the actual salvation of men the appointed medium of salvation behoves to be known, and God must therefore reveal as well as provide a mediator. Without a supernatural communication, neither God's determination to save, nor the way in which this determination was to be carried into effect, could ever have been known. These are things which lie quite beyond the sphere of human investigation. That man should continue ignorant of them, however, is incompatible with their very existence. And, in making them known, the grace of God, in connection with man's salvation, is displayed. The end of God in giving a revelation of his will, is the salvation of men; and that which prompted him to make this revelation was his grace. The sum of the gospel message is, 'Salvation to the ends of the earth.' The scriptures are designed to make men 'wise unto salvation.' The preachers of the gospel are represented as 'publishing salvation;' when their word is made effectual, it proves 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' And as expressive of the source, as well as the end of revelation, the apostle speaks of it as 'the GRACE of God that bringeth SALVATION.'

IV. When we proceed to consider the actual *application* of salvation, whether in its commencement, its progress, or its completion, we are furnished with another proof that salvation is by grace.

Such is the extent of man's depravity, that after being made acquainted with the gracious purposes of God respecting salvation, and with the all-sufficient and divinely-appointed medium, he is still incapable of availing himself, without assistance from above, of the provision that has been made for him. 'He *will* not come to Christ that he may have life.' This want of disposition forms an incapacity which nothing

short of divine power can overcome. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither *can* he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.—They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God.—No man *can* come to me except the Father who sent me draw him.' These passages affirm, as distinctly as language can do, an existing inability. The inability, it is true, is altogether moral; it has its foundation in the depravity of the heart, in the perversity of the will. Men *can not* because they *will not* come to Christ that they may have life. Yet it is not, on this account, the less invincible by any mere natural agency. According to the laws of the human constitution, every person who is under the influence of a vicious habit, must continue to follow objects that are vicious till the habit is removed. And as the disposition to have the habit removed supposes a previous inclination to good, it follows that the change in question can never possibly originate with the individual himself; for this would suppose him to be at once under the dominion of evil and inclined to good,—an absurdity every way analogous to that of supposing a body to move in contrary directions at one and the same time. The want of *inclination* or *will* (which constitutes moral inability,) and the want of *physical* powers (which constitutes natural inability,) are things vastly distinct, so distinct indeed as to make all the difference, in their effect on the moral subject, between high criminality and perfect excusableness. Nevertheless, the one forms as insuperable a barrier as the other. Suppose a captive to be every way pleased with his confinement, to have no disposition to change his situation, to feel indeed a hatred of liberty,—will not such a state of mind render him as incapable of making his escape, as if he were bound by iron fetters in every limb of his body? On the same principle, the love of sin and hatred of holiness which are natural to the unregenerate man, render it impossible for him, of himself, to effect a change of state and of character. You might as well talk of a dead person putting forth exertions to restore himself to life, as of the sinner who is 'dead in trespasses and sins' bringing himself into that state of spiritual life which is included in salvation. Life may be

infused into an inanimate subject; and spiritual life may be imparted to spiritually dead sinners: but in the one case, as well as in the other, the change must originate in some other source than the person himself. It is absurd to talk, as some do, of a change of conduct persevered in for a while effecting at length a change of disposition; for however true this may be when once the change has begun, it cannot possibly account for the commencement. Virtuous conduct is thus supposed to be the cause of virtuous dispositions. But what is the cause of this virtuous conduct? This is the question which it behoves the friends of this mode of reasoning to answer. Virtuous conduct persevered in for a while we can suppose to produce a favourable change on the person's dispositions. But whence is this virtuous conduct to proceed? It cannot be from virtuous dispositions, for these are the *effects*, not the *cause*. It must therefore be produced either by vicious dispositions, or by dispositions of no sort—suppositions which are equally absurd. In the one case we have an effect produced by a diametrically opposite cause, and in the other case an effect without any cause at all. We leave the abettors of Arminianism to decide on which horn of the dilemma they choose to be tossed.

In this argument we assume, of course, the depravity of man. It is supposed in the subject of which we are treating. With those who deny this doctrine we have at present nothing to do; as it is only such as are depraved that can stand in want of salvation. 'The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.' The depravity of man's heart being taken for granted, it seems an irrefragable conclusion that he cannot be the author of his own salvation.

In some instances of conversion, the previous indisposition to a change has been such, as to render the intervention of a superior power undeniable. The violence of the passions had been so strengthened by a long course of indulgence, the habits of vice so confirmed by frequent repetition, and withal the moral principles so utterly debased, that nothing short of almighty power, no happy combination of favourable circumstances, could at all account for the change. We have only

to reflect with candour on the unfavourable predisposition of the heart, and to bear in mind that the active principles of the soul had a direct tendency to counteract a¹ virtuous influence, to be led unhesitatingly to conclude that the persons saved were born 'NOT OF THE WILL OF MAN, nor of the will of the flesh, but OF GOD.'

The system which refers the salvation of man to his own personal efforts, and ascribes it to the natural influence of certain concurrent advantages of an outward nature, fails to account for another phenomenon of not unfrequent occurrence in the moral world. I mean the permanent obstinacy of thousands, in the full enjoyment of all possible advantages, national, educational, and ecclesiastical. Of persons all possessing the same privileges, some undergo a saving change, while others continue in unbelief and die in their sins; and how are we, without reference to the discriminating grace of God, to explain this wide diversity of effect, under an absolute sameness of means? Nay, it is no uncommon thing at all for persons whose circumstances combine every possible advantage to persevere in rebellion against the infinite Majesty, while those whose previous wickedness was more notorious, and whose outward privileges were decidedly less propitious, exhibit a radical transformation of character; and how is this also to be accounted for on the principle which ascribes all to man, and leaves no room for the operation of divine power? The thing is impossible. The apostle's language can alone explain these phenomena: 'Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?' 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his own mercy he saved us.' 'By grace ye are saved.'

Besides, this is the only principle that consists with the salvation of persons dying in infancy. There are many around the throne who never lived to an age in which they were capable of feeling the influence of external circumstances, or of exercising a choice in obedience to the laws of moral suasion. Respecting children, we are assured by high

authority, that 'of such is the kingdom of God.' But how does this animating fact consist with the exclusion of immediate divine agency in the salvation of the soul? In the salvation of infants, at least, such agency must be admitted; and this admission, which it is impossible to avoid, is destructive of the whole Arminian system. for the scriptures give no countenance to the supposition of two methods of salvation, one for infants on the principle of divine grace, and another for adults on that of human merit and power. In heaven the redeemed have but one song; whether they have been saved in infancy or in old age, they harmoniously unite in the same lofty ascription, 'Unto HIM that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, TO HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.'

Indeed, that the power to save should rest with God, was necessary to secure the fulfilment of the divine purposes, and the designed result of Christ's mediation. Had the salvation of sinners depended on themselves, or, which amounts to the same thing, on motives which it was fully in their power to obey or to resist, the whole human family might possibly have chosen to resist. What might have been done by one, might have been done by all. In this way, God's will respecting salvation might have been counteracted, the mediatorial appointment might have been annulled, and the whole work of God's Son squandered on a useless and inefficient experiment! Away with every system which involves in it consequences so derogatory to the honour of God and of Christ; and let us receive with implicit submission, the testimony of the apostle in our text, that 'by grace we are saved.'

It must not be supposed that the doctrine we maintain is at variance with the use of means. Far from it. To the manifestation of mercy in a consistency with justice, it was necessary that a connection should obtain between the appointed medium and destined subjects of salvation. It was also necessary that the subjects of salvation should be qualified for the enjoyment of the state to which they are destined, and in which the consummation of their saved state consists. For these ends, faith, repentance, and holiness are indispen-

sable ; and in the production of these, God has been pleased to employ the instrumentality of religious ordinances. The use and importance of ordinances, in this connection, no intelligent christian will either deny or undervalue. But to ascribe the existence of the prerequisite qualifications to the mere influence of the ordinances, without the power of God, would be grossly impious and unscriptural, not to say absurd. The ordinances of religion have no inherent efficiency. Instruments always suppose agents. If Paul plant and Apollos water, GOD GIVES THE INCREASE. *Faith*, which interests the sinner in the purchase of salvation by enabling him to lay hold on the person and sacrifice of Christ, is expressly said in this chapter to be of divine origin : ‘ By grace are ye saved through FAITH, and that not of yourselves ; IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD.’ *Repentance*, which is necessary to prepare the mind and dispose the heart for the exercises of a saved state, is also represented as a heavenly gift : ‘ Him hath God exalted to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.’ If any sorrow to repentance, it is only they who are ‘ made sorry.’ With regard to *holiness*, which is so essential a part of salvation that without it ‘ no man shall see the Lord,’ we have infallible assurance that not only the actions themselves in which it consists but the dispositions which prompt to these actions are to be referred to the same all-gracious source : ‘ It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.’ The Holy Spirit—‘ the Spirit of grace ’—is the author of whatever efficacy attends the ordinances of religion, the appointment of which is so far from being understood to be at variance with the doctrine of our text, that we are accustomed to speak of them, not only as means of salvation but ‘ means of grace.’

Man’s incapacity to save himself is not confined to the period of his conversion, or regeneration. It continues the same throughout the whole of his after existence. The progress and completion of salvation are of grace, as much as its commencement. Even after the person has been renewed in the spirit of his mind—even after he has obtained redemption through the blood of Christ and forgiveness according

to the riches of God's grace, he is still in danger of being led away of his own lusts and enticed. The wiles of Satan, the alluring blandishments of the world, the workings of inward corruption, muster a force against which, if left to himself but for a single moment, he could not stand. So weak and defenceless is he at all times, that his constant safety proceeds from the gracious source of all his previous blessings. Never is he secure, but when laying aside all confidence in himself, he places implicit reliance on the Mighty One of Israel who is alone 'able to save.' When he is weak, then is he strong. He requires to be '*kept* by the power of God through faith *unto salvation.*' He who begins the good work must perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. And even when the day of Jesus Christ has arrived, when the believer's salvation, in respect of an absolute and eternal deliverance from sin and all its sad effects, has been consummated, and he is himself presented before God, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing—even then his trust in the God of his salvation will not cease. He has indeed reached a state of which we know little—he has become an inhabitant of a country of which our knowledge is most imperfect. But we know enough to enable us to affirm with confidence that it is the unceasing exercise of the redeemed company, in their songs of praise, to echo the sentiment which it has been our study to illustrate. The disembodied soul, when ushered into the realms of light, will exclaim in rapturous recognition of the Author of all its blessings, 'Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: This is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.' While through eternity the multitude of them that are saved, as they stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and having palms in their hands, shall cry with a loud voice, 'SALVATION TO OUR GOD who sitteth upon the throne! Alleluia, SALVATION and glory and honour, and power to the Lord our God.'

V. The ultimate *end* of salvation, as illustrative of the text, must not be overlooked.

The end contemplated by God in the salvation of sinners, was to advance 'the glory of his GRACE.' Wisdom renders it necessary that the supreme Being, in all his works, pursue the highest possible end. No end terminating *without* himself can at all compare with what terminates *with* himself. It is reasonable hence to conclude, that the ultimate end of every work should terminate in himself. The scriptures confirm this dictate of reason: 'God hath made all things for himself.' The end of man's salvation must thus be sought for in God. 'This people have I formed for *myself*: they shall shew forth *my praise*.' But the feature of the divine character which this work is designed principally to glorify, is that of which we have been all along speaking—*grace*. Hence says the apostle, in the chapter preceding that from which we have taken our text, 'Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to HIMSELF, according to the good pleasure of his will, TO THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE!' Thus also writes he to the Corinthians, 'All things are for your sake, that the abundant GRACE might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to THE GLORY OF God.' (2 Cor. iv. 15.) Now to magnify the riches of divine grace in the salvation of men, let it not be forgotten that there were other ways by which the divine Being could have glorified his character. He could have glorified himself in the condemnation of sinners of the human race; and he could even have glorified his grace without an individual of our fallen family being saved. There were apostate spirits, fallen angels, on whom he might have fixed his sovereign saving love, and in whose eternal redemption his gracious character might have been magnified, while mankind sinners were left to the blackness of darkness for ever. But on this we cannot now enlarge.

It thus appears that the salvation of man, from first to last, from its primary conception in the infinite mind of Jehovah, through all the steps of progression to its ultimate end, is wholly of grace. The foundation is laid in grace; every step in the superstructure bears testimony to the same delightful principle; while 'the headstone thereof is brought forth with shoutings, Grace, grace unto it!' (Zech. iv. 7.)

Magnify, then, my hearers, the riches of divine grace. If you have felt in any adequate degree the things which you have heard, this you will be disposed to do with all your heart. Salvation by grace is a doctrine which is so frequently asserted in the bible, and which, when revealed, approves itself so readily to the rational mind, and meets so suitably the total helplessness of fallen man, that every system of religion from which it is excluded must be radically defective, and every individual who scruples to receive it, gives alarming evidence of the danger of his state. 'It is recognised in every account of the natural state of man; it is revealed in every statement of the glorious gospel; it accords with the uniform and invariable experience of christians; it is the implied sentiment of every prayer, and the source of true devotional feeling; it animates the praises of the sanctuary below, and is the theme of that song which shall resound for ever in the temple above. The man who would refuse to join in such a sentiment on earth is not a christian, and is morally incapacitated to bear his part in the praises of eternity.' We know not indeed a truth which admits of more ample illustration from the doctrinal statements and historical allusions of the sacred writings than that *by grace we are saved*. Were we required to fix on a sentiment more expressive than another of the actual renovation of the heart, we know not that we could be more safe than in adducing that of Paul, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' While the doctrine affords an excellent criterion for appreciating the comparative merits of the numerous sects into which the religious world is divided, it furnishes a valuable test by which you may ascertain the actual state of religion in your own souls. Do you feel your utter incapacity to save yourselves? Are you convinced, that for anything about you, your ruin must have been inevitable? Are you willing to trust in the merits of another, and to be eternal debtors to the riches of free and sovereign grace? If so, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. But if you feel otherwise disposed, if you are inclined to cavil at salvation by grace, and to stand up for the honour of having a share in the work of your salvation, then you

have as yet neither part nor lot in the matter; you are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity; you are yet in your sins, and have much cause to pray to God for a change of heart.

The doctrine of salvation by grace has been adduced as a plea for indolence, and even licentiousness. Against this antinomian extreme it behoves you to watch. While you cannot be too strongly impressed with the conviction that you can do nothing to effect your own salvation, nothing that can recommend you even to the divine regard, nothing that can confer on your salvation the character of an act of justice; yet this is not to be considered as any reason why you should sit down in idle security, or indulge without remorse in the pursuits of sin. It is forgotten by those who do so that the means are as infallibly fixed from the beginning as the end; and that we have no right to look for the one while wilfully neglecting the other. While fleeing from the ordinances of religion, and revelling in the pleasures of sin, it is presumption, it is madness to look for salvation. It was never the design of God to save man *in* sin but *from* sin. They greatly mistake the nature of the christian salvation who confine their views of it to futurity, and conceive of it merely as an escape from condemnation. Deliverance from the power and dominion of sin here is not less a part of man's salvation than from the wrath which awaits the workers of iniquity hereafter. Be persuaded, my friends, that unless the former is enjoyed, it is the greatest of all possible delusions ever to expect the latter. Unless you are holy here, you will never be happy hereafter. If you have not grace in the present life, you need never look for glory in the life to come. Whatever is the state in which death shall find you, that shall be your state for ever; for as the knell of death summons you away to the world of spirits, the angel of the Lord shall pronounce the irreversible decree, 'He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he which is filthy let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.' You may rely upon it that at all times and in every state of things, 'salvation is far from

the wicked.' Instead then of abusing the doctrine of the text for indulgence in sin, let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let them turn unto the Lord who will have mercy upon them, and to our God who will abundantly pardon.

What gratitude, humility, and joy ought this subject to inspire! It lays you under high obligations to praise. It is calculated to check every unhallowed emotion of self-complacency. It is well fitted to fill the soul with comfort, and even elevate it to feelings of joy. 'My soul,' says David, 'shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in his salvation.' With what delight does the believer repeat the words, 'The God of my salvation!' Under the daily experience of personal impotency, he finds relief in the consideration that 'salvation belongeth unto the Lord.' In the full assurance of an interest in this truth, he can brave every danger, and patiently submit to every privation. The sword of persecution may be unsheathed against him—the storms of calamity may gather thick around him—poverty may strip him naked and bare—bereavement may quench the light of social happiness in his tabernacle; and after all, he is not comfortless. 'Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, *I will joy in the God of my salvation.*' Nay, when death itself shall come, instead of being given up to gloomy forebodings, the believer will be able to lift up his head and rejoice, for the full accomplishment of that salvation which is by grace draweth nigh. The doctrine lays foundation at once for exercises of adoring gratitude here, and for rapturous ascriptions of glory in the heavenly state. Embrace it that you may be comforted now, and that when you die you may burst into the never-ending song, 'Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.' *Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!*

SERMON V.

THE REBUILDING OF JERUSALEM.

Preached at the opening of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod, Glasgow,
April 20, 1835.

NEHEMIAH. ii. 17-20.

' Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, lo Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire: come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me: as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. But when Sumballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem.'

THIS book contains part of the history of the Jewish church, during what is commonly styled the Babylonish captivity. And it is a circumstance not unworthy of remark, that, although the affairs of the Persian monarchy were, at the time, in a most flourishing condition, the inspired writers pass over these altogether without notice and confine themselves to those of the humble captives of Israel and Judah. The reason of this is, that the church, in the estimation of God; is of superior importance to the greatest nations of the world; whence it

follows of course that those pious and patriotic men who have been raised up from time to time to be of service to Zion, are entitled to be regarded as nobler characters far than the most illustrious statesmen, warriors, orators, or philosophers of antiquity.

Among the distinguished reformers of the Jewish church, at the period just mentioned, were Ezra and Nehemiah; the former taking the lead in the good work, the latter following up and carrying forward the schemes of his predecessor.

Nehemiah, the son of Hachaliah, appears to have been descended from a Jewish family, who at the time of the dispersion occasioned by the conquest of Nebuchadnezzar fled into Persia and settled there. His talents and acquirements readily procured him a post of great honour and influence at the court of Artaxerxes Longimanus. Though born in a foreign land, and holding place under a heathen prince, he seems to have inherited and cherished both the religion and the zeal of his ancestors: and neither the daily example of the idolators among whom he lived, nor the peculiar temptations of his office, could alienate his heart from the land of his fathers, or weaken his desire for its recovery from bondage and from desolation. He accordingly embraced with eagerness every opportunity of obtaining the slightest information respecting it. And when, on a particular occasion, having found certain men of Judah, whom he interrogated 'concerning the Jews which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem,' he received for reply, that 'the remnant that were left were in great affliction and reproach, the wall of Jerusalem broken down, and the gate thereof burnt with fire,' the mournful tidings so overpowered him, that he sat down and wept and mourned and fasted and prayed certain days before the God of heaven. He continued to ponder for months over the calamities that had befallen his church and people; he watched the first favourable opportunity of laying the matter before the king, and succeeded at length in obtaining a commission to visit Judea and promote the welfare of his countrymen. With this view, he was invested with the rank and authority of governor of the province; letters were written to the neigh-

bouring governors, requesting them to lend him their aid; and the keeper of the king's forests was instructed to furnish a supply of timber to assist in carrying forward the work. Thus prepared, he set out under a guard of horse, and arrived at Jerusalem. Either from prudence or from a modest wish to avoid observation, he surveyed the city by night, in deep and silent melancholy, and forthwith divulged his purpose. Both lukewarm Jews and mercenary Gentiles derided and opposed the undertaking: he had to withstand at once the treachery of persons within, and the combined force of enemies without; and had not his manly firmness of mind been sustained by seasonable supplies of grace, he must inevitably have been led to abandon his design. But his God was with him; and the text records the appeal which he addressed to his countrymen, and the resistance which he made to his enemies at this interesting crisis.

The church of Christ in our land has been long in a state of captivity. Fetters, galling and ignoble, have been wreathed around her with a cruel and oppressive hand, by means of which her freedom has been impaired, her energies cramped, her usefulness curtailed, and her spirit well nigh crushed and broken. Yet has she not been altogether forsaken. There is still a latent spark of life and liberty, which seems beginning to be roused. A desperate struggle remains to be made, before she regain her former influence and dignity. And as this struggle would seem destined to take place in opposition, as of old, to both the lukewarmness of treacherous friends and the fierce assault of avowed enemies, the appeal and remonstrance of good Nehemiah have strong claims on our attention at the present time.

Three things here demand consideration:—The *work* in which Nehemiah and his associates were engaged—the *opposition* they encountered in performing it—and the *resistance* which they made to this opposition.

I. The *Work* in which Nehemiah and his associates were engaged, was—rebuilding Jerusalem.

To a Jew Jerusalem was invested with more sublime and

interesting associations than any other spot on the face of the earth. Apart altogether from its outward magnificence, its commercial opulence, and its military greatness,—its being the capital of Judea, the depository of holy oracles, and the chosen place of Jehovah's peculiar residence and worship, was sufficient, in the estimation of all true-born Hebrews, to impart to its name an abiding charm, fitted to awaken and to keep alive the tenderest feelings of the heart. Even when dilapidated, desolate, and forsaken, this charm was not dispelled: they took pleasure in her stones, and favoured the dust thereof. Similar is the attachment of 'the true Israel of God' to the city of the church—'the Jerusalem that is above, which is the mother of us all.' And from the conduct of Nehemiah on the present occasion, we may take a lesson regarding our duty to the church in our own day.

1. The church of Christ may be fitly represented under the emblem of a dilapidated city.—In the scriptures the church is often compared to a *city*. The figure suggests to our minds ideas of its magnificence, its order, its immunities, and of the purposes subserved by it as a place where rest, security, and society may be enjoyed. By being compared to the city *Jerusalem*, two additional ideas are suggested, namely, those of sacredness and royalty. It is, besides, called 'the city of the Lord'—'a holy city'—'a strong city'—'the city of righteousness'—'a faithful city.' But we have to do with it at present in the character of a *dilapidated* city. 'Jerusalem lieth waste.' When, in obedience to the divine command, we 'walk about Zion and go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark well her bulwarks, and consider her palaces,' we find her towers shattered, her bulwarks broken down, and her palaces mutilated and defaced.

The *doctrines* of the church, which, as lofty and pointing heavenward, may be compared to 'towers,' are greatly corrupted and neglected. The trinity, the divinity of Christ, the distinct divine personality of the Holy Spirit, atonement by the blood of Immanuel, justification by faith in the righteousness of the Redeemer, the nature and necessity of regeneration, the power and efficacy of the Spirit—these, and other vital

parts of the christian faith, have been long much opposed and overlooked. The strong and massive towers of the city of the Lord, so to speak, have been thrown down, and a paltry plaster work of Arianism, Arminianism, Pelagianism, and false philosophy, substituted in their room.—The *government and discipline* of the church, which may correspond to the ‘bulwarks’ of the city, as being the means of safety and defence, are also greatly impaired. Loose sentiments prevail regarding even the nature and importance of ecclesiastical government in general; all forms are considered as alike scriptural; or rather, the scriptures are considered as not giving their sanction to any one form in particular, but leaving this to be fixed as time and other circumstances may seem to render expedient; while the goodly structure of Presbyterianism, reared by the zeal and piety of our ancestors, according to the word of God, has been either violently broken up, or allowed to go greatly to waste. By a partial or total prostration of discipline, the privileges or immunities of Jerusalem have been thrown open to every unprincipled intruder. ‘The hedges have been broken down, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her: the boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.’—The ordinances of ecclesiastical *fellowship*, may be represented by the ‘palaces of the city,’ as being the medium of intercourse betwixt Christ, the King and Head of the church, and the members of his mystical body or subjects of his spiritual kingdom. By means of these, the most close, sweet, and ennobling communion is enjoyed, fitted to promote the edification, joy, comfort, and peace of the inhabitants of Zion. These palaces of our Jerusalem are, in the present day, greatly defiled. Vague conceptions respecting the nature and necessity of creeds and confessions, spurious dogmas about general saintship, and consequent notions of catholic communion, have given rise to such an indiscriminate admission to sealing ordinances, as is at once hurtful to the purity, and, in a great degree, subversive of the ends of ecclesiastical fellowship, being calculated, not only to lead to a profanation of holy things, but to go far to obliterate the distinction which it is most important to maintain be-

tween the church and the world.—On these accounts may the church in our day be fitly compared to a dilapidated city;—there are many breaches in her walls, and, as the necessary result, her stately towers and royal palaces are humbled and polluted.

2. Now, the text leads us to remark that, in repairing the city of the church, human efforts are to be made, and these efforts, that they may prove successful, must be made unitedly.

Nehemiah put his hand to the work, and called upon others to take part with him in his operations: ‘Come,’ said he, ‘and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.’ He did not say, Let us wait with submission until the Lord is pleased himself to do the work for us: he did not even say, Let us sit down and pray to God for deliverance: but, Come and *let us build*. Patient waiting for the Lord, and fervent prayer to the Most High, are certainly fit and proper means to be employed: but they are not the only means; they must not stand alone; they are not to supersede the use, or to be substituted in the place, of others which are equally necessary and authoritative. Exertions must be made; we must rouse us from our sloth; we must put forth our hand to the work; while we pray God to build the walls of Jerusalem, we must ourselves arise and build. This is agreeable to the plan on which the Almighty acts in the other departments of his works, and on which he has ever proceeded with his church. When she has been low, he has provided persons to raise her up: when corrupted, he has qualified and sent forth reformers to correct and purify her abuses: when invaded, he has stirred up individuals of power and influence to interpose for her defence. And if those who ought to have befriended her in these circumstances, have neglected to do what was their duty, he has brought her aid from some other quarter, that there might be no infraction of the grand law of his procedure with regard to the use of means. ‘If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place: but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed.’

Persons of all classes are bound to exert themselves on behalf of the church. At the time to which the text refers, we find priests, rulers, and private individuals co-operating in repairing the wastes of Jerusalem: whence we infer that the ministers of religion, civil magistrates, and private christians are all under obligation to exert themselves in promoting the reformation of the church.

The ministers of religion are certainly bound. 'Eliashib the high priest rose up, with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate.' (Neh. iii. 1.) These have much in their power. As teachers, they can expose, warn against, and refute doctrinal errors, lifting up a faithful testimony against every perversion of truth; they can unfold, vindicate, and maintain the principles of the church's faith; they can point out to others their duty, and firmly enjoin the performance of it. As pastors, they can exercise a wise discrimination in the admission of persons to the privileges of the church, and honestly exclude such as have proved themselves unworthy of membership, remembering that 'it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to give it unto dogs.' As presbyters, they can use the power they possess in ecclesiastical courts, for originating, supporting, and defending measures which have it for their object to revive a wholesome administration of discipline, and to give efficiency to the government of the house of the Lord.

Civil magistrates, too, may be of service in repairing the wastes of Jerusalem. 'Next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Haloheh, the ruler of the half-part of Jerusalem. The dung gate repaired Malehiah, the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Beth-haccerem. But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah. And after him repaired Nehemiah, the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half-part of Beth-zur.' (Neh. iii. 12-16.) And what, it may be asked, can civil rulers do in such a work? They can protect the church in the enjoyment of her privileges and the exercise of her functions. They can remove external impediments to her growth and purification. They can restrain and punish open blasphemy, Sabbath desecra-

tion, and gross immorality. They can see to the erection of places of public worship, and to the adequate support of qualified functionaries, that all classes may have an opportunity of participating in the benefits of true religion, the influence of which is so essentially interwoven with the real prosperity, peace, dignity, and virtue of a nation. These things, we are aware, are positively denied, and all connexion between church and state vehemently denounced, by many at the present time. But we must take leave to express our conviction that the opposition in question springs from two capital errors;—from neglecting to look on civil society as the moral ordinance of God, viewing it as if it were purely the product of man;—and from overlooking the union in the character of the Redeemer, of the offices of ‘King of Sion’ and ‘Prince of the Kings of the earth,’ viewing him so exclusively in the light of ‘Head of the church’ as to forget that he is also ‘King of kings and Lord of lords.’ Nor can we see how, without taking some such view as we have given of the duty of civil rulers, they can ever fully answer to the terms in which they are described in the scriptures, as being ‘nursing fathers to the church’—‘the ministers of God for good,’—‘a terror to evil doers and a praise to them that do well.’ Without this, we know not how to explain the applause bestowed on the reforming kings of Israel and Judah, who, for services done to Zion in their official capacity, are lauded by God in terms of the highest commendation. Indeed, we know not well how, otherwise, the text and context are to be interpreted. It was not as a mere patriot, but as a Hebrew, that Nehemiah acted in the instance before us. It was for Jerusalem, not merely as the birth-place of his fathers, but as the city of his God, that he cherished such devoted attachment. Now, Nehemiah was a civil ruler; he was cup-bearer to the king of Persia, and governor of the province of Judea; he was no ecclesiastic; nor was the influence he exerted merely private influence, to which his official character contributed nothing. It was as invested with civil authority that he took the various steps described, and as such he did eminent service to the church of the living God in his day.

But the duty of promoting the church's reformation does not devolve wholly on persons in authority; individuals also in the private walks of life are called upon to exert themselves for this end. In the days of Nehemiah, the *people*, as well as the *priests* and the *rulers*, were employed in repairing Jerusalem. Look into the twenty-ninth verse of the third chapter, and you will find that one even in the humble rank of a door-keeper or porter was of service:—'After him also repaired Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the *keeper of the east gate*.' Afterwards you find mention made of 'Malchiah the *goldsmith's son*,'—'the goldsmiths and the merchants,' (Neh. iii. 21, 22), that is to say, tradesmen and common artificers. Let no individual, then, think himself too humble to be of use in this good work. The merchant and the mechanic, may bring their influence to bear on the restoration of Zion, as well as the minister and the magistrate. And how? Why, by contributing of their substance; by attention to their own sentiments and conduct; by using their influence with their families and neighbours; by availing themselves discreetly of their right of petition and remonstrance with both civil and ecclesiastical courts; and, besides all, by humble, devout, persevering, earnest prayer to Him who alone can send us a little reviving in our bondage. In these, and other ways which will easily present themselves, may persons in the most private walks of life, and in the humblest worldly circumstances, contribute to the good of Zion. If there be once the disposition, there can never be an absolute want either of means or of opportunity. It is greatly to be desired that the minds of men were more alive to this consideration: for there is reason to fear that the cause of Christ loses much aid, which it might otherwise receive, from private persons leaving all exertions to be made by those high in authority and influence, and thinking themselves excused, by the obscurity of their circumstances, from all obligation to act. Let it, however, be deeply impressed on the hearts of all, and constantly borne in mind, that in this as in other things, there is not a member of the church or of society at large, however lowly, with regard to whom the most influential are entitled to say, 'We have no need of thee.'

Now, let it be observed, that not only must human efforts be made, and that by men of all classes, but these efforts, that they may be successful, must be made *unitedly*. Each is, indeed, to keep within his own proper sphere; and no good will ever result from any one overstepping the province which properly belongs to him. No real and permanent advantage can ever be derived from the minister interfering with the duties of the magistrate, or the magistrate interfering with those of the minister, or from persons in private stations invading the functions of men in office. But, while acting distinctly, they may, nevertheless, act unitedly and harmoniously, so as that there shall be no jarring, opposing, or counteracting of one another: 'Let us,' said they one to another, 'arise and build.' In the reformation conducted by Ezra, we are informed, that 'the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.' And, although, from the extent of the work undertaken by Nehemiah, the people were necessarily 'separated upon the wall, one far from another,' still there were such bonds of union and signals of assembling as to warrant the governor to speak of them in these terms, 'All my servants were gathered thither unto the work.' The union with which they acted is strikingly set forth in this language: 'In what place, therefore, ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us. So we laboured in the work.' In the reformation as well as in the defence and the fellowship of the church, the maxim holds good, 'Two are better than one.' Union is strength. By united efforts, obstacles apparently insurmountable may be overcome; achievements, seemingly impossible, may be effected. And when the enemies of the church combine, it becomes her friends to league together in her defence: when her foes 'take counsel together' how they may best oppose her interests, it is not for those who are seeking the good of Zion to be separated and divided among themselves. They should forget those mutual jealousies and heart-burnings by which they have been dissevered and kept asunder, and, linked together by attachment to a common cause of deep and paramount importance, combine all their

scattered energies in seeking to secure what is valuable and dear to all. There should, it is true, be no compromise of truth; it must be only a doubtful and precarious advantage that can arise from union at the expense of principle. Still, on the other hand, it is not less undoubted, that there ought to be no division or separation which the interests of truth do not peremptorily demand; and certainly it is not every diversity of sentiment that will warrant us in refusing to co-operate with others in promoting a common object. Our reforming forefathers knew how to avail themselves of the principle of union: the National Covenant, the Solemn League, and the productions of the Assembly at Westminster, are noble proofs of the value they attached to united exertion, and of their skill in availing themselves of its influence.

Nor can we avoid here expressing our conviction, that there must be more of this, before much can be done in the way of repairing the wastes of our spiritual Jerusalem. The friends of true religion, the lovers of Zion, the admirers of Scotland's Covenanted Reformation, must learn to act more in concert than they have been hitherto doing; they must get the better of those jealousies which have kept them aloof, and prevented them from meeting to ascertain and remove their unhappy differences; they must make an effort to accomplish, what is surely not impossible—what they are bound by the most solemn obligations to seek,—a close and powerful union on the basis of scripture truth; they must encourage one another's hearts and strengthen one another's hands by mutual co-operation. It is thus that the walls of Jerusalem shall be effectually built up, and that the hearts of Zion's enemies shall be smitten with terror, when they behold her friends presenting a broad, brazen front of combined, determined, and manly resistance to whatever would extend or perpetuate her desolations. O who, looking at the unhappy dissensions that prevail, and reflecting on the blissful consequences of union, would not join in the prayer, 'Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise!' (1 Chron. xvi. 35.)

3. We next remark, that in reforming the church, each will contribute most successfully to the general good by attending to his own immediate interests.—We mean by this something more than that each should attend to his own particular department of the work, as before stated and illustrated. What we intend to express is, that the department in which each may expect most successfully to aid the cause at large, is that which constitutes his own immediate concern, that which forms his most direct personal interest, that which lies nearest to his own door. This observation is suggested by the circumstance that, in the chapter following that in which our text is contained, individuals and bodies of men are represented as having built those parts of the wall which lay over against their own habitations. The language is worthy of particular attention, and suggests, as we conceive, a most important practical lesson:—‘From above the horse gate repaired the priests, *every one over against his house*. After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer, *over against his house*. After him repaired Meshullam, the son of Berechiah, *over against his chamber*.’—(Neh. iii. 28–30.) The fact seems to be, that each built that part of the wall which was opposite his own dwelling, and so minutely was the work distributed that the last-mentioned person, who appears to have been only a lodger, repaired the part which lay in front of the apartment he happened to occupy. The practical instruction deducible from this is, that by attending to our own immediate spiritual interests, we shall best promote the general welfare and reformation of Zion.

In engaging in this work, it is not necessary we should go far from home. It is doubtless right that we cherish enlarged desires, and good wishes, and prayers with regard to the whole race of mankind, and that we prove the sincerity of these by contributing to the promotion of the best interests of mankind at large; but the proper sphere of personal activity, generally speaking, lies near at home, indeed at our very doors. We may do much to advance the cause of Zion, by attending to the concerns of our own souls. By seeking personal salvation, spirituality, and growth in grace; by cherish-

ing religious experience, internal holiness, and communion with God; by exercising the graces of the divine Spirit, and practising the duties of the christian life; by attending, in short, to individual reformation, we may promote the reformation of the church in general, not only in so far as we are ourselves integral parts of that church, but inasmuch as such personal godliness cannot fail to exert a favourable influence on others who are around us.

In like manner may we be of use by attending to the spiritual welfare of our families. These are, properly speaking, our 'houses.' To restrain the corrupt workings of the young, to impart to their minds wholesome scriptural knowledge, to set before them a wise and holy example, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is an eminent mean of doing good to the church. Families are the nurseries of the church. The neglect of domestic piety is one great cause of the desolations of Jerusalem. A revival in this department would seem to be necessary to avert the church's destruction:—'Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord: and *he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers*, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.' The Saviour sent forth his disciples with instructions to enter into the 'houses' of Judea, The apostles paid special and marked attention to 'households.' The glory of the last days stands connected with the pouring out of God's Spirit on 'sons and daughters, servants and hand-maidens.' And the church's deliverance from bondage may well be expected to be promoted by God's 'delivering us from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaks vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood: that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.'

Neighbours and brethren in the same religious fellowship, lie within the sphere of our immediate personal exertion. From contiguity of local residence, there is always a number of persons with whom we come into close and frequent con-

tact; and by taking care to regulate our intercourse with them so as to make a favourable impression, by dropping a word of seasonable advice, by prayerful sympathy in times of sickness and affliction, by faithfully reproofing and discountenancing what is sinful, and by exhibiting at all times a good and consistent example, may we be instrumental in promoting the welfare of the church. Still more by doing our duty to those with whom we are connected in ecclesiastical communion. Not that our christian friendship and intercourse are to be confined to such. But these have certainly a superior claim on our attention, and there are, in this case, facilities of success which can scarcely be expected to exist in others. If we would build the wall of Jerusalem over against our own houses, we must exert all the influence we can upon the members of our own congregations, cherishing a brotherly affection, conveying seasonable instruction, and doing everything in our power to preserve them from error and from vice.

These remarks serve to lay open a most important field of exertion, by the diligent cultivation of which, every one may do essential service to Zion. Yet is it a much neglected field. How careless we often are about our own more immediate spiritual concerns, at the very time that we are all zeal and activity with regard to objects that are more remote! Are there not many who profess a concern for the souls of others who are living apparently in culpable negligence of their own? Are there not many, who, while exerting themselves for the religious instruction of children of other families, suffer their own to run ignorant and wild? Are there not many who make the most laudable efforts on behalf of the heathen of far distant lands, while they show a callous indifference to the spiritual claims of the heathen at home? Are there not many who take the most deep and absorbing interest in the affairs of other religious communities, while the defects and reformation of their own are in a great measure overlooked? Such men act a most absurd and inconsistent part. They are concerned to have the wall of Jerusalem built everywhere but opposite their own dwelling.

Much of this inconsistency, there is reason to fear, exists

both among ministers and people. It is for us, dear fathers and brethren, while we warn our hearers of the danger, to be on our guard against it ourselves. We are, in some respects, still more exposed to it than they are; and oh! it is a solemn and awful reflection to think that we should be constantly exerting all our energies to build the wall against the houses of our people, while it lies prostrate and in ruins against our own. Let both ministers and people give heed to this consideration. It is full of importance in the connexion in which we are now speaking. The cultivation of personal godliness is essential to the church's reformation. In this good work every one must begin at home. Were all to give due attention to this point, the peace, and purity, and prosperity of Zion would soon be secured. And it should stimulate us to activity, when we reflect on the injury that may be done to the church at large, by the existence even of one ungodly individual among her citizens. Supposing that, of old, but one careless Jew had neglected to build opposite his own apartment, while all besides had done the work faithfully and well,—by the single gap thus left, the enemy might have effected an entrance and spoiled the city. So one sinner, one careless, unholy professor, may hinder and destroy much good. It is impossible to calculate what amount of evil may result from the bad conduct of a single individual, nay, from a single bad action. Might it not be a sense of this which led David to mingle his secret exercises respecting his personal fall, with tender concern for the welfare of Zion? He felt keenly that the foul sin of which he had been guilty, was calculated to give the enemy an occasion to reproach; he felt, in short, that by breaking down the wall opposite his own door, he had made a breach by which the destroyer might get in; and, therefore, he could not close his penitential bewailings, without subjoining the fervent prayer, 'Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: BUILD THOU THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM!' (Psalm li. 18.)

4. We only remark farther, on this branch of the subject, that the friends of Zion are not to be deterred from attempting to repair her wastes, by the circumstance that they are few

in number.—Nehemiah was alone when he commenced the work; and few joined him afterwards, compared with those who stood aloof and derided the undertaking. True reformers have, in every age, been a minority. The church itself is but a small society, a little flock; and the number of those within the church who possess the proper spirit of reform is smaller still. But let not this prove a discouragement; let us not say despondingly, ‘By whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.’ No. Let us rather, few though we be, arise and build. Much has been done by few: much has been done by one. Abraham was ‘alone’ when God called him: yet was he made an extensive blessing. ‘I called him *alone*, and blessed him and increased him; for the Lord shall comfort Zion, he will comfort all her waste places.’ Even a single individual, if animated and directed by a proper spirit, may exert a most extensive and salutary influence. The success that has attended the single efforts of a Wickliffe, a Luther, and a Knox, may well encourage others to proceed, even single-handed. A right spirit is of far more importance than great numbers. ‘There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.’ (1 Sam. xiv. 6.) Most animating and instructive, in this connexion, is a fact in Old Testament history. Gideon was not permitted to carry the whole people of Israel against the host of the Midianites. ‘The people are too many,’ said the Lord unto Gideon, ‘for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.’ A diminishing process was resorted to, by means of which they were reduced from thirty-two thousand to ten thousand, the timid and the vacillating being separated from the bold and the firm. But they were still too many; and, by another process, the ten thousand were reduced to three hundred. ‘And the Lord said unto Gideon, by the three hundred that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand!’ (Judges vii. 1–7.) Thus we are taught to see that a society, by being numerically diminished, may be actually increased in moral strength and influence. Thus do we learn to weigh purity, and courage, and zeal against numbers;

to look to quality more than to quantity, for success in the work of the Lord. The chaff is more bulky than the wheat, but the wheat unspeakably transcends in value the chaff. 'What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?' Let us not, then, be faint-hearted because of the small number of those who espouse the cause of true reformation in the church; rather let the few look well to their own character, and principles, and conduct; let them only be faithful, and active, and persevering, and they need not despair of ultimate success in building the old wastes, and repairing the desolations of many generations. 'Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim, better than the vintage of Abiezer?'

II. Let us now consider THE OPPOSITION which Nehemiah and his friends met with in rebuilding Jerusalem.

It does not appear that he needlessly provoked opposition. On the contrary, he took every precaution to avoid it. He got the king of Persia to write to the neighbouring rulers in order to interest them in his favour. The nobles of Judah also wrote letters to some of the heathen governors, with a view to the same object. And he seems himself to have proceeded in the least offensive manner. But all was to little purpose; the most furious opposition arose, and displayed itself in conduct that could not be mistaken.

1. The opposition was rendered formidable by the rank, combination, and motives of those from whom it proceeded.—Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem were persons in authority, under Artaxerxes, the king of Persia. Sanballat was chief or governor of the Cuthites or Samaritans. Tobiah was an Ammonite, but a person of great consideration among the Samaritans, and governor along with Sanballat. It is not so well known who Geshem was; from his being classed with the others, however, it is reasonable to conclude that he was of the same rank, and of course a prefect in Arabia. All the power and influence which these persons possessed individually were brought against Nehemiah and his undertaking.—Nor only this; they combined, banded together, entered into a league to defeat the work on which he was commissioned.

Being persons of different manners and religions, and having a diversity of local interest, they were naturally opposed to one another; but they, nevertheless, united to oppose the repairing of Jerusalem. They merged all their individual differences in opposition to one whom they were disposed to regard as a common enemy. Not the only case, certainly, in which persons, who agree in little or nothing else, have joined most cordially against the cause of truth and righteousness. A notable parallel to the one before us will be recollected by all who are acquainted with the New Testament:—‘And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves.’—Then the *motives* by which these confederate enemies of reformation were actuated were such as to give energy and weight to their hostile movements. As either heathens or Samaritans, they must have felt all the rancour of religious jealousy, which is known to burn with peculiar fury and intensity. To this was joined the strongest self interest, as the lands which they possessed had belonged to the captive Jews, and on the return of the latter they must have been compelled to restore to the rightful owners what they had unrighteously appropriated. And these powerful principles were doubtless combined with no small portion of malice and spite. Under the influence of all these incitements, the opposition Nehemiah encountered could not fail to assume a formidable character; for, when religious animosity is stimulated by worldly interest, and both are seasoned with a large infusion of rancorous envy or ill-will, what efforts will not men make to gain an object, or to put down an enemy?

Not less formidable in all respects is the opposition with which true reformers of the church may lay their account at the present day. There are many Sanballats and Tobiahs still, men of rank, and wealth, and authority, who are concerned in upholding and perpetuating abuses that have crept in; men who care little or nothing for purity of doctrinal sentiment, who are anything but friendly to strictness in ecclesiastical discipline, and who are most unwilling to part with the Erastian power which they happen to have obtained

over the church, especially in the appointment of her ministers; and whose opposition of course to all true reformation, is only what may be expected. The ranks of the enemies of church reform exhibit a motley combination of persons of various sentiments, if not all acting in formal league, at least all bearing directly against a through correction of existing abuses—lordly laymen, ambitious or temporizing ecclesiastics, interested dissentients, and heartless infidels—materials not less discordant than were the Moabites, Ammonites, and Samaritans, who joined against Nehemiah. Nor will the motives, perhaps, on accurate scrutiny, be found greatly different, there being reason to fear that the governing principles, by which some, at least, are actuated, are not free from a tincture of malignity, selfishness, and religious jealousy.

2. The opposition itself consisted in contempt and calumnious misrepresentation, rather than physical violence.—It does not appear that the enemies of Nehemiah had recourse to actual violence, at least at first. From this they might be restrained by fear of the consequences, or by a prudent dread of giving offence to the king, or by the reformers being, in their estimation, too insignificant in point of numbers to call for such a line of procedure. Afterwards, indeed, they made some show of fighting; but their opposition, in general, seems to have been conducted more with the tongue than with the sword. Their words, however, were drawn swords—sharp, cutting, and destructive, breathing the very essence and spirit of persecution.

They treated the reformers with contumelious *reproach*. ‘But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do?’ At a later period they assailed them with still more pointed ridicule. ‘When Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the

heaps of the rubbish which are burnt?'—(Neh. iv. 1–3.) They affected thus to despise both them and their work, to look down upon them with disdain, to hold them in proud derision; they attempted to turn the whole affair into ridicule, and to cover its promoters with stinging sarcasms and unsparing abuse. Nor was there any want of plausible pretexes for such treatment. That such men should ever attempt an undertaking of so great magnitude, appeared calculated to awaken only feelings of scorn. The time it would require to finish it would render, in their opinion, the attempt quite ridiculous. Then there was the want of materials, which would afford them another joke at the expense of the enthusiasts. While the survey of such parts as were completed would be the signal, either for a burst of obstreperous merriment, or for the utterance of some well-turned sneer—'Even that which they build, if a fox go up he shall even break down their stone wall!' It is true, they were not to be moved from their purpose by such weapons; but they felt not less keenly, on this account, their edge; their language shows that they were sensibly alive to the poisoned shafts with which they were fiercely assailed—'Hear, O our God, for we are despised, and turn their reproach upon their own head.'

With the same species of opposition, all who are engaged in the work of the Lord may lay their account. When their enemies may not have it in their power to attack them with physical violence, or when they may be regarded as too insignificant to warrant such a mode of treatment, recourse will be had to mockery and reviling. These are the common weapons of infidels, of heretics, and of the strenuous supporters of things as they are. The introduction of any new measure, the attempt to remove old-established abuses, is sure to bring down a torrent of contumely on the head of its abettors. The godly in general, and the reformers in particular, have, in every period of the church, had to contend with such opposition. 'The upright man,' says Job, 'is laughed to scorn.'—(Job. xii. 4.) 'Thou makest us,' says David, 'a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.'—(Ps. xlv. 13.) 'Our soul is exceedingly filled with

the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud,' (Ps. cxxiii. 4), is language which the people of God have often had occasion to adopt. And the treatment of their Master may give christians an idea of what they have to expect from the world:—'Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him. They bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews.'—(Luke xxiii. 11.—Matt. xxvii. 29.) Ridicule, while a common, is also a powerful weapon. Its might is well known to those who employ it. There is no individual so fortified as not to feel it: it is only a very strong, firm, well-established mind that is capable of withstanding it: we believe indeed, it may safely be affirmed that there are many who could march undaunted to the cannon's mouth, who would nevertheless shrink before the well-directed fire of a contemptuous laugh or sneer. It were well, however, that those who are disposed to calculate on its power as a reason for its use, would remember at the same time that its danger is equal to its strength: the fate of the children of Bethel, who mocked Elisha as he went up by the way, saying, 'Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head,' ought not to be forgotten:—'Then came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.'—(2 Kings ii. 24.)

To scorn there was added *calumnious misrepresentation*. 'Will ye rebel against the king?' Nehemiah's enemies tried to fix upon him and his friends the odious charge of treason: they attempted to hold them up as disaffected to the government. They were well aware, indeed, of the contrary; they could not but know that he acted under the royal commission: but this did not deter them; for, where there is a malicious determination to oppose, men will not stick at falsehood; calumny and misrepresentation will often serve their purpose better than truth, and there are always some ignorant enough to be misled and filled with prejudice by such means.

This is a stale mode of attack, which, unhappily, has not shared the fate of some other old-fashioned things which less deserve it, by falling into disuse. It has been ever a common device of the enemies of religion to represent its friends, and

more especially such as would correct existing abuses, as seditious persons, troublesome, unfriendly to the powers that be; and their reforming projects as only invidious, well-masked schemes of rebellion against the king. It was on this principle that Ahab accused Elijah of 'troubling Israel,' and Micaiah the son of Imlah of 'not prophesying good concerning him, but evil.' (1 Kings xviii. 17; xxii. 7, 8.) Such also was the artful insinuation of Haman to King Ahasuerus against the Jews: 'There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people, *neither keep they the king's laws*; therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them.' (Esther iii. 8.) The prophet Amos met with similar treatment at the hands of Amaziah: 'Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to Jeroboam, king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words.' (Amos vii. 10.) The harmlessness with which Paul and Silas conducted themselves did not prevent their being represented to the rulers of the city in such language as this: 'These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.' (Acts xvii. 6.) Nay, the blessed Saviour himself did not escape the foul charge of rebellion: 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar.—If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend.' (Luke xxiii. 2; John xix. 12.) After this, it is not to be wondered at that our reforming forefathers also in these lands, were commonly branded as factious and disorderly persons. Under this specious though unjust pretext it was that they were cruelly persecuted, outlawed, hunted down, and butchered with merciless ferocity. The same disposition is manifested still towards all who would walk in the same footsteps. The friends of reform, who freely denounce and expose abuses and corruptions, who spare no error however long it may have been held, who exercise forbearance toward no course of maladministration however venerable it may have become by age, are liable still to be

suspected of disaffection to government; suspicions of disloyalty are apt to be entertained against them; while some may even go the length directly to charge them with a lurking design to overthrow altogether the existing order of things. The most violent protestations to the contrary will not be sufficient to prevent them from being eyed with jealousy; to escape which, some have been betrayed, both in language and conduct, into a facile acquiescence and obtrusive loyalty, which savour more of sycophancy and meanness than befits high-minded, independent, free born subjects. Now, my brethren, if this were the place, it would not be difficult to account for all this:—the silent reproof which even the example of the godly lifts up against the men of this world, the firmness with which such refuse to comply with sinful requirements of every sort, and the openness with which they feel themselves bound to testify against all manner of existing evils, explain, without difficulty, how it comes about that they are liable to the charge in question. But it is with the fact, and not its explanation, that we are at present concerned—a fact that constitutes a principal element in the formidable and combined opposition with which such as would repair the old wastes of Jerusalem must lay their account. Open persecution is, indeed, restrained in our day; the sword is sheathed, but the tongue is not silent; the lips of scorn and calumny are not shut; there is no want of contemptuous and abusive language: and against this the friends of ecclesiastical reform must stand prepared to defend themselves.

III. We come now to speak of THE RESISTANCE made by Nehemiah and his associates to the opposition with which they were assailed.

‘Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem.’ Here, let it be remarked, they expressed a firm determination to proceed; took a survey of their encouragements, and bore a decided testimony against their enemies.

1. They expressed a firm determination to proceed.—‘We will arise and build.’ They were nothing daunted by the rank and power of their combined adversaries; for they knew that greater was He that was for them than they that were against them. They penetrated the base and unworthy motives by which they were actuated, and estimated them according to their desert. They disregarded their contempt and scorn, as they would not have felt themselves honoured by their approbation and applause. They left their insidious calumnies and misrepresentations to refute themselves, or were determined to live them down. In this way they were not moved in the slightest degree, or for a single moment, from their holy purpose; they held fast their integrity, and went calmly and unflinchingly forward in the prosecution of their work. Their sense of its value and importance was more than a match for all the opposition with which they met. Nay, the opposition seems only to have had the effect of strengthening their determination.

Such indeed is the natural influence of opposition on a properly constituted mind. Where there are the true principles of moral heroism within, outward hostility will only nerve the energies to greater activity and perseverance. The very attempt to prevent an individual of this temperament from gaining an object on which his soul is fixed, by drawing his attention anew to the subject, tends to occasion a favourable reaction, and puts the mind into that attitude of defence and resistance, by which the character is consolidated and rendered inflexible. They are minds of an inferior class only that yield to opposition, while those of the proper stamp are strengthened and improved by it; just as the tempest which tears up and carries away the tender sapling, only causes the oak on the mountain’s brow to strike deeper its fibres and take a firmer grasp of the soil; or as the blast which extinguishes a taper will only increase the intensity of a powerful fire.*

It is well even to give expression to the inward resolution.

* See Foster on Decision of Character.

Nehemiah and his friends did not content themselves with inwardly determining to proceed; they *said*, 'We will arise and build.' By giving utterance to the feeling of determination we not only let the enemy know on what resistance he may calculate, but we augment the decision and inflexibility of our original purpose, as by yielding, in however slight a degree or for however brief a period, we not only encourage the foe to advance, but proportionably diminish our own power of resistance. All this tends to show how important, among the elements of resistance, is the place which is occupied by resolute determination of purpose: how essential to the character of one who would successfully build up the walls of Jerusalem in troublous times, is that unwavering disposition which is not to be shaken by the rudest assault, that noble intrepidity of soul, the offspring of an enlightened and virtuous mind, which is not to be quelled by the most formidable onset. See to it then, my hearers, that you 'be of good courage, and play the men for your people, and for the city of your God.'

2. They took a survey of their encouragements to continue the work.—This, we apprehend, contributed not a little to their stability. Some of these encouragements were adverted to in their intercourse with one another, and others in directly addressing the enemy: the former, of course, were more immediately designed to animate the hearts of their brethren, and the latter to intimidate those of their foes. But both were of service in contributing to the resistance which they were enabled to make. They took encouragement from the countenance and aid of a gracious providence, which they conceived themselves to enjoy:—'Then I told them,' says Nehemiah, 'of the hand of my God which was good upon me.' The providential opening which appeared in the change on the heart of the king, also afforded them hope: 'as also,' he adds, 'the king's words that he had spoken unto me.' The character, power, and promise of God, formed another source of incitement, as calculated to insure their success:—'The God of heaven he will prosper us.' While the capacity in which they acted, not as selfish adventurers seeking their own

aggrandisement, but as the servants of the Most High intent on the advancement of his honour and glory, seems also to have had great weight in exciting them to resist:—‘We HIS SERVANTS will arise and build.’

This affords an instructive lesson on the subject of resistance to the opposition we may meet with in reforming the abuses of the church. We are not to dwell on the difficulties and discouragements that lie in our way; we are not to allow ourselves constantly to brood, with melancholy feelings, over the hardships of the undertaking and the probabilities of failure. No; we must look at the bright as well as the dark side of the cloud; we must survey the grounds of encouragement; we must give due heed to the circumstances which hold out the prospect, nay, the assurance of success. And what are these circumstances? Why, just those which animated Nehemiah and his friends in withstanding the assault of the confederated Moabites, Ammonites and Samaritans.

Let us take encouragement from the grace and *favour of God*. If the hand of God, which is good, be upon us, what evil can befall us! It is promised; let us seek it earnestly, and rely on it with confidence.—Let us watch the *openings in divine providence* that occur. These, at times, hold out encouraging prospects. The wise observer of the signs of the times will not be inattentive to those propitious occurrences, those favourable turns in public affairs, whether in the dispositions of the great or in political revolutions, which occasionally take place—those breaks in the clouds which indicate a season of approaching sunshine. To neglect such, is not more to violate an express command than foolishly to overlook an abundant source of encouragement.—Let us take a believing view of the *character of God*. It is ‘the King of heaven,’ who is the King and Head of the church. He is possessed of every glorious attribute, able to give undoubted prosperity, and worthy of the most confident reliance. He will not permit his church to be overthrown; he will not deliver up his servants into the hands of their enemies, but will strengthen them to withstand every attack, and crown their efforts with final success. To know that the character of the

God of heaven is pledged to give us prosperity, cannot fail to inspire us with the greatest fortitude.—Let us also take encouragement from the capacity in which we act as *the servants* of the Most High God. If we are indeed his servants, we have nothing to fear. He is not a hard master; he sends none a warfare on their own charges; his interests and his honour are pledged to give his servants success. Such is the import of the promise: ‘The hand of the Lord shall be known toward *his servants*, and his indignation toward his enemies.’ (Is. lxvi. 14.) This is the secret of the distinction put between those who are favourable, and those who are hostile to the work of the Lord: ‘Therefore thus saith the Lord God, behold, *my servants* shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, *my servants* shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, *my servants* shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, *my servants* shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. (Is. lxx. 13, 14.) It is this consideration, too, which inspires confidence in praying to God for success: ‘Let thy work,’ said David, ‘appear unto *thy servants*; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us.’ (Ps. xc. 16, 17.) The same was the plea of Peter and John: ‘And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto *thy servants*, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.’ (Acts iv. 39.) Ah! my hearers, could we only assure ourselves of being the servants of the Lord, we need never despair of being able to resist the most formidable opposition.

The sources of encouragement, to which we have thus briefly adverted, are sufficient to support us under whatever difficulties we may be met with, in repairing the wastes of Jerusalem. Be the obstacles what they may, if we can only take a believing survey of the considerations enumerated, we must feel animated to proceed. We may place these against the nature of the work itself; the extent of the desolation; the frowns of the great; the aspect of the times; and, indeed, against everything that can occur to damp our ardour, or weaken our hands. We have not time to dwell on each of these difficulties by itself; nor is it necessary that we should, the

general principles we have established being of easy application to all. There is one, however, of a very insidious and dangerous nature, which may, perhaps, warrant a more specific notice. We advert to the objection, that this is not the proper time to make special exertions with a view to reformation. As a general principle, we admit the propriety and importance of paying due attention to the times and the seasons: the servants of the Lord should be ‘men that have understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.’ But we must express our conviction that there is no time unfit for the correction of abuses; no prudential calculations will warrant our permitting Jerusalem to remain a day in ruins, without exerting ourselves to repair her waste places. *God’s time* for giving success to the work may not have arrived; but this is not to be the rule of our duty—it is always *our time* to exert ourselves: it may be our time to sow, although the time to reap be at some distance. And it may be profitable for us to consider how the same objection was met, when urged by certain murmurers in the days of Haggai the prophet: ‘The time is not come,’ said the people, ‘the time that the Lord’s house should be built. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways, go up to the mountain and bring wood, *and build the house*; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. Consider now from THIS DAY and upward, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord’s temple was laid, consider it: from THIS DAY will I bless you.’ (Hag. i. 1-8; iv. 18, 19.)

3. They bore a distinct and manly testimony against their enemies.—‘Ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.’ They had no portion with the people of God; they had no right to interfere and hinder his work; they had no memorial to show that they were entitled to retain possession of the lands which they unrighteously held. This was just telling them that they knew their character; that they could not be deceived with regard to them; that they held them to

be strangers, and foreigners, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, whom they were determined to resist to the utmost.

Bearing testimony against the enemies of the church, it thus appears, is one means of resisting their opposition, and promoting reformation. Testimony is to be borne, not merely in favour of truth and godliness, but against error and defection: nor only against error and defection, but against those by whom the errors are held and the defections vindicated and supported. It is not enough that we determine ourselves to do what is right; we must manfully and boldly confront those who do what is wrong, and tell them they have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem. Thus Paul made mention of 'Hymeneus and Philetus,' in connection with the condemnation of their opinions; and Christ himself in his warning to the Church of Pergamos, said, 'So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.'

Such testimony-bearing serves a variety of important purposes. It exposes the true character of the opposition, which is liable to be concealed under the cloak of zeal for truth and charity; but this tears off the mask, and lets it be seen in all the hideousness of its native deformity. It tends, also, to vindicate ourselves, to draw a broad line of demarcation betwixt us and the enemy, and to secure us against all risk of being confounded with them or their cause. It is fitted, moreover, to do good to the persons themselves; by causing them to think, repent, and reform their evil ways, it may, with the blessing of God, prove the means of reclaiming them and bringing them over to the good way. 'Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend: but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.' In these ways may testifying against the enemies of the church, after the example of Nehemiah, prove a means of promoting her best interests, and of assisting her friends in resisting opposition. It ought therefore to possess a place in the creed and practice of the church. It is certainly not agreeable to the spirit of the age. But the facile complaisance and simpering insipidity, which the men of these days have designated *charity*,

and in the use of which they would rather flatter and cajole than testify against the enemies of Zion, is, notwithstanding, not worthy to be compared with the stern, straightforward, manly honesty of the olden time, which would tell them openly and boldly, 'Ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem.'

Such, fathers and brethren, are some few hints respecting the work in which we are required to be engaged—the opposition we may expect in doing this work—and the manner in which the opposition may be resisted.

Let us, in conclusion, seriously reflect on the duty to which we are called in our day. We are to rebuild Jerusalem. The church wears, at the present time, the appearance of a dilapidated city; her towers, bulwarks, and palaces, are more or less in ruins. Long and extensive are her desolations. Mournful is the aspect she presents to a patriotic Israelite, whether in point of doctrine, discipline, or fellowship. Yet we must not think of erecting a new church: our business is to *repair* not to *destroy*, to 'build the old wastes, to raise up the former desolations, to repair the desolations of many generations.' Let us ascertain what these are; let us make ourselves acquainted with their nature and extent; and let us set ourselves to the work with ardent zeal, holy fervour, indomitable courage, and determined perseverance.

Let no opposition discourage us. Let nothing cause us either to suspend our exertions, or relax our energies. Rather may we calculate on contempt, and calumny, and the frowning disapprobation of men of distinction in the world. It was so, we have seen, of old; it was so in the case of the primitive saints; it was so in the case of the Saviour himself: and what right have we to expect exemption? Our well-meant schemes will be turned into ridicule—our efforts and doings will be treated with consummate scorn—the sneer of 'What do these feeble Jews?' will be reproduced and repeated, though perhaps in a new form, with all its ancient virulence and malignity—and our principles and our practice will have the effect of exposing us to the suspicion of disaffection

to the government and rebellion against the king. But to these, and such like things, we have been too long accustomed, to be either much surprised, or greatly moved by them.

Let us see to it, then, that we meet all this opposition with a firm and manly resistance. Let us take up all the elements which entered into that of Nehemiah and his friends. Let us show an unflinching determination to proceed. Let us survey with faith our many grounds of encouragement. Let us bear a decided testimony against all who would oppose us. Let us cry aloud and spare not. Few though we be, we must not be disheartened. Let us act in concord with all who have an honest desire to build up the walls of Jerusalem. And let the assured prospect of success cheer us amid our laborious and self-denied exertions. Yes; the walls of Jerusalem shall be rebuilt; her towers shall be re-established: her palaces shall be refitted, and filled with the devout and holy worshippers of Zion's King. The faith, the worship, the beautiful order of the house of the Lord, shall be revived in all their original purity and simplicity. Every abuse shall be rectified; every plant which our heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. We, like Nehemiah, may not be permitted to see the work completed; but, like him, we may do something to assist and help it forward in our day. Let us do what we *can*; God requires nothing more. Should there, as will probably be the case, when we die, remain many evils unreformed, let us retire from the scene of activity with an eye turned upward to him who will see to the accomplishment of his own work in the end; and, while each for himself presents the brief but expressive prayer of Nehemiah, 'Remember me O my God for good,' let there mingle with our dying accents the patriotic supplication of the man after God's own heart,—'DO GOOD IN THY GOOD PLEASURE UNTO ZION; BUILD THOU THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM.'

It were unpardonable to conclude this discourse without remarking that the times in which our lot is cast are *reforming times*. A spirit has sprung up to correct abuses, theoretical and practical, political, moral, and religious. Some of these reforms may not be of the decided character we would

wish. But still that there is a leaning toward reform, a distinct pointing in the direction in which it lies, it would argue perverse blindness not to perceive, and pitiful prejudice and ingratitude not to acknowledge with delight. We see it in questions that have been entertained in the high councils of the nation; we see it in measures that have been agitated in ecclesiastical assemblies; we see it in the extensive combination that has been entered into against a certain enormous and parent vice. These are favourable indications of the spirit of the age, redeeming features in the character of the times, to which, surely, they cannot be indifferent on whose ecclesiastical banner the word REFORM holds so conspicuous a place. Who would not rejoice in them? Who would not hail them as tokens for good; as the early dawnings of a brighter and more resplendent day than the world has ever yet beheld, when the smiles of holiness, peace, and liberty, and joy shall succeed to the dark frowns of penury, and tyranny, and war, when iniquity as ashamed shall hide its face, and when Jerusalem shall become a praise in the whole earth? Spirit of the Lord! Breath of heaven! fan the latent spark, and hasten the glorious era.

Nor is it unworthy of notice here, that one of the best signs of the near approach of this desired period, will be just a general disposition to act on the principle involved in the example we have been considering. The sign that the Lord is about to arise and have mercy upon Zion, is, that his servants take pleasure in her stones and favour the dust thereof. 'The time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.' Hear this, ye professing servants of the Most High! and see that ye exemplify it. O take pleasure in the rubbish and the stones of Zion. This is at once your interest and your honour. The patriot who lingers amid the ruins of his country's capital, and covers himself with the dust of her desolations, is a more noble character far than he who, getting enamoured by the splendours of the land of his exile, forgets the claims of his native soil. The Jew, skulking affectionately among the fragments of the temple at Jerusalem, as if incap-

able of leaving it, is surely more to be admired than if found luxuriating contented amid the unscathed edifices of Babylon. Be it yours, then, to abide by the church even in her desolations. Value more the remains of Scotland's Covenanted Reformation, for which you are permitted to contend in your present state, than all the gorgeous forms or tempting emoluments of corrupt established systems. O forsake not the city of your God in her waste and desolate condition! Sit down amid her venerable fragments, determined that nothing shall induce you to leave her till she shall be thoroughly repaired, and restored to her pristine glory, magnificence, and usefulness. And, while you neglect to work, omit not to pray, but raise to heaven the touching appeal of the captives:—
‘ Our holy and our beautiful house where our fathers praised thee is burnt up with fire; and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain for these things, O Lord? Wilt thou hold thy peace and afflict us very sore? Arise, O God, and plead thine own cause.’

SERMON VI.

THE FIRST PIOUS YOUTH.

Preached in Lady Glenorchy's Church, Edinburgh, Feb. 12, 1843, by desire of the University Missionary Association.

MATTHEW xxiii. 35.

'Righteous Abel.'

THE mind of man delights to go back to the origin of things. Not content with surveying the present, or prying into the future, it plunges into the dark and shadowy regions of remote antiquity. Hence it is, that the first step in any great undertaking, the first circumstance leading to some important discovery, the first event giving rise to the foundation of some vast empire, the laying of the first stone in some splendid edifice, the first bubbling spring in which originates some mighty river, are all invested with a deep and peculiar interest.

In ordinary cases, however, the researches of the antiquary are subject to this disadvantage, that they are attended with great uncertainty. They lie in a quarter of dim obscurity, where the fragments of truth are apt to be deeply buried amid the rubbish of fiction, and where he must often push his way by the faint glimmerings of conjecture rather than the clear light of history.

It is otherwise with the student of scripture. He prosecutes his investigations with this double advantage, that the record he consults, while carrying him back to the remotest antiquity, even to the very first step in 'the march of time,' is divinely inspired; so that he proceeds under the guidance

of Him who is at once the Author of all things, and the Light of the world.

The initial chapters of the book of Genesis derive not a little of their interest from the circumstance now stated. They disclose to us the origin of our world. They place everything connected with the commencement of the present system of things in the clear sunshine of heaven. They make us acquainted with the first step in the creation of a material universe; with the first man and the first woman, the original progenitors of the vast family of mankind; with the first moral constitution under which it pleased God to place human beings; with the first transgression, by which guilt, corruption, misery, and death, with all their desolating effects, were introduced into our world; with the first promise of mercy to fallen man, welling in spontaneous effusion from the fountain of redeeming love in the bosom of God; and with the first specimen of a redeemed and renewed creature, saved by grace from the moral ruins of human apostacy.

Do you inquire, my hearers, who was the first specimen of a gracious character? You have the answer in our text—‘Righteous Abel.’

Abel was the second son of Adam and Eve. His name, which signifies *vanity*, may be regarded either as a historical memorandum of his weakly constitution, or as a prophetic intimation of his sudden and untimely end. Or if, as some conjecture, it is to be understood as expressive of the little account made of him by his parents at his birth, it serves, especially when contrasted with the name given to their first-born—‘Cain,’ signifying *acquisition* or *possession*—to show the blindness of parental partiality, and the uncertainty of human hopes.—The epithet ‘righteous,’ or *just*, marks the most interesting and distinctive feature in the character of the individual. It refers, not to common justice or equity, to mere honesty between man and man, but, from what is said of him elsewhere, as may afterwards appear, it points him out as justified before God, that is to say, delivered from the curse of the broken covenant, and accepted in the sight of the Almighty moral Governor.

Permit me, my young friends, to direct your attention to 'righteous Abel,' the first youth who embraced and practised true religion; whom it may not be uninteresting or unprofitable to contemplate in some of the more prominent features of his character and history.

I. And, first of all, view him as the first of the human family whose justification by faith is clearly revealed.

A state of justification being the most important into which a fallen moral creature can be brought, no slight degree of interest must attach to the first individual in whom such a state was exemplified. On the principle adverted to in the introduction, in proportion as value is attached to the character of a saint—a subject of divine grace, a child of God, must be the degree of interest felt in the first by whom this most enviable of all characters was ever borne. It is commonly, indeed, believed, that both Adam and Eve were justified persons, and it is no part of our object to dispute this opinion. They had revealed to them the promise of the Seed of the woman who was to bruise the serpent's head, and there is nothing made known in scripture that would lead us to conclude that they refused to act faith in this blessed revelation. But at what time their justification took place, whether before or after that of their second son, we are not informed: For anything we are told, the sovereignty of God may have been illustrated in giving the child precedence to the parent, in conformity with the principle on which he is so frequently pleased to act in regard to the arrangements of grace: 'The first shall be last, and the last first.' Indeed, even the fact of our first parent's conversion is far from being definitely revealed. He may have given evidence of it during his life sufficient to place it beyond all doubt; but this evidence it has not pleased God to put on record in his word. There is nothing said about it in the scriptures. They preserve a fearful and instructive silence on the subject. When we turn to the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, which contains a catalogue of primitive saints, arranged in chronological order, we find that the name of Adam is not there.

As he was the first sinner, we naturally expect to find him held forth as the first believer; but in this we are disappointed. The omission may have been designed to mark his presumption, to commemorate his guilt, to point out the displeasure of God at his sin, or rather, perhaps, to call off our attention from the *first*, and direct it to the *second* Adam, as he through whom alone man's primitive pre-eminence is to be restored. But whatever may have been the reason, the fact of the omission in question is undoubted. The first individual of the human family, of whose saintship we are directly assured, is Abel.*

Of the justification of Abel, we have the most satisfactory proof. It is not obscurely intimated in the very epithet applied to him in our text. He was 'righteous,' that is to say, he stood right with regard to the law of God; he was righteous evangelically, through an interest in the righteousness of the Seed of the woman; he was righteous personally, in consequence of the Holy Spirit implanting the inward principle and securing the outward manifestation of true holiness; and, contrasted with his own former condition, or with the natural virtue of equity which might be possessed by others, he was comparatively righteous.—His being a believer, puts this matter beyond all doubt. We are assured that, 'by *faith*, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.' (Heb. xi. 4.) The faith of Abel, we may safely conclude from the other examples of the exercise of the same principle in the chapter in which it is recorded, was true saving faith, the faith of God's elect; it was faith in the covenant character of Jehovah, in the promises of the divine word in general, in that of the Seed of the woman in particular; in short, it was faith in the assurance of pardon and eternal salvation through the Lamb of God who should appear in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Now, faith and justification are inseparable. It is as impossible to believe without being justified, as to be justified without believing.

* The saintship of Eve is *implied* in the address of Jehovah to the serpent: 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman.' But there is nothing in these words to determine the time of her conversion.

‘Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation *through faith* in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that *believeth* in Jesus. Therefore we conclude, that *a man is justified by faith* without the deeds of the law.’ (Rom. iii. 24-28.) There has been but one method of saving sinners, from the beginning; and that method is what an apostle describes as ‘the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.’ (Rom. i. 17.) The evidence of Abel’s justification is rendered complete by direct divine testimony to the fact. ‘He obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.’ (Heb. xi. 4.) The divine approbation of his gifts was the evidence of his righteous character. How this approbation was intimated we shall see afterwards; it is enough for us at present to know that there was such an intimation. Nor let it for one moment be forgotten, that the connection between the two was that of *evidence* alone, not that of cause and effect. It was not because of his presenting gifts which approved themselves to God that Abel was justified; but his being justified was evinced by the acceptance of his gifts. This is the only view of the matter which accords with scripture doctrine; and it is worthy of remark that it is fully borne out and illustrated by the order in which these things are introduced in the sacred history. ‘The Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering.’ (Gen. iv. 4.) Not first to the offering, and then to the offerer; but to the offerer first in the exercise of sovereign grace, and afterwards to his offering as the appropriate fruit and evidence of his character. It was not the acceptableness of the offering which gave rise to the offerer’s righteous character, it was the righteous character of the offerer which gave rise to the acceptableness of his offering.

Such, then, is the first and most interesting light in which we are required to contemplate righteous Abel. He was justified by faith, through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had no righteousness of his own on which he

could rely as a ground of merit in the sight of the righteous moral Governor. The righteousness of Christ, embracing his satisfaction to the penalty and obedience to the precept of the law, was imputed to him in sovereignty, and received by faith. He was thus brought into the most desirable state; all his sins pardoned freely and for ever, and his person graciously accepted as righteous, he was regarded as standing right with respect to the law,—not only free from its curse, but clear of all its claims as a covenant of works, and dealt with as if all the righteousness of the Surety had been his own, as if he had fulfilled in his own person every condition of that original moral constitution under which man was placed. The state was one replete with consolation. No legal terrors, no enemies, no afflictions, no temptations, not even death and judgment might alarm him; and, when making approaches to God in acts of devotion, or when looking forward to heaven, it was fitted to fill him with joy and peace and the most blissful assurance. ‘Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.’ (Rom. viii. 33, 34.)

Nor let it be supposed that at that early period there could be no proper acquaintance with Him whose righteousness forms the sole ground of a sinner’s justification. We are not concerned to determine the amount of knowledge on this subject which was enjoyed by the patriarchs. It is enough that ‘the Seed of the woman’ had been revealed. Such revelation, however scanty, the Spirit of all grace could render efficacious to the soul, and without his agency no extent of inspired truth can be of any avail. The faith of the patriarchal saints was a vigorous and far-seeing faith. It enabled them to overleap intervening years, and fix on the fulness of the time when God should send his own Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. By it they not only embraced the immediate promises that were addressed to them, but they beheld afar off the day of the coming Messiah and rejoiced.

While called thus to contemplate, with interest, Abel as the first justified individual of the family of Adam, it is comforting to know that he was not the last. The saints may be comparatively few, but absolutely they are a multitude which no man can number. The righteousness with which *he* was invested has proved sufficient for thousands since ; nor is its merit in any degree impaired at the present time. See to it, then, my dear hearers, that you obtain an interest in it yourselves. Seek that you, like Abel, may be 'righteous' also. You have the same ground on which to rest, and that ground more fully revealed, so as to render the neglect or rejection of it more inexcusable. Renounce all dependence on a righteousness of your own. Consist of what it may, you must cast it away from you. You must count your best righteousnesses as filthy rags, if you would put on the righteousness of Christ. Had you 'all the faith of the patriarchs, and all the zeal of the prophets, and all the good works of the apostles, and all the sufferings of the martyrs, nay, had you all the quenchless brightness, and matchless purity, and glowing devotion of seraphs,' you must part with all as a foundation of acceptance, and repose implicitly and alone on the merits of Jesus Christ. Say with Paul, 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: and do count all things but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' Thus shall you 'receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of your salvation;' and be stimulated to exclaim, 'Our mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day, for we know not the numbers thereof.'

II. View righteous Abel as the first who is distinctly spoken of as offering unto God an acceptable sacrifice.

We are apt to associate sacrificing so closely with the Levitical economy, as to receive the impression that its origin was coeval with that dispensation. But the records of heathen

nations, and certain passages in the law of Moses itself, contain abundant proof that it existed long prior to the period in question. Some particular forms of the sacrificial rite are among the things prohibited by the Jewish legislator, which is itself decisive of its previous existence; and when the Jews took possession of the Holy Land, they found the practice existing amongst its aboriginal inhabitants. There is ground to suppose that it can be traced as far back as to the entrance of sin into our world. How else are we to account for the coats of skin with which our fallen progenitors were clothed? The animals to which these skins originally belonged, must either have been slain for the purpose of furnishing materials for the garments, which, considering that there were so many other expedients that might have been had recourse to without inflicting death on an innocent sentient creature, is extremely improbable;—or they must have been killed for nourishment, which is at variance with the fact that we have no intimation of a grant of animal food to man until after the deluge;—or they must have died of themselves, which is by no means likely, when we remember that they had been so lately created in a state of perfection;—or they must have been put to death in the way of sacrifice, which, failing all other suppositions, is the only reasonable or plausible conjecture by which we can explain the facts of the case. Very high, however, as is the presumption with which we are thus furnished in favour of the antiquity of this rite, it is only presumption or conjecture after all. The first decisive fact in point, is presented in these words:—‘And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof: and the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.’ (Gen. iv. 4.)

The offering which Abel presented bore a marked distinction, in several respects, from that of Cain. The substance, for one thing, was different. It was not the fruit of the ground, but firstlings of his flock; it was not a vegetable, but an animal offering; it admitted, which the other did not, of substitutionary suffering; it expressed not merely a sense of gratitude, but a conviction of guilt; it was, in short, not

eucharistical, but expiatory in its very nature. Then, again, it was offered in faith,—‘By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.’ Of the nature of this faith we have already spoken; and we advert to the circumstance now, simply as furnishing a distinctive peculiarity of the sacrifice in question. But the chief distinction arose from its acceptance. It was an acceptable offering. This is the point on which we would fix attention. The thing is fully attested. The language,—‘The Lord had *respect* unto Abel and to his offering, is itself conclusive. The whole history of the case assures us, that Abel ‘did well;’ and it is written, ‘If thou doest well, shalt thou not be *accepted*?’ His offering, too, is pronounced by an inspired writer, ‘a more excellent sacrifice’ —*πλεονα θυσιαν*—than the other; something more full, complete, perfect; much more of the nature of a sacrifice; not in respect of its matter or substance only, but in regard to the divine appointment, as expressive of man’s sinful condition, and as pointing forward to Christ.

The acceptance of Abel’s sacrifice is put beyond all doubt by the words—‘by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, *God testifying of his gifts.*’ Somehow or other, the Almighty significantly intimated his approbation of Abel’s offering. Of the mode in which this was done, we are not informed, and consequently there have been various conjectures on the subject. It is obvious, that the testimony of God did not consist only in an inward impression conveyed to the offerer’s mind by some secret preternatural means, for the thing was known to Cain. There must, therefore, have been some outward visible expression by which the fact was signified to others, as well as to the person himself. One (Michaelis) is of opinion, that the divine approbation was marked by Abel’s superior success afterwards in his lawful avocation as a keeper of sheep, while Cain’s labours in the field were singularly unproductive. This is rather a fanciful conjecture. Others have supposed that a stream of light, like that of the Shechinah of old, rested on the offering. And others, that the intimation in question was given by fire coming down from heaven and consuming the sacrifice. The last is by far the most plau-

sible supposition. It is supported by many eminent writers,* and by the analogy of the divine procedure in other cases of a similar description. When Aaron presented a sin-offering for himself and the people, we are told, 'There came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat.' (Lev. ix. 24.) When Gideon was solicitous to know whether he had found grace in the sight of the Lord, and asked a sign to that effect, he was directed to take flesh (the flesh of a sacrifice) and unleavened cakes, and lay them upon a rock, 'and there rose up fire out of the rock and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes.' (Judges vi. 21.) When, in the days of Elijah the prophet, a distinction was put between the worshippers of Baal and the worshippers of Jehovah the God of Israel, the decisive intimation in favour of the latter was this, 'The fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice.' (1 Kings xviii. 38.) With respect to the extraordinary offering presented at the dedication of the temple, it is said, 'Now, when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices.' (2 Chron. vii. 1.) Add to these, that the word translated *accept*, signifies *reduce to ashes*, in reference to the mode in which the acceptance of a sacrifice was signified. 'Remember all thy offerings, and accept (marg., *turn to ashes*) thy burnt sacrifice.' (Ps. xx. 3.)

In whatever way the intimation was made, the fact of the divine acceptance of Abel's sacrifice is undoubted. Nor is there much room to hesitate with respect to the point on which the preference in question turned. Some have indeed fixed on the substance or quality of the offering, others on the state before God of the offerer, and others on his immediate frame of mind; and, doubtless, in all these respects there was a marked distinction between the two. But does not the whole resolve itself into the one brother being a believer, and

* Grotius, Leclerc, Rosenmüller, Delany, and many of the Jewish Rabbis. The same is the idea adopted by Milton—

'His offering soon propitious fire from heaven

Consumed with nimble flame and grateful steam.'—*Par. Lost.*

the other an unbeliever? It is from this that all the respective points of difference take their rise. Had Cain only possessed Abel's faith, we cannot doubt that he would have presented Abel's offering; his state before God should have been that of a justified person; and his frame of mind at the time, instead of being that of a self-righteous infidel trusting for acceptance to his own merits, should have been characterised by a humble, self-abasing dependence on that all-sufficient sacrifice of which the act he performed was prefigurative.

The preceding remarks regarding Abel's offering demonstrate the divine origin of primitive sacrifice. The very substance of it goes far to establish this point; inasmuch as, apart from divine appointment, it could never have been supposed that the destruction of an unoffending animal could prove acceptable to God. Nothing but duty, as has been remarked, could make it acceptable; and nothing but a divine command could make it duty. The same inference results from its being offered in faith. Faith has always a respect to a divine revelation. Such is the case with regard to the other instances of faith with which that of Abel stands associated in the sacred record. If Noah in building the ark, and Abraham in leaving his country, and Moses in rescuing the Israelites,—all of whom are said to have done these things by faith,—acted in obedience to divine instructions, on what principle can we be warranted to conclude that what Abel did by faith was not done also in compliance with a divine command? Nor can we otherwise account for its acceptance. The complacent respect of God, unscrupulously and instantly conveyed, never could have occurred, had the act been a suggestion of fallen reason, a mere human invention. A superstitious, a gratuitous act of will-worship never could have found favour in the sight of the Lord. 'In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.'*

* Matt. xv. 9. Such as may wish to investigate more fully the subject of the divine origin of primitive sacrifice, may consult, on the negative side, Benson's *Hulsean Lectures for 1822* (Lect. x., xi., xii.); and, on the affirm-

The act of worship thus performed by Abel was a most important and significant one. All the sacrifices of divine institution pointed forward to Christ. This, indeed, was their proper use and design. Short of being a prefigurative memorial of the way in which God had determined to save the life of man which had been forfeited by sin, no explanation can be given of the institution of the sacrificial rite at all consistent with the wisdom or the goodness of God. It at once set before man the evil of sin, the punishment sin deserved, and the mode in which sin was to be taken away. It held up to view, in the most striking light, the fall and the recovery, the loss and the salvation, the death and the life, of the human family. And, when the utter inadequacy of a mere irrational animal to atone for the guilt of a moral creature is taken into the account, it appears undoubted, that the institution had a respect to a greater, a more excellent sacrifice, afterwards to be offered,—even that of the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, without reference to which the rite in question can be looked upon only as a heartless drudgery,—a useless, unmeaning, burdensome ceremony.

Such, then, was the first acceptable act of worship performed by fallen man. When man had sinned, he could no longer approach God but through a sacrifice. How expressive is this fact of the necessity of an atonement to secure intercourse between sinners of the human family and the righteous Jehovah; and how presumptuous the conduct of such as venture to draw near to him on any other footing. The distinction between the sacrifice of Abel and the offering of Cain, fitly sets forth that which subsists between the worship presented to God by true saints and that presented by self-righteous formalists. The offering of Cain was essentially eucharistical; it was adapted to a mere creature; it only recognised dependence on God, and breathed forth the homage of a naturally grateful heart. It had nothing in it that recognised the existence of sin. It might have been presented

native, Delany's *Revelation Examined*, and Faber's most satisfactory *Treatise*. An outline of the argument will be found in the Author's volume (part i. sect. iv.) on *Atonement and Intercession*.

in paradise before the serpent had found an entrance there. The sacrifice of Abel, on the other hand, was decidedly of an expiatory character ; it was the offering, not of a creature merely, but of a fallen creature, a sinner ; it intimated not only that the offerer was dependent, but that he was lost ; it signified, not that he needed to be preserved so much as that he needed to be saved ; it breathed not simple gratitude but conscious guilt and self-abasing penitence and humble faith ; it spoke, in short, of sin and pardon and a Saviour to come, without the shedding of whose blood there could be no remission. Now, the same essential distinction still obtains between evangelical and false religion. It is too well known that, in the religious exercises of those who entertain legal sentiments, man's character as a sinner needing salvation through the merits of another, is very imperfectly recognised. Adoration of the natural perfections of the Deity, and thanksgivings for natural bounties, predominate over acknowledgments of the divine holiness and justice, and deep-drawn confessions of penitential sorrow. More is apt to be said of the *dignity* than of the degradation of man ; and, if the 'pardon of sin for Christ's sake' is introduced at all, it is rather as a sort of decent tribute to christianity at the end, than as a sentiment the spirit of which pervades the whole exercise. Such persons are not backward to represent the plan on which they proceed as more *rational* than that of others. We venture to presume that Cain was disposed to do the same ; and, doubtless, many plausible things he could have put forth, by way of showing how much more reasonable it was to offer to a God of goodness the fruits of the ground, than to think of appeasing his displeasure by committing a violent outrage on a poor harmless sentient animal. But, my brethren, in the matter of divine worship, the question is not, what is rational, but what is appointed ; not, what to our weak and fallible minds may appear to be reasonable, but what has received the sanction and institution of Jehovah. Nor let it be for a moment forgotten, that between what man may deem rational and what God has seen meet to authorise, between evangelical and legal worship, there will be found to

be all the difference at the last that there was between the sacrifice of Abel and that of Cain,—the difference, namely, between acceptance and rejection! ‘The Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect.’ Ah! what a heaven-wide distinction is here!

Let me entreat you, my dear brethren, in imitation of righteous Abel, to give due attention to the worship of God. The sacrifices you are required to offer are not of the same substance as his; not beasts of the field, nor burnt-offerings for the sin of the soul. But you are expected to lay on the altar of God spiritual sacrifices,—your persons, your services, the sacrifices of a broken and a contrite heart, of prayer and of praise; with such sacrifices God is well pleased. In presenting these, you must have a respect to Christ, not looking forward to him, as did Abel, in the light of the Messiah to come, but looking back upon him as he who came in the fulness of the time, and has already put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and in whom alone either our persons or our services can find acceptance with God. You must, of course, present these sacrifices in faith; for without faith it is impossible to please God, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Acting thus, your deeds of spiritual worship cannot fail of acceptance, whereby you also may obtain witness that you are righteous, God testifying of your gifts.

III. We may next regard righteous Abel as the first martyr;—the first who suffered death for the sake of religion.

The death of Abel, by the murderous hand of his wicked brother, is familiar to all. But it is questionable whether sufficient attention is paid to the prompting cause: ‘Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? *Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.*’ (1 John iii. 12.) Here we have it distinctly given. Cain hated the holy image of God in his brother Abel; he disliked his brother’s piety, and humility, and faith; he was angry at the success and acceptance of his brother’s oblation. These malevolent feelings were fostered

and indulged, until they settled down into a determined purpose to take the life of his brother; and when a fit opportunity occurred, the cruel design was carried into effect. We are not concerned here with the question, how much time elapsed between the presenting of the offerings and the perpetration of this hellish revenge; it might be longer or it might be shorter: it is with the foul deed as a fact that we have at present to do. 'Cain talked with his brother,'—either in the way of angry strife or of pretended friendship;—'and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.'

'—— He fell; and, deadly pale,
Groaned out his soul, with gushing blood effused.'

It was not a common, but a violent death. It was not an accident, it was a deliberate act. It was not in consequence of a personal quarrel and in fair combat, but the deed of an assassin, prompted by malicious and envious hostility to moral and religious excellence. Cain was thus the first persecutor, and Abel the first martyr. And, if what was said under a foregoing particular is borne in mind, it will appear that Abel died, not only in the cause of truth and religion, but of gospel truth and evangelical religion, in opposition to false and self-righteous views. The verse in which our text lies, speaks of his blood as 'righteous blood,'—blood shed in the cause of righteousness, and classes him with those 'prophets and wise men and scribes' who at different periods have been 'killed and crucified, scourged in the synagogues, or persecuted from city to city.'

As martyrdom necessarily implies, Abel was a witness. 'By it, he, being dead, yet speaketh.' The antecedent to the pronoun *it*, in this passage, has been variously understood, as referring to Abel's sacrifice, to his faith, or to his blood. However this point may be determined by critics, it is agreeable to what is said in other parts of scripture to understand his blood as bearing witness. That blood has a voice, which has been heard uttering its testimony for thousands of years, and which is still loud and definite as ever: 'The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.' Nor

is it retribution only which his blood proclaims. When it is said, 'The blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than that of Abel,' we are inclined to think that it is the blood of Abel himself, not that of his sacrifice, which is here compared with the blood of Christ.* At the time when the apostle wrote, the blood of beasts, which had been so freely shed under the law, had become dumb; but there was a blood still, which, like that of Abel, was not dumb, and never should be so—a blood which, in contrast with that which cried for vengeance, implored mercy and forgiveness even on those by whom it was shed. Abel's blood, then, had a voice; it has a voice still; and 'by it, he, being dead, yet speaketh.'

And to what does the blood of martyred Abel bear witness? It testifies, in particular, to a fallen and guilty world, four grand gospel truths. His 'righteous blood,' shed in the cause of righteousness, proclaims unequivocally that sinful man can be justified only by the righteousness of Christ; this cardinal doctrine of evangelical religion it announces in the clearest and most unfaltering manner. It testifies, moreover, that faith is necessary to a sinner's justification—faith in the merits of a mediator. It tells, not less plainly, that no acceptable offering, of worship or otherwise, can ever be presented to God, but through an atoning sacrifice. And it makes known, without all peradventure, that God has had but one method of saving sinners from the fall even until now; that the ground of a sinner's hope, the medium of man's intercourse with heaven, has been one and the same in all ages; so that the first subject of saving grace and the last who shall find mercy of the Lord, may mingle their voices in one harmonious ascription of praise to the one Redeemer through eternity. These prominent features of the first martyr's creed have formed favourite articles in the testimony of the witnesses in every period. Dear are they to the hearts of the saints, and worthy of being sealed with the best blood that ever flowed in human veins.

Although the first, Abel was not the last martyr. Such

* This view is supported by Owen, Michaelis, Moses Stuart, and Bloomfield.

there have been in every age. God has never left himself without witnesses; and of the testimony of the witnesses it has ever been the lot to be persecuted. The Jews of old were persecuted by the heathen for testifying the unity of God, in opposition to the manifold objects of polytheistic idolatry. The primitive christians were persecuted by the Jews for maintaining the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. The protestants of continental Europe were persecuted by the votaries of the Roman pontiff, for adhering to the bible as a perfect rule of faith, and refusing to submit to the dictation of the pope. Our reforming ancestors in Scotland were persecuted for asserting the spiritual independence of the church of Christ, and the sole headship of the Redeemer. It remains that a distinct and open testimony be borne by many to the universal moral supremacy of the Messiah—to his headship over the nations as well as the church, and to the duty of civil rulers to acknowledge his sovereignty, and have a supreme regard to his glory; and, when a number sufficient to awaken the jealousy of men in power shall have adopted this testimony, small ground is there to expect that it will not be persecuted also.

You need not to be told how freely the blood of the saints was shed during the struggle for reformation in our own land. That blood has still a voice. It not only cries to heaven for vengeance, but proclaims to all them that dwell on the earth the principles of that glorious cause in which it was shed. It tells of salvation by grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; of the sole authority of the holy scriptures in matters of religion, and the right of all men to use them and to take from them their religious opinions; of the sole headship of Christ over the church, and the church's consequent independence of civil control in all ecclesiastical concerns; of the headship of the Redeemer over the nations, and the consequent duty to conduct civil affairs on religious principles, and subordinate them to the interests of Zion; of the right to refuse submission to the powers that be, when they invade the prerogatives of the Redeemer and tyrannically oppress the ministers and members of his church; and of the importance

and obligation of public vows, as means of professing, advancing, and maintaining the cause of truth and godliness in the world. In respect of this blood, how truly may it be said of the martyrs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that *by it, they, being dead, yet speak!* Yes; their lives, recorded by the pen of faithful contemporaries; their principles and struggles, incorporated with the honest history of their times; the traditions, still told around many a Scottish fireside, of their piety and steadfastness, their untiring perseverance and unshrinking fortitude; the scenes of their worship and their warfare, hallowed by their religious meetings and their patriotic resistance to tyrannical power, still sought after and visited by the devoted admirers of bravery and piety; the very relics of their torture, their tattered and blood-stained banners emblazoned with CHRIST'S CROWN AND COVENANT, and their parchment deeds of many signatures carefully preserved in the archives of the antiquary; nay, the rudely-carved stones, which, whether in the crowded grave-yard or in the solitary moor, still mark the spot where repose their ashes—these all speak, loudly, eloquently, solemnly, of the character, and doings, and sufferings, and spirit of men, of whom the world was not worthy; men, some of whom were honoured to act a conspicuous part in conducting the public affairs of their country, others of whom 'lived unknown, till persecution dragged them into fame, and chased them up to heaven,' but of all of whom it may be said—and never more truly than now—

' Their names shall nerve the patriot's hand,
 Upraised to save a sinking land;
 And piety shall learn to burn
 With holier transport o'er their urn.'

If you would be followers of righteous Abel, my young friends, you must cherish the spirit of martyrs. You may not be treated precisely as Abel was; you may not be placed in exactly the same circumstances as our reforming forefathers; nevertheless it concerns you to show the same spirit of faith, of patriotism, zeal, valour, and hope. From the spirit of the times, who can tell that mockery, and bondage,

and privations, and barbarities, and even death, may not soon be the portion of such as would be found faithful to the Redeemer? Adopt the principles of the martyrs, and hold yourselves prepared to imitate their great activity and magnanimous endurance in adhering to their principles. Let no supple time-serving policy mark your conduct, but stand fast in the exercise of faith, and love, and holiness. Love not your lives unto the death. Act so as to show that the counsel of your Lord and Master is ever ringing in your ears: 'Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' The martyr's spirit is necessary to the martyr's crown. Bright, indeed, is the crown of martyrdom, and well calculated to compensate for all the sorrow and suffering by which it is won. In all the three instances in which martyrs are spoken of in scripture, it is remarkable that they are introduced as standing in a near relation to the exalted Redeemer: 'When the blood of *his* martyr Stephen was shed;' 'Antipas, *my* faithful martyr;' 'the blood of the martyrs of *Jesus*.' This itself gives to the character a moral elevation, throws around it a halo of glory, sufficient to neutralise disgrace and compensate for any measure of hardship.

IV. We may, perhaps, in some sense, view righteous Abel as the first personal type of Christ.

There were such types of old. Moses, David, and Solomon, are admitted to have borne this honourable character. There are others whose title to rank among such is more equivocal; and among these last, many may be disposed to regard Abel. This is not the place to discuss how great an amount of designed resemblance is required to constitute any one of the ancient worthies a type of him that was to come. Enough for our present purpose to know that there are many points in the character and history of him of whom we are speaking, fitted to remind us of the Lord Jesus Christ, and *that* without any unnatural or fanciful straining. The very name of Abel, signifying 'vanity,' may well remind us of Him who was 'a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and

despised of the people.' The 'keeper of sheep' may naturally enough conduct our thoughts to the 'Good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep.' He who 'by faith offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain,' reminds us of Him who, 'through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.' He who fell by the violent hand of a cruel brother, suggests Him who was 'cut off, but not for himself,' by the persecuting malice of his brethren the Jews; and wherefore slew they him, but because their own works were evil, and his righteous? 'Righteous Abel' may well bring to our minds the 'righteous Lord that loveth righteousness,' even him who is called 'the Lord our righteousness.' Does Abel's blood speak? So surely does that of Christ. But here the parallel runs out, for the blood of Christ 'speaketh *better things* than that of Abel.' The one speaks of enmity, the other speaks of reconciliation; the one speaks of condemnation, the other of pardon; the one of defilement, the other of purification; the one of vengeance, the other of mercy; the one of misery, the other of happiness; the one of death, the other of life. But whether Abel was himself a type of Christ or not, we know that his sacrifice was prefigurative of the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, and calls for corresponding improvement.

Properly speaking, we cannot exhort you to imitate Abel in the matter now under consideration. The typical dispensation has long ago ceased; and, even were it not so, the typical character is not properly a matter of voluntary assumption. Still, in another point of view, the present particular is not without its practical use. Saints are bound to regard themselves as the representatives of Christ in the world, and as such are under obligation to give back a full and fair reflection of his bright and holy image in their character and conduct. They ought to be concerned to show that, 'beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they have been changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' Let the same mind, then, be in you which was also in him.

Bearing in mind that 'if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his;' see that you copy faithfully the pattern of wisdom, charity, gentleness, forgiveness, purity, disinterestedness, and spirituality, set before you by him who has left us an example that we should follow his footsteps. The consideration that men are apt to take their impressions of the character of the master from that of his servants, should fill every professed disciple of Jesus with the dread of being accessory to the dissemination of false and distorted views of the Saviour.

V. In fine, we ask you to regard righteous Abel as the first redeemed soul that entered into glory.

Many more souls are there now,—a multitude, indeed, which no man can number. But with peculiar interest is our attention drawn to the first who entered that holy and happy region. Abel was the first of the human family who departed this life; and it is not a little deserving of notice that the first who died met death unstinged. The first on whom the sentence of death was executed, had that sentence modified by the mitigations and counteractions of the scheme of divine mercy. How beautifully illustrative is this of the statement, that 'where sin abounded grace has much more abounded.' Yes; my brethren, Christ had lifted a trophy to heaven, before Satan had dragged down a victim to hell! Shocking as was the death of Abel in regard to the body, it is pleasing to think that the soul was perfectly safe, and that, from the gory earth to which he was felled by the murderous stroke of the blood-thirsty assassin, his spirit soared aloft under angelic escort to the bosom of his Saviour and his God.

And oh! what an interest must the arrival of that soul have awakened in heaven! How interesting must it have appeared to the Father, as being the first-fruit of the work of his Son, nay, the first-fruit of his own electing and saving love! How interesting to the Son, as the first trophy of his conquest over sin and Satan, the first gem in his mediatorial diadem, the first voice to sing that jubilant anthem in which he is to be praised through eternity! How interesting to the

Spirit, as the first resplendent result of his regenerating and sanctifying power! How interesting to angels, as the first specimen of a new order of companions with whom they are to be associated for ever, it being the purpose of God to unite in Christ things in heaven and things in earth, and to restore outcast men to the fellowship of the elder sons of light! How may these celestial ones be supposed to have clustered around him on his first appearance among them; and what a stimulus must the novelty of his presence have given to their intellectual, moral, and social faculties! What an object of interest must this soul have been,—nay, must continue to be,—to the saints that followed after him, as the first-fruits of a rich and glorious harvest of souls hereafter to be reaped at the end of time! Much of that harvest has since been gathered in; much of it yet remains to be collected; but we have the pledge of it all in the entrance of the soul of righteous Abel into heaven, which may on this account be regarded, in terms that have been used of another, as ‘the wave-offering of a world already white unto the harvest, the signal of those ever successive victories by which the prey should be snatched from the mighty, and the sinner be saved to the uttermost.’

Need I call upon you to follow Abel into glory? If you resemble him in the other points, resemblance in this also will not be wanting. No, through the blood and righteousness of Him in whom he believed and whom he was honoured to prefigure by his sacrifice, when you die you shall be translated to heaven, to mingle with Abel and all who have followed him,—to join that happy throng of redeemed men who surround the throne of God and of the Lamb; and you, too, shall be objects of complacent regard on the part of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, of angelic spirits, and glorified saints.

Such are some lights, replete with solemn interest, in which the first pious youth may be viewed. Would that I could persuade some, at least, of the vast assembly now before me to follow the example of ‘righteous Abel.’ Your privileges are, in many respects, greatly superior to his: and this, it becomes you to reflect, brings with it a corresponding measure

of responsibility. Be assured, from all you have this evening heard, that righteousness is the leading and pervading feature of a gracious character. Righteousness springs from justification; is the secret of all acceptable worship; is essential to the character and testimony of a martyr or witness; and is indispensable to admission to heaven,—the gates of heaven being ‘gates of righteousness,’ into which only the ‘righteous shall enter.’ Secure, then, a righteous character, and ye secure all. Nor do we mock your worthlessness and impotency by nature when we offer you this counsel. We proclaim,—we offer to every sinner within these walls, a righteousness in which he may be pardoned and accepted. We tell you, hearers, of one whose name is **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**, through whom whosoever believeth may become ‘righteous’ as well as Abel; and, considering the awful alternative that may hinge on this announcement and offer, we cannot but suppose that heaven and hell, holy angels and fallen spirits, are roused to wait with anxiety the issue. If, like Cain, you disregard the announcement, and reject the offer, angels shall weep, and devils send forth a shout of infernal triumph. But if, Abel-like, you hail the announcement and accept the offer, devils shall gnash their teeth with disappointment, and angels exult with joy unspeakable. Can you hesitate a moment to which of these parties you should give delight?

It is perhaps expected that I should say something to the class of persons by whom this service has been requested, bearing more directly on their duty at the present time. However, under different circumstances, I might have shrunk from the presumption of volunteering an advice to the students and young men who principally compose the present audience, your own request relieves me from every feeling of embarrassment on this score. But what shall I say to you, my young friends, seeing you have given me liberty to speak? I must not conceal from you the conviction to which every day, I might almost say every hour, is adding strength, that we are on the verge of ‘perilous times,’ in which you may have

a part of no small difficulty to act. There is much in the present aspect of things in our land to awaken and perpetuate the conviction in question—a conviction with regard to which an unwonted harmony of opinion seems to prevail among those who are accustomed to watch the indications of providence. In particular, the spirit which has been elicited in Scotland, especially among the higher classes, in consequence of the late collision that has occurred between the Established Church and the civil courts, and the marvellous progress in England, especially also among the upper ranks, of that system of ill-disguised popery which has attracted so much attention and awakened so much well-grounded alarm throughout the length and breadth of protestant Christendom, proclaim, but too unequivocally, that a crisis is at hand for which the young cannot too anxiously prepare. The days in which your lot is cast admit of neither idleness nor neutrality. Where so much is to be done and so much to be endured, activity and firmness are pre-eminently required. These are not the times for soft and silken manners, for loose opinion or easy virtue, for lukewarmness or indifference. On the contrary, manly boldness, unquenchable zeal, indomitable courage and untiring patience, are the qualities demanded. These, let it be your concern to seek from the Spirit of all grace, who giveth to every one severally as he wills; and, having obtained, see that you conscientiously cherish and exert them.

See to it, that your characters be well grounded on a righteousness better than your own. Your first concern ought to be, to be righteous; evangelically and personally righteous. This you are to regard as essentially, indispensably necessary. Without it there can be neither personal safety nor relative fitness. Prominent, then, among the things I would recommend, is the study of piety,—deep, personal piety,—piety sound, fervent, consistent, eminent. Yes, eminent; it is not an ordinary measure of grace that will suffice to qualify you for acting your part in these days of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy; and great need have you to invoke a ‘double portion’ of the Spirit to be poured out upon you.

Some of you are looking forward to the christian ministry,

and such -I would remind of what has been said regarding the importance that attaches to the doctrine of imputed righteousness, and to the distinction between evangelical and legal religion. In your future ministrations, exhibit clearly and faithfully, justification by faith without the works of the law. Beware of adopting any system of interpretation by which this vital article is liable to be either concealed or compromised. Hold it forth in all its naked simplicity, in its abundant scriptural evidence, and its mighty power to salvation. This is the more requisite, that tenets directly subversive of the cardinal principle in question are cunningly insinuated and industriously circulated by men who, having set themselves to overthrow the protestant Reformation, have, with revolting consistency, made a daring assault on this its cornerstone. And, oh! beware of that cold system of rationalism, once so prevalent in Scotland, which overlooks, in a great measure, man's fallen state, and resolves religion into the grateful homage of a mere creature to the God of nature, instead of a sinner's believing trust for acceptance in the sacrifice of God's own Son.

Be it yours to aspire at the honour of being witnesses for the Redeemer, in these dark days of Antichrist's power and reign. Holy and honourable is the character of those who are privileged to bear testimony against the whole antichristian system. We have already adverted to the probability of the testimony of the witnesses being persecuted, and we have indicated what seems to us to be the point on which this testimony is likely to turn,—the universal moral supremacy of Messiah. May I not presume that you desire to rank among the 'witnesses?' If so, remember that a witness is required to be intelligent, faithful, consistent, persevering, self-denied; and set yourselves to acquire these qualifications. To the separating cry which is now, as of old, heard in the camp of Israel, 'Who is on the Lord's side?' stand prepared to give a decided answer, 'Thine are we, O David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse.' Let no consideration discourage you from casting in your lot with the Redeemer's called and chosen and faithful adherents. Let no flatteries allure, let

no opposition frighten you from your position on the side of 'Michael your prince.' If you have fully and determinedly made up your minds to be 'witnesses,' you will, perhaps, find that what may seem at first sight to be points of discouragement, are but the characteristics of those who are entitled to wear the honourable appellation. Is it the smallness of your numbers that discourages you? Remember that the witnesses are but 'two,'—the smallest possible number by which the truth of an allegation can be attested. Are you afraid of poverty, in consequence of having to relinquish emoluments to which you reckoned yourselves entitled? Bear in mind that the witnesses are to prophesy in 'sackcloth,' the garb of poverty,—not in gay clothing, indicative of wealth. If you are to hold the honourable character of which we are speaking, you must learn to practise self-denial; and it will be no evidence that such character is yours, if you can in any way sympathise with the men who would sell the blood-bought birth-right of Scotland's church for a mess of pottage. Does the prospect of persecution cause you uneasiness? You cannot surely forget that the witnesses are to be 'slain.' And what if the movements of the present day should be preparatory to the fulfilment of the prophecies which foretel the slaying of the witnesses? Be it so. You have no reason to tremble. He who watched over the preservation of Lot and of the primitive christians, will provide another Zoar, or another Pella, in which the faithful shall be sheltered, during the brief period when they are to lie politically dead in the street of the great city. And even should the witnesses, like Abel, be literally slain, their blood, like his, shall continue to bear testimony when their voices have been hushed in the silence of death. By it, they, being dead, shall yet speak. And the spirit of life from God, by this means entering into their survivors, shall realise the promised *resurrection* of the witnesses, who shall thus stand again upon their feet; and great joy shall fall upon them that see them. Then a voice from heaven shall be heard saying to them, Come up hither; and they shall ascend up to heaven in a cloud. The same hour shall there be an earthquake, and the tenth part

of the city shall fall, and the remnant shall be affrighted and give glory to God. Then shall succeed the blissful and long-wished-for period, introduced by the sounding of the seventh angel, and worthy of being proclaimed by great voices in heaven,—THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD ARE BECOME THE KINGDOMS OF OUR LORD AND OF HIS CHRIST; AND HE SHALL REIGN FOR EVER AND EVER!

Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus; come quickly!

SERMON VII.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Preached in the Free Assembly Hall, Edinburgh, July 11, 1843, at the opening of the commemoration of the Bicentenary of the Westminster Assembly.

JOHN xiii. 34.

'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.'

WE are now assembled in very peculiar circumstances—circumstances at once solemnising and delightful. We are met to do honour to the character and the deeds of men of other years. The disposition to commemorate past events, whether of public or private interest, springs from an original law of our nature, a law which certainly admits of being, and has actually been grossly abused, but which is, nevertheless, good in itself, and capable of being turned to valuable account. Subjects of great and permanent utility are thus held forth to view, and hindered from passing into oblivion. The very act of reminiscence calls into operation, and consequently improves by exercising, some of the higher moral sentiments of the heart. And, even if there were no other advantage; we might well feel prompted to such an undertaking, when we reflect that it tends so forcibly to remind us of the lapse of time—of the steady progression of those quickly-revolving cycles which are hastening on the secrets of futurity to their complete and final development; and, by bringing us to contemplate what has been happily styled 'the funeral procession of centuries,' to lead us to reflect at once on 'the handbreadth of our own

earthly concerns,' and on 'the vast gulf of duration beyond.' Strongly, therefore, do we feel that, in responding to the present call in providence, instead of lending countenance to the pernicious principle that 'the church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies,' we are only following the approved example of him who said, 'I remember the days of old, the years of ancient times; I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High;' nay, we are acting under authority of the divine command: 'Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father and he will show thee, thy elders and they will tell thee.'

Not the least interesting, and I would say too, not the least *appropriate*, feature of the present meeting is, that it is composed of persons of different denominations. Under the constraining power of a common sympathy we have agreed, I do not say to strike our respective banners, but, instead of lifting them in hostile opposition to one another, to range them all in peaceful display around one glorious standard, to which we all feel under lasting obligations, and towards which we all profess to cherish one lofty sentiment of moral admiration. Under these circumstances, when, at your own request, proceeding to address you in the name of our common Lord, I know not that I could select words more befitting the occasion, or more in accordance with the will of our Divine Master, than those which I have just read in your hearing, and which were first spoken by his own lips to his disciples on earth: 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.'

It is perhaps not unworthy of remark, that these words were spoken by Jesus to the eleven disciples, after Judas, impelled by Satan, had left their company and gone out with a view to fulfil his treacherous engagement with the chief priests. The Saviour, placing the fullest confidence in those who remained, and laying aside all reserve, proceeded to give them his last instructions in that most interesting, beautiful, and comforting discourse contained in this and some following chapters. The advice we have chosen as our text stands near the outset of the address, and from its position,

as well as other circumstances, seems obviously to refer to something that is peculiarly weighty and important.

It sounds rather strange, indeed, that what is here enjoined should be called a *new* commandment, the love of our neighbour being elsewhere spoken of as constituting a summary of one grand division of the moral law, and the moral law having been, of course, in its essence at least, coeval with the existence of the species. From the beginning it must have been the duty of men to love one another; after four thousand years the duty in question could be no novelty; and yet it is here inculcated in a commandment which is said to be *new*. There have been different attempts made to explain this difficulty. Some of these are too frivolous to merit notice in this place; but others deserve attention. Some view the commandment before us as referring to *the love of good men as such*, which they suppose was never, previously to this period, formally enjoined. This explanation, although supported by a name which stands high in theological science, appears to us to be exceedingly forced and unnatural; nor can we for a moment bring ourselves to think that the duty just spoken of was not fully and clearly comprehended in the ancient precept, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' This being the case, of course it must have been inculcated hundreds of times by the prophets, and doubtless must have been reduced to practice every day by the saints of the former dispensation. Brotherly love, even in this peculiar and restricted sense, could not therefore have been exemplified, for the first time, by the disciples of our Lord in the days of his flesh: 'Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning.' There must be some other explanation. And, perhaps, when we consider that the duty in question was too much a novelty at that period, as it is still, in the practice of men—when we reflect that it had no place among the lessons taught by either the divines or the moralists of that age—and when we add that it was now enforced by new motives, and recommended and illustrated by a new example, we shall probably feel satisfied that abundant reason existed why it should be charac-

terised as a new commandment. It is indeed both new and not new—not new in substance, but new in the circumstances which attend its promulgation.

Conceiving the subject to be not unsuitable to our present purpose, I shall, in the sequel, endeavour to explain and enforce the duty here inculcated.

I. In explanation, it may be remarked in general, that ‘love’ is a term of comprehensive import. Divines speak of a love of benevolence, and a love of gratitude, and a love of complacency. The love of benevolence is due to the whole human family at large. It is indeed the great principle of the second table of the moral law, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,’—the term *neighbour*, in the scripture sense of it, comprehending all mankind without exception,—all those whom God hath made of one blood to dwell on all the face of the earth. It admits not of being restricted by the circumstance of party, of relationship, of locality, or by any other distinction whatsoever. It is due to the worst as well as to the best—to the deceitful as well as to the sincere—to strangers whom we have never seen—nay, even to enemies who hate, revile, despitefully use and persecute us, as much as to those who are our personal friends and nearest relatives.

But as the text was addressed to the disciples of our Lord in particular, and not to men promiscuously, it may be presumed to refer to some duty that is peculiar. The love here enjoined is, in short, that which we owe to men, viewed not merely as creatures, but as new creatures—not as fellow-men, but fellow-saints, fellow-heirs, and of the household of faith—not merely as capable of existence and of happiness, but as possessed of certain moral and religious qualities—not, in one word, as brethren by nature, but as brethren in Christ. To such, love, in all its modifications, in its fullest extent, is due. It must include benevolence, or wishing them all the good, temperal and spiritual, of which their nature admits—gratitude, in return for all the benefits we derive from their society, example, prayers, and acts of beneficence—and, above all, complacency, or moral satisfaction in their excellent pro-

perties, as believers in Christ Jesus, consisting in a high esteem of the holiness, and goodness, and spirituality, and heavenliness which compose their character—a character so truly worthy, amiable, desirable. The feeling in this latter form is what was exemplified by David, when he spoke of the saints on earth as ‘the excellent, in whom was all his delight.’ (Ps. xvi. 3.) Here we have the very thing of which we are speaking—delight in moral excellence. The character of the saints affords room for the exercise of this noble sentiment. The qualities which are its proper object do not certainly belong to them by nature—in themselves, they are, through the influence of depravity, ‘black and ugly,’ in a moral point of view; but in respect of their new nature, as born of the Spirit, and sanctified in heart and in life, they are ‘all fair’ in the estimation of such as are qualified to discern and appreciate real excellence, true genuine moral worth. Now, as to the saints belongs that which is fitted to awaken and exercise the principle of moral esteem, it may be inferred to be the duty of every christian to exhibit the working of this principle. Indeed, the duty is explicitly inculcated by the Saviour in the text; but to the exemplification of it aright, it is requisite that its nature be distinctly understood.

The love enjoined in the new commandment, be it observed, then, is a divine or preternatural love. It is not a mere natural affection. There is a sort of brotherly love, which is a part of man’s original moral constitution, which has not been quite obliterated by the fall, and which still serves an important purpose, as a bond by which families are united and held together. But that which binds together the members of the family of Christ, is supernatural, spiritual, divine. It is possessed only by such as have undergone a spiritual renovation, and by all such; as saints only can be its objects, only saints can be its subjects; it takes its rise from the new nature imparted in regeneration; without this, it can have no existence; it is, in short, a grace of the Holy Spirit: ‘As touching brotherly love,’ says Paul, ‘ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.’ (1 Thess. iv. 9.) ‘Seeing,’ says

Peter, 'ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto the unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.' (1 Pet. i. 22.) To the same purpose are the words of John: 'Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God.' (1 John iv. 7.) There is, indeed, a natural warmth of heart possessed by some which is apt to be mistaken, even by themselves, for the principle of which we are speaking, and with reference to which it is not uncommon to hear men who have no pretensions to piety talk of the love they bear to all good people. But on a close analysis it will be found to be a mere natural affection after all. There being no capacity for discerning that which is spiritual, the qualities which awaken it are nothing more than certain natural good dispositions which the objects happen to possess; it can have no respect to what constitutes the distinctive features of a renewed character, for these one who is not renewed can never appreciate; they cannot once come into calculation; he wants the very faculty for perceiving their existence, not to speak of estimating their worth. Let us, then, beware of deceiving ourselves in this matter. Unless we are taught of God, purified by the Spirit, born from above, we never can exemplify the duty enjoined by the Saviour—we are morally disqualified for yielding obedience to the new commandment. It is strongly corroborative of this remark, that love to man is necessarily and intimately connected with love to God—so much so, that the former cannot even exist without the latter. It will be readily enough admitted, that there cannot be true love to God without producing love to man. But the converse holds equally good; there cannot be true love to man except where there previously exists love to God. As there cannot be religion without morality, so neither can there be morality without religion. Love to God would want one of its proper evidences were there no love to man; but love to man would want its proper principle were there no love to God. It irrefragably follows, that love, even to fellow-men, and much more of course to fellow-saints, can be properly exercised

only by such as are born again ; it is a preternatural principle, the product of the Spirit of all grace : 'The fruit of the Spirit is love.'

But more than this. The love here commanded is of an evangelical kind. It is not a mere moral duty—not a branch of heathenish ethics, to be spoken of as obligatory, because it is fit, or proper, or becoming, or amiable. It is based on the gospel of the Son of God. Like other duties, doubtless it admits of being enforced by hope and by fear ; but, in addition to these, there are higher and more powerful recommendatory considerations—considerations arising out of the authority, the example, and the glory of Christ. The authority of Christ is brought forward in the text : 'A new commandment I give unto you ;' and afterwards, in the same discourse, he says with emphasis, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another ;' and again, 'These things I command you that ye love one another.' (John xv. 12-17.) It thus appears that the duty was enjoined by the Redeemer again and again. It is not left resting on common ground with other moral duties ; it is lifted to a higher elevation, and invested with a more hallowed character. It is not a thing to be done because it is right and proper in itself, or because it will prove profitable to the person performing it, or because the neglect of it would be dangerous, or even because it is commanded by God, absolutely considered, but it is to be done because required by the Saviour, out of respect to his high and mild authority, in obedience to his gracious command. And O, my hearers, what power there is in such a motive—in the authority of one so exalted, so good, so kind, so beneficent ! A stranger to everything like christian feeling must be that heart which is not alive to the weight of a consideration such as this. Then, again, the love in question was exemplified by our Lord himself. To the text it is added, 'As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' The same consideration is adverted to elsewhere : 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.' Mark these words, '*As I have loved you.*' They are full of meaning ; they serve to give a particular emphasis and char-

acter to what is required. Christ himself set an example, a perfect example of love to the brethren; his love was perfect in the principle from which it flowed, perfect in the measure of its exercise, and perfect in the fruits of which it was productive. No angry look ever marred the beauty of *his* countenance; no harsh imputation ever disturbed the music of *his* tones; no selfish emotion ever obstructed the flow of *his* generosity; no unkind suspicion ever chilled the ardour of *his* affection. This is the pattern after which we are to copy. Our love to the brethren is to be formed on the model of his—the same in kind, and, as far as the necessary limitation of our nature will admit, the same also in degree: ‘That ye love one another, as I have loved you.’ Moreover, in paying this respect to our brethren, we must have regard to the glory of Christ as well as to his authority and example. They are *his*—his children, his disciples, his subjects, his brethren. They are closely and delightfully connected with himself; they bear his name, breathe his Spirit, and reflect his image. It must, therefore, be honouring to *Him* to love *them*. To treat *them* with disrespect, or even with neglect, cannot but be held dishonouring to *Him*. So much are they identified, that what is done to them is regarded as done to *Him*: ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my children, ye have done it unto me. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.’ In loving them that are begotten, respect must be had to the glory of *Him* that begat. Thus evangelical is the duty before us—evangelical in its origin, the authority of Christ—evangelical in its rule, the example of Christ—and evangelical in its end, the glory of Christ.

It is scarcely necessary after this to remark, that the love inculcated by the new commandment is sincere and disinterested love. By one inspired writer it is described as ‘unfeigned love of the brethren’ (1 Pet. i. 22); by another, as ‘love without dissimulation.’ (Rom. xii. 3.) How common for persons to practise all the outward forms of good-breeding, to observe the rules of politeness, to employ the language of friendship, and even to lavish on one another terms of adula-

tion, when there is no genuine attachment in the heart! The love of many consists only in empty compliment, hollow profession, meaningless ceremony; it is nothing other than a well-sustained course of hypocrisy and deception. Unlike this, the love which subsists among the disciples of Christ is 'unfeigned,' and 'without dissimulation;' that is to say, un-hypocritical, unmasked, unveiled, needing no cloak of dexterous simulation to conceal its pretensions; everything about it may be laid open and bare; the words of the lips and actions of the life being just an exact transcript of the inward feelings of the soul. 'The law of kindness' is in the heart as well as 'on the lips.' Nor has it any contaminating intermixture of selfishness, as is too often the case among the men of the world: 'Love seeketh not its own things.' It is not dictated by motives of worldly advantage. It is not an article of sordid traffic—a mere matter of profit or aggrandisement. It is altogether a different thing from the professed love of those who, when their own personal interests are to be promoted, can be ever so accommodating and complacent, nay, even sycophantish—'having men's persons in admiration because of advantage;' but when difficulties require to be encountered, and sacrifices require to be made, in carrying out their professions of attachment, their affection instantly evaporates, leaving the poor victim of a misplaced confidence, in the bitterness of disappointment, to exclaim, 'My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away.' Unlike this, the love before us is a generous and disinterested affection, dictated by the purest motives, and flowing from a source not liable to be affected by the vicissitudes of fortune. Its objects are immortal beings, and itself wears the stamp of immortality. 'Charity never faileth.'

In describing brotherly love, due regard must be had to what is said respecting it by the apostle Peter: 'See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.' (1 Pet. i. 22) Purity and fervour are indispensable qualities of christian affection. It is pure; it proceeds from a pure heart; it issues from a sanctified fountain. Murderers, drunkards, and sensualists may have some bond of attachment which leads them

to associate with a view to destroy the lives of their fellow-men, to celebrate their obscene orgies, or to indulge those brutal propensities of which they ought to be ashamed. But their love—if love it may be called—is not pure; the principle of their alliance is unholy; like Simeon and Levi, they are ‘companions in iniquity,’ in course of preparation for being companions in tribulation, when they shall be gathered together into the place of unending woe. The love of Christ’s disciples, on the contrary, flows from a holy principle, is directed to holy objects, and tends to provoke not only to love but to good works. Nor is it less distinguished by its fervency. It possesses a keen sensibility, opposed alike to fluctuation and to indifference. It burns with a strong and a steady flame; many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. Worldly afflictions, reverses of fortune, sicknesses, calumnies, injuries, have no tendency to quench this holy fire. Amid the greatest ills that can befall its objects, it glows with undiminished intensity, stirring up to constant acts of kindness, and consuming whatever obstacles may stand in the way of its exercise. There is a love which can live only in the sunshine of prosperity, but this displays its brightest beam in the dark night of adversity. If we would obey the Saviour’s command, we must ‘have fervent charity among ourselves,’ and count nothing strange to us which can possibly affect the reputation, the happiness, or the well-being of brethren in Christ: ‘A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.’

This leads us to observe, that the love enjoined is an active principle: ‘My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.’ We love in *truth* only when we love in *deed*. The love of the brethren is not a sickly feeling of sentimentalism, but a sturdy principle of patient endurance and active performance. It will show itself in leading those who are under its influence to abstain from injuring such as are its objects, and to avoid giving them unnecessary offence; to abstain alike from doing injury to their persons, property, character, and even feelings. It will dispose us even to forgive injuries that may happen to be

committed against ourselves. Offences must needs come. Misunderstandings are sure to fall out in the best regulated communities on earth. They are the unavoidable result of the intercourse of imperfect and fallen creatures. But where love exists, the evil results of such occurrences are in a great measure neutralised. Where there is love there will be forbearance and forgiveness; resentment can have no place; every feeling of revenge must necessarily be suppressed: 'With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.' (Ephes. iv. 2.) 'Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering: forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any one have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.' (Col. iii. 12-14.) Love is the proper element of peace. Strife and contention are incompatible with its existence. Where it reigns, the sun will not be permitted to go down upon our wrath. It also manifests its influence in prompting us to cultivate one another's society. Love leads to a free, familiar, unsuspecting utterance of the heart; it banishes cold reserve; it puts an end to chilling suspicion: 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' The parties who are knit heart to heart in the sympathies of affection will necessarily be drawn to join hand in hand in the intercourse of friendship: 'Come, hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.' 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.' When the heart is full of love, 'the law of kindness is on the lips.' It prompts to sympathise with one another's joys and sorrows. Its direct tendency is to produce a community of feeling and of interest, leading those who feel it to make the case of those toward whom it is felt their own, and thus teaching them to weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that do rejoice. It disposes, further, to promote and to delight in one another's good. It teaches, instead of hindering, to advance in every possible way the true interests of others. The morbid sensibility which can weep over a tale of imaginary distress, and

yet turn away with disgust from a case of real suffering—which can say to a brother or a sister, Be warmed and filled, but gives not those things which are needful for the body—has no foundation in love. Nor will it admit of the indulgence of envy, its tendency being to repress every such ungenerous emotion, and to stir up to rejoice in good always. But there is no end to an enumeration of the activities of brotherly love; nor is there any sacrifice, however great, which it will not enable its possessor to make: ‘We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.’

It remains to observe, that the principle of which we are speaking is most comprehensive, is, in short, universal as regards its objects. It admits of no restriction within the commonwealth of christianity. It is to be cherished towards all who bear the image of the Saviour, without regard to family, church, or nation. Differences of sentiment there may be, and important differences, too; differences of ecclesiastical profession there may be, and resting too on well-grounded distinctions. Yet must not these be suffered to obstruct the flow of mutual good-will and esteem. The greater principle must not be overborne by the less. Too long have persons of different denominations regarded one another with unfriendly jealousy; too long have they indulged in the language of bitter invective; too long have they stood aloof in the attitude of dark suspicion or supercilious disdain. These things ought not so to be. Not that we would be understood as meaning that all communities and professions are alike worthy of countenance and support,—that there is really no distinction worthy of regard among them. Far otherwise. We candidly avow that we have no taste whatever for the sentimental cant of the day, which would go to reduce all differences of religious profession to some vague levelling scheme of indiscriminate communion. The maintenance of truth, the support of discipline, the preservation of ecclesiastical order, we humbly deem matters of moment; and, in order to secure these, we regard a different line of procedure to be necessary. Nevertheless, we see nothing in all this that should prevent the fullest reciprocation of kindly feeling; nor have we any hesitation

in affirming it as our opinion, that the man has good reason to question his christianity altogether who would hesitate to say, 'the grace of God be with all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.' We may surely wish one another well without lending our countenance to error; we may surely seek one another's good without making a compromise of truth; we may surely love a brother in our heart and yet be careful not to suffer sin upon a brother. Let us see that we exemplify this, my dear brethren. By kindness, by candour, by forbearance, by prayer, and by cheerful co-operation in common efforts for the support and extension of religion, let us show that we can combine firm adherence to principle with warmth of love to the brethren. I would not say that men should never talk of their differences; such advice were alike irrational, unmanly, and subversive of ultimate unity; but when they do, let them talk of them with meekness and with minds open to conviction. And this we certainly will say, that if men were to talk more about the things in regard to which they are agreed, and to pray more about those in respect to which they differ, it would tend powerfully to promote, not only brotherly love in particular, but the interests of religion at large.

II. Having thus explained the nature of the feeling spoken of in the text, it remains that we attempt to enforce the practice of it by some few considerations.

There is a moral fitness in the love of christian brethren for one another. Their nature, their relations, and their mutual dependence are such that reciprocal affection commends itself at once to the approbation of every virtuous bosom, while the want of it, and still more, its opposite, is calculated to shock all our ideas of propriety. Strangers may without impropriety cherish indifference, and enemies may manifest hostility; but that brethren, those who are members of the same family, who are descended from the same parents, who have been reared under the same roof, nursed at the same breast, and fed at the same table, should indulge in strife, animosity, and contention, has something in it which

appears to all to be disgraceful, unbecoming, and positively shocking. In like manner, the disciples of the Redeemer, being children of the same Father, brethren of the same family, related to the same Spirit, soldiers under the same Captain, travellers in the same journey, members of the same body, and fellow-heirs of the same heavenly inheritance, are bound by every consideration of propriety to cherish ardent and devoted affection for one another. ‘Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.’ (Ps. cxxxiii. 1.) ‘The whole body fitly framed together maketh increase to the edifying of itself in love.’ (Eph. iv. 16.) Nor is it possible to imagine a sight more unseemly, a spectacle more incongruous, a moral contradiction more glaring and monstrous, than that of professing christians regarding one another with malignant jealousy, attacking one another with the tongue of slander and detraction, or practising towards one another any sort of mutual recrimination whatsoever. ‘If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.’ (Gal. v. 15.)

Think, too, of the very emphatic manner in which the duty is enjoined. Even the common law of benevolence is only second to the first and great commandment which inculcates love to God. ‘The second is like unto it.’ If this may be affirmed of the love due to the species, how much more emphatically does it apply to the feeling of christian affection? Love to God’s children bears a striking resemblance to love to God himself. It is ‘like unto it,’—in its origin, the authority and Spirit of the Most High; in its nature, admiration of moral excellence; in its tendency, to assimilate and make happy; and in the place which it holds in the moral code, being the spring and summary of a whole class of duties. Even the epithet *new* in the text, as in the case of the ‘new creature’ and that of the ‘new song,’ has been understood by some to mark out that to which it is applied as of rare excellence and transcendent importance. James also speaks of the commandment, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,’ as a *royal law*; (James ii. 8;)—language expressive of the highest consequence and dignity. Nor are we at liberty

here to overlook, in estimating the emphasis with which it is recommended, the time when the new commandment was given. And when was it spoken? At that memorable period when divine love and infernal malice had each its perfect manifestation; when Jesus, having finished the paschal supper, and instituted the New Testament rite, was betrayed into the hands of sinners; when, all preparatory steps having been taken, he was about to retire to the garden where he should undergo those awful and mysterious agonies by which he made atonement for sin; then, when we should have concluded that he would be absorbed in himself and sink into thoughtful silence, then it was that, for the good of his disciples in all future ages, he put forth the solemn declaration, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.' Oh! surely, my hearers, everything connected with that awful hour must be deemed of immense moment. The connection could not fail, we presume, to make a deep impression on the minds of the eleven; and sure we are that the consideration only requires to be seriously pondered, even still to carry home the precept of the Saviour with undiminished emphasis to every pious heart.

Besides, is not the love of the brethren the principle of all other relative duties? Many are the relations in which christians are brought to stand towards one another. These give rise to an endless diversity and succession of duties, not one of which can be discharged as it ought to be without love. Love is, indeed, the fulfilling of the law. Christian husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, brothers and sisters, neighbours and friends, are all under peculiar obligations, to the due performance of which the love enjoined by the Saviour is indispensable. Where this is wanting, it matters little what may be done: where this is present, there is little danger of any duty being neglected. And it only requires that this principle be universally diffused, and constantly acted upon, to secure the banishment from the earth of murder, impurity, theft, lying, covetousness, and every evil work, and the cherishing and practising of all the opposite social virtues. 'For all the law

is fulfilled in one word, even in this, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*' (Gal. v. 14.)

Nor is the duty in question less calculated to exert a beneficial influence on the persons themselves who perform it. Love to others tends to promote our own happiness. It provides a certain solace amid all the calamities that may befall us here. As a bond of union, it lays a foundation for the most extensive schemes of philanthropy by which the benevolent desires of the soul may be gratified. It supplies indubitable evidence, whether to ourselves or to others, of the existence of genuine piety. Next to being pious, it is desirable to know that we are so, and to exhibit the marks of it to others. Now, as far as we ourselves are concerned, there can be no better sign of a regenerated nature than love to christian brethren. 'He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now: he that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' (1 John ii. 9, 10; iii. 14.) Not less valid is the evidence it affords to others. The curse of selfishness has, like a wide-spreading leprosy, so deeply infected the family of man, that wherever the holy, self-denying, disinterested affection of which we are speaking is found, the person may safely be concluded to have been separated from the world lying in wickedness. Hence to the announcement under consideration, our Lord subjoins the statement,—'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' It even tends to increase love to the Saviour himself, as the head of that noble family, the members of which are the immediate objects of the affection itself. From them it is natural to be led on to Him, not only on the principle of suggestion, but inasmuch as they are his accredited representatives in the world. In every one of those towards whom the heart of the saint beats with brotherly affection, is beheld the vivid likeness of that bright Original on whom the love of all is concentrated.

And what, brethren, shall I say more for the purpose of

recommending the practice of brotherly affection? I can only further remind you, that the feeling we are endeavouring to enforce forms a prominent feature in the character of the redeemed above, and a chief element in the happiness of heaven. Here in this fallen world of ours, hatred, variance, strife, and animosity in every form prevail. 'Hateful and hating one another,' is too often an accurate though melancholy description of the society of earth. There, however, in that happy world above, love—high, universal, uninterrupted love, brightens every countenance, and swells every bosom. All the inhabitants of that region of bliss are possessed of moral excellence—complete moral excellence. Every one is able to perceive, disposed to esteem, and ready to acknowledge it in every other; and in this way foundation is laid for the mutual interchange of the warmest affections, and for ceaseless acts of holy beneficence. Oh! then, how refreshing to look up from this earth, blighted and withered with the curse of human selfishness and strife, to that heavenly country where love,—pure, fervent, disinterested, and universal love, hallows and enlivens all! Surely the glorious prospect should operate as no mean inducement to breathe the spirit and cultivate the exercise of the same blessed affection now, and thus enforce upon us the new commandment of the Saviour, that we love one another.

Let us, in conclusion, dear christian brethren, lament the want that prevails of that sacred and heavenly feeling on which we have been descanting. Oh! how little of true love is to be found in the world;—even amongst those who bear the christian name! How much division, variance, anarchy, everywhere abound! Who, observing the state of things that obtains in the church, would ever be led to conclude that these are the disciples of him who said, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.'

But, while bewailing the want of it in others, let us not neglect to inquire whether in any adequate degree it is to be found in ourselves. Are we yielding obedience to the commandment of the Saviour? We acknowledge its importance, we

admit its obligation; but do we feel it? We have some kind of affection, it may be, for our fellow-men, and for those who are reckoned to be saints, but is it a natural or a spiritual affection? Let us test its character by its properties. Is it evangelical—having respect to the authority, example, and glory of Christ? Is it disinterested and sincere? Is it holy in its nature and tendency? And does it glow with intense and inextinguishable ardour? Does it stir us up to those activities without which we have every reason to doubt the genuineness of our affection? Does it, in one word, possess a character of christian catholicity, folding in its ample embrace all who give evidence of being born of the Spirit? By such marks as these, let us try ourselves, and in applying them for the purpose of ascertaining how, in this matter, it stands with us, let us proceed with all candour and fidelity, as in the sight of Him who judges the heart.

And let all be affectionately exhorted to the diligent cultivation of this truly christian grace. Love as brethren. Let brotherly love continue. Let love be without dissimulation. Beware of whatever would either restrain the ardour or restrict the circle of your affections. See that you exhibit its genuine fruits. Let every one, in his own person, do something to hasten on the bright and happy day when the whole family of Christ, seeing eye to eye in the principles of truth, shall feel heart to heart in the sympathies of love. And let us all look steadfastly forward to that glorious state which is to succeed, when love to God and love to man, purified from all earthly dregs, liberated from all grosser thraldoms, shall pervade every bosom, and unite in one hallowed bond of brotherhood the universal family of the redeemed.

Connecting the subject we have been considering with the object for which we are convened, you will permit me to add, that the cherishing of the sentiment of the text is essential to the attainment of one at least of the purposes of the Westminster Divines. They contemplated, besides a religious uniformity in the three kingdoms, a great Protestant union among the nations of Christendom. Their hearts were

large, and the measures they conceived were catholic, generous, and free. No sectarian prejudice, no weak partiality of kindred or of country, was permitted to freeze or confine the current of holy feeling that flowed in their bosoms. Their sympathies were universal as man, and their conceptions partook of the same lofty and munificent character. Their eye penetrated beyond the limits of their own 'sea-girt isle,' and ranged over the nations of men that dwelt on the face of the whole earth. Their hearts, deriving inspiration from the cross, throbbed full not only with glory to God in the highest, but with good-will toward men. They opened correspondence with foreign churches, and in the largeness and warmth of their affection, formed schemes of co-operation and intercourse, which in Providence they were not permitted to see realised. The symbols they framed were so constructed as to exhibit a generous and catholic bearing, being equally adapted to the church in Britain, on the continent of Europe, in the Republican States of America, in the Islands of the Southern Pacific, the plains of Hindostan, the deserts of Africa, the West Indies, and New Zealand. Well they knew that the christian commonwealth knows no geographical boundaries, and consequently the prospect before their minds was that of laying the foundation of no such anomalous contradiction as a *Roman-Catholic* or an *Anglo-Catholic* church, but a *Catholic Church*.

Such were the bright conceptions and noble aspirations of men of whom it has been too much the fashion to speak as narrow-minded bigots—aspirations and conceptions which we do not the less admire, that they were clearly in advance of the age in which they were formed. The far-reaching perspicacity and large philanthropy of the men, fairly anticipated what centuries were to elapse before being realised. And are these glowing conceptions to be lost? Admitting them to have been premature, may they not yet be carried out? Who can tell but that the period of their realisation has arrived? Who can tell but that the seed sown two hundred years ago, yet instinct with life, is about to burst forth into full maturity, and to yield an ample and a glorious

harvest? Minds of kindred mould have at length arisen—times remarkably coincident have arrived—many seem now determined to remember the Lord's wonders of old; and, therefore, we regard it as something better than a baseless vision of imagination which leads us to trust that the period is not distant when the mighty principles of the Westminster Standards shall be more extensively recognised than they have ever yet been, and shall put forth an energy of influence on society hitherto unknown.

Let us mark, then, the indications—let us follow the leadings of providence—let us, like the sons of Issachar, be men of understanding, to know the times, and what Israel ought to do. Rising above the little jealousies of sectarian rivalry, laying aside all personal asperities, let us show a willingness to meet, on the arena of frank and friendly consultation, brethren of other churches, and to discuss with them our points of difference in a spirit of christian candour and charity. The friends of the Redeemer are surely not always to be separated and divided. The reign of disunion is not to be for ever. 'There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all. There is one body and one Spirit.' And believing that these statements of sacred writ are destined to receive a *visible* as well as an *invisible* fulfilment, we must hold christians bound to use all lawful means for bringing this about. Surely it is more to be desired that the churches of the Reformation, acting like rational and moral beings, should take steps to unite on a basis of truth, by the scriptural use of consultation, explanation, advice, discussion, and prayer, than that, like insensate masses, they should wait to be melted by the fire, and welded together by the hammer of divine judgments. May the present commemorative services be blessed of God for leading to movements that shall issue in putting an end to existing dissensions and divisions! And may each one of us feel himself under obligation, in order to this, to crucify and repress the spirit of party strife; to feed the flame of that sacred affection which many waters cannot quench; to take to his heart in fraternal embrace all who love the Lord Jesus;

to converse closely and oft with those predictions which foretell coming days of unity and peace; and to drink deeply into the spirit of the prayer, 'That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us!' May the Lord the Spirit give to the scattered churches of the Reformation one heart and one way, that they may fear him for ever, for the good of them and of their children after them! Then, and not till then, shall the great, the bright, the glorious conception of the Westminster Divines be realised. When 'the people are gathered together,' then shall 'the kingdoms serve the Lord.'

And now, O thou Spirit of love! bless the word that has been spoken. Descend on this assembly. Preside in all our future meetings. Repress every unbrotherly emotion. Implant, quicken, and call forth into full manifestation, all the family affections of christianity. Cause the precious ointment poured on our Divine Head to go down to the skirts of his garments. Let the watchmen see eye to eye, that with the voice together they may sing. And let even more than a pentecostal energy, holiness, unity, and peace, reign in the midst of us, that the multitude of them that believe may be of one heart and of one soul! Amen, and amen.

SERMON VIII.

THE SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR: OR, THE OPENING OF THE FIFTH SEAL.

Delivered at Wigtown, September 24, 1848; in aid of a fund for erecting a monument in honour of the martyrs whose ashes repose in the churchyard of that parish.

REV. vi. 9-11.

‘And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given to every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.’

NOTWITHSTANDING the prejudices that exist in certain quarters against the study of prophecy, it must be admitted that the book of the Apocalypse is one of vast importance. The references it contains to the state and dangers and prospects of the church of Christ, are sufficient to give it value at any time; while the connection of many of these with passing events, serves to invest it with a character of peculiar worth at the present day. Then, there is the divine benediction pronounced at the commencement, ‘Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein; for the time is at hand’—a

benediction at which we shall cease to feel surprised when we consider the evidence which the book affords in support of the truth of christianity—the illustrations and confirmations of the doctrine of providence which it furnishes—the solemn warnings it gives forth as to the danger of all antichristian connections and alliances—the consolation and support it is fitted to minister under trials the most painful and distressing—the explicit testimony it bears to the character of the Redeemer—and the incitements it supplies to the exercise of the christian graces, especially those of faith, patience, and hope. Indeed, the high estimation in which the Apocalypse is held, may be gathered from the interest that is felt even in the place where its visions and revelations were vouchsafed to the beloved disciple; there being no spot in the whole archipelago, studded with attractions though it be, toward which the eye of the christian voyager, as he passes along those seas, turns with such eagerness, as the small, barren, inhospitable, rocky islet of Patmos—otherwise uninviting, but hallowed by the visions of God of which it was the scene when the Lord himself ‘sent and signified his revelation by his angel to his servant John.’

The contents of the book are classified, by the voice which spaké to John, under a threefold division: ‘Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.’ The things *seen*, refer without doubt to the Christophany, or glorious vision of the Son of Man recorded in the first chapter; the things that *are*, to the then state of the seven Asiatic churches as detailed in the epistles to these churches contained in the second and third chapters; and the things which *shall be*, to those important events connected with the church of Christ which should occur posterior to the time of the vision, and which occupy the succeeding chapters.

The visions of futurity, properly speaking, commence with the chapter from which we have taken our text. It is true that at the beginning of the fourth, John heard a voice saying, ‘Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.’ But the fourth and fifth chapters are wholly

introductory; although from the splendour of the introduction we may form a high idea of what is to follow, as a magnificent vestibule serves to convey an impression of the grandeur of the building to which it conducts.

The principal theories of apocalyptic interpretation are known by the names of the preterist, the futurist, and the protestant theories. The preterist theory applies all but one or two chapters at the end to events connected with the Jewish nation and the pagan Roman empire,—events all of which must have fallen out during the first few centuries of the christian era, and are consequently long ago past. The futurists refer nearly the whole of what is prophetic in the book to events that are still to take place, every part being according to them yet unfulfilled, and of course, having no reference whatever to the character and history of the Romish church; a theory, we cannot help remarking as we pass, which, however learned the writers by whom it is maintained, takes away one of the strongest bulwarks of protestantism, quenches in the darkness of night nearly all the light which the history of two thousand years has been throwing on the word of God, obscures with a thick cloud of conjecture and confusion the future hopes of the church, and tends to generate in the minds of bible readers a feverish spirit of doubt and scepticism prejudicial alike to the interests of revealed truth and of personal godliness. The protestant theory, again, is that which regards the Apocalypse as a prospective history of the church from the ascension of Christ to the end of time; and this, by providing a key which serves to unlock the most intricate mysteries, proves itself at once the most satisfactory and comforting.

In looking at the divisions of that department of the book which refers to things future, it is impossible not to be struck with the prominent part assigned to three septenaries;—seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials. We are disposed to regard these as referring to successive not parallel events, each of them presenting of course a different series of occurrences;—the seals, those which belong to Rome pagan; the trumpets, those which belong to Rome christian; the vials, those

which belong to Rome papal. This last includes the struggle of the Reformation and the overthrow of antichrist; and the scene of the whole,—seals, trumpets, and vials,—is laid in the western Roman empire.

The first four seals, called the equestrian seals because in each of them the symbol of a horse is introduced, we are inclined to view as relating chiefly to the secular interests of the Roman empire; the different colours of the animal, white, red, black, and pale, denoting the respective phases assumed by the body politic, at successive periods of its history, during which it passed from a state of perfect health to one of approaching mortal dissolution.

The fifth seal, which we have chosen for our text, possesses a character entirely different from that of those by which it is preceded. Two points of distinction, apart altogether from the general subject, cannot fail to strike an observant reader. The equestrian figure, which occurs in the others, is here dropped; the horse, symbolising the western Roman empire, now disappears, as if to intimate that at the time to which the seal refers, the empire, though not altogether had been well nigh extinguished, brought indeed very nearly to a state of dissolution. And besides this, the invitation of the living creatures, which is prefixed to the other seals, has here no place. When each of the preceding seals had been opened, John heard one of the four living creatures (ζῶα, unhappily translated *beasts*), saying, Come and see. But there is nothing of the kind at the opening of the fifth seal; and this circumstance we are disposed to look upon as ominous of the extent to which, at this time, the ministers of religion—for such, and not angels, we consider as meant by the living creatures—should be silenced by incarceration, banishment, or murder.

These observations may help to prepare us for entering on a consideration of the fifth seal, to which we now crave attention as suitable to the object of our present meeting. In treating of it, we purpose three things:—to explain the language; to ascertain the historical reference; and to point out the general import or design of the seal.

I. Let me, first of all, as the basis of what is to follow, attempt some brief explanation of the terms in which this part of revelation is couched. This will be best accomplished by a brief exposition of the passage. It contains, you will observe, a vision, a cry, and an answer to the cry; a separate verse being devoted to each of these in succession.

The *vision* we have in the ninth verse: 'And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.' This seal, like all the rest, was opened by the Lion-Lamb, who, in token of his willingness and ability to disclose to men the counsels of God, had taken the sealed book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne; a pledge which he fully redeemed, and in redeeming which he laid foundation for the ascription, 'Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof.' The opening of the seal disclosed something which John 'saw.' It was a vision, a picture presented to the eye, a scenic representation. The scene of the vision is laid in the altar-court of the apocalyptic temple in the ecclesiastical heaven, that is to say, in the church. The 'altar' under which the souls of them that were slain are seen, is of course the altar of sacrifice. This formed a prominent and important piece of temple-furniture of great use in the worship of God under the ancient economy, and the allusion to it here is sufficient to determine the respect that is had in this vision to the church, where the service of God is conducted and his worship observed. The scene, then, in the grand drama now shifts from the secular interests of the Roman empire to those of the church within that territory. These interests are never lost sight of at any time, the church being the centre around which all the dispensations of Providence revolve,—that to which every movement is subordinated. But the concerns of God's covenant society on earth are brought forward more prominently at one time than at another. And at the period of this seal, attention is, as it were, concentrated on the church of God. The nature, character, and position of what John beheld in this scene all deserve attention.

The nature of what John saw is indicated by the word 'souls.' The soul as the animating principle of the body, the animal soul, is what the original term imports—the breath. Spirits are not visible to the natural eye, they are incapable of being recognised by the bodily senses. The shades of persons departed were, indeed, regarded by the ancients as appearing from time to time to surviving friends; but we can attribute nothing so heathenish as this to the apostle. Spirits, however, have the capacity of perceiving and holding intercourse with fellow-spirits, and John, we are to remember, was at the time 'in the Spirit,'—under a superior influence, preternaturally endowed. But to explain what is before us, it is not necessary to have recourse even to this circumstance. It is all a vision, in which things spiritual and material are represented under bodily shapes and forms. The whole is hieroglyphical, symbolical, figurative, not designed to give us philosophical ideas of the substance of the soul, and consequently not admitting of a literal interpretation. There is no necessity, therefore, for supposing, as has been done, that souls are here put for bodies as in some other parts of scripture. But we are not disposed to reject as unworthy of consideration the opinion of those who think that there may be a reference to the blood of the martyrs. The animal soul is what is spoken of, and while we know that the soul is the life we know also from scripture that the life is in the blood.

The character of these souls is very plainly pointed out: 'The souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.' They are the souls, you will observe, not of living men but of dead; of men, too, who had died not an ordinary but a violent death, who were *slain*, put to death by the hand of others; and, moreover, of persons who were put to death, not in the common course of civil law, or even by private assassination, but in the way of persecution, for the sake of religion—*for the word of God, and the testimony which they held*. They are the souls, in short, not of malefactors, not of men who suffered as evil-doers; but of martyrs, of men who suffered as christians, or

for the cause of Christ in the world. 'The word of God' is the scriptures, the bible. 'The testimony which they held' is that by which they bore witness to the truths, the doctrines, the principles of God's word. The distinction between the word of God and the testimony of man is strongly marked in this book. The scriptures are a testimony, to be sure, but they are the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness. Besides this, there is a testimony by man. We read of the witnesses 'finishing *their* testimony,' and of Michael's angels overcoming the dragon 'by the blood of the Lamb and the word of *their* testimony.' Martyrdom supposes witness-bearing, the holding forth of a clear, faithful, public testimony for divine truth before the world. That to which this testimony is borne is always the revealed will of God, so that the word of God and the testimony held by the witnesses go necessarily together. They are different things, indeed, but the latter cannot be separated from the former. The aspect of revealed truth to which the witnesses' testimony may give prominence, is not always the same, but must vary at different times according as that which happens to be assailed or to be in danger of being overlooked varies. The ostensible reason why the witnesses are slain is not always, nor even often, their attachment to the word of God as manifested by their testimony on its behalf. Their persecutors have little difficulty in finding some other plea, more plausible in the eyes of the world, and more quieting to their own natural consciences. Sedition, turbulence, disaffection to the powers that be, a design to turn the world upside down, or some such convenient pretexts are always at hand. But the true ground of opposition to them, is, after all, their religion, their love of the bible, their firm refusal to abandon scripture truth, to deny Christ, or to compromise his claims by ceasing to contend for his crown-rights and royal prerogatives. And thus the souls seen by John were the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held.

The position of these souls merits attention—'under the altar.' Viewing them as the spirits of departed saints, this

may intimate their obligations to the sacrifice of Christ for the heavenly bliss they enjoy. Owing their acceptance with God here to the blood of the Redeemer prefigured by the sacrifices which were laid on the ancient altars, the benefits of the celestial state flow from the same meritorious source, and the enjoyment of these in this way may be regarded as signified by their contiguity to the altar. In short, believers are indebted for every blessing, for acquittal, purification, happiness, and glory, to the blood and sacrifice of Christ symbolised by the altar. The blood of the martyrs possessed no atoning virtue to save their souls, but these souls, like those of all other saints, were saved, redeemed, and glorified, through the atonement of God's Son. But viewing them as the souls of martyrs, of them that were slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held, may not the position in question suggest another idea? 'The blood of certain sacrifices under the law was 'poured at the bottom of the altar.' (Lev. viii. 15.) The souls beheld by John in this vision were seen occupying the very position held by the blood of these sacrifices; and may not this serve to mark them out as having been offered in the way of sacrifice to God? Not as sin-offerings, atoning sacrifices, of course; but as true and proper sacrifices notwithstanding. Paul instructs the Romans to 'present their bodies a living *sacrifice*;' (Rom. xii. 1)—speaks of being '*offered* upon the sacrifice and service of the faith' (Phil. ii. 17) of the Philippians—and says to Timothy as expressive of his willingness to die, 'I am now *ready* to be *offered*, and the time of my departure is at hand.' (2 Tim. iv. 6) In the same sense, the persons in question had offered themselves as sacrifices in the cause of Christ. They had submitted to self-immolation on behalf of religion. For the sake of the truth as it is in Jesus, they had made a sacrifice of everything dear to them, property, comfort, liberty, nay, even life itself. They had loved not their lives unto the death, and in dying as martyrs had poured out their souls, their animal souls, their life, their blood, in libation on the ground, at the bottom of the altar, where they were seen in vision by John. We here perceive the importance of the

view formerly given of the term 'souls,' as synonymous with blood; and it may not be irrelevant to call attention to the confirmation which this interpretation of the passage receives from the language in common use respecting those who have suffered martyrdom for Christ. The words of Polycarp, the martyr of Smyrna, in his prayer at the stake, may be recollected as in point:—'Father, I bless thee that thou hast thought me worthy of having a share in the number of the martyrs, among whom may I be received in thy sight, this day, as a rich and acceptable *sacrifice*, as thou the faithful and true God hast prepared, hast revealed and fulfilled.' And the historian (Eusebius) speaks of him as 'a ram selected from the flock, to be offered as an acceptable holocaust to Almighty God.'

Having explained the vision, the *cry* next demands consideration. 'And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell in the earth?' There is something heard, you will observe, as well as something seen; something addressed to the ear as well as to the eye. There is a 'voice,' and 'a *loud* voice' too. The intensity of the utterance betokens the urgency of the case. Matters have come to an extremity. A crisis has arrived. Unless an interposition takes place soon, it can be of no avail. 'A little while and the state of things will be placed beyond all remedy. A feeble complaint, a languid expostulation, cannot meet the emergency. Nothing will do but a cry, a vehement cry. 'They cried,' says John, 'with a loud voice.'

The words, 'dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?' are not to be understood as implying that those who have suffered martyrdom, cherish in the world of spirits revengeful feelings. Nothing of the kind. It is utterly impossible. Even in the present imperfect state, sentiments of this nature are strictly forbidden and quite incompatible with gracious exercise: 'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.' This solemn interdiction is one which cannot be disregarded with

impunity, and to which such as have suffered for religion have not been inattentive. The proto-martyr Stephen, amid the shower of stones thrown upon him by his persecutors, employed his very last breath in crying, and 'with a loud voice' too, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' And the Prince of Martyrs, our Lord himself, exemplified the same spirit on the cross, when, although having all nature at his command, so as to have paralysed if he chose in a moment the hands of his crucifiers, and to have stretched themselves as with a thunderbolt lifeless at his feet, he offered for them that God-like prayer, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' We cannot, therefore, hesitate in the slightest degree, to repudiate the idea of the existence among departed saints of anything like resentment. But how, in consistency with this, can the words in question be explained? The following observations may help to obviate the difficulty. First of all, the scene before us, be it remembered, is not in heaven, properly so called, but on earth; it is in the ecclesiastical heaven, which is the church below. The souls are indeed those of persons who had departed the present life, but the position which in the vision they are represented as occupying is not in the upper sanctuary, the true holy of holies, the highest heavens; but on earth, under the altar of sacrifice in the outer court of the apocalyptic temple. This accounts for the use of prayer, which belongs properly to this world.—Then, in the second place, the cry uttered by these persons, is not so much that of their glorified spirits, as that of their animal souls, of their life-blood poured in willing libation on the ground. Blood, the blood of martyred saints, has a voice; it speaks, in accents, which, however disregarded by men, come up into the ears of the Judge of all. 'The voice of thy brother's blood,' said Jehovah to the first persecutor, 'the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.' Mark the striking resemblance of this language to that in the passage under consideration. There is in both cases a voice, in both a cry; and, agreeably to the interpretation put before on the term *souls*, and in harmony with the *position* these souls are

said to occupy, may they not be regarded as being, in the one case as in the other, the voice, the cry of blood? In this way, the idea of personal revenge is completely set aside, and the expression resolves itself into a strong figurative or symbolic representation of the justice of the martyrs' cause, their blood, wantonly shed, forcibly appealing from the very ground which is stained with it to the judgment-seat on high, and calling loudly in righteousness for a vindication of their character and their testimony.—Moreover, the retributive interposition here invoked is not that of the final judgment. The terms preclude such an idea:—‘On them that dwell in the earth,’ that is, on the inhabitants of the Roman earth, the citizens of the Roman empire, the votaries of Rome, by whom the souls under the altar were slain. The judgments sought are those spoken of in other parts of this book. The words, ‘Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come,’ are introductory to the announcement, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen.’ (Rev. xiv. 7, 8.) To the same effect is the call, in which the very language we are explaining occurs: ‘Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets: for God hath *avenged* you on her.’ (Rev. xviii. 20.) And also the well-known declaration: ‘True and righteous are his judgments: for he hath *judged* the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornications, and hath *avenged* the blood of his servants at her hand.’ (Rev. xix. 2.) These sayings refer to the righteous judgments which are to be inflicted on the friends and supporters of Rome, by means of which the principles for which the martyrs suffered shall be vindicated, and their testimony confirmed by the voice of providence. When these passages are fulfilled, the cry of the souls under the altar shall be answered. But as communities are punished only in the present state of being, having no existence as such in the world to come, it is manifest that the prayer before us has respect to God's providential inflictions now, and not to the final retribution of the last day.—But, in the fourth place, even supposing the words under consideration to denote the state of feeling among departed saints, the utmost that could be made of them would

be to express cordial acquiescence in the retributive rectitude of the Most High. Retribution forms an essential element and feature of the divine moral government, as is affirmed again and again in terms the most unequivocal. 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' (Gen. ix. 6.) 'With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' (Matt. vii. 2.) 'Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord.' (Rom. xii. 19.) Nothing can be plainer than these statements. It is only thus that the character of God the Judge of all could be vindicated, and the principles of his moral government upheld. In everything having such a tendency, all moral beings must feel disposed, not to acquiesce merely, but to rejoice. Indeed, in the passages quoted above, the inhabitants of heaven are not only represented as shouting 'Alleluia!' because the Lord God hath avenged the blood of his servants on the mystical Babylon, but are even commanded to 'rejoice' on this very account: 'Rejoice over her, thou heaven, for God hath avenged thee on her.' Moral creatures, in proportion to their dignity and perfection, cannot but sympathise with Him whose nature is the only proper standard of morality. Whatever illustrates or vindicates his character and government, must awaken within them sentiments of highest and purest delight; and consequently, for whatever is calculated to subserve such desirable ends, they cannot but cherish the most intense desire. Without supposing the infusion of a single particle of personal resentment, we can therefore easily understand why the glorified spirits of the martyrs should wish, and that with the utmost intensity, to see their blood avenged on them that dwell on the earth. The wish takes its rise from a sense, not of the injury done to themselves, but of the dishonour cast on a righteous and holy God. When the saints present the prayer, 'Render unto our neighbours seven-fold,' they are prompted to it by zeal for the divine glory, and not by any feeling of paltry selfishness: 'Render into their bosom the reproach *wherewith they have reproached thee*, O Lord.' (Psalm lxxix. 12.) This high and noble feeling of moral sympathy with what is

just and right, we cannot suppose to beat less feebly in the breasts of saints in heaven than in those of saints on earth. Nor can anything more require to be said in justification of the martyrs' cry, than that the feeling it evinces is the very feeling which animates the benign and holy bosom of the Son of God himself, who sits on the right hand of God, 'from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.'

These observations, particularly the last, will help to explain the degree of impatience, implied in the words 'how long.' They suppose, of course, that persecution was no new thing; it had existed for a length of time; it had been reiterated and protracted, in short, so as well nigh to exhaust the patience, not only of the sufferers, but of those also who were waiting for some vindicatory interposition of God. There was a time when christians were disposed to set a high value on martyrdom, to court rather than deprecate persecution, and to regard it much in the light of matter of rejoicing and gratitude. But dire experience and more mature reflection had served to correct these mistaken views, and taught them, instead of coveting it, to deprecate even its continuance. Hence the saints beneath the altar are represented as crying 'how long!' But with this feeling of holy impatience with the delay, there mingles no sentiment of distrust as to the final result. The language is quite consistent with perfect confidence in the fact that their blood shall be judged and avenged. They express no doubt on this score. Their cry is not 'Wilt thou judge and avenge?' but 'how long shall it be ere this is done?' Firm reliance on the retributive equity of Jehovah is characteristic of all his saints; and the feeling is unshaken even by those protracted visitations which tend to induce a degree of impatience.—Nor can we wonder at this, when we take into calculation his character as 'holy and true.' Truth and holiness are essential attributes of God. They are attributes, too, which, so to speak, are brought under reflection by the continued calamities of his church. That his people should be subjected to a long course of cruel and exterminating persecution, is difficult to reconcile with the purity of his

nature and the truth of his promises. His judging and avenging the blood of his saints is therefore necessary to vindicate his perfections—to prove him, in short, to be ‘holy and true;’ and a desire to see every cloud that may have fallen on these views of God’s character cleared away, can satisfactorily account for the impatience implied in the eager cry now under consideration. To the outrage practised on themselves the saints could meekly submit, but the reflection thereby cast on their Lord and Master could not be so easily borne. Yet in these very attributes of the divine nature the souls under the altar saw the pledge of the desiderated vindication. His holiness and truth assured them of a coming retribution. Without this he could neither be holy nor true. As sure as God is holy, as sure as God is true, the blood of his dear saints shall be avenged on their enemies. So that the mention made in the cry of these essential features of the divine nature, partakes at once of the character of a security, and of the urgency of a plea: ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth!’

It remains that we explain the *answer* which is returned to the cry. This we have in verse eleventh: ‘And white robes were given unto every one of them: and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.’ The reply, you will perceive, consists in two things—a significant act, and suitable words.

The act is thus described, ‘And white robes were given unto every one of them.’ This act possesses a forensic significance. White raiment is the common symbol or emblem of righteousness, purity, honour, glory. It is not their justification before God, however, that is denoted by the act under consideration. That in this sense they had white robes given them we do not doubt. They were arrayed in the robes of the Redeemer’s righteousness, clothed in the garments of salvation, the fine linen clean and white, which is the justification of the saints. But this preceded, whereas the investiture here spoken of followed, their martyrdom; and it

belonged to them not as martyrs but as saints. The same may be said of the white robes of sanctification, or personal moral purity. And in regard to glorification, while in no way disposed to doubt or deny that some peculiar distinction may be put in the heavenly kingdom on those who have borne a large share of suffering here, and have evinced great strength of principle and fortitude by submitting to death in the cause of truth, this is not what the act before us seems intended to indicate. The white robes given them rather refer to some honour of which the martyrs are to be the subjects on earth. The investiture is before men, in the same open public court in which their souls are seen lying under the altar; in the presence, as it were, of those by whom they were slain. It seems to refer to some providential justification to be given of their character, some public vindication of their cause, some honourable testimony to be borne to their memories on the part even of their enemies. A glorious issue awaited them. The sackcloth in which they had prophesied was to be exchanged for raiment of resplendent brightness. These robes they should not need to assume. They should be 'given' them; the implied recognition should be voluntarily made, the testimony cheerfully and publicly borne, the acknowledgment graciously bestowed. Nor should there be 'one of them,' however humble or obscure, whose claims were overlooked, so ample and complete should be the act of justification.

The intimation of this glorious issue was calculated to prepare them for listening with patience to the suitable words that follow: 'And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.' Solemn and affecting words these. Those to whom they are addressed were thus given to understand that some time was to elapse before the vindictory interposition implied in their being clothed with white robes should take place. There is to be a considerable interval. They must 'rest,' wait on with patience; for a 'little season,' a period which, while comparatively short, might nevertheless, both in

itself and in consequence of the eagerness of their desire, seem long. And the filling up of the predicted interval is to be of a gloomy character. They are not the last victims of persecution; others are to be 'killed as they were,' subjected to the same unjust and cruel treatment. These others are their 'brethren,' their brethren in Christ, and in the cause and testimony of Jesus; nay, their 'fellow-servants,' enlisted under the same banner, fighting under the same Captain, serving under the same Master, for the church on earth and in heaven is one. Thus was it significantly intimated that the persecution of the saints was not yet at an end; that Rome's thirst for blood had not been satiated; that the cup of her iniquity was not yet full; that other victims must fall before her, and many more souls be gathered under the altar, slain by her for the word of God, and the testimony which they held.—Nor was the hint in this way obscurely conveyed, that the long-suffering of God far exceeds the long-suffering of man. The cry from under the altar intimated in a way that could not be mistaken, that human forbearance had well nigh reached its limits. It was not so with the forbearance of God. He shall not make bare his holy arm, in visiting on the persecuting foes of his people the just award of their iniquity, till many more deeds of cruel atrocity are perpetrated. He is slow to wrath and plenteous in mercy. Before the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, the earth must yet disclose her blood, and no more cover her slain. What a reproof is thus tendered to man for his impatience, and what a lesson are we here taught of long-suffering forbearance with the opposition of fellow-mortals! Oh, what a contrast between the spirit of men who cry with a loud voice, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth,' and that of Him who 'endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction!' (Rom. ix. 22.)

II. The explanation now given of the language in which the opening of this seal is expressed, should prepare us for

considering its historical reference. To this, then, let us address ourselves.

The general import it is not at all difficult to perceive. The seal refers unquestionably to a state of religious persecution, to some period of martyrdom, when many were subjected to death because of their steadfast adherence to Christ and to his word. But the particular era referred to is not so easily established, and different opinions will be entertained on this point according to the theory of interpretation that may happen to be adopted regarding the seals which precede. We have already expressed ourselves in favour of the view that the first four seals refer to the state of matters in the western Roman empire during the first ages of christianity; and, in harmony with this, it will not be found difficult, we think, to give an intelligible and plausible application of the seal now under consideration. The state of matters in regard to the christian church, within the bounds of the Roman empire, towards the close of the third and the beginning of the fourth century, will be found to agree pretty closely with the symbolical statements of this vision. This will appear more distinctly if, taking our station at the period in question, we give a rapid glance, as the circumstances require us to do, to the past, the present, and the future. The words 'how long,' necessarily carry us back to the past; 'dost thou not judge and avenge our blood,' is phraseology which marks with sufficient clearness the state of things at the time; while the expression 'until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, should be killed as they were,' points attention unavoidably forward to the future.

Looking, then, at the past, casting the eye backward over the period of time embraced by the first four seals, we meet with frequent persecutions of christians. Christianity seems never, indeed, to have been long or extensively favoured during this time. Notwithstanding the general tolerance of the Romans, they appear to have cherished towards christians only a bitter and impatient spirit of persecution. Nor, all things considered, is this much to be wondered at. Paganism was the state religion, and the gods, however numerous, were

all looked upon as national divinities. But christianity assumed an aggressive attitude; it declared open hostility against every existing religion; from its very nature it could admit of no compromise with other systems; it was not enough for it to be one among many, it must either be all or nothing; it affected to do away with and to supersede everything else of the kind; it could not be content with even gaining the ascendancy and reigning triumphant, but aimed at taking sole and exclusive possession of the world. Then, the men who stood forward to expound christianity, and to dictate, so to speak, on the subject of religion, to the whole world, even its political masters and philosophers not excepted, were persons of humble birth and rank, whose very obscurity rendered their pretensions only the more irritating and intolerable. Accordingly, christianity and christians were everywhere spoken against and opposed, and that by all classes. The rulers regarded their conduct in the light of a civil offence, an affront offered to the religion of the State. The populace, unable to distinguish between being the enemies of their gods and having no god at all, reckoned themselves justified in giving way to ebullitions of fanatical rage and fury. Accordingly, every public calamity that occurred was without ceremony laid at the door of the christians. To use the words of a philosophical historian of our own day:—‘There was no want of individuals who were ready to excite the popular rage against the christians; priests, artisans, and others, who, like Demetrius in the Acts, drew their gains from idolatry; magicians, who beheld their juggling tricks exposed, and sanctimonious cynics, who found their hypocrisy unmasked by the christians.’ (Neander.) Hence arose those cruel persecutions which so frequently occurred previous to christianity being received under Constantine to a place among the class of lawful religions. The ten pagan persecutions, as they are called, are known to every reader of history.* Eight at least of these had fallen out and spent their

* We adopt the usual mode of speaking by which these persecutions have been spoken of as ten in number, in a popular sense, being aware that the phrase is not perhaps quite in accordance with historical accuracy.

fury before the opening of this seal; those, namely, which occurred under Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Adrian, Verus, Severus, Maximus, and Decius; during whose respective reigns, incredible multitudes of souls were gathered under the altar, of persons who had been slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held. Nor, when the character of these persecutions is considered, need it at all surprise us to find the martyrs, as they take the mournful retrospect, represented as exclaiming, 'how long!'

The state of things at the time when the cry is uttered, is supposed in the very language to be not different, in regard to suffering and severity, from that which went before. When the martyrs' cry, 'dost thou not avenge our blood,' was uttered, blood was still being shed. This agrees well with the state of things under Valerian, who made up for the unusual clemency with which he treated the christians in the early years of his reign, by a severity afterwards not greatly behind that of his most cruel predecessors. Finding that the progress of christianity was not to be checked without bloodshed, he followed the example of the previous emperors, and renewed the persecution. The edicts issued during this period were chiefly directed against the ministers of christianity, the presbyters and the bishops; those whose duty it was to conduct the worship of God in the christian assemblies, and to supply the people with the means of grace; in short, the men who, from their office, were required to act a prominent part in holding forth the 'word of God,' and in exhibiting a public 'testimony' for the truth. The terms of one of these imperial edicts carried that 'bishops, presbyters, and deacons, were to be put to death immediately by the sword.' It was at this time that Cyprian, the famous bishop of Carthage, was added to the glorious army of martyrs; and if the martyr-legends of the period, whose authenticity is unchallenged, are to be trusted, the bloody cruelties perpetrated under Valerian were not inferior to those of his most blood-thirsty predecessors. The language of the cry from the souls under the altar, thus depicts the state of heavy persecution under which the christians were groaning at the very time of which we now speak.

Nor is there anything, in looking to the future, which holds out a more cheering prospect. The gloomy intimation implied in the words, 'until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, should be killed as they were,' accords well with the facts of history in the period following. The persecution of Diocletian soon succeeded, and assumed a character of unparalleled atrocity. It was the worst of all the pagan persecutions,—the fiercest, the longest, and the most extensive in its range.

——'Diocletian's fiery sword
Work'd busy as the lightning.'

In conjunction with the eastern emperor Galerius, he issued a succession of edicts of the most barbarous description, the design of which was to extirpate christianity from the earth, to abolish for ever the christian name. These edicts ordained penalties, banishment, torture, and death; they were directed against all christians whatever their age, sex, or rank; and seemed, as Eusebius remarks, written with the points of daggers dipped in blood. The persecution lasted ten years, and an idea of its extent may be formed from the fact that, while Spain and Britain on the west furnished their proportion of victims, as far east as Egypt two hundred thousand are said to have perished. During this persecution alone, how many 'fellow-servants and brethren' of those souls which were previously under the altar must have been 'killed!'

Thus does it appear, that in the ten pagan persecutions everything symbolical in this seal received its fulfilment, so as to leave little room for hesitation as to the historical reference of the seal itself. And, before advancing another step, three things confirmatory of this view are worthy of being noted. First, the period in question is commonly known and distinguished as the 'era of martyrs.' Secondly, the persecutions of the period assumed the form of a war against 'the word of God and the testimony' of its friends. While the scriptures were suffered to exist, and the ministers of religion

* Gibbon labours, without success, to lessen the number of the victims; but gives the edicts, from which an idea sufficiently horrible may be gathered.—*Dec. and Fall*, chap. xvi.

permitted to exercise their sacred functions, all hopes of crushing christianity proved to be in vain. Accordingly, the edicts required, not only that the presbyters and bishops should be put to the sword, but that the holy scriptures should be committed to the flames, and the christian churches levelled to the dust. The demolition of the church in Nicome lia, the place of imperial residence, may be mentioned as an example in illustration. On the twenty-second day of February, in the year three hundred and three, at the dawn of day, that magnificent edifice was attacked under cover of an imperial edict, every copy of the bible found in it was burned, and the whole building abandoned to plunder and destruction. This was only the signal for razing christian churches everywhere to their very foundations, and throwing all manuscripts of the scriptures wherever found into the fire. Nor, thirdly, does the part of the vision which speaks of 'white robes being given them,' admit of being less strikingly verified by historical fact. The language has already been explained to mean public vindication or justification. Now, it so happens that a circumstance of this kind followed the persecution of Diocletian. We allude to the well-known edict of Galerius, issued in the year three hundred and eleven, which, by granting toleration to their religion, put an end to the sanguinary conflicts of the christians with the Roman power. When one who was a chief instigator and promoter of persecution, thus felt constrained, whether by the softening influence of disease, or by a conviction of the utter hopelessness of his mad attempt to extirpate the christian religion by such violent proceedings, to issue a decree in favour of the christians, and even to solicit an interest in their prayers, there were such an implied acknowledgment of his former fault, and such an honourable testimony to christianity as a living and indestructible faith, as may well admit of being expressed in symbolical language by the martyrs being clothed in 'white robes.' The change produced by Galerius' edict of toleration was so very striking, that even the infidel historian himself records that in consequence of it great numbers of the christians were released from prison, or delivered from the mines,

and the wailings of oppression exchanged for hymns of triumph. This part of the symbol was still more fully verified when Constantine embraced the religion of the persecuted, and the empire itself became nominally christian.

And this leads me to inquire, whether the import of that part of the seal which contains the answer to the cry may not admit of being extended beyond the period of the pagan persecutions. True, the ten years of the Diocletian persecution may properly be regarded as 'a little season' compared with the whole period during which christianity had been opposed with violence in the ages that went before. But 'little' is a comparative term, and entirely dependent for its extent of meaning on that with which it is compared. Now, history proves that neither the predicted 'fulfilling of the fellow-servants and brethren that should be killed,' nor the promised justification of the martyrs implied in having 'white robes given to every one of them,' can be restricted to what occurred while the Roman empire retained its heathen character. The early christians were certainly disposed to put such a limited construction on the words of the seal; but in doing so they only betrayed a little of the same impatient desire of early deliverance which appears in the cry itself of which we are speaking. We feel inclined to agree, therefore, with those expositors who view the passage as embracing events which should transpire under Rome papal, as well as under Rome pagan. And whether we regard the treatment to which christians were subjected, the formal ground of that treatment, or the manner in which it issued or is yet to issue, we shall find the language equally applicable to the one as to the other.

As respects the treatment which true christians have received at the hands of Rome papal, in what language could it be more appropriately spoken of than as a killing of the fellow-servants and brethren of such as were put to death under the heathen emperors? Christians of one age are brethren to those of every other age; they are all fellow-servants of one Master, to whatever chronological period they happen to belong; and as such, the treatment they re-

ceive at the hands of enemies will be found to be much the same. The pagan persecutions were fairly rivalled by those which occurred after the empire had assumed the name of christian. The sanguinary spirit of popery is too well known to require either laborious proof or lengthened illustration. It were easy to refer, in corroboration of the charge, to crusades undertaken with a view to extirpate infidelity by the sword; to swords unsheathed and fires lighted, in order to gratify the ambition of a universal conquest; to the Inquisition, that horrid tribunal which carried popery in triumph over so many lands, grinding under the burning wheels of its ponderous idol-car every vestige of true religion and liberty, and from the tale of whose murderous atrocities men are disposed to turn away with a generous scepticism; and to torrents of human blood which the cruelty of papal interests has made to flow. Its progress may, indeed, be tracked by the gore of its victims, who form a multitude that is literally innumerable. No character of Rome is better attested than this. It can neither be plausibly denied nor successfully concealed. It is written, as with a sunbeam, on the face of 'history's honest page.' No description of the popish church can be more true to fact, than that given of her in holy writ, where she is represented under the symbol of a 'woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.' (Rev. xvii. 6.) It is calculated that not fewer than fifteen millions have been slain for the word of God, since the rise of antichrist; and that, were all the true saints in Christendom at the present day to be put to death, they would not equal the number of those who, in their conflict with Rome papal, have already sealed their testimony with their blood, and gone to join the souls under the altar.

May we not include in this enumeration of Rome's bloody deeds, the atrocities committed in Scotland during the persecution which succeeded the Second Reformation, and which had for its object the overthrow of that blessed work? True, that was, strictly speaking, a prelatical persecution. But not to speak of prelacy as the parent of popery; not to speak

of the less than half-reformed character of the prelacy then attempted to be established, it is not to be forgotten that the two royal brothers, Charles and James, under whose auspices and at whose instigation, the barbarities in question were perpetrated, were thorough papists in heart. Nor had the episcopal minions,—some of them perfidious apostates,—who submitted to their arrogant and despotic claims, who sat in their high commission courts, and who lent their countenance and their influence to the execution of their bloody decrees, any claim to the name, much less to the spirit of protestants. It is not certainly to the honour of episcopacy that it could so easily adapt itself to the spirit and practices of Rome. But the streams of blood which flowed in Scotland, from the Restoration to the Revolution, and the thousands who during that period were sent to mingle with the souls under the altar, may, for the reasons assigned, safely be ascribed to popish intolerance. And it is thus that the subject we are considering applies to the object in connection with which we are now met.

The true ground of the papal, is the same with that of the pagan, persecutions. The protestant martyrs, as well as their fellow-servants and brethren who went before, suffered 'for the word of God, and the testimony which they held.' The cause in which they died was the cause of bible truth, religion, and liberty; the cause of God and his Christ; a cause every way worthy of their best exertions and their dearest sacrifices. The principles of the martyrs, especially of those of Scotland, specifically viewed, may be comprehended in a brief summary. They contended for the doctrine of salvation by the free grace of God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ;—for the sole authority of the holy scriptures in matters of religion, and the right of all men to use them and to form their own opinions from them;—for the exclusive headship of Christ over the church, and its consequent independence of civil control;—for the headship of Christ over the nations, and the consequent duty devolving on the civil community to regulate its affairs by the law of Christ, and subordinate them to the glory of the Lord and the interests

of his church;—for the right of resistance to such civil rulers as usurp the prerogatives of the Redeemer, tyrannise over his church, oppress the people, and lend the weight of their influence to the subversion of constitutional equity, liberty, and law;—and for the obligation and importance of public covenants, as a means of professing, advancing, and maintaining the true religion, and of comforting and fortifying the church in troublous and difficult times.

These are the leading principles—bible principles all of them, as it appears to us—for which the martyrs of old, particularly the Scottish martyrs, contended earnestly, and died nobly. The simple enumeration, you will allow me to remark in passing, ought to be enough to rescue our ancestors from the charge that has sometimes been rashly preferred against them, of having busied themselves about trifles and squandered their lives on matters of little moment. Some of the points above indicated may seem of small moment to many in the present day; but such is not the light in which they presented themselves to the minds of our reforming forefathers. They felt that they were not at liberty to dispense with any part of revealed truth. Their consciences would not suffer them to purchase exemption from pain or even from death, by acknowledging as true what they believed to be false, or by acknowledging as right what they believed to be morally wrong. Nor did they deem it prudent at times to make concessions even when they might perhaps have been conscientiously made, lest their doing so should only have the effect of inducing their persecutors to demand similar concessions on points in regard to which their demands could not have been so safely complied with. These observations may help to account for some things in their conduct in which they are apt to be blamed for having gone to an extreme. They conscientiously believed, for example, the presbyterian form of church government to be derived from the word of God; and, therefore, they could not virtually abjure it by tamely submitting to a lordly prelacy. They regarded the custom of kneeling at the sacrament as originating in, and fitted to lend countenance to, the idolatrous

reverence extended to the host in the Church of Rome; and therefore they placed upon it the mark of their condemnation. The form in which they were required to pray for the king seemed to them to involve an acknowledgment of encroachments on the prerogatives of Christ, and the liberties of the church, which they could not but regard as at once tyrannical and blasphemous; and therefore, while they never refused to pray for the blessing of God on his person, they scrupled to pray for him in the form prescribed by the civil authorities. These are matters which the men of an easy and silken generation like the present may deem of no moment. But we feel convinced that all who will look at them from the true point of view, that, namely, in which the history of the times present them, will be disposed to think otherwise; and, while condemning as worthy of the strongest reprobation the conduct of the persecutors who, on grounds like these, sought to ensnare the consciences of men, and even proceeded to take their lives, they will view the steadfastness of those who manfully resisted every such attempt, as evincing a strength of principle and even an accuracy of thinking which merit the highest admiration and approval.

Returning from this partial digression, for which in the circumstances in which we are now speaking an apology will easily be found, we beg attention to the remark that, it would not be difficult to show that the principles of the martyrs all resolve themselves into the 'word of God,' from which they appear to us to be derived; and of course, dying for these principles, they may be said to have been 'slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.' Certain it is, that in the protestant struggle with antichrist, as in the christian struggle with heathenism, the contention not unfrequently turned on the holy scriptures,—their place as the rule of faith, and the right of all to read them. For as one well remarks, 'The suppression of the scriptures has been the unquestionable characteristic of the papal polity for a thousand years. In every country where it possessed influence, popery invariably succeeded in extinguishing the national use of the bible. In every country where the Reformation enlightened

the popular ignorance, its first effort was to give the bible to the people. This was, and *is*, uniformly the point of struggle, the acknowledged distinction, the marking feature of the contest between protestantism and popery.' (Croly.)

Nor is the analogy between the pagan and the papal martyrdoms less striking in regard to the justification they receive. A vindication amounting to investiture with 'white robes,' took place in respect to the latter also; in general, in the establishment of the Reformation; and as regards Britain, in particular, in the Revolution of 1688, which, whatever its defects, (and we are not insensible to them,) cannot but be regarded as a noble justification of the martyrs, inasmuch as, not only was there a stop put by it to the shedding of blood, but many of the grounds on which it proceeded were those for which they had suffered and died. It is not easy to conceive a more unequivocal testimony to the Reformers of this country than that which was given when the whole nation rose, and with one indignant effort drove from the throne and from the kingdom the family which had so wantonly shed their blood; and that, too, on the very principles, decided adherence to which had cost them their lives. This can be looked upon as inferior only to that complete and universal justification which awaits their character and cause at the final overthrow of antichrist. For, when the witnesses shall have finished their testimony, and the Beast out of the bottomless pit shall have made war against them and overcome them and killed them, (the slaying of the witnesses appears to us to be still future,) after three days and a half, during which their bodies shall lie in the streets of the great city, which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified, the spirit of life from God shall enter into them and they shall stand up upon their feet, and a great voice from heaven shall be heard, saying, Come up hither, and they shall ascend up to heaven in a cloud. Then, truly, shall 'white robes be given to every one of them,' and in their new and resplendent attire they shall stand forth acquitted and admired by the whole world, while their persecutors are wrapped in confusion and shame.

III. We have still, in fulfilment of the plan proposed, to point out the general import and design of the seal ; in other words, the purposes to which it may be viewed as subservient.

It was well fitted, for one thing, to sustain the faith of the christians living at the time. Their belief in the truth of christianity was in some danger of being shaken by such a long continuance of cruelties and persecutions, of sufferings and death. So long a time of the prosperity of the enemies, and the oppression of the friends, of the christian religion might be apt to induce a doubt whether, after all, it enjoyed the countenance of God. As the afflicted saint, in his moments of depression, is apt to say, *If I be a child, why am I thus?* so members of the church, contemplating the trials to which she is exposed, may be in danger, in the same mistaken spirit, of saying, *If indeed a church of God, why does he not interpose to protect and deliver her?* The vision before us was calculated to refute this false logic, by teaching that God, though long-suffering, was nevertheless holy and true, and that his judgment, though suspended for a while, could never, except in a figurative sense, be said to slumber. He delays, but he has purposes to serve by so doing ; and it is our duty to wait the development of these. We may not know beforehand what these are, but if we can only wait on in faith, they will assuredly unfold themselves. One of them may be, to try and to strengthen the faith of his people, by giving room for its exercise.—Another may be, to guard the members of the church against the danger of apostacy. The converts to christianity at first being from paganism, and those to the reformed religion afterwards being from popery, who knows whether the display given of the inherent darkness, and cruelty, and malignant selfishness of both these false systems, in their persecuting treatment of those who seceded from them, may not have been a chief means of preventing these converts from being allured back again into their fascinating but dangerous embrace? The tempest of persecution and the rage of the oppressor might thus become, not merely the instrument of their purification, but the occasion of their steadfastness.—Nor were the persecutions less calculated, by bringing strongly

out what religion is, and what it can both do and suffer, to subserve the great end of its diffusion. They showed what the omnipotent grace of the Most High could accomplish; what fortitude it could inspire; what constancy it could secure; what oppression it could enable those who were under its influence to sustain; what exploits it could qualify them to perform; what meekness, and patience, and forgiveness, and true elevation of spirit it could engender. This itself would constitute no mean testimony to the nature and reality of religion,—a testimony having much the effect of a miracle, being, indeed, a moral miracle, and so adapted to an age when miracles of another kind had ceased. And is it not the fact, that such exhibitions of the power of divine grace in times of persecution, have deeply affected the minds of men in favour of religion, and thus served materially to aid the very cause which the persecutions themselves were designed to overthrow? To such a degree, indeed, has this been the case, that it has even passed into a proverb that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

The vision before us was fitted, also, to animate the christians of the period to which it refers for the struggle which then awaited them. The persecution of Diocletian was at hand. Its last fearful outbreak was about to sweep over the empire. It would require special invigoration to enable the members of the church to face the danger, and to stand their ground, much more to come off with triumph. And what better calculated to serve the purpose than this? A view of the effects of former persecutions was well fitted to uphold them under those with which they themselves were about to be visited. A picture, such as is here given, of the wrongs sustained in former times by their fellow-servants and brethren, and of the ultimate glory in which these sufferings were to issue, was adapted to stir them up, under a keen sense of injury and a deep conviction of the justice of their cause, to put forth their utmost energies in the coming conflict. It brought to their assistance, in an hour when it was much required, the powerful aid of sympathy—sympathy with the great and the good, the noble and the honourable, of former

generations, than which scarce anything can be conceived more spirit-stirring and inspiring. A sight of the bleeding martyrs under the altar was calculated to operate on those by whom it was beheld, much in the same way in which a thrilling signal seasonably hoisted in the field of battle rouses the dispirited troops to an enthusiastic onset.

The vision is, in like manner, well adapted to teach and to illustrate some vastly important doctrines. It sets forth, in a most emphatic manner, the awful depravity of man, furnishing a most impressive illustration of the scripture statement, that the carnal mind is enmity against God; seeing that a religion so pure and benevolent as that of Christ should draw down on its supporters such cruel and atrocious treatment.—It proclaims, no less unequivocally, the retributive rectitude of the Almighty; representing him as holy and true; intimating that vengeance is his and his alone, and giving palpable meaning to the published principle of retributory justice, ‘Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.’ It throws light on the statement, ‘Precious shall their blood be in his sight;’ and supplies a comment on the passage which announces, ‘When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them; he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.’ The doctrine of God’s retributive equity is one of immense value in connection with the scheme of grace. Most vague and imperfect views regarding it are abroad, while by many it is either altogether overlooked or denied. The pernicious effect of such a state of things is to be seen in the notions that are prevalent regarding the work of Christ, the nature and method of man’s salvation, and even the principles of criminal legislation. Well were it, could some of the would-be theologians and philanthropists of the present day be induced to study the opening of the fifth seal, so as to drink into the spirit of the souls under the altar who cry with a loud voice, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?’—And how strikingly does it instruct us in the soul’s safe and happy and active existence after death! The bodies of the martyrs had fallen into the hands of their persecutors, and had been, perhaps, given by

them to be meat to the fowls of heaven or to the beasts of the earth. But they had no control over the disembodied spirits. They could kill the body, but could not kill the soul. The indignities offered to the mangled, quivering, lifeless flesh, had no effect in hindering the rest or the glory of the spirit. The bodies are inactive and insensible; but the souls are busily employed in contemplating the justice of God's moral government, confidently reposing thereupon, waiting with eager desire for farther displays of it, and deriving from the contemplation and prospect large accessions to their happiness. How is the gloomy sentiment thus rebuked, which represents the soul as entering at death on a state of unconscious torpidity! And what a degree of plausibility is given to the opinion that separate spirits are neither ignorant of, nor insensible to, the events connected with the church which are transpiring here below!

Besides these purposes of a general nature, the vision is no less fitted to exert a salutary practical influence, some particulars of which may form a suitable conclusion to the discourse.

How well fitted to moderate the expectations of christians! They may hence learn not to look for uninterrupted enjoyment. We see here what the christians of former ages were called to endure. We are even taught to expect no better treatment for those who are yet to follow after; at least until that *let* or hinderance to everything good, the Mystery of Iniquity, be taken out of the way. The children must fill up the measure of their fathers. So long as antichrist continues, 'all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' We need not, then, look for exemption from this common lot of saints, but lay our account with being made to feel, in one form or another, the bitter hostility of Rome.

We are taught also highly to value and earnestly to contend for the word of God. As witnesses, it is our duty to testify; and the grand point on which our testimony must be concentrated is the holy scriptures,—their place as the alone rule of faith, and the title of every man and woman to read them. This, as we have seen, has been a principal object of

attack by Rome, whether papal or pagan. By Romanists, the authority of the church has been raised above that of the bible, and the use of the scriptures denied to the laity. The contest between popery and protestantism takes its rise, and derives one of its most prominent features, from this point. Decrees of councils and rescripts of popes there are in abundance, modern as well as ancient, denouncing the reading of the word of God, and uttering curses on such as disregard the prohibition. As christians and as protestants it becomes us to guard the point in question with jealous care, to defend with zeal the right of all to the word of God, and to strive for it even unto blood, manfully resisting every attempt to wrest from us so precious a treasure. Were I monarch of a kingdom, some one has said, I would sooner part with the right to wear my crown, than with the right to read my bible. The right to wear my crown! A bauble! Sooner would I part with my right eye—sooner would I part with my right arm—sooner would I part with life itself, than surrender my right to hold converse with these scriptures which make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Learn to abhor and stand aloof from all persecution. You see its spirit and effects in the details of this seal. They are such as should awaken the strongest detestation and repugnance. You meet this day to testify your respect for the memory of martyrs. But this is no proof that you may not cherish a persecuting spirit. The Church of Rome herself professes veneration for the martyrs who fell under the pagan persecutions; she pretends to have great respect for their memory, and even pays them a sort of religious homage. Yet does not this hinder her from killing the fellow-servants and brethren of thesesame martyrs. With that taste for absurdity and inconsistency for which the system is distinguished, she can at once canonise the dead and persecute the living. She can venerate, even to superstitious excess, the murdered saints of one age, and herself put to death those of another age. She can build the tombs and garnish the sepulchres of one set of martyrs, and fill the tomb with the bodies of another set. She can profess respect for the cry of the souls under the altar, at

the very time that she is adding daily and extensively to their number, and doing what only tends to swell the voice of their bitter exclamation. Imitate her not in this, my brethren. Value the religious liberty you yourselves enjoy, and conscientiously respect that of others. Hate with a perfect hatred the demon of persecution, and do what in you lies, in the exercise of an enlightened zeal, to hunt it down and banish it from the earth.

Rejoice in the retributive equity of the Most High, and wait with tranquil and confident expectation its unfailing results. There is nothing in this that is at variance with the charity of the gospel. On the contrary, the subject we have been considering shows it to be in perfect harmony with the feelings of those who have been purified from the last dregs of human depravity and even infirmity. If the souls under the altar cry, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?' we need not hesitate to cherish similar sentiments. The Lord reigns. Justice and judgment are the foundation of his throne. The wicked may triumph and the righteous be oppressed; but it shall not be so for ever. A time will come when all such moral discrepancies shall be completely rectified; and to that time let us look forward with joy. Let us do so in particular with respect to the retributive visitation which awaits the popish church. We know that her sins shall yet reach unto heaven, and that God will remember her iniquities. He will reward her even as she hath rewarded others, and double unto her double according to her works; in the cup which she hath filled, he will fill to her double. Great Babylon shall yet come in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the fierceness of his wrath. He will yet prove himself to be the Lord God, holy and true, by judging and avenging upon her the blood of his saints. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he cannot overlook a system in whose skirts is found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that were slain on the earth. Having shed the blood of saints and prophets, nay, having been drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, she shall have blood given her to drink,

for she is worthy. In these holy and equitable retributions, who would not feel satisfaction? Not to do so were to contravene an express command of God, and to prove ourselves disqualified for engaging in the lofty ascriptions of heaven. You need not therefore be deterred from the exercise in question by any apprehension of its unsuitableness to the christian character. The command of God and the example of the company on high may well relieve you from every scruple of this kind.

Nor may you be in any degree restrained by a dread of disappointment. No. We are well assured that Babylon's 'plagues shall come upon her in one day, and that she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.' Mark, for your encouragement, the expression, 'for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.' Rome is strong, but there is a stronger than she. She may yet increase her zeal and redouble her activities; nominal and faithless protestants may give themselves over to supine indifference, and even lend their aid to advance her interests; Oxford, forgetting the purpose for which its schools are upheld, may become Romanised; the court of Britain may form diplomatic relations with the court of Rome, and may even with perfidious and suicidal inconsistency pension the priesthood of the Man of Sin. But the result of all such efforts will only be to impart a sort of posthumous or galvanic strength to the system, the efforts arising from which will be but as the mortal spasms of approaching dissolution. The doom of Babylon is sealed. The hour is fixed, and at no great distance, when the seven-hilled city shall be tossed from its proud pre-eminence,—when the triple crown of blasphemy shall be prostrated in the dust,—when, like a millstone cast with an angel's might into the sea, the great city shall be thrown down to rise no more at all for ever. Do you demand security that it shall be so, before you comply with the command to rejoice in the prospect? What better can you have than this?—'Strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.' The might of Jehovah, the strength of the Omnipotent, is pledged for the destruction of popery. There is no room for despon-

deny. He, whose voice is obeyed by the wind and the waves—He, to whom the planets in their courses, and the angels in their holy ministry, do homage—He, who can rend the rocks with his word and shake the earth with his presence—He, who has the roar of the thunder and the impetuosity of the whirlwind, not less than the whispering breeze of love, at his command—even He it is that hath said, ‘Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her. With violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.’ The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. Contemplate it then, my hearers, with unwavering faith; pray for it with devotion; anticipate it with rapturous satisfaction and delight.

Let the subject, in fine, serve to direct, confirm, and animate us, in regard to what is our own duty at the present time. Let us manifest becoming respect for the memory of our martyred forefathers; and do what we can, by refreshing their time-worn tablets, and, above all, by seeking to revive an interest in the sacred cause in which they died, to hasten forward their predicted investiture with white robes. As christians, we profess to be the fellow-servants of all the saints in glory; as Scottish Presbyterians we are the hereditary descendants of the martyrs of our country; but they only can consistently claim the honour of being their real successors who adopt and act out their principles, which were opposed at once to popery, prelacy, and erastianism. Lift up your eyes then, and look. Behold the souls under the altar. Perceive ye not among them, the spirits of Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart; of Argyll, and Guthrie, and Warriston; of Cameron, and Cargill, and Renwick, and other names in Scotland’s illustrious army of martyrs? Imbibe their spirit. Espouse their cause. Follow in their worthy footsteps. Lift high their fallen standard. Shake out the folds of their battered and blood-stained banner to the wind, and the gathering breeze of passing events will not suffer it to hang flapping idly against the flag-staff, but will stretch it stiffly out so that

men on all sides may read its simple but glorious motto,—*For the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus—for Christ's Crown and Covenant.* Wait with patience till, the little season being past, their cause shall be justified before the world by the providential interpositions of the Most High God. Then, instead of prophesying in sackcloth, or weltering in their blood, or crying with a loud voice for retribution, they shall stand forth in presence of their enemies arrayed in the white robes of open acquittal and universal approbation, hymning songs of gratitude, and raising the shout of victory. The Lord hasten it in his time!

And Oh, my hearers, let us all, in conclusion, feel the need, on account of our sins, of escaping without delay from the retributive justice of a true and holy God to whom vengeance belongeth, to the sacrifice of the Redeemer. We have an altar, beneath which has been poured the blood of a divinely meritorious offering. To that blood must we betake, to that blood must we cleave in faith, if, in the solemn day of final award, we would be found among those who shall appear 'arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints,' and in whose happy experience the blessed promise shall be everlastingly realised—'THEY SHALL WALK WITH ME IN WHITE, FOR THEY ARE WORTHY.' Amen and amen!

SERMON IX.

CHARITY TO THE POOR EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

Preached at Paisley, Sept. 23, 1823, for the Widow and Orphan Society there.

JOB xxxi. 16-22.

'If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail: or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; (for from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;) if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate; then let mine arm fall from the shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone.'

No part of scripture, perhaps, has more exercised the ingenuity of critics and commentators than the book of Job. To detail all the various hypotheses that have been offered on the subject, nay, even to take a brief retrospect of the principal opinions that have been entertained respecting this portion of God's word, would carry us completely away from our present design. The reality of Job's existence, the period in which he lived, the place of his residence, and the class of poetry to which his book is to be referred, have all given rise to the keenest disputes. Assuming that the poem is not a mere fictitious narrative but an authentic detail of facts, we are disposed to refer the period of Job's existence to very remote antiquity, as remote at least as the patriarchal age, and to

regard him as an inhabitant of Idumea, that part of Arabia-Petrea which is situated in the southern extremity of the tribe of Judah, between Egypt and Philistia.

The book, whether viewed as epic, dramatic, or didactic, must be allowed to exhibit all the marks of an eastern poem. The machinery is extremely regular and distinct. It consists of an exordium, or introduction,—a protracted dialogue,—and an epilogue or conclusion, all of which are so closely connected, as not to admit of being detached from one another. The exordium and epilogue are in prose, but the intermediate dialogues, which compose the principal part of the book, are in metre. And the whole sparkles with such a peculiar play of fancy, exhibits such strength of description, and abounds with such frequent use of metaphors, as have led commentators and critics of every class unanimously to agree in pronouncing the poem of Job the most ancient book in existence.

Here we behold a truly pious man suddenly precipitated from the very summit of prosperity into the lowest depths of misery and ruin; on which account he is exposed to the unjust suspicions and bitter reproaches of his mistaken friends; from whose accusations he is repeatedly compelled to defend himself by strong asseverations of his innocence, earnest expostulations, and solemn appeals to the justice and omniscience of God.

It is in one of these solemn protestations that the words of our text occur. They have obviously a direct reference to the purposes for which we are now assembled, viz., to exhibit the duty of charity to the poor in general, and to an interesting class of indigent persons in particular. In the wise arrangements of the Almighty Ruler of the world it has been so appointed, that in every age there should exist among men a great diversity of external condition—some wallowing in pampered affluence, and others oppressed with pinching want. In the Levitical writings it was distinctly asserted, that ‘the poor should never cease out of the land’—from the text we learn, that long prior to that period poverty presented its claims to the benevolent heart; and the object that has brought us together at present serves to evince the continuance of the

same order of things. It will not, therefore, be deemed unsuitable to solicit your attention to—A few preliminary remarks on *the text itself*; the *manner* in which charity to the poor in general ought to be conducted; and the *motives* by which this duty is enforced.

I. Let me crave your attention to some PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS on the text itself.

1. Here it is important to remark, that it was spoken in reply to a charge.—In any other light, such language as is here employed might appear ostentatious. There is no species of ostentation more hateful or disgusting than the ostentation of charity. In whatever way it makes its appearance, whether in a vain parade beforehand, in the manner in which alms are conferred, or in the noise that is made about them afterwards, it betrays the most despicable littleness of soul, and is a sure indication of the want of all proper religious principle. However much we may be required in scripture to please our fellow-men as a *duty*, it is never recognised as the *motive* from which any of our actions ought to proceed. Here lay the great fault of the Pharisees of old. They did nothing so much from a regard to the will of God, as to procure for themselves the praise of man. Actuated at all times by a base spirit of self-conceit, they were perpetually hunting for human applause; and this spirit displayed itself to such a degree even in their almsgiving, that our Lord deemed it necessary to expose their wickedness, and to warn his disciples from following so hateful and so dangerous an example.

The circumstances in which the text was spoken, completely free the patriarch from every such unworthy suspicion. It was in vindication of his character from the harsh and illiberal imputations of Eliphaz, that he was forced, reluctantly we may believe, thus to speak of charitable deeds that might otherwise, for him at least, have for ever remained concealed under the shades of profoundest secrecy. But this pretended friend, incensed at Job's resolute assertion of his innocence in reply to former accusations, proceeds to open crimination and contumely, and accuses the most upright of men of the most

atrocious crimes,—of injustice, rapine, and oppression. Read the language in which he inveighs against him for his want of charity to the needy: ‘For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing. Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry. But as for the mighty man, he had the earth; and the honourable man dwelt in it. Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken: therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee.’ (Job xxii. 6–10.) What virtuous heart could coolly submit to such sweeping reproaches? Who but must acquit the patriarch of everything like ostentation in the language here used concerning his own benevolent actions, when he thus views it as the simple and spontaneous expression of a noble spirit uttered in indignant refutation of one of the foulest of calumnies? Although not allowed by the pure principles of christianity to obtrude our good deeds on public notice in the way of self-gratulation, there is certainly nothing in these principles to hinder our taking this method of replying to unfounded impeachments of character.

2. The text is part of a solemn protestation before God.—Instances of such appeals occur not unfrequently in the sacred oracles. Saul says—‘God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.’ (1 Samuel xiv. 44.) David also—‘So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down.’ (2 Samuel iii. 35.) Similar is that in Psalm cxxxvii. 5, 6: ‘If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.’ From their nature, we may safely infer that such asseverations are only warranted on special occasions, when other means of vindication have proved ineffectual, and that even then they ought to be conducted with great solemnity.

Of this kind is that of Job in the text. He had formerly protested his innocence in presence of his accusers. But so far from convincing, these protestations had only incensed

them to assail him with heavier charges than before. In such circumstances he must either sit tamely still under a load of the most unfounded reproaches, or make an animated and confident appeal to the tribunal of all-seeing Justice. The latter course is what he here pursues. Nor is it easy to conceive anything more solemn, affecting, and appropriate, than the manner in which it is done. He relates the principal transactions of his past life; appeals to the omniscience of God for the veracity of his statements; and, rising in vehemence as he proceeds, calls on the Almighty to attest by judicial visitations, if his statements are false. Such is his feeling of conscious innocence, that he is not afraid to imprecate judgment, nay, even to challenge the awful fury of divine vengeance. His language is worthy of notice. The paroxysm of virtuous indignation does not carry him beyond propriety of diction: 'If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; (for from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;) if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate; then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone.' The arm is the instrument of industry, by which, with the blessing of God, men acquire what enables them to supply the necessities of the poor, besides being in such offices of charity the instrument of donation. On this member of the body, therefore, it is that, on supposition of his guilt, he calls down the righteous retribution of an angry God; which plainly amounts to an acknowledgment of his conviction, that the arm which either withholds from the poor his desire, or is lifted up in opposition against the needy, deserves to be withered, the flesh to rot from the bone, and the bone itself to be disjoined, and even broken off.

3 The text affords a fine illustration of the sense enter-

tained, among the people of God, at that early age, of the relative duties of life.—These duties are but ill understood by mankind in general; and the farther back we carry our inquiries into any society, they will be found to be worse understood. This is the case, particularly with the duties which the higher classes owe to the lower. Consult the records of antiquity, and you will find that reasons of the latter description have been undervalued, despised, trampled upon, and treated with every species of indignity. Such is indicative of a state of barbarity; and in the proportion in which it holds good in any community, it denotes a deficiency of civilisation. Nor does it appear that mere unassisted reason can elevate society to such a state as that the poor shall not be harassed and oppressed, and treated in some measure as beasts of burden. The existence of slavery in Greece and Rome, even at the proudest stage of their advancement, corroborates this opinion. It was otherwise, however, at all times, among the people of God. Divine revelation imparted to them a clearer knowledge of relative duty, and, of course, raised them to a higher state of civilisation than could ever otherwise have been attained. Of the importance put upon the poor by the Founder of christianity, you are all aware. To the manner in which they were appreciated during the Levitical economy, let the Mosaic institutes bear witness; and of the ideas entertained on the subject by the patriarchs, we need no other proof than what is presented in this noble passage from one of the earliest of the inspired writings. It leaves us no room to hesitate that the people of God, from very remote antiquity, were accustomed to recognise and to respect the claims of poverty. By the light of the occasional revelations they received, they were guided in this as well as the other departments of relative duty; and the grace of God in their hearts at once restrained every proud sentiment of conscious superiority, and taught them to regard every human being however poor and degraded as a brother. Such are still the lessons of genuine christianity, and the effects it is found invariably to produce wherever its true spirit is imbibed. The cruelties

that exist in what are styled christian countries, and the accursed traffic in human beings which is conducted, countenanced, or vindicated by men who claim the honour of this sacred name, may seem utterly irreconcilable with this statement. But in explanation of this, we have only to remind you that it is where the true spirit of genuine christianity is felt, that the effects in question are to be expected. It is too true, alas! that many claim the honour of the christian name who have never drunk at all into the spirit of the religion of Jesus, whom real christians can never recognise, and whom, if they repent not, Christ himself will at last frown away into endless perdition. Still, a mere glance at the state of christian communities may serve to illustrate and confirm our remark; while the number of public charities, hospitals, asylums, and other benevolent institutions that exist in our own land, shows the decided tendency of christianity in favour of the poor and the destitute, notwithstanding the counteracting influences of selfishness, hypocrisy, and irreligion.

4. The text suggests an important lesson to the guardians of the young.—Job, it appears, had been accustomed to deeds of charity from his earliest years: ‘For from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother’s womb.’ This plainly intimates that he had been educated to maxims and habits of a benevolent nature; and he obviously refers to some well-known cases in which he had carried these into effect from the days of his youth. He had, in all probability, a tender and compassionate nature, a heart sensibly alive to the miseries of the species, and keenly susceptible of the most lively feelings of commiseration. He could not look on the distresses of others with hard-hearted indifference; and even when a child, the sight of some wretched sufferer, or the recital of some tale of woe, would cause his little bosom heave with grief and his eyes stream with tears. This amiable disposition, in all probability, had been fostered, encouraged, and directed by parental authority and example. It had consequently grown into a habit, which never afterwards left him, but continued to the

last to form a bright feature in his general conduct, to which he could refer in vindication of his character: 'When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not, I searched out.' (Job xxix. 11-16.)

Children are early capable of receiving impressions, earlier than those who have the charge of them are apt to suppose; nor is there anything in education more deserving of attention than that these impressions be of a proper kind. And as concern for the wants of our fellow-men is one of the most important of relative duties, whatever is connected with this will not be overlooked by the enlightened guardians of the young. Indeed, children themselves early display symptoms of liberality; and cases sometimes occur, in which they show a readiness to part with their food or their clothing, to supply the necessities of other children who have not been equally well provided for as themselves. These spontaneous movements of charitable feeling, while they require to be wisely directed, ought, on no account, to be checked. Let them rather be cherished by all proper means. Let the young be early instructed on this interesting branch of moral duty; let every symptom of cruelty, hard-heartedness, or supercilious pride, be noticed with disapprobation;—let us take our children with us on our walks of usefulness, and initiate them into the practice of benevolence, by being made on proper occasions the agents of our charity, the almoners of our bounty. In every circle will there be found some destitute orphan, whose wants they can supply; some disconsolate widow, whose burden they may help by their little charities to lighten. Thus shall we, while we perform a duty to the young themselves, confer an unspeakable benefit on those who, after we have retired from the stage of public life.

shall become the objects of their benevolent interest. ‘Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.’ O who would not wish that his children, should they like Job ever need to vindicate their character from uncharitable reflections, might be able to say, ‘From my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother’s womb?’

II. We proceed to consider the MANNER in which charity to the poor in general ought to be conducted.

1. It should be managed with prudence.—In scarce any thing is there more need of wisdom. The injurious consequences of a thoughtless, lavish, and indiscriminate charity, are incalculable. Many seem to think all that is requisite is profusion; if they give enough, they consider themselves as having done their duty, although the manner in which it was to be done has never perhaps cost them a single thought. It never occurs to them that to think, to investigate, to inquire, are necessary to entitle their donations to the name of charity. It has been very properly remarked, that there are three things to be considered in everything we do: *what* we do, *how* we do it, and *when* we do it. The individuals in question, as indeed is too common in the world, content themselves with attending to the *what*, while the *when* and the *how* are entirely overlooked. But the blessing of God, let it be remembered, is pronounced only on such as ‘*wisely* consider the case of the poor.’

‘Blessed is he that *wisely* doth
The poor man’s case consider.’

Prudence requires to be exercised, both with regard to the *objects* relieved, and the *nature* of their necessities.—Among the objects to be relieved, there may be some who, although poor, are yet able to work. Charity to such consists in providing them with the means of supporting themselves. If they are able, but unwilling to work, from habits of laziness, a dislike to restraint, or a predilection for a wandering life, they ought to be subjected to such restrictions as shall make them feel the necessity of honest industry: to supply

them gratuitously, is just to rear a lawless banditti to plunder and alarm the district they happen to infest. And, even where indigence is attended with inability, prudence will often dictate the propriety of furnishing the necessaries required, rather than the money which is the means of procuring them. —These necessaries again will vary with the circumstances of the paupers. The wants of the poor may be various. Some may stand in need of food, others of medicine, others of clothing, others of fuel, others of shelter. Where poverty is accompanied with disease, medical aid may be necessary to check the progress of the disorder, and even careful attendance to smooth the pillow of distress: nor can that charity be counted wise, which furnishes an abundance of food, but leaves its objects exposed to the starvation of nakedness. Not such was that of Job: ‘If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep.’

Charity, then, it appears, does not consist merely in giving money, but in giving it prudently; for they are sluggards in well-doing, it has been said, ‘who know only to do good when they have a purse in their hand.’ It is not that sentimental feeling of pity which weeps over a tale of imaginary distress, while it shrinks with affected disgust from real suffering. It is a dignified principle, which can visit the abodes of the indigent, encounter poverty in all its shapes, and disease in all its loathsomeness, confer its liberality with discretion, and enhance the value of its gifts by the counsels, the cares, the looks, and the tears of genuine sympathy with which it is accompanied.

2. It should be liberal.—Paul commends the Corinthians for their ‘liberal distribution to the saints, and unto all men.’ (2 Cor. 9–13.) From this it may be inferred, that charity to the poor ought to be liberal, both as to the *gifts* conferred, and as to the range of *objects* it embraces.

As to what is conferred, this no doubt requires in individual cases to be regulated by circumstances. While men’s ability is so very different, it were unreasonable to expect the same from

all. The christian institute on this subject is founded on the obvious principles of equity and common sense: 'Let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God hath prospered him.*' (1 Cor. xvi. 2.) Still this does not prevent the donation from being in every case liberal, the term being obviously relative to the circumstances of the donor. It was on this principle, plainly, that the widow's two mites were considered by one well able to judge, as more liberal than the offerings of the rich who gave out of their abundance: 'And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.' (Mark xii. 41-44.) A truly charitable spirit will not be satisfied with a mean and sordid gift. It will not be content that the poor enjoy a bare subsistence, but will seek to provide them with the comforts, as well as with the necessaries of life. Despising the niggardly disposition which would support life only to feel its miseries, it will never be found nicely balancing the question, how *little will do*, but rather considering how *much* can be spared. There is generally more danger of our *keeping within*, than of our *going beyond* the measure of our ability. 'If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.' (Deut. xv. 7, 8.)

Our liberality ought also to have a respect to the range of objects which it embraces. Our charity is to be diffusive. Prudence, to be sure, must be consulted. It were folly, as before remarked, to scatter our gifts with indiscriminate profusion; and to roam to distant regions in search of objects,

while many are pining unrelieved at our door, were to lay ourselves open to the charge of enthusiasm. Still it holds true that charity ought not to be confined within a narrow circle, ought not to be limited by blood, neighbourhood, christian fellowship, or even national relationship. While those who stand connected in each of these relations are to be viewed as having a prior claim, to restrict it to any one of them would be to do violence to the generous spirit of the christian religion. Christian charity is not to be limited by kindred, for God has made of one blood the whole family of mankind; nor by neighbourhood, for, in the scripture sense of the word, the whole human race are our neighbours; nor by character or profession, for, as we have opportunity, we are required to do good to *all* men, as well as to them that are of the household of faith; nor by national relations, for all nations of men are but joint-subjects of the great Supreme. Among the many wretched objects who applied to the compassionate Redeemer, in the days of his flesh, none was ever dismissed unrelieved on account of his character. The Jew and the Gentile, the rich and the poor, the friend and the enemy, the blind beggar, the loathsome leper, and the ferocious maniac, were alike welcome to apply, and met an equally gracious reception. None ever left him sorrowful but one, and he because he refused to comply with His charitable requirement. It is not for us, then, to spurn from us those whom Jesus would have relieved, or to set limits to our charity which he would have overstepped. If religious character is indispensable to render any proper objects of charity, the same principle would oblige us to ascertain its existence in order to our giving employment. Let us remember the commendation pronounced on the good Samaritan for his kindness to a stranger. Let us look at God, who 'makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain on the just and on the unjust.' Let us bear in mind the command of our Lord, 'Love your enemies; bless them that curse you, and do good to them that hate you.'

In short, true benevolence, as its object is the happiness of all who are capable of feeling happiness, however much its *efforts* may be circumscribed by individual inability, will be

strictly universal in its *wishes*; and if there are few who can realise the extensive philanthropy of a Howard, there may still be many whose wishes may describe a circle equally expansive with that of him whom, when seen traversing the globe on his errand of mercy, the spirits of the good are poetically conceived to have mistaken

‘For an angel guest,
And asked what seraph-foot the earth impressed.’

3. It should be cheerful.—‘God loveth a cheerful giver. Therefore, every man, according as he hath purposed in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity.’ (2 Cor. ix. 7.) In conferring our alms, we are to show such a willingness and alacrity as shall evince our sincerity in obeying the divine command. To do it with a reluctant grudge is to say we are compelled by necessity rather than prompted by our own good-will. Yet how many are there who, when called upon to contribute, put their hands into their pockets with obvious reluctance,—a reluctance which they are at no pains to conceal? For some to give, is like tearing the very flesh from their bones. They yield, it is true, to custom or to importunity, but all the while they inwardly curse the necessity which obliges them to part with their self. Charity, however, to be deserving of the name, must in every case be a *free-will offering*.

4. It should be self-denied.—We ought to accustom ourselves to want something, that we may be in a capacity to give. We may give, and yet our tables be loaded and our persons clothed as richly as ever. In this case there is no self-denial. And although, when they can be had, we are not perhaps required to deny ourselves the comforts of life, yet it would seem that, in every circumstance, it is our duty to deny ourselves some of its luxuries and fineries at least, that we may contribute to the wants of our fellow-men. Such habits of self-denial help to prepare us for circumstances in which we also may have to want; and even should we never be so situated, of which the most wealthy cannot assure themselves, the gifts thus conferred will yield a peculiar pleasure to ourselves, and possess an additional value in

the estimation of others. Indeed it is in such cases that men can be said, properly speaking, to *give* at all; as in other cases they part only with what was unnecessary, perhaps cumbersome,—what at any rate they were nothing benefited by possessing, and what, when transferred to the person relieved, may be said only to have changed its depository. ‘If thou wilt be perfect,’ said Jesus to the young man, ‘go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me.’ (Matt. xix. 21.)

5. It should be conducted with a proper regard to the feelings of the poor.—This I deem an important remark. The objects of our charity may be possessed of sensibilities as delicate as our own; and it is quite possible to conceive that a donation may be offered with such a look of supercilious disdain, or such a parade of condescension, as may inflict a deep wound on the feelings of the person on whom it is conferred. Such is to add insult to misery, and to purchase by our gift the liberty of cruelly aggravating a sense of dependence that is perhaps already too severely felt. We hope there are few who are capable of doing so wilfully and deliberately; yet there is reason to think that owing to inconsideration the thing, not seldom occurs. It ought therefore to be carefully guarded against; and we have the example of Job to aid us in the attempt. His language in the text shows how sedulously he studied the feelings of those whom he relieved. Hence it is that he speaks of the ‘desire’ of the poor, the ‘eyes of the widow,’ and the ‘fatherless eating his morsel’ along with him.—He not only gave heed to the petition of the indigent, but even attempted to discover and anticipate their desire. Many may desire relief from the influence of circumstances, whose delicacy of feeling or sense of independence will not allow them to beg. There is no doubt a false shame, allied to pride, that may restrain some from disclosing their wants; but there is also a noble spirit of virtuous independence which may have the same effect. Such a spirit, there is some reason to fear, has often been broken by dire necessity, when a wise and timely anticipation of the individual’s desires might have

preserved it unimpaired ; and it were a curious inquiry, not unworthy of being pursued, how many of those clamorous vagrants that infest both town and country might have been spared the community, had their incipient wants been thus discovered and relieved. Such at any rate is unquestionably the duty of the truly charitable. But how, it may be asked, are the *desires* of men to be known unless they are spoken out? Many ways, my brethren. The empty house, the tattered or threadbare garment, the pale countenance, the hollow eye, the feeble step, may all, alas! make an eloquent appeal to the tender-hearted, without a single word being uttered. In such cases, the necessity may be supplied without its ever being known from what quarter it comes ; or what is needed may be conferred as an act of friendship rather than of charity, as a debt rather than as a donation ; and without, I do not say a look of supercilious pride, but without even such a look of sympathy as might intimate to the individual that his wants were observed.

With beautiful propriety, in this point of view, does the patriarch speak of his not having ‘caused the eyes of the widow to fail.’ Ay, the case is neither imaginary nor rare, of such a one *looking* wistfully for what she cannot bring herself to *ask*, and expressing with the eloquence of the eyes what the eloquence of the tongue could never fully have uttered.’ Accustomed to plenty during the lifetime of her partner, depending on his industry for all she required, little used perhaps to work and as little to want, the relentless stroke of death reduces her at once to loneliness and poverty, robs her in the same moment of the means of support and of the company that gave them a double relish, and leaves her with the charge of a numerous and helpless family. She struggles for a little with the difficulties of her situation, and still bears about, in the remains of her respectable attire and in her habits of cleanliness, touching memorials of her former circumstances. By and by, however, she finds it will not do longer ; her labours by day and her watchings by night do not suffice to meet the wants of her household ; poverty overtakes her, and starvation seems to look her in the face. Gladly would she pine away in want,

and sink unheeded into an untimely grave, were it not for her children, in whom she beholds the image of their father, and who pierce her already too lacerated heart with cries of want which it is not in her power to relieve. In such circumstances what is she to do? She cannot beg: her heart is too big to admit of utterance, even were there no other restraint. She can *look*,—she can only look; and obtuse must be those feelings that cannot interpret the language of her eyes; hard, harder than the nether millstone, must be that heart which would suffer her eyes to fail with looking unsuccessfully, and thus perhaps compel her at last to utter with her lips what her eyes had already spoken far more powerfully.

To the same purpose is what Job says of his not having ‘eaten his morsel alone.’ He seems here to refer to his having entertained at his table some orphan or orphans, whose previous rank in society and habits of life rendered it a point of delicate propriety thus to treat them. Excepting when these circumstances occur, such treatment is certainly not called for; as it would be preposterous to hold that poverty should entitle persons to an elevation in society to which they were formerly unaccustomed. But when the circumstances supposed do occur, true charity will dictate an imitation of the conduct of Job. Nor is this the only example of the kind recorded in scripture. Some of our hearers may recollect another in the history of king David. When this heavenly-minded prince sought an opportunity of showing kindness to the house of Saul, for Jonathan’s sake, to whom he had been warmly attached, he was told of Ziba, a servant of Saul, and of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. Observe how he expressed his charity to each of these according to his rank;—to the *servant* by finding him employment—to the *son* by admitting him to a seat at his own family board. ‘Then the king called to Ziba, Saul’s servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master’s son all that pertained to Saul, and to all his house. Thou, therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shalt till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master’s son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master’s son shall eat bread alway at my table.’ (2 Sam. ix. 9, 10.)

It is plain then, I think, on the whole, that our charity ought to be conducted with due respect to the feelings of the poor.

6. It should, in fine, flow from proper principles.—It is easily conceivable, that deeds of outward beneficence may be performed from very improper motives. Conformity to custom—the example of others—a wish not to be troubled with importunate clamour—a regard to reputation—a love of flattery—and mistaken views of merit, may all severally dictate such beneficent acts. The last is perhaps the most common, but all are equally dangerous. Many, there is reason to fear, expect to fly to heaven on the wings of charity. I need scarcely add that their expectations are vain. But this will appear more at length in considering the third branch of our discourse, to which we are thus naturally conducted.

III. The MOTIVES by which charity to the poor is enforced.

Before proceeding to specify particulars, I would here remark in general, that there are two principles from which charity may flow, which, though not enough to render it virtuous, are nevertheless good enough in themselves. These are the natural feelings of humanity and the benevolent spirit of the christian religion.

The great radical principles of human nature exist alike in the righteous and the wicked. They may prompt an ungodly person to acts of beneficence, which, though not on that account virtuous, can neither, on the other hand, be regarded as sinful. And although the operation of these principles in a godly person may not be sufficient to render his conduct acceptable in the sight of God, yet ought they not on this account to be repressed. Grace does not eradicate our constitutional feelings; it refines them, and imparts to them a proper direction.

The benevolent spirit of christianity no one can deny who is at all acquainted with either its nature or tendency. 'Good-will toward men' beams from every part of it. Everything injurious it forbids; everything conducive to the welfare of the species it enjoins. Were its spirit universally realised, every torment would be plucked from the breast of individuals,

every bane rooted out from society. Envy, jealousy, injustice, calumny, war would be unknown; and happiness and peace would reign throughout the earth. Of course, whoever imbibes this spirit must take a deep interest in the good of his fellow-men—must be powerfully prompted to consult the interests of the poor; nor is it conceivable, that one under its influence could wallow in luxurious affluence while he knew of another perishing for want at his door. Yet although in his being thus prompted to relieve his fellow-creatures there may be nothing blame-worthy, something more seems needful to give his conduct the character of virtue in the sight of God. Having made these observations, I proceed to specify some of the motives by which the duty under consideration may be enforced.

1. Respect must be had to the will of God.—This is, indeed, the first thing to be regarded in every duty. We are the moral subjects of a divine Sovereign, by whose will our conduct ought ever to be regulated. Charity is a *duty*, the performance of it is *obedience*; and, of course, to its proper existence we must know and recognise the *command* of God. This command is reiterated throughout the sacred volume. It was given under the Mosaic dispensation: ‘If there be among you, a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.’ (Deut. xv. 7, 8.) It was repeated at the introduction of the new testament economy: ‘If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.’ (Matt. xix. 21.) And it has even been incorporated with the institutions of christianity: ‘Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.’

While these commands express to us the divine will, it appears that one design which God has in conferring his bounty on man is, that he may distribute it to others. Thus

it is that we read : ‘Cast thy bread upon the waters : for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight ; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth : and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there shall it be.’ (Eccles. xi. 1-3.) The allusion here is extremely beautiful. As in the kingdom of nature the moisture of the earth, which is exhaled by the heat of the sun, is condensed in the atmosphere and forms clouds which discharge their contents on the earth in refreshing and fructifying showers, so the bounties of Providence are given to some that they may scatter them to others as they are needed. While the man of beneficence, therefore, may be compared to a cloud charged with rain hanging over a parched field, ready to receive its contents with greediness, the niggard may be compared to a cloud without water, which excites perhaps expectations of benefit, but leaves these expectations unfulfilled. He not only disappoints his fellow-creatures, but, in a certain sense, counteracts the very designs of God.

2. The golden rule, as it is called, supplies enforcement of the duty in question. ‘All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.’ (Matt. vii. 12.) This is a law which, when properly explained and understood, will be found to possess many excellent properties. It is simple in its meaning, universal in its application, equitable in its principle, authoritative in its form, and in its effects beneficial. How happy for the world were its spirit universally diffused ! Then should we find love in every countenance, kindness in every word, in every domestic circle harmony and peace, every society should present the comely spectacle of perfect order, and all the distracting measures of national policy should be hushed in one universal calm. Its bearing on the point in hand scarcely needs to be shown. This must be obvious to all. It requires us to fancy ourselves in the situation of those who need our charity, to consider what, in such circumstances, would be our wish, and to regulate our conduct accordingly. It obliges us, when applied to by persons in distress, to make

their wants our own; in imagination to strip ourselves of our luxuries and our comforts; to fancy ourselves destitute of food, clothed in rags, having no home, or only such an one as it is almost sickness to inhabit, and wandering about in quest of support, with an imploring look of squalid wretchedness; and in accordance with the feelings which circumstances like these must inspire, teaches us to sympathise with and supply the miseries of others, to open our hands to the wants of the needy, and to pour the oil and the wine of consolation into the bleeding heart.

3. There are the best examples to prompt us to this duty.— If we are to be followers of them who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises, their example is not wanting to recommend the duty in question. That of Job in the text might suffice. But it appears to have formed a feature in the character of all the great and the good of former times, while we read in particular of one who could say, ‘Behold, Lord, the half of my goods have I given to the poor.’ (Luke xix. 8.) It so happens, however, that on this subject we can appeal to an example, the dignity and perfection of which entirely eclipse every one which is merely human. It is a touching circumstance in the history of our Great Exemplar, that in his domestic establishment, humble as it was, there was a bag, out of which we learn, from an incidental circumstance, he was accustomed to order frequent donations to the poor. When at the last passover he said to Judas, ‘That thou doest, do quickly,’ some of his disciples understood him to mean, ‘that he should give something to the poor,’ a conjecture which, had not such been his custom, would never have occurred. ‘And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.’ (John xiii. 27–29.) Here, then, is an example, to which no professing christian can object, and of which every *real* christian must feel the power—an example which says,

in the most forcible and affecting manner to each of us.
 'Go thou, and do likewise.'

Nor, is this all. Paul, in exhorting the Corinthians to be mindful of the poor saints in Judea, sets the example of Christ in a still more impressive light: 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.' (2 Cor. viii. 9.) The self-abasing, and self-denying love of the Redeemer is here employed as a motive to christian liberality; a motive, the strength of which must be obvious to all. If Christ became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich; if He laid aside, as it were, the robes of celestial lustre, and deprived himself for a time of heavenly treasure, that we might be spiritually enriched, we are certainly bound, by such an example, to forego a little of our earthly substance to relieve the necessities of our brethren, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the fatherless, and cause the widow's heart to sing for joy. A motive so commanding, so energetic, so irresistible, to enforce a duty which, however important, is not certainly of the very highest estimation in ethical morality, shows how nobly christianity excels every other system, and how inconsistent, how inexcusable are those who, though professing to admire, are at no pains to imitate the gracious munificence of the Saviour.

4. Its advantageous influence on ourselves is worthy of being considered.—'Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.' (Psalm xli. 1.) Blessed indeed in a variety of ways, more than we can now wait to enumerate. The individual who does so, is blessed with a rich feeling of virtuous satisfaction—the pleasure of doing good, one of the purest and sweetest allotted to man—which is the appropriate and inseparable reward of true beneficence. 'He that hath mercy on the poor,' says Solomon, 'happy is he.' (Prov. xiv. 21.)—He is blessed with provision against the day of adversity, should such ever overtake him; not only in an animating subject of reflection within himself, but in the sympathy and assistance he is almost sure to receive from others. The wise man assures us, that 'whoso

stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.' (Prov. xxi. 13.) While he exhorts, as the result of long observation, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.' (Eccles. xi. 1, 2.)—It would also seem that in some cases beneficence is rewarded with additional worldly prosperity. 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.' (Prov. iii. 9, 10; xi. 24, 25.)—And, in fine, it is even spoken of as adding somewhat to the felicity of heaven, and as honoured with the divine approbation and blessing: 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. (Luke xvi. 9.)

In considering this subject, we cannot help remarking how much we have been struck at the frequency with which in the scriptures the duty under consideration is mentioned in connection with reward. Several of these passages have already come under our notice. The following may be subjoined: Prov. xix. 17; Luke xiv. 12–14; 2 Cor. ix. 6; 1 Tim. vi. 17–19; Heb. vi. 10. Not even a cup of cold water itself, given to the thirsty traveller, shall lose its reward. It is obvious, from all this, that in recommendation of the duty before us the Almighty appeals to our self-interest, and this is a decisive proof that in such a motive there is nothing inconsistent with virtue in general, or with the high principles of christian morality in particular. Indeed, our Lord himself is represented as having endured the cross for the joy set before him. Still it requires to be distinctly understood that although reward is held out as a motive to charitable deeds, these deeds have in them no merit to entitle to the reward. There is no meritorious connection between the one and the other; the

connection is wholly gratuitous. The reward is purely a reward of grace, and never shall be enjoyed by one who regards it in any other light. Do not, therefore, my brethren, plume yourselves, in pharisaical pride, on the fancied merit of your good deeds. We solemnly warn you to beware of ever conferring your alms as purchase-money for heaven. The delusion, we are afraid, is too commonly indulged; but it is a fatal one. It is to supplant Christ; it is to overturn the scheme of grace, and derange the economy of the new covenant; it is to lay another foundation than that which is laid; it is to build on sand, which the tempest of divine wrath is sure to sweep away, and lay the superstructure of your hopes for ever in ruins.

We might have added other motives. In particular, we might have descanted on the fear of punishment, which appears to have been in the view of Job, (ver. 23,) and which is elsewhere adverted to in the same connection: 'Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.' (Prov. xxi. 13.) But I desist, and hasten to bring the subject to a conclusion.

Here let me first apply the general remarks that have been offered to the purpose for which we are met. The objects of the Institution for which I have the honour this evening to plead, are such as need only to be named to recommend them to your deepest commiseration. They are *fatherless children* and *helpless widows*—a description of persons who, while Death continues his gloomy reign, must continue to claim the sympathy of every feeling heart. The spread of knowledge, piety, and wise government, together with a superior fruitfulness in the earth, is likely during the period of millennial rest to go far in banishing some other descriptions of distress from the world; but nothing short of an exemption from the dominion of the king of terrors can annihilate the claims of the widow and the orphan. To do justice to these claims would seem to require the knowledge and feeling which experience alone can confer. Instead therefore of attempting to excite your compassion, by any representation of my own, and thus running the risk of weakening rather than

strengthening my cause, I prefer to lay before you a picture of a new-made widow, drawn by one, herself a widow, well qualified, from her judgment, piety, and observation, for the task. 'Accustomed,' says Mrs Graham of New York, 'to spread the board by a cheerful fireside, to welcome the companion of her heart from the labours of the day, to bless and share the social meal, provided by his industry, drest with neatness and ingenuity, rendered agreeable by health and appetite, and heightened in its relish by mutual love! The witty sayings of the prattlers are repeated, and the news of the household exchanged for those of the city. The little ones, too, have their share; they tell their father the exploits of the day; he forgets his fatigue, and dandies them by turns on his knee, while the mother's moistened eyes glisten with pleasure. Alas! the change! Husband, father, support, provider, gone for ever! The setting sun, the succeeding twilight, the rattling cars, the train of labourers, announce the approach of evening, when many boards are spread, many husbands return to bless their families; scarce can she believe that he is not in the crowd; fain would she persuade herself that she has been in a dream; fain would she fancy that yonder is he. Darkness pervades the earth; the neighbouring doors shut in the happy families; the beaming fires illumine the windows. Back she staggers to her dreary dwelling, and wakes to all the realities of a widowed state. The once cheerful chimney scarcely emits a taper blaze. Her children cry for bread, but her empty pantry affords it not. Tired nature soon brings *them* relief—they sleep—they forget. Not so the widowed heart: busy cruel memory calls back, and doubles her departed joys; comparison also doubles her present misery; every avenue to hope is shut. Her big swollen heart would burst its narrow bounds, but for a gush of tears sent in mercy to give it vent. The deep-fetched sobs wring out the big round drops in blest profusion, till, glutted with grief, she sinks 'among her babes!' This picture we believe is not overcharged, and who can look at it without feeling that this Institution is entitled to his liberal support? I make not my appeal to any feeling of sickly sentimentality. This, as has been happily said, is a quality

which ‘a good man may have nothing of, while a bad man may have it in abundance,’ and which ‘constitutes at best rather the ornament of a fine than the virtue of a good mind.’ I choose rather to remind you of the more dignified motives of action to which we have already adverted:—the will of God, the golden rule, the best examples, and the benefits that accrue to ourselves. And it is not a little to our purpose here to observe, that while these inducements are employed to urge to charity in general, they can be shown to have a particular bearing on the present object. If God has been pleased in condescension to exhibit himself as ‘the Patron of the poor’ in general, he is such especially of the ‘widow and the fatherless.’ Of old he gave this awful command: ‘Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry: and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.’ (Exod. xxii. 22–24.) He has even incorporated the idea with one of his designations: ‘A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.’ (Psalm lxviii. 5.) Nor can we forget the interest shown by the incarnate Saviour in the same class of individuals, in his denouncing the Pharisees for devouring widows’ houses, and in his restoring to life the youth of Nain, ‘the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.’ (Luke vii. 12.) Neither must we omit to notice here the manner in which these interesting objects were provided for in the simple institutions of primitive christianity: ‘Honour widows that are widows indeed.’ (1 Tim. v. 3.) They are recognised again in the description of our holy religion given by James: ‘Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.’ (James i. 27.) Seriously reflect, my hearers, on these considerations; ponder them as motives of action; and, moved by them to gifts of charity, give prudently, give liberally, give in the spirit of self-denial, and give with proper respect to the feelings of the poor. Deliver the poor and the father-

less; let the blessing of him that was ready to perish come upon you, and cause the widow's heart to sing for joy.

The subject naturally suggests a lesson of gratitude. We who are in a capacity to relieve the distresses of others, instead of grudging a small contribution from our substance, should remember with grateful emotions the goodness of Him who thus causeth us to differ from the objects of our bounty. Let us recollect that their situation might have been ours—our situation theirs. But for the sovereign appointment of Him who 'ruleth over all,' we might have been the humble and dejected suppliants, and those in whose behalf we plead, might have been this evening enjoying all the delicious emotions attendant on the right exercise of the benevolent affections. Let us, when we retire to our homes, look around on our unbroken families, on our cheerful wives, and gamboling children. Let us fancy these children fatherless, and these wives widows—the mothers gazing with looks dejected and forlorn on their infants, pale and emaciated, with 'no ruddiness in their cheeks, no sprightliness in their motions,' and let heartfelt gratitude mingle in our song of praise to Him to whom we owe the blessings we enjoy.

Our charity ought not to be confined to temporal things. If it is worthy of the name, it will not overlook the wants of the soul. The soul is a higher and more noble object than the body. If the tear of sympathetic piety starts at contemplating such scenes of outward misery as we have been describing, can we look without emotion on the moral wretchedness, the spiritual condemnation of mankind? Let our care for the body's outward wants be mingled with a proper anxiety for those of the never-dying spirits of those whom we contribute to relieve; and let our charitable donations be ever accompanied with ardent desires, fervent prayers, for their everlasting salvation. Alongst with the supply of their temporal necessities, see that the objects of your bounty this evening be furnished with that sacred book which tells the widow of a 'Husband,' and the orphan of a 'Father,' of whom death can never deprive them; and which is fitted to shed a hallowed light over their otherwise dark and cheerless tabernacles.

But as we can never feel such concern for others unless we have felt it for ourselves, it may be proper, before concluding, just to remind you that we are all by nature spiritually poor, wretched, and naked. There is no outward condition so miserable, no state so forlorn, as fitly to express man's natural destitution of spiritual good. Without the image, without the favour, without the approbation of the Father in heaven, what outward calamity is sufficiently awful to express man's lost and ruined state! Nor can we of ourselves offer a single sacrifice to atone for our guilt, or put forth a single effort to alleviate our distress. We must be indebted, my hearers, for all spiritual good to the royal bounty of Heaven. That bounty, I rejoice to proclaim, is ample as the necessities of the human family, and free as it is ample. There is not an individual within these walls but needs it—not an individual but is free to accept it; and if we are ever put in possession of salvation, we must be brought humbly to receive it as an undeserved gift. Oh! then, be convinced of your spiritual wretchedness. Beware of arrogantly supposing yourselves 'rich and increased with goods, and having need of nothing!' Awake from the fatal delusion. Look to the fulness that is in Christ. Think of his becoming poor that you through his poverty might be made rich. Be counselled to buy of him gold tried in the fire that you may be rich, white raiment that you may be clothed, and eye salve that you may see. And be assured that if, from a vain conceit of your own righteousness, you refuse to accept that of Emmanuel, you will only sink into deeper misery than ever at the last day, when the tempest of divine wrath will strip you of your worthless rags, and expose you to be driven away naked and defenceless from the judgment-seat into never-ending perdition. Now, now is the accepted time. Boast not yourselves of to-morrow. To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Amen.

SERMON X.

POPERY THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY.

2 THESS. ii. 7.

'The Mystery of Iniquity doth already work.'

It is a common sentiment, that the ministers of religion ought to abstain from all party controversy whatever; and, by confining themselves to the establishment and application of what they conceive to be truth, tacitly to condemn and counteract the influence of error. This opinion is founded on a too narrow view of the duties of an advocate of divine truth; is quite unsupported by the conduct of mankind in other departments of learning; and is virtually condemned by the commands and examples of holy writ. 'Prove all things,' says Paul, 'hold fast that which is good.' (1 Thess. v. 21.) 'Beloved, believe not every spirit,' says John, 'but try the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.' (1 John iv. 1.) The

[The substance of this, and the following discourses, was delivered in November, 1824, in consequence of the opening of a place of popish worship, in the town in which the author then resided. In 1829, when the Catholic Emancipation Bill was under discussion in Parliament, they were remodelled and enlarged, and given to the public in the form of a small treatise. The original form of sermons, in adaptation to the nature of this volume, is here resumed, while the additional matter is retained, being either incorporated, or appended in the supplementary note. The subject is applicable to the question which is agitating the British public at the present moment, and it is impossible not to remark, how much many of the observations are confirmed by the modern aggressions of Popery.—Dec. 1850.]

Saviour, too, not only condemned the erroneous sentiments entertained by those among whom he lived in the days of his flesh, but pointed out by name the persons who held them: 'Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.' (Matt. xvi. 6.) The apostle of the Gentiles acted on the same principle: 'But shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus; who, concerning the truth, have erred, saying, That the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.' (2 Tim. ii. 16-19.) The Faithful and True Witness, writing to the church of Pergamos, has these words: 'I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam; so hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.' (Rev. ii. 14, 15.) And, applicable to every case, in every age of the church, is the solemn declaration of prophecy, 'WHEN THE ENEMY SHALL COME IN LIKE A FLOOD, THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD SHALL LIFT UP A STANDARD AGAINST HIM.' (Isa. lix. 19.) I feel, therefore, confident, that in acting on the principle of these precedents, I am not departing from the line of duty which a minister of religion ought to follow; but, on the contrary, discharging an imperious obligation laid on me by the signs of the times.

And, at the outset, I wish it to be distinctly understood that the task is undertaken from no liking to the controversy itself, nor from any feeling of personal hostility to the individuals on whose principles I shall feel called upon to animadvert. Far from it. Sincerely do I wish there were no need for agitating the question at present; and, so far as I know my own heart, I can freely declare, that I am conscious of no emotion of rancorous animosity or malicious hatred to the persons of any of those whose sentiments I condemn. It is the *system* to which they are attached that rouses my opposition; and while I wish to entertain towards *it* all the moral indignation it deserves, I would cherish towards its deluded votaries no other feelings than those of heartfelt compassion and chris-

tian good-will. If I saw a papist hungry, I would feed him; if I saw him thirsty, I would give him drink; if I saw him naked, I would clothe him; or if I knew him sick, or in prison, and were given to understand that my services would be acceptable, I would visit him as readily as I would any other person. In the sequel, therefore, while I shall speak of the system with all the freedom of truth, I shall study to avoid all bitter invective against its supporters, endeavouring, throughout, to

‘Keep nothing back,
Nor ought set down in malice.’

Few parts of scripture have received more attention from commentators than Paul’s prediction respecting the Man of Sin and Mystery of Iniquity.—‘Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the MYSTERY OF INIQUITY doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.’—This prophecy has been differently explained, of course, according to the judgment, feelings, or prejudices of respective authors. Bishop Newton, in his excellent dissertation on the passage, enumerates and refutes eight different opinions respecting it, all of which have found their zealous supporters. These opinions are the following:—That it refers to—

1. The Emperor Caligula.—*Opinion of Grotius.*
2. Simon Magus and the Gnostics.—*Dr Hammond.*

3. The revolt of the Jews from the Romans.—*Le Clerc.*
4. The revolt of the Jews from the Romans, or from the faith.—*Dr Whitby.*
5. Titus Vespasian, or the Flavian family.—*Professor Wetstein.*
6. The impostor Mahomet.—*Opinion of some Papists.*
7. The Reformation.—*Held by other Papists.*
8. The apostacy which is to take place a short time before the general judgment.—*Opinion of the greater number of the Romish Doctors.*

In opposition to all these, the view of almost all protestant writers, and even of some popish ones, is that it refers to popery,—an opinion which is strongly corroborated by the similarity of this prediction to those of Daniel and John, in which the system in question is undoubtedly pointed out, and by the well-known character of the system itself. Let any one examine the features of the corruption here described by Paul, and say whether they do not agree, with marvellous exactness, to the Romish Church, as supported by the concurrent testimony of all history.

It is scarcely necessary to premise, that we do not understand the prediction as pointing out the Pope individually, or indeed any one part of the system, but the system itself. The corruption alluded to by Paul is spoken of as ‘a falling away;’ and what is popery but an *apostacy* from the purity of the christian religion, in doctrine, worship, and practice? It is called ‘the Man of Sin,’—a title too well merited by the scandalous lives and abominable corruptions, maintained and sanctioned by the principal supporters of the system in question. It is styled ‘the Son of Perdition,’—a designation certainly not inapplicable to a religion which has been the cause of eternal destruction to so many thousands, and which is, itself, destined to a complete and final overthrow. It is added, ‘who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped,’—a description which cannot fail to identify itself with a power which has claimed universal and absolute supremacy, not only over all ecclesiastical persons and affairs, but over

magistrates, kings, and emperors. Its taking its rise and maintaining its place in the christian church, is plainly enough referred to in the expression, 'Sitting in the temple of God;' while what follows, 'showing himself that he is God,' is strikingly illustrative of the blasphemous titles assumed and divine prerogatives usurped by the Romish pontiffs. It is needless to pursue the parallel farther. These are sufficient to identify the object of the prediction. It may, with safety, be affirmed, that there is not another system in being to which the apostle's description will, in the same manner, apply.

We are thus warranted to assume, that it is the popish system of which it is said, 'The Mystery of Iniquity doth already work.' The Thessalonians, to whom Paul had before spoken on the subject, had understood him to refer to the final judgment. To correct this mistake, he affirms that, although the complete development of the apostacy in question should not take place till some future time, the elements—the seeds, were already in operation.

A 'mystery' signifies something hid, but afterwards revealed; or something complicated, involved, and difficult to be understood. The word, translated 'iniquity,' means *unlawfulness*—whatever is opposed to the law of God; and, of course, embraces every kind of iniquity, doctrinal or practical. The term 'mystery' is applied to the same system in the apocalyptic description of the woman arrayed in purple and scarlet colour: 'Upon her forehead was written, MYSTERY, Babylon the Great.' The kind of mystery is pointed out in the phrase, 'Mystery of *Iniquity*;' and the sad pre-eminence in complicated unlawfulness, of that system, is strongly marked by its being styled 'THE Mystery of Iniquity.'

In what follows, we shall attempt to verify the application of the ignominious title in question to popery;—animadvert on some of the pleas urged in its behalf by its friends and apologists;—and point out the duty of protestants, with reference to it, especially at the present crisis.

Meanwhile let us consider how applicable is the ignominious title, 'Mystery of Iniquity,' to the popish system.

1. In speaking of Popery as a Mystery of Iniquity, the vast complication of evil which it embraces cannot fail to present itself to the mind. Here it will be necessary to enter somewhat into detail, and to view the system in a variety of bearings.

1. Contemplate then its bearing on the *glory of God*.—This, all are aware, is the high end which the Almighty proposed to himself in the creation of the universe; which is, consequently, designed to be promoted by all his works, material and immaterial, rational and irrational; and every encroachment on which he is represented as regarding with the utmost jealousy: ‘The Lord hath made all things for himself. I am the Lord, that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.’ (Prov. xvi. 4; Isa. xlii. 8.) Yet is the glory of God invaded in a multiplicity of ways in the Church of Rome; by idolatrous worship, blasphemous titles, arrogant claims, and presumptuous deeds.

The worship of angels, of saints, and of images, is a well known part of the popish system. Prayers are offered to departed spirits; and honours, nothing short of divine, paid to the crucifix. Whatever excuses may be made by papists for this part of their conduct, the fact, at least, is too notorious to admit of denial. Nor will the apology, that the worship is not offered to the image but to God through the image,—the latter being only used as a help to devotion,—be deemed of any weight by those who consider how unfit any representation whatever must be to convey an idea of the great Supreme; how much more fitted such a practice is to lower than to elevate our conceptions of God; how expressly ‘the *making of any graven image*’ is forbidden in the second commandment; and how unequivocally the meaning of this commandment is settled by the following caution:—‘Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, (for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire,) lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure; the likeness of male or female; the likeness of any beast that

is on the earth ; the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air ; the likeness of anything that creepeth on the ground ; the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth : and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.' (Deut. iv. 15-19.) It is not necessary, it appears, to constitute idolatry, that the object of worship be understood to be God ; it is enough if the service offered be such as is due only to Him. Thus it is that 'the covetous man' is viewed as an 'idolater,' (Eph. v. 5,) because the love and respect which he owes to God he gives to his riches ; and thus, too, that the children of Israel were chargeable with 'turning aside quickly out of the way which God commanded them,' when they made the golden calf, notwithstanding that they professed to regard it as a representation merely of the God 'which brought them up out of the land of Egypt.' (Exod. xxxii. 1-8.) Jehovah is the sole object of religious adoration ; and whatever worship, on whatever pretence, is paid to the creature or to images, is a direct infringement of the glory which he claims as his peculiar prerogative in the first two commandments of the decalogue, so admirably epitomised in these words of the Saviour, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him ONLY shalt thou serve.' (Matt. iv. 10.)

Those who can make free with the worship of God are not likely to be over-scrupulous about the honour connected with his titles. The titles which the Supreme Being claims for himself can apply only to him ; and the ascription of these must be understood as an acknowledgment of his possessing what the titles themselves import. Whoever, then, usurps the peculiar designations of Deity, may be regarded as guilty of sacrilegiously robbing him of the honour connected with the possession of them, and blasphemously transferring that honour to himself. And that such iniquity exists in the Church of Rome, is made too evident by the fact, that her pontiffs have assumed such divine appellations as the

following:—‘His Holiness’—‘Holy Father’—‘Our Lord God the Pope’—‘Most Holy Lord’—‘Another God upon earth.’

In harmony with these are the presumptuous claims of infallibility and supremacy, which are preferred by the pope. He lays claim to unlimited control over all persons and all affairs, both ecclesiastical and civil. The attribute of supremacy is ascribed to him in the standard works of the church; it is acknowledged by her members, and has been acted upon even to the extent of deposing, degrading, and creating kings and emperors at pleasure. This claim, it is scarcely necessary to remark, is condemned by what our Lord said to his disciples, when he found them disputing which of them should be the greatest: ‘Ye shall not be so, but he that is greatest among you let him be as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve; neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ.’ (Luke xxii. 26; Matt. xxiii. 10.) No countenance to it can be derived from the institutions and practices of the primitive church; and when it is considered what difficulties attend the management even of an ordinary family, it will appear that a supremacy over the whole world is utterly incompatible with the attributes of humanity. Such a claim, therefore, includes in it all the iniquity of an invasion of a divine prerogative.—Nor can anything less be said of the claim of infallibility. There is no maxim supported by more general and unequivocal proof than that *it is human to err*. To claim exemption from this rule, then, is to usurp the prerogative of *divinity*. Indeed, of no finite creature in itself, however pure or exalted, can infallibility be predicated. Creatures there are who have never fallen, and shall never fall from the dignity of their primitive condition. But this is owing not so much to their nature, as to the support vouchsafed them by their Maker; the removal of which would render them as capable of declension as any of those who have proved their defectibility by their history. The claim of infallibility, therefore, wherever it may be thought to reside,—whether in the person of the pope, in the cardinals, or in the collective body of the church,—is alike impious, blasphemous, unscriptural, and irrational.

The deeds of the Church of Rome are not at variance with her impious claims. She presumes to legislate for her members; to dispense with the laws of God, prohibiting what is allowed, as in the case of marriage, and commanding what is forbidden, as in the case of image-worship: nay, even to usurp the high prerogative of absolution from sin, in the face of those solemn words of Jehovah: 'I, EVEN I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.' (Isa. xliii. 25.)

2. Closely allied to the glory of God, is *the honour of Christ*, which is introduced in scripture as an object of interest to men, to angels, and to the Deity himself. The saints are represented as singing, 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.' (Rev. i. 5-6.) The angelic spirits, who surround the throne, cry with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' (Rev. v. 12.) And of God himself is it given as the will, 'That all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.' (John v. 23.) How far this object is respected by the Church of Rome, let the impartial judge. The Roman pontiff's have assumed the peculiar titles of the blessed Saviour, blasphemously styling themselves, 'Head of the Church'—'Lion of the tribe of Judah'—'King of kings and Lord of lords.' Nor have they paid more respect to the honour attached to the offices of Christ;—that of his prophetic office is virtually nullified by enjoining ignorance, claiming for traditions equal authority with the word of God, and pretending to infallible interpretations;—that of his priestly office, by the doctrine of merit, the sacrifice of the mass, and the employing of created intercessors;—that of his kingly office, by tyrannical usurpations over the persons and consciences of men, issuing authoritative decrees, and pretending to dispense forgiveness of sins. To be convinced of the 'iniquity' of thus dishonouring the Saviour, we have only to reflect how peremptorily we are enjoined to 'bear him in all things,' and how expressly we are told that 'by one offering he hath per-

feeted for ever them that are sanctified;’ that there is but ‘one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus; and that ‘Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins.’ (Acts iii. 22; Heb. x. 14; 1 Tim. ii. 5; Acts v. 31.)

3. The *holy scriptures* are a sacred deposit committed to the church to be employed for the purposes for which they are designed, to be treated with all possible respect, and their existence and purity watched over with pious sedulity. But the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome are hostile alike to the perfection, authority, and use of the scriptures.

Although told that ‘the law of the Lord is *perfect*, that ‘all scripture is given by inspiration of God, that the man of God may be *perfect*, throughly furnished unto *all good works*,’ (Psa. xix. 7; 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17,) she scruples not to give these plain declarations the lie, by elevating the apocryphal writings and oral traditions to equal authority with the Old and New Testaments, as if necessary to supply a deficiency in the latter. The books of the Apocrypha thus received, were written during the cessation of the prophetic spirit between the time of Malachi and John the Baptist; were never received into the sacred canon by the Jewish church; are never once quoted or alluded to by Christ or his apostles; contain many things fabulous, contradictory, unscriptural and untrue; and were not admitted into the canon of scripture during the first four centuries of the christian era. To them is added a vast lumber of oral traditions, purporting to be sayings of Christ and the apostles, collected by the early christians, and transmitted in all their original purity, and with all their primitive authority. But notwithstanding that many of them are contrary to the principles and practices of the church in the days of the apostles, and even to the acknowledged dictates of inspiration, the principle itself is directly subversive of the perfection of the word of God, as a complete standard of faith and duty. The sinner that is desirous of becoming acquainted with the

way of salvation, the church that is contented with the simple institutions of Jesus, will find ample satisfaction in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, without having recourse to either oral traditions, or the books of the Apocrypha; but if it is wished to graft on the doctrines of Christ and the example of the apostles such tenets and practices as image-worship, the sacrifice of the mass, transubstantiation, the intercession of saints and angels, supererogation, and purgatory, we frankly admit the necessity of referring to some such spurious authorities; and we concede for once to the Church of Rome the praise of wisdom and candour, in seeking for her absurdities another foundation than that on which protestants exclusively rest their faith.

Nor, after presuming to add to the perfect law of God, will it surprise us to hear that the Church of Rome, in the plenitude of her arrogated power, has ventured to alter, mutilate, and retrench, the acknowledged canon of christian belief. The passage, 'By faith Jacob worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff,' (Heb. xi. 21,) is, by way of furnishing some shadow of countenance to the worship of images, transmuted in the authorised Vulgate into, 'worshipped the top of his staff.' The second commandment is, for a similar reason, expunged from the decalogue in her catechisms; and, to keep up the number, the tenth is divided into two. It is perfectly natural for such a church to employ degrading language in reference to the sacred volume, and to pronounce it, without foreign help, 'a dead letter—an unintelligible record.' But we would seriously submit to the consideration of every candid person, whether the facts just now adduced do not establish her title to the fearful doom with which the canon of Revelation is closed:—'I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.' (Rev. xxii. 18, 19.)

The Church of Rome is not less hostile to the authority than to the perfection of the scriptures. Apart from the claims of the bible itself, reason would seem to demand for it equal authority with that of its Author; but there is no tenet of popery more explicitly avowed than this, that the authority of the church is supreme in matters of faith. Her members are taught, instead of *What saith the scriptures?* to inquire *What saith the church?* The word of God is thus robbed of the honour to which its high origin entitles it; and, so far from being the ultimate standard to which everything in religion is to be referred, must itself be content to receive sanction from the church. The version to be used, and the sense to be attached to particular texts, must all be determined by the church. Yet, with marvellous inconsistency, the church professes to derive her authority from the word of God, and cites the scriptures in support of her claims. The absurdity of supposing the scriptures and the church mutually to confer authority upon, and derive authority from, each other—that is to say, that a thing whose authority is professedly derived should confer authority on the source from which it derived it,—is so glaringly monstrous, that it were a waste of words to attempt its exposure.*

The iniquity of thus elevating human above divine authority, of wresting the standard of religion from the hands of the people, and seeking to subjugate faith to the dictates of erring creatures, is only equalled by the conduct of the same church in reference to the use of the scriptures. It has long been a favourite maxim, that the scriptures ought not to be given to the laity. Their use is restricted to the clergy, and to such among the laity as are considered proof against being hurt by them; who, it is peculiarly worthy of notice, enjoy

* Indeed it can never be better exposed than it was by the ignorant collier, of whom Dr Campbell relates the following anecdote. Being asked what he believed, he answered, 'I believe what the church believes.' On being asked again, 'What then does the church believe?' he readily replied, 'The church believes what I believe.' His interrogator desirous, if possible, to bring him to particulars, rejoined, 'Tell me, then, I pray you, What is it which you and the church both believe?' The only answer the collier could give was, 'Why, truly, sir, the church and I both believe the same thing!'

this distinctive privilege by express *permission* from the church, while it is absolutely forbidden to the people at large. The withholding of the bible from the laity on pretence of their liability to abuse it, is in direct opposition to the assertion, 'The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the *simple*;' (Psa. xix. 7;) is utterly at variance with the well-known commendation pronounced on the Bereans; and is contrary to the universally-approved maxim, that the abuse of a thing is no argument against its use. What is there, we may ask, that is not liable to abuse? Are not the best things often liable to the greatest abuse? Will the papist cut off his feet, because they may carry him into ways of wickedness; or amputate his hands, because they may lay hold on his neighbour's property; or put out his eyes, because, perchance, he may be tempted to employ them in viewing vanity? Yet, on this hollow pretext—for it is nothing else than a pretext, the true reason is something widely different from what is avowed—on this hollow pretext are the holy scriptures, the word of eternal life, withheld from the poor and the young. Reading the scriptures has no place in the code of christian duty laid down in the catechisms of Romanists; and papal maledictions have been fulminated against those societies which have for their object the circulation of the pure words of eternal life in the vernacular language of every people under heaven. Tell us not of some individuals in the papal communion who have acted on different principles. The fact we most willingly admit; but does it prove anything more than there are some in that communion who act inconsistently with their profession by aiding the circulation of the word of God, as there are some among protestants who act equally inconsistently with theirs by opposing such circulation? This is all that can be legitimately concluded from the fact, while the truth of the charge remains untouched; in support of which we might refer to the decrees of councils—to the bulls of Roman pontiffs—to the time-immemorial practice of that church—to the history of the proceedings of the Hibernian Society for circulating the scriptures in Ireland—and to the fierce, outrageous, and unblushing attacks that have been lately made upon the bible cause in that unhappy

country. Great, then, and complicated is the 'iniquity' of the popish system, even in the limited point of view we are now considering, namely, as respects its bearing on the scriptures of truth.

4. But all this is only introductory to its influence on *the salvation of the soul and vital religion*. The soul of man is of incalculable worth—worth to an adequate estimate of which, no earthly ideas, however vast, can assist us. Whatever affects its salvation on the one hand, or ruin on the other, must of course be considered as standing high in the scale of excellence or criminality. We would not go the length to say that in connection with the Church of Rome salvation is a thing impossible, as we read of some who are saved 'being pulled out of the fire;' and, moreover, we find the following address spoken in reference to Babylon, 'Come out of her, my people.' (Rev. xviii. 4.) We, nevertheless, fearlessly avow it as our opinion, that the tendency of many of her tenets is directly injurious to the high object in question.

In what other light can her doctrine of human merit be viewed? We know not any propositions in the bible more unequivocally announced, and more unanswerably established, than these:—'By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified.—If righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain.' (Rom. iii. 20; Gal. ii. 21.) Yet, in the face of these, and similar plain scripture declarations, does the Church of Rome maintain that good works are meritorious of salvation;—are calculated to diminish or remove altogether the future punishment of the sinner, and even to establish a claim to heaven. To save her character, to be sure, she makes some show of reference to Christ; but then all the place he is permitted to hold is, instead of the primary one of being 'the only Saviour,' the subordinate one of having enabled man by what he has done to save himself. 'If any one shall assert,' say the decrees of the Council of Trent, 'that justifying faith is nothing else than a trust in the divine mercy, remitting sin for Christ's sake; or that it is faith alone by which we are justified, let him be accursed.' And again, 'If any one say that the righteousness received, in justification, is

not preserved, and even increased before God by good works; and that these works are only fruits and signs of justification, not the cause of its being increased, let him be accursed.' Still further, 'If any one say that the good works of a justified man are so the gifts of God, that they are not the meritorious good deeds of him who is justified, let him be accursed.'* Nay, not even satisfied with this, by her doctrine of supererogation she maintains that saints can do more than the law of God requires, and, after saving themselves, accumulate a treasury of surplus merit, whose exuberance may be retailed to such as have little or none of their own; as if sufficient disparagement were not shown to the Redeemer by representing his infinite merits as defective, unless a superabundant good were ascribed to the doings of worthless man. Oh! in what a perilous state are the souls of those who espouse such sentiments as these; and who that believes that 'other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ,' does not tremble for their salvation!

Nay more; to the establishment of 'another foundation' she adds the cruel insult of maintaining that salvation is nowhere else to be obtained but in the bosom of the Catholic Mother Church. The members of all other churches are regularly and formally excommunicated, with anathemas and maledictions which would be dreadful did we not know that the spirit from which they proceed is as powerless as it is malicious. 'And withal I condemn,'—such are the words of the oath prescribed by Pope Pius IV. to be taken by every lay convert to popery, and by every ecclesiastic,—'reject and *accuse* all things that are contrary thereunto, (obedience to the bishop of Rome,) and all heresies, whatsoever condemned, rejected, and accursed by the church. This true catholic faith, *out of which no man can be saved,*' etc.

Having laid claim to a monopoly of salvation, as if to make amends for the ungracious aspect which this part of the system bears toward other communities, she holds out, as a lure to enter her fellowship, the easy terms on which eternal salvation may be thus secured. Mere connection with the

* Sess. vi. can. 12, 24, 32: cited by Fletcher.

church, and acting faithfully to its interests, are all that is necessary. Neither faith in the Redeemer, nor any other principle of difficult attainment or heavenly origin, is required, but only conformity to the rites of the church. These are all-eflicacious, sufficient to secure a sinner from all possible hazard as to his eternal state. Baptism regenerates the nature; penance, confession, and the mass, purify the life; and the mystic ceremony of extreme unction affords the expiring soul an ample viaticum for heaven. All the while, faith in the atoning blood of the Lamb of God is left out of view: no mention is made of the Balm of Gilead or the Physician of value. The whole mystery is effected by a charm, the secret of which is in the full possession of the priesthood; and, should even the sinner be about to appear before God with the blood upon him of who-knows-how-many victims, remorselessly butchered for sordid gain, the officiating priest can have the effrontery to tell him, within hearing of protestant ministers, and before thousands of protestant people, 'Say your creed now, and when you come to the words, Lord Jesus Christ, give the signal, and die with the name of the blessed Saviour in your mouth.'*

In such a church, and holding such tenets, where is there room for vital religion? If in any communion 'the righteous scarcely be saved,' surely personal godliness must be in the Church of Rome a rare and difficult attainment. Like the ancient Pharisees—to whom, by the way, they bear a striking resemblance—her clergy exact 'tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and omit the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.' The commandments of God are made absolutely of no effect by the idle pageantry of superstition. Faith, repentance, humility, charity, and

* No part of the details of those disgusting facts by which our northern metropolis has been so lately (1829) disgraced, shocked us half so much as that to which we have here referred. In the case of the principal facts, our attention was turned, for the most part, to the *bodies*. Here, however, we beheld a *soul*, a guilty soul, quivering on the verge of eternity, entrusted, for its future welfare to the mere enchantment of a name! And such is the method of salvation in the popish church!

new obedience, cannot be essential constituents of popish devotion. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;' but to the members of the Church of Rome the use of the word of God is forbidden. The faith she requires is not faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but faith in the priest. For the grace of repentance, she substitutes the sacrament of penance, not scrupling even to accommodate the Saviour's well-known declaration, on the subject of repentance, to her own wicked purpose: 'Except ye *do penance*, ye shall all likewise perish.' In place of new obedience, she has invented an endless succession of rites and ceremonies, kneelings, crossings, counting of beads, lustral sprinklings, and mutterings of Ave Marias and Pater Nosters. Her charity is evinced in coolly devoting to perdition all who dispute her claims: and, as for her benevolence, it may be guessed from the frowning battlements, reverberated groans, and devouring flames of the Inquisition!

This, though not by any means the most prominent, is, out of sight, the most dangerous feature of popery. The salvation of the soul is everything to man. If *it* is lost, all is lost. The arrogant claims and bloody persecutions of the Church of Rome, which figure so conspicuously in history, affect but the goods or territory, or bodies of men; but the principles we have just been surveying affect their deathless spirits. In following up her decrees of extermination against heretics, many thousands of *bodies* has she slain, and awful must be her recompence when the Lord shall make inquisition for blood; but who shall estimate the guilt that cleaves to the spiritual Babylon for the many millions of *souls* that have been eternally ruined, by drinking of her deleterious, intoxicating, and maddening cup? On this ground it was that the first quarrel of the Reformers rested. It should never be forgotten that Luther commenced his bright career by denouncing the doctrine of human merit, and maintaining, as the essential article of a standing or falling church, that of justification by faith. Nor is it without special meaning, in connection with these remarks, that, in the apocalyptic inventory of Babylon's merchandise, a prominent place is assigned to 'the souls of men!'

5. The value and importance of *the institutions of the christian religion* will be admitted by all. By corrupting, diminishing, and adding to them, their beautiful simplicity has not been more defaced than their usefulness destroyed, in the Church of Rome. They are no longer what they were as given by their gracious Author—few, simple, easily practised, and possessed of a directly beneficial power;—but they are mutilated, dwarfed, debased, burdened with an intolerable load of difficult ceremonies; their fair proportion distorted by unsightly excrescences of human invention, and their tendency perverted to what is positively pernicious.

How is the simple and holy ordinance of Baptism corrupted by additions for which no divine warrant can be shown;—by sponsorship, exorcising, crossing, the use of salt, oil, and saliva! How different from the instituted rite of sprinkling with pure water, in the name of the ever-blessed Trinity: to say nothing of its being most unwarrantably and dangerously represented as in itself, by virtue of the mere *opus operatum*,—the simple act of administration,—efficacious to regenerate the soul, and actually to purify it from all sin!—Nor is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper less corrupted, by the mixture of superstitious ceremonies with its celebration; by the efficacy ascribed to the mere act of participation; by the doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass; and by the monstrous absurdity of transubstantiation. All of these are highly derogatory to the merit of Christ's 'one sacrifice;' are in themselves irrational and palpably absurd; and in their tendency unspeakably pernicious, as calculated to induce low conceptions of the work of our great High Priest, and to divert the mind from scriptural views of the design and benefits of the ordinance.

By diminishing, as well as by corrupting, does popery interfere with the institutions of Christ. By 'communion in one kind,' as it is called, the cup is denied to the laity, who are obliged to content themselves with a consecrated wafer, while the wine is reserved for the exclusive use of the priesthood. By this arbitrary law, which claims no higher antiquity than that of the Council of Constance in the

beginning of the fifteenth century, the aggravated iniquity is committed of a presumptuous infringement of the Saviour's authority, a wicked invasion of the rights of the christian people, and an entire subversion of the end and use of the ordinance; so much so, indeed, as fully to justify the assertion, that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper has no existence in the Church of Rome. The plea set up for this departure from the original form and primitive custom, is as wicked as it is contradictory, and as weak as it is wicked. As the bread represents the body, and the body supposes blood, there is no need, it is alleged, for giving more than the bread: the one element represents the whole. Overlooking the impious reflection which such reasoning implies on the wisdom of the divine Institutor, whose superfluity of appointment, forsooth, called for the retrenching hand of a general council, it is surprising it should never have occurred to its authors, how easily the principle might be turned against themselves. Can there be anything more natural, than to ask,—if the case be as stated above,—why the use of the wine should not have been abolished among the priests as well as the people? for it can never surely be alleged, that the perceptions of the former are so much more dull than those of the latter, as to require the stimulus of an additional symbol to enable them to understand the 'holy mystery.'

But if iniquity is committed by thus taking from the perfect institutions of the church's Head, still greater guilt is contracted by adding to their number. According to the Church of Rome, the sacraments of the New Testament Church are seven in number, instead of two. Confirmation, penance, extreme unction, orders, and matrimony, are added to those which are universally admitted. Of the three standing first in this enumeration, it is enough to say, that the scriptures are altogether silent; and of the remaining two, that there is nothing whatever sacramental in their character or manner of observance. We wait not to expose the weakness of the arguments by which these additions are supported; but we cannot omit taking notice of the glaring contradiction exhibited in exalting matrimony to the rank of a sacrament,

and at the same time eulogising celibacy as meritorious and peremptorily enjoining it on all the clergy. A sacrament, of which it is flagrant iniquity for the ministers of religion to partake, is, we venture to say, an anomaly unparalleled in the history of ecclesiastical legislation! Nor can the virtue of abstinence from a sacramental institution of Christ be less a prodigy in the department of christian ethics.

Amid the contempt with which we cannot but regard such absurdity, and the pity we cannot but feel for those who embrace it, let us not overlook the daring wickedness of the system by which the arrogance it supposes is sanctioned. This wickedness is not confined to the sacraments. The practices of canonisation, auricular confession, prayer for the dead, and invocation of saints, are all additions, for which it will be equally difficult to adduce the sanction of 'Thus saith the Lord.' In short, it is impossible to name an ordinance or doctrine of the christian religion, which popery has not either exploded, or corrupted, or perverted.

6. No feature of this corrupt system is more prominently developed than its hostility to *personal liberty*. The praises of freedom have been sounded by patriots, and sung by poets, in every age; and slavery, whether mental or bodily, has been ever an object of marked detestation. But this blessing, so naturally dear to the heart of man, popery seems, most artfully contrived to defeat. Its spirit is that of an unmitigated despotism; being satisfied with nothing less than a complete ascendancy over the judgments, lives, consciences, and persons of men. Without being charged with entertaining exaggerated notions of human freedom, a liberty to do whatever the word of God permits or enjoins, may surely be claimed. Yet even this reasonable demand is denied. All right of private judgment is withheld; the church is infallible; the will of the priest is supreme; the part of the people is hence that of a mere passive credulity; the functions of understanding and judgment are superseded; and a disposition to inquire and judge for one's self, lays open to a charge of insufferable heresy and rebellion against the infallibility of the church. The bible says, 'Try the spirits; prove all things;'

but the system in question inculcates a different lesson; and, though its ministers lay claim to a pure succession from the apostles, there is one point of resemblance at least in which they will surely allow themselves to have failed: 'We speak as unto wise men, judge ye what we say.' Can popish ecclesiastics adopt such an appeal?

The consequences of this slavish subjection of the judgment to priestly dictation, are fatal to mental vigour as well as independence. The mind, having no room for action, necessarily becomes paralysed. The result of the scriptures being prohibited to be used—of the services of public worship being stripped of everything like instruction, and converted into a show—of the public prayers being offered in an unknown tongue, must be a humiliating prostration of reason. The tendency of the doctrine of supremacy, is to induce a crouching timidity; of that of infallibility, to suspend all mental exertion; while the power claimed over the world to come, must necessarily engender a cowardly fear, directly injurious to mental greatness:—to say nothing of other tenets, in their very nature calculated to outrage reason, and put common sense to the blush. It were vain to expect vigour of intellect, or ardour of discovery, under the operation of a system which draws a mystic line, beyond which it is sinful to push inquiry; and which claims the right of dooming to the dungeons of the Inquisition,—as in the case of Galileo,—the unfortunate author of any innovation on the opinions of the church, however well supported by the light of revelation or the soundest philosophy. This part of her policy, one should suppose, Rome must have borrowed from the Philistines, who put out Samson's eyes and bound him with fetters of brass, that he might more submissively grind in the prison-house. And though, among papists, there may exist individual minds of high talent and culture, it will often be found, it is presumed, that, in such instances, the slavish tenets of the system have been abjured; and, consequently, that the effect is to be ascribed to some other cause, which could not have had liberty to operate had the shackles not been thrown off. Besides, these are but exceptions—sparks of light amid a

general gloom—straggling rays, breaking through a dense eclipse of intellect; while the great mass of every truly popish population exhibits a state of the most degraded mental vassalage. In protestant countries, papists cannot fail to be influenced, more or less, by the light with which they are surrounded. But in purely popish lands, as Spain, or Portugal, or Italy, where the natives are the born vassals of the deadliest despotism, they breathe not a single generous or lofty aspiration, and dare not even ‘call their souls their own.’

Its hostility to freedom is further apparent, in prohibiting the use of what God has most clearly permitted. Certain kinds of meats are forbidden, at particular times; in the face of the declaration, that ‘every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.’ Marriage is strictly forbidden to the clergy, and celibacy encouraged in others, by the establishment of nunneries and monasteries, under pretence of superior sanctity; as if it had not been in reference to a state of innocence, that it was first said, ‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh:’—to say nothing of the plain apostolic assertion, ‘Marriage is honourable in all.’

The sanguinary and persecuting spirit of this religion is too well known to need lengthened illustration here. Claiming a universal civil as well as ecclesiastical authority, the Roman pontiffs have sought to unite the imperial diadem with the sacerdotal mitre; and, grasping the sword of temporal power in addition to the keys of St Peter, have prostrated even monarchs at their feet. Is it then to be wondered at, that they should have made the most cruel and unjustifiable encroachments on the personal rights and liberties of such as ventured to decline their jurisdiction or differ from them in opinion? Not content with bitter invectives and spiritual maledictions,—by which they have attempted to overawe the conscience,—external violence, in every varied form of atrocious ingenuity, has been employed against the persons of men. The history of popery tells of crusades undertaken to

extirpate infidelity—of swords unsheathed, and fires lighted up, to gratify the ambition of universal conquest—of inquisitions erected, with all their horrible instruments of torture, in order to punish or convert obstinate heretics—and of streams of human blood, which the cruelty of papal interests has caused to flow. Even to recite the forms of punishment, would require more room than can well be given to this department of our subject. Suffice it to say, that every country where it has been resisted, has done so at the expense of its best and dearest lives: its progress is tracked with the blood of its victims; and the multitude of those who have fallen a prey to its rapacity is literally innumerable. No part of the character of Rome is better attested than this. It is what cannot be concealed. Before this could be done, it would be requisite to blot from ‘history’s honest page,’ the reigns of Mary of England—of Charles V. in Germany—of Louis XIV. in France: together with the accounts of St Bartholomew-day in Paris—of the revocation of the edict of Nantes, at which 100,000 were murdered—and of the massacre of the Irish protestants in 1641. France, Spain, Germany, Bohemia, Poland, Hungary, England, Scotland, Ireland, America, and even Italy, have all had their martyrs. There is scarce a country in Europe on which the fires of popish persecution have not gleamed. Nor is it possible now to tell how many Huguenots in France, Waldenses in Piedmont, Lollards in England, and Reformers in Scotland, have fallen sacrifice to papal intolerance. The Belgic martyrs are estimated at 50,000 by some, and by others as high as 100,000; the Waldensian at a million. In the city of Beziers alone, 60,000 persons were indiscriminately murdered in one day, the pope’s legate, with the crucifix in his hand, crying out, ‘Kill all, and God will know his own.’ Charles IX. of France, boasted of having sacrificed in one night, 70,000 of his subjects. During the Irish massacre, which began in 1641, from 40,000 to 50,000 protestants were cruelly murdered in a few days. Even in England, during the short reign of Mary, about 300 persons, of all classes,

perished amid the fires of Smithfield ; and during the persecutions under Charles and James, 60,000 in England, and 18,000 in Scotland suffered by banishment or death. Let it not be said these are old things. Are they not approved by papists of the present day ? Have they ever received a mark of condemnation from any authoritative source ? Is there not, on the contrary, an annual thanksgiving observed at Rome, for the signal interposition of the divine power at the revocation of the edict of Nantes, and for the massacre on St Bartholomew-day ? No description of the popish church is more true than that which represents it as ‘drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.’ (Rev. xvii. 6.) Nor can any declaration better accord with the retributive character of Deity than this:—‘Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus : for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink ; for they are worthy.’ (Rev. xvi. 5, 6.)

This is one of the things which are apt to be retorted on protestants : but most ignorantly and most unjustly so. It is not sufficiently observed, that when protestants have persecuted, they have done it in opposition to their principles : their religion has, at the very time, disallowed their conduct. But persecution is in the very spirit of popery—is the natural and avowed result of its principles. Besides, if at an early period protestants exhibited anything of an intolerant disposition, it ought in justice to be ascribed, not to their religion, but to the difficulty men feel in throwing off the influence of sentiments they have been long accustomed to entertain. For any spirit of intolerance they have retained, protestants are entirely indebted to Rome, in escaping from whose abominations, it was scarce to be expected that they should get rid of everything objectionable at once. After all, what are the few paltry instances by which the charge in question is supported, compared with the tens of thousands which attest the spirit of the antichristian system ! All the Jewish, pagan, and protestant persecutions put together, cannot number so many

victims as have been sacrificed to the 'Roman Moloch' alone.

How opposite the spirit of protestantism is to that of popery, may be illustrated by the following quotations, which we would recommend to the attention of those who are disposed to confound them:—'Mary,' says a sensible French writer, quoted by Dr M'Crie, 'was brought up in France, accustomed to see protestants burned to death, and instructed in the maxims of her uncles the Guises, who maintained, that it was necessary to exterminate, without merey, the pretended reformed. With these dispositions she arrived in Scotland, which was wholly reformed, with the exception of a few lords. The kingdom receive her, acknowledge her as their Queen, and obey her in all things according to the laws of the country. I maintain, that in the state of men's spirits at that time, if a Huguenot queen had come to take possession of a Roman Catholic kingdom, with the retinue with which Mary came to Scotland, the first thing they would have done, would have been to arrest her; and if she had persevered in her religion, they would have procured her degradation by the pope, thrown her into the Inquisition, and burned her as a heretic. There is not an honest man who dare deny this.' (Life of Knox, vol. ii. 28.) 'In this very city,' writes Mr Maturin of Dublin, in 1824, 'there is a work, entitled *Ward's Errata*; that is, errors of the protestant translation of the bible. This work is exhibited in all the Roman Catholic booksellers' shops in Dublin, adorned with prints of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, chained, in flames, and tormented by devils. Now, I say, that if a protestant bookseller dared to expose at Rome, at Naples, at Madrid, etc. etc., a protestant book, in which the pope, the cardinals, or the distinguished ecclesiastics of the Roman Catholic Church, were represented as condemned to everlasting flames, the result would be, that in twenty-four hours the publisher would be committed to the prison of the most holy Inquisition, from whence he would never make his exit, except to blaze at an *Auto da Fe*, for the love of God, the honour of Jesus Christ, and the glory of the holy Roman Catholic religion. Such *would* be the tolerance of

the Roman Catholic Church—such is the tolerance of the protestant.’

7. To complete this picture of complicated iniquity, it is only necessary to advert to the influence of the popish system on *practical morality*. Here we shall leave out of view altogether the laws of the Jesuits, which, whether publicly avowed principles or secret instructions, disclose a system of wickedness, of unblushing impudence, and consummate adaptation to corrupt human nature. Enough may be gathered, from the general maxims of the body at large, to serve our purpose.

The very distinction of venial and mortal sins cannot but have an injurious influence on morals; inasmuch as there must be less inducement to abstain from iniquity, in believing ‘that venial sins deserve only temporal punishment,’ than in believing that ‘the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against ALL unrighteousness of men.’ The tenet, *No faith with heretics*, of which, however stoutly denied, the history of the church affords so many illustrations; the abominable maxim, that the end will sanctify the means; and the power assumed and acted upon, of dispensing with the most solemn obligations. of which so many well-authenticated instances are on record, —open a wide door for the overthrow of all social morality, break the bonds of every relation, and pour a desolating destruction over the dearest and most important interests of human life. It is matter of fact, that so late as 1811, the pope pronounced sentence of divorce between Bonaparte and Josephine Beauharnois, his lawful wife, to enable him to marry the daughter of the Emperor of Austria; and the incestuous marriages of uncle and niece, nephew and aunt, which have taken place for two generations among the members of the reigning family in Portugal, exist in consequence of a similar dispensation from his *Holiness!*

But perhaps the most demoralising principle of all is that of penance, with its appendages of confession, absolution, dispensations, and indulgences.—By substituting the spurious sacrament of *penance* for the christian doctrine of *repentance*, one of the most effectual barriers to immorality is removed.

Is it, in the nature of things, supposable that *they* will be strongly solicitous to avoid practical iniquity, who believe, that on the payment of a given sum, or submission to some painful process, the priest is authorised to absolve them from all the sins committed since their baptism? nay, that should they feel greatly repugnant at the performance required, they may, for a trifling bribe, have it transferred to a less wealthy individual, and thus accomplish their object by *proxy*?—With respect to the confession that precedes absolution, it is not easy to determine on whom, the priest or the culprit, its influence will be more pernicious. As a source of emolument, as a subtle engine of spiritual tyranny, it is not difficult to see the use of the law which enjoins confession ‘at least once a year;’ but as a means of personal holiness, it is not quite so easy to discover the secret of its utility. The person who confesses every iniquity of his heart, tongue, and life, to a fellow-mortal, cannot but be fearfully degraded in his own eyes; while he, whose office it is to receive such confessions, whose ear has poured into it all the dishonesty, malice, profaneness, injustice, and lewdness of a district, could scarce expect to escape being contaminated, were he even innocent as Adam, immaculate as an angel of light.

And then another department of the mystery is *indulgences*, permissions on certain conditions to commit sin, or rather assurances of pardon before guilt is contracted. How these should contribute, as asserted, to the moral benefit of the individuals who procure them, one may surely be excused for being at a loss to apprehend. This part of the system is comparatively a modern invention. It was artfully contrived to replenish the exhausted coffers of Pope Leo X. by the sale of documents, in which the purchaser is secured against the consequences of such offences as he is thus authorised to perpetrate. As in other cases of merchandise, the variety is suited to all tastes; there being indulgences for this world, and indulgences for the next; some partial, others plenary; some for a shorter, and others for a longer period; for every species of crime indeed; the scale of prices being, of course,

nicely graduated according to the supposed greater or less enormity of the crimes to be committed.*

Nor are these antiquated things, which the light of modern times has abolished. The doctrine still holds a place in the catechisms of the church, and the practice still forms a fruitful source of the emolument of her priests. To expect a heightened morality among the members of such a community, were to look for the living among the dead. That a people who are instructed to believe that the payment of a few pence, or the virtues of a splinter of wood or a rusty nail, can absolve them from guilt, should be distinguished for purity, would be a greater miracle than any to which impostor has ever laid claim. Nor is this a mere speculative inference from the tenets in question. The page of history is stained with the crimes of the popes, cardinals, bishops, and priests, of the dark ages; and even now, where will you find a more wicked race of human beings than the poor Roman Catholics? Do not the greater proportion of the thieves, robbers, housebreakers, highwaymen, and assassins, whose misdoings go to swell the criminal calendars of our country, and who end their days on the gibbet, belong to this class?

Such is the complicated iniquity of the popish system. Dark as is the picture, it is so far from being overcharged, that it can only be called a very faint sketch. Even to state all its abominations would require a volume of no ordinary dimensions. Should any one presume to doubt the fidelity of the outline, the clearest documentary proof can be adduced. And yet it is such a system—a system which thus throws

* The extent to which this singular traffic has been carried, may be guessed from the well-known fact, that the Spanish vessel *Galleon*, captured in the reign of Queen Anne, and carried into Bristol Roads, had on board, as part of its lading, 500 bales of bulls of indulgences, sixteen reams in a bale, the whole number being supposed to be not less than 3,840,000; the value of each varying from 20*l.* to £11! To such a height of impudence did this iniquity rise, that John Tetzel, who was commissioned by Leo to preach up these indulgences, unblushingly proclaimed that they could obtain the pardon of any offender, *etiamsi matrem Dei stuprasset*, and boasted that he had saved more souls from hell by his indulgences, than St Peter had converted to christianity by his preaching!

dishonour on God ; offers direct insults to Christ ; nullifies the holy scriptures ; endangers fearfully the souls of men ; perverts all the institutions of the church's divine Head ; annihilates everything like personal liberty ; and throws open the flood-gates of grossest immorality,—it is such a system which lays claim to being the *True Church of Christ, out of which there is no salvation*. To every one who has attended to the preceding statements, it may safely be left to judge, how much more appropriately it is styled, by the Spirit of God, **THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY !**

SERMON XI.

POPERY THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY.

2 THESS. ii. 7.

'The Mystery of Iniquity doth already work.'

IN proof that popery is the Mystery of Iniquity, we have already adverted to the complication of evil which it embraces. This complication of evil has been viewed in relation to the glory of God—the honour of Christ—the holy scriptures—the salvation of men—the institution of religion—mental vigour—personal liberty—and practical morality. We invite attention to still further proof.

II. The policy with which popery has been framed and upheld, is sufficient to justify the application to it of the title, 'Mystery of Iniquity.'

The ascendancy of the popish system is perhaps the most extraordinary fact in the history of nations. Nothing in the annals of Rome pagan, brilliant as were her victories, and extensive as was her dominion, can compare with it. 'Her ancient records contain nothing equal to the stratagems, the achievements, and the unconquerable perseverance which elevated the popes to ecclesiastical sovereignty, and gave the ascendancy to papal Rome. The champions of the church have surpassed the heroes of the republic; the subtlety of the conclave has exceeded in depth and refinement that of the senate; the thunder of the vatican has rolled more terribly

than that of the capitol; and, though within a narrower boundary, the tyranny of the popes has been more despotic and intense than that of the proudest of the Cæsars.' The *beau ideal* of popery comprehends so much that is contradictory and chimerical, as to cause the mere projection of the scheme appear a wild and capricious start of imagination; while its actual realisation seems a thing so unparalleled, so far

‘Above all Greek, above all Roman fame,’

as to make us instinctively ask, by what means was it effected?

The history of its formation and progress is no secret. The rise of the papacy may be assigned to the seventh or eighth centuries, when claims of universal supremacy, civil as well as ecclesiastical, were put forth. The elements were in operation long before; but then it was that it became *the popish system*. Its nature was then unfolded—its principles developed—its plans arranged. From that period it continued to advance till it reached the maximum of its power and glory in the eleventh or twelfth centuries. The scheme itself was formed, and the height to which it reached was attained by a system of Machiavellian policy, even a slight acquaintance with which will go far to justify the application of the ignominious title of ‘the Mystery of Iniquity.’

The very first step was to have the understandings of men subjected, as far as possible, to human authority. Claims of absolute and universal supremacy were accordingly put forth on the part of the clergy over the people. And having once enslaved the minds of men by every wicked and artful contrivance, they were prepared to wield the unlimited power they had acquired at pleasure. The foundation of the whole gigantic fabric is laid deep in this one principle of unbounded and uncontrollable dominion.

The next thing was to captivate the imagination by an outward show of pomp and dignity and greatness. The places of worship—the forms of service—the dress of the priests—the order of processions and arrangement of ceremonies, were all, accordingly, calculated to allure and overawe the minds

of the vulgar; while the immense revenues of the church were fitted to attract the avaricious and unprincipled among the rich, who sought nothing so much as aggrandisement. The aid of architects, painters, and sculptors, was called in; and the fine arts, of whose ennobling tendency we hear so much, became the handmaids of the most degrading superstition. To this part of her policy must be referred the massive porches, lofty domes, and pictorial decorations of her temples—the gorgeous apparel of her ecclesiastics—the voluptuous character of her music—the burning of incense—the lighting of candles in open day—the pompous processions on seasons of festivity; together with a multitude of other things, better calculated to strike the senses than to affect the heart, to glitter in the eye than to reach the conscience. In all these, it is not difficult to perceive a cunning adaptation of professedly christian principles to the rites and ceremonies of paganism, and to the carnal inclinations of fallen humanity. To such an extent has this spirit of criminal temporising been carried, that, in some instances, the worship of heathen idols, under the names of popish saints, has been sanctioned and encouraged. In short, popery is but ‘baptised paganism.’

Another cunning device of the framers of popery has been to overawe the minds of the people, by laying claim to miraculous powers; and to keep them at a distance by pretensions to a mysterious sanctity, well fitted to repel everything like an obtrusive spirit of investigation, which might not be always quite convenient for the purposes of the hierarchy. Tricks were accordingly played off, in great plenty, which had their desired effect on the weak, the ignorant, and the credulous; who, being denied the privilege of judging for themselves, had no course left them to pursue, but to wink hard, and swallow down, with true orthodox gullability, whatever nostrums might be mixed up for them by their father confessors.

Nor was it less artfully contrived to relax the principles of morality, and throw down the barriers of real ecclesiastical discipline. Here was something exactly suited to corrupt human nature. The spirit of enmity to holiness, which might feel disposed, in reference to the precepts of Christ, to say

‘ Let us break asunder his bands, and cast his cords from us,’ could find an ample range of indulgence within the pale of the *holy* catholic church. A taste for luxury and effeminacy could meet with nothing to oppose its gratification, in a system which empowered its office-bearers to dispense, at pleasure, with any of the laws of the gospel ;—nay, the emoluments of which office-bearers, were in no small degree to spring from the exercise of such dispensations, and whose interests, of course, lay in holding out every encouragement to sin.

The power being once gained by such means as we have described, other parts of the system were as wisely adapted to its maintenance and diffusion. The law of confession, for example, was admirably fitted for these ends ;—by making the clergy acquainted with the inmost secrets of men’s hearts ; by laying open to them the private history and peculiar circumstances of every person without exception ; and thus enabling them to address to the failings or propensities of all, such motives as might best subserve their own selfish purposes. The property, the peace, the liberty, and even the persons of the community, were thus placed in the hands of a few interested individuals ; nor are the instances either few or remote in which this dangerous power has been made use of for the basest of ends.

Perhaps no principle is better adapted for upholding the power of the Roman Catholic hierarchy than that of clerical celibacy. It erects a barrier betwixt the ministers of religion and the people, which effectually prevents all proper reciprocity of feeling, or community of interest. All the tender endearments and exquisite enjoyments of domestic society are thus cut off from the former ; a morose, contracted, and even cruel spirit is engendered and fostered ; and, bound by no tie to the community at large, and free from all the charges of a family, the priests are converted into a close corporation, ever ready to promote the ambitious designs of the Romish See in any part of the world. Were they permitted to form matrimonial alliances, they would soon come to participate in the common feelings of the people ; and, by learning to feel towards them as friends, would be rendered unfit to accomplish

the purposes of papal ambition by treating them as servants or as slaves.—In the spirit of the same principle, has encouragement been given to monastic establishments, where, instead of shining as ‘lights in the world,’ or mingling with society as the ‘salt of the earth,’ persons are induced to betake themselves to a useless and selfish retirement; as if human beings could better serve the purposes of their existence by ‘chanting matins and vespers, and spending their time in drowsy meditations,’ than by entering into the relations for which God has fitted them, and actively discharging the duties of life.

Notwithstanding all we have seen, the system should have been incomplete without an ample and permanent revenue. Nor has this been neglected. The subtle politicians of Rome, acting up to the letter—we say nothing of the spirit—of at least one scripture maxim—‘Money answereth all things,’—have left no art untried, that could promise to aid the church’s exchequer. They seem to have been sufficiently aware of the folly of pretending to worldly dominion without possessing worldly riches. The cupidity of wealth was a natural and essential accompaniment of the lust of power. Hence the law of tithes, the appropriation of church-lands, the imposition of fines, the sale of indulgences, and the exaction of fees for every part of religious service performed by the priests. Everything the church had to bestow became an article of merchandise. A regular system of spiritual traffic and extortion was set on foot. Besides assessing the people for the support of public worship in general, regular charges were made for christening, churching, confession, confirmation, marriage, visitation of the sick, and burial. The spirit of popish avarice thus pursues its unhappy votaries from the cradle to the grave; ay, and beyond the grave, for it has invented what are called ‘Masses for the dead,’ for which immense sums are wrung from the friends of persons deceased, under the pretence of rescuing them from purgatorian pains. To such a length of hard-hearted rigour are these various exactions pushed, that the priesthood, while holding the indispensable necessity of certain rites to salvation, cruelly refuse to administer them, even to the poorest, without payment of

the money. Baptism, according to them, is essential to salvation ; yet unless the wretched parents of a dying infant can produce the requisite fee, the tender-hearted priest will coolly suffer it to go into everlasting perdition ! Surely the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. And what kind of a religion must that be, in which a dying sinner is directed to seek his consolations in the prospect of deliverance from the wrath to come, more from his temporal than from his spiritual riches ; where the rich are sure to die happy, and the poor without comfort ; and where the reason of damnation, in the majority of instances, may be, not the want of *faith*, but the want of *gold* ?*

But it is not so much our object here to expose, as to develop the system by which the papal treasury is replenished. In addition to the arts already enumerated, it is a common expedient to encourage free-will offerings to the church, by attaching to such benefactions expiatory and positive merit ;— a measure borrowed from the priests of pagan Rome, who contrived to enrich themselves by inducing the people to leave legacies and bequests to their gods and goddesses. Hence the rich endowments of monasteries, etc. ; of which we may form some idea from the single fact, that the wealth of those establishments, in our own country, which were suppressed by Henry VIII., is calculated to amount, at the present value of money, to six millions sterling *per annum* ! And it may assist us in forming an estimate of the immense wealth which flowed from all quarters into the Romish treasury, to know, that the

* We sometimes hear the catholic clergy of Ireland commended for their zeal, in ministering to the spiritual wants of their people. A gentleman of that persuasion, who intruded himself into a meeting of the Irish Evangelical Society in Dublin, thus eulogised the ministers of that religion :—‘ They travel this country in the middle of the night, braving storm and rain, and even death itself, to administer comfort to the dying sinner.’ The statement would have done something to prove their claim on our respect, had the gentleman been able to assure his audience that they were not well paid for every such sacrifice. But, seeing it is known that their emolument arises from these very offices individually, the performance of them can no more assert their right to the praise of pious disinterestedness, than the exertions of a merchant who exposes himself to hazards in disposing of his wares, or those of a quack in vending his nostrums.

money collected in England alone, before the Reformation, under the name of *Peter-pence*, *annates*, and other pretences, amounted to two-thirds more than the produce of the royal treasury!* Money, money, has ever been a darling object in the Church of Rome. She could never have existed without it. It is not more essential as a means of carnal pomp and indulgence, than as an instrument of bribery and corruption. ‘How lucrative to us,’ said Pope Leo X., ‘this fable of Jesus Christ is!’ In the same spirit of venal baseness, Pope Pius IV. boastingly exclaimed, as he pointed out the vast treasures of the church’s exchequer to Thomas Aquinas, ‘The church can no longer say, Silver and gold have I none:’—a remark which deserves to be recorded, not more for the proof it affords of the worldliness of popery, than for the admirable reply it received:—‘Neither can she any longer say, In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Rise up and walk!’

One more device served to perfect the cunning policy of Rome. Her various monastic orders have contributed not a little to her growth and stability. By means of these, her strength and majesty have been asserted, the number of her proselytes increased, and her influence powerfully upheld. It has been her study, of course, to encourage both their number and their variety. Hence the existence of monks, abbots, priors, canons, knights, mendicants, clerks,

‘Eremites and friars,
White, black, and grey, with all their trumpery,’

who labour assiduously and incessantly to promote the interests of the church:—orders, on the recital of which, one can scarce help exclaiming, ‘Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are ye?’ In critical periods, new orders were erected to meet the emergency of the demand; and when, at the Reformation, the whole fabric received such a shock as threatened its overthrow notwithstanding the numerous buttresses by which it was propped, a new order of prodigious strength was called

* Bruce’s Free Thoughts on Popery, etc., page 37—note.

into being. This was the order of the Jesuits, which, originating with Ignatius Loyola, a crafty Spanish soldier, surpassed every other in the depth of its cunning, the flexibility of its principles, the frenzy of its zeal, and its powers of insinuation. The hallowed name of Jesus became the watchword of a most unhallowed confederacy. The members, by means of artspeculiar to their order, sought to worm themselves into all the cabinets of Europe; and, catching the fire of missionary enterprise, all countries, christian as well as pagan, became the scenes of their strenuous efforts. This is not even excepting our own land, in which they have long had a footing; where they occasioned no little mischief during the struggle consequent on the Reformation; and in which they still exist in great numbers. Though suppressed by Pope Clement XIV., the order was revived by Pius VII., in order, as it would seem, that he might have it in his power to make some suitable return for being reinstated in his pontificate by British treasure and British blood, by overrunning our country with hordes of those miscreant emissaries:—a characteristic instance, it must be allowed, of papal gratitude! And, to this day, the activity of the order continues unrelaxed, as it was but lately that a party from France effected a landing on some of the South Sea Islands, and so far succeeded in insinuating themselves with some of the natives, as to induce them to submit to being baptised:—a consummation to which the tricks, practised on the unsuspecting inhabitants, by means of a powerful galvanic battery which they carried with them as a part of their missionary furniture, in no small degree contributed.

Here, then, is a system of the most deep-laid policy—a well-compact scheme of manifold corruption—a device of immense skill, constructed on a thorough acquaintance with corrupt human nature, and most artfully adapted to subserve the ambitious project of a boundless temporal and spiritual dominion—in short, a MYSTERY OF INIQUITY. And this is the secret of that unexampled, and apparently inexplicable success which formerly drew from us an expression of wonder.

III. The title in question is borne out by the artful intermixture of good and evil which popery exhibits.

Betwixt good and evil there is this distinction, that the power of the former is in proportion as it is pure and unmixed; the danger of the latter, in proportion as it is artfully intermingled with what is good. To the full moral influence of religion, it requires to be unadulterated; to the success of superstition, it must be combined with some of the qualities of pure religion. The counterfeit coin will not find a circulation, unless wearing the shape, and stamp, and appearance of what is genuine. The poisoned cup, to prevent its rejection, must contain a part of what is wholesome and savoury, that suspicion may be lulled asleep, and the potion swallowed before it is discovered to be impregnated with death.

Of this the framers of popery were fully aware. Of course, its name, its tenets, its institutions, and its forms, have all something that is good about them; yet are so connected with what is essentially bad, as to render them, on this very account, more fatally injurious. Error is so interwoven with truth—the sublime doctrines of faith so debased with puerile superstitions—and the simple institutions of divine worship so burdened with forms of human invention, as not only to nullify their beneficial tendency, but to invest them with a fearful power of mischief. The name of God is invoked in the Church of Rome; the doctrines of the Trinity, original sin, the sacrifice of Christ, the work of the Spirit, and a future state of happiness or misery, are all recognised; while preaching, prayer, praise, and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, are acknowledged as ordinances of divine institution. These things are so far good in themselves; but then, they are so adulterated by the intermixture of the basest materials, as greatly to neutralise their utility. It is well to invoke the name of God, and acknowledge the scripture doctrine of the Trinity; but when creatures and images are admitted to share in the adoration paid to the Great Supreme, and the inscrutable mystery of God's manner of subsistence is attempted to be explained by outward representations, the highest insult is offered to the Almighty.

The divinity and offices of Christ are maintained; but then his character and mediatorship are alike degraded, by daring usurpations of his attributes and functions. The sinfulness of man is confessed; but then there are only some sins that are mortal, others are but venial. The merits and intercession of Jesus are useful; but so also are those of saints and of angels. Prayer is practised, but in public it must be in an unknown tongue; and in private, it must be addressed to the 'Blessed Virgin,' as well as to the 'Father who is in heaven.' Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments; but so also are penance, orders, confirmation, matrimony, and extreme unction. Water is employed in baptism, but it must be accompanied with salt, chrism, and the sign of the cross. The Lord's Supper is celebrated; but the bread is transubstantiated into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of the Saviour; the cup is withheld from the laity; and the whole is transmuted into the unbloody sacrifice of the mass. The communion of saints is a part of the church's creed; but it is a communion exclusively restricted to those within her own pale. The authority of the moral law is admitted; but, besides that its precepts are mutilated and abridged, others are added to them under the name of 'the commandments of the church.' Belief in a resurrection, a judgment, and a future state, is professed; but so, also, is belief in the fable of purgatory.

Such is the mixture of good and evil the popish system exhibits; and all this is most artfully contrived to give it currency in the world. The evil so preponderates as to leave no room to doubt for what end the good is introduced. Pure unmixed evil would have excited disgust. Under the name and semblance of christianity, the antichristian system was fitted to attract and to enchant many who would have revolted at the naked form of paganism. The 'man of sin,' in his proper features, could command no homage; but, 'seated in the temple of God,' multitudes will bow before him. A monster, 'having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his head the names of blasphemy,' is fitted only to terrify; but let him show 'his two horns, like a lamb,' and all the world will wonder after the Beast. The

‘mother of harlots,’ if seen only as ‘full of names of blasphemy, abominations, and filthiness,’ could awaken nothing but loathing; let her be arrayed, however, in ‘purple, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls, and have in her hand a golden cup,’ and speedily ‘the inhabitants of the earth will be made drunk with the wine of her fornication.’ Simple ‘iniquity’ will not serve the purpose; it must be a ‘*mystery* of iniquity.’

It is thus that popery is a system most iniquitous in itself, and possessed of an alarming power of mischief. It is, indeed, as has been said, ‘the masterpiece of Satan:’ and the Evil One himself may well be held ‘incapable of such another contrivance.’

IV. The design of providence in permitting the existence of such a system of iniquity is mysterious.

God’s ways are not as our ways; his thoughts not as our thoughts. His ways, like his thoughts, are ‘a great deep.’ ‘His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known.’ ‘So these are a *part* of his ways; and how little a portion is heard of him?’ Such language is in strict accordance with the state of feeling which a contemplation of the works of the Almighty is fitted to inspire. Like a person stationed on the shore, we can only gaze, in silent admiration, on the immensity before us. No intellect, however vast, can pretend to explore the boundless field; and to account for all the doings of a wonder-working Deity, must baffle the keenest penetration of created skill.

Few, perhaps, of God’s providential dispensations are more inscrutably mysterious than the existence and continuance of the system of which we now speak. That, under the righteous government of God, a society, calling itself christian, and yet, in principle, worship, and practice, so thoroughly antichristian, should have been permitted to arise—to attain such a height of aggrandisement and influence—to spread over so large a portion of the earth—to enthral so many of its inhabitants—and to continue for so long a time withal, must be allowed to be a difficulty of no trifling magnitude.

'Righteousness and judgment,' we are bound to believe, are in this, as in every other case, 'the habitation of his throne;' but surely 'clouds and darkness are round about him.'

Not that no purposes of wisdom can be perceived to be served by the fact in question. It serves, for one thing, to show to what dreadful lengths the wickedness of the human heart will run, when not restrained by grace; and thus admonishes us at all times to submit to the guidance of the Almighty. It manifests how even the temple of God may become defiled, when the Spirit has forsaken it; and warns us to beware of such practices as may provoke him to withdraw his gracious presence from the church. It points out the danger of neglecting the word of truth, of invading the prerogatives of the Redeemer, or of interfering with the institutions of his house; and admonishes us to abstain from all such impiety. It confirms the truth of the christian record by a minute fulfilment of prophecy; and thus holds up an evidence in support of christianity which nothing but the hardihood of the most heaven-daring scepticism can gainsay or resist. It affords, moreover, a fine trial of the faith and purity and patience of the true saints who, during the reign of antichrist, are called to witness in sackcloth and ashes. And, in fine, its destined overthrow will form a noble triumph of truth and godliness over long-established and complicated iniquity, and a splendid manifestation of the power and grace of the Lord, who shall 'consume that Wicked with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming.'

These are, doubtless, some of the important purposes designed, by an infinitely wise God, to be subserved by the existence and maintenance of popery. But, after all, the subject is involved in much 'mystery.' It partakes of the darkness which overhangs the great question of the permission of moral evil, as being itself a conspicuous branch of that perplexing subject. Somewhat of this darkness may be expected to be dispelled, when the system of iniquity shall be overthrown; but it may be doubted whether the measure will be fully unveiled before that great and awful day, when 'the mystery of God shall be finished.'

Sufficient evidence has surely been adduced, in what has been said, to show how appropriately the popish system was characterised by the Spirit of God 'The mystery of iniquity;' and how strikingly it contrasts in every point with what the same Spirit has designated 'The mystery of *godliness*.' Here, meanwhile, let us pause and reflect with emotions of veneration and wonder on the doings of him whose 'ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts,' in permitting, and so long tolerating, the existence of such a complicated system of iniquity.

SERMON XII.

PLEAS IN BEHALF OF POPERY, AND THE DUTY OF PROTESTANTS IN REGARD TO IT CONSIDERED.

2 THESS. ii. 7.

'The Mystery of Iniquity doth already work.'

HAVING in the preceding discourses vindicated the application of the ignominious title, *Mystery of Iniquity*, to the Romish system, we have still to animadvert on some of the pleas urged on behalf of popery, and to point out the duty of protestants in regard to it.

I. Consider the arguments on behalf of the popish system commonly urged by its friends or apologists.

1. It is asserted by papists, that theirs is the most ancient religion. This is, indeed, their grand bulwark—the very citadel of their strength, to which they betake whenever they are hard pushed by an opponent; and entrenched in which, they seem to reckon themselves secure, when they have been forced from every other retreat. It is a claim which, we are sorry, and even ashamed, to think, has been conceded by some professing protestants, who, borne away by a spirit of spurious liberality, have suffered themselves to be imposed upon by pretensions unblushingly put forth and incessantly reiterated.

There is a fallacy in the argument which ought not to pass unexposed. To exhibit a claim of antiquity, in proof of the genuineness of a church, is a mere begging of the question; for, as the church that is true must be built on the primitive model, genuineness and antiquity amount to the same thing.

Mere precedence in point of time, however, is in itself no evidence of truth; as novelty is no proof of error. Mohamadanism is as ancient as popery; and paganism is more ancient than either. Mohamed and the Pope are mere upstarts, compared with Fohi and Zoroaster. Christianity itself, in comparison of Judaism, is a novelty. Nor is there much that can lay claim to higher antiquity than Sin. Are we, then, to erect temples to the worship of heathen divinities, and to yield ourselves up to the service of our lusts?

But it may be said, popery is the most ancient *christian* church. Now, this we most pointedly deny. The distinguishing features of the system—which are essential to its existence, and constitute, in short, its essence,—did not even come into being till after the lapse of several centuries of the christian era. The pope's headship over the church was, properly speaking, unknown till the year 606, when, by the decree of Phocas, the Roman pontiff was constituted universal bishop. Temporal supremacy originated so late as 756, in the grant of Pepin, King of France, afterwards confirmed and extended by his son Charlemagne. The worship of 'the blessed virgin' was first mentioned by Peter Tullo, who lived at least 500 years after her death,—a neglect for which, to be sure, succeeding ages have made ample amends. Image worship is of a still later date, having been denounced by the fathers as paganism, and first authorised in the christian church by the second Council of Nice, in 787. The doctrine of seven sacraments was first taught by Hugo de St Victore, in the twelfth century. The clergy were first prohibited from marrying by Pope Hildebrand, or Gregory VII. in 1074, whose orders were afterwards confirmed by Pope Innocent II. in 1138. Private confession was first imposed by Pope Innocent III. in the fourth Council of Lateren, 1215 years after the death of Christ. And as for communicating in one kind, as it is called, though now the universal practice, no higher antiquity can be claimed for it than that of the Council of Constance, in 1415. Now, these are essential features of popery. Were she to renounce them all to-morrow, she would be no longer entitled to the name. And if she *would* not be

popery, were they to be given up, are we not entitled to hold, that she *was* not such before they were assumed? So fares it with the boasted argument of antiquity.

Should her advocates seek refuge from the inference at which we have thus arrived, by abjuring the name of *popery*, and cleaving to that of the *Church of Rome*, what would it avail? From the Acts of the Apostles, it is clear, that many of the apostolic churches had an existence long prior to that of Rome. Churches were established at Jerusalem, Damascus, Antioch, and many other places in the east, before the gospel was even so much as preached in the western metropolis.

While denying the claim of primitive existence to the popish system, as a regularly organised church, it may safely be granted that the *elements* of the system had an existence as early as the age of the apostles. Considering this, we have sometimes wondered at the suicidal pertinacity with which her advocates have clung to the argument of antiquity. Might not the weapon be wrested from their hands, and pointed against themselves? Is not the apostle's language 'the Mystery of Iniquity *doth already work*?' It is curious to observe how the essential errors of the system had even then begun to discover themselves, though not collected and matured and organised into a scheme. Paul had already had occasion to tender the warning, 'Dearly beloved, flee from *idolatry*;' (1 Cor. x. 14)—to caution the Colossians against being beguiled into the '*worshipping of angels*;' (1 Col. ii. 18)—to denounce such as '*corrupt the word of God*, handling it deceitfully;' (2 Cor. ii. 17)—to reprove the practice of '*making a gain of godliness*;' (1 Tim. vi. 5)—to condemn the superstitious observance of '*days, and months, and times, and years*;' (Gal. iv. 6)—and pointedly to warn those to whom he wrote, against giving heed to the '*traditions, and commandments, and doctrines of men*.' (Col. ii. 8, 22.) The elements, it thus appears, of the principal papal corruptions, had an early existence; and, so far, we willingly concede to the Church of Rome the claim of antiquity. But by so doing, we only identify her the more with that alluded to by the

apostle, when he says, 'the Mystery of Iniquity doth already work.'

2. Allied to the claim of antiquity is that of a pure apostolic succession. Taking popery as it is, with those principles and claims which constitute its essence and give it a distinctive character, in what can it be said to resemble the primitive churches? Where, in the inspired accounts of these simple establishments, have we anything resembling the hierarchy of Rome? Cardinals, archdeacons, deans, archbishops, primates, metropolitans, etc., are designations unknown in the New Testament. Where do you read of the invocation of the Virgin, prayers to saints, or the use of images, as helps to devotion? These will be sought for in vain in the bible; as in deed all the other peculiarities of the system.

Nor can anything be more unfortunate than the attempt to establish an uninterrupted succession from Peter, founded on our Lord's address to that apostle: 'And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' (Matt. xvi. 18.) The inculcation of silence regarding his Messiahship which immediately succeeds, fixes down the Saviour's reference to the *confession* and not to the *person* of Peter. This opinion is supported by other passages of scripture, in which Jesus is spoken of as the 'Rock' on which the church is built. The opposite sentiment is indeed utterly irreconcilable with the well-known instability of this apostle's character, as well as with the circumstance of its being soon after debated, among the apostles, which of them was the greatest,—a question, for which it is impossible to account, on the supposition that the thing was settled in favour of Peter so short a time before. To this add the principle laid down by Christ himself, 'Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, and ALL YE ARE BRETHREN;'—the little ceremony with which Peter was treated by Paul, who 'withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed;'—and the impossibility of showing that Peter ever visited Rome, much less was bishop of that city; and we shall see on what slender ground the ecclesiastical fable of succession rests.

There is a sense in which all ministers of Christ are successors of the apostles ; that is, as the authorised dispensers of those ordinances which were first entrusted to these extraordinary office-bearers. But this is quite a different thing from a succession to all the powers of the apostles, as pretended to by the bishops of Rome. The apostolical office neither required nor admitted of existence beyond the primitive age of the church. It was altogether of an extraordinary, and, consequently, of a temporary character. One of its essential qualifications was, that the person holding it should have personally seen the Lord. But this, excepting by a series of preternatural appearances, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus—which it were unreasonable to expect, and which are not pretended to have occurred,—could not take place after his ascension. Moreover, the office of an apostle, and that of a bishop, are essentially distinct ; the latter from its very nature implying residency, the former as necessarily supposing itinerancy ; the one restricted to a particular district, the other having a range commensurate with the visible church. Nor is it a little against the claims of the Romish hierarchy to being true christian bishops, that, to a man, they are without what an inspired apostle specifies among the qualifications of such :—‘ a bishop must be blameless, *the husband of one wife.*’

Such is the frail foundation on which the Church of Rome has reared the proudest pretensions ; and, on account of which she has thought herself entitled to look down with disdain on the ministers of all other churches ; nay, to deny the existence of any other true church, and insultingly to demand of protestants, ‘ Where was your church before Luther ? ’ It might be sufficient to retort on papists the question, ‘ And where, pray, was *your* religion in the days of the apostles ? ’ But it is not necessary to have recourse to this method of silencing our assailants. Though uttered in the spirit of a challenge, the question is one which no enlightened protestant need be afraid to meet. Even in the darkest period of the reign of antichrist, when her boundaries were most extended, and her dominion most absolute, there was still ‘ a remnant according to the election of grace ; ’—‘ there

were still a few names of those who had not defiled themselves with her abominations. There were the famous Syrian churches, lately discovered by Dr Buchanan, in India. There were the primitive Waldenses, who, among the mountains of the Alps, escaped the ravages of that desolating extermination which swept the face of Europe. There were the ancient Culdees, who, uncontaminated by antichristian alliances, maintained their pure and simple forms of worship, safe amid the mists of our own Western Isles. And, supposing that none of these had existed, we should still have been able to give a satisfactory and triumphant reply to the question, 'Where was your religion before Luther?' Our answer should have been—IN THE BIBLE. There it was found by Luther and Melancthon, by Calvin and by Knox. They went to the fountain-head, and drew their notions of doctrine, worship, and discipline, direct from this unpolluted source. We, therefore, utterly disclaim the pretensions of Rome to being our *mother* church; and, though our early Reformers were once members of her communion, she can no more, on that account, lay claim to the honour of the system which they founded, than the unregenerate nature of a convert to christianity can be reckoned the source of his regenerate state.

3. Uniformity of belief and worship is another stronghold of popery; and the schismatical spirit of protestantism is constantly urged as an unanswerable argument against it. We shall not go the length of some, and say that uniformity is not a desirable thing. But that it is, in itself, a criterion of truth, we deny. Men are as likely to be uniform in what is wrong, as in what is right. Mahomedans, it is presumed, are as distinguished as papists for the virtue in question. Nor, if the matter be fairly stated, have even protestants anything to fear from a comparison, in this respect, with the Church of Rome. Take, for example, any particular church, the Greek Church, the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, or any other one denomination, and say whether it is not as uniform as is the Church of Rome. Nay, even putting protestants together, there is this marked distinction between them and papists, that the former differ, for the most

part, only in matters of form, and agree in the grand essentials of the gospel; while the latter agree only in ceremonies, and differ in the principles of faith and morals. Then, after all, what is the nature and source of the boasted uniformity of the Church of Rome? Is it a real harmony of enlightened opinion? Is it not rather the mechanical result of tenets which require implicit faith to the *dicta* of the priests,—which deny to the people all right of judging for themselves,—trample under foot all the independent workings of the human mind,—and, by means of civil penalties and threats of excommunication and eternal damnation, oblige men to conceal the real sentiments of their hearts? It is an artificial uniformity, resembling more the stillness of fear or the silence of death, than the intellectual, moral, and spiritual unity inculcated in the word of God!

This all proceeds on the assumption that actual uniformity exists among papists. But we refuse such an admission. She is, in fact, the most schismatical church in existence. What is schism? Not the erection of separate communions, so much as the existence of party spirit in the same church. Now, in this respect, what is there that can be compared with popery? Who has not heard of the disputes between the Dominicans and the Franciscans, the Jansenists and the Jesuits? What are the ecclesiastical orders but so many different sects or factions, entertaining conflicting opinions in matters of faith, following diverse courses in worship and practice, and having no common feeling but that of mutual and cordial dislike? * Nay; is it not a fact that, up to the present moment, papists are not agreed as to the seat of infallibility, whether it rests with the pope alone, or with the cardinals alone, or with the pope and cardinals together?

* ‘One says, I am of Benedict; another, I am of Francis; another, I am of Dominic; and another, I am of Jesus. These holy fraternities vilify and condemn one another; and when the mendicants of different orders used to meet on a begging expedition, they would hold a pitched battle like as many wild Irishmen on a holiday. This is an example of schism in the true sense of the word; and as nothing like this exists in protestant churches, we are entitled to call the Church of Rome the only schismatical church in the western world.’—*Protestant*, vol. iv., p. 311.

It were easy, in pursuit of this topic, to confront bishop and bishop, doctor and doctor, council and council; for never were more conflicting sentiments uttered, than are to be found in the writings of popish dignitaries, and the solemn decrees of ecclesiastical councils. But all these may be passed over, for the purpose of attending to the edifying and undeniable fact of two anti-popes. This occurred during the fourteenth century, in the case of Urban VI. of Rome, and Clement VII. who fixed his seat at Avignon; whose rival claims served for fifty years to divide the opinions of men in the west. Each assumed the titles and discharged the functions of pontiff—creating cardinals, canonising saints, and issuing bulls in abundance. And, as was to be expected, they did not fail mutually to anathematise and excommunicate one another; each denouncing his competitor as antichrist, and his cardinals as incarnate devils; and absolving from their oath of allegiance the subjects of those princes who supported the claims of his rival. Nor has it, we believe, been ever yet ascertained which was the genuine vicar of Christ and successor of St Peter; and the consequence is, that the acts of both have been acknowledged, and the saints canonised by each admitted to a place in the calendar, notwithstanding their having been regularly and lawfully excommunicated by the rival patrons. A precious specimen this of ecclesiastical uniformity! Good right, in truth, have the adherents of such a church to brand all others with the reproach of schism!

4. It is commonly affirmed by the apologists of the Church of Rome, that whatever it may have been once, it is now quite *changed*. Such a favourite plea must not be passed over unnoticed. There is a sense in which it is admitted that popery is changed. She has no longer the power, the wealth, the extent she once possessed. 'Its head is a disregarded and decrepit priest; its bulls, that once made monarchs tremble, are now issued only to add a clause to the *index expurgatorius*; and more than half of Europe has rejected its impositions, and defied its power. She was indeed a proud and glorious galley, the burthen and the terror of the great deep; but she lies on its waters now, a dismantled hulk; her pendant

sweeps the seas no more; the strong blast of the Reformation hath rent away mast and mainsail, rope and rudder; the mighty rushing winds of heaven are abroad, and assail her from every point of the compass; England, Scotland, all the north, and half the east of Europe, hold her in chase, and every shot they send through her rotten timbers, threatens to make her a wreck.' All this is true; and we rejoice in its truth. But though changed in circumstances, is she not the same in nature, in essence, in spirit? She has not now a universal temporal power; but has she abandoned her claims to supremacy? Many of the sources of her enormous wealth have been drained off; but has the right to all she ever once had been abandoned? The same deeds of atrocious persecution are not now heard of; but may not this be ascribed to a want of power? The tiger in chains is as harmless as a lamb, and his confinement may even tame his spirit for a little; but let him once go free again, and snuff the air of his native forest, and who shall be security for his innocence?

Thus far, and no farther, are we prepared to admit the altered nature of popery. It is not a change of character, but of circumstances; not an alteration of spirit, but of power. Manners, customs, governments, exhibit constant mutations; and, since the See of Rome was at the zenith of its splendour, the changes that have taken place in the world, have been as numerous as the phases of the moon. Still, in essence and spirit, she has exhibited no symptom of improvement, however slight. If at the period of the Reformation any promise of a change to the better was given, it was but for a moment; it was but a gleam of light transmitted from an opening cloud, which instantly closed and settled down into a more dense and lowering mass than before, destined to burst, one other day, in 'hailstones and coals of fire.' And in vindication of our right to hold her the same as she ever was, we appeal to her own plea of infallibility; what is infallible can never change, as change supposes either former or present imperfection; and until this claim is withdrawn, every pretension of change must be held

as a sinister, hypocritical device. We appeal to the fact that she still teaches the same corrupt doctrines, still practises the same absurd ceremonies, and still breathes the same intolerant spirit. Who ever heard of a single tenet, rite, or pretension, having been laid aside? And, whether any alteration has taken place in her temper, may be guessed from the comparatively recent persecution of the protestants in France, and from the annotations of the new popish bible, published at Dublin in 1818, under the sanction of Dr Troy. In these it is maintained that, when it can be done without hazard, 'heretics, (*i. e.*, protestants,) may, and ought, by public authority, to be chastised or EXECUTED;' the protestant clergy of all denominations are described as 'thieves, murderers, and ministers of the devil;' and the protestant 'heresy' is declared to be a '*rebellion and damnable revolt against the priests of God's church.*' Such is popery, in a protestant country, and in modern times; and yet we shall be told that it is now changed. Changed! In what part of the scriptures, we demand, is the warrant given to expect that popery shall ever be *reformed*? Destroyed it shall be; reformed it never will—it never can. Amid the awful predictions with which the canon of inspiration closes, not a single ray of scriptural hope will be found to gild the destiny of papal Rome. A dense unbroken cloud of portentous judgment lowers upon the horizon of this devoted church. No other light meets the eye of the observer, than the glare of those awful lightnings which presage that tempest of wrath by which the mystical Babylon is to be irretrievably overwhelmed; nor does there any other sound break upon the ear, than that which announces its final doom,—'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.' The Lord shall 'CONSUME' that wicked with the spirit of his mouth. The beast shall be cast 'ALIVE' into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone. Babylon shall be 'UTTERLY BURNED WITH FIRE;' for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. With violence shall that great city be thrown down, and shall 'BE FOUND NO MORE AT ALL.' These are the words of the Spirit of God; and such as have any respect for his authority will not easily be per-

sueded, in defiance of such unequivocal testimony to the contrary, that popery is changed.

II. It remains for us to speak of the duty of protestants in regard to popery.

1. Considering the iniquity of its nature, and the futility of every plea on its behalf, true-hearted protestants cannot but lament the existence and increasing influence of the popish system. Such a system must prove a curse wherever it exists; and we need only glance at the state of things in Portugal, Spain, France, Austria, Italy, and Ireland, to receive ample confirmation to the inference. From the nature of the system itself, the zeal of its friends, the influence of some of its professors, the indulgences it grants to corrupt gratifications, and withal the supineness of its professed enemies, there is reason to fear it may yet considerably increase both in extent and in power. Not that we expect it ever to regain its former proud ascendancy. The diffusion of light, both religious and literary, and the palpable absurdity, fraud, and falsehood of the system itself; its present poverty; the degradation it has already suffered, which, as in the case of the idol which was spit upon, must preclude its ever being viewed with the same sentiments of veneration; and, above all, the irreversible decrees of Heaven, may be regarded as ample security against any such event. Still, this is not inconsistent with its obtaining a partial revival. We have seen from scripture that the Beast is to be cast *ALIVE* into the pit: and even reason would lead us to conclude that a system which once possessed such amazing strength is not likely to expire without making some desperate struggle for existence. Facts harmonise with these observations. Popery is actually on the increase. Within the last thirty years, it is well known that 900 chapels,—as many nearly as all the parish churches in Scotland put together,—have been erected in England and Wales alone. Popish colleges, some of them largely endowed, exist in all the three kingdoms. Besides these, schools, newspapers, periodical publications, and all the machinery of conversion have been in active operation. What

right-hearted protestant but must mourn such a state of things in these our covenanted lands! *

2. Nor is the supineness of professing protestants less a ground of lamentation. The apathy complained of has seized on all classes—statesmen and even divines, as well as private individuals. In private circles there is a growing disposition to palliate, countenance, and excuse the abominations of Rome, which cannot but grieve the hearts of the godly. Among our statesmen, whether peers of the realm or representatives of the people, a growing leaning to what are called ‘Catholic Claims’ is but too apparent. And even the ministers of religion, there is some reason to fear, have, many of them at least, ceased to bear the same public testimony they once did against the Man of Sin, in their public discourses and prayers. In former times, whatever wore the aspect of countenance to incomparably the most dreadful superstition that ever arrogated dominion over the conscience of man, was viewed with jealousy, grief, and distrust; while every symptom of its approaching overthrow was hailed with delight. But in these good easy times of ours, the fears and hopes of our ancestors are smiled at and talked of with contempt, as the feelings of ‘silly old women;’ and events, for which millions of the wisest and devontest and holiest of men that ever inhabited the earth ardently prayed, are reckoned, by their sapient descendants, scarce worthy of an effort being made to accomplish them.

3. Such persons, it might be deemed vain to exhort to gratitude for the Reformation. But all are not such. There is still, we believe, a large majority who feel towards popery as they ought; and to whom an exhortation to thankfulness for the inestimable blessings of the Reformation, will not appear an insult. The oppressions and corruptions of the popish system were not to be for ever endured. There is a point beyond which tyranny, whether civil or religious, cannot safely be pushed. To that point the Court of Rome carried her ungodly ambition. The latent spark of freedom, when

[* This was written in 1829, since which time matters have become greatly worse, both in England and in Scotland.—Dec., 1850.]

just about to be extinguished, was by the breath of the Almighty, fanned into a flame. The Spirit of the living God breathed on the dry bones, and a noble band of champions arose, who, under the guidance of a Superior Power, achieved deeds of heroism and renown, which shall secure the transmission of their names to latest posterity, along with those of the best benefactors of our race. Foremost to break the yoke of papal domination, were the churches of Britain. Nor, in purity of reformation, boldness of enterprise, magnanimity in suffering, and steadfast perseverance, can any claim precedence of the Reformers of Scotland. Indefatigable in exposing the errors of popery, and in reviving the doctrines and institutions and order of primitive times, they established a claim on the respect, veneration, and affection of posterity, which none but the coldest and most ungrateful will refuse to acknowledge. No tribute to their memories can be regarded as sincere that is not accompanied by a wish to drink into their spirit, to adopt their principles, and to follow their example. And while the story of their deeds and their sufferings inflames the heart with the purest patriotism, let us not forget to give the praise and glory to Him, whose Spirit so clearly animated and sustained them in that illustrious struggle, in which, 'against the multitudinous hosts and sanguinary assaults of papists, they presented their own bodies as a bulwark, and occupied, not in vain, the christian Thermopylae.'

4. While thus showing the value they are disposed to put on the blood-bought privileges of our land, let protestants remember, that in times like these, they have duties to perform to papists and to themselves, which demand their serious attention. Though with regard to *popery*, they are bound to oppose its tenets, to resist its claims, to seek its extermination from the earth as an accursed thing; *papists*, the deluded supporters of this devoted system, it becomes them to admit to a place in their pity and their prayers. Their ignorance and oppression give them strong claims on christian commiseration; and prayers for their illumination and conversion should never cease to be offered. With

prayer there ought to be combined such mild, candid, conciliatory treatment, as may tend to disarm their prejudices, and lead to their salvation. It must not be forgotten, that, bad as is the system, it may embrace among its votaries not a few of the chosen people of God, whom it should be our concern to save, pulling them out of the fire. And even although we were assured that it contained not a single individual of this description, the religion we profess peremptorily requires of us to 'love our enemies; to bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them who despitefully use us and persecute us.'

Moreover, with regard to ourselves, it becomes us to beware, lest, with the profession and the zeal of protestants, we be found to unite a resemblance to popery, in its very worst features. We may not dishonour God by the adoration of images; but by cherishing the idols of the heart, and worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, we may, nevertheless, rob him of his glory. By neglecting to improve, as well as by usurping, his offices, may we pour contempt on the blessed Saviour. The scriptures may be treated with disrespect many ways besides those chargeable on papists; and even by lending our countenance to corruptions of the word of life, we may be in danger of incurring guilt not unlike to theirs. The doctrine of human merit is not confined to the Church of Rome, but finds its strenuous supporters among many professing protestants, while its principles are responded to by every unregenerate heart. The institutions of Christ may be neglected and abused many ways by all. A spirit, hostile to the true liberty of the gospel, may be breathed by others besides the advocates of popish intolerance. And, even while denouncing the immoral tendency of many of the tenets and practices of this corrupt society, it is far from being impossible that we may cherish in our hearts sentiments, respecting the efficacy of religious forms or the virtue of charitable deeds, every whit as subversive of practical godliness, as the belief of the papists in the virtue of relics, sprinklings, and extreme unction. As there is reason to suppose that some, who have retained the name of

papists, have drunk deeply into the spirit of protestantism ; so ought we to bear in mind, that these may be nominal protestants who have imbibed the very essence of popery. We have need, therefore, to beware, lest ‘ a deceived heart should turn us aside, that we cannot deliver our souls, nor say, Is there not a lie in our right hand ?’

See to it, then, protestants, that your character and conduct correspond to your profession and privileges. By reverencing God—by cherishing a profound and hallowed respect for all the offices of Christ—by making a proper use of the holy scriptures, to which you have free access—by seeking, with eagerness, the eternal salvation of your souls—by maintaining personal piety and practical holiness, see that you make it appear that your religion is something more than a name. Expose not yourselves, by an opposite line of conduct, to the reproach, ‘ What do ye more than others ?’ But recollecting that of those to whom much is given much shall be required, seek grace to enable you to act in conformity with your high and glorious distinctions.

5. Cultivate the qualities which, under God, may fit you to combat the errors and the power of Rome. There is nothing to assure you that the battle is over. You may have use yet for all your polemical skill, and for all your power of enduring hardships. The crowning victory is yet to be gained. These are not times for neutrality, or idleness, or soft and silken manners. No ; extensive scriptural knowledge, manly boldness, unconquerable zeal, indomitable courage, exhaustless patience, firm decision, determined perseverance, are the mental properties it becomes the members of the church of Christ to seek and to cultivate, in this our day. Ask them of Him who giveth liberally and upbraideth not ; and let them be consecrated to his service, in the sacred warfare you are required to wage against error and corruption.

6. Whatever may be the immediate result of contemplated measures, it becomes us to act faith in the predicted final overthrow of the antichristian system. We may not be able to see clearly through the mists by which her future history is obscured ; nor is it necessary to our comfort as christians

that we should. 'The just shall live by faith;'—'we walk by faith, not by sight.' And with exhorting you to the exercise of believing joy in the ultimate issue, we take leave of the subject.

The revealed purposes of God are the ground of this exercise. 'He SHALL come to his end, and none shall help him. The Lord SHALL consume that Wicked. And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory: and he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, **BABYLON THE GREAT IS FALLEN, IS FALLEN!**' Such is the language of God's word on the subject. Any efforts that may be made to revive the power of Rome can only issue, at the most, in imparting 'a kind of posthumous and galvanic existence to the cause of superstition;' and whatever struggles it may yet make, they can be regarded, at best, as but the mortal spasms of approaching dissolution. The doom of Babylon is sealed; whatever events may intervene, the hour is fixed when the seven-hilled city shall be tossed from its proud pre-eminence, and the triple cloud of blasphemy be prostrated in the dust; and the stone, cast by an angel's might into the sea, never more to rise, is at once the emblem and the pledge of Babylon's complete and everlasting destruction. *The Lord of hosts hath purposed; and who shall disannul it? his hand is stretched out; and who shall turn it back?*

Two questions of immense interest, connected with this issue, we have scarcely time to state:—*How* shall it be brought about? *When* shall these things be? As the anti-christian system has a political character, it is far from improbable that temporal judgments,—wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, may be brought on many of its supporters. It is scarcely to be expected that a power of such extent will be overthrown without some tremendous agitations and convulsions. But the spiritual part of the system can only be destroyed by spiritual means; and as the great instrument of effecting this, prophecy leads us to look to the blessing of God on his word. Whether written or preached, this is that breath of the Lord's mouth, by which the Wicked is to be

consumed—that sword of the Spirit, quick and powerful, which is to dismember the complicated system of iniquity—that message with which the angel is to fly to every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue that dwell on the earth, just before the fall of Babylon is sounded—that Sun of Righteousness, before whose radiance, the consummate scheme of Satanic device is to melt away and be dissolved. The process may go on gradually for a while; popery like the house of Saul becoming weaker and weaker, and the christian church, like that of David, waxing stronger and stronger. But the final overthrow, there is reason to think, will be sudden. ‘Her plagues shall come upon her in one day, death, and mourning, and famine.’ Then shall He, whose right it is to rule, ascend his throne, and sway, undisputed, the sceptre of the world.

It is an issue to be contemplated with steadfast faith; to be prayed for with ardour; and to be anticipated with rapturous delight,—delight, untinged by any of that pensive compassion which it is common for fallen greatness to excite. The men who have participated in her unholy traffic, may weep and wail, and cry, ‘Alas! alas! that great city!’ But not a sigh or a tear shall the event call forth from the members of the true church. ‘REJOICE OVER HER, THOU HEAVEN, AND YE HOLY APOSTLES AND PROPHETS; FOR GOD HATH AVENGED YOU ON HER.’ Purity shall succeed to corruption, and an unprecedented blaze of gospel light follow the antichristian darkness. The church’s greatest enemy being slain, she shall have peace and unexampled success; the witnesses shall put off their sackcloth; the thousand years of splendour and glory shall succeed; and the very howlings which accompany the overthrow, shall mingle with the acclamations of joy and praise at the marriage supper of the Lamb having come.—‘And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her

hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, and the four beasts, fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' To this encouraging prediction, we can only add the devout prayer:—
'ARISE, O LORD, PLEAD THINE OWN CAUSE; LET NOT MAN PREVAIL.'

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

TO

SERMONS ON POPERY,

On the Claims of Roman Catholics to Political Power in Britain.*

'Once I believed that Popery would never return into England; but I find it was not faith, but fancy.'—LATIMER.

It may, perhaps, be unnecessary to launch out fully into the wide and stormy sea of debate, connected with what are called 'Catholic Claims;' but it is scarce possible to avoid entering upon it altogether. We pass over all discussion on the Revolution Settlement, the Claim of Right, the Act of Union, and similar topics, as requiring more time than we can afford to give them at present. But, viewing the subject in the broad light of the well-known facts of our national history, it must be allowed to be difficult to form an opinion favourable to these claims. The leading events of the history of our country—the spirit of our public acts—and the tendency and design of those great and venerable federal deeds by which so much good was achieved, wear an aspect so unfriendly to the admission of papists to places of power and trust, that it is not easy to see how those who feel any respect for these events or documents, can be friendly to such a measure. Everything national frowns disapprobation on it.

All this, we allow, must go for nothing, if it can be shown that such exclusion is unjust, and a violation of the natural rights of the persons in question. But we are unable to see the subject in this light. The right supposed, we view, not as *natural*, but *conventional*. A natural right is something common to all men, and to which no one can possess a higher claim than another. Now, it will not surely be maintained, that a seat in the cabinet, or a place in Parliament, is the natural right of every man. There must be certain natural and moral qualifications possessed, as well as certain legal steps taken, to entitle any one to such distinction. And what we hold is, that papists, by the tenets of the

[* This note formed a chapter by itself of the tractate as it first appeared.—Dec., 1850.]

religion they choose to profess—tenets, which stamp them with the character of aliens, and which destroy even their free agency—are as much disqualified from sitting in Parliament, or holding office under a protestant government, as is the person who is born deaf and dumb. The disqualification is indeed *moral*; but it is as complete as the physical one just named, or even the *mental* one of insanity itself. Even a *vote* for a member of Parliament, according to the present constitution of things, is not held to be the natural right of every individual. On what principle, then, can a *seat* in Parliament be held to be such? The truth is, that the right in question is *acquired*, not natural;—a right arising out of a social compact by which certain qualifications are stipulated, and these qualifications are such as no adherent of the Church of Rome can possess.

Do not the very spirit and principles of this religion disqualify its professors for political power in a protestant country? The Roman pontiff claims temporal power; the claim, at least, was long ago put forth, and has never been recalled. Of course, as far as every papist is understood to acknowledge this claim, he is, to all intents and purposes, an alien, under allegiance to a foreign prince; and should it ever happen, as it has happened before, that the king of Britain and the pope should go to war, he must hold himself bound, by every tie, to promote the interests of his Holiness. Nay, papists believe that the pope has a right of sovereignty over the whole christian world, and over Great Britain and Ireland amongst the rest. All the church lands are considered as his rightful property: and the property forfeited by papists during the different rebellions, is reckoned to be most unjustly retained. 'They believe as firmly, that they have a right to the church-livings and lands, as they do in the doctrine of transubstantiation; and it betrays a woful ignorance of human nature in the supporters of Catholic Emancipation, ever to expect that two hierarchies, who have both claims upon the church-lands of the state, can ever be placed on a footing of mutual privileges and equal rights, unless these claims be settled. It is different with protestant dissenters; they may not allow the justice of the Church of England's claims to seats in the House of Peers, and to tithes and fellowships; but they have no counter claim of their own to set up.' (Aikman's History of Scotland.)

Nor is this all. The Roman pontiff's claim the power of deposing heretical kings, absolving subjects from their allegiance, and even authorising assassination. It is the language of Bellarmine, 'The church does not always execute her power of deposing heretical princes, though she *always retains it*.' By an ordinance of Pius IV. and his cardinals, it was 'declared that all prelates, princes, kings, and emperors, falling into heresy, ought to be accounted as fallen from their benefices, estates, kingdoms, or empires, without any other, or farther declaration; and they could not be again restored by any authority, not even by the Apostolic See.' (Free Thoughts on Popery, p. 138.) Pages might be filled with the names of excommunicated monarchs; and, as a necessary consequence, subjects are absolved from their allegiance, and assassination of excommuni-

cated princes authorised. 'It belongs to the Pope,' says Bellarmine, 'to absolve the subjects of princes from their oaths of fidelity.' And Saurez, in his Defence of the Catholic Faith, writes thus:—'A heretical king, after sentence given against him, is absolutely deprived of his kingdom; so that he cannot possess it by any just title, but becomes a tyrant; and therefore, from thenceforth, may be treated altogether as a tyrant; and, consequently, may be killed by any private person.' (Free Thoughts on Popery, p. 151.) Nor are these mere abstract maxims. Many instances are on record in which they have been reduced to practice; as, for example, that of Henry III., who was assassinated at St Cloud, by James Clement, a Jacobin friar; and that of Henry the Great, who was stabbed, by Ravailiac, in his coach, in open day, in the streets of Paris. Can the claims of such as profess a religion like this be conceded with safety?

And, supposing such horrible things to be abjured by papists of modern times, yet it may fairly be asked, whether, even in our own day, such a spirit of bitterness and contempt has not been shown for those in authority, as to form a valid ground of exclusion. Mr O'Connell, the popish orator, is reported to have thus expressed himself in a public speech: 'The principle of Mr Pitt's administration was despotism. The principle of Mr Perceval's administration was speculating bigotry—bigotted speculation! In the name of the Lord he plundered the people! Pious and enlightened statesman, he would take their money only for the good of their souls! The principle of the present administration is still more obvious. It has unequivocally disclosed itself in all its movements. It is simple and single: it consists in *falschood!* *Falschood* is the bond and link which connects this ministry in office. Some of them pretend to be our friends. *You know it is not true.* They are only our worse enemies for their hypocrisy.' (Protestant, vol. ii. p. 266.) In scarcely less discourteous terms have this demagogue and his associates spoken of the present prime minister and home secretary: * and yet, to shut out such men from the management of the affairs of the state, is religious persecution!

Religious persecution is an odious thing. But there is reason to suppose that many of those who bandy the charge in the present case, do not understand what it means, farther than that it is something exceedingly detestable. Persecution is the denial to men of their natural rights, because of their religion. Now, we revert to our former argument, that papists have no natural right to what is claimed, and consequently we infer that there is no persecution in withholding it. Nor is it on account of a *difference* in religion, that these claims are denied; but on account of the *character* of the religion in question. It possesses an essentially political character. How far its idolatrous character might warrant a similar result, we wait not now to inquire; neither to enter into the wide field of civil disabilities in general, as a prerogative of government. Enough has been said to repel the charge of persecution.

But, it is alleged, that, unless concessions are made, the state is in absolute danger of being involved in a civil war. And to what

[* This, it will be recollected, was written in 1829.]

does this amount, but to an acknowledgment of all for which we contend? For surely those who wait only a fit opportunity of rising up in arms against their country, who, unless they get everything as they wish, would not scruple, as their fathers have done before them, to raise the standard of revolt and shake the kingdom with internal convulsions, are not the best entitled to the confidence proposed to be placed in them, by investing them with full political power! 'To please the papists, seeing nothing else will please them, we must break down every barrier that prevents them from gaining ascendancy in Ireland at least: and so, just from a fear of being murdered by them, we will admit them to such power in the state, that it will be at their own discretion whether death, or banishment, or conversion, shall be the lot of all the protestants in the kingdom.'

But then, it is said, concession is the very way to diminish both their numbers and their strength. Remove restrictions, and you disarm those prejudices by which they are attached to their own communion, and pave the way for their accession to the protestant faith. They know but little either of the spirit of popery, or of the facts of its history, who reason thus. Concessions have often been made before; but the result has been always the reverse of what is supposed. Penal laws were repealed in 1778, 1782, 1792; and in 1793 the elective franchise was conferred, and other privileges. Has popery declined since that period? 'Exactly in proportion as the restraints have been removed, has that detestable system gained ground amongst us. To say nothing of Ireland—what has been its progressive state in England, and even in Scotland? In 1780, the number of papists in England and Wales, according to the Parliamentary return, was exactly 69,376. Now it is understood to be at least 600,000! Then, there were only three public academical establishments of that persuasion in the country; now, there are at least fifty. Then, there was no such thing as a Catholic college, or university, heard of in Britain; now, the literary establishment at *Stonjhurst*, in Lancashire, comprises at least 500 professors and students; has 1100 acres of the finest land in England attached to it; has the town of Preston, and a great part of Lancashire, under Jesuitical influence; while, within a quarter of a mile of it, stands a large elementary school for at least one thousand children. In 1780, the number of chapels in England and Wales, including those kept in the houses of peers and commoners, did not exceed 300; now, it is at least 1000, over and above private chaplainships. Then the number of priests was calculated at 366; now, it cannot be less than 1200, besides teachers in academies, and chaplains attached to the families of Catholic gentry. In the immediate vicinity of London, is one mass-house capable of containing 10,000 persons; and, for the erection of this temple of Satan, the good city of London made a compliment of the ground!—Shall we believe, then, that popery has been on the wane, and that the *emancipation bill* will seal its doom?' (Dr Burns' Speech in Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, 1825.) To these we would add one more remark. Is it any symptom of the decline of popery, that just the other day, in the city of Edinburgh, high mass, and other ceremonies, were publicly announced to be performed on occasion of the death of the

late pope? Thirty years ago, would papists have ventured to come thus unblushingly forward, and obtrude their gross superstitions on the presbyterian public of Scotland?

Nor is concession a more likely method to allay discontent. The history of past experiments fully corroborates this opinion also. The concessions of 1793 were fully expected to effect this desirable object. The result is known to all. 'Hardly were they granted,' as was remarked by a member of the House of Commons in 1811, 'until Ireland was in a flame from end to end, and one continued month of peace and security it has never known from that hour to the present.' 'The moment they gained a standing place,' remarked Lord Redesdale in the House of Peers, the same year, 'they assumed the language of menace and intimidation.' And what other effect is to be looked for from the measure now proposed? The concessions are more ample, to be sure; but, then, they are not complete. As regards the feelings and interests of protestants, the proposed measure is, indeed, a sweeping one; but, as respects the ambition of the popish spirit, it is but a half measure after all. See if they will regard it as paying 'twenty shillings in the pound.' So long as the offices of Lord Chancellor, and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to say nothing of the Crown, are not open to them; so long as they are shut out from the universities; so long as their clergy are denied the use of episcopal titles and names; so long as persons in power are prohibited from wearing the insignia of office in their own places of worship; so long as these things are so, they will represent themselves as a persecuted people, and grumble forth their discontent. 'Why, if other things are given us,' they will say, and they will say it not without reason, 'should these be withheld? Why continue thus to brand us with such marks of opprobrium?' And is there not something in the manner in which the proposed amelioration has been brought about, to encourage such aspirings, as not altogether hopeless? The measure, it is acknowledged, is a matter of necessity; 'something *must* be done,' is the language used, it has no marks of being an act of grace, but wears, on the contrary, all the appearance of a thing extorted by dint of intimidation. And if the system of 'agitation' has brought about so much in their favour, are they likely to lay it aside before they have got all they can desire? The prudence of thus letting them know their own strength is to be questioned; and, should ever this natural anticipation be realised, should papists, after a temporary quiet, begin again to clamour for the removal of all remaining disabilities, little trust, there is reason to fear, could be placed in the men who now so violently advocate concession for resistance to these further demands. Consistency would seem to require, that after giving them so much, they should willingly yield them all. We see not on what pretence they could act otherwise. And should all be yielded, of what avail were all the struggles and blood of our reforming ancestors? Little thought these worthy and magnanimous men, how cheaply their successors would barter away their dear-bought privileges.*

[* What a comment do the events of the last twenty years, and the late bull of Pius IX. to revive a popish hierarchy in England, supply on these

But all danger of this kind is proposed to be averted by means of the oath to be required of papists before entering on office. An oath is indeed a solemn thing; and its obligation ought not to be lightly spoken of. But in the popish church it is held very cheap indeed; and its inefficacy, in the present case, is satisfactorily reasoned, in the following remarks, by Professor Bruce:—The solemnity of an oath can by no means determine what are the real doctrines of the Church of Rome, nor, consequently, what is the faith, or what shall be the future conduct of her members. If they were popish principles before which are renounced—as, indeed, the nature of an oath of abjuration supposes—no oaths whatever can make them cease to be so, nor annul their influence, nor prevent their effects upon the conscience and practice of a papist. Such an oath from a professed papist, acknowledged as such and continuing such, is utterly preposterous, and entirely insignificant; it runs counter to his known principles, to his previous engagements, and to the religious profession which he still continues to make. Such an oath in him must originate purely from ignorance, error, or perfidy, and is, *ipso facto*, destructive of the swearer's own faith and conscience, and therefore can deserve very little credit from another. He that swears against principle declares to all the world that he ought not to be believed. No papist has his faith, or declarations about it in his own power; he cannot, in this respect, go beyond the prescription of the church, to say or swear either good or bad. Though any of them should be guilty of such presumption, the power of the church must, after all, be paramount to everything else; and her laws, by a kind of omnipotence, must annihilate all other laws, deeds, oaths, contrary thereto.' (Free Thoughts on Popery, pp. 231, 233.) And to show that this is not mere theory, we must remind our readers of the manner in which the securities, framed by James I., were disposed of by the papists; and, as still more to the point, and, in our view, what ought to set the matter at rest, we beg leave to quote an authoritative document from Rome on the subject, and that of no very ancient date. When Dr Poynter, vicar apostolic and legate of the Pope in England, submitted a copy of the oath of allegiance, proposed in 1813, a reply was made by Cardinal Signior Quarantotti, in which the following sentence occurs:—'In case the bill be already passed containing the same words (*i.e.* of the oath), or that nothing in it is allowed to be altered, *let the clergy acquiesce*: and it will be sufficient for them to declare that *this, and this only*, is the sense in which they have sworn to it; *so that nothing in the oath may be adverse to orthodox doctrine.*'* To trust, then, to the obligation of an oath, with regard to which the religion of papists permits them to make their own explanations, or to entertain their own mental re-

paragraphs regarding the insufficiency of concession to diminish the number or check the ambition of Roman Catholics? One is involuntarily reminded of the opinion expressed by a late Lord Chancellor, that, 'When the Romani-ts are admitted to power, from that day the sun of England is set for ever.'—Dec., 1850.]

* Speech of the Bishop of Ossory in the House of Lords; cited by D Burns, p. 18.

servations, or from which the church possesses the power of absolving them, is like trusting to a cobweb to bind a giant.

Much reliance seems to be placed in the small number of papists who could possibly get into power. This very statement supposes that there is danger connected with their admission. If there is not, why need the smallness of the number be argued? or why should any disabilities or restrictions be retained? The number, however, there is some reason to fear, has been understated. To say nothing of the overwhelming majority in Ireland, the English Catholics rank among their number seven peers, seventeen baronets, and about five hundred families in ancient, pure, and noble lineage, reckoned not inferior to many in the British peerage; besides a large body of commoners. It is not unreasonable, therefore, considering their zeal, wealth, and influence, to suppose that as many may be returned to parliament as all the representatives of Scotland together! * This is saying nothing of the cabinet, from only two or three places in which are they proposed to be shut out. The number, then, is not in itself small; but supposing it so, they can make up, by intrigue, for any defect in numerical strength; and we need not to be reminded what power of mischief an intriguing factious minority can put forth, just as a single restive animal in a team may counteract the proper discipline and movements of all the rest. How is a protestant king to withstand the influence of a majority of popish advisers?

We should like to see, on this subject, some respect paid to the aggregate opinion of the country. It is true, the country is divided; but even our opponents will never refuse that the majority lies on the side for which we contend. This very conviction has driven them to a balancing of intelligence and respectability against numbers, which is somewhat amusing, and not a little uncandid. There is a fallacy, we are convinced, in the assumption, that the higher men stand in society, they are the better qualified to judge in a question of this nature. In Scotland, at least, no class is better acquainted with the nature and history of popery, as bearing on its connection with the institutions and government of the country, than the peasantry. They are the direct descendants of the men who had actually to oppose it in their own persons, and the very traditions of their families give them a deeper interest in the story of their sufferings and their achievements. On the contrary, we are not sure that many of those who arrogate for themselves a monopoly of 'intelligence,' are the best instructed after all—we mean on the question at issue—for we have observed, that whenever persons have set themselves thoroughly to investigate the tenets and spirit of popery, it has resulted in a full conviction, which perhaps did not exist before, of its utter incompatibility with social comfort or civil freedom. As an example, we may refer to the case of the author of the 'Protestant,' who, in the commencement of his work, expressed himself favourably to the popish claims, but before he had finished it, saw abundant reason to alter his views, and wrote against

* The probability is, that a much greater number will be returned than is here supposed. But this supposition is made for the sake of argument.

them with great clearness and strength; declaring it as his fixed sentiment, that no person is capable of judging of the merits of the question, until he has studied the character of popery as exhibited in the writings and in the practice of papists. (Protestant, vol. iii., p. 415.)

One grand defect attaches to almost all the reasoning that takes place on this subject. It is treated rather as a question of *expediency* than of *moral right*. On the one hand the dangers of refusal are depicted; on the other, the consequences of compliance. It may be all very well, after the moral aspect of the question has been settled, in connection with this, to point out its probable results. In this view we should have no objection to argue the impolicy of the measure. And we think it might easily be shown that it is calculated to check the progress of the protestant reformation—to exasperate the public mind, and endanger public tranquillity—to operate injuriously on papists themselves, by dragging them from an obscurity, which it is their interest to court—and even to have an unfavourable influence on literature, by causing the revival of useless controversies and exploded errors. All this we deem to be true. But let not these considerations *alone*, or *first* be dwelt upon. Let it be understood that they are the native consequences of the intrinsic immorality of the measure itself; and that positive guilt attaches to giving countenance in any shape to abominations which God has denounced, and which the nation as such has abjured. To caress what ought to be loathed, is to confound all distinctions of moral feeling; and to lend support to a system which the Almighty has threatened to destroy, is to act in opposition to the revealed purposes of Heaven, and thus to fight against God. The principle on which we argue the exclusion of papists, is the character of their religion, as delineated in the preceding discourses. No government, which professes respect for the mystery of godliness, can safely or consistently extend support to the mystery of iniquity. Such conduct is truly sinful and monstrous. When popery was overthrown in our land, a step was made toward its final destruction; let us beware how we seek to retrace that step, and to build up anew the desolations of antichrist. ‘Onward’ is the christian’s motto in all things; but to revive again the power of Rome, is to retrograde in the march both of intellect and religion. To think of abolishing popery by increasing its power, is essentially to do evil that good may come, and thus to adopt in practice one of the worst principles of popery, namely, that the *end* will sanctify the *means*. To attempt the extension of a scriptural faith, by giving power to the antichristian beast, is not less sinful than chimerical—not more chimerical than dangerous. ‘If any man worship the beast and the image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation.’ (Rev. xiv. 9, 10.) Nor are these sentiments more accordant with scripture than confirmed by some striking facts in the providence of God. ‘It is a coincidence too remarkable in the history of Scottish freedom to pass unnoticed, that, in three several generations, when arbitrary sway would have been established through the medium of Roman

Catholics or their friends, being entrusted with places of power ; and when the plea for admitting them to such stations—a change in the political nature and persecuting spirit of their religion—backed by all the influence of the court, was acknowledged, at least by the Tories, some tremendous explosion, the plain result of the principles of which they were accused exhibited the deceit of all their fair pretensions, and drove from the government of the country the men who favoured the tenets, or were themselves the adherents of that slavish superstition. The anniversary of St Bartholomew was fatal to the schemes of Mary ; the Irish massacre confounded the measures of her grandson ; and the revocation of the edict of Nantz had no small share in producing the glorious revolution which drove for ever the papistical branch of the Stuarts from the throne. (Aikman's History of Scotland, vol. v. p. 233.)



