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DISCOURSES

BY

T. H. GALLAUDET.

DISCOURSES

ON

VARIOUS POINTS

OF

Christian Faith and Practice;

MOST OF WHICH WERE DELIVERED
IN THE

CHAPEL OF THE ORATOIRE,

IN PARIS,

IN THE SPRING OF M.DCCC.XVI.

BY

THOMAS H. GALLAUDET,

PRINCIPAL OF THE CONNECTICUT ASYLUM, IN THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA, FOR THE
EDUCATION OF THE DEAF AND DUMB.

LONDON:

*Printed by Ellerton and Henderson,
Johnson's Court;*

FOR J. HATCHARD, BOOKSELLER TO THE QUEEN,
190, PICCADILLY.

1818.

TO
MRS. HANNAH MORE.

MADAM,

WHEN I was informed by a mutual Friend, whose worth you have long known, that I might venture to place at the head of the following Discourses, a name ever to be cherished in the annals of the Redeemer's Kingdom, I was somewhat encouraged to present them to the public eye; feeling secure that they would at least be considered as containing nothing which would tend to injure that cause to which your Life and Talents have been so successfully devoted, and that, possibly, they might serve, in some humble degree, to promote it. Most of them were delivered while I was prosecuting in Paris, under the

auspices of the venerable Abbè Sicard and his interesting Pupil Clere, my present fellow-labourer, the object of qualifying myself to instruct an unfortunate and too long neglected portion of my countrymen, the Deaf and Dumb. Several of your Nation and my own, taught in their own lands to hallow the Sabbath of the Lord, felt a desire to do this in the splendid and voluptuous City where they had assembled, as their surest safeguard against its fascinating seductions; and, at the request of this little flock of Strangers, I became their temporary Preacher in the Chapel of the Oratoire, to which we were very kindly allowed access.

You were once pleased, Madam, to express a lively interest in the object which carried me to Europe, and it may afford you some pleasure to know, that it has so far been crowned with the smiles of a kind Providence, that within the course of six months after the commencement of the Asylum with which I am connected, it has begun to impart its benefit to thirty pupils.

In such a sphere of action, I shall deem myself truly happy in being made the instrument of leading *one* immortal mind to that Saviour in whose service your labours have been blessed with such a rich harvest of success. That He may long continue this your extensive usefulness, and shed upon your declining days the choicest consolations of His presence and His grace, is, Madam, the earnest prayer of one, who, with thousands of his Countrymen, has long been taught to venerate your name and character.

THE AUTHOR.

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DISCOURSE I.

1 JOHN i. 3.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us : and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

WE are assembled, my brethren, under very interesting circumstances. At a distance from our respective homes, we have met together in a foreign land for the purpose of mingling our devotions before the altar of our common Father. And while I would congratulate you upon an event so likely, I trust, to prove salutary to us all ; while I would mention with thankfulness the kindness of our Christian friends, who thus generously furnish us with so convenient a place for worship ; I should poorly discharge the duties of the sacred office, did I not call upon you to look

with the eye of gratitude to that Being whose superintending providence directs all the concerns of this lower world, and to whom we are ultimately indebted for every good and every perfect gift. It is *his* Hand that has gathered us together—a little flock. It is to *Him* that we owe this inestimable privilege of treading his earthly courts. It is *his* presence and blessing which can alone render our services acceptable in his sight. It is *his* Word which we expect to hear. It is *his* Gospel that is to sound in our ears. It is *his* Son that is to be offered to us as the object of our faith, and as the only Saviour of our souls. And as we improve or abuse these occasions of learning his will and our duty, we must expect to receive at last the kindest tokens of his love or the severest marks of his displeasure. With these momentous truths in view, and feeling my own weakness and insufficiency, I venture to address you, and, as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, to solicit your serious attention to all you may hear that is conformable to the oracles of Divine Truth. And may the Source of all Truth shed down his wisdom upon our minds, and his grace upon our hearts, while we attend at this time to the portion of Scripture recorded in our text! “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us;

and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

Religion is seated in the heart—an inward, secret principle of thought and action. Thence it communicates life and activity to the whole spiritual man. Its hidden workings are seen by the eye of Omniscience alone. *We* can ascertain its existence, and trace its operations, only by its effects upon the outward appearance and conduct: and *there* we have to observe it acting uniformly through all the various forms of human character. It occupies, with the same Divine influence, the breast of the prince and the beggar—of the wise and the ignorant—of the old and the young—of the refined and the rude—of the civilized and the savage—of the freeman and the slave. In this respect, it resembles both the principle of vitality and of intellect in man. God breathes into man the breath of life. Its impulse causes the heart to throb and the blood to flow, under all the diversities of human countenance, complexion, and structure. However great these diversities may be, man, wherever you find him, has one uniform principle of animal life. The same is true of his intellectual character: “There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” This immaterial and immortal principle, the gift of the Father of

spirits, displays the same general characteristics, and appears to be governed by the same laws, whether you view it in the philosopher or the child—in the lettered recluse or the busy man of the world. There is, in like manner, an unity, a *oneness* of religious principle in the hearts of all sincere Christians, of whatever age, or climate, or nation; of whatever rank or condition in life: “For they are all born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” He is their common spiritual Father, and they all bear the impress of his moral image on their hearts. Nor let it be said, that the various forms of church government and the different modes of external worship which pervade the Christian world, or even articles of faith, dissimilar in some particulars, are appearances difficult to be reconciled with this oneness of the Christian character. For these appearances are no more strange than that, in the animal and intellectual constitution of man, the same general principles should exist under such a variety of external forms. Man is the same, as to body and mind, amid all the diversities which these two parts of his nature present to our view. The Christian is the same, as to real holiness of heart, amid all the various outward appearances his piety may assume, while exhibiting itself in per-

sons of different conditions or circumstances in life. Nor is the wisdom of Providence more to be arraigned in the latter case than in the former. “ He hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth ;” and yet he hath so ordered events, that the diversities of the human countenance, and structure, and mind, are infinite. Christians “ have been all made to drink into one spirit ;” yet “ unto every one is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ :” and hence the external varieties which are discernible among the members of the Christian church. In both dispensations, God, no doubt, has wise purposes to answer, which may, perhaps, hereafter be disclosed to us. Without being too curious, therefore, to inquire into the reason why He permits so much apparent difference to exist among Christians, let us look, my brethren, at a brighter view of our subject. Let us “ endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” while we consider, first, What abundant proof there is that all the true followers of Jesus have fellowship with one another, and with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ : and, secondly, In what this fellowship consists.

I. There is abundant proof that all the true

followers of Jesus have fellowship with one another, and with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. The Scriptures are full of testimony on this point. They use the boldest metaphors, when speaking of the relation which subsists between Christians and their Divine Master. He is the Vine, and they are the branches. He is the Corner-stone, and they are the superstructure. He is the Bread which is necessary to support their spiritual life. He is the Head, and they are the members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones, and members also one of another. They are all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit. In our Saviour's prayer for his disciples, on the night preceding his crucifixion, he uttered these memorable words: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved

me." Christ here prayed for all his followers, through the successive ages of the Gospel dispensation, down to the end of time. His prayer was heard and answered. And if any one doctrine of the Scriptures is capable of the most complete and overwhelming proof, it is this—that all sincere Christians are one; that they are one in God and Christ; one in spirit, even as the Father and the Son are one.

How fully, too, is this truth confirmed and illustrated by the experience of all believers! The humble follower of Jesus, on whom calamity hath brought poverty, and poverty obscurity, cut off from the comforts of this world, draws all his consolations from the resources of Faith. He unfolds the sacred volume, and wonders, with holy delight, at finding the saints of old engrossed with the same objects of confidence, and hope, and love which now cheer and animate his own breast. With Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, his mind is stayed upon God. He sings with Moses the song of deliverance, and with David the hymns of praise. He enters into all their feelings of devotion. He mingles his soul with theirs. With them, he surrounds their own altar, and offers up the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart, and the incense of a pure and spiritual worship. As he approaches the advent of our

Saviour, he exclaims with the mother of Jesus, "My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." He catches the holy rapture of Zecharias, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." He glows with the gratitude of Simeon, and with him is ready to exclaim, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." But why need I proceed? The time would fail me to tell of all the saints of whom the Scriptures speak; of the illustrious martyrs, whose blood was the seed of the church; and of the pious of succeeding ages, in whose steps the follower of Jesus finds himself now walking, and in whose history he sees reflected the experience of his own heart.

And cannot you also, my Christian brethren, testify to the delight which you have often felt in this fellowship of the saints? Have not your hearts sometimes burned within you while reading the lives of the pious dead, or while holding converse with a fellow-pilgrim to the heavenly Jerusalem? And have you not then realized, that there is indeed "one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called, in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and

Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all?" It would be pleasant to dwell longer on this delightful theme; but it becomes necessary, in the second place, to consider in what consists the fellowship which Christians have with the Father and his Son, and with each other.

II. Here, my brethren, we approach a subject calculated to fill the soul with wonder and joy. Here, too, we may well feel the darkness of our minds, and realize the narrowness of the circle which confines the extent of our moral vision. Here reason fails, and faith, "which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," asserts her undivided empire in the heart. Recal to your minds the emphatical words of our Saviour, in his prayer for all his disciples,—“that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us,”—“that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one.” What a stupendous thought! The infinite, the eternal, the incomprehensible Jehovah, the high and holy One that inhabiteth the praises of eternity, and his Son, “who is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,” condescend to

unite themselves with every believer in Jesus. Man is admitted to communion with his Maker. By faith in Christ, "he is joined unto the Lord, and is one spirit with him."

The precise nature of this oneness, which Christians enjoy with their God and Saviour, "it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive." It is, however, most real, intimate, imperishable, endearing. To say, that it involves no mystery, is to oppose the direct testimony of Scripture; and to reject this truth, because it is mysterious, is as absurd as to deny that "in God we live, and move, and have our being," because we do not perceive, and cannot comprehend, the mode of our existence in him. We should, indeed, be careful, on the one hand, not to run into unnecessary mysticism and obscurity, in contemplating religious truth; yet we should as cautiously avoid, on the other, the unhallowed boldness of a rash spirit of inquiry, which will not deign to own that it now sees but "through a glass darkly;" which pretends to draw aside the veil that conceals the hidden things of God from our view, and already to walk in the brightness of that future world of light, whose inhabitants will know even as they are known. Let not such, my brethren, be the presumptuous character of our speculations. Let us remember, that here "we walk by faith, and not

by sight." Let us rejoice in the consoling truth, that all the sincere disciples of Jesus have fellowship with each other, and with the Father and with his Son, although the nature of this communion may be too deep a subject for our limited understandings to fathom. And let it be one excitement to our Christian progress—a star like that of Bethlehem, to direct and animate our steps toward heaven—that there, these clouds of obscurity will be for ever dissipated, and a clear light be shed on the present mysteries of providence and grace. Said our Saviour to his disciples, "In that day," referring to the day of resurrection, "ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." Still it may be profitable to push our inquiries a little farther into this interesting subject, which we may do safely if we take for our guide the word of God. There, is disclosed to us the important truth, that "hereby do believers know that they dwell in God, and he in them, because he hath given them of his Spirit." By this Spirit they are all created anew in Christ Jesus, and are made partakers of the Divine nature. And this nature is love. "God is Love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." Here, then, is no room left for doubt or mistake. Communion with God, although inexplicable in its nature, discovers the

reality of its existence by its *effect*. This effect is a holy love occupying the heart, and regulating all its affections and desires. It is opposed to that *selfishness* which is the natural growth of the human heart, which seeks the gratification of its own sinful propensities and desires at the expense of the happiness of others, and in direct repugnance to the best good of all the intelligent creation. It holds no fellowship with those who make the enjoyments of this vain and transitory world, its riches, its honours, and its pleasures their chief good. On the contrary, this divine love, which constitutes the oneness of the Christian character, and forms the bond of union between Jehovah and all holy beings, is directed to *Him* as alone able to satisfy its boundless desires. It delights to dwell on his character as displayed in the works of creation, of providence and redemption. It is filled with awe of his power and majesty, with admiration of his wisdom, with humility in contemplating his purity, with dread of his justice, and with gratitude for his mercy. It rejoices in submission to his will. It relies with confidence on his strength. It trusts implicitly in his promises. It longs to be made the humble, yet cheerful instrument of carrying into effect, within its own limited sphere of action, his wise and benevolent purposes. The believer, under the influ-

ence of this divine love, often soars to Heaven on the wings of devout meditation, and becomes swallowed up in the view of the riches of the goodness of God, through a crucified Saviour. He is lost in holy admiration of the wisdom which devised, and the benevolence which executed, the wonderful plan of Redemption. He remembers, too, at what price he was bought, and by whom it was paid. Jesus appears to him "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." Christ dwells in his heart by faith; and being thus rooted and grounded in *love*, his unceasing prayer and endeavour is to be enabled "to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that he may be filled with all the fulness of God."

The same love which thus directs the affections of the believer to his God and Saviour, enkindles them also with good will and charity toward his fellow-men. He forgets not the declaration of the Apostle, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." The believer, therefore, is careful to "put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kind-

ness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." And these dispositions towards his fellow-men, and especially towards those who are of the household of faith, he manifests by assiduously and affectionately endeavouring to promote their best interests, both spiritual and temporal. He "visits the widows and the fatherless in their afflictions." He feeds the hungry, and clothes the naked. Above all, he is anxious to administer the bread of life to those who are ready to perish. How does he long that all men should "taste and see that the Lord is gracious!" How would he persuade those "who labour and are heavy laden," who are sick of the vanities and delusive pleasures of this world, and burdened with a sense of their guilt, to resort to Jesus Christ, and "find rest unto their souls!" And while he sees how many neglect the invitation of the Gospel, and reject that Saviour whose blood was poured out to procure remission of sins, and the hope of pardon and reconciliation to God for our miserable race, how is his "heart sore pained within him!" How often does he take up the language of the prophet of old, "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains." "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall *weep* in secret places for your pride."

Such are the characteristics of that Divine love

which exists in the heart of every sincere believer. This love displays the oneness of the Christian character. It is the effect, and also the evidence, of that fellowship of the saints which they enjoy with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. It is the principle, the very heart's blood, of their spiritual life, nourishing and animating the whole process of their growth in grace. It beats in every pious breath, although its impulse is often checked, and sometimes suspended, by remaining corruption and sin. Then is experienced the moral lethargy of the soul. Then is such a death-like hue cast over all the features of piety, that scarcely any traces of its existence remain. But it has not for ever fled. It is again quickened into action by the life-giving Spirit of God. The Christian, thus reanimated, once more breathes the air of Heaven, and becomes "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." He pursues his journey heavenward with alacrity and delight! "Wisdom's ways" again become to him "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace." Think it not strange, therefore, my brethren, that the principle of Divine love, on which rests the oneness of the Christian character, is subject to so much irregularity in its operations, and displays itself under such a variety of forms. The present is a state of 'mperfection and sin. The believer is sanctified

but in part. The most pious are not yet freed from the weaknesses and corruptions of a depraved nature. But, blessed be God, such will not always be the condition of those who have put their trust in Jesus, and have been born again in his image. Even now, as they make progress in the divine life, and engage with increasing ardour in the common cause which they have espoused, how are their "hearts knit together in love," while the differences of sect, or party, or denomination, melt away, and are forgotten! But the time will arrive, when their resemblance to each other will be more striking; when their communion will be more intimate and delightful; when they shall enjoy complete and uninterrupted fellowship with each other, and with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. For they shall "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

And now, would to God that I could press this subject, with all its importance and interest, upon such of you, my dear hearers, as have no fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ! On earthly objects, where all is deceitful and transitory, where all is "vanity and vexation of spirit," you fasten the desires of your immortal

souls. The world, which has so often disappointed or betrayed you, and of which you so often complain, is still your chief good. *Your* fellowship is with mammon and his deluded followers. And what does such a communion promise you? The enjoyment, perhaps, of sensual pleasure, the accumulation of wealth, the distinctions of rank, or the honours of fame. But consider, I pray you, that these are transient as the morning cloud, and as the early dew. Life itself is a "vapour that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away." So that, could you enjoy this world to the full measure of your desires, how like a dream, short and shadowy, must still be your happiness! But this is not the worst view of your case. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "The friendship of the world is enmity with God: whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" Do not, I beseech you, continue to be so engrossed with the cares of this life, or so devoted to its sinful pleasures. Let me entreat you to remember and feel the momen-

tous truth, that “we are all by nature children of wrath, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our hearts;” and that nothing but the sovereign grace of God can “deliver us from this power of darkness, and translate us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” He alone, through the influence of his Spirit on our hearts, can bring us into fellowship with himself, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And unless we thus enjoy communion with God *here* on earth, it is most certain we shall be for ever banished from his presence in the future world. Unless we *here* become “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,” it is most certain we shall never be admitted to “the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven.” Unless *here* we are renewed in the spirit of our minds, and possess that supreme love to God and good-will to men which form the very essence of the Christian character, it is most certain—as certain as the declaration of God can make it—that we must take up our abode for ever in the prison of despair, “prepared for the devil and his angels.” To that place, Benevolence, under all its attractive forms, will for ever be a stranger. All will be selfishness and sin. The malignant passions which *here* harass our peace, and fill with bitterness the

heart in which they reside, will there have full scope. Each will be the enemy of the other, and the torturer of his own breast. As you value, then, your own souls,—as you would escape, my brethren, from this society of wretchedness and woe, and secure your admittance into the paradise of God, among the spirits of just men made perfect, where all is love, and peace, and joy,—now, while it is called to-day, now, by repentance toward God and faith in a crucified Redeemer, enter into fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

DISCOURSE II.

MATTHEW xi. 30.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

WHEN our Saviour uttered these words he did not mean to say, that his disciples would be free from all trouble. He did not intend to propose to them a complete security against the cares and misfortunes of life. He did not wish to represent the religion which he taught, as requiring of its professors no sacrifices, or as exposing them to no evils. Meek and forgiving as was his own character, he foresaw that this could not protect him against the malice of his foes, and that his heart, which was full of kindness to all around him, must soon pour forth its blood upon the cross. What else, then, could his friends expect? "The disciple," said he, "is not above his master, nor the servant above his

lord." "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" When he invites us to come unto him, therefore, it is to meliorate our condition indeed, but not to render it perfectly happy in this life:—it is that we may cast off the yoke which the world imposes upon us, and wear *his* which is comparatively easy to be borne:—it is that we may enter upon a more delightful service than that of the slaves of sin; yet a service not without its pains and trials:—it is that we may find rest unto our souls, but a rest not complete and uninterrupted on this side the grave. The life of the Christian must indeed be a life of self-denial; and yet it is comparatively a happy life. His condition is not without its cares and sorrows, and yet it is the most desirable of all conditions. Behold a paradox, my brethren! which the world always makes matter of wonder, and sometimes of ridicule, but which is capable of being defended on the plainest principles of common sense. The force of these principles is admitted in every thing that relates to the daily concerns of life, and yet we are too apt to reject them when applied to the concerns of the soul. A man who wished to secure any earthly benefit would be thought a fool if he did

not adopt them ; yet if adopted in order to obtain an eternal good, they are too often viewed as weak and childish. Let us consider them ; and in so doing, let not our consciences shrink from the duty of deciding, whether, while we recognize their force with regard to our temporal interests, we also apply them to the more important concerns of eternity.

The first of these principles is, that no prudent man, who consults his own happiness, is ever so much engrossed with *present* objects as to be regardless of the future. I speak now of the *man of the world*—of one whose sole purpose is to make the most of human life, to secure the greatest possible share of its pleasures, its riches, its honours, or its ease. Scrutinize his daily conduct ; follow him to his retirement ; enter into the chamber of his soul ;—what engrosses his thoughts ? Whither do his motives of conduct lead ? Where do his desires tend ? To what are his plans directed ? When does he hope to see them accomplished ? To-morrow ! *To-morrow* he expects to “bear his blushing honours thick upon him.” His coffers in a *little while* will be full ; his sources of enjoyment and of ease equal to all the wants of his soul. Urge him to abandon his toil for what is future and uncertain, and to think only of the present moment so as to make the most of it ; to eat, and drink, and be merry, for *to-morrow* he

may die;—talk to him of the disappointments of human life, and point to him thousands who have trod the same paths of diligence and carefulness in which he is walking, and have at last found them to end in complete failure;—he would call such language that of a madman; and unless wallowing in the lowest depths of sensuality, seeking no gratifications but what are common to him with the brute, he would reply—that the voice of Wisdom bids him look to something beyond the present day, and that the smile of hope invites him to follow her towards some distant good. This regard to the *future* governs all the conduct of life. Why should it not govern the concerns of the soul? It is folly to bound our views by the setting sun: why not extend them beyond the grave? It is prudent to make provision for old age: why should we neglect to provide for eternity?—Now of all men the Christian is the only one who does this: *his* views are commensurate with his existence: *his* plans are laid for eternity: *his* to-morrow will never end. Whatever, then, may be his trials and his sorrows in this pilgrimage of weariness, he has continually the satisfaction of reflecting that his eternal good is secure. Now, a conviction of this nature is sufficient to counterbalance all possible human evil, and to beget within the soul a kind of happiness

which partakes of the divine. It does thus counterbalance human evil; for it may be seen shedding its solace in the obscurest abode of poverty, and in the darkest cell of the dungeon: it often glows serenely on the cheek of the dying, and has beamed with celestial lustre in the last look of the martyr at the stake.

Again: it is a plain principle of common sense, that great sacrifices ought to be made for the attainment of any valuable distant good. Ask the conqueror how many wearisome days and sleepless nights his crown has cost him. Let the statesman tell us what have been the paths of toil and difficulty which have led him near the throne of majesty. What price has the orator paid for the powers of his eloquence; or the painter for the skill of his pencil; or the poet for the magic of his song? Count the daily cares, and projects, and anxieties through which *he* has passed on whom wealth rolls in like a flood. In fine, ask the thousands whom you see busy around you, what is the meaning of all their bustle and industry, their rising early and sitting up late, their traversing of sea and land, their relinquishment of ease and comfort, and their incessant and indefatigable toil: they all aim at something *future*, and they hope to procure it by the sacrifice of a present good. *This* is their solace. *This*, in fact, is the *sum* of their

actual happiness. Walk the rounds of life, and you will scarcely meet one who will not tell you that his present enjoyment consists in the hope of some distant good, and that to obtain this he is not unwilling to make frequent and great sacrifices.

This, my brethren, is the yoke of the world. None who are engaged in the pursuits of the world can lay it aside; and it is grievous to be borne. He who sustains it toils for what must perish in the very using. He knows that, after a few short days, what has cost him so much labour and anxiety, so much self-denial, and so many sacrifices, must inevitably, like himself, be laid in the grave of forgetfulness. Not a century will elapse before his very name may never be mentioned, except by the passing traveller who reads it on his tomb.

But the Christian—for what does he toil? For what does he take upon him the yoke of his Divine Master? For what does he practise a self-denial, which, it is not to be denied, is, at first, irksome to the native propensities of his heart, but which the grace of God renders more and more easy, and even delightful, and which is often actually less than that of the worldling himself? For what does the disciple of Christ bear this yoke? For an inheritance that is “incorruptible, unde-

filed, and that fadeth not away ;” for an admittance into the mansions of everlasting rest ; for an imperishable treasure ; for unalloyed pleasures ; for an endless state of being, in which he will mingle with the spirits of the just made perfect, in which he will be admitted to the presence of God—to the ineffable manifestations of his glory—to the sublime delights of his worship—to the solution of the mysteries of his providence—and, in fine, to an unceasing progress in knowledge, in holiness, and in happiness. What are the petty cares and anxieties, or even the deepest sorrows of life, when compared with this weight of glory? Shall the man of this world be deemed wise and prudent, because he relinquishes his present ease and quiet for the acquisition of some temporal good ; and shall the Christian deserve reproach, because he deems heaven itself worth some crosses and sacrifices, as he is passing to it through his short pilgrimage? Shall the man of this world continually solace himself with the prospect of what he is soon to obtain, and shall this be thought, in the eyes of others, a most sober, and rational, and manly kind of happiness ; and shall the Christian not feel a far sweeter solace—shall not his enjoyment be deemed the most rational and the most noble of all—when it is founded on the absolute promise of God, that through the

tribulations of this life he shall pass to a state of complete and endless bliss?

Admitting, then, that he who sets at nought all the restraints of religion—who will not listen to the dictates of conscience—who resists every influence of the Spirit of God upon his soul—who rejects the only Saviour of sinners—who will not bear his yoke, deeming it a hard and unreasonable service;—admitting that such an one accomplishes all his purposes of ambition or of pleasure, that he enjoys this world to the full, and that his grey hairs go down to the grave with mirth and gladness;—yet *there* is an end of his bliss; for the music of pleasure never breaks the silence of the tomb; the voice of ambition never rouses its slumbering inhabitants; the charms of wealth can no longer glitter before them. The world is left behind. The body moulders in the earth, and the spirit—the immaterial, the immortal spirit—is gone—Whither? The unbeliever cannot tell: the philosopher cannot tell. A dark and gloomy cloud hangs over the unknown ocean of eternity; and it is the dread of launching into this ocean which the man of this world cannot shake from his bosom. He is surrounded with ease and pleasure and riches and honour; but his eye is continually directed to the future; and this single thought of what *may* be hereafter often embitters

the moment in which he had anticipated the greatest delight. On the contrary, the disciple of Jesus Christ, supposing him to suffer all the possible evils of life—poverty, disgrace, reproach, sickness, imprisonment, or death, and death in its most horrid forms—counts these trials nothing. He is sure they will soon be ended. The grave will be to him the door of paradise. He knows in whom he has believed. His path is now beset with thorns; his sky is overshadowed with clouds; the tempest is beating upon his head: but now and then his heart is gladdened while his eye catches a few beams of that sunshine which will hereafter continually cheer his course through a day of bright and eternal splendour.

Behold, my brethren, the immense difference between the man of this world and the Christian. Weigh well the comparison which has been made between them: it is a comparison not founded on a mere fiction. It is not a philosophical hypothesis which is yet to be proved. It rests on two obvious principles of common sense, which a man would not dare to reject in the ordinary concerns of life, lest he should be deemed as simple as a child, or as complete a sensualist as the very brutes who graze around him. These principles are, that it is the part of prudence not to be so much engrossed with present objects, as to be

regardless of the future ; and that it is our duty to make proportionate, and in some cases therefore great, sacrifices for the attainment of distant good. — In applying these principles I have not done justice to the Christian's cause. I have supposed it possible for the man of the world to enjoy this life to the full, and I have spoken of the disciple of Christ as one, like his Divine Master, "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" as having every earthly comfort shorn from his side, and nothing left him but trust in God, the approbation of his own conscience, that internal peace which cometh down from the Source of all good, and that hope of heaven which is as an anchor to his soul both sure and stedfast. I might have drawn a very different picture, and a far juster one. The man of the world might have been represented as pursuing shadows which elude his grasp, as catching at splendid bubbles which immediately melt in air. Something might have been said of the wearisomeness which soon intrudes itself at the board of festivity ; of the disgust which often enters the haunts of pleasure ; of the satiety which is the inseparable companion of sensuality ; of the toil and anxiety, the jealousies and envyings, the disappointments and defeats of ambition ; of the emptiness of honour, and of the cares of wealth. On

the other hand, the Christian might have been described as not called to suffer the same wretchedness as did the primitive disciple of Christ. It might have been shewn, that bound as he is, not to shrink from any evil which men may inflict upon him, on account of the cause which he has espoused—nor to refuse making any sacrifice of earthly good for the sake of that Saviour in whom he trusts—still he is permitted (so much gentler are the dispensations of God toward his church than they have formerly been) to use this world, if he do not abuse it, and even to possess its wealth and its honours, if he do but devote them to the service of God.

And is it not reasonable, then, my brethren, to put confidence in the words of Jesus Christ, when he invites us to come unto him that we may find rest unto our souls? Shall we not consent to bear his yoke, without murmuring, when he so truly assures us that it is easy and his burden light? Surely, the requisitions of the Gospel, the duties and the trials of a Christian, are not well understood, or they would not so often be rejected. It is admitted by all, that unalloyed happiness is not the lot of man. Every eye is directed to something future: every heart beats with the hope of what it may yet enjoy. The world is tried by its thousand votaries, in their thousand

different paths, and all confess that it continues to impose upon them. In the mean while, life is wasting away; the roses are withering with which the man of pleasure has loved to crown himself; the honours are fading which have blushed in such thick abundance upon the son of ambition; the gold is soon to be scattered, he knows not where, that now fill the coffers of the rich man. Even the charms of philosophy and literature fade from the eye which has long feasted upon them. The dearest of all earthly good—social and domestic love—must soon have its golden cord broken; bosom friends must be torn asunder and family circles destroyed; and man, stripped of all which can now afford him any delight, must—invariably must, in a few fleeting years—descend to the tomb. Is this world, then, worth possessing, without some hope of a future? And what hope of a future can we have except that which is founded on the revelation God has given us in the Gospel of his Son? And when this Gospel invites us to a Saviour, whose yoke, even in this life, is comparatively easy and his burden light, how much is it the part of wisdom to bear this yoke! Sacrifices, indeed, the Christian must make, and some of these sacrifices will cost him much. He must offer continually the sacrifice of a broken heart and of a contrite spirit

at the remembrance of his sins. And this yoke at first is galling to his pride. He must sacrifice all reliance upon his own merits for acceptance with God. He must hope, by faith alone in Jesus Christ, to secure the pardon of his guilt, the renovation of his heart, and a preparation for heaven. And this yoke presses hard upon his self-righteousness. But soon these very sacrifices become delightful. Humility and Meekness and Faith, which at first, when seen through the mists of prejudice, appeared so hideous and disgusting, are found upon a nearer approach to be the daughters of Peace, and to shed around the head of him whom they attend a heaven-born calm and a serene dignity of which the sons of Pride know nothing. His self-denial, too, every day becomes easier to the Christian. That sneer which once kindled the glow of resentment on his cheek he learns to bear with a meek and a quiet spirit, while he pities the prejudice from which it sprung. That reluctance to disclose his principles before the world, which once made him almost ashamed of his Saviour, has given place to a manly yet modest avowal of them. The world, to which, like others, he once clung with so fond a grasp, has lost much of its charms; and he cheerfully abandons it when he reflects what a better portion he has beyond the skies. Thus the yoke of Christ is not only easier

than that of the world, even under circumstances the most unfavourable, so to speak, for the Christian; but this very yoke becomes easier and easier to be borne, so as to be at last not the mark of toil and servitude, but the badge of peace and triumph. May it always, my brethren, prove such to each one of us! May the Spirit of grace incline us cheerfully to sustain it in this life! And may the same Spirit, through the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, conduct us all at length to that world of entire rest where no more sacrifices will be required of us, where no more self-denial will be necessary, but where every want of the soul will be supplied and all its wishes gratified!

DISCOURSE III.

MATTHEW xi. 30.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

THE life of a real Christian is one of continual self-denial. He has to carry on an incessant and difficult contest within his own breast; to subdue the native propensities of his heart; to struggle against the force of habit; to bring all the powers of his body and all the affections of his soul into subjection to the precepts of the Gospel; to resist the allurements of temptation; to withstand the seductions of pleasure, of riches, and of honour; to watch against the wiles of Satan; to meet, if need be, with an undaunted heroism, ridicule and reproach, infamy and death; in fine, always to prove himself a faithful soldier of the Cross, and not to quit the field of danger, and sometimes of

blood, till he come off a triumphant conqueror, through the strength of the great Captain of his salvation. How, then, demands the world, can the yoke of Christ be easy, and his burden light? Does it cost nothing to engage in so hard a service? Is it to find ease that you call upon us to rush into such an unprovoked and useless contest? Is it wise to abandon our present pursuits and pleasures for so distant a good, and for one which demands so many sacrifices? Why not enjoy life while it lasts? Why sadden the few days we have to spend in this world with gloomy thoughts about the future? Why check, by the mournful restraints of Religion, the flow of delight with which we are surrounded, and which bears us so gently down the stream of life? When the storm arrives, of which we now see no prospect, we will prepare for it. When our bark launches upon that vast ocean of eternity which we believe to be far distant, we hope to be ready to encounter all its dangers. At present, we enjoy too much the cheerfulness of our sunshine, to suffer shadows of superstitious melancholy to be thrown across our path. The cup of delight which we drink is so pleasant, that we cannot permit Conscience to mingle in it her wormwood and gall.

Such, my hearers, is the language of the world when it is called upon to bear the yoke of Jesus

Christ; to submit to those wholesome restraints which he imposes upon us, not only as the test of our fidelity, but as the truest sources of our real comfort in this life, and our happiness in the future. But this language of the world is false in its *principles*, and ruinous in its *consequences*.—It is founded on erroneous views of what the world promises, and what the Gospel requires; and therefore it is false in its principles. If listened to, it will afford no substantial benefit in this life, and it must lead to a dreadful result in the future; and therefore it is ruinous in its consequences.

I attempted, in some measure, while discoursing from the words of my text, the last Sabbath, to illustrate these truths, and to shew that, on two acknowledged principles of common sense, the yoke of Christ is indeed easy, when compared with that of the world. These principles are recognized and adopted, by every man of ordinary reflection, in the daily concerns of life; and to depart from them would be considered as downright presumption and folly. They are the following: That no prudent man, who consults his own happiness, is ever so much engrossed with present objects as to be regardless of the future; and that great sacrifices ought to be made for the attainment of any valuable distant good. In applying these principles, I endeavoured to prove, that

the comparison between the Christian and the man of the world is altogether in favour of the former, although he should be called to endure the greatest privations and misfortunes of life, while the latter is in possession of all its earthly pleasures. For although the worldling may revel in delight, having his most sanguine prospects realized, and his most unbounded wishes gratified; yet the constant conviction that the grave must put an end to all this gladness, and that there may be such an hereafter as the Gospel unfolds to us, in which an eternal distinction will be made between those who receive Christ as their Saviour, and those who do not: I say, these saddening thoughts, which nothing but absolute stupidity can banish from the mind, will often intrude themselves, and spoil; as with the touch of death, the dearest delights of the man of this world. His enjoyments, too, even when he can lull all forebodings about the future, are not of the most noble kind. They relate to the gratifications of sense, to the acquisition of wealth, to the possession of glory, to the pursuits of literature, to the pleasures of taste; and sometimes, for I would not disguise the truth, to the alleviation of wretchedness, and the diffusion of knowledge and comfort among his fellow-men. But observe, my brethren, all these objects, in themselves consi-

dered, relate only to this life: they extend not beyond the grave. And is the immaterial, the immortal spirit, which animates these frail bodies of ours—which is continually dissatisfied with the present, and always engaged about the future—which is ever following the beck of Hope toward some distant good;—is it to find its most exalted happiness in any thing beneath the sun? Is it to take a part in the fleeting concerns of this life, except as a mere pilgrim who is on his march to a better country? Is it not to have its views enlarged, and its plans ennobled, and its affections elevated, and its hopes brightened, by connecting all that is here below with all that is beyond the skies? Ought it not to be thus mindful of its eternal destiny, and to walk the rounds of life, as some heaven-descended messenger, for the sake of distributing the mercies of God to the bodies of men, and his grace to their souls; but, having its eye always fixed on its celestial home, remembering that *there* alone it can find pure and perpetual bliss? This kind of happiness, so divine in its source and so ennobling in its effects, is a stranger to the breast of the mere man of this world; for without revelation, and the aid of that grace which it reveals, he cannot shape his conduct aright with regard to the future world. I speak

with boldness :—of futurity, the philosopher and the unbeliever know nothing definite : they can only guess at what it *may* be.

Who is that infinite and incomprehensible Spirit, that occupies all space — that exists through all eternity — that wields the sceptre of universal empire — that is too omniscient ever to be eluded, too pure ever to be reconciled to sin, and too powerful ever to be mocked with impunity ? How shall we, who are sinners, (our own consciences bear testimony against us—it is in vain to resist the accusation) ; how shall we propitiate the favour of this holy Intelligence ? Shall we hope in his unboundness goodness ? Is his mercy unlimited ? Will he never inflict pain upon the souls he has created ? He is almighty ; and will he communicate all the happiness in his power ; and will it be safe, then, to trust to this his unmixed benevolence ? Ah ! it *may* be unsafe to do this. It *may* be necessary, for the wise and holy purposes of the government of God, to make distinctions between the creatures he has formed, to separate between the righteous and the wicked, and to inflict pain upon those who depart from the strictest requisitions of his laws. *Perhaps* this may be so. *Perhaps* that Being, who sees it necessary to impose suffering upon his creatures in this life, may also afflict them in the next.

How is it compatible with the notions we long to entertain of that unbounded and unmixed goodness of his, on which we hope to rely for our eternal safety, that He, whose word could make it otherwise, permits the babe to languish, to suffer the most excruciating torture, to die in its mother's arms? Why do we all endure so much pain and anxiety of body and mind? And why must we all pass through the terrific agonies of the hour of dissolution? God might have prevented all these evils: He has seen fit not to do it. It has been necessary, for the purposes of his government, to suffer pain to exist in the world. The fact is every day before our eyes. We *may*, therefore, be wretched in the future world; for it may be necessary, for the purposes of his government, that pain should exist *there* also.

On these momentous points, so interesting to every man who aspires to immortality, who learns by a little experience the vanity of the world, and who pants for some unknown good to satisfy the desires of his soul; on these points, the unbeliever must be content to remain in entire ignorance. He may doubt, if he pleases, the truth of those doctrines which afford to the Christian so much confidence and hope; but this does not help his own case. Though surrounded with all worldly

delights, he must continue to want that exalted kind of happiness which consists in acting like an heir of immortality and in making this life subservient to a future state of being. In that state the Christian believes all will be adapted to fill the capacities of his spirit, freed from the shackles of the body and the dominion of sin, delivered from the ever-changing scenes of a short and uneasy life, and assimilated to the very character of that Eternal Spirit, whose essence is holiness and happiness. Let the yoke of Christ, then, be ever so heavy, it is light when compared with that of the world: for amid all his troubles and disappointments, the Christian has within his breast a principle of hope, with regard to his future destiny, which, if he suffer it not to be weakened by the temptations that surround him, or by the remaining corruption of his own heart, bears him up triumphantly through all the trials he has to encounter, and animates him continually with the prospect of that crown of glory which he is soon to obtain.

From all that has been said in this and the former discourse, I cannot but think it has been made evident, that the words of our Saviour, contained in the text, when properly understood and applied, are worthy of our entire belief and acceptance; and that it is not only our

bounden duty, but our highest privilege, to resort unto him, and find rest unto our souls. He promises us the most unspeakable advantages, if we will truly repent of all our offences against God, and rely, with an unshaken faith, on his merits alone, for pardon and peace. He offers to us the absolute remission of all our sins; the influences of the Holy Spirit of truth and grace to enlighten our minds and purify our hearts; a deliverance from their remaining corrupt propensities; a protection against the temptations of the world; a security from the seduction of its smiles; a victory over its frowns; a support under its trials; a serenity amidst its injuries; a cheerfulness during its disappointments; and a temperate use of all its innocent enjoyments. He offers us the calm of a quiet conscience, and a peace of mind that passeth understanding; nay, in his gift is the most sublime delight to which a created intelligence can dare to aspire—communion with God himself: for, much as the sceptic may doubt it, there is sometimes shed over the soul of the true disciple of Jesus Christ such a lively conception of the presence and love of God, such an admiration of his excellence, such a resignation to his will, such a gratitude for his goodness, and such an anticipation of being soon admitted to the ineffable dis-

play of his glory, that the soul almost forgets that it is inhabiting its tabernacle of clay, and seems already to have taken its flight to paradise. My brethren, I speak not the language of a wild enthusiasm, but that of sober Christian philosophy. I state a fact, which, like all other facts, is liable to have the force of its evidence weakened by the intemperate zeal of fanaticism, or by the incoherent ravings of mysticism, or by the cunning pretensions of hypocrisy, or even by the misguided ardour of an honest though mistaken ignorance; but yet a fact, the truth of which is attested by thousands of sober and discreet men—men of philosophy, of science, of literature, of political sagacity, and of military wisdom—men whose testimony on every other subject would be received without the least scruple or hesitation.

I say, then, this very influence of the Spirit of God is offered to all who resort unto Jesus Christ, in order to purify and to elevate their affections, and to shed serenity on the soul. He offers also to all who trust in him, to stand by them with the succours of his grace, in an hour which has appalled the stoutest hearts—an hour when the strongest arm is palsied, and the proudest eye droops—an hour in which the visions of worldly glory sink into eternal darkness, the charms of pleasure vanish into nothingness, the delights of wealth and the ac-

quisitions of industry crumble into insignificance around their very possessor—an hour in which even the kindest offices of friendship, and the sweetest solaces of domestic love, are unavailing—an hour in which the spirit trembles on the verge of an unknown existence, and in which its hopes and fears, abandoning the petty concerns which have so long agitated them, become absorbed in the momentous realities of its approaching condition. Then is the moment to compare the yoke of Christ with that of the world, and to say whether it is not worth some sacrifices to obtain a victory over the king of terrors, and to have the beams of a Divine serenity illuminating the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death.

Shall I carry this comparison any farther? Shall I lead you to watch the last look, and to catch the last accents, of the unbeliever? His brow, perhaps, still preserves its firmness, and his voice its composure: he has summoned up all the resources of his philosophy, and he is ready to die with gaiety and an heroic pride. Not a sigh escapes him, no self-reproach for any action of his past life, no apprehension of the future state upon which he is just entering. But in spite of all this, occasional doubts flit across his mind, and he can find nothing certain on which to establish an unshaken confidence in the approbation of that

awful Being before whom he is soon to appear. No visions of hope pass before his eyes, and at the best he has to confess that he is about to launch upon an ocean which is shrouded in the deepest obscurity and darkness.—But there are few who reach this elevation of stoical apathy. Thousands there are, who, though bold in scepticism in the days of health and pleasure, have shrunk from the trial of the last hour, and have spent its fleeting moments in bewailing the rashness that has led them to meet it unprepared. But the instance cannot be produced, in which the true disciple of Jesus Christ, when brought to the test of *his* dying hour, has ever abandoned the principles of the Gospel, or exchanged the hope of religion for any other.

Shall I carry this comparison still farther? Shall I venture to lift the veil which separates eternity from our view? No. It is enough for my present purpose to have contrasted the yoke of Jesus Christ with that of the world, in reference to this life alone. I will not enter upon the awful subject of the future destiny of the righteous and the wicked. Revelation discloses enough, however, upon this topic, to excite our liveliest hopes and fears. Christ has declared, in such explicit terms, what will be the fate of those who reject him, that it is sufficient to read what he has

spoken, without endeavouring to enhance its momentous import by any images of terror. Let His declarations, to which we must give an important and surely alarming significance or else suppose that he used words without a meaning—let his declarations be soberly regarded, and in their light let his yoke be compared with that of the world. I need not say which will be deemed, by the judgment of prudence, the easiest to be borne. In prosperity, then, or in adversity, in sickness or in health, in life or in death, with regard to time or eternity, the world deserves to be held low in our estimation, when compared to the service of Jesus Christ; and the yoke which he calls upon us to sustain ought to be deemed easy, and his burden light. Let those who profess to believe his doctrines, and to tread in his steps, be mindful of these truths. Let them cultivate the liveliest affections of gratitude to that Saviour who has redeemed them from the thralldom of the world; and let them bear the yoke which he may see fit to impose upon them without a murmur or a complaint. Let them be careful, too, not to be again “entangled with the yoke of bondage;” nor to suffer that world to gain the ascendancy over them which they are bound to conquer, with all its trials and temptations, by faith in Him who himself gained over it a complete victory. Let those, too,

who have suffered their affections to be engrossed with the cares and business, the pursuits and pleasures of this life, be induced to ponder for a moment on the imprudence of their choice. Let them try their rejection of Jesus Christ, and their dislike to his service, by the same principles of prudence which guide their daily concerns. Let them be careful to inquire how wise or how safe it is to procrastinate their preparation for eternity, because it is at a little distance ; to be absorbed in pursuits which the grave must end for ever ; and to decline placing an entire confidence in Jesus Christ, as the only Saviour of men, because the repentance and faith which he demands are irksome duties, and his service is attended with many and great sacrifices. In such momentous concerns, may the Spirit of Truth so enlighten our minds and affect our hearts, that our choice may be the choice of wisdom ; and that, after having meekly borne the yoke of Christ through the wilderness of this world, we may be admitted to the Canaan of eternal rest ! . *Amen.*

DISCOURSE IV.

I CORINTHIANS XI. 27.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

THIS solemn warning was originally addressed to the church at Corinth. The members of that church had fallen into many gross errors and sins. Beguiled by false teachers, they perverted, and in some cases almost denied, several plain and important doctrines of the Cross. Seduced by the example of many in this rich, populous, and very corrupt city, they were guilty of conduct unworthy, in the last degree, of those who professed to be the disciples of Jesus Christ. This dreadful degeneracy discovered itself even in their religious exercises; and at the most solemn of all

these exercises—at one which, from its very nature, was calculated to inspire them with reverence and awe, with purity and peace, with kindness and charity—a scene was often exhibited of discord, intemperance, and confusion. Seated round the very table of the Lord, holding in their hands the mystical symbols of his body broken and his blood shed for their sins, professing their attachment to his cause, and invoking his protection and blessing, they shuddered not at the grossest profanation of this sublime and sacred ordinance. Their guilt called down upon them the anger of God; who withdrew from them the sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit, and left them, at least for a season, in a state of awful and dangerous declension. But a more open and visible mark of his displeasure, was exhibited in the infliction upon them of severe temporal calamity. A languishing disease threw many of them on the couch of suffering; and not a few were called, by death, to appear before the judgment-seat of Heaven.

How deplorable was their condition! Sinning against God with a high hand, and suffering his severest rebuke! Well might Paul tremble for their spiritual welfare: well might he summon up all the energy of his soul, and all the ardour of his affection, to reclaim and reform them: well might

he urge them, by the terrors of the Lord, to repent and live; and considering, as not the least of their crimes, their dreadful profanation of the Lord's Supper, well might he say, in the strong language of the text, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

This solemn warning, my brethren, which seems to have had a very salutary effect upon the Corinthian Christians, is of no less force and use in all the ages of the church. Let us, then, endeavour so to understand its true import, and so to apply it to our own consciences, that, under the blessing of God, it may awaken within us a spirit of serious self-examination, of sincere penitence for sin, and of purer holiness, that thus we may be prepared for all the duties and services which we owe to our Divine Master. For this purpose, let us consider, first, the nature of the offence against which the text cautions us—"he that eateth and drinketh unworthily;" and, secondly, the awful consequences of this offence—"eateth and drinketh damnation to himself."

I. If, in the first place, we consider what it is to partake of the Lord's Supper unworthily, it may be proper very briefly to mention some of those imperfections or sins, under which a person

may labour, and yet not be disqualified for a participation of the Lord's Supper.

First, then, Occasional doubts and fears with regard to one's spiritual state are not inconsistent with a worthy approach to the table of the Lord. I will not say, that such doubts and fears do not always result from the wickedness of the human heart; from a neglect of those means which God has put within the reach of all, for the confirmation of their faith and the establishment of an unwavering hope. They who seldom look into the Oracles of Truth, and who are seldom found in the closet of prayer, must expect to become the prey of the tempter, and to have their breasts often harassed with doubt, or sometimes tortured with despair. There is certainly great guilt attached to such a state. It calls for the sighs and tears of penitence; for the fervent supplication, at the Throne of Grace, of a broken and contrite heart; for new and vigorous attempts after an unclouded assurance of being truly born of God; but, if accompanied with this penitence and prayer and resolution, it does not exclude from the table of the Lord. Otherwise, how many weak souls must be deprived of their spiritual nourishment; nay, how many eminent saints, in their seasons of darkness, must be cut off from the enjoyment of an ordinance which is often made the means,

under God, of dispelling the gloom of spiritual despondency, and of shedding upon the Christian's path a light, which, beaming upon him from Heaven, shews him, that thither his footsteps, though of late so faint and weary, are still tending!

Secondly, Imperfect views of the doctrines of religion are not inconsistent with a worthy participation of the Lord's Supper. At the commencement of the third chapter of this very Epistle from which our text is taken, Saint Paul, addressing the Corinthians, says; "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." The Corinthian converts, then, had not advanced beyond the first principles of the oracles of God: yet, although thus ignorant, they were reckoned among the saints, and enjoyed communion with the church of God. It is not their ignorance, therefore, which the Apostle makes the ground of his complaint against them, and of the warning contained in the text; but their sinning against God, by the neglect or abuse of the light, however small, already in their possession. Ignorance, however, if it result from the neglect of those means of instruction which God has afforded us, is most highly criminal; and, if obstinately

persisted in, without repentance and without reformation, renders a man, without doubt, an unworthy partaker of the Supper of the Lord.

Thirdly, Remains of sin in the heart are not inconsistent with a worthy approach to the Lord's table. On this head, few words are necessary, if we recal to mind the language of the beloved disciple :—" If we say, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;"— words approved by the confession of every Christian in this life, however great may be the degree of his attainment in holiness. Perfection lies not on this side the grave. The best men have many internal corruptions to struggle with, from which nothing but death will free them : and how many of those corruptions may lurk in the heart which has been touched by Divine Grace, it is impossible for man to determine. The remains of sin, therefore, in the breast of him who sincerely grieves for its past influence, and faithfully prays and strives against its future dominion over him, are no obstacle to his worthily partaking of the Lord's Supper.

I proceed now to consider, more directly, in what an unworthy participation of the Lord's Supper consists.

First, It consists in using this ordinance with an entire ignorance of its proper spirit and meaning.

Its grand design is to recal to our remembrance the sufferings and death of our Saviour, as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world. The bread broken, and the wine poured out, are symbols very significant of his body broken, and his blood shed, for our redemption from the curse of the law. Indeed, the celebration of this ordinance speaks a language most impressive and affecting—a language which ought to confound and overwhelm those who deny the doctrine of the propitiatory atonement of Christ, and who rely upon their own merits for acceptance with God. What shall we say to declarations like the following? “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us”—“Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour”—“He died for our sins”—“In whom we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of sins”—“The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” Thus speaks the church, whenever in faith she draws nigh to the table of her Lord. And what, on the other hand, says her spiritual Head? “Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me. This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. Drink ye all of it. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”

With such plain declarations sounding in his ears, he who can approach and receive the testimonials of our Saviour's dying love, entirely ignorant of their true spirit and meaning, or, as is sometimes the case, wilfully perverting them—such an one, I say, assuredly eateth and drinketh unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body.

Secondly, He also eateth and drinketh unworthily, who approaches this sacred ordinance with an impenitent or unforgiving spirit. The very celebration of this ordinance is a confession of sin : for it shews forth the Lord's death ; and all who engage in it do by their conduct declare, that their past transgressions have exposed them to the just displeasure of God, and that in Christ alone they have “ redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

Now, what can be thought of the piety, nay, even of the sincerity, of that man who dares to make this confession of his guilt, and yet repents not of all his transgressions? He touches with his unhallowed hand the sacred symbols of the Lord's death ; he receives them into his polluted lips ; he makes an outward show of sorrow and contrition of heart for all his past offences ; yet, he cherishes in his breast some secret and easily besetting sin ; makes a compromise with the inward compunctions of conscience, or entirely

silences them ; and raises not even a sigh to God for deliverance from this miserable and dangerous bondage. As he repents not of his own trespasses, neither does he forgive those of his fellow-men. He indulges some lurking hatred—some coldness towards a friend, or some enmity to a rival—while he professes to cast himself upon the mere mercy of God, through Jesus Christ. What impiety ! what insincerity ! Surely such an one eateth and drinketh unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body.

Thirdly, He also eateth and drinketh unworthily, who approaches this ordinance without a cordial faith in Christ. If this ordinance significantly shadows forth the sufferings and death of Christ ; if the great Master of assemblies invites all to this feast of love with the solemn declaration, “ This is my body, which is broken for you— This is my blood, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins ;” if those who surround the table of their dying Lord do, by this act, publicly and solemnly profess themselves to be his disciples ; if they thus express their entire reliance upon his merits alone for acceptance with God ; if they thus renew their covenant with the great Head of the church, and pledge themselves more faithfully in future to espouse his cause, and obey his precepts : if such be the true import of this sacred transac-

tion, then who can take a part in it without a cordial faith in Jesus Christ, and yet be guiltless? Who that cherishes not some humble hope of his acceptance in the beloved, although this hope may be clouded with occasional doubts and fears; who that relies at all on his own merits, for the pardoning mercy of God, and trusts not, entirely and without reserve, to the all-sufficient righteousness of Christ; who that cannot say with some good degree of sincerity, "Lord, in thee I believe, help thou mine unbelief:" who that is thus faithless can eat the Gospel passover, and not be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord?

II. Having thus attempted to ascertain the nature of the offence against which we are cautioned in the text, let us, in the second place, consider what will be the awful consequence of this offence: "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself."

Here it is necessary to observe, that the word in the original Greek, which our translators have rendered "damnation," does not in itself convey the idea of future and eternal punishment. It means *punishment* simply, or some judgment of God inflicted upon an offender, leaving it still indeterminate, whether the punishment is to take place in this life or in the next. The true import of this word, then, must always be determined by

attending to the circumstances under which it is used. And what were the circumstances under which Paul addressed the Corinthian Christians? They had most grossly profaned the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Their wickedness had drawn down upon them the judgments of God. He had taken from them the influences of his sanctifying Spirit. He had afflicted them with disease and death. This was the damnation, or punishment, which they were actually suffering, when Paul wrote to them. He wished to shew them the connexion between the punishment and their guilt, and to make them tremble lest a perseverance in wickedness should expose them to the more severe and awful rebukes of Heaven. Hence he writes—"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (or punishment) to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (or die). As if he had said—"Your guilt, O Corinthians! in the profanation of the Lord's Supper, is the cause of your suffering. Be persuaded, by the terrors of the Lord, to return unto him with sincere and hearty repentance, lest he chastise you with more terrible temporal judgments; lest he withdraw from you, for ever, the restraint of his grace, and thus abandon you to the necessary and just consequences of your guilt, eternal and irremediable destruction."

From all this we may gather, that an unworthy participation of the Lord's Supper does not, like the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, inevitably expose men to eternal perdition. If speedily and sincerely repented of—if washed out by the application of faith at the Throne of Grace, through the atoning blood of Christ—it will be forgiven. Still it is a crime of the deepest dye; and he who commits it will call down upon himself the anger of an offended God. Such was its character and consequences among the Corinthian Christians, and such they will always be. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily at the Lord's Supper, and persisteth in his guilt, may not, perhaps, suffer any immediate temporal calamity. He may be "in great power, spreading himself like a green bay tree," and flourishing in the sunshine of worldly prosperity. But his punishment is not the less awful, because it is hid from the human eye. He is imitating him who supped with his Lord, and then treacherously betrayed him. He is hardening his own heart by the vilest insincerity. He is destroying the efficacy upon his soul of one of the most instructive, and soothing, and animating ordinances of religion. He is virtually denying Christ, while he professes to serve him; and by thus crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame, he is in constant hazard of

falling into that state from which it is impossible to be renewed again unto repentance.

Thus it appears that an unworthy participation of the Lord's Supper, if it do not at first expose men to inevitable and eternal perdition, will, if persisted in, hasten on, and be finally followed by, this awful consequence. Our text, therefore, although it ought not, when rightly understood, to fill the weak and timid, yet believing, disciple of Christ, with needless scruple and alarm, still, on the other hand, holds forth a most solemn warning to the hypocritical professor of religion; and to that Christian, also, who so far declines from the service of his Divine Master, as to approach the memorials of his dying love with an ignorance of their proper and important meaning, with sin that is not repented of, with an unforgiving spirit, or with a self-righteous and unbelieving heart.

Lest this should be our unhappy case, it becomes us, my brethren, to institute a strict inquiry into the state of our own souls, and to implore Almighty God, that he would "search us, and know our hearts;" that he would "try us, and know our thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting." It becomes us ever to bear in mind the solemn warning of our text; to remember the awful declension

and suffering condition of the Corinthian Christians; and to fear lest we “fall after the same example of unbelief.” “God is just who taketh vengeance.” He hath said unto the wicked, “What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?” He hath said that the “hope of the hypocrite . . . shall be cut off,” and that his trust shall be “a spider’s web.” Let us, then, examine ourselves, lest, eating and drinking unworthily, we become “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” Are we ignorant of, or do we pervert, the true spirit and meaning of the Lord’s Supper? Do we approach this sacred ordinance with an impenitent or unforgiving spirit? Do we receive the testimonials of our Saviour’s dying love, without a cordial faith in him, and an entire reliance upon his merits alone, for acceptance with God?—These are questions which conscience alone can answer. If its testimony be against us, it behoves us to “remember from whence we are fallen, and to repent; to turn unto the Lord with all the heart, with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning;” and to supplicate the aids of his grace, that we may be delivered from the condemnation of such as profane his holy ordinances.

If, on the other hand, the testimony of our conscience is, that “in simplicity and godly

sincerity ;” with some humble hope of having been renewed in the temper of our minds ; with some spiritual understanding of what is signified by the symbols of the Lord’s Supper, we desire to approach its affecting solemnities as an expression of attachment to their Author, and of entire reliance on his merits ; then let us feel encouragement and consolation. We may have occasional doubts and fears : our views of the doctrines of religion may be imperfect : we may discover remains of sin in our hearts ; but these alone are not obstacles in the way of a worthy participation of the Lord’s Supper. They prove, indeed, our lukewariness and our guilt ; they call for sincere and hearty repentance ; they should teach us to be humble before God. But if thus penitent and humble, we need not hesitate to celebrate the dying love of Him who is the Friend of the lowly and the contrite, and of whom it is said, for our comfort and encouragement, that “ a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.”

DISCOURSE V.

MATTHEW iii. 8.

Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance.

THE Pharisees and Sadducees were sects of eminent distinction among the Jews. They occupied the highest civil and religious offices, and were venerated by the common people for the supposed sanctity of their lives. By a strict observance of all the outward forms and ceremonies of religion; by a zealous defence of some idle traditions; by a perpetual warfare about speculative and erroneous doctrines, they would fain appear to be of all men the most holy. But very many of them, we have reason to think, were mere hypocrites. Nor will this judgment appear to be rash or uncharitable, if we only call to mind the severe rebukes which they so often received from our Saviour. He saw through their false

disguises, and charged them, notwithstanding their ostentatious display of the most exalted virtue, with being full of all manner of wickedness. The Forerunner of Christ, too, treated them with no more lenity. When he came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, there went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, "O generation of vipers! who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance." As if he had said, "So vile and corrupt do I know most of your sects to be; so inflated with pride and self-righteousness; so dependant upon your own superior holiness for acceptance with God, that I am filled with astonishment to see you come to my baptism. For I preach the doctrine of repentance, and they who become my disciples are not backward to confess their sins with the deepest sorrow and contrition of heart. What voice has roused you from the slumber of death, and filled you with anxiety to escape the just vengeance of God? But if your penitence is indeed sincere, let it be marked as such by its inseparable attendant, a

thorough and permanent reformation." "Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance."

Our text, my brethren, thus explained, enforces upon our most serious attention this important truth, that no repentance can be genuine without a radical reformation of heart and life.

In endeavouring to unfold the meaning of this doctrine, let us consider, first, the reasons on which it is founded; and, secondly, the nature of that reformation which it inculcates.

I. We are to consider the reasons on which the doctrine is founded, that no repentance can be genuine, without a radical reformation of heart and life. These reasons will be very evident, if we attend but a little to those causes which, under the influence of the Spirit of God, produce repentance in the heart of the sinner.

1. Repentance is in part founded on a deep conviction of the justice of the law of God, and of the awful nature of its penalty.—It was said by the venerable Dr. Watts, than whom scarcely any servant of Christ has been favoured with a more deep insight into the Christian character, that, with the exception of one or two instances, all the cases of genuine repentance which had happened within the sphere of his ministry were to be traced to the fear of future punishment.

And, without doubt, this is more generally the fact than is apt to be imagined. The Gospel is a system of motives adapted to our hopes and our fears: and “what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” Our Supreme Lawgiver has seen fit to disclose to us the tremendous penalty of his violated law; and he urges us by all the horrors of its awful execution to flee from the wrath to come. The terrors of the Lord persuade men. The sinner is alarmed at his danger. He sees that the law which he has broken is holy, and just, and good. He trembles with fearful despondency at the view of his past transgressions. He acknowledges, that if judgment should be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, he could not stand before the offended Majesty of Heaven. He sorrows for his past guilt in view of the dreadful doom to which it has exposed him. And thus his repentance is in part founded on a deep conviction of the justice of the law of God, and of the awful nature of its penalty. But this law never abates its requirements. What it has exacted it still exacts—perfect obedience. The Gospel hath not made it void. Having brought the sinner to contrition, it still continues to be the rule of his conduct. And if so, he can feel no genuine repentance for having violated the law of God, unless he acknowledge and obey its autho-

rity with regard to his future life ; unless he commence and prosecute the work of a thorough and permanent reformation.

2. Repentance is in part founded upon a deep conviction of the purity of the law of God.—The purity of this law is to be distinguished from its justice. The latter threatens a penalty which addresses itself to our fears : the former holds forth the rule of right conduct, and claims the assent of our conscience. The one makes us tremble for our future safety : the other distresses us with a view of our present guilt. Hence it is, that the awakened sinner, before he can be truly penitent, must always be found abhorring himself for his past transgressions ; not simply because they have exposed him to future punishment, but because they have been committed in violation of a law which forms a most holy rule of conduct ; prescribing nothing base, nothing degrading, but all that is honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report. How does he grieve for the past debasement of his moral character ! How is he filled with deep and penitential sorrow, when he reflects, that, instead of rising to the noble dignity of a virtuous being, he has wallowed in the grossness of sensuality, or been devoted to the sordid pursuit of uncertain riches, or been fascinated with the empty applauses of an erring and deceitful

world! An obedience to the pure law of God would have saved him from this moral degradation, and from the present sharp rebuke of his wounded conscience. But this same law is still his only rule of conduct. A conformity to its precepts is still necessary to form his moral character, and to satisfy the demands of his conscience. And if so, he can surely feel no genuine repentance for having violated this law of God, unless he acknowledge and obey its authority with regard to his future life; unless he commence and prosecute the work of a thorough and permanent reformation!

3. Repentance is in part founded upon a deep conviction of the unhappy consequences of sin.—I do not here refer to the effect of sin upon the sinner's individual happiness; that has been already considered; but to its effect upon the happiness of others. He who is truly penitent, at the recollection of his past transgressions, will soon cease to think only of the injury which they have done to his own safety and peace. His keenest pang of sorrow will arise from the remembrance of the evils which others may have suffered, either from his neglect of duty towards them or from the unhappy influence of his bad example. In all the various relations of life—whether Providence may have raised him to stations of public honour and trust, or limited his sphere of action

within the domestic and social circle—he will have reason to lament the ten thousand opportunities he has neglected of doing good to those around him; of soothing their distresses; of relieving their wants; of enlightening their minds; of reclaiming them from sin; of urging them to attend to the concerns of their immortal souls, and of supplicating the Throne of Grace in their behalf. Nay, what is worse, he may have mocked at every thing sober and serious; he may have laughed away the first religious impressions from the breast of some friend or acquaintance; he may have delighted to tread the forbidden paths of sensuality and sin, and may have seduced, by his base example, the innocent and unwary to destruction. Thus, either by gross neglect on the one hand, or by direct influence on the other, he may have shut out some miserable soul from heaven, and may have plunged it into irremediable woe. And, if really penitent, his heart will bleed at the remembrance of these consequences of his guilt. He will begin to realize the true and awful nature of sin. He will see that, if permitted to have an unchecked sway, it would soon blot out all that is fair and lovely and cheering from creation, and envelop it in one eternal midnight of wretchedness and despair. So far, therefore, as he may have contributed to this

horrid predominance of sin, even within the narrow circle in which he has moved, so far he sees reason for the deepest repentance. But if such be the character of his past, such also will be that of his future, guilt; for sin will ever be opposed to real happiness. He, therefore, can surely feel no genuine repentance for the consequences of his past guilt, who does not labour to become entirely free from the dominion of sin in future—who does not commence and prosecute the work of a thorough and permanent reformation.

4. Repentance is principally founded upon a deep conviction of past ingratitude toward God. This cause of repentance swallows up all the rest; or rather, they all terminate in this. For God is the Author of that law which denounces eternal death against the transgressor, and to the just penalty of which the penitent sinner has long been exposed; and yet the arm of Divine Justice has not fallen upon his guilty head. God is the Author of that law, by the disobedience of which the penitent sinner hath so degraded his moral character, and roused to its keenest rebuke a wounded and angry conscience; and yet Divine Grace has all the while been offering, and still offers, its pure and holy influence to remove all sin from the heart, and to adorn it with every Christian virtue. God is the Author of all those

relations of life in which the penitent sinner hath so grossly neglected his duty, and done dreadful, perhaps irreparable, injury to the best interests of his fellow-men; and yet Divine Goodness has continued to sustain him in life, and even to crown that life with loving-kindness and with tender mercies. He has had food to eat, and raiment to put on. He has enjoyed the comforts and conveniences, perhaps the refinements and luxuries, of civilized society. He has reposed beneath his own vine, with none to molest or make him afraid. And, what is far beyond all these mercies—crowning them all, ennobling them all, giving importance to them all—he has been permitted to hear the glad news of Salvation through Jesus Christ, and has had continually placed before him the means of grace and the hope of glory. These good and perfect gifts have all flowed upon him from one Source—from that Being who is merciful, and kind, and long-suffering even to the ungrateful and rebellious. His past transgressions, therefore, take their deepest dye from the reflection that they have been committed against God; and the true penitent is ready to exclaim, with the contrite monarch of Israel, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” But this goodness of God, which thus lays the foundation

of genuine repentance, still continues to bless the penitent sinner. Does he mourn for his past ingratitude? Has the goodness of God led him to repentance? The same goodness still demands the most loyal homage of his heart, and calls for unceasing expressions of grateful obedience. He, therefore, can surely feel no genuine repentance for his past ingratitude toward God, who does not endeavour to love him more and serve him better in future—who does not commence and prosecute the work of a thorough and permanent reformation.

Thus you see, my brethren, how all the causes which tend to produce genuine repentance must, with the force of necessity, lead to a radical reformation of heart and life. These are as indissolubly connected as the fountain, and the streams which it pours forth; as the tree, and the fruit which it bears. Trust not, then, to any outward expression of humiliation and penitence before God, as the test of your sincerity. Count not the sighs, and tears, and groans, which may have attended your more secret prostration of soul, before the offended Majesty of Heaven. Rely not on these for proof of the genuineness of your repentance. Rather scrutinize your present purposes and motives of action: examine the real character of your daily conduct and conversation: and thus

learn whether you are truly penitent, by ascertaining whether you do indeed bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

II. And that we may all the better practise this important duty of self-examination, let us consider, as was proposed in the second place, the nature of that reformation which the doctrine of our text inculcates. This reformation will be radical, and it will be permanent.

1. It will be radical.—It will lay the axe to the root of the sinner's past transgressions. It will purify the fountain whence all his wickedness has flowed. It will reach the heart, penetrating its most hidden recesses, and hallowing its most secret affections. There is, my brethren, a mere external reformation of conduct, which often takes place in those who are alarmed at the consequences of sin. The fact is, their repentance is not allied to a humble reliance on the merits of Jesus Christ for acceptance with God; but to a dependence on their own future obedience. Self-righteousness is the foundation of their apparent reformation. And in what does their reformation consist? In abstaining from gross and palpable immoralities of conduct; in preserving a decent and sober external deportment; in attending to the outward forms and ceremonies of religion. Of

that internal purity of heart which consists in bringing, or at least attempting to reduce, the most retired thoughts, the most secret motives of conduct, into subjection to the law of God, which requires that we should do all things for his glory;—of a radical reformation like this, the false penitent knows nothing. Let us then, my hearers, be careful to see, whether the reformation which our repentance produces is commensurate with the extent of our past transgressions. Does it aim to rectify all the disorders of our souls? Does it make no compromise with any secret or easily besetting sin? Does it strive to slay all the remaining enmity which exists in the carnal mind against God? Does it seek to remove all that sluggish lukewarmness of soul which damps the ardour of devotion, and chills the seraphic glow of communion with God? Does it labour to eradicate from the breast all that grovelling and undue attachment to this world, to its honours, its wealth, its business, or its pleasures, which is the reproach and disgrace of too many who are called Christians; which is so great a stumbling-block in the way of unbelievers; which strengthens the cause of mammon, while it weakens that of Christ; which sullies the lustre of Christian example, palsies the arm of Christian exertion, keeps the church of God in its infancy, and,

with cruel and cold-hearted delay, retards the arrival of its bright, millennial glory? Yes, my Christian brethren, I would fain press it upon our consciences to say, whether our contrition for our past cold and sluggish indolence in the cause of God be indeed sincere. Does it lead to a thorough reformation; to active and zealous industry in his service; to a holy contempt of the vanities of this life; to frequent aspirations of soul for the purity and happiness of the heavenly state? And with this zeal for the Lord of Hosts, with this elevation of mind above the world, do we make it our daily business, in some way or other, to add our humble efforts, a portion of our time, or talents, or conversation, or influence, or wealth—to the great mass of noble exertion which Christians, in our own and other countries, are making for the building up of the Redeemer's kingdom upon the earth?

2. In the second place, Is this spirit of reformation not only radical but permanent?—Does it warm and animate our path toward heaven with a bright and constant ray; or does it cast over it, at distant intervals, a sickly and flickering light, just serving to render the darkness of our spiritual state visible? To speak without a figure, is the struggle against sin habitual? Is the aim at perfection unremitting? Is the often-recurring temp-

tation watchfully resisted; the secret and easily besetting sin constantly and manfully struggled with? Above all, is the Source of all genuine repentance, of all thorough and permanent reformation—the Holy Spirit of God—sought for by frequent and importunate supplication at the Throne of Grace; that while we are working out our salvation with fear and trembling, God would be pleased, by his energy, to work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure? With such inquiries, my brethren, let us try the sincerity of our penitence; not relying too much for consolation on any past or present sorrow for our guilt; not building our hopes of heaven upon mere frames and feelings of mind; above all, not trusting to any outward observance of the forms and ceremonies of religion, but remembering what our Saviour hath said, that if we love him we shall keep his commandments; let us look to the reformation of our hearts and lives for the best proof of our spiritual safety. And let us ever bear in mind for our consolation and support, that if, by this patient continuance in well-doing, we seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, in due time we shall reap, if we faint not, eternal life.

DISCOURSE VI.

MATTHEW vi. 10.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

PRAYER is not only a reasonable, but a most delightful duty. It is the acknowledgment of our dependence on God. It is the cry of the poor and needy to Him who is the Fountain of all good and happiness. It is the overflowing of a grateful heart to the Author of all its mercies and privileges. It is the ladder which connects earth and heaven, and on which descend to the pious soul all needful communications of wisdom and grace. What Christian has not learned its efficacy, and felt its consolation? What Christian, too, has not often been ready to exclaim with Elihu of old, "Teach us what we shall say unto God; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness?" This difficulty it was which induced the disciples of Jesus Christ to ask him

to teach them to pray, as John did his disciples. His instruction we have on record; and it exhibits to us a guide and model of devotion alike remarkable for its comprehensiveness and simplicity. It is valuable, also, as containing an exhibition of the most prominent graces of the true disciple of Christ. For one great object of prayer is to produce those holy affections and desires which should adorn the heart that aspires to become a fit temple for the residence of the Holy Ghost. Our Saviour, therefore, teaches us to pray for those things which are most necessary to keep alive within us the temper of habitual love and obedience to God, and thus enforces the necessity of that connexion which must always be preserved between our devotions and our conduct. Alas! how prone are we to forget this truth, and to imagine, that if we perform faithfully a certain circle of what are termed religious duties, if we offer up our prayers with fervour and importunity, it is of little moment what is the character of our heart and deportment in the common concerns and transactions of life. But how great, in this respect, are our mistake and guilt? Holiness is the same, whether it glow in the devotions of the seraph, or warm the breast of him who bestows a cup of water on the humblest disciple. The spirit of prayer is the same spirit which should

animate the Christian at all times. For he is commanded to “pray without ceasing;” that is, to preserve, under all circumstances, a devotional frame of mind—one which will enable him, let his pursuits and business be what they may, to raise his heart upward, and to commune with his Father who is in heaven. The nature of this devotional spirit is clearly taught us in the prayer which our Saviour gave his disciples, as the guide and model of their worship. And its essential character is sufficiently described in the words of my text:—“Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” He who always prays with this spirit, and who cherishes and preserves it as the director of all his affections and conduct, has that true holiness which will fit him for the blessed society above, whose constant delight is to do the will of God. That we may improve the words of the text to the cultivation of this spirit of prayer, let us consider, first, the meaning of these petitions: “Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven;”—and, secondly, the spirit with which they should be offered.

I. We are to consider the meaning of these petitions; “Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” Although

these petitions are distinct the one from the other, they have, in fact, the same import, and are directed to the accomplishment of the same object. For were the kingdom of God fully come; that is, did it embrace and govern all men; then would his will indeed be done in earth as it is in heaven. The latter petition, therefore, may be considered as explanatory of the former. In order, then to ascertain the meaning of both, we have only to inquire what is meant in the text by the expression, "Thy will." "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

Of the nature of God's will, as an attribute of his Divine mind, we know nothing. How far it resembles our own, and how immensely it differs from it, we must be for ever ignorant. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" This should lead us to be very humble and modest in all our speculations concerning God's sovereign will and pleasure; how he truly purposes every event that takes place, and yet in such a way as to leave man's free agency and accountability entirely unimpaired. We should rest satisfied with the plain and express declarations of Scripture on this subject, and make them the ground of our faith and

confidence in God, without venturing to attempt its explanation by our own reason. " Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of his law."

But though the *nature* of God's will is thus concealed from us, we may know much of its *effects* from what his word teaches us of the great object of his will, and of the means which he uses to accomplish this object. The *object* of God's will is the display of his own glorious perfections, in order that the greatest happiness of his intelligent creatures may be promoted by leading them to admire and love this display. To accomplish this object, he has created beings capable of knowing, of loving, and of serving Him. He has passed before them, and will yet pass, in such manifestations of himself as are calculated to exhibit his goodness in its most attractive, and his justice in its most awful forms. He has given them, as a rule of conduct, the law of holiness, and connected with the violation of this law a most dreadful penalty. It is by the obedience of this law among some of his subjects, and by others suffering the punishment which it denounces against transgressors, that his throne will be established in the heavens, his name glorified

among his saints, and all who love him rendered completely and eternally happy. Why it is necessary, in order to promote God's glory, and the greatest good of his creatures, that sin and suffering should exist, we cannot fully discover. I pretend not to shorten the line of those who venture to fathom these deep and awful subjects. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." But to those whose eye can measure but a little way the boundless ocean of God's providence, and who, sensible of the darkness of their minds, exclaim with the Apostle, "O the depth and riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!"—to such, one plain declaration of Scripture is more satisfactory than all the speculations of human reason. From God's word they learn that he will be glorified by the punishment of transgressors, and by those very events which are brought to pass by means of their disobedience; that this very disobedience and punishment, however, were foreseen by him from eternity; nay, that he permits them to exist, and sustains in being the very agency of man by which they are produced, yet in such a way as to preserve his own holiness and justice unblemished, and to render the sinner guilty and inexcusable. With this the believer is satisfied. He knows that the Judge of all

the earth will do right, and he adopts the submissive language of our Saviour: " Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."

This will of God, which relates to the existence of sin and suffering, is a part of what is often termed his *secret will*. Our text, I apprehend, does not so much refer to this as to the revealed will of God. Still it may indirectly refer to it, and then the meaning of the petition would be, that with regard to the future existence of evil, either natural or moral, the believer reposes the most entire confidence in the wisdom and justice of God, praying that he would direct events according to the counsel of his most holy will, and so overrule the wickedness of man, as that good may come out of evil, and the Throne of Heaven be established by the entire overthrow of all its enemies. But to pray that sin may exist, either under a general or particular shape; to cease to detest it as the abominable thing which God hateth, or to remit a single prayer or a single effort against it; to do this is to act contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture. It is to suffer some speculative difficulties and theories to sway our minds, instead of the plain and practical precepts of the Gospel.

But, as I before observed, the petitions contained in our text, refer chiefly to the revealed

will of God, as contained in that law which he has given us as our rule of action. This law, as explained by our Saviour, requires that we should "love the Lord our God with our whole soul and strength and mind, and our neighbour as ourselves." This is that spirit of love and benevolence which pervades the breasts of the angels in heaven; and we are directed to pray that it may equally control the affections and conduct of our fellow-men. That such may be the happy resemblance of earth to heaven, it is first necessary that the kingdom of God should come in all its majesty and dominion. Jesus Christ must take to himself his great power, and reign King of nations, as he now is King of saints. The heathen must be given to him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. All must bow to his sceptre, and submit to his laws.

Alas! how sadly different from this state of things is the present aspect of our world! Look for a moment, my brethren, through the vast tribes of your fellow-men, of those whose pulse beats with blood like yours, whose souls are immortal like your own, and, like yours, need to be created anew in Christ Jesus. How little is our earth like heaven! How much more does it resemble the infernal world! We have reason to fear that multitudes of mankind, who are now on

the stage of action, instead of growing up into the fair resemblance of the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven, are contracting deeper and deeper shades of moral guilt, and becoming more and more assimilated to the terrific character of those apostate angels who are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. The will of God, I mean his *revealed* will, is *not* done; his authority is *not* submitted to; his laws are *not* obeyed. Nor will they be obeyed until the Saviour is known, and trusted in, as the only refuge for sinners, throughout the whole habitable globe: for in no other way, and by no other influence, will man cease to be a rebel against his Maker, and learn to do his will as the angels do in heaven.

Thus, my hearers, have I attempted to unfold the meaning of my text. It may have an indirect reference to the secret will of God. So far it requires that we should pray, with the most entire confidence in the wisdom and justice of our Heavenly Father, that he would direct and overrule all events, according to the counsel of his most holy will; that he would bring good out of evil; and, by the very opposition and wickedness of his enemies, display his most glorious perfections, and promote the eternal good of all who love him. But the petitions contained in the text

refer more directly to his revealed will. In this sense, they require, in one word, that we should pray for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, and that all men may be brought to the knowledge and love of the truth as it is in Jesus.

II. I proceed to consider with what spirit we should pray, "Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

First, These petitions should be offered with a spirit of love—of love to God, of love to his Son, of love to the souls of our fellow-men.—How can we desire that the will of any being should be carried into effect unless we love that being? Where a character is hateful in our view, how do we long to controul and check the purposes of him who possesses it! On the contrary, where the character is amiable, we admire to see it exhibited in all its various expressions of loveliness. We are anxious that the will of its possessor should be constantly accomplished. To pray, therefore, that the will of God may be done, is but solemn mockery and insult, unless we love God. His character, as displayed in the works of creation, of providence and redemption—combining, in its full perfection, the beauty of unbounded benevolence, the purity of entire holiness, the splendor of matchless wisdom, the

might of supreme power, and the majesty of inflexible justice—must be the unceasing object of our veneration and love, if we mean to cherish the true spirit of prayer, and to worship the infinite SPIRIT in spirit and in truth.

Again ; as we know it to be impossible that his will should be done in earth as it is in heaven, until the proud and rebellious heart of man be renovated by the grace of that Spirit which his Son died to purchase, we cannot offer these petitions in sincerity without love to the Redeemer. “ Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God !” was the language of our Saviour, when he undertook to reconcile the world unto God by his death. “ By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” There is then but one way of becoming holy. It is by faith in Jesus. His blood alone can purify our souls. His righteousness alone is our refuge from the wrath to come. His Spirit alone can restore to us the image of Heaven which we have lost, and make us, like the angels above, the cheerful ministers of God’s will. When we pray, therefore, that this will may be done by all the inhabitants of this lower world, great should be our affection to that Saviour who was lifted up that he might draw all men unto him ; strong

should be our faith in his merits, unwavering our confidence in his promises, and ardent our attachment to his cause.

Again; the same sincerity, requisite in offering up these petitions, makes it necessary that our hearts should be enlarged with love to the souls of our fellow-men. How can we present these requests at the Throne of Grace, without commiserating the hapless condition of millions who refuse to do the will of God? Could we but lift the veil which conceals eternity from our view, and look with a single glance into that prison of despair in which those who once opposed the will of God in heaven are confined against the judgment of the great day; could we anticipate the awful solemnities of that day, and hear the voice of the Son of man, saying, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me;" how should we grieve at the world lying in wickedness! How ardently should we desire the salvation of our families, of our friends, of our neighbours, of all mankind! And praying always that God's will might be done in earth as it is in heaven, we should always preserve that spirit of benevolence which the Gospel enjoins. Thus devotion and charity must be kindred graces in the soul; and he has no true love to

God, no honest desire for the establishment of his dominion on earth, no sincere wish that the earth may become holy and happy like heaven, whose heart does not glow with love to the souls of his fellow-men.

Secondly, These petitions should be offered up with a spirit of submission.—Mark, my brethren, the example of Him who came into our world, not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. How ardent were his prayers, how unceasing were his efforts, that the will of God might be done in earth as it is in heaven! And how submissive was he to this will, even when it inflicted on his own head the severest trials and sufferings! You remember the garden of Gethsemane, and the agony which made our Saviour sweat drops of blood. You remember his impassioned entreaty—“O my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt”—an entreaty thrice repeated in the anticipation of the awful scenes which were before him. He was tempted, or tried in all points, like as we are. Being a man, his human nature shrunk from the horrible agonies of the cross. Yet he bowed in meek submission to the will of his Father in heaven. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not

his mouth: he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

My brethren, "be ye followers of Christ as dear children." When you pray that the will of God may be done in earth as it is in heaven, do not forget that you, *individually*, are the subjects of this will. The Almighty may for wise purposes call you to mourning, lamentation, and woe, on this side the grave: he may deprive you of your dearest earthly comforts; he may blast your fondest worldly expectations; he may bring death into your families and to your very bosoms; he may touch your health with the finger of disease, and make it wither; he may send you days of trouble and nights of pain; he may command it, and your riches take to themselves wings and fly away: in one word, he may so afflict you as to leave you but one single solace—the hope of rest beyond the grave. Still if you cherish the true spirit of prayer; if you do indeed long that the will of God may be done in earth as it is in heaven, you will check every murmuring thought, and learn continually to say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Finally, These petitions should be offered up in a spirit of co-operation.—By this I mean, that

while we pray that God's will may be done in earth as it is in heaven, our own efforts should not be wanting toward the accomplishment of this glorious object. God condescends to act through our humble instrumentality. He is building up the Redeemer's kingdom on the earth; but how? Not as he called the world into existence—not as he destroyed the cities of the plain—not as he parted the waters of the Red Sea, by his *simple word*—not as he saw fit to do in the first age of the church, by investing his servants with the power of working miracles—but in a way more natural, more gradual, more silent; by the influence of Divine truth upon the hearts and conduct of men, accompanied, as it always must be, with the operation of his Holy Spirit. Now, my hearers, the dissemination of this Divine truth has God committed to our care. Much may be done to promote its salutary effect by the humblest individual. His family, his friends, his neighbourhood, his town may all reap the benefit of his exertions. Something even of his earthly substance he can contribute for the promotion of charitable and pious objects. Now and then he can cast a mite into the treasury of God, that his holy word may be sent to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge. He can lend his influence, however small, and his example, however

few may observe it, for the suppression of vice, for the promotion of good order and of good morals, and of what is worth more than these, and without which they have no stable foundation—evangelical holiness of heart. But he, to whom Providence has entrusted more talents, will have a more strict account to render. Shall he dare to pray, that God's will may be done in earth as it is in heaven, and yet make provision for the *flesh alone* to fulfil the lusts thereof? How can he cast his eye over the miseries of the human family, and learn from the light of God's word, that these miseries are the wages of sin, and that this sin will yield to no power but that of the Cross, and yet do nothing for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom on the earth? How can he pray that this world may become like heaven, and yet sit still, and see the powers of darkness toiling to carry on their work of devastation and woe, without so much as lifting a finger against them? What inconsistency! I had almost said, what blasphemy! The language of his lips is—
“ Carry on, Almighty God, the purposes of thy redeeming love; gather in thy elect; save mankind from their awful state of wretchedness and sin; proclaim the glad news of salvation to the distant corners of the earth; send forth the ministers of thy Word, and the missionaries of thy Cross;

give thy Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." The language of his conduct is—"Excuse my remissness in thy service; leave me to amass wealth, to feast on pleasure, to shine with distinction, and to say to my soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" My hearers, would you avoid this dreadful inconsistency of conduct, and its most awful consequences? Then let your spirit of prayer be accompanied with a spirit of co-operation. To piety toward God, join a prudent zeal in his service. And let your industry in doing good, prove that you are indeed longing, and hoping, and praying for the *approach* of that *happy* day when the kingdom of God shall be fully come, and "his will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

DISCOURSE VII.

JOHN i. 12.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

ALL our conceptions of a future state, and of our present relation to it, are obviously very inadequate and imperfect. For we have no direct intercourse with the invisible world: we see it only by the eye of faith: we think of it only through the assistance of analogy: we speak of it only in language originally appropriated to the objects of time and sense.

Hence it is that the sacred Scriptures, in accommodation to our weak and limited understanding, abound so much in metaphor and allegory. The character of God himself, that awful and mysterious Being; all his majestic works in the kingdoms of Nature, Providence, and Grace; and all the various and important relations which he

sustains to his intelligent creatures, are there expressed in terms borrowed from the present state and circumstances of our being. A judicious reference, therefore, to this state and to these circumstances often affords the best, and sometimes the only, solution of the figures of holy writ.

Believers are, in this manner, called "God's husbandry;" because the seeds of holiness originally implanted in their hearts by his hand, cherished by the dews of Divine Grace, and invigorated by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, grow up, under this culture, into that mature perfection of beauty which they will eternally exhibit in the paradise above. Believers are called "God's building;" because, like a wise architect, he forms, and fashions, and disposes their spiritual graces into a divine symmetry and proportion, so as to render their hearts fit temples for the residence of his Holy Spirit. Believers are also called "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people;" all of which metaphors derive their significancy from that course of God's providence in this world which falls within the scope of human observation and experience. What a variety, and, I had almost said, redundancy, of figure is here employed to denote the relation between Christians and their God. Strong, in-

deed, is the tie which binds their temporal and eternal destiny to the Throne of Heaven, securing to them the perpetual guidance, protection, and friendship of Jehovah.

But our text exhibits this relation in language still more animating and affecting to the pious heart. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name;”—sons of God; of that “high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity;” to whom belong the “greatness and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty, for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is his;”—sons of God; of that holy One “who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity;” “in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and whose angels he chargeth with folly.” Well may we exclaim with the Psalmist, “Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him, or the son of man that thou makest account of him?” and with the beloved disciple, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!”

Let us cherish, my brethren, these salutary emotions of pious wonder and filial gratitude, while we consider what it is for man to become a son of God. In attempting to elucidate this subject,

I shall notice the *past condition*, the *present character and privileges*, and the *future prospects* of such as become sons of God.

I. In the first place, as to the past condition of the sons of God; they have been removed from the family of Satan, and are no longer children of the wicked one. "In this," saith the Scripture, "the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." "He that committeth sin is of the devil."

It is indeed a melancholy and ought to be to us all an alarming truth, that they who are enemies to God by wicked works; who feel not towards him the submissive, dependent, and obedient temper of children; who refuse to receive the unspeakable gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, are sons of the great adversary of souls, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." What an odious parentage is this, so much to resemble, both in disposition and conduct, the chief of apostate spirits, the grand enemy of God and of all good, as to deserve the title of his children!

Think not, my hearers, that this language savours too much of severity and invective. Even he who was the Friend of sinners, and who laid

down his life for them, once said to certain of the Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." "If God were your Father, ye would love me." And if God were thy Father, fellow-sinner, thou wouldest love his Son—thou wouldest repose all thy confidence in him as thine only Saviour and thine only hope. So long as thou refuseth to do this, *thou art of thy father the devil, and the lusts of thy father thou wilt do.* He, therefore, who becomes a son of God, must first cease to be a child of the wicked one.

II. When we consider, in the second place, the present character and privileges of the sons of God, we remark, that they become such by being born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Such is the emphatical language which Scripture employs to illustrate, by a striking metaphor, that mighty transformation of moral character effected, by the Spirit of God alone, in the heart of the sinner.

It is a *birth*—that is, the commencement of a new and spiritual life—constituting a most intimate and affecting relation between the subjects of it and its Author. By it, they become his sons in a peculiar and appropriate sense: for they are made partakers of his Divine nature. They are

conformed to the image of his First Born, even of him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. They enjoy a communion with the Father and the Son, the closeness of which is described in the memorable prayer of our Saviour for his disciples: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." In the like manner it is said, "Every one that loveth, is born of God;" that is, a son of God possesses, though in a very imperfect degree, the same divine benevolence by which God himself is preeminently characterised, when he is styled "Love." Hence, also, the peculiar force and propriety of those precepts which are given to believers on account of the resemblance between them and their Heavenly Father; "Be ye, therefore, followers of God, as dear children." "Be ye, therefore, merciful, as your Father also is merciful." "Love your enemies, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." "Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

To be a son of God, then, is to be born of God, and to be made a partaker of the Divine nature.

2. The sons of God become such by being adopted into his own family: for although once they were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise; having no hope, and without God in the world;” yet now they “are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God.” They are made members of a happy community, which, even here on earth, has some foretaste of that peace, and love, and joy, which will glow with unsullied and perpetual ardour in the breasts of the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven. They esteem one another as brethren, their hearts being knit together in love; having *one* common Father, trusting in the *same* Saviour, espousing the *same* cause, cheered by the *same* promises, animated by the *same* hopes, and looking forward to the same mansions of eternal rest, which Christ their Elder Brother has gone before to prepare for all his followers.

3. The sons of God, on the other hand, enjoy from his bounty the choicest privileges; his Spirit bearing witness with their spirits that they are indeed his children. Nor is this done by any immediate revelation of his love to them; by any influence supernatural in such a sense as to be clearly distinguished from the operation of their

own minds; by any communication of such miraculous gifts and graces as were common in the first ages of the church; but by infusing into the soul that deep sorrow and contrition for sin, that sincere and hearty repentance, that humble though strong reliance upon Christ, that filial and reverential love toward God, that ardent charity toward all men, and that faithful diligence in good works which afford satisfactory evidence to their possessor that he is truly a son of God.

Nor think, my brethren, that I wish to deprive you of the earnest of your inheritance, the Divine consolation of the assurance that you have passed from death unto life: for what assurance can be stronger, nay, what other can stand the test of God's word, than to discover in ourselves that holy temper and conduct which are the genuine fruits of the Spirit, which no other influence but *his* can produce, and without which all our pretensions to the title of sons of God are but as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal?"

4. Those, again, who become sons of God are under his peculiar guidance: "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *they* are the sons of God."

And how necessary, my brethren, is such a heavenly light to cheer and illuminate and direct our path through the wilderness of this world to

the Canaan of eternal rest! He who has learned, by an acquaintance with himself, how much sin hath darkened the understanding of man, and what a moral midnight broods over all his intellectual faculties; how will he hail the “day-dawn and the day-star arising in his heart,” and rejoice that “God, who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!” And sensible of his remaining blindness and ignorance, weakness and guilt, he will still look to this Divine Instructor for all needful wisdom and grace, and continually say, with the Psalmist, “Lord teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.”

5. Further, God frees believers from the spirit of bondage, introducing them into “the glorious liberty of the sons of God;” and because they are sons, he sends forth “the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” This Spirit helpeth their infirmities; and when they have aught to present at the Throne of Grace, either the tribute of filial gratitude, or their supplications for paternal support and deliverance, it maketh intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered. And soothing beyond expression,

my brethren, are those aspirations of fiducial confidence which often rise to heaven from the secret sanctuary of the pious heart. When the trials of life, the assaults of the adversary, or the pangs of a wounded conscience, overwhelm the mind of the Christian with gloomy despondency and fearful foreboding, very consoling is it to know that he has an Almighty Friend, to whom he can cry, "Abba, Father!" and say with one in like affliction, "Be merciful unto me, O God! be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast."

Speak, ye who best can tell; ye elder brethren of the household of the saints; ye who have almost finished your earthly pilgrimage, and whose feet just press the threshold of your wished-for home, even "that building of God, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;"—say, for what you would exchange that Spirit of Adoption which has enabled you, amid the many vicissitudes of life—so full, perhaps, of cares, and anxieties, and distresses—to forget all your sorrow, to raise the cry of "Abba, Father," and to find perfect peace, because your minds were stayed upon God. For what, thou aged saint! bending beneath the burden of thine infirmities; on whose memory the

iron hand of Time has engraven the just complaint of the Wise Man, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;" whose heart hath now shut every avenue against that world from which it once derived some transitory enjoyment, because the "evil days have come, and the years drawn nigh which have no pleasure in them;" for what wouldst thou exchange that Spirit of Adoption which enables thee to lift thy trembling eye to Heaven, and to say, with a sweet assurance of being heard and answered, "Now also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God! forsake me not, until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power unto every one that is to come?" For what would the departing soul, just taking its flight to the other world; its eye shedding its last ray of serene lustre on the weeping friends who surround it; its faltering lips whispering their last accents of praise; for what would it exchange that Spirit of Adoption which enables it, in this trying season, to triumph over the king of terrors, and to say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou, Lord, art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me?"

III. We notice, lastly, my brethren, with regard to the future prospects of such as become

sons of God, that death, which fills the heart of the sinner with dismay, discloses to the child of God his brightest views, and ushers him into the enjoyment of his choicest privileges. By it his spirit, freed from its tabernacle of clay, ascends to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. In this blessed society, satisfied with the fulness of joy flowing from the presence of his God and Saviour, his heart glowing with filial gratitude toward the Author of his salvation, and with brotherly love to all his associates in happiness, he awaits, with delightful anticipation, the august solemnities of the final day.

And when that day shall arrive—a day to be for ever so illustrious in the annals of the universe; bringing a final catastrophe to all the events which have taken place in this lower world; displaying the character of God, so awful in justice, and so attractive in mercy; filling his friends with joy and his foes with terror, and consummating the glorious work of the Redeemer—then shall the children of God be recognized before an assembled universe, and be formally invested with every privilege, as sons of their Heavenly Father.

What these privileges shall be, in their proper character and full extent, we are not able to say: but the Scriptures communicate enough on this subject to fill the pious heart with the most

sublime emotions of hope and joy. Such is that passage : “ Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.” From this and the like declarations we know, that God’s children are the children of the resurrection ; that their bodies, which are now corruptible, shall put on incorruption ; that, as they have borne the image of the earthly, they shall also bear the image of the heavenly. “ For when Christ their life shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory.” “ He shall change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.” Invested with this pure and spiritual receptacle, fresh with immortal youth and beauty, and fitted for all the operations and for all the enjoyments of a holy intelligence, the sons of God, after receiving the approving sentence of the Judge, shall enter upon the inheritance of the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Of the value of this kingdom we can form some faint conception from the consideration, that it is the same which Christ himself receives, who, for the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and honour : for he himself hath promised, “ To him that over-

cometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." Thus does our Saviour receive this kingdom on account of the accomplishment of his mediatorial work. This was the joy set before him, for which he endured the cross and despised the shame. And the degrees of his reward we are to estimate from that shame and that humiliation; from his condescending to divest himself of that glory which he had with the Father before the world was; from his stooping to assume the form of a servant, and to be born in the likeness of sinful flesh; from all the ignominy and reproach which he endured during life, and from the agony of his death. How precious the inheritance bought at this dear rate, and with sacrifices like these!

Thus, my hearers, have I attempted to illustrate the topic proposed at the commencement of my discourse, by exhibiting to you the past condition, the present character and privileges, and the future prospects of the sons of God.

And now let us notice how pertinent and striking is the metaphor contained in our text, which represents God as a Father, and believers as his children.—Truly he is their Father, in a sense the most endearing and affecting. He rescues

them from the family and service of Satan; he transforms them into his own image, and makes them partakers of his own Divine nature; he and his Son enter into a most intimate communion with them; he adopts them into the household of the saints, his chosen family; his Spirit beareth witness with their spirits that they are indeed his children; he takes them under his peculiar guidance and direction; he gives them the temper of full reliance on his parental goodness: he is their support through life; their death is precious in his sight; and he at last leads them to their eternal home, making them joint-heirs with Christ of that "inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

Surely these are exalted privileges to be conferred upon beings that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth!

But how is our wonder enhanced, and how ought our deepest gratitude to be awakened, when we consider them as bestowed on beings who are sinners; who, like the Prodigal in the parable, have wandered far from their Father's house, have fastened their affections upon the low pleasures of the world, have lost all claim to the title of sons, and have forfeited by their rebellion the protection and friendship of God! That he should

offer to such beings the high destiny of becoming his sons is an illustrious and affecting proof, that he is a God ready to pardon, slow to anger, and of great kindness.

Oh! be touched with this, thou who art still a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world! Now imitate the penitent Prodigal; feel all his deep compunction and ingenuous sorrow; and, in the spirit of sincere and hearty repentance, say, "I will arise, and go to my Father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." And be assured, if thou thus return with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, humbled under a sense of guilt, and reposing all thy hopes of pardon on the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, thou shalt be met with forgiveness and reconciliation; thou shalt be invested with the Divine love and favour; thou shalt become truly a Son of God, and be made a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

DISCOURSE VIII.

JOHN xiv. 1.

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God,
believe also in me.*

FROM these words I propose, my brethren, at this time to direct your thoughts to Jesus, “the Consolation of Israel;” and what an object of delightful vision to the eye of faith is Jesus Christ! In him dwells all that is admirable in excellence, and attractive in loveliness: for he is the “brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.” They who saw him while on earth, “beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” They who shall see him in heaven, will behold him clothed in ineffable splendor, “seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high,” swaying the sceptre of universal empire, victorious over all his enemies, and dispensing to his friends an immortality of life and peace and joy. But

we, my brethren, who yet “see through a glass darkly,” can only behold him as delineated by the pencil of sacred history. The Evangelists have given us his portrait. Though faint, it is faithful: and the more minutely we examine the lineaments of our blessed Master, the more shall we have to admire in them the beautiful symmetry and grace of perfect moral excellence, and the constant beaming forth of that Divine lustre which irradiated him in whom “dwelt bodily all the fulness of the Godhead.” And if, while we thus admire, we also believe and trust and love, then shall “we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Then shall we be entitled to the animating benediction of our Saviour, “Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” Thus to assimilate you to Jesus Christ, and thus to revive and enliven your confidence in his promises, I propose, my brethren, to direct your attention to a very interesting scene of his life, which took place on the night immediately preceding his crucifixion. For several nights previous he had made the mount of Olives, and especially the village of Bethany, which was situated at its foot about two miles east of Jerusalem, his occasional retreat from the daily toils and dangers

of his ministry in the city. It was there that he supped with his friend Lazarus, while Martha served, and Mary anointed his feet with spikenard "against the day of his burying." It was there that Satan entered into the heart of Judas, and led him to form, and soon to execute, the diabolical purpose of betraying his Lord. It was there that our Saviour disclosed to his disciples the immediate prospect of his sufferings and death. It was thence that he sent Peter and John to Jerusalem to make ready the last passover which he would commemorate with his beloved flock. They obeyed his directions, and prepared the feast in a large upper chamber, which had been furnished for this purpose. In this room, retired from the gaze of the multitude, and secure for a short season from their violence, our Saviour engaged with his little band of followers in a solemn and devout act of social worship. They partook of the Paschal Supper in strict obedience to the Jewish law, for thus it behoved them to fulfil all righteousness. Here Jesus taught his disciples the sweet grace of humility, by checking their ambitious contest for superiority, and still more forcibly by condescending himself to wash their feet. Here, with much emotion, he predicted the treachery of Judas. Here he exhorted his disciples to mutual love. Here he foretold the fall

of Peter. Here he instituted that symbolical rite of his religion which we still celebrate in grateful remembrance of its Founder, and which “shews forth his death until he come.” Here, and on his way to the garden of Gethsemane, whither he soon resorted with his disciples, he consoled them with many “great and precious promises,” under the dismaying prospect of soon losing their beloved Lord and Master. At the same time, (that is, soon after leaving Jerusalem, and probably near the Mount of Olives), “he lifted up his eyes to heaven” and prayed, with all the ardour of paternal affection, for his disciples; and not for them only, but for all his followers—for us, my brethren, if we are among that happy number.

Such were some of the most striking incidents which marked that interesting scene of our Saviour’s parting interview with his disciples. For, alas! soon after this, Judas betrayed him, and they all fled. And now, how true and forcible does the declaration of St. John appear! “When Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” It was this affectionate regard of Christ for his disciples which formed the most conspicuous trait of the scene I have just been describing. It was this which led him to

utter the words of our text: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." And it is this, my brethren, to which I am anxious to direct your earnest attention, by considering, first, The sources of that anxiety which filled the hearts of the Apostles; and, secondly, The various consolations which our Saviour afforded them.

I. Let us consider the sources of that anxiety which filled the hearts of the Apostles. These were various, and all calculated to overwhelm them with grief and dismay.

During the paschal supper Jesus was "troubled in spirit," and said, "Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say, Lord, is it I?" "They were exceeding sorrowful;" trembling, no doubt, each one, at the possibility of being abandoned of God, to the weakness of their own resolution, to the force of powerful temptations, and thus to the dreadful guilt of traitorously delivering up their Lord to his enemies. They were sorrowful thus to learn that their little band contained so hardened and desperate a sinner. What disgrace would it cast on their whole body! How would the world scoff at their Divine Master; impiously questioning,

on the one hand, his wisdom in selecting for an intimate friend so base and faithless a miscreant, and, on the other, the truth of his Messiahship, thus to be betrayed by one who had enjoyed the best opportunity of becoming acquainted with his real character! They were exceeding sorrowful at the pain which such treachery would give to Jesus. They mingled their grief with his. To be betrayed by one on whom he had conferred the dignity of an Apostle, to whom he had entrusted the treasury of himself and flock, and whom he had always treated with gracious condescension and love! How must such diabolical ingratitude have wrung the heart of the mild and affectionate Jesus! No doubt his countenance disclosed the emotions of his troubled spirit. The disciples, sympathising with his affliction, “were exceeding sorrowful.”

Again; Christ had told them that Satan had desired to have them, that he might sift them as wheat. He even predicted their temporary defection in these words—“All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered.” This, and the certainty of Peter’s disgraceful denial of his Lord, no doubt filled them with sorrow. True, they all vehemently protested that they would rather die than deny their Master. But this very vehemence was the ardour of per-

turbation and anxiety. A moment's cool reflection would lead them to distrust themselves, to tremble and to grieve at the declaration of Christ.

Again; the prospect of our Saviour's speedy and ignominious death was to the disciples a source of fearful dread and sorrow. He had assured them of its certainty in the most explicit manner. They could have no hope of his escape from this awful and distressing scene. It was full in their view; and its very horror was enhanced by the obscurity which yet hung over it, and by their ignorance of its design and consequences. It was near at hand, and they must soon feel its bitterness. Gloomy, indeed, were their apprehensions, and painful beyond description the emotions which now filled the breasts of the Apostles. They were about to lose the protection of an Almighty Friend; of one who commanded the wave, and it was still; who said, "Lazarus come forth," and the dead burst the bars of the tomb; who had under his control all the powers of nature, and even the malevolent passions of wicked men. Beneath the covert of his wing they had always felt safe and fearless. Left by him, a little flock, timid, forlorn, as sheep without a shepherd, they were about to be exposed to the scoffs and persecution of an insult-

ing world. Yea, even our Saviour had told them, "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Well might each one exclaim, in the bitterness of his soul, "My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me." Thus, also, in one hour were to be blasted all their hopes of the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom upon earth: for, in common with their countryman, they had entertained the thought, even till this time, that the Messiah would be a great temporal prince, the deliverer of their nation, the restorer of its ancient splendor and dominion, and the monarch of the whole earth. They were even looking forward (alas! such was their weak and wicked attachment to this world,) to posts of authority and honour under Jesus Christ. Even in the very chamber where the passover was celebrated, "there was a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." Jesus rebuked their unhallowed contest, and afterwards explained to them, more fully than he had ever done before, the nature of his kingdom and the design of his death. Still they were men; and although thus taught the spirituality of that cause which they had espoused, great must

have been their surprise and disappointment at thus losing at once all hopes of what good men are too apt to covet, a share of worldly rank and honour.

Further; they were about to lose the immediate instruction of their Divine Teacher. How often had they hung upon his lips, who spake as never man spake! How often had they admired the dignity and majesty with which he spake! How often had they wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, and felt astonishment at his understanding and answers! How had all his precepts been recommended by their purity; his reasoning by its force; his parables by their aptness; his reproofs by their mildness; his warnings by their solemnity; his manner of instruction by affability and condescension; and his whole eloquence by a beautiful and sublime simplicity! Let it be recollected that to them, too, "it was given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom." They were the babes, the ignorant and unlettered men, to whom were revealed those sacred truths which are hid from the wise and prudent. And if there is a sacred satisfaction in having the eyes of the understanding purged from that film which sin hath spread over them, and opened to receive the pure and cheering beams of Divine truth; to look

abroad upon the moral world thus illuminated by the Light of Heaven, and observe its beautiful order and harmony; then did this satisfaction eminently belong to the disciples of our Lord. How great, then, must have been their grief at the prospect of parting with him, in whom were "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!"

Again; by the death of Christ his disciples would lose the holy pleasure which they enjoyed in contemplating a Pattern of perfect moral excellence, and of loving Him who exhibited it with a pure and holy affection. Their hearts, indeed, had remains of selfishness and sin; but they had been touched by Divine Grace. They knew what it was to love Jesus for his intrinsic worth. They saw in him the "glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" and although their notions concerning his Divinity seem to have been for the most part imperfect and obscure till after his ascension, yet they saw the glimmerings of this truth, and felt that profound veneration and reverential love which it was calculated to inspire. Indeed, in the very chapter from which our text is taken, Jesus says to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father: how sayest thou, then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" The disciples, therefore,

no doubt took a complacent delight—a delight of the same kind with that which pervades the breasts of the redeemed in heaven—in contemplating the spotless purity and excellence, the Divine perfection and majesty, of our Saviour's character. This object of their veneration and love was soon to be removed from their sight, and in a way, too, which seemed to them most awful and mysterious. The Messiah, the expected Deliverer of his people, the Desire of all nations—he who their Scriptures taught them was “the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace”—was about to be delivered into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer a most cruel and ignominious death. What perplexity and doubt, what grief and dismay, what fear and horror must have seized upon their minds! Such was the disconsolate situation of the disciples on the night immediately preceding the crucifixion of their Lord. It called for all his compassion. He was ready to afford it. He bound up their broken hearts; and this, too, at a time when his own soul was agonizing at the prospect of his approaching sufferings. Yes, my brethren, he neglected his own sorrow, that he might sooth their's: “having loved his own, he loved them unto the end.”

II. This brings me to the second head of my

discourse, which is to exhibit the various consolations that our Saviour afforded his disciples. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." Confidence in himself—in his power, his wisdom, and his goodness—even that same implicit trust which they reposed in God, he proposes to them as the only sure foundation of peace to their distracted souls. To convince them of his title to this confidence, and to encourage them to its cordial and unreserved exercise, he gives them "exceeding great and precious promises," and unfolds to them the nature of his kingdom, and the design and consequences of his death. Let us attend to these topics more particularly.

He encourages them under the prospect of personal suffering, by shewing them, that in this they will but share the fate of their Master, and "suffer for righteousness sake." "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Clad, therefore, for the conflict, with the armour of conscious rectitude, they might fearlessly follow, even to death, the great Captain of

their salvation, who was to be made “perfect through suffering,” and to obtain a complete victory over all his enemies—“spoiling principalities and powers, making a shew of them openly, and triumphing over them.” Fully able, therefore, would he be to afford them his continual protection and support. And this he promised them—“I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.” “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.” With God, therefore, and his Son occupying their hearts, truly the disciples had need to fear no evil. Go forth, then, ye little flock! “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus your Lord.” “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will keep thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” “The Lord is with you, as a mighty terrible one; therefore your persecutors shall tremble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed, for they shall not prosper; their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.”

Besides, our Saviour taught his disciples, that

these very afflictions which they dreaded would serve to purify them; that their trials would wean their affections from this world, and “work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”

Again; Christ promised the Apostles, that they should be invested with the power of working miracles, even greater than those which he wrought, and that “whatsoever they should ask in his name, that would he do, that the Father might be glorified in the Son.” With these divine resources—calculated, on the one hand, to command in some good degree the respect and dread of their enemies, and, on the other, to inspire the disciples with confidence in that God who heareth prayer, and furnishes grace and strength equal to the day of trial—they had good reason to banish all fear and despondency from their minds.

Further; they were assured by Christ, that after his departure he would send unto them, from the Father, another Comforter, even the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth. This Divine Agent, they were taught, would supply the bodily pre-

sence of their Lord. He would testify of Christ: he would teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance. He would give them “ a mouth and wisdom, which all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay or resist.” He would fortify them against the trials to which they might be exposed. He would inspire them with hope and peace in believing, and cheer them all their way through this thorny world, to those peaceful mansions “ where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.”

Again; our Saviour took special care to convince the disciples, that his death was voluntary, and in strict accordance with the purposes of God—and to unfold to them, in some degree, its design and consequences. Thus he endeavoured to do away, in their minds, the “ offence of his cross.” “ I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father.” “ Truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined.” “ Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” “ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away.” “ In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto

myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

“ Because I live, ye shall live also.”

Thus did he, with the most assiduous condescension, dispel the perplexity of their minds. Thus did he pierce the cloud of portentous obscurity which overshadowed the mount of crucifixion, and through its parted gloom reveal to the eye of Faith the bright regions of immortal bliss.

Such were the consolations which our Saviour afforded his disciples in the hour of anguish. Yes, said he, with lips breathing comfort most tender and soothing—“ These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” “ Peace I leave with you—my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

Thus, my Christian brethren, I have exhibited to you, though in a very imperfect manner, a most endearing trait of our Saviour’s character, which shone forth so conspicuously on the night immediately preceding his crucifixion. You have seen portrayed the affectionate regard of Christ for his disciples, in the cheering nature of the consolations which he afforded them. Mark, I pray you, these things. “ Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day: for it

is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life." This compassionate Saviour still lives. "Ye have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens—Jesus the Son of God." "He can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities: for he was in all points tempted like as ye are, yet without sin." "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Never, then, let your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Never:—not under the pressure of your past guilt: "Christ hath redeemed you to God by his blood:"—not when beset with temptation: "he is able to succour them that are tempted:"—not when called to great trials of affliction: rejoice the rather, "inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy:"—not on the bed of death: he "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" that "he might destroy him that had the power of death; that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage." When you pass through the last scene of suffering, fear no evil. "The Lord shall be with you, his rod and his staff shall comfort you." The hope of soon being with Christ, and of seeing him as he is, shall be to you "as

an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast."

"Never, then, let your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid;" "for all things are yours: whether life or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

Such, my brethren, are the strong consolations which the Saviour now affords to all who put their trust in him. And does he afford them, as he once did, to fortify his disciples against insult and persecution—against imprisonment and death? Are they now necessary to cheer the heart of the Christian at midnight, in his dungeon, that he may sing praises to his God; to make serene the soul of the martyr, that, when stoned to death, he may calmly resign his spirit to Jesus, and pray for his very murderers?

No, my brethren: "the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places; we enjoy a goodly heritage." Our religion has not now to dread the dungeon or the stake. The little Galilean band has become a mighty people. Christianity is honourable in the earth. Its present triumphs are astonishing. It has swayed momentous decisions, regarding its dearest interests, in the legislative halls of the most powerful European nation. "Kings have become its nursing-fathers and queens its nursing-mothers." The day is already dawning when

Jesus shall take to himself his great power; “and the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.”

Few and insignificant, then, my brethren, are your trials, when compared with those of the Apostles. And yet you have consolations strong as their's. Who hath thus made you to differ? Who is it that thus requires, as the test of your obedience, not that you should lay down your life for his sake, but that you cherish his graces in your hearts; that you adorn his doctrines by your life; that you keep yourselves “unspotted from the world;” that you act with faithful and zealous industry in dispersing the benefits of his Gospel to “all who are ready to perish”—to your families, your friends, your neighbours, your country, and the world? Who calls you to this delightful service? Who promises you, as the reward of it, “a crown of glory that fadeth not away?” Who has provided for you, in all the trials and difficulties you may have to encounter, the most abundant consolation and support? It is Jesus Christ—still the affectionate Saviour—still loving his own even unto the end. To him, then, render the entire homage of your hearts. Let your obedience to his precepts, and your at-

tachment to his cause, be the proof of your love and gratitude. So shall he guide you safely through the pilgrimage of this world, to the holy city above. There shall he “ feed you, and shall lead you unto the living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.”

DISCOURSE IX.

COLOSS. iii. 23.

*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord,
and not unto men.*

A VERY considerable restraint is imposed upon the conduct of men by a regard to their own safety and convenience in this world. Not a few feel within their breasts the ragings of lust, envy, avarice, ambition, malice, revenge, or rapine; and would delight to gratify these passions in their full scope, were they not deterred from it by the dread of losing property, reputation, or life. Some who are called by the world “very good and very honest men;” who are kind, industrious, benevolent, and honourable; who pass gently through life, enjoying a full share of respect and confidence; even some of these are all the while playing a part—mere hypocrites, who fear not God, nor regard man, except so far as is agreeable to their own private interest.

Nay, my hearers! this sad degeneracy of human nature does not stop here; for it is found even among Christians: and the most pious are sometimes actuated by motives which they would blush to acknowledge before the world. So true it is, that all morality is defective without piety toward God; and that a fair external decorum may exist, as the pharisaical righteousness of old, beautiful perhaps to the eye, but, like a whited sepulchre, concealing a mass of death and putrefaction. The fact is, there is no right conduct; none that is acceptable in the sight of God; none that is worthy of our confidence and love, but what proceeds from a heart renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. And so long as we direct our intercourse among our fellow-men merely by what are called the rules of common honesty and morality; so long as we keep out of view our allegiance to the dread Sovereign of the universe, in the most minute concerns and duties of life; so long, in fine, as we remain unrenewed in the temper of our minds, and neglect to act from a principle of love to God, and to the souls of those around us; so long, let our external deportment be what it may, we are building our hopes of safety upon the sand, and have reason to fear lest we meet with final and irremediable destruction. These solemn truths are every where

inculcated in Scripture; but in no part of it more explicitly and forcibly than in our text: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men." While we attempt to discover the true import of this command, may the Spirit of Truth enable us to examine ourselves most faithfully, to see whether we do indeed recognise its authority, and conform our conduct to its holy requisitions!

I propose to consider very briefly, 1st, The circumstances under which the words of the text were written, and the character of those to whom they were addressed: 2dly, To examine the nature of the command which they contain; and, 3dly, The extent of this command.

I. Let us consider the circumstances under which the text was written, and the character of those to whom it was addressed.—St. Paul was visited, near the close of his first confinement at Rome, by Epaphras, a member of the church planted at Colosse. From him the Apostle learned the condition of the Christians in that large and flourishing city. They had, most probably, received the rudiments of the religion of Jesus from Paul himself, and were converted, by his preaching, to the faith. He felt, no doubt, a lively interest in their welfare. He saw them like

a handful of corn upon the top of the mountains ; a weak and defenceless band in the midst of a vast pagan people. To animate and encourage them in their Christian course, and to guard them against falling into error and temptation, he sends them the Epistle from which the text is taken. In drawing it to a close, he is mindful to enjoin upon them the importance of a strict attention to all the duties which they owed to their fellow-men : for he well knew that the religion which he taught was a religion of kindness and love, serving not only to prepare men for the future world ; but also, in this, enabling them to adorn their several stations and conditions in life, with the graces of an honest, upright, and benevolent demeanour. In this advice he did not overlook the lowest of his fellow-Christians. “ Servants,” says he, “ obey in all things your masters according to the flesh ; not with eye-service, as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God : and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance ; for ye serve the Lord Christ.” The persons thus addressed were slaves ; subject, no doubt, some of them to the tyranny of austere and cruel masters. Their occupation was of the most servile kind, Yet the Apostle is careful to teach them, that it

is not enough to regulate their conduct by the common rules of honesty and prudence. Whatsoever they do they must do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.

II. I proceed to examine the nature of the command in our text.

In order the better to understand its true import, let us consider, first, what it forbids; and, secondly, what it enjoins.

It forbids us in general to do any thing as unto men; that is, to act, under any circumstances, with a mere regard to any influence of our fellow-men upon our safety or happiness. They can affect our temporal welfare in a thousand different ways: they can aid us by their friendship: they can injure us by their hatred: they can build up our worldly fortune by all the arts of patronage and support: they can load us with caresses in private life, and crown our reputation with honour. They can trample us also under foot, and can consign us to poverty and shame. How hard is it, my brethren, to resist such mighty influences; to rise superior to the fear or favour of man; to acquire that Christian heroism and independence of character which will enable us to abandon, as mercenary and sinful, all motives of conduct terminating in a mere regard to our earthly comfort and security!

But let us consider, a little more particularly, what these motives are which our text forbids.

1. It forbids, as a sinful motive of conduct, a regard to mere reciprocity of interest.—One act of kindness, according to the maxims of the world, deserves a return of favour. What think you, my brethren, is the extent of this principle? How many make it their sole rule of intercourse with their fellow-men! How few are free from its influence! How many kind words and actions, adorned with the shew of disinterested love and affection, are dealt out, like the goods of traffic, on the mere score of barter! An equivalent must be paid for them—good measure too, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over.

But how different a lesson of conduct did our Saviour enjoin upon his followers! Hear his own words—“Give to him that asketh thee; and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do

not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

2. Our text forbids, as a sinful motive of action, a mere regard to the reputation which our good conduct may procure us in the world. — There is a homage which vice pays to virtue. There is a foresight which calculates, on the mere principles of loss and gain, that apparent honesty is the best policy. There is a prudence which is wise enough to cover the vilest passions of the breast with the semblance of virtue. There is a vanity which delights in the esteem of the good, and is willing to enjoy the reputation of moral worth, by preserving a fair outside. Indeed, it is to be feared, that many of those whom we call moral men—nay, that some who are deemed pious—maintain such appearances simply from a regard to their character. They know that public opinion is in favour of an honest and Christian demeanour; and they keep within the bounds of decency, or they affect activity in doing good, from a simple regard to their own private interest, and to enjoy the honour with which virtue is always adorned among the wise and good.

But here, again, listen to the words of our Saviour: the precept was given in reference to a par-

ticular class of external duties, but its spirit applies equally to all. “Take heed, that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.”

3. Our text forbids, as a sinful motive of conduct, a mere regard to any evil which our fellow-men may inflict upon us.—The dread of human laws imposes no inconsiderable restraint upon the most abandoned. The jail and the gibbet are arrayed with terrors, which it is hard for those who are influenced by no principle of honesty or honour to resist. But, alas! it is not only among the dregs of human society that we find men governed by this servile spirit of fear: its operations are more extensive than one would at first imagine. The dread of shame or disgrace is felt by all ranks of men, and produces no inconsiderable share of that external decorum which we observe in the world. In proof of this, let us look, my hearers, into our own hearts. How often do we ask ourselves the question—“What will be thought and said of this or that course of conduct? Conscience and duty impel me to it; but if I pursue it, shall I not be injured in my property, reputation, or life?” On the other hand, how often does inclination prompt to sin, while nothing deters from the commission of it but the fear of man! “Public opi-

nion will in this be against me: on the whole, I shall lose even in my worldly interest by yielding to the suggestions of my sinful heart. I will choose the least of two evils, and abstain from the appearance of crime, that I may avoid disgrace or punishment." Such motives, whatever shape they may assume, however subtle and refined may be their workings in the human breast, are denounced in our text as unworthy and sinful. Nor is the conduct that proceeds from them at all acceptable in the sight of God, how much soever it may appear like obedience to his will.

I have thus considered three classes of motives which are forbidden in our text—a mere regard to reciprocity of interest, to the reputation of good conduct in the world, or to any evil which our fellow-men may inflict upon us.

Let us now consider what the text enjoins as the only proper motive of conduct: "Whatever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord."—It cannot be denied that God, as our Creator, our Preserver, our constant Benefactor, and our rightful Sovereign, has a claim upon our perpetual allegiance and service. We are his property, and shall he not do what he pleases with his own? We are his children, and shall we not render him a filial respect and obedience? We are his subjects, and shall we not submit to the wholesome

laws of his empire? Now he requires us to love him with our whole soul and strength and mind, and that whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to his glory. It is true, we cannot be constantly engaged in immediate acts of devotion to God. Our present state of being does not permit this, nor is it required by our holy religion. We have much to do with our fellow-men in the various relations of life. We must have food and raiment. Domestic cares devolve upon the father of a family, and civil duties upon the magistrates and rulers of the land. But our text teaches, that all these pursuits must be sanctified by a spirit of love to God, and of obedience to his will;—because, by thus performing the duties of life, we keep constantly in view our allegiance to our Maker and his dominion over us : because, by thus performing them, we imitate the example of Him who is set forth as a pattern to all believers, and whose chief object was to do the will of him that sent him ; because, by thus performing them, we are voluntarily and cheerfully subservient, in some humble degree, to the wise designs of Providence, in relation to the government and economy of this world ; because, by thus performing them, we purify and ennoble every motive of conduct, are guarded against what is vile and selfish and sinful, and become meet for that future world of bliss, the

delight of whose inhabitants is to do the will of God ; in fine, because by thus performing the duties of life, we let our light so shine before men, that others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven. Thus to act is to do all things heartily, as to the Lord.

III. Let us consider, thirdly, the extent of the command in our text: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men."—Most men are willing to acknowledge a general obligation of obedience to the will of God. They professedly recognize him as the Sovereign of the universe ; as the Controller, by his providence, of this lower world ; as the final Judge of their conduct ; and as that Being whom they ought, in some way or other, to serve. But, alas ! they honour him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him. Proclaim in their hearing the injunction of Scripture, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God," and they call it a hard saying, and complain of its Author as an austere master. But surely, if God has a right to any of our services, he has a right to them all. If we are bound to act from a principle of love and obedience to him in the more important concerns of life, we are equally bound to do so in those of less moment. The command of the text, there-

fore, applies to every event and circumstance of our lives. In all, in each of these events, however minute and trifling, we are required to act, either with a direct reference to God, enabling us to realize his immediate presence, his lawful authority over us, and the constant claim which he has to our cheerful and grateful obedience; or, at least, with a prevailing temper of mind to exhibit and prove the existence of such principles in the breast.

Having thus attempted to unfold the meaning of the text, let us attend to a few reflections by way of improvement.

In the first place, let no one complain of the injunction of our text, that it is too austere, that it lays too great a restraint on human motives and conduct, that an obedience to it would rob this life of all interest and importance, and that its strictness makes no allowance for the frailties and imperfections of our nature. I say, let no one thus complain who considers the condition of those persons, to whom the command—"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men"—was originally addressed. Think of the slaves at Colosse—poor, degraded, abject—deprived of what we deem the greatest of all earthly blessings, Liberty—condemned to a perpetual, irksome bondage—and subject, no doubt, some of

them, to the iron rule of a cruel master. They are taught by the Apostle, that it is not enough to regulate their conduct by the wary principles of mere prudence ; that something more is necessary than common morality and honesty ; that God requires of them, because they are his servants, a strict obedience to their earthly masters, and a performance of whatever they do, however irksome or servile, from a principle of love to God and conformity to his will.

Now, was all this required of the poor slaves at Colosse, and shall we hope to excuse ourselves from this injunction ;—we who enjoy so many privileges ; we who breathe the air of freedom, who taste the comforts of domestic and social life, who have access to a thousand sources of enjoyment, and of intellectual and religious improvement ? Alas ! such is the depravity of man, if God load him with kindness, he becomes the more ungrateful, and complains of that as a hard service which requires of him to act from a principle of love and obedience to his greatest Benefactor. But this service is not a hard one. My brethren, let us appeal to our own consciences. Which is the hardest service ? to serve God or Mammon ?—to do whatever we do, as unto men ; to act from a regard to the short-lived influence of our fellow-men upon our safety or happiness ; to seek the gratification of low and sensual appe-

tites, the acquisition of perishable riches, or the enjoyment of a reputation which in a few years will sleep with our dust in the tomb?—or to live as becomes rational and immortal beings; to love and serve in all our conduct that infinite Spirit who sheds down, even in this world, upon the meek and lowly followers of his Son, a peace which passeth understanding, and who opens to their view beyond the grave the prospect of perfect and unfading bliss? I repeat it; let conscience answer whether it is indeed a hard service to do all things heartily as to the Lord.

In the second place, The subject holds forth an awful admonition to such as hope finally to be accepted of God, because they have in this life never swerved from the strictest principles of an honest and decent morality. How many, it is to be feared, go down to the grave relying on this broken reed for support! If such be the case of any of you, my hearers, I pray you compare your motives of conduct with the command of the text: “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” The nature and extent of this precept has been explained, and its authority and reasonableness established. It has been given us as a rule of conduct by that holy and dread Being, at whose bar we must all one day appear, to render an account of the deeds done in the body. Have we complied, do we comply,

with its reasonable injunctions? If not, where shall we look for safety? To what covert shall we resort from the storm of Divine Justice, in that day of awful retribution, when “the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat;” when “the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; when he shall sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats?” What, then, will be our condition; what will be our plea, when the books are opened, and judgment passed upon all according to their works? Shall we dare to plead a strict obedience to that Law of God, which commands us, in the words of the text, “to do whatsoever we do heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men?” Or shall we not have to confess, that much of our conduct, perhaps in some instances all, has proceeded from a selfish and sinful regard to the mere favour of man? Where, then, will be the refuge of the mere moralist; of him who has neglected to love and serve his God; of him who, trusting in his own righteousness, has despised that Saviour whose blood alone can redeem us from the curse of the law, and deliver us from a doom only as horrible as the guilt of those who deserve it?

Finally, Forget not, my Christian brethren, the

slaves of Colosse, nor the precept given them by the Apostle. Compare your condition with theirs, and let every principle of gratitude awaken your love and obedience to God. You are not called to endure the trials and sufferings which every where awaited the primitive disciples of Christ. Many a thorn which made them bleed and suffer is removed from your path toward heaven. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." And remember, for your consolation and encouragement, that "of the Lord ye shall receive thereward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ."

DISCOURSE X.

JOHN v. 39.

Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me.

THIS command was originally given to the Jews by our Saviour. His object was to convince them that he was the true Messiah, by an appeal to their own sacred writings. And had this stubborn and unbelieving people obeyed this injunction in its true import; had they read with candour what was written in their Scriptures respecting Christ; had they, in doing this, felt the spirit of their monarch David, when he prayed, “ Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;” then would many have been ready to say, with Philip, “ We have found him of whom Moses, in the law, and the prophets did write; Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Then would many have

resorted unto him as the true Messiah, and believed on him to the saving of their souls. But, alas! "that people's heart was waxen gross, and their eyes they had closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted." A few were open to conviction; but we have reason to fear that most of those who listened to our Saviour's instruction, and, perhaps, of those who heard the solemn injunction in our text, resisted unto the last the influence of Divine truth. Their doom has been fixed by God;—we will not judge them. Let us, rather, my hearers, consider how much greater light we enjoy, and, of course, how much more aggravated will be our condemnation, if we close our eyes against that truth which is able to make us wise, through faith, unto salvation. We possess in our own language the word of God. Beside the Law and the Prophets, we have an additional Record, full of Divine instruction, and calculated to persuade every candid and sober mind of the truth and importance of the Christian Religion. The evidence, now, of Christ's Messiahship, and of the truth of what he taught, is overwhelming. It beams from every page of the New Testament, and extorted the confession of a celebrated infidel, that if Socrates, one of the most

irreproachable of the heathen sages, died like a philosopher, Jesus Christ died like a God. Indeed, the conscience of every one who has been at the pains to peruse carefully what the Evangelists have recorded of our Saviour, bears witness that he was Divine, and that he is the only Refuge for our lost and ruined world. Let us apply, then, to ourselves the precept in our text, feeling that this day Jesus Christ, in fact, says to each one of us, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me."

In further directing your attention to these words, I propose, first, to consider the importance of searching the Scriptures; and, secondly, with what spirit this search should be adopted.

I. The importance of searching the Scriptures is manifest from two considerations. It is the only way to acquire a correct knowledge of what concerns the welfare of our immortal souls.—The habitual performance of this duty is absolutely necessary to the Christian's growth in grace.—Let us notice each of these particulars.

1. Searching the Scriptures is the only way to acquire a correct knowledge of what concerns our immortal souls.—Think, for a moment, my brethren, of the condition of those who are destitute

of the word of God. Cast your eyes upon those who inhabit the distant islands of the sea, or roam in the wilds of the Western world, or dwell in the pagan regions of the East. Select from among them the most enlightened of their wise men. Place him alongside of some little child of this congregation, who has been taught the first elements of the oracles of God. Let them converse together on moral and religious subjects. Let them speak of that great Being who made the heavens and the earth, who breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, who is the Father of our immortal spirits, the observer of all our conduct, and at whose bar we must one day appear to give an account for all the deeds which we have done here in the body. Which of the two, think you, would speak most worthily and correctly of God? The pagan philosopher would have reason to blush at his ignorance, and to acknowledge himself capable of being taught the most sublime and important truths, even "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings."—My brethren, we should be as ignorant as the Pagan, had we never listened to the instructions of the Bible. Our minds, like his, would be covered with gross darkness in regard to all moral subjects. Do you require proof of this? It is furnished by every page of history; and by all we

know of the religious knowledge of the wisest nations of heathen antiquity. They who have carefully read the most ingenious writings of pagan philosophy will assure you, that their notions of God, of virtue, and of a future state, are miserably low and erroneous. True, they had some glimmerings of the truth; but these were few and feeble, and all of them were reflected from the Jewish Scriptures, or from the instructions given by God to the patriarchs of old, and transmitted through tradition.

But we need not resort to the experience of ages to establish the position that our knowledge of Divine truth must be derived from the word of God. Let us examine our own minds. Whence did we derive our acquaintance with religious truth? Surely it was not born with us. We have acquired it according as our mental powers have gradually strengthened and become capable of receiving it. Did we, then, originate it by our own powers of thought? How, for instance, did we obtain the knowledge of a God? By considering without any instruction the works of his hands which surround us? Did these lead our minds to the great Maker of all things with no help from others, from our parents and instructors? Alas! so far from seeing God in the various displays of his goodness in the heavens and in the

earth, how did our youthful minds start back from this serious subject, when it was proposed to us; and how difficult was it, after all, to teach us to form any just conception of the great Jehovah! No, my brethren; if we look back upon the history of our own minds, we shall see that we are indebted to instruction for all that we know of God and a future state, and that this instruction was grounded upon the holy word of God. If, then, to know that dread Being, whose law denounces the most severe penalty against us, because we are sinners; if to learn the real state of our moral condition, and on what our eternal safety depends; if to hear of that Divine Saviour who poured out his blood on the Cross, that he might save all who put their trust in him; if to be taught that there is a Holy Spirit, whose influences can change our corrupt and rebellious hearts, and prepare us for a world of purity and peace; if to have set before us the awful realities of death, judgment, and eternity;—if these are solemn and momentous truths, in which we are all most deeply interested, then it is important to search the sacred Scriptures in which they are contained; and, if we neglect to do this, we rush blindfold to perdition.

2. The habitual reading of the sacred Scriptures is absolutely necessary to the Christian's growth in grace.—This is evident, first, from the

nature of regeneration. The Holy Spirit is indeed the proper and efficient cause of this great moral change in the hearts of sinners. But he acts through the instrumentality of means. And what are these means? Let the Scriptures answer. St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." St. James says, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." St. Peter says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Divine truth, then—even that truth to which we can every day have access in the pages of Holy Writ—is the instrument which the Spirit of God uses in renovating the depraved heart. Now, my Christian friends, will you neglect the perusal of that sacred truth, to which, under God, you are indebted for the hope you may venture to entertain of being born of God? Shall that word, whose effulgence first shone in the dark places of your understanding, no longer be necessary as "a lamp to your feet and a light to your path, to guide you in the way everlasting?" If you neglect daily and prayerfully to peruse the oracles of God, you will soon learn

by sad experience, that the fervour of your first love will decline; clouds and darkness will obscure your spiritual day; and, “if the light that is in you become darkness, how great will be that darkness!”

That the habitual reading of the sacred Scripture is absolutely necessary to the Christian's growth in grace, is evident from the express declarations and commands of Scripture. Hear what our Saviour says: “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” In the last very affectionate interview which he had with his disciples, he thus said, “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” And in the memorable prayer which he offered up soon after, is this petition addressed to his heavenly Father, “Sanctify them through thy truth—thy word is truth.” The early converts to Christianity were urged by Saint Peter, “as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word;” and for what purpose?—that they might “grow thereby.” We have also this precept, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom:” and, to sum up all, the express declaration of an Apostle, that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for

instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

II. Under my second general head, I proposed to consider with what spirit it becomes us to search the Scriptures.

1. First, we should be fully persuaded that they are indeed the word of God, and that in them he as truly addresses us, as if we heard his voice speaking to us from heaven.—No one need want proof of the divinity of the Bible, who lives in this Christian land. The evidences of its inspiration are complete and overwhelming, and within the reach of even the most illiterate who will be at the pains to read them. Pious and ingenious writers have comprised these evidences in a small compass, and rendered them accessible to all.

And here I cannot but entreat parents to consider, how important it is that those children, whom God has committed to their care, should be early instructed in some of the most easy and familiar proofs of the truth of our holy religion. This will be the surest guard, under the blessing of God, against the attacks of infidelity with which they may meet in their riper years. It will inspire them, especially such as are curious to inquire into the reason of things, with a sober and per-

manent reverence for the word of God, and will convince them how great must be the depravity, even of their youthful hearts, in resisting that truth which comes so forcibly recommended to their understanding and conscience.

But to return; I observed, that, in searching the Scriptures, we should be fully persuaded that they are indeed the word of God. Now, without insisting on the external evidences of their truth, to which I have alluded, there is enough in the very pages of the New Testament, to render all doubt and unbelief most criminal. Read them attentively. Compare their contents with your own hearts. Soon, unless pride and obstinacy darken the understanding—soon does the sinner, like Felix, tremble before the authority of Divine Truth. He is obliged to confess that the word of God is indeed “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and that it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” But your faith, my Christian brethren, stands on a still firmer foundation. You have, I trust, realized the fulfilment of the Saviour’s promise—“If any man will do his will, (the will of God) he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” You have proved the truth of His words,

who spake as never man spake, by the experience of your own hearts. When you open, therefore, the pages of the sacred book, listen to the instruction of your Heavenly Father, with the most implicit confidence in his veracity, and with the full assurances that He, and not man, speaks to you in the record which he has placed in your hands.

2. Secondly, We should search the Scriptures with a docile and humble spirit.—If we have ever felt the gross moral darkness which sin has cast over our minds: if we are sensible how liable we are to err in forming just conceptions of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ: if, in short, we are persuaded that God alone can teach us, what is our duty and our truest happiness;— then shall we be prepared to sit as humble disciples at the feet of Jesus, and learn of him, who also was meek and lowly in heart. But with how different a temper do many, even those who are called Christians, often approach the sacred Oracles! They rely on the strength of their own reason, and even pride themselves in having discovered truths, which perhaps God has seen fit entirely to conceal from the human mind. They reject, too, all that is mysterious, and would bring every thing to the level of their own understandings. They

are almost unwilling to walk by Faith. Such, wise and prudent in their own conceit, have to fear lest God should hide from them the knowledge of Divine Truth, and reveal it unto babes,—unto those who are willing to be taught of God, and to rest the most implicit confidence upon “Thus saith the Lord.” Bear in mind, then, that in searching the Scriptures, as well as in the performance of every other duty, “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”

3. Thirdly, This search should be conducted with a prayerful spirit.—When our Saviour met the eleven disciples at Jerusalem, just before his ascension, we are told that “he opened their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures.” And Saint Paul tells the Ephesians, that he “ceased not to make mention of them in his prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory, would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know what was the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.” So necessary is the influence of the Spirit of God upon our minds, to enable us rightly to understand the word which he has dictated! Always rely, then, on this heavenly Monitor for assistance. Supplicate the continual

communication to your minds of his wisdom and grace, when you search the Scriptures; and then you may rest assured that you will learn all truth necessary to salvation. For you have this encouragement and promise—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

In improving our subject, let us attend briefly to the two following particulars.

First. If to search the Scriptures is important, because from them alone we can derive that knowledge which is essential to the welfare of our immortal souls: if they alone furnish that spiritual food which is absolutely necessary to the Christian's growth in grace: and if it becomes us to peruse them with a spirit of faith, of humility, and of prayer; then our subject furnishes believers with a very satisfactory test of their religious character. Let us, my Christian brethren, apply it to ourselves with "fear and trembling." On the sacred pages of Revelation, we find written every thing that can animate our hopes, and alarm our fears. There we see portrayed the character of that awful and holy Being, who permits us to call him our Heavenly Father. Do we love to trace the operations of his power, his wisdom, his justice, and his grace, as recorded in his revealed

word? There we have drawn out, in living colours, the features of Him who is “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.” Do we often unfold the Gospels, that we may admire this heavenly portrait of our Divine Master? Do we endeavour to assimilate our characters to his? Do we find ourselves, in the frequent perusal of his history, imbibing more and more of his spirit; and thus “with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, do we become changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord?” Do we, with the holy monarch of Israel, delight in the law of the Lord, and meditate therein day and night? Do we, as he did, find it “perfect, converting the soul; sure, making wise the simple; right, rejoicing the heart; pure, enlightening the eyes?” Do we desire, with his ardour of affection, this letter of love, written as it were by the finger of God, more than gold, yea, than much fine gold? Is it sweeter to us than honey and the honey comb? Is it the only oracle of our faith to which we resort for instruction; the only guide of our conduct, to which we look for direction; the balm of our souls, which we use for consolation; the light, whose piercing ray we are not anxious to avoid, lest our deeds should be reprov’d, but to which we cheerfully come, that our deeds may

be made manifest, that they are wrought in God? In one word, do we daily, in the spirit of faith, of humility, and of prayer, “receive with meekness the ingrafted word;” and learn by happy experience the truth of what an inspired Apostle has declared concerning it, that it is — “the power of God to salvation?”

Finally; They who neglect the frequent and prayerful perusal of the holy Scriptures, have no reason to hope that they are interested in its “many great and precious promises.” Indeed, they have every reason to fear, lest against them will finally be executed its awful and tremendous threatenings. What would you say, my brethren, of that Son who should refuse to receive and read an epistle from his father, containing the most salutary advice and directions respecting his conduct; nay, offering to him the entire forgiveness of all his past ingratitude, and an interest in the choicest privileges and expectations of his father’s house? What would you say of that sick man, who, although on the verge of death, should decline hearing the prescriptions of his kind and affectionate physician? What would you think of that traveller, who should shut his eyes against the way-side monitor, placed to direct him in his path, and wander on careless of his journey’s end, and about to suffer perplexity, distress, and

ruin? Would you not call these persons weak, foolish; and wicked? How much wiser or better than they, are those to whom the Bible is a sealed book? Nay, are they not of all men the most unwise and sinful? Holding in their hands a revelation of the will of their Heavenly Father, they treat it with contempt and neglect. Sick, even unto death, their ear is deaf to the voice of the only Physician of their souls. Walking in the path which leads to the chambers of woe, they turn from that Guide who points the sure way to the mansions of everlasting peace. They are urged to open the sacred volume, by the express command of that Saviour, the history of whose dying love it contains. By all the light which it casts upon their condition in this life, and upon their future destiny; by all the solemn motives it holds forth, derived from every thing that is attractive in the mercy, and awful in the justice, of their final Judge, are they incited to a speedy repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, in violation of duty, in opposition to their best interests, day after day passes by, and they read any thing else but the Bible: they think and converse about any thing else rather than its sacred contents.

My dear hearers, do any of you habitually neglect the perusal of the sacred Scriptures? Con-

sider, I pray you, that there can be no stronger proof of your having no interest in the blessed hopes which they hold forth to all whose delight is in the law of the Lord. Consider, that if you finally perish, this Book, which God, in his wise providence, has denied to so many of your fellow-men; this Book, which you possess in your own language, and which, nevertheless, you treat with careless indifference, nay, with contemptuous neglect; this Book will testify against you at that dreadful day, "when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ," according to the Gospel which this very Book contains; and you will receive the aggravated condemnation of that servant "who knew his Master's will, and did not obey it." From such a doom may we all be delivered by the mercy of God! May his grace so incline us to search the Scriptures, and his Spirit so enlighten our minds in the perusal of them, that their solemn truths may be received into good and honest hearts, and bring forth fruit unto eternal life! *Amen.*

DISCOURSE XI.

JOHN VI. 44.

*No man can come to me, except the Father
which hath sent me draw him.*

PERHAPS there is scarcely any doctrine of Scripture more repugnant to the feelings of sinful man, than the necessity of a Divine influence in whatever relates to the salvation of the soul. And yet there is none, which, when rightly understood and duly appreciated, is more full of encouragement and consolation. How it happens, that we, worms of the dust, ignorant, weak, and wicked, are unwilling to be enlightened by that Being whose understanding is infinite; to be “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;” and to have him “work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure;” how this happens, is surely to be accounted for in no other way, than that sin, the most deep and dreadful, hath “darkened our foolish hearts,” rendered us blind to our own true

interest, and urged us to rush onward to perdition; refusing to be rescued by that arm which alone is mighty to save. This opposition to the doctrine of Divine influence is as various as the different shapes of sin and diversities of human character. Indeed, it often changes its form in the same breast; and, when driven from one "refuge of lies," finds a hold in some other.

1. Unbelief doubts the possibility of Divine influence.—"I can trace," says one, "within my own mind no symptoms of foreign guidance or aid. I discover there nothing but the regular and uninterrupted flow of my own thoughts, emotions, and purposes—no supernatural suggestions—nothing that is not connected with something preceding. I always act from motives, and as reason dictates, without any sudden and unaccountable starts of aversion to vice or love of virtue. Indeed, were it not so, I should cease to be free. Place me under Divine influence with regard to moral objects of thought or action, and you make me a mere machine; you destroy my responsibility to God."

2. Pride disdains this influence.—"Am I not," is its language, "the absolute sovereign of my own thoughts, affections, and conduct, and capable, as a free agent, of controlling and directing them as I please? Must I be still influenced and guided by God in the exercise of that *very* power which he

has given me, of choosing the good and refusing the evil?"

3. Self-righteousness does not want this influence.—“All the commandments of God have I kept from my youth up,” it exclaims: “what lack I yet?” Why need I be drawn by God to a reliance upon the merits of his Son—I who am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing?"

4. Slothfulness is waiting for this influence.—Its language is:—“I have nothing to do in the affair of my salvation. God alone can change the heart. He alone works in us both to will and to do. I will therefore live in hope that I shall be *compelled* to enter into the kingdom of heaven; and in the mean while, surely but little blame can attach itself to one who is thus absolutely dependent for all holiness upon the efficacy of Divine influence.”

5. Guilt, awakened by conscience, imagines that it truly longs for this influence, and murmurs because it has not received it.—“How long,” it says, “will God withhold from me the energy of his grace? My ardent wish is to be made holy and happy. I see the extreme wickedness of my own heart. I feel that I am unable to change its polluted affections. How often have I sought carefully the interposition of Divine assistance, and yet have not found it? What else can I do that I have not done?"

Such, my hearers, are some of the repugnancies which the sinner feels against the doctrine of Divine influence, and some of the perversions which he makes of it. I propose to consider them in their order, and to shew, that although some of them may, in a few instances, originate from misapprehension and mistake, yet that most of them always, and all of them often, are to be traced to the depravity of the human heart.

I. In the first place, then, Unbelief doubts the possibility of Divine influence—and why? Because it can discover no traces of this influence in its own mind, and because it deems it to be inconsistent with the freedom of human agency.

Let us attend to these two particulars.

Unbelief can discover no traces of a Divine influence in its own mind.—But surely this is a very unsatisfactory argument to prove that it has not affected the minds of others. Shall the sickly invalid, who has from his very birth, laboured under the constant pressure of lassitude and disease, be justified in concluding that no one feels the benign influence of health, because he has never been conscious of it? Strong and unequivocal is the testimony of thousands, whose clearness of apprehension, sobriety of judgment, and veracity of assertion, in all other cases, are never called in question—that they discover within themselves

a wonderful transformation of temper and conduct which manifests itself to be the effect of a Divine influence, by marks the most distinct and certain. Now, surely, it is neither the part of candour nor good sense, to deny the reality of that which is attested by the most respectable witnesses. But Infidelity is not satisfied with this reply to its objection. It starts another difficulty, more subtle and ingenious. "Every one," it says, "even the advocate for a Divine influence, who is careful to turn his view inward and examine attentively what passes within his own mind, will discover there nothing but his own thoughts, emotions, and purposes. He will soon find, that these succeed each other in a certain order; that one, as it were, grows out of some other preceding it; that all are under the guidance of his will, though subject in a certain sense to that principle of association which is one of the fundamental laws of the human mind." Now, admitting all this to be true, what does it prove? Why this precisely, and this only, that the human mind is subject to certain laws, which so control it as to produce a regular and connected train of thought and action. And is this inconsistent with the possibility of a Divine influence? *Who* gave the human mind these laws? *Who* sustains their operation? The Father of spirits. And cannot he, through the instrumentality of these laws, have access to those very souls which he supports in

being, so as to guide and direct them as he pleases? But to press the unbeliever more closely—let him tell what these laws are; what *any* laws are, whether of Providence, of Nature, or of Grace, but a certain *uniformity* of operation which the Divine Being has seen fit to adopt in the exhibition which he makes of himself to his intelligent creatures. It is this very *uniformity* which displays him, in the greatness of his strength, moving onward in silent majesty to the completion of his vast and incomprehensible purposes. And yet it is this very uniformity which leads us blind and sinful mortals to overlook, to forget, and even to deny the interposition of his power and his grace. “In him we live, and move, and have our being,” although many of the most important processes of our animal frame go on so silently, and secretly, that we are entirely unconscious of them. They go on in such exact conformity to the laws of the human body, that we are unable to discover the mode; and yet we acknowledge the reality of that Divine Agency which sustains and manages our corporeal existence. What symmetry, order, and harmony pervade the world of nature that surrounds us, from the lily of the field which unfolds its beauties by a gradual and regular process, to those vast lights in the firmament of heaven, which are there placed, and continue their accustomed rounds, “for signs, and for seasons, and for days and for years.”

Every thing goes on under the direction of what we call the Laws of Nature; and yet it is the great Creator of all things who “clothes the grass of the field,” “causes the day-spring to know his place,” “binds the sweet influence of Pleiades,” “looses the bands of Orion,” “brings forth Mazaroth in his season,” and “guides Arcturus with his sons.” Now we do not deny the influence of God upon our bodies, or upon the material world, because we see this influence only in its *effects*, or because it acts with constant and regular *uniformity*. How unwise, then, nay how wicked, is the unbeliever who rejects and treats with contempt the doctrine of a Divine influence upon the mind, simply because the mind is under the direction of regular and uniform laws of thought and action! But another difficulty is raised. “Granting,” it is said, “the possibility of a Divine influence, how is this to be reconciled with the freedom of human agency?” I answer: Just as many other apparent difficulties are to be reconciled, where one truth seems to clash with another, by establishing each on its own proper basis, by its own proper proofs; and then acknowledging, with a candid and humble mind, that we blind and erring mortals cannot fathom all the works and dispensations of the infinite and eternal Spirit. Our Saviour has expressly declared, in

the words of our text, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." These are the words of Him who, by way of eminence, called himself "The Truth." His declaration is enough to satisfy us, that God does exercise a Divine influence upon man; especially since it has been shewn, that there is nothing in this inconsistent with all that we can discover of the structure and laws of the human mind. That we are free agents, we know by our own consciousness. Here, then, each of these truths has its own proper proof; both satisfactory, both convincing; and if we reject both on account of apparent inconsistencies and difficulties, we may as well turn sceptics at once on all moral and religious subjects, nay on many subjects connected with the daily concerns and conduct of our life. Let us tremble, then, my brethren, at the thought of resisting and grieving that Spirit of grace which alone is able to draw us to Jesus Christ. Let us no longer do this by cherishing unwise and wicked doubts respecting the reality and efficacy of his influence.

II. In the second place, Pride disdains this influence. — A feeling of dependence on God, whether for temporal or spiritual good, is of all other emotions the most repugnant to the sinful

heart. Yet why should it be so? God is our Creator, our Preserver, our constant Benefactor. To him we are indebted for life, and breath, and all things. His visitation preserves our spirits. He feeds and clothes us. His bounty fills our cup, and causeth it to overflow with blessings. Should he at this moment withdraw his supporting hand, we should be blotted out from existence. Should he withhold his kindness and long-suffering, and deal with us according to our just deserts, we should cease to be prisoners of hope—we should open our eyes upon that world, where all is horror, and anguish, and despair. And yet this Being, so good, so gracious, and so merciful, receives not the homage of our dependence. Especially is the sinner prone to reject the influence and assistance of God, in what relates to the salvation of his soul. “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God—God is not in all his thoughts.” Alas! how does such conduct prove his extreme folly and guilt! How little has he yet detected of that ignorance of religious truth, under which his dark and benighted understanding labours; of that weakness and insufficiency of human resolution which is so unable to cope with temptation, which yields to the first assaults of the adversary, and is taken captive by him at his will; of that dominion of

sin within his breast which binds and enslaves him in the miserable thralldom of "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Could he once be brought to feel this his ignorance, and weakness, and guilt, and to exclaim with the humble Apostle, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God," how earnestly would he ask for, and how gratefully and devoutly would he cherish, that spirit which alone can draw the proud and rebellious to Jesus Christ! And having felt the sweet attractions of his grace, how ready would he be to say with the same Apostle, "By the grace of God, I am what I am!"

III. In the third place, Self-righteousness does not want this influence.—For others, it may indeed be necessary; for extortioners, for the unjust, for adulterers, for the poor publican; but for him who fasts and prays; who pays tithes of all that he possesses for the support of the civil and religious institutions of his country; who goes with "the multitude" to the house of God, "with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that keep holy-day;" who practises all the kind and endearing charities of life; who "lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet," in all his conduct and concerns with his fellow-men;

that *he* must be “created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works,” is what he cannot feel, and will not believe.—Behold here, my brethren, another striking proof of the depravity of the human heart, in thus opposing the necessity of a Divine influence. For what saith our text? “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” *No man*: no; not even the amiable and interesting young man of the Gospel, who fancied that he had kept all the commandments of God from his youth up, and whom Jesus, in the exercise of that social sympathy and benevolence which he had, as partaking of our human nature, regarded with a look of tenderness and love. All, all have sinned, and must be drawn by the influence of the Holy Spirit, before they will resort to Jesus Christ. Ye, then, my brethren, who “think that ye stand, take heed lest ye fall.” No longer, through ignorance of God’s righteousness, “go about to establish your own.” Acknowledge the necessity, and humbly invoke the aid, of that Divine grace which is alone efficacious to remove the film which now blinds your moral vision; to enable you to see, that, although fancying yourselves “rich and increased with goods, and in need of nothing, you are indeed wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;” and to lead you to that Saviour who

came not “ to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

IV. In the fourth place, Slothfulness is waiting for this influence. — Forgetting that we are commanded to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; unmindful of the precepts, “ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you—Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded”—the slothful sinner excuses his delay and palliates his guilt by pleading in his defence the very doctrine which it is the object of this discourse to establish. “ God alone,” he says, “ can change the heart, and therefore I will wait for his influence.” But “ the desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour.” He sits down satisfied in his guilt: no alarms of conscience, no contrition for sin, no dread of futurity can arouse him from this slumber of death. Not even the cry of “ Lord, save me,” escapes his lips. And are you sure, my fellow-sinner, that you have always been thus *waiting* for the Spirit of God to touch your heart? Have you never felt his monitory suggestions and influences? Has no religious truth of deep and interesting import been dropped within your hearing by a friend, or pressed upon your attention from the sacred desk by the ministers of

God's word? Has no salutary counsel of a watchful and tender parent been given with all the earnest solicitude of one whose life was bound up in your spiritual life? Has no remarkable dispensation of Providence removed from you some one who was dear to you as the apple of your eye, or some other of your own age, and in your own circumstances, who you little thought would thus become the victim of the king of terrors? Or has it never brought yourself to the borders of the grave? Have you never felt yourself to be guilty in the sight of God, and trembled at the prospect of being summoned to appear at his bar, there to render an account for all the deeds which you have done here in the body? Has no retired walk, no midnight musing led your thoughts heavenward, and inclined you at least to hope that you might be interested in Him who is the Friend of sinners? If all, if any, if even *one* of these causes, have ever aroused you to sober and serious reflection with regard to the eternal destiny of your soul, then you have not been always waiting for the influence of the Spirit of God. Then it has striven with your spirit. And it is because you have resisted and grieved its sacred influence, that you are now sunk in the arms of spiritual death. What do I say? Perhaps even now this Spirit of grace once more deigns to descend and touch your heart. Oh! yield your-

self to its controul. Pray constantly and earnestly, that it may never again leave your breast; that it may enlighten your understanding, that it may purify your heart, that it may draw you from every other object to Jesus Christ.

V. In the last place, Guilt, awakened by conscience to a sense of its danger, imagines that it truly longs for this influence, and murmurs because it has not received it. — And is it indeed so? Does the sinner truly estimate the enormity of his wickedness, and the extent of his danger? Is he sensible of his entire dependence upon the grace of God, to subdue the dominion of sin within his breast? Does he honestly and sincerely wish that he may be made happy by being made holy, by being withdrawn in all his affections and desires from those forbidden objects which now occupy his mind and engross his heart? He complains that he has done all he can do, and yet the grace of God is denied him. Alas! how will this plea fail him at the bar of God? Will he then be prepared to say, that day after day has witnessed his faithful and earnest perusal of those sacred Oracles “which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ;” his retirement from the world, that he might meditate on the things which belong to his everlasting

peace; his frequent prostration of spirit before the throne of God, praying, with strong cries and many tears, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." If he dare not make this plea at the judgment bar, let him not now impeach the justice or the goodness of God. Let him more carefully examine his own heart. Let him see whether he has indeed felt the pressure of his guilt, and whether he has not been striving and hoping all the while to do something which will entitle him to receive the grace of God not as a free gift, but as a merited reward. Let him, in fine, cast himself without reserve upon the mercy of that Saviour, who is able and willing to save all who come unto him. Then will he no longer oppose the doctrine contained in our text, but from experience realize the truth and delight in the import of these words—"No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him."

Thus, my brethren, have I attempted to present to your consideration, some of the repugnancies which the sinner feels against the doctrine of Divine influence, and some of the perversions which he makes of it. You have seen how they all spring from the depravity of the human heart; that none furnish any extenuation of our guilt, or ground of murmur against the justice or the good-

ness of God ; and that if still embraced and cherished, they will render us more and more worthy of that dreadful doom which awaits the finally impenitent. Let us, then, learn and imbibe this salutary, though humbling truth—that whatever evil we are chargeable with is the result of our own perverse and sinful inclination ; and that all that is good within us cometh down from the Source of all good—the Spirit of holiness and truth. No longer, with that Unbelief which doubts the possibility of a Divine influence ; that Pride which disdains it ; that Self-righteousness which does not want it ; that Slothfulness which is waiting for it ; or that terrified Guilt which imagines it longs for it, and murmurs that it has not been procured by what it deems so great and unwearied efforts ;—no longer let any of us strive with these weapons of sin, against the Holy Comforter : let us cease this unhallowed warfare ; let us prostrate ourselves at the foot of the Cross, and there look unto Him, and be saved, who was “ lifted up, that he might draw all men unto him.”

DISCOURSE XII.

JOHN vi. 44.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.

VERY good reason had our Saviour to utter these memorable words. They were addressed to a multitude of Jews, who refused to believe on him, in spite of the most overwhelming proofs which they witnessed of his Divine mission. They saw what many prophets and kings had desired to see, and had not seen, the glory of this only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and, in him, the clear and striking signature of that Messiah, of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write. They heard the instructive lessons of Wisdom, and the gracious invitations of the Gospel from His lips who spake as never man spake. They had just been refreshed, to the number of five thousand men, besides women and children, by a wonderful miracle of his power,

calculated as well to remove all their doubts concerning Jesus, as to melt their hearts into gratitude and love. Indeed, their doubts seem partially, and for a little while, to have been removed. For when they had seen the miracles that Jesus did, they said, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." They even sought to take him by force and make him a king; thinking, no doubt, that he, whose hands held such astonishing resources for the supply of their bodily wants, was able also to bestow upon them more illustrious temporal benefits; to rescue them and their nation from the yoke of Roman servitude; to make the Jewish people rich, powerful, and happy; and to wield, as their mighty and magnificent Prince, the sceptre of universal empire. For that they had no thoughts of bowing to him as the Deliverer of their souls from the dominion of sin, and as the Head of that spiritual kingdom of God, "which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," their subsequent conduct fully testified. Jesus secretly withdrew from their unhallowed importunity, and soon after, with his disciples, crossed the sea of Galilee, and entered into Capernaum. Thither, on the succeeding day, the multitude followed him: and when they had found him, they said unto him, "Rabbi, when camest

thou hither?" Their address was respectful, and their conduct denoted a certain kind of attachment to Christ. But he, who knew the hearts of all men, said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." Then ensued a conversation between them, which, on the part of the Jews, was full of disrespect and distrust, of captiousness and doubt, of murmuring and unbelief; and, on the part of our Saviour, of condescending instruction, sober reasoning, and mild reproof. His discourse, of which our text forms a part, seems to have had no salutary effect upon the multitude. Indeed, even many of his professed followers from that time went back and walked no more with him. Good reason, therefore, had our Saviour to say, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." "No man can come to me." For, "as in water face answereth to face," so did the hearts of those Jews to the hearts of sinners of whatever age or nation,—to our hearts, my brethren, if we are not reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. In that case, let us turn our censure of these faithless and ungrateful people upon ourselves. Let us consider how we also, most of us in times past, and perhaps some of us at the present time, have rejected, or continue to reject,

the only Saviour of our souls. And this, too, in spite of the most abundant and satisfactory proofs of his being sent from God, and in opposition to the most powerful motives which either the joys of heaven, or the pains of hell, can place before us. So deep is this depravity of our hearts, and so perverse this inclination of our wills, that we also cannot go to Jesus Christ for salvation, unless we are drawn to him by the influence of God.

I propose, my brethren, to direct your thoughts to the farther contemplation of these truths, by considering—First, What is meant by the drawing spoken of in our text: “No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him;”—and, secondly, Why this drawing is necessary.

I. What is meant by the drawing spoken of in our text.—Its Author is the Holy Spirit, procured by the sufferings and intercession of Christ, and sent by God the Father into our miserable world, to accomplish the benevolent purposes of Redeeming Love. This mighty and mysterious Agent is every where spoken of in Scripture as the proper efficient cause of faith in Christ. It is He who rouses the conscience of the sinner to discern the enormity of his guilt, the spirituality and extent of that law which he has broken, the holiness and

justice of that Being against whom he has sinned, the dreadful doom to which he stands exposed, and from which nothing can save him but the mercy of God through Jesus Christ. It is this Spirit, who, having thus convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, discloses to the guilty soul its forlorn and wretched state, guides it to the foot of the Cross, destroys all its proud reluctance to receive the pardon of God as a free and unmerited gift, and disposes it to rely on Jesus Christ as its only Saviour.

Such is the effect of the drawing spoken of in our text, and such its Divine original. And is it not the part of true humility, my brethren, to rest satisfied with this concise and scriptural account of our subject? Shall we venture to explore its profound and mysterious abysses? Shall we measure the thoughts of the infinite and incomprehensible Mind, by our own? Shall we, to whom every thing that surrounds us is a mystery; who are bewildered and lost in the contemplation of the meanest reptile that crawls beneath our feet;—shall we dare to scan the mode in which the Holy Spirit of God has access to our minds; how he enlightens our understandings, controls our wills, regulates our affections, subdues our sins, renovates our hearts, and draws us to Jesus Christ? Shall we attempt to reconcile the absolute neces-

sity of this agency with man's entire responsibility and guilt; or its certain and uncontrollable effect with his character of moral freedom? Shall we do this in the hope of getting rid of difficulties, which, it must be confessed, attend the consideration of this subject? Or, shall we not rather acknowledge, that we find no greater perplexities here, than in a thousand other topics connected with man's existence as an accountable or even intellectual being? Shall we not, as becomes us, believe what Christ hath spoken, although to us mysterious and incomprehensible—"No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him?" But, my brethren, such is not the humility of man. He pries, with eager and even audacious curiosity, into the secret things of God. Hence it is, that so much has been written on the subject of Divine influence, with the design of rendering it plain and intelligible to the human capacity. And hence the necessity which is laid upon the ministers of God's word, sometimes to discuss this important topic, according to the measure of their feeble abilities, in order to guard it against misapprehension and mistake. Suffer me, then, to lay before you a few thoughts, which may possibly serve to throw some light upon the meaning of our text.

1. This drawing is not physical, nor mechanical,

nor compulsory, and yet it is certain in its effect. —It is not physical. By this I mean, that it is not like that agency which God exercises over the material world, and which we term, in its various developments and operations, “the Laws of Nature.” The vast lights of heaven perform their accustomed rounds. Day and night, summer and winter, seed time and harvest, successively return. The vegetable and animal race spring into life, flourish, fade, and decay. Our own bodies carry on their silent and hidden processes. All this is done by the physical agency of God. The subject of it is matter; a substance inert, senseless, and involuntary in all its motions. It cannot even wish to resist the hand of God; and it is only by a bold figure of rhetoric, that it is ever spoken of as yielding obedience to his command. Such is not the spirit of man. To say that his moral character is affected by a physical agency of God, is to confound the use of language, to destroy the distinction between mind and matter, to reduce the human soul to a level with the clod of the valley. Nor is it any objection to what has just been said, that the Scriptures speak of sinners as being dead in trespasses and sins, and of saints as being created anew in Christ Jesus. Such terms are not to be taken in a literal sense. They describe not the nature, but the reality, and

the might, and the sovereignty of that Divine Agency which is employed in the conversion of the wicked. Those persons, therefore, I apprehend, pervert the right meaning of the word of God, who say—that sinners have no more power, of whatever kind, to go unto Christ, than the corpse has to restore itself to life, or the thing formed to produce its own existence. The sinner is able to go unto Christ, if he were only willing. Nothing but his own obstinacy and guilt prevent him. Matter has neither inclination nor ability to move.

For similar reasons this drawing is not mechanical.—The principles of mechanism are nothing more than a certain modification and direction of the laws of nature. The matter, of which the machine is composed, is as truly inert as any other matter. It yields an unconscious and involuntary obedience to the control of the artist. Such is not the spirit of man. His moral character cannot be affected by any mechanical process or agency, without destroying his free and intelligent nature.

Nor is this drawing compulsory. Its very nature implies that the subject of it should be drawn to Jesus Christ of his own accord, cheerfully and heartily. To speak of one's being compelled to become a Christian, is a contradiction in terms. Of what moral worth is the forced obedience of

the child to its parent, or the constrained loyalty of the subject to his sovereign? The *will* must yield; it always does yield, when sinners are drawn to Jesus Christ. This drawing, therefore, may be resisted. It often is resisted; and when it becomes effectual, it is by making the sinner willing in the day of God's power. And it does thus become effectual whenever Divine Wisdom and Sovereignty so determine. For what saith our Saviour, in the very chapter from which our text is taken? "All that the Father giveth me *shall* come to me."

2. In the second place, This drawing is suited to the faculties of a rational and accountable moral agent.—Observe, my hearers, it is man who is drawn—man as he is, full of frailty and error, and loaded with guilt, "having his understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart;" but yet, *man as he is*—a being capable of discerning between right and wrong, having a conscience to reprove his transgressions, an understanding to discern and comprehend the doctrines of the Cross, and a will to be affected, if such be the pleasure of God, by the motives which the Gospel holds forth. Truth, therefore, and motives are the medium, through which the Spirit of God acts, in drawing sinner.

to Jesus Christ. And this truth and these motives are to be derived by us from no other source than the sacred Scriptures. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Hence we read—"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth;"—and, "In Christ Jesus have I begotten you, through the Gospel." As, on the one hand, therefore, we are to acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the proper efficient cause in drawing sinners to the Saviour; so, on the other, we must be careful not to disparage the means which he sees fit to use. There is an economy of grace as well as of providence and of nature. There is a connection between the presentation of truth and motives to the mind and heart of the sinner, and his subsequent faith in Christ; a connection, indeed, independent of man, for it is constituted by God; a connection, too, which is affected by so many hidden and intricate causes, various as the infinite diversity of human character and God's difference of providential dealing with man, that it eludes our view, and often disappoints our conjectures: yet a connection which we discover in general to exist, and which therefore justifies the conclusion, that in the kingdom of grace God acts by general laws, and through the instrumentality of what we term secondary causes. In all this, however, my brethren, God forbid that I

should detract from the sovereignty of his grace, or the necessity of his proper and direct influence in leading us to Jesus Christ. What I mean to assert is, that the Holy Spirit has seen fit to adopt a mode of acting in what relates to the salvation of sinners; that this mode is, in one important respect, disclosed to us; that, in this respect, it consists in using Truth, and motives derived from God's word, to affect the mind and heart of man; and that such means, so far as we can discern, are the only means which are suited to a being of a rational and accountable nature. These means produce no effect without man's agency; yet their efficacy depends on God's agency. Neglecting them, we can have no hope of salvation. In their use, if effectual in drawing us to Jesus Christ, to God will be all the glory.

3. In the third place, This drawing usually discovers itself only by its *effects*, and is not usually to be distinguished from the operations of our own minds.—I say, usually; for I would not deny that God may, in some cases, vouchsafe to manifest, by distinct and certain marks, his peculiar and immediate presence to the soul. But such is not usually the fact. His Spirit acts, but we see only its effects. All is under his guidance and control, yet all appears to be our own thoughts and purposes. He leads us in the way in which he would

have us to go, but his hand is unseen. He draws us to Jesus Christ, but we seem to ourselves to direct our steps. Shall we then arrogate any merit to our faith? By no means. God is its Author, but he sees fit to conceal his agency.

4. Hence, in the fourth place, this drawing is of such a nature as to render it extremely difficult, and in most cases impossible, to determine the precise time at which the sinner is first affected by it.—Were the agency of God in producing faith in the heart a sensible one; were the hand which leads us to the Cross visible; then might the first moment of our reliance upon the Saviour be most easily ascertained. But our spiritual state is to be estimated by a comparison of our hearts with the word of God. And what says this word? The fruit of the Spirit is “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” Now what scrutiny, my brethren—what scrupulous caution is necessary, in order to determine whether we possess these heavenly graces. Let the advanced Christian, who, like a tree planted by the rivers of water, hath constantly brought forth his fruit in his season, indulge the unwavering hope that he shall eternally flourish in the paradise of God. But how shall the young convert, whose mind has been tortured and distracted with a sense of his guilt, who has been

tremblingly alive to every alternate suggestion of hope and despair; who has had so many doubts and perplexities; how shall he venture to say with certainty, that at just such a moment he passed from death unto life?

So far, then, as time, and scrutiny, and caution, are necessary to enable us to pass a judgment upon our spiritual state, so far it becomes difficult to determine, that at any one moment overwhelming evidence was afforded us of our having an interest in Christ. Still I would be far from saying that this is not sometimes the case. What I have offered is in the way of caution to those who think it necessary, or even important, that the believer should be able to ascertain precisely, or nearly so, when his faith in Christ had its commencement.

II. Having thus attempted to throw some light, however faint, upon this difficult subject of Divine influence, I proceed, in the second place, to consider why the drawing spoken of in our text is necessary. "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him."—Observe, my brethren, the impossibility here spoken of is simply that which results from the want of inclination in the sinner to go to Christ. It is that same impossibility which the

froward child pleads, when he says to his parent, "I cannot perform this or that act of obedience." It is that same impossibility to which we refer, when we say of the inveterate sot, that he cannot renounce his cups. Now the lamentable fact is, that we are all by nature prone to sin. We are attached to our own selfish and sensual interest. We are unwilling to love God with our whole soul, and strength, and mind, and our neighbour as ourselves. Although conscience condemns us, and would justify God in passing his sentence of condemnation upon us; although we see that there is no hope of reconciliation with God, but through the death and merits of Jesus Christ; still we are unwilling to submit to the righteousness of God, and to be interested in the great propitiation which has been made for sin. Hence we cannot go to Christ. In other words, we will not. So deep and thorough is this depravity of the human heart, as the Scripture every where teaches us, that there is no hope for man but in the sovereign mercy of God. If left to himself, it is morally impossible that he should be saved. And, my hearers, can we want proof of this? Alas! we find it near at hand—in our own hearts. Is there any one motive which we can conceive, that God does not this day present to our minds to lead us to Jesus Christ? He promises to the believer

complete deliverance from the burden and punishment of guilt, his continual protection and blessing in this life, and beyond the grave an immortality of bliss. Why, then, do any of us reject the Saviour? Why is it that we cannot go to Christ, unless drawn thither by the Spirit of God? Let conscience answer.

A few reflections, by way of improvement, will conclude this discourse.

In the first place, How careful should we be not to reject or pervert the doctrine of a Divine influence, because it is attended with some apparent difficulties! It is the part of wisdom and good sense to be humble and modest. The greater the progress made by the philosopher in intellectual improvement, the greater reason has he to pause and admire the wonders, and even mysteries, of creation. As we advance also in the knowledge of Divine truth, we should learn to bow with the most complete prostration of soul before the infinite and eternal One, and to exclaim, with devout humility, that, "as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts."

You have seen, my brethren, that the drawing spoken of in our text is every way worthy of God, and suited to man, as a rational, accountable, and

withal sinful, being. Do not, I beseech you, let any seeming difficulties which may attend the subject, and which result from our weak and limited understandings, and, perhaps, too often from our wayward hearts, lead you to despise or resist that influence which is necessary to lead us to Jesus Christ.

In the second place, If it be true that the Spirit of God acts through the instrumentality of truth and motives, how dreadful is the situation of those who neglect the public ministration of God's word, and the frequent and careful perusal of the sacred Scriptures! These are "able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ." In them we learn the character of God, and of his Son. In them we behold, as in a glass, our own deformity and guilt. In them are placed before us the most cogent motives which can be drawn either from the joys of heaven or the pains of hell, to induce us to lay hold of the hope which is set before us in the Gospel. He, therefore, who wilfully closes his eyes against this Divine light; who makes the Bible, as to himself, a sealed book; who endeavours to escape from the very hearing of the proclamation of peace; how can he expect aught of God, but an entire withdrawment of his restraining grace, and a complete abandonment to sin and ruin?

In the third place, If the influences of the Holy Spirit are not usually to be distinguished from the operations of our own minds; or, in other words, if we can discover them only in their effects by their directing and controuling our thoughts, emotions, and purposes; how watchful should Christians be over their own hearts! “Every good gift and every perfect gift, my brethren, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” To God are you indebted for all your moments of sober thought on the vanities of this life, and the awful realities of the future. Do you ever, amid the busy and fascinating scenes of the world, chide yourselves for consenting too much to its spirit, and imbibing too readily its maxims? Does conscience ever smite you for yielding to a temptation or neglecting a duty, which, in the view of the world, is too insignificant to demand the notice of your moral judgment? Are you sometimes inclined, even amid your cares and business, to direct the eye of faith to your heavenly Father, and to supplicate the continuance of his mercy and his grace? Resist not, I beseech you, these heavenly suggestions. Grieve not the Holy Spirit, who thus calmly and silently leads your thoughts heavenward, and sheds abroad his love and his graces in your hearts. Do not rest satisfied with those Divine influences,

which purify and elevate the holy soul in its secret retirements or seasons of social devotion. God is ever with you, although you see him not; his grace is ever ready for those who sincerely seek it, although the nature of its operation may elude their research. Watch over your hearts, then, that they may become fit temples for the residence of the Holy Spirit. So shall you be more and more cheered in this pilgrimage of trial, by the constant presence and guidance of God, until you reach at last the holy city, the new Jerusalem, where “the sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you; but the Lord shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God, your glory.”

Again; As the influences of the Holy Spirit are usually to be discovered only in their effects upon our own minds, then let the sinner beware how he attempts to stifle the alarms of conscience, to banish sober reflection from his mind, or to check any inclination which he may feel to attend to the things of his everlasting peace. Perhaps, God’s Spirit may now be striving with his spirit. Let him dread, then, to resist its monitory suggestions, lest haply he be found fighting against God.

Finally, How deep and entire must be the depravity of the human heart, which renders neces-

sary the interposition of God's Spirit to draw sinners unto Jesus Christ. O let him who continues to reject the Saviour, ponder well this momentous and alarming truth: it is one which our Saviour uttered in the hearing of his unbelieving countrymen: "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life!" "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." Yes, my hearers, we all lie at the mercy of our offended Sovereign. We can do nothing that will make us deserving of his favour. If abandoned to ourselves, we must perish. We have only one hope left:—it is that of the drowning mariner, that some arm may be extended to save him. We have only one Refuge:—it is the Cross of Christ.

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DISCOURSE XIII.

ACTS iii. 19.

Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.

THESE words are part of an address delivered by the Apostle Peter to a Jewish multitude, in the temple at Jerusalem, soon after the ascension of Christ. The occasion was this—"Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man, lame from his mother's womb, was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple, that is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple: who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In

the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up; and immediately his ancle-bones received strength. And he leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people—Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses; and his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see

and know; yea, the faith which is by him, hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

Such was the occasion on which Peter addressed his countrymen in the words of our text. They were full of amazement at the miracle which had been wrought, and which they were disposed to attribute to some inherent power or holiness in the Apostles. With what admiring and fearful attention would they listen to the words of Peter! What an ascendancy had he acquired over their minds! Had he now chosen to wreak his vengeance upon these murderers of his beloved Master, how might he have overwhelmed them with terror and dismay, by denouncing upon them the curses justly due to those who had crucified the Lord of glory! But grace had softened the heart of Peter, and every feeling of resentment was sacrificed to the more noble and generous object of proclaiming pardon even to the chief of sinners.

Equally benevolent, my hearers, is still the

spirit of the Gospel ; and to us who are so justly deserving of the Divine vengeance, to us who have crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame by our infidelity, our disobedience, and our guilt ; to us this very Saviour speaks, to-day, in the words of our text, “ Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”

Let us, then, with humble and penitent hearts, remembering that we stand in the presence of that God who hath commanded men every where to repent, and who hath denounced the most dreadful anguish upon the finally impenitent ; let us endeavour to ascertain what is the duty of repentance, and be excited, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to a constant practice of it, by considering,

First, Its nature ;

Secondly, Its necessity ;—and,

Thirdly, The motives that should lead to it.

I. We are to consider the nature of repentance. —To do this it is necessary to observe, that there are two words in the original Greek of the New Testament, both of which our translators have rendered by the term “ repentance,” although they have meanings, in some important respects, very different from each other. One signifies a

mere wish that some part of our past conduct had been otherwise, without any regard to its moral nature or consequences. The other denotes such a cordial, sincere, and permanent sorrow for all that we discover to be wrong in our past life, as will lead to a radical reformation of our whole moral character. It is the last which is used in our text, and, indeed, in all other passages which speak of genuine evangelical repentance. So that no notion can be more unscriptural or absurd than that held by some Papists, that repentance is a grace to be exercised at stated intervals, as a sort of penance; a duty which is to cancel, at one stroke, all past transgressions, and which, indeed, may be deferred till the last moment of dissolution.

Very different from this is that repentance which is enjoined by the Gospel.

So far from being a desultory duty to be performed at intervals, it is a fixed habit of the soul, implying a constant detestation of sin, a lively regret for all we have committed, and a steady purpose of thorough and universal amendment. It requires in its possessor an enlightened and discriminating conscience; for how can we sorrow for sin, unless we understand what it is?

The true penitent, therefore, has correct views of the infinite excellence and purity of God's

character; of the indispensable obligation of all intelligent creatures, to obey his law which is holy, and just, and good; of the injury done to his authority, by the violation of this law; of the necessity of guarding it by a severe penalty, and of the justice of that sentence which inflicts everlasting punishment on every offender. Nor are these views of sin merely speculative: they touch the heart of the true penitent with deep humility and contrition. For he reckons himself among the chief of sinners; his iniquities overwhelm him with shame and confusion of face; he considers them as committed against that Being to whom he is indebted for all that renders existence desirable—against that Saviour who freely gave himself a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world—against that Spirit whose monitory suggestions and attractive influences have so often pointed the way, and urged him to walk in the path to heaven. Memory spreads before him the scenes of his past life, and day after day passing in review testifies to the enormity of his ingratitude and his guilt. How many moments have been wasted in slothful and criminal supineness! How many have been devoted to the gratification of the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life!” And how have all, even those which have witnessed in his breast some fervent

aspirations after holiness, and earnest, though imperfect, attempts at obedience, been sullied by some lurking corruption? For all this he grieves, not merely, nor principally, because such conduct has exposed him to the dreadful penalty of the law, but because he has been evil and unthankful to him whose very nature is "love." With the Psalmist, he is ready to exclaim, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

The true penitent laments also the remaining depravity of his heart. Even in his most pure and holy moments—in those which witness the flight of his affections from earth to heaven, and the ineffable communion of his spirit with the Father of spirits—even then, while he discovers how some selfish and sinful desire insinuates itself into his soul, he feels the deepest and most hearty repentance for his present guilt; for he then is best able to detect its true and odious character, by contrasting it with his clear apprehension of real purity and holiness of heart. And if such seasons, imbued with so sweet a savour of things heavenly and divine, and affording a prelibation of that blissful state where sin can never enter,—if even such seasons demand repentance and reliance upon the merits of Christ, what deep sorrow will the true penitent feel as he observes his affec-

tions becoming more gross and more tainted with the corrupt influence of the world! How often will he exclaim, with the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And sensible, from past experience, of his ignorance, and weakness, and guilt, he will tremble at the dreary prospect of a life which is always to be spotted with sin; resolving, however, by the aid of Divine grace, to struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, and, when he fails, ever to feel the deepest contrition and sorrow.

Such, my brethren, is the nature of genuine repentance. It is a fixed habit of the soul, under the direction of an enlightened conscience, discerning well between right and wrong, and sensible of the immense evil of sin. It implies a constant and cordial detestation of sin, a lively regret for all which we have committed, and a steady purpose of thorough and universal amendment.

II. I proceed, in the second place, to consider the necessity of this duty.—It is necessary to satisfy the demands of conscience. So powerful is this faithful monitor within our breasts, that it will be satisfied with no extenuation of our past guilt—with nothing short of sincere repentance. The sinner is on this account unhappy, for he

stands self-condemned. He knows that he has violated the holy law of God, and that he deserves the Divine displeasure. He regrets that his transgressions must meet their deserved reward; but, alas! his sorrow is entirely selfish, and is not of a godly sort. And hence arises the evidence to his own mind, that being still impenitent, he yet retains his past sinful disposition; which is, indeed, itself the root of all his transgressions, and which, therefore, renders him still an object of the just displeasure of God. Remorse, therefore, for the past, and dreadful forebodings of the future, often fasten upon his soul. Dismal and terrible are his anticipations of that future world of woe, the anguish of which will receive its keenest poignancy from the fact that repentance will for ever be a stranger to its miserable inhabitants.

Again; Repentance is necessary to ensure any prospect of future amendment.—Perhaps there is scarcely a man living, except some solitary monster of iniquity, whose vast and complicated enormities have blunted every perception of the moral sense, and produced that consummation of depravity, the perpetration of crime for its own sake; who does not hope at a future period to correct some sinful propensities which he now acknowledges in his own heart. But, alas! how foolish and

unwise are our judgments on all moral subjects, while sin retains its empire in the breast! Future amendment is intended while past and present guilt excites no penitential sorrow. As well may the intemperate man promise himself a future deliverance from the miserable thralldom of his appetite, while continuing to enjoy his cups. He, who sincerely hopes ever to hate sin, must now hate it: he who anticipates future reformation, must now exercise unfeigned repentance.

Again; Repentance is necessary to procure the pardon of our past sins, and the protection and favour of God.—I do not mean by this, my brethren, that repentance, however hearty and unfeigned, can make atonement for guilt, or recompense the injury done to the Divine government by our violation of its just laws. It may, indeed, render its possessor a proper object of the Divine favour; it may prepare him for obedience hereafter; but can never remedy the evil of his past offences—for those offences have endeavoured to oppose the rightful dominion of the Sovereign of the universe, and to introduce anarchy, confusion, and woe, into his intelligent creation.

I know there are those who teach a different doctrine—who give such a virtue to repentance as to make it obliterate all past guilt, and satisfy the demands of Divine Justice. I will not stop to

confute this notion, so dishonourable to the cause of the Redeemer, and so destructive of the souls of men, by placing it in the light of human reason alone, which, when investigating religious truth, affords such imperfect aid, not to say deceptive guidance.

Let Jesus Christ be our Guide: let us cast one look at Calvary, and ask, Why there the Cross was erected? It sustains in excruciating torture the only-begotten Son of God. Unlike the holy martyrs, whose souls, sublimed (so to speak) by their last agonies, are almost emancipated from their prison of clay before they quite leave it, and enjoy a sweet prelibation of that blissful presence of God, to which they will soon be introduced in its more full beauty and lustre — this holiest of martyrs, this pure and spotless Being, is overwhelmed with the tremendous consummation of his great work, and exclaims — “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” What! does not the recollection of his past innocence sustain him in the trying hour? Is He, the Holy One of God, denied that consolation which has been so often afforded to some of His humble followers? He cries with a loud voice, and yields up the ghost. Nature bears witness to the dignity of the Sufferer, and to the value of his death, by prodigies the most awful and portentous.

And can you, my brethren, believe that this terrible tragedy is acted merely to give Jesus Christ an opportunity of placing before his disciples an example of patient resignation and obedience to the will of God;—of meek forbearance under the grossest injuries, sealing the truth of his divine mission by a martyrdom so singular and dreadful? To suppose this is to insult God, by impeaching his benevolence and his wisdom;—his benevolence, by imposing so heavy a weight of suffering upon an innocent victim, when every purpose might have been answered by a death less excruciating to both body and soul;—his wisdom, for sure it was to be expected that a death so awful, and marked with such prodigies, would naturally lead every beholder to attach to it a value infinitely above that ascribed to common martyrdom. The terrible majesty of our Saviour's death would then be calculated to lead all who became acquainted with it into the grossest error.

But, my brethren, the sacrifice of this Lamb of God had a meaning most awful and momentous: it testified, that without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. It proved to the universe of God, the awful inflexibility of his justice; and that sin, even in this little world, this corner of his vast dominions, was such an outrage upon the economy of his government, and, if suffered to

pass with impunity, would be so destructive of universal happiness, that, to atone for it, no less a sacrifice than the Son of God was necessary. This sacrifice, too, had a meaning most gracious and condescending. It testified, that such was the benevolence of God toward those who had rebelled against him, that he was willing to devise some means by which his honour might be preserved, and yet they restored to favour. Hence was Christ wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Now God can be just, and yet the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. When I say, therefore, that repentance is necessary, if we would obtain the pardon of our past sins, and the protection and favour of God, I do not mean, that it alone is necessary. To repentance toward God must be joined faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;—the one, to teach us the greatness of our guilt by leading us to rely solely on the merits of the Saviour for reconciliation with God;—the other, to produce within us that deep humility and self-abasement, that godly sorrow and contrition for sin, and that earnest purpose of amendment, which

are so necessary to prepare us for approaching to the presence of Him who is of “purer eyes than to behold iniquity.”

III. Let us now, in the last place, consider the motives which should lead us to repentance. They are disclosed in our text—“Repent ye, therefore, and be converted; that your sins may be blotted out.” Sincere repentance, then, regards the obliteration of guilt from the table of our own hearts, and from the book of God’s remembrance. And did we, my brethren, duly appreciate these two motives to repentance, how ready and anxious should we be to exercise this chief of Christian graces! Think what it is to be freed from the dominion of sin—no more to feel the influence of those wicked passions and lusts which war against the soul; and which, even in the enjoyment of their most favourite objects, so far from conferring true peace on the bosom in which they reside, serve only to distract and harass it with care, anxiety, remorse, and woe. Think what it is to have these enemies of our real happiness destroyed, and in their place to feel the sweet dominion of love toward God, and good-will to man.

Repentance produces this happy change. Peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, reign within the bosom. All is calm and cheerful. In-

deed, God himself, the Source of all good, condescends to occupy the heart of the truly penitent. "For thus saith the High and the Holy One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy—I dwell in the high and holy place, with Him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." And here, my brethren, we are furnished with a test of the sincerity of our repentance. Do we seek and exercise repentance, in order to purify the heart, and free it from the dominion of sin? Do we grieve for our past and present guilt, because it is such base ingratitude against the Best of Beings? In fine, do we sorrow for sin, because we detest it in all its shapes, however fascinating—in all its forms, however disguised so as to be taken by a corrupt world as innocent and lawful—in all its subtle and ingenious devices, seducing us to comply with certain maxims and customs of this sinful age, under pretence of rendering virtue more lovely and attractive;—I say, do we sorrow for sin, because we detest it in these its more refined workings, as well as in its grosser attacks upon our purity of heart and life? Much, however, as this disinterested detestation of sin is necessary, as a constituent, and indeed prominent trait of genuine repentance; and much as we ought to be excited to this duty,

that the influence of sin on our hearts may be entirely destroyed; there is still another motive to repentance in our text, addressed to that love of our own safety and happiness, which no principle of our religion forbids us to indulge.

The expression, “that your sins may be blotted out,” when compared with other similar phrases in Scripture, evidently refers to a deliverance from that punishment justly due to transgression. God, then, has been pleased to declare, that sincere repentance, which always implies a cordial faith in Christ, is necessary to save us from the wrath to come. How terrible is the danger, how tremendous the doom, to which we are exposed by sin; and yet how simple the condition of deliverance!—repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Alas! could we hesitate a moment to comply with this condition, did we but fully realize the importance of these words—“The wrath to come?”

Painful is the task, my hearers, with the ministers of God’s word, to point to sinners the sad termination of their career of wickedness. And, sometimes, this would seem but to render more callous the heart of the sinner; perhaps, because of the familiarity of most minds educated in Christian lands with this awful subject; or, in some cases, because it attacks that disdain of cow-

ardice, which, in a few souls, lofty, bold, and heroic amid all the dangers of this life, would shrink from the suspicion of fearing even that dread Being, who can, with a word, sink them to their original nothing, or consign them to irremediable woe.

But, my hearers, if such be your choice, lay aside for a moment, I beseech you, this sad insensibility—this presumptuous daring. Be alive to your own true interest—mock not the information of your real danger. Look forward a little through the successive changes of your future life. Like the present, they will, perhaps, continue to rouse some of you, to the ardour and bustle of business; some, to the fascinations of pleasure; and others, to the chase of fame. Day after day will roll by, furnishing, each in its turn, a sad memento to your weary minds, that all below is “vanity and vexation of spirit.” Think not the world will ever afford you more happiness than at present. The hour of your departure will at length arrive, of your final adieu to this world, of your entrance upon that future state of being, in which God has declared, that he that enters unholy, shall be unholy still; and if unholy, then miserable, and miserable for ever.

O! tremble, then, at the sentence which awaits the finally impenitent. Our Saviour will himself

pronounce, “ Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Shudder at the thought of entering that dismal abode of woe, “ where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Fear him who thus holds the awful sceptre of a dominion most just and holy. His justice is arrayed in dreadful majesty, and well may strike his enemies with terror. His mercy is clothed with condescension and pity: it breathes pardon to all the truly penitent: it points to Jesus Christ, who is “ able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him:” it addresses us, this day, in the language of our text, “ Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”

DISCOURSE XIV.

 HEBREWS xii. 2.

Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

IN the chapter preceding that from which the words of the text are taken, the Apostle traces, in a brief outline, the history of the faithful. From Abel to the prophets, he describes the lineage of the children of God, and by a succession of illustrious examples, shews how the *same* spirit of faith confirmed and cheered the hopes of all the saints of old, under their severest trials and sufferings. God was the object of their firm and unshaken confidence. Leaning on the arm of Omnipotence, and looking for their final reward beyond all that lies on this side the grave, they trusted every promise and obeyed every call of Jehovah, through whatever path of difficulty and danger it might lead them. The proof of their faith, though severe, was short. The pilgrimage was

soon ended, and its wanderings, though often sad and weary, conducted them, one after the other, to the Canaan of eternal rest. “Wherefore,” says the Apostle, animated by the bright vision of the long train of worthies which had just passed before his eye, and giving vent to all the fervour of his bold and ardent spirit—“Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” In this beautiful and cogent exhortation, the Apostle alludes to certain public games, which were common at that time in the pagan world. At these games were various exhibitions of strength and agility, among which not the least conspicuous was running on foot for some prize of victory. The competitors in such races were well prepared for the contest. They took care beforehand, by a proper regimen and discipline, to give their bodies all the strength and vigour of which they were susceptible; they divested themselves at the race of every useless incumbrance; they caught the spirit of emulation from the gaze of the surrounding

spectators, among whom were many who had previously taken a part in the same games, and were wearing the laurels of their triumph; they fixed a steady eye on the goal which was before them, and, rushing impetuously forward, sought a fading crown of glory from the hand of the director and arbiter of the contest.

To such a scene did Paul allude, when he exhorted the Hebrew Christians to run with patience the race that was set before them. He urges them to be animated by the example of the many worthies of whom he had been speaking, and whom he describes, by a bold figure of rhetoric, as looking down from their seats of bliss on the theatre of this lower world, to witness the struggles which the followers of Christ were making to procure an incorruptible crown. He directs them to cast away every weight of sin which might impede their course, and, above all, he calls them to look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his and their faith, the great Superintendant of the holy contest in which they were engaged, the final Arbiter of their destiny, and from whom they would receive the glorious reward of all their toils and sufferings.

My brethren, it is our duty to run the same race of Christian perseverance, and, if we are faithful unto the death, it will be our happiness also to

receive that crown of glory which fadeth not away. We, too, have all the motives of encouragement and consolation which Paul addressed to the Hebrew Christians; but waving all the rest, let us confine our attention to this single consideration, that Jesus is both the Author and Finisher of our faith. Let us endeavour to understand this truth in its proper extent and importance, and then make such a practical use of it as will tend, under the blessing of God, to confirm and advance us in our Christian course. For this purpose I propose to consider,—1st, In what respects Jesus is the Author of our faith,—2dly, In what respects he is the Finisher of it,—and 3dly, How we are to look unto Him in this interesting character.

I. Let us consider in what respects Jesus is the Author of our faith.

1. He is the Author of our faith, by accomplishing those events in the economy of God's government, which were necessary to open the way for the promulgation of the doctrines of the Cross.—These doctrines all harmonise and centre in one point, the reconciliation of sinful man to the offended Majesty of heaven, through Jesus Christ. But how was this proclamation of mercy to be made to a world of rebels, without infringing the authority of God's law; without sullyng the

honour of his government; without shaking the stability of his throne? Infinite Wisdom solved these tremendous difficulties, and devised a scheme of redemption which should be as illustrious in displaying the justice as the mercy of God. The Son of God condescended to pour out his blood for the remission of sin, that God might be just, and yet the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. The cross was to sustain a Victim so pure, so immaculate, so holy—what do I say? it was to bear on its torturing arms the Son of God himself—one who declared himself equal to the Father—a dying spectacle to angels and to men, to prove that sin could be expiated by no sacrifice less costly. Now, my brethren, elevate your minds to the contemplation of this august and awful scene; the Son of God descending from heaven and dying on Calvary, to ransom our ruined race from the dreadful consequences of sin: think, too, how much was to be done to prepare the way for so astonishing an event. From the time that the consoling prophecy was given, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, to that awful moment of consummating the work of redemption, when Jesus exclaimed, “It is finished”—in this long lapse of ages, how many grand events must transpire before the “fulness of time” could come! A deluge must sweep from the earth its

sinful inhabitants, a chosen few must be preserved to re-people the world. Their descendants must be scattered abroad. Abraham must be called from his kindred, and a solemn covenant be made with him by Jehovah, to preserve in his seed the line of the faithful. His descendants must be led forth from their Egyptian bondage. The law must be given from mount Sinai. The Jewish economy must be established. The heathen must be scattered before the children of Israel, and themselves established on the promised land. They must become a distinct people, separated from the rest of the world to retain the knowledge of the true God, and to furnish a parentage for the expected Deliverer of mankind. But the time would fail me to tell of the vast changes which this wonderful people experienced: of the revolutions too, which were all the while taking place in the Gentile world—the rise and fall of empires, the progress of arts and sciences, the turning and overturning of the great mass of human affairs and projects, by all of which the way was preparing to usher in one simple but grand event; the sacrifice on the cross of the only begotten Son of God.

Now, who had the controul of this astonishing order of things? Who superintended and directed these momentous events? It was the Son of

God himself, as we are abundantly taught in Scripture; He who was in the beginning with God, and was God; by whom all things were made, and by whose providential agency they have continually been sustained. He took on himself the whole work of redemption in its preparation, its progress, and its consummation. After having guided by his controlling hand the long train of events which must precede his appearance in our world, when the fulness of time was come, he left the bosom of his Father, took upon himself the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Then*, and not till then, could repentance and remission of sin be preached in his name. *Then*, and not till then, could the doctrines of the Cross, the great object of the Christian's faith and confidence, be fully unfolded and explained. Let us look then, my brethren, unto Jesus as the Author of our faith, because he hath accomplished those events in the economy of God's government which were necessary to open the way for the promulgation of the doctrines of the Cross.

2. Jesus is the Author of our faith, by having promulgated himself, and by his Apostles, the doctrines of the Cross.—After the way was opened for the pardon of sin, and for man's acceptance with God, by the obedience, the sufferings, and

the death of Christ, it was still necessary that the meaning of these wonderful events should be explained. Otherwise, they would have been shrouded in impenetrable mystery; and man, though so deeply interested in them, could only have gazed on them with wonder and awe. Our Saviour, therefore, before his crucifixion, and his Apostles more fully after it, taught the connection between his sufferings, obedience, and death, and man's salvation. They taught, that by the blood of Jesus, a full pardon of guilt might be obtained, and that the simple conditions of this pardon were, repentance toward God, and faith in Jesus Christ. These doctrines of the Cross, my brethren, have reached our ears. The Son of God, who now guides and governs the affairs of this lower world, hath distinguished us by his providence from thousands of our fellow-men, by placing in our hands the records of his sufferings and death, and by instructing us how we may become interested in the atonement which he has made for sin. From him emanates the light of religious truth, which beams upon us in meridian lustre. To him, therefore, let us look, as the Author of our faith, because he hath by himself, and by his Apostles, promulgated the doctrines of the Cross.

3. Jesus is the Author of our faith, by producing this grace within us, through the influences

of the Holy Spirit.—It was not *enough*, my brethren, for our Saviour to accomplish those events which were necessary to prepare the way for the promulgation of the doctrines of the Cross. It was not *enough* for him to have promulgated, by himself and his Apostles, these doctrines so glorious to God, and so interesting to man. The most difficult part of his work yet remained to be accomplished; the greatest obstacle was yet to be removed; the most splendid triumph was yet to be won. He had satisfied the demands of Divine Justice. He had conquered the powers of darkness; but he had not subdued the heart of man; that almost impregnable fortress of iniquity, full of passions and propensities the most sinful; subject to the dreadful rule of the powers of darkness; in league with the great adversary of all good; hostile to the interests of its rightful Sovereign; unwilling to submit to his lawful authority; and, above all, spurning with deadly hatred his kindest overtures of pardon and reconciliation. This foe must be subdued, and none but the arm of Omnipotence could subdue it. Christ, by his death, procured for sinful and rebellious man the influences of the Holy Spirit, and this mighty and mysterious Agent perfects the triumph of the Cross. Your experience, Christians! will testify, that if you have aught of faith in your hearts toward the

blessed Redeemer, it was indeed the gift of God. His Spirit first enlightened your benighted understandings to discern the things of your everlasting peace. His Spirit first convinced you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. His Spirit first bowed your will in submission to God's will. His Spirit first led you to sincere repentance for all your guilt, and to embrace Jesus Christ as your only Saviour and your only hope.— And *your* experience also, my fellow-sinners, who are yet strangers to Christ, your experience will testify, that without the influences of God's Spirit upon your hearts you must remain his enemies, and have no share in the benefit of his Son's death. Else, why is it that you continue to reject this Saviour; you who are so convinced of the shortness and vanity of human life—of the certainty of death, judgment, and eternity—of the awful realities of heaven and of hell—and of the truth of God's most solemn declaration, “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him?” Why is it that, in spite of all that has been done for your salvation; in contempt of those doctrines of the Cross, which have been so often proclaimed within your hearing, and the truth of which you hesitate to call in question; in disregard too of your own best good;—why is it that you still reject the Saviour? It is because

his Spirit is necessary to renovate your hearts, and to lead you to believe on him. Be convinced, I pray you, of this humbling, yet salutary truth ; and let us all look, without further delay, unto Jesus as the Author of our faith, because He alone can produce this grace within us, through the influences of the Holy Spirit.

II. I proceed to consider in what respects Jesus is the Finisher of our faith.

1. Jesus is the Finisher of our faith, because he is now accomplishing, and will continue to accomplish, those events, in the economy of God's government, which are necessary to prepare the way for the consummation of his mediatorial work. Many of the objects of our faith, my brethren, are still future. We look forward to the universal diffusion of the religion of Jesus, and the complete establishment of his dominion through the earth ; to the resurrection of all men from the dead ; to the dissolution of this material world ; to the day of judgment, and to the retributions of eternity. Now how much remains to be done in the economy of God's government, to prepare the way for the arrival of these grand and momentous events ! That they will happen we do most firmly believe ; but we are not enough disposed to think of that Omnipotent Agent who

is now guiding and controlling all the affairs of this lower world, with reference to the glorious consummation of his mediatorial work. It is Jesus Christ who is thus wielding the destinies of man, who is accomplishing those astonishing changes in the earth, which have of late so baffled the conjectures of politicians, so confounded the sagacity of the great, and filled all men with awe and wonder. It is Jesus Christ who will go on to effect revolutions still more surprising; to pull down and build up states and empires; to punish nations for their sins; to eradicate the remains of ancient and cruel superstitions; to enlighten and reform mankind; to animate the prayers, and concentrate the efforts, and knit together the affections, of those who have espoused his cause throughout the whole world; to heal the divisions and animosities of sects; and, through the instrumentality of his disciples, to make the influence of his doctrines universal among men. It is Jesus Christ who will adorn the Church with its millennial lustre. It is Jesus Christ who will come in the glory of his Father to accomplish the dread solemnities of the final day. At *his* voice the sea, and death, and hell shall give up their dead. All men shall stand before *his* tribunal. At the breath of *his* mouth the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and vanish into their original nothingness. *His* lips,

my brethren, will pronounce the eternal doom of each one of us; and as *He* sentences us, we shall either sink into the horrors of the infernal world, or rise with him to the joyful mansions of complete and unfading bliss. Let us look, then, unto this Jesus, as the Finisher of our faith, because He is now accomplishing, and will continue to accomplish, those events, in the economy of God's government, which are necessary to prepare the way for the consummation of his mediatorial work.

2. Jesus is the Finisher of our faith, because he continues to instruct us more fully in the doctrines of the Cross.—The Christian's faith is in one sense progressive. He is not at once enlightened into the knowledge of all the truths of the kingdom of God. "By reason of use, his senses are exercised to discern both good and evil." By embracing wider and wider views of religious truth, he "leaves the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and goes on unto perfection." He searches his Bible. He listens to the public ministrations of the word. He explores the recesses of his own heart. He looks back upon the experience of his past life. He scrutinizes the dispensations of Providence. He extracts from all these sources the richest food for his faith. He acquires a supply of heavenly manna; and, nourished by it, he is

continually growing up unto "a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Now to *whom* is the Christian indebted for these various sources of improvement in the Divine life? *Who* is thus, by his providence and his word, casting a brighter and brighter light upon the Christian's path toward heaven, elevating his views more and more above the things which "are seen and are temporal, and fixing them with intenser gaze upon the things which are not seen and are eternal?" It is Jesus Christ, the Disposer of all events, the Shepherd of his own flock, the Head of his church, the King in Zion. To him, therefore, let us look, my brethren, as the Finisher of our faith; because he continues to instruct us more fully in the doctrines of the Cross.

Finally; Jesus is the Finisher of our faith, because he confirms and invigorates this grace within us by the influences of his Holy Spirit, and will finally perfect it in the unclouded vision of the heavenly world. The kingdom of heaven in the heart of believers is like a grain of mustard seed; small in its origin; gradual in its growth, but all the while pushing upward to maturity; unfolding its latent energy; and at last, when transplanted to the paradise above, displaying itself in complete luxuriance, and beauty, and perfection. Faith is this germ of all the Christian graces: but how

much Divine culture is necessary, ere it discloses its proper fruits! Too often, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke this seed, and it becomes unfruitful. Indeed, it would soon languish and die, did not the same hand, which originally planted it in the believer's heart, continue to refresh it with the dews of Divine grace. Jesus Christ is careful not to forsake those whom the Father has given him. Having begun the good work of faith in the soul, he will carry it on unto perfection. Yes, Christians, notwithstanding your errors and sins; notwithstanding your deplorable conformity to this world; notwithstanding the injury you do to the cause of the Redeemer, by so ungratefully neglecting to act in all things as becomes his humble followers; notwithstanding the little you do for Him by whose blood you have been redeemed from the curse of the law, he does not forsake you. How often does he reclaim your wandering feet, by convincing you that the world which you are sometimes seduced to love, is but vanity and vexation of spirit! How often does he excite within you the sigh of penitence for your sins! How often does he lead you to form holy and successful resolutions of amendment! How often does he guard you against the temptations which do most easily beset you! How often does he chasten you

by frustrating your favourite worldly projects, and by depriving you of some worldly good, and thus lead you back to God! How does he bless you in the enjoyment and use of all the means of grace! How does he condescend himself to occupy your hearts by the influences of his Holy Spirit, confirming and invigorating your faith, and increasing within you every Christian grace and virtue! And thus will he still continue to reclaim, to chasten, to instruct, and to guide you. If you are truly his disciples, nothing shall separate you from his love; nothing—"neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus your Lord." He will ever be near you, to strengthen and increase your faith. By this faith he will fortify you to resist the great adversary of your souls. By it, he will enable you to overcome the world. By it, he will purify your hearts and ripen you for heaven. By it, he will cause you to triumph over your last enemy, the king of terrors. By it, he will thus bring you to the gates of paradise.—Then shall Faith have done its perfect work. Then shall Jesus be emphatically the Finisher of it, by rendering it no longer necessary: for he will introduce you to the unclouded

vision of the heavenly world. Faith will be swallowed up in sight. "Now ye see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now ye know in part, but then shall ye know even as also ye are known." Then will be the termination of the race that is now set before you. Then, if you continue stedfast unto the end, you will receive from Christ himself that crown of glory which fadeth not away.

Look, therefore, my brethren, unto Jesus, as the Author and Finisher of your faith. Look unto him with a spirit of *confidential trust*: for His omnipotent arm manages, in its vast extent, the sublime work of redemption, and will bring it to a most glorious and successful result—a result which will reflect the brightest lustre on the character of God, and redound to the eternal and unspeakable happiness of all who put their trust in him. Look unto him with a spirit of *humble docility*: for in him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:" from him must you hope to derive that light of Divine Truth, which is to shine in the dark places of your understanding; thence to dispel all error, and doubt, and perplexity, and to guide you in the way everlasting. Finally, look unto him with a spirit of *cordial dependence*: for the Comforter, which he sends, first shed abroad the love of God in your hearts.

And to this same Spirit of holiness must you constantly be indebted for the increase of your faith. He alone can preserve it from shipwreck. He alone can make it as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast. He alone can so confirm, and invigorate, and ripen it, that it shall be prepared at last to be finished and swallowed up in the unclouded vision of the heavenly world.

DISCOURSE XV.

HEBREWS xii. 2.

Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

WHILE discoursing from these words, the last Sabbath, I attempted, my brethren, to place before you the several respects in which Jesus Christ may be considered as the Author and Finisher of our faith. From what was said, it would seem that he is entitled to this appellation for the following reasons: because he accomplished those events in the economy of God's government, which were necessary to open the way for the promulgation of the doctrines of the Cross; because he promulgated, by himself and by his Apostles, these doctrines, so glorious to God, and so interesting to man; because he alone produces faith within us, through the influences of the Holy Spirit; because he is now accomplishing, and will continue to accomplish, those

events which are necessary to prepare the way for the consummation of his mediatorial work; because he continues to instruct us more fully in the doctrines of the Cross; because he confirms and invigorates our faith, by the influences of the Holy Spirit, and will finally perfect it in the unclouded vision of the heavenly world. Such are the various attitudes in which Jesus Christ presents himself to our view, as the Author and Finisher of our faith. Thus, wielding the sceptre of universal empire, and managing in its vast extent the great work of redemption; thus carrying it on to a most successful and glorious result, which will reflect the brightest lustre on the character of God, and redound to the eternal happiness of all who put their trust in him; thus opening the treasures of his infinite wisdom and knowledge, and distributing most liberally the riches of Divine Truth, to all who will receive and use them for the relief of their spiritual wants; thus shedding down, as the choicest of his blessings, the Holy Comforter, to renew the hearts and invigorate the graces of all whom his Father hath given him; thus supporting and guiding his disciples, through this pilgrimage of tears, in the straight and narrow path which leads to the mansions of eternal rest;—sustaining this character so sublime and so interesting, most justly is he

proposed to us by the Apostle as the great Object of our faith.—Wherefore, while running with patience the race that is set before us, while struggling for that crown of glory which fadeth not away, Christians are called upon by every principle of reason, by every motive of esteem, by every tie of gratitude, continually to look unto Jesus with a spirit of confidential trust, of humble docility, and of cordial dependence. These are the affections which should glow in the breast of every believer who hopes to “hold the beginning of his confidence stedfast unto the end;”—and to urge upon you, my brethren, the duty of cultivating these affections is the object of this discourse.

I. First, then, it is the duty of Christians to look unto Jesus, as the Author and Finisher of their faith, with a spirit of *confidential* trust.—If he manages the work of redemption in all its vast and momentous extent; if from that remote moment in eternity, when he pledged himself to leave the bosom of the Father, and pour out his blood on Calvary for the remission of sin, to that glorious consummation of his mediatorial character, when, all things having been subdued unto him, he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, that God may be all in all; if during the lapse of these long and eventful ages, *his* hand has wielded, and

shall still wield, the sceptre of the kingdom of grace, then is that kingdom *safe*, nor shall even the gates of hell prevail against it. Let not, then, the weakest disciple of Christ give place, for one moment, to doubt or despondency. Let him remember *who* that Saviour is in whom he hath trusted. He is the Friend of sinners. Full of compassion toward a world lying in wickedness, anxious to rescue every sincere penitent from the tremendous curse of the law, He condescended himself to feel this curse, and to drink, to its dregs, that mysterious cup of wrath, the very anticipation of which so agonized his soul, that his human nature almost shrunk beneath the torture, and found a temporary relief only in a sweat of blood. Yes, my brethren, the garden of Gethesmane, with its midnight scene of anguish; the hall of Pilate, with its cruel scourges, and mocking crown of thorns; the hill of Calvary, with its torturing cross and reviling persecutors; these testify with a language, forcible, honest, and affecting as the last accents of the dying, that Jesus is the Friend of sinners. Never, therefore, has he deserted, never will he desert, his mediatorial work; never has he forsaken, never will he forsake, the most timid disciple, who sincerely trusts in him. Consider then, my brethren, the love which Christ bears to all his followers; a love strong as death, which many waters cannot quench, nor floods

drown ; and let it constrain you, by a sweet and irresistible necessity, continually to look unto him with a spirit of confidential trust. Consider too, that, as Mediator between God and man, he is invested with all dominion in heaven, and earth, and hell ; and that he shall rule till he hath put all enemies under his feet. Consider, that in his Divine nature, he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power ; nay, that he is " the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." As therefore, on the one hand, what he hath *done* for sinners is a pledge that his love toward all who trust in him will never suffer abatement or diminution ; so, on the other, what he *is* in his own exalted and Divine character affords the most convincing proof, that if infinite knowledge, and wisdom, and power, can secure the accomplishment of a purpose, then is the kingdom of grace *safe* ; then shall none of Christ's *true* disciples perish, nor shall any pluck them out of his hand. " Be strong, therefore," my brethren, " in the Lord, and in the power of his might ;" and let the Divine majesty and dominion of Jesus, as well as the unwavering constancy of his love, lead you continually to look unto Him with a spirit of confidential trust.

II. Look unto him, also, with a spirit of *humble docility*.—If *He* has risen upon our benighted earth, the glorious Sun of Righteousness, with healing in his wings; if *His* beams alone could dispel the cheerless midnight of moral ignorance which brooded over all the Gentile world; if the rays of *His* truth are still necessary to illuminate the dark places of our understanding, and to pour upon the soul the refreshing light of “the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ;” then ought we no longer to direct our course toward futurity by the wandering stars of human philosophy falsely so called, nor pursue, as guides in the path of duty, the deceptive meteors of our own proud and erring reason. “We have a sure word of prophecy; whereunto we do well that we take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts.” “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” Jesus Christ hath given us the words of eternal life; and if *He* is thus the Source of all Divine truth; if he is the medium through which Jehovah hath disclosed to us all that we know of his will and our duty, all that we know of the pardon of sin and of acceptance with God, all

that we know of an immortality beyond the grave, all that we know of a final judgment, all that we know of the joys of heaven and the terrors of hell; then most meekly should we sit at the feet of Jesus, and imbibe the lessons of wisdom from his lips. Prize, then, ye who profess to be his disciples, the oracles of Divine Truth which he has placed in your hands, on the pages of which he lives over again, as it were, his life of humiliation and suffering, speaks to you again as never man spake, and “before your eyes is evidently set forth crucified among you.” Listen to his voice; receive with meekness his ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls; lean not to your own understandings; look continually to Jesus Christ, as your Instructor, and Pattern, and Guide, with a spirit of humble docility.

III. Again; Look unto Jesus, my brethren, as the Author and Finisher of your faith, with a spirit of *cordial dependence*.—Our Saviour hath done so much in the affair of our salvation, that we are often led to think he hath not done all; and that something is left for us to perform, which will entitle us to at least a small share of credit at the bar of God. But this is to forget, that “we were by nature the children of wrath;” that we were dead in trespasses and sins; that God hath

quicken us together with Christ; that “by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God;” that “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” It is to forget, that we cannot go on to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling,” unless “God work in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” It is to forget, that all those wonderful events which our Saviour accomplished before the doctrines of the Cross could be promulgated; nay, that Divine Truth itself, clad, as it is, with all that is terrible in the justice and attractive in the mercy of God, will produce no effect upon the obduracy of the sinner’s heart, without the accompanying energy of the Holy Spirit. No, my brethren; Jesus Christ claims to himself the entire honour of our redemption. He *died* to procure that Holy Comforter which first convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and draws the rebellious to the foot of the Cross. And he now *lives*, having passed into the heavens, to intercede continually before the throne of God, for those influences of the Spirit, without which even his own disciples would go back and walk no more with him. Trust in him, therefore, at all times, for that energy of Divine grace which must ever be affecting your

hearts, to purify you from the remains of sin; to guard you against the allurements of the world; to fortify you against the assaults of the adversary, and to ripen you for heaven. Feel your own weakness and insufficiency. Pray without ceasing, that Almighty God would grant you, “according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God.” Thus look unto Jesus, as the Author and Finisher of your faith, with a spirit of cordial dependence.

And now, my hearers, having attempted to discover what the duty is which our text enjoins, and what are the motives which urge us to a constant performance of it; it becomes us most seriously to inquire whether we do indeed thus look unto Jesus as the Author and Finisher of our faith, with a spirit of confidential trust, of humble docility, and of cordial dependence. One day we shall see him coming in the clouds of heaven, invested with the awful and majestic glory of his Father, and surrounded with an innumerable angelic host, to

pass the sentence of eternal justice upon all the enemies of God. On that day we shall have to render at His bar a strict account of the use we are making of all the mercies and privileges with which we are now favoured. On that great day of "*the wrath of Jesus Christ,*" as the word of God most solemnly denotes it; whether we shall say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne," or whether we shall behold that Face with composure and joy, depends upon one single condition—a condition most simple in its nature, but most momentous in its effects. It is, that we now look unto Jesus as the Author and Finisher of our faith. Do we thus look unto him? Or is our eye filled with the vain shew of this world? Are we continually busy in gazing upon the political prodigies and revolutions of the day; the changes of commerce and trade; the strifes of party, and the contests for dominion? Are we searching the records of history, exploring the mines of science, or feasting our intellectual eye with the splendid and fascinating visions of literature? Are we curiously prying into the best projects for amassing a little more wealth, for adding another leaf to the laurels of our reputation, or shedding on our couch of pleasure a softer down? Are we thus engaged, instead of raising a single

look of supplication for mercy unto Him who is alone able to save us from the wrath to come? Then stand we in jeopardy every hour. Then are we in continual danger of becoming the victims of that "fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who shall tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing; and do despite unto the Spirit of grace!" For we know him that hath said, "Vengeance belongeth unto me: I will recompense, saith the Lord." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

O that these terrors of the Lord, which the unerring word of his truth discloses to our view—these terrors, which we yet behold (so great is the mercy of God) only in prospect—these terrors, which cast a gloom, dismal as the midnight of the grave, over the eternal destiny of the wicked—these terrors, which are compared by our Saviour to "the worm that never dies, to the fire that is never quenched"—these terrors, which are too vast for our conception, even when conscience awakens the most fearful forebodings, and excites the troubled imagination to form its most stu-

pendous and terrific images of all possible evil—these terrors, over which the Almighty hath, in compassion, drawn a veil of partial obscurity, lest the full sight of them should overwhelm us with irremediable consternation and despair;—O that these terrors, which have not yet overtaken us, and from which we can yet flee, might compel us, as we value the eternal welfare of our souls, now to look unto Jesus Christ, who is alone able to save us from the wrath to come!

I cannot leave my subject without enforcing upon you, my Christian brethren, the duty of serious self-examination. You profess to be running the Christian race, and to be striving for that crown of glory which fadeth not away. Is the termination of your career continually before you? Is the eye of your faith continually directed to Him from whose hand you expect to receive those robes of righteousness and palms of victory which will adorn your eternal triumph over sin, and death, and hell? If you thus look unto Jesus, the fruits of your faith will not be hid. They will put forth their brightest and loveliest forms. They will enrich your character with a beauty, and cast around it a fragrance, that will compel even a censorious world to recognize in you the faint though sure image of your Father, who is in heaven; and to confess that the genuine spirit of

Christianity, so far from debasing the human character, serves to give it the greatest dignity and happiness of which it is susceptible. If you thus look unto Jesus, he will most assuredly shed down upon you the gifts and graces of his Spirit; and your souls will be always the happy residence of “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” May Almighty God, by his grace, enable you thus to adorn the religion which you profess, and thus to feel its influence in your hearts! So may he afford you the most satisfactory evidence that you are indeed looking unto Jesus as the Author and Finisher of your faith. So may he beget within you a lively hope, that there is “laid up for you a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give you at the last day; and not to you only, but unto all them also, that love his appearing.” *Amen.*

DISCOURSE XVI.



[Delivered at the Opening of the Connecticut Asylum for the Education of Deaf and Dumb Persons, at the Request of the Directors, April 20, 1817.]



JUST two years have elapsed, since the first steps were taken towards the establishment, in this city, of an Asylum for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb. Those who then embarked in this enterprize felt it to be their duty to commend its future prospects to the protection of that Arm which moves so easily the complicated springs of human action, and wields, with unerring wisdom, the vast machinery of Providence. Their united supplications ascended from the lips of one* whose venerable presence has so often filled

* Rev. Nathan Strong, D. D. late Pastor of the Church in which this discourse was delivered.

this sacred desk, and whose spirit, perhaps, now witnesses the fulfilment, in some good degree, of his wishes, and the answer of Heaven to his requests. His voice no more guides our devotions, nor animates us in the path of duty: but his memory is cherished in our hearts, and, on occasions like the present, while we mourn his absence and feel his loss, let it be a source of grateful consolation to us, that the undertaking, of which this evening is the anniversary, began under the hopeful influence of his prayers. It has met indeed with difficulties, and still labours under embarrassments, which are incident to almost all the untried efforts of benevolence. Yet, in its gradual progress, it has been encouraged by the smiles of a kind Providence, and is at length enabled to commence its practical operation.

At such a season, the Directors of its concerns have thought, that a remembrance of past favours, and a conviction of future dependence on God, rendered it proper again to unite in solemn acts of religious worship. These acts they have made thus public, from a grateful sense of the general interest that has been expressed towards the Asylum; and it is at their request that the speaker rises to address this respectable assembly.

He enters upon the duty which has thus devolved upon him, not reluctantly, yet with diffi-

dence and solicitude, principally fearing that the cause of the Deaf and Dumb may suffer, and yet hoping that God, in whose hands the feeblest instruments are strong, will deign to make our meditations not only productive of benefit to the unfortunate objects of our pity, but of eternal good to our own souls. And, my friends, how soon would the apologies of the speaker, and the implored candour of his hearers, pass into forgetfulness, could we feel that we are in the presence of Almighty God, and that the awful destinies of our immortal existence are connected with the events of this passing hour! May the Spirit of Grace impress these truths upon our hearts, while we take as the guide of our thoughts that portion of Scripture which is contained in

ISAIAH XXXV. 5, 6.

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

These words depict a part of the visions of futurity which gladdened the eye of Isaiah, and irradiate his writings with so cheering a lustre

that he has been called “the evangelical prophet.” His predictions are assuming, in our day, some of their most glorious forms of fulfilment. For although they had a more direct reference to the time of our Saviour, by whose miraculous energy the ears of the deaf were opened, and the tongue of the dumb loosened, yet without doubt, as might be proved from the general scope and tenor of the prophetic writings, they equally allude to the universal diffusion of the Gospel in these latter ages of the church, and to its happy influence upon the hearts of all mankind. The same Saviour, who went about doing good, is also the Lord of this lower creation. He once performed the acts of his kindness by the mere word of his power: he now is mindful of the necessitous, and makes provision for them, through the medium of his providential dispensations. It should be matter, therefore, of encouragement to us, that the establishment which is now ready to receive within its walls the sons and daughters of misfortune, however humble may be its sphere of exertion, is not overlooked in the economy of the Redeemer’s kingdom; that its probable influence is even shadowed forth in the sayings of prophecy; and that it forms one link in that golden chain of universal good-will, which will eventually embrace and bind together the whole family of man. Let

it awaken our gratitude to think, that our feeble efforts are not disregarded by the great Head of the church, and that we are permitted thus to cast our mite into his treasury.

In the chapter from which the words of my text are taken, the prophet has described the blessings of the Redeemer's kingdom, in the richest colours of Oriental imagery. He portrays by the strongest and boldest figures, the joy that will be diffused throughout the earth, when the Gospel of Jesus Christ shall have been proclaimed to all people, and its principles made the universal rule of thought and conduct. He would thus teach us the intimate connexion, even in this world, between holiness and happiness, and excite our efforts towards hastening on the latter-day glory of the church, by placing before us the advantages that will result from it. Every exertion, then, of Christian benevolence, which forms a part of the great system of doing good, is entitled, so to speak, to the encouragements which the prophet holds forth. I shall not, therefore, depart from the spirit of the text, if, on the present occasion, I attempt to describe some of the benefits expected to result from the exertions which are making for the improvement of the Deaf and Dumb, and thus shew how it will happen, that in this department of Christian benevolence, "in

the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.”

The whole plan of my discourse, then, will be to state several advantages likely to arise from the establishment of this Asylum, and to propose several motives which should inspire those who are interested in its welfare with renewed zeal and the hopes of ultimate success.

The instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, if properly conducted, has a tendency to give important aid to many researches of the philanthropist, the philosopher, and the divine. The philanthropist and the philosopher are deeply interested in the business of education. The cultivation of the human mind is paramount to all other pursuits; inasmuch as spirit is superior to matter, and eternity to time. Youth is the season in which the powers of the mind begin to develop themselves, and language the grand instrument by which this development is to take place. Now it is beyond all doubt, that great improvement has been made in the mode of instructing children in the use and power of language. To what extent these improvements may yet be carried, time alone can determine. The very singular condition in which the minds of the Deaf and Dumb are placed, and the peculiar means which are necessarily employed in their instruction, may furnish oppor-

tunities for observation and experiment, and the establishment of principles, with regard to the education of youth, which will not be without essential service in their general application. How much light also may in this way be thrown upon what are supposed to be the original truths, felt and recognised to be such by the mind, without any reasoning process! Many speculations, too, which now are obscure and unsettled, respecting the faculties of the human mind, may be rendered more clear and satisfactory. How many questions, also, may be solved, concerning the capability of man to originate, of himself, the notion of a God and of a future state; or, admitting his capacity to do this, whether, as a matter of fact, he ever would do it! What discoveries may be made respecting the original notions of right and wrong, the obligations of conscience, and, indeed, most of the similar topics connected with the moral sense. These hints are sufficient to shew, that beside the leading and more important uses of giving instruction to the Deaf and Dumb, their education might be made to subserve the general cause of humanity, and of correct philosophy and theology.

But I pass to considerations of more immediate advantage; and one is, that of affording consolation to the relatives and friends of these un-

fortunates. Parents, make the case your own! Fathers and mothers, think what would be your feelings, were the son of your expectations, or the daughter of your hopes, to be found in this unhappy condition! The lamp of reason already lights its infant eye; the smile of intelligence plays upon its countenance; its little hand is stretched forth in significant expression of its wants; the delightful season of prattling converse has arrived; but its artless lisplings are in vain anticipated with paternal ardour; the voice of maternal affection falls unheard on its ear; its silence begins to betray its misfortune, and its look and gesture soon prove, that it must be forever cut off from colloquial intercourse with man, and that parental love must labour under unexpected difficulties, in preparing it for its journey through the thorny world upon which it has entered. How many experiments must be made before its novel language can be understood! How often must its instruction be attempted before the least improvement can take place! How imperfect, after every effort, must this improvement be! Who shall shape its future course through life? Who shall provide it with sources of intellectual comfort? Who shall explain to it the invisible realities of a future world? Ah! my hearers, I could spread before you scenes of

a mother's anguish, I could read to you letters of a father's anxiety, which would not fail to move your hearts to pity, and your eyes to tears, and to satisfy you that the prospect which the instruction of their deaf and dumb children opens to parents, is a balm for one of the keenest of sorrows, inasmuch as it is a relief for what has been hitherto considered an irremediable misfortune.

The most important advantages, however, in the education of the Deaf and Dumb, accrue to those who are the subjects of it; and these are advantages which it is extremely difficult for those of us, who are in possession of all our faculties, duly to appreciate. He, whose pulse has always beat high with health, little understands the rapture of recovery from sickness. He, who has always trod the soil, and breathed the air of freedom, cannot sympathize with the feelings of ecstasy which glow in the breast of him who, having long been the tenant of some dreary dungeon, is brought forth to the cheering influence of light and liberty.

But there is a sickness more dreadful than that of the body; there are chains more galling than those of the dungeon—the immortal mind preying upon itself, and so imprisoned as not to be able to unfold its intellectual and moral powers, and to

attain to the comprehension and enjoyment of those objects, which the Creator has designed as the sources of its highest expectations and hopes. Such must often be the condition of the un-instructed Deaf and Dumb! What mysterious darkness must sadden their souls! How imperfectly can they account for the wonders that surround them! Must not each one of them, in the language of thought, sometimes say, "What is it that makes me differ from my fellow-men? Why are they so much my superiors? What is that strange mode of communicating, by which they understand each other with the rapidity of lightening, and which enlivens their faces with the brightest expressions of joy? Why do I not possess it; or why can it not be communicated to me? What are those mysterious characters, over which they pore with such incessant delight, and which seem to gladden the hours that pass by me so sad and cheerless? What mean the ten thousand customs, which I witness in the private circles and the public assemblies, and which possess such mighty influence over the conduct and feelings of those around me? And that termination of life; that placing in the cold bosom of the earth, those whom I have loved so long and so tenderly; how it makes me shudder!—What is death?—Why are my friends thus laid by and

forgotten? Will they never revive from this strange slumber? Shall the grass always grow over them? Shall I see their faces no more for ever? And must I also thus cease to move, and fall into an eternal sleep?"

And these are the meditations of an immortal mind—looking through the grates of its prison-house upon objects, on which the rays of Revelation shed no light, but all of which are obscured by the shadows of doubt, or shrouded in the darkest gloom of ignorance. And this mind *may* be set free; *may* be enabled to expatiate through the boundless fields of intellectual and moral research; may have the cheering doctrines of life and immortality, through Jesus Christ, unfolded to its view; may be led to understand who is the Author of its being—what are its duties to him—how its offences may be pardoned through the blood of the Saviour—how its affections may be purified through the influences of the Spirit—how it may at last gain the victory over death, and triumph over the horrors of the grave. Instead of having the scope of its vision terminated by the narrow horizon of human life, it stretches into the endless expanse of eternity;—instead of looking, with contracted gaze, at the little circle of visible objects, with which it is surrounded, it rises to the majestic contemplation of its own im-

mortal existence, to the sublime conception of an Infinite and Supreme Intelligence, and to the ineffable displays of his goodness in the wonders of redeeming love.

Behold these immortal minds! Some of them are before you; the pledges, we trust, of multitudes who will be rescued from the thralldom of ignorance. Pursue, in imagination, their future progress in time, and in eternity; and say, my hearers, whether I appreciate too highly the blessings which we wish to be made the instruments of conferring upon the Deaf and Dumb.

For the means of anticipating these blessings, the Deaf and Dumb owe much to the liberality of generous individuals in our sister States; whose benevolence is only equalled by the expanded view which they take of the importance of concentrating, at present, the resources of the country in one establishment, that, by the extent of its means, the number of its pupils, and the qualifications of its instructors, it may enjoy the opportunity of maturing a uniform system of education for the Deaf and Dumb, and of training up teachers for such remoter places as may need similar establishments.

This State, too, has, we trust, given a pledge, that it will not abandon an Asylum which its own citizens have had the honour of founding, and

which claims a connexion (a humble one indeed) with its other humane and literary institutions.

In this city, however, have the principal efforts been made in favour of this undertaking. Here, in the wise dispensations of his providence, God saw fit to afflict an interesting child with this affecting calamity, that her misfortune might move the feelings, and rouse the efforts, of her parents and friends, in behalf of her fellow-sufferers. Here was excited, in consequence, that spirit of research which led to the melancholy discovery that our own small State probably contains one hundred of these unfortunates. Here were raised up the original benefactors of the Deaf and Dumb, whose benevolence has enabled the Asylum to open its doors for the reception of pupils much sooner than was at first contemplated. Here, the hearts of many have been moved to offices of kindness, and labours of love, which the objects of their regard will have reason ever to remember with affectionate gratitude; and here is witnessed, for the first time in this western world, the affecting sight of a little group of fellow-sufferers assembling for instruction, whom neither sex, nor age, nor distance, could prevent from hastening to embrace the first opportunity of aspiring to the privileges that we enjoy, as rational, social, and immortal beings. They know the value of the gift

that is offered them, and are not reluctant to quit the delights of their native home—(delights doubly dear to those whose circle of enjoyment is so contracted)—nor to forsake the endearments of the parental roof, that they may find, in a land of strangers, and through toils of indefatigable perseverance, the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. How can the importunity of such suppliants be rejected! Hard is that heart which can resist such claims upon its kindness.

Nor, we trust, will motives be found wanting for future exertions in behalf of these children of misfortune. It is always more blessed to give than to receive.—Efforts of charity, prudently and usefully directed, never fail abundantly to repay those by whom they are made. This is true, not only with regard to individuals, but also public bodies of men. That town, whose character is one of benevolence and good-will towards the unhappy, enjoys, in the opinion of all the wise and good, a reputation more exalted, more valuable, more noble, than it can possibly gain by the most extensive pursuits of commerce and the arts; by the most elaborate improvements in trade or manufactures; by the richest displays of its wealth, or the splendour of its edifices; by the proudest monuments of its taste or genius. It gains, too, the smiles of Heaven, whose blessings descend upon

it in various forms of Divine munificence. While the hearts of its inhabitants expand in charity towards others, and the labours of their hands are united in one common object, they learn together the pleasure of doing good ; they find at least one green spot of repose in the desert of life, where they may cull some fruits of paradise, and draw refreshment from streams that flow from the river of God. They feel that they are fellow-pilgrims in the same wilderness of cares and sorrows ; and, while they look to that country to which they are all hastening, while they tread in the footsteps of Him who went about doing good, how quickly do their differences of opinion soften ; the lines of sectarian division melt away ; and even political jealousies and animosities retire into the shades of forgetfulness !

Yes, my hearers, godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come. The spirit of Christian benevolence is the only one which will change, completely, the aspect of human affairs. It has already begun to knit together the affections, not only of towns and villages, but of numerous sects throughout the world, and seems to be preparing to embrace within its influence even states and kingdoms. On its hallowed ground, a respite is given to political and religious warfare ; —men lay down the weapons of contention, and

cherish, for a season at least, the Divine temper of peace on earth, and good will towards men.

Every charitable effort, conducted upon Christian principles, and with a dependence on the Supreme Head of the church, forms a part of the great system of doing good, and looks forward to that delightful day, when the earth shall be filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

While, therefore, my hearers, I would endeavour to excite an interest in your hearts in behalf of our infant establishment, by pourtraying its advantages, and addressing to you motives of encouragement with regard to its future progress, drawn from topics of a more personal and local kind, permit me to place before you the purest and noblest motive of all, in this, and in every charitable exertion;—the tendency it will have to promote the welfare of the Redeemer's Kingdom.

It was the future advent of this kingdom which filled the heart of the prophet with rapture, when he wrote the chapter which has been read in our hearing. Do we participate, in any degree, of his spirit? Do our efforts for doing good, however humble may be their sphere of influence, proceed from a wish that thus we may be made the instruments of advancing that period, when the heathen shall be given to Christ for his in-

heritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; when, through the influence of his Gospel, and the efficacy of his Grace, “the wilderness and solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;” when “the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: when they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

It is Jesus Christ whom we are thus bound to love, to imitate, and to obey. We are stewards, but of His bounty; we are labourers in His vineyard. Whatsoever we do, should be done in His name. For it is by this test, that all our efforts to do good will be tried at the great day of His dread and awful retribution. Let us not fail then to make a suitable improvement of this occasion, by inquiring, whether our benevolence towards men springs from love towards the Saviour of our souls; whether our humanity is something more than the offspring of mere sympathetic tenderness: for it is a truth which rests on the authority of our final Judge, that, without the principle of Divine love within our breasts, we may bestow all our goods to feed the poor, we may give our very bodies to be burned, and yet by all this be profited nothing.

While we seek, therefore, to sooth the distresses

and dispel the ignorance of the unfortunate objects of our regard; while we would unfold to them the wonders of that Religion in which we profess to believe, and set before them the love of that Saviour on whom all our hopes rest; let us be grateful to God for the very superior advantages which we enjoy—consider how imperfectly we improve them—be mindful, that after all we do, we are but unprofitable servants—and thus, feeling the necessity of our continual reliance upon Jesus Christ, trust alone to His righteousness for acceptance with God. That this may be the sure foundation, to each one of us, of peace in this world, and of happiness in the next, may God of his mercy grant! *Amen.*

The following Hymns, composed for the occasion, made a part of the Religious Exercises of the Evening.

HYMN I. (Isaiah xxxv.)

THE wild and solitary place,
Where lonely silence frown'd,
Awakes to verdure, light and grace,
With sudden beauty crown'd.

Through the long waste, neglected soil,
A stream of mercy flows ;
And bids its thirsty desert smile,
And blossom as the rose.

Ye feeble hands, your strength renew ;
Ye doubtful hearts, believe ;
Unclose your eyes, ye blind, and view ;
Ye sad, no longer grieve.

Behold ! the deafen'd ear has caught
Salvation's raptur'd sound ;
Praise to the speechless lip is taught,
The helpless lost are found.

Say then, with joyful voice aloud,
JEHOVAH's work we see :
He hath his way within the cloud,
His footsteps on the sea,

But righteous is he to perform;
 His word is truth indeed:
 And 'mid the sunshine or the storm,
 His purposes proceed.

HYMN II.

WHILE in this glad, inspiring hour,
 We praise Almighty Grace and Power;
 While strains of grateful music rise,
 E'en with their tone remembrance sighs.

He, who implor'd, with zeal divine,
 A blessing on this great design,
 Now sleeps in dust; and sad we bend
 To mourn the Pastor and the Friend.

Yet, oh! if angels cloth'd in light,
 E'er hover round this vale of night;
 If mortal wanderings ever prove
 Their watchful glance of guardian love;

Perchance, he views his earthly home,
 This lonely flock, this holy dome;
 And while our humble prayers arise,
 Aids with his harp the sacrifice.

But who can speak his boundless joys,
 When those who heard their Shepherd's voice,
 Shall meet him in a world of rest,
 And join the spirits of the blest!

—◆—

HYMN III.

YE happy, rescued throng,
 Escap'd from gathering night,
 Who mourn'd in darkness long,
 While all around was light,
 As through the cloud
 The day-star gleams,
 Oh! love the Hand
 That gave its beams.

And ye whose soften'd souls
 Each generous feeling prove,
 Whose prayers and labours aid
 This ministry of love ;
 JEHOVAH's name
 Conspire to raise ;
 His was the work,
 Be his the praise.

FINIS.



