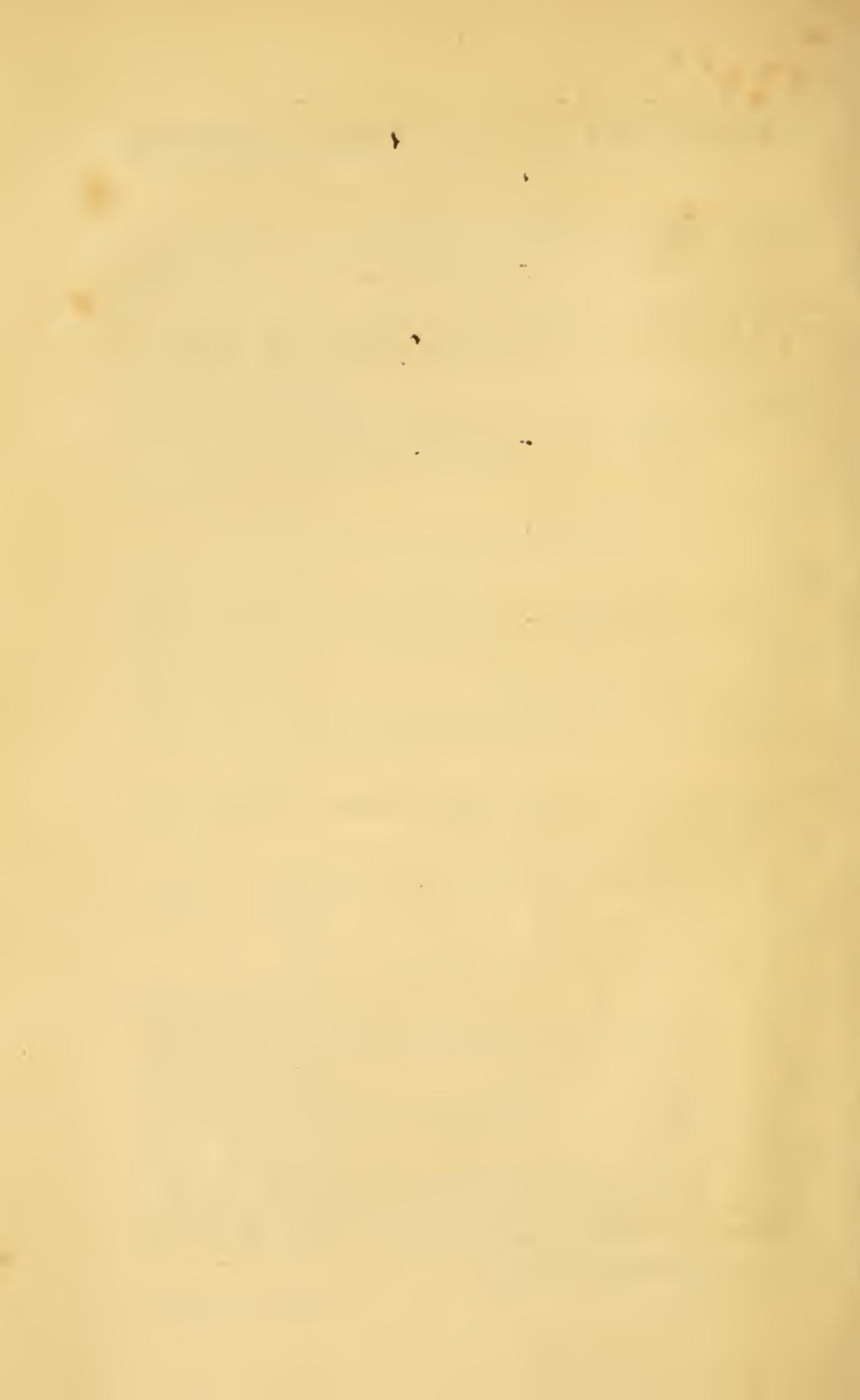


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OF THE
FAREWELL DISCOURSE OF JESUS:
BEING
A SERIES OF LECTURES
ON THE
FOURTEENTH, FIFTEENTH, AND SIXTEENTH CHAPTERS
OF THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

BY THE LATE
REV. JOHN B. PATTERSON, M.A.,
MINISTER OF FALKIRK.

Second Edition.

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P R E F A C E .

WHEN, in 1830, my dear Brother, the accomplished and excellent Author of these Discourses, entered on his parochial ministry at Falkirk, he commenced a course of Expository Lectures on the Gospel of St. John; and when, in 1835, death put a period to his useful and honourable life, he had proceeded in that course as far as the nineteenth chapter. Soon after the appearance of the Memoir and Remains of Mr. Patterson which were published in 1836, there was a call for some, at least, of his Lectures on the Gospel of St. John. From his Manuscripts, accordingly, the Lectures on our Lord's Farewell-Discourse—recorded in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of that Gospel—were selected, as containing an exposition of a specially precious portion of the New Testament, and as furnishing a characteristic specimen of the ordinary ministrations of the lamented Author. These were given to the Public several years ago, and have been regarded by many competent judges as remarkable for accurate exegesis, elevated thought, and felicitous expression. I myself am fully persuaded that they are not all that the Author could have made them; and that he would not have permitted them to appear in his own life-time, without

a thorough revision by his critical and classic taste. Agreeing, however, with those who have welcomed them as a valuable addition to our Expository Literature, and finding that the republication of them has been earnestly called for, I have consented to edit this new Edition. It is presented to the public eye in the firm persuasion that the work is not unworthy of my Brother's memory, but with a trembling fear lest that memory should, in any respect, suffer at the hands of one to whom it is very precious.

While the sheets of this Edition were passing through the Press, one who had paid a public tribute to the worth of these Discourses—my dear and venerable kinsman, Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh—passed away. I hoped to have been able to place a copy in his hands before he left us; but death has blighted the anticipation. In matters of opinion, Mr. Patterson did not, in every instance, thoroughly agree with Dr. Brown; and their minds were cast in somewhat different moulds. But they were knit together here by mutual affection and esteem; and who may doubt that they have met, as congenial spirits, in a loftier land?

ALEX. S. PATTERSON.

GLASGOW, *November* 1858.

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LECTURES

ON THE

FOURTEENTH, FIFTEENTH, AND SIXTEENTH CHAPTERS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

LECTURE I.

CHAP. XIV. 1, 2.

“ Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would
have told you.”

IF there be any of our Master's divine discourses which it is lawful to pronounce diviner than the rest,—if any, to speak more guardedly, which have been practically felt by Christians more copious sources of believing, sanctifying, and consoling thought,—of faith, and holiness, and hope, and joy,—they are His parting exhortations addressed to His disciples, followed up by His parting prayers on their behalf, recorded in this and the three succeeding chapters. In these we see, as it were, fulfilled the fable of the ancients respecting that melodious bird which reserves its sweetest and most touching music for its last, breathing out its soul in ecstasies of pathetic song,—we behold the Sun of Righteousness bursting forth in one farewell gleam of tenderest beauty,—tearfully smiling,—ere He plunged into the chaos of dark thunder-clouds which waited on the horizon to receive Him.

The discourses and the prayers contained in these chap-

ters are avowedly of the nature of farewell-exhortations and farewell-petitions. They contain a series of counsels and of consolations expressly adapted to the peculiar circumstances in which the disciples were ere long to be placed, when separated from Him who had so long been their present Guide and Guardian, their living Counsellor and Comforter. The duties, the encouragements, the hopes, connected with the condition of His disciples during His absence,—these form the subject of the whole passage. And as in respect of this circumstance, on the supposition of which the whole proceeds,—namely, the personal absence of the Saviour,—the Christians of all following ages have been placed in exactly the same situation as the primitive disciples, it is not wonderful that the same exhortations, and the same consolations, which were primarily addressed to the latter, should have all along been felt most happily adapted to the circumstances and the feelings of the former. It will be necessary, however, to keep it constantly in view, as a principle of exposition, in the consideration of these chapters, that the case which Jesus had primarily before Him was that of his original disciples,—that consequently there occur, in the course of His remarks, observations and advices which refer to them peculiarly, in the character of His apostles, and cannot therefore without force be applied to ordinary Christians; while on the other hand, by far the greater part of what He addresses to them respects their character and situation, not specially as apostles, but generally as Christians, and is, therefore, immediately applicable to believers of all countries and all ages, so long as Christ's visible presence is absent from the earth,—so long as they “walk by faith and not by sight,” “loving Him whom yet they have not seen, believing in Him though now they see Him not.”

Our Saviour, then, begins His farewell-discourse to the beloved eleven by informing them that the mere fact of His departure, and His anticipated absence from them for a lengthened period, was not one to overwhelm them with hopeless sorrow and dismay. He perceived,—most probably from the agitation and anxiety which were painted on their countenances, which spoke, perchance, in their troubled gestures and their glistening eyes,—how deeply they were struck with regret, on the one hand, and with consternation, on the other, by the intimations He had given them in the preceding chapter that He was about to leave them, and that they were for the present to be forbidden from following Him. How could they but be pierced with sorrow to hear that they were soon to be deprived of the most precious and delightful communion of Him to follow whom they had forsaken all,—whom they loved in their heart of hearts, and justly, more than father or mother, or sister or brother, or wife of their youth or friend of their bosom,—more than all to whom the soul of man is linked and grappled by those bonds of which the continuance imparts the sweetest pleasure, of which the dissolution inflicts the sharpest and bitterest pang? How could they but be stricken with alarm when they anticipated the situation in which His departure would leave them,—at war with a world whose scorn and enmity they cared not that they had provoked while they had the guiding wisdom and the guardian power of their Redeemer-Lord to trust to; while, forsaken by Him, they felt that they had no resources of their own to cope with the sharpened subtlety, and the exasperated might, which were armed to crush them—that they were cast forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, weak and defenceless victims to the gaunt and ravenous devourers? In these circumstances, no one

will doubt, nor did Jesus deny, that there was reason for grief and fear on the part of His disciples. He who "knoweth our frame," both because He at first created it, and because, in the fulness of the times, He took it,—who "remembereth that we are dust,"—was not, be sure, offended if the eleven accounted His departure a loss to be regretted, or the ensuing peril a trial to be dreaded. He is not now offended if, to a certain extent, believers feel that, while severed from Him, they are by that circumstance placed in a situation of imperfection and of jeopardy. But still, His exhortation to the apostles first, and to Christians at large, is to the effect,—that they should learn to moderate at once their regrets and their apprehensions on this account,—that they should beware of suffering such emotions to get the mastery of their thoughts and feelings, or of surrendering their souls to that mood of tempestuous agitation, raised by the storm and whirlwind of emotion, in which the voice of reason and religion are alike unheard,—in which the promises and consolations of the gospel fall powerless on the convulsed and labouring heart, as a strain of soothing melody upon the deaf and raving seas.

Jesus, however, was too profoundly acquainted with the human heart to think that, under the apprehension of just cause for grief or for alarm, it could be simply commanded into tranquillity and calm. He had but to speak to the midnight winds and the darkling waves, "Peace, be still; and immediately the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." But the tempests of the soul are not so to be appeased; they yield not to the constraint of a physical omnipotence, but to the sway of moral influences; and He knew that, before even He could expect the agitated and trembling spirit to subside at His bidding into equani-

imity and peace, it was necessary to say why and how its sorrows were to be assuaged, its apprehensions to be overcome. Having, therefore, begun by exhorting His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled," He proceeds to address them with consolations appropriate to their sorrows, with encouragements adapted to their fears:—"Believe in God," He says, "believe also in me."

It is one of the imperfections of the Greek language, among many singular excellences which it possesses as an organ of speech, that the indicative and imperative of its verbs are in certain cases the same. The idea, "believe ye," is expressed by precisely the same form as the other idea, "ye believe;" and it seems to us, that in the passage now before us the whole context and bearing very distinctly show that the rendering, "believe in God," is to be preferred to that which our translators have adopted, "ye believe in God." It would be very difficult to assign any satisfactory reason for the difference of rendering in the two connected clauses,—where, in the original, the words thus variously rendered are precisely the same,—"Ye believe in God, believe also in me." It will, we think, be admitted that the natural and obvious way of translating the words,—from which we are never, without strong reason, to depart,—would lead us to assign them the same force and meaning in either case. Nor does there seem any sufficient ground in the actual state of the disciples' minds for making so marked a distinction as the vernacular rendering suggests between the character of their faith in God and of their faith in Jesus Christ. If the former was real, so was the latter; if the latter was imperfect, so was the former. In all these circumstances, we entertain no doubt that the meaning of our Saviour in the clause before us, is,—"Believe in God, and believe in me." This

He recommends to them as the great tranquillizer of the troubled heart, the holy unction that stills the stormy waters,—faith in God and in Himself; that is, the assured and realizing recollection of all those blessed truths and promises referring to the character and disposition of the Father and the Son towards their people on the earth when placed in such circumstances of sorrow and alarm as those in which the disciples now were standing.

They had heard,—and thou hast heard, O Christian,—that God is He who, for His servants' highest, their eternal good, orders and determines all the circumstances of their lot, and more especially the measure and the manner, the time and the continuance, of their persecutions and afflictions; so that, in looking back even on the severest of their trials, they should have cause to acknowledge with the Psalmist—"I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."* They had heard that nothing could befall them, whether pleasing or painful, except by the permission and appointment of their Father, who "maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, and restraineth the remainder of his wrath;" that "the very hairs of their head were all numbered," and "not one of them could fall to the ground without their Father."† They had heard that God Himself had promised to be the Comforter and the Supporter of His own in the hour of sorrow and alarm:—"The Lord, He is their strength in the time of trouble; the Lord shall help them and deliver them;" "Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thy heart;" "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He will sustain thee."‡ They had heard that even when environed with circumstances of extremest

* Psal. cxix. 75.

† Psal. lxxvi. 10; Matt. x. 30.

‡ Psal. xxxvii. 39, 40; xxvii. 14; lv. 22.

affliction and most formidable terror, the people of God had His security and pledge, that while they were steadfast to their duty and allegiance to Himself, no real evil should befall them:—"The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in the times of trouble;" "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the floods, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee;" "I am the Lord thy God."* They had heard that even while He permitted the trials of His people to continue for the advancement of ends in order to which they would themselves have chosen to be afflicted, He pitied the pangs, and sympathized with the emotions, of their labouring hearts:—"His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel;" "In all their affliction He was afflicted;" "Even as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."† They had heard, in fine, that God would not always suffer His children to continue under affliction and distress; that He would in due time accomplish their deliverance and perfect their felicity; that though "many are the afflictions of the righteous, yet out of them all the Lord delivereth them;" that "the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."‡ This they had heard concerning the character of God their Father as the Helper, the Comforter, the Saviour, of his people in the time of trouble. Nor less refreshing and exhilarating were the views which have been given to Christians, and in great part had been already given to the eleven, of the character of Jesus their Redeemer-Lord, as the

* Ps. ix. 9; Is. xliii. 2, 3. † Judg. x. 16; Is. lxiii. 9; Ps. ciii. 13.

‡ Psal. xxxiv. 19; Isa. xxxv. 10.

Man who should be “as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,”—as a High-priest, “not such an one as cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tried like as we are, and having suffered, being tried, is therefore able to succour them that are tried,”—as one who identifies Himself with His believing and obedient children on the earth, and had assured them that, if they were partakers of His sufferings here, they should be partakers of His glory and His joy hereafter,—as one on whom the Spirit of Jehovah rested without measure, “to bind up the broken-hearted, and to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”*

But in order to obtain the benefit and comfort of declarations and promises such as these, it is obvious, from the nature of the case, that a man must first believe them, and believingly remember them; while it is equally obvious, on the other hand, that whoever does believe them, assured at the same time that he is of that blessed number to whom they appertain, possesses in these facts the grounds and elements of a celestial peace which all the shocks and agitations of the world should be unable to disturb. Often has the efficacy of the cure which Jesus here prescribes for the agitations of a convulsed and troubled soul, pierced with sharp anguish or shaken with restless fear, been proved in the experience of believers. This faith it was that inspired and upheld the song of clear triumphant confidence with which the Church of old, amidst the shock of warring elements, while

* Isa. xxxii. 2; Heb. iv. 15, ii. 18; Isa. lxi. 1—3.

all around was shaking with the tumult of the lashing waves and the uprooted hills, is heard cleaving the clamorous storm:—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."* This faith it was that strengthened and emboldened the holy Psalmist thus to reason with his soul when "afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted,"—when the "sorrows of death environed him, and the floods of the ungodly came round about him,"—when "deep called unto deep at the noise of heaven's rushing waterspouts, and all God's billows and His waves went over him:"—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."† This faith it was that dictated to the apostle, in the name of all believing men, the lofty defiance which he cast abroad to all the powers of persecution and affliction,—wherein, even in that day of fierce and fiery trial when, for the sake of Jesus, "they were killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter," he challenged them to violate his present safety or frustrate his final victory:—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or nakedness, or famine, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."‡ This faith it is that even now, when the course and current of events seems to run most vehemently adverse to the believer's interests and

* Psal. xli. 1—3.

† Psal. xliii. 5.

‡ Rom. viii. 35—37.

hopes,—when, swept by the bleak winds, and mantled with the wild night, of disappointment and calamity, his soul is stirred from its inmost depths, like the troubled sea when it cannot rest,—is able to tame the maned billows, and call Peace the halcyon to brood with downy plume upon the waters as they rock themselves to rest from the tempest:—“Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth; for the Lord hath comforted his people, He will have mercy upon his afflicted;” “Thou wilt keep him, O Lord, in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. Trust in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”*

But while the exhortation of this first verse, in its widest possible sense, as applicable to all seasons and emergencies of affliction and distress in which the disciples could possibly be placed, was appropriate to their case, and is appropriate to that of all believing men; it was, no doubt, intended to be used by them with an especial reference to that event on account of which sorrow had now filled their hearts,—the approaching departure of their beloved Master. In reference to that event, the exhortation to “believe in God,” to “believe also in Christ” Jesus, was an intimation to them that, though they were about to be deprived of the immediate and personal presence which they had hitherto enjoyed of Him whom they revered and loved as their constant Friend, and Guide, and Guardian, they would have, in the power of faith, what would, for all practical and necessary purposes, abundantly compensate for the lack of sight. That mighty principle, whose office, as defined by the apostle, is to make the absent present, and bring the distant near,—realizing the character of the Father and the Son as both willing and able, though in-

* Isa. xlix. 13; xxvi. 3, 4.

visible, to impart to those who trusted in their omnipresent Providence all needful supplies of directing, defending, and consoling grace,—would enable them to feel that they had not been left, as they apprehended they should be, orphans in a fatherless and forsaken world, but were to God, and to Jesus too, the objects of a care as real, as affectionate, as practically efficacious, when the heavens had received Him out of their sight, to retain Him in their inaccessible pavilion of august retirement until the restitution of all things, as when He went in and out before them a fellow-pilgrim with themselves upon the world's highway, and they could pour directly into his human bosom all their cares and all their wants as they successively arose; so that in Him, although they saw Him not, yet believing, they might not merely repose their steadfast trust and confidence amidst all the tribulations through which they were to enter the kingdom of heaven, but might even “rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Meanwhile, that their consolation in regard to this particular might be full and overflow, the compassionate Saviour, who had deigned to call His disciples friends, proceeds to assure them that the personal separation which was at hand, and which, with all its alleviating circumstances, could not but be felt at the time a bitter and painful one, was but for a little while; that the transient parting would be ere long succeeded by an eternal re-union; that they were travellers to a common home, though for a little space divided from each other by the way; and that in that celestial home He and they should form, throughout eternity, one undivided family, of which every member should enjoy his own especial share in a common glory and felicity,—in which all together should inhabit one “house of many mansions.”

“In my Father’s house,” says Jesus, “are many mansions.” That the house of God here mentioned and described is heaven, will be at once apparent to every one at all familiar with the phraseology of Scripture, who remembers how customary it is with the sacred writers to describe the celestial world as the palace and abode of the Eternal Majesty. Not that, strictly speaking, the presence of Infinite Divinity can be said to reside more properly in one region of the universe than in another,—“Behold heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain Him;” “Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord:” but partly, that in heaven Jehovah intimates His presence and His power by more glorious manifestations still than even the most glorious with which He has irradiated all the other departments of His magnificent creation,—that in heaven is situated that glory of inaccessible light which the Bible calls “the throne of the Living God;” and partly, that heaven is the place where, from the beginning of the world, the blessed spirits that never fell, with those who, from age to age, have been gathered from the earth, ransomed and regenerated, to the pure and blessed family above, have enjoyed that nearer contemplation of Jehovah’s excellence, and that directer experience of His love, which form the felicity for which angels and men were made,—the vision and fruition of their God. Now, in this, the brightest and most blessed place of all creation,—most refulgent with the display of the divine perfections, and most replenished with the fulness of the divine beauty,—in which it is most conspicuously manifested to the view and to the sense of all the pure inhabitants that “God is Light” and that “God is Love,”—we are told that there is separate provision and accommodation, so to speak, for every individual dweller, or at least for each individual

household, there. "In my Father's house are many mansions,"—a several place of rest and of refection for every immortal spirit, or consociated group of immortal spirits, embraced in the great family of light. Amidst all the diffusive and pervading happiness which is the very element of heaven, it would seem that there is provision made for that tendency to concentrate and individualize our feelings, to fix our affections with peculiar warmth and intensity upon the special sphere in which we have been severally placed, and to which our habits have been severally adjusted,—to perceive an especial charm and beauty on that one spot of earth, or, as it would seem, of heaven, which we can call peculiarly our own; the tendency which is the genial product of the love of country and the love of home—which renders our own, our native land,—our own familiar dwelling—our own accustomed couch of rest,—dearer and more precious to our hearts than goodlier lands afar, or statelier mansions, or more luxurious beds. There are many, I doubt not, here, whose hearts, replete with domestic associations and domestic sympathies, it will thrill with not mere sentimental and illusive tenderness, to be told, as we are here, that there are homes in heaven. But we are further told, that in the "better country, that is, the heavenly,"—"the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," the "building of God, the house not made with hands eternal in the heavens"—the individual mansions, the several homes are many; that is to say, that heaven is an ample, and is intended to be a populous, place,—where there are abodes of rest and blessedness provided not only for all the shining hosts of the unfallen, the "innumerable company of angels," but for all "the nations of the saved"—for the innumerable multitude, "redeemed from the earth, out of every kindred and people and

tongue," who through eternity shall reign and minister as anointed kings and consecrated priests to God, even our Father. By thus assuring the eleven of the ample provision which the "house of God eternal in the heavens" contains for all the many sons of God whom the Captain of salvation hath undertaken to bring to glory, Jesus gives them to understand that the object of His hastening departure was not, as they might be ready to imagine, that He should reign apart in unapproachable and solitary grandeur,—exalted out of the reach of human sympathies and human fellowship, to some august and lonely sphere of majesty, where they might never hope to see Him more, or, if allowed to see Him, might not expect, at least, to renew with Him that dear and intimate communion which had been so long the solace of their souls,—contented if they might 'behold His utmost skirts of glory, and far off His steps adore,'—but that, in going home to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God, He was going where there should be 'ample room and verge enough' to comprehend them all, and a countless host besides, in one holy and happy family, of which He Himself should be the Elder Brother, nor think Himself degraded by allowing every one of them to associate with Him for ever on the terms of fraternal amity.

Jesus had said to Peter immediately before,—“Whither I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards.” But not to Peter did He wish to confine this blessed assurance. He desired that not Peter alone, but all the company of His disciples,—that not they alone, but all who should believe on Him to the end of the world,—should be assured that access to the abodes of immortality was free and open to them all,—that in these bright abodes there was room for them all, and a welcome for them all.

And that they might feel the full force and value of this gracious assurance, He appeals to the experience which they had enjoyed, and the opinion which they had formed, of His own candour and veracity:—"If it were not so, I would have told you." He was not the person to mock them with vain hopes, to cheat them into His service with empty and fallacious promises. He could appeal to their own recollection and experience, whether they had been so coldly loved by Him, or so negligently cared for, as that He should have suffered them to entertain and cherish such exalted expectations only that they might be stung at last with a bitterer disappointment. He had never scrupled to tell them forcibly how grievously they were deluded by the phantoms and the day-dreams with which they suffered their imaginations to be dazzled, in connection with His anticipated reign. Their fond visions of earthly pomp, and power, and pleasures, He had unsparingly exposed and dissipated by the light of austerest truth,—telling them that their portion in the world as His servants and His followers was not, as they fancied, to be wealth, and fame, and happiness, but poverty and want, reproach and scorn, persecution, and suffering, and death. And, in the ingenuous and unhesitating openness with which He had all along rebuked and disallowed their most cherished opinions, and hopes, and wishes, when they had no foundation in reality, He had given them the most convincing pledge that, if their anticipations of the "inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," had been equally unfounded and illusory, He would not have spared to tear from their bosoms the dear deceit, the beautiful delusion; He would not have invited them to sacrifice all that they had esteemed most precious in the world,—to forsake all and follow Him,—

in order to embrace an unreal shade,—in order to purchase an eternal disappointment. It is a declaration, then, which, in all its weight of precious meaning, whatever we know of the character of Jesus assures us is and must be true,—one on which we may suspend securely the interests of our eternity, and leaning on which, as a staff of hope both sure and steadfast, we may pursue our pilgrim-path to heaven,—that in His “Father’s house are many mansions,”—that all things are there provided, on a scale of magnificence befitting the majesty of the eternal King, for the entertainment and repose, not of one or of a few selected champions and leaders of the host, but of the whole army of the faithful from every tribe of the peopled earth, from every age of the history of man. A glorious company are there already around their Saviour-Lord, resting from their labours, and followed by their works. Thousands even now are pressing thither along the arduous path that leads to “glory, and honour, and immortality.” Thither we are every one of us invited to aspire, and assured that if we shall pursue that lofty mark of our high calling in the way revealed, prescribed, and sanctified, by God, we shall not be disappointed of a mansion in the everlasting habitations—an immortal home in the immortal heavens.

That way, as so plainly and impressively described by Jesus in the context, we shall soon have an opportunity of expounding more at large. Meanwhile, suffice it to remark, that Jesus is Himself the way; no man can come unto His Father or His Father’s house except by Him; none can be admitted there but those who are entitled, and those who are prepared,—and none of the guilty and polluted race of man can have either title or meetness for the inheritance of light, save those who, by faith in Jesus as their Saviour,

and submission to Him as their Lord, have been interested in His all-sufficient merits, and renewed after His all-excellent example.

Oh, then, if there be anything attractive to your hearts in the hope of finding at last a home in heaven—of being numbered with the family of God in glory everlasting—let all the power of this attractiveness be a force that draws you to the Saviour,—an argument that persuades you to build on His mediation all your hopes, to dedicate to His service all your powers; so that, when at last the warfare of time is accomplished, and these mortal tabernacles in which it is performed are taken down, your lot may be secure in those bright abodes which know no dissolution nor decay,—the “kingdom which cannot be moved,”—the “building of God,”—the “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

LECTURE II.

CHAP. XIV. 2, 3.

“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.”

THIS most impressive and interesting portion of holy writ contains, as you are aware, a series of exhortations addressed by the Saviour to His disciples, for the purpose of pointing out to them at once the duties and the consolations, springing from their relation to Himself, which should ere long become appropriate to the circumstances of their condition, when they were left without His personal presence on the earth to guide, to guard, and to befriend them. In administering to them the consolation which the case admitted, He shows Himself peculiarly desirous of placing that event, in anticipation of which “sorrow had filled their hearts,” in the most animating and cheering points of view; of showing them that what they were ready to imagine an event fraught with unmingled sorrow and alarm, was in truth an event that, rightly considered, afforded the most abundant cause of joy, of confidence, of triumph,—that His departure from the world would prove not only most happy and illustrious to Himself, but most propitious and beneficent to them. In this spirit it is, that, having assured them that in His Father’s house above there was room for

them all, and a welcome for them all, and that all their past experience of His sincerity and candour might suffice to convince them that, in reference to the prospects and privileges pertaining to them as His disciples, He would not delude them with idle visions and fallacious hopes, He goes on to explain the exact connection which His departure had with their future admission to the realms of everlasting peace:—"I go to prepare a place for you."

The image is borrowed from the case of a company of travellers towards a common destination, of whom one undertakes to go before to the place where they propose to take their refreshment and repose, in order to provide suitable accommodations—to have every thing in order for their reception when they shall arrive,—so that they shall have nothing to do but to sit down and enjoy the satisfaction and the rest thus without their care provided: and then, having completed all the necessary arrangements, he goes forth to meet them as they draw nigh; he congratulates them on the close of their tedious and toilsome journey, and welcomes them with benevolent satisfaction to the immediate enjoyment of all the ample and various provision he has made for their comfort. Such is the interesting illustration which the Saviour gives to His trembling and sorrowful disciples of the nature and results of the fact that He was to leave the world before them,—so intimating, on the one hand, that their separation was not to be final or perpetual, and, on the other hand, that while it lasted, they had the amplest assurance that their great Friend, 'not lost but gone before,' was engaged, on their behalf, in occupations mightily conducive to their ultimate and ever-during interests,—in preparing a place for their perpetual dwelling and their perpetual bliss,—in taking care that there were ready for all of them in heaven, the mansions

of eternal abode, the couches of eternal rest, the board of an eternal festival.

There are two ways in which the Saviour's departure from the earth was to have the effect of preparing a place in heaven for His disciples.

In the first place, His meritorious death and passion,—“the blood of the everlasting covenant,” by the shedding of which He, according to the evangelist's expression, “accomplished His departure at Jerusalem,”—were that by which the incorruptible inheritance was purchased for His people, and the way to everlasting life was opened to all believing men. This we are not to understand as if heaven had not been prepared for any before the death and ascension of the Son of God in human nature. But without His merit, either as having died, or as yet to die,—as having ascended, or as yet to ascend,—no man hath had, or can have, access into heaven. Thus “it became Him of whom are all things, and to whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect,”—to render Him a fully accomplished Guide to everlasting happiness,—“through sufferings.” “Neither by the blood of bulls nor of goats, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us;” and thus we too have liberty to enter with filial “boldness into the holiest of all through the blood of Jesus.”* Because from before the beginning of the world it was clearly and infallibly foreseen that the incarnate Only-begotten would, by dying, satisfy the justice of Heaven for the sins of all believers, and so render it an honourable, or, in other words, a possible, thing for the pure and righteous Divinity to admit

* Heb. ii. 10; ix. 12; x. 19.

the guilty into His favour and eternal fellowship,—therefore is the celestial heritage described as “a kingdom prepared for the blessed of the Lord from before the foundation of the world;” and therefore, through all descending generations, since the first promise made to fallen man informed him that restoration to his primeval dignity through a Saviour, one day to appear in the form and nature of humanity, was not impossible, they who by faith received testimony that they pleased God, have been gathered gradually thither, to “the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.” Had it been possible, as it was not, that Jesus should have failed in His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross,—had He not been “given for our offences, and raised again for our justification,”—all the dignity and all the blessedness which the spirits of olden saints had enjoyed before that terrible catastrophe, the failure of the plan for the accomplishment of human salvation, had occurred, would have been enjoyed in direct violation of all the established principles of Jehovah’s government,—in direct inconsistency with all the most essential attributes of Jehovah’s character; and from that day forward, be sure, not only those who had hitherto by mistake enjoyed them would have been hurled from their seats of glory into the ruin from which they should never have emerged, but care would have been taken that no such fatal mistake should ever be committed more by the admission of one actually unransomed soul into the everlasting habitations. Let us be excused if thus we speak of what would necessarily have ensued had an impossibility been possible, in order that we may the more strongly show how indissolubly connected the departure of Jesus out of the world by death is with the admission of

His people to the purer, happier, and sublimer world, where death and separation are unknown,—how His decease is to be esteemed the condition and the cause of their felicity,—how, ‘having overcome the sharpness of death, He opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.’ While, therefore, the disciples seem fondly to have expected, according to the common imagination of their countrymen, that the Messiah, when He came, should continue ever, and under this apprehension would have detained Him, if possible, from the cross and from the sepulchre, they little thought that the fulfilment of their wishes would have been the subversion of the whole object for which Messiah came,—the ruin of that kingdom of heaven for which they professed to long,—the dethronement of their patriarch and sainted fathers from their ancient seats in glory,—and their own final and irreversible exclusion from the dignities and privileges of the reign of God’s Anointed.

Not only, however, in this sense did Jesus, by His departure to the Father, prepare a place in heaven for all who were, or should become, His followers, to the end of the world,—in that by His death He purchased for them all the right of entrance into the celestial kingdom; but also in that, by carrying up with Him his human nature to the throne of God, He, as the Elder Brother, the Surety and Representative, of His redeemed, has taken possession, as it were, of heaven in our name and our behalf,—so that from that moment forward it might be said of genuine Christians, in the words which holy writ, in point of fact, employs, that “their life is hid with Christ in God,”—that they “are raised up with Him, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” “For us” believers “the Forerunner hath entered within the vail, even Jesus, made

an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek,"* and, like that ancient high priest of the seed of Aaron, bearing our names upon His heart,—presenting for us the merit of His blood before the Lord continually,—pouring out on us His Holy Spirit, to make us “meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,”—and by His continual intercession procuring for us all needful supplies of guiding and guardian grace to bring us in safety thither. So that His ascension is the pledge of ours,—the assurance that our destined inheritance will be kept secure till we be ripe for its actual and full enjoyment.

Finally,—for all the explanations we have hitherto given are obviously insufficient to exhaust the meaning of the phrase, “I go to prepare a place for you,”—we seem entitled to gather from it that Jesus, where He now dwells in majesty and blessedness ineffable, and where He means ere long to gather around Him the whole of the redeemed family, is actually employed in adapting the scenes, the occupations, the arrangements of the heavenly world for imparting to the soul of every Christian, as he ascends into those glorious regions, a higher degree of happiness, suited to his nature and his circumstances, than had otherwise been possible,—that He takes advantage of His personal presence in the land of immortality in order to see that, for every soul that loves Him, as it successively arrives, there is provided a mansion richly furnished with every thing most suitable for the divine refection and divine repose of that individual soul. Nor is there any representation in the whole range of Scripture calculated to excite in our hearts a livelier idea of the august magnificence of the abodes prepared for the Christian’s liberated spirit, than the repre-

* Heb. vi. 20.

sensation which the text contains of a certain lengthened and laborious preparation expended on their construction, and furniture, and decoration, by Him who, in rearing up the glorious fabric of the visible creation,—in calling into existence this beautiful earth, with all its goodly garniture, and yonder ‘dread magnificence of heaven,’—had but to speak, and it was done,—to command, and it stood fast. We are taught to think of the skill and might of Jesus,—the skill of Him in whom “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,”—the might of Him who, by “the working of His mighty power, is able even to subdue all things to Himself,”—as employed and tasked, so to speak, in order to produce a structure for the habitation of the glorified immortals which, for curious and exquisite contrivance, for lavish and accumulated grandeur, shall utterly eclipse the brightest of those visible glories in which we are now invited to contemplate the ordinances of His wisdom, and the work of His fingers, and to which when we gaze upwards, we are forced to feel, in the ecstasy of our astonished admiration, “What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?” In what particular forms of external arrangement, in what detailed provision of the materials of blessedness,—the displays of majesty and loveliness, the divine omnipotence of Jesus, consulting and acting for the happiness of the redeemed, shows itself in the celestial sanctuary, we are not informed, and we dare not conjecture; for “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” One circumstance, however, by means of which the departure of Jesus from our earth to the world of invisible glory, is fitted to prepare that world for the residence of the holy soul, is very obvious; and

that is, the simple fact that He is present there. It is uniformly represented in Scripture as forming among the very chiefest elements of the celestial blessedness, that there those who have been redeemed from the earth behold the glorious countenance, and enjoy the personal communion, of the Redeemer-Lord. Thus Jesus Himself describes it in the following verse; and thus it appears that it was necessary for Jesus to go away in order that earth might not appear to His people a more desirable place than heaven,—in order that they might not have occasion to reverse the apostle's maxim, and to say, To remain and to be with Christ is far better. You easily perceive how much more ample a fund of blessedness, as derived from the presence of the Saviour, is enjoyed by the church at large, than had He realized the fond desire of His original disciples, and remained for ever on the earth, the Head and Sovereign of an earthly monarchy. Before the great day of final consummation, when Christ shall have accomplished the number of His chosen, and gathered them all in one holy commonwealth, that, body and soul, they may have their perfect consummation and bliss, and reign with Him in life eternal,—before the coming of that day, every true believer that has been and that is, almost every true believer that shall be to the end of the world,—every one save of the two concluding generations of our race,—has a longer time, in most cases a time immensely longer, to spend in heaven than on the earth. And it is for you to say,—considering that one primary source of the felicity of heaven is the presence of the exalted Mediator there,—whether it would be most for the advantage of the church, that, previous to the day of “the restitution of all things,” she should live in exile from her Lord during her abode in this world, or during her residence in the world celestial.

In order, therefore, that heaven, the paradise above, where, delivered from the burthen of the flesh, and rescued from the miseries of life, "the spirits of the just made perfect" have their appointed dwelling, might really become to Christians in our world the object of hope and of desire,—in order that "the heaven of heavens" itself might be fitted to impart felicity such as their renewed natures could relish and rejoice in,—in order that it might be for them a prepared and congenial place, it was necessary that Jesus should be there. "The Lamb is the light thereof;" and were that light extinguished or withdrawn, how deep and disastrous the shade which would at that instant fall over all the grandeur and the loveliness of heaven! Well, therefore, might the eleven—the honoured and blessed company who best had known what spiritual and sublime delight there was in gazing on the countenance of Him in whom alone the lofty description of 'the human face divine' was fully verified,—in listening to the words of Him "into whose lips grace was poured," and "who spake as never man spake,"—in contemplating the character and work of Him in whom, the Living Image of the Invisible God, 'without cloud made manifest, the Almighty Father shone,'—well might they be convinced that their Master's speedy return to heaven, however it might for the moment pierce their hearts with sorrow and alarm, would ultimately prove for their advantage and felicity,—that the withdrawal of His beatific presence from the world in which they were to spend the few fleeting years of their mortal pilgrimage, was only in order to its permanent location in another, a brighter and happier, world, in which it should diffuse its blessed influence over a wider sphere and throughout a mightier duration,—in which they, individually, should enjoy His presence and most intimate communion through

ages more numerous than the moments of their separation, and should, at every instant of the flight of those innumerable ages, feel that it was expedient for them that He should go away, because He had gone to prepare a place for them.

It was not enough, however, that Jesus should prepare a habitation for His followers, however stately and magnificent,—however provided with the means and materials of enjoyment. It was necessary that He should make provision of means for conducting and introducing those for whom that habitation was intended into its pure and blissful mansions. And, therefore, having said, “I go to prepare a place for you,” He adds—“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.”

I have no doubt that those interpreters have rightly understood these words, who refer them,—not so much to that magnificent occasion which is commonly set forth in Scripture under the idea of Christ’s second coming, when He is “to gather together His elect from the four winds of heaven,” and receive them to Himself in one vast society,—but to the reception which He gives at the hour of death to every individual Christian, and the welcome with which He hails them to the land of everlasting peace. It seems very unlikely, and alien indeed from the whole plan and tenor of this discourse,—which finds all its consolatory topics in matters near at hand,—that Jesus should have referred His apostles, for comfort and support under a present grief, to a prospect so remote; while the description of the state into which, by His return and reception of them, they are to be admitted, as a state of close proximity to Jesus, and of intimate communion with Him, is the familiar and customary description of the intermediate blessedness to be enjoyed by the unembodied spirit between

death and resurrection. This is the very hope by which the sacred oracles teach and prepare the Christian to depart in peace, in trust, in triumph,—to be “confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body,”—the hope of thereby becoming “present with the Lord.” No sooner does any one of them cross the boundary of time, and commit his naked and lonely spirit to the vast unknown beyond, than, lo! he perceives the Divine Deliverer waiting, as it were, on the threshold to receive him,—advancing to meet and welcome him into the realms of everlasting joy, to animate his failing heart, to guide his trembling footsteps amidst the giant scenes and objects of that new and awful world, to “show him the path of life,” and, with His own supporting arm around him, to lead him along the upward path which, as our Forerunner, He Himself hath trod,—which, as our Saviour, He Himself has opened,—the path which leads to glory and to God. Conducted thus in safety to its destined mansion in the palace of the King Eternal, radiant all with the splendours of the beatific vision, and echoing all with the symphonies of heavenly voices, the ascended soul is overwhelmed, and pervaded, from a thousand points, with thrilling sensations of a “joy that is unspeakable and full of glory,”—it loses itself in astonished rapture amidst the visions of unimaginable glory, flashing on its sight from every point in the circumference of that magnificent world, and the billowy tide of song rolling on the ear from every voice in that innumerable multitude, “like the sound of many waters,” of mighty and melodious thunderings. Yet, amidst all the splendours and all the harmonies of heaven, by which the soul of each new-coming pilgrim, as he reaches the house of his eternal rest, is entranced and overwhelmed, till he ‘feels that he is happier than he knows,’ one object there is more glorious to

his eye, one sound more grateful to his ear, than all the rest,—the countenance, the voice, of the God-Man, his Anointed and Exalted Saviour. For the sensible presence, the intimate communion, the perpetual society, of Jesus, is always represented by Himself and His apostles as the primary element of that pure, and perfect, and permanent bliss which is reserved for Christians in the world unseen. To gaze upon His sacred person more directly, to contemplate His transcendent character more closely and comprehend it more completely, to cherish towards Him the feelings of an intenser love, and to receive from Him the tokens of a more exuberant benignity, dwelling together as in one palace-home, and the heirs together of one unending life,—this, this it is which chiefly attracts to heaven the aspirations of the regenerated soul, and constrains it with groanings of desire, with agonies of prayer, to cry, “When shall I come and appear before God?” or, with the mystic spouse, when sighing for the return of her departed Lord, “Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for, sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.” This, therefore, is the circumstance on which our Saviour fixes here in His description of the celestial inheritance,—not more in accordance with the actual exigencies and feelings of the eleven, stricken to the dust with grief and terror in the prospect of His approaching departure, than with the native breathings of each renewed heart after intercourse and fellowship with its Saviour-God,—this is the circumstance by which He seeks to recommend their destined home to their wishes and their aims, so that they might derive from the anticipation “strong consolation” and “living hope,”—that it will be a place of everlasting union to Him, of everlasting communion with Him:—“I will receive you to myself; that

where I am, there ye may be also." Oh, when the Christian shall reflect how much of holy peace and joy,—of "peace that passeth understanding," of "joy that is unspeakable and full of glory,"—even in this land of exile and remoteness, in which he "walked by faith, and not by sight," he has derived from an invisible union to Jesus, from an indirect communion with Jesus,—sensations that have proved themselves irradiations from above, the morning-beams of immortality, the antepasts of heaven,—what may he not expect when that rich and radiant scene shall unfold itself into the perfect day, these sweet and precious foretastes be succeeded by the full fruition,—when Christian faith shall be exchanged for the beatific vision, and Christian love be ripened into celestial communion, and Christian joy expanded into felicity without measure and without end? "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know even as we are known; while, streaming from His unveiled face,—the Sun of the spiritual universe,—love and joy, purity and bliss, blent and commingled in one element and flood of radiant influence, shall absorb our spirits, and fulfil in us the Psalmist's glorious hope—"As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."*

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12; Psal. xvii. 15.

LECTURE III.

CHAP. XIV. 4—6.

“And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

You recollect that the occasion of the discourse contained in this and the following chapters was the approaching departure of Christ Jesus from the world He had so long irradiated with His presence,—the departure which He had intimated to be now near at hand, when He said to His disciples, “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now say I to you.” Because, therefore, He had said these things unto them, “sorrow had filled their hearts;” and to dispel or mitigate that sorrow, is the object of His present exhortations. With this view, He had already suggested various topics of most powerful and persuasive consolation, well fitted to assuage the grief, and to allay the fear, which His former communication had inspired. He had told them, that for Him they had no reason to sorrow, inasmuch as He was going where He would be happy for evermore,—to His Father’s house, the home of His eternity; that they had no reason to sorrow for themselves, inasmuch as, where He was going, there was room for them all,—“many man-

sions” for the “many sons” of God whom He had undertaken to bring to glory; that the object of His departure thither before them was, as their Forerunner, to secure and to prepare for them the dwellings of immortal bliss; that whensoever these were ready for every several soul that loved Him, He would personally interpose to gather it in safety thither, meeting it, as it were, at the gate of eternity, and showing it the path of life which leads to the fulness of joy before Jehovah’s face; and that so they should be ever with the Lord. All this Jesus had intimated to them in words which, though in some portion figurative, might have been expected to be most readily intelligible to the minds of His disciples. They knew right well that God was His Father,—and what, therefore, could they rationally suppose, the phrase, “my Father’s house,” to signify, but heaven, the throne and palace of the Everlasting? This expression is plainly the key of the whole discourse, and, once understood, might have been expected to leave no mystery remaining in our Lord’s remarks. Hence, He goes on to observe, at the 4th verse,—“And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know,”—Now surely, after all the hints I have given you, you cannot but be aware of my destination, and of the way which leads to it.

This form of speech, by which we tell a person that he knows—meaning that he might know, that he ought to know—is quite familiar in our own language as well as in that of the original Scriptures. Nor was it any more than might have been expected of the disciples, that they should now have a clear conception, both of the place to which their Master was about to depart, and of the way by which they might follow Him thither. On the one hand, with regard to His place of destination, He had not only, on the

present occasion, distinctly informed them that He was going to His Father's house, but He had often, in former conversations, given them to understand that, as He had come from God, so He went to God,—that the time was coming when the Son of Man should ascend up where He was before,—that but a little while He should continue in the world, and then He should go to Him that sent Him. On the other hand, in regard to the way, He had, with still greater distinctness, if possible, informed them that the only path by which they might ascend to join Him in His Father's presence, was the path which He had opened up,—that He Himself was the Author of eternal salvation to those who believed. That He was the only and all-sufficient Saviour, through faith in whom alone any sinner of the human race could enter heaven, was, in truth, the main point of His doctrine, which He had all along been pressing on their attention in innumerable varieties of statement and of illustration; it was what they themselves, as a general principle, did most firmly believe in their hearts, and had more than once confessed most courageously with their lips:—“Lord, to whom can we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” Recollecting this, we may perhaps interpret our Saviour's declaration, “Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know,”—not, as we have already suggested, as equivalent to, Ye might know, or, Ye ought to know,—but rather, as an assertion, on the part of Jesus, that His disciples were, in point of fact, already acquainted with the substantial truth which He was now teaching them respecting heaven as the ultimate destination both of Himself and of His followers, and respecting His own saving merits and saving grace as the only means by which any human sinner can attain to heaven; although some of them, one of them we should rather say,—for it would be

rash to conclude from the ignorance of Thomas, that all the rest of the eleven were equally ignorant with him,—did not recognise that truth in the form in which it was at present expressed, the figurative attire in which it was at present clothed.

Such was the fact with that interesting disciple,—inferior to none, as the few incidents recorded of him show, in warm and vehement attachment to the person of his Master, though distinguished from them all by a certain passionate straining after the highest possible evidence in reference to every demand, which, in his Master's name, was made on his belief,—as eager of emotion as he was apt to be slow of conviction. With his characteristic disposition to seek on every subject the last degrees of clearness and of certainty,—to maintain his own opinions till absolutely forced from them by resistless weight of evidence and perspicuity of demonstration,—we find him, in the text, more unwilling, apparently, than any of his brethren, to part from the dream with which they seem all to have originally soothed and flattered their imaginations, that the intended departure of their Saviour was on some pilgrimage or expedition, connected, though they knew not exactly how, with the speedy establishment of that reign of earthly splendour and felicity in which they still expected, ere long, to behold the Anointed of the Lord enthroned, with themselves upon His right hand and His left, and the crowns and sceptres of the nations at their feet. Resolved to cling while it was possible to the glittering hopes of worldly ambition which had played so long before his dazzled fancy, he is determined not to perceive in the idea of his Lord's departure the idea of His death,—His separation from them by more than land or sea,—and therefore, with an inexcusably determined and pertinacious incredulity,

contradicts in form, though without by any means invalidating in substance, in the sense in which we have explained it, the declaration of Jesus, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know:"—"Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?"

The reasoning of Thomas is obvious and luminous enough. The very notion of a way implies a term to which it tends, and in the nature of things we cannot choose our means till we conceive distinctly of our end,—we cannot select our path till we know what our destination is to be. It was well, if Thomas was indeed still ignorant of what his Master meant, that he should thus frankly confess it, and ask for further light from Him who was the embodied Truth and Wisdom of the Highest. The ignorant who feel and confess their ignorance are on the way to learn; and many might have arrived at wisdom, had they not imagined themselves to have arrived at it already. But it was not well, that, after instructions which ought to have been so plain and perspicuous, and must have been so to every mind sincerely and candidly desirous of simply knowing the truth, he should yet have clung so immovably to carnal prejudices and earthly hopes. Nor was it well that he should so rashly have ascribed to his brother-disciples an equal obscurity of apprehension with himself, when doubtless there were some among them not so blinded in their understanding as not to have perceived that the home of which their Master spoke as the common destination of Himself and them was the palace of the King Eternal in the heavens, and the way by which He summoned them to follow Him thither was what they knew, with all the indistinctness, first of their information, and then of their recollection, to be the way of salvation—faith in Jesus as

their Saviour, and obedience and submission to Him as their Lord. Condescending, however, to His servant's weakness, that Teacher, "meek and lowly of heart," without reproving as He might the slowness of heart to understand and to believe which the question showed, returns a most explicit and satisfactory reply to either point of the inquiry. The end of the journey which He now was meditating, and in which He hoped ere long to be followed by the eleven, was the presence of the Father, and the eternal life that is with Him; and the only way in which any one of them,—in which any of the race of Adam,—might follow Him to that blessed termination, was by availing themselves of His interposition as the "one Mediator between God and man:"—"I," says He, "am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

There can be little doubt, to any one familiar with the sacred idiom, that the appellations, "the Truth" and "the Life," by which our Saviour follows up the declaration that He was "the Way," are to be understood as containing in themselves a repetition of the first epithet, qualified by the attributes of Truth and Life; and that the full import of His words is this,—I am the way, I am the way of truth, I am the way of life, I am the only way to the presence of the Father. These several statements may be most conveniently illustrated, perhaps, by considering apart what they teach us concerning the end and concerning the means.

As to the end to be aimed at by the disciples, they describe it as life:—"I am the life," the way of life; and as the presence of the Father:—"No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

In the Bible, such expressions as, life, and, life eternal, include the idea of happiness,—denote not merely immortal

being, but immortal well-being. "A man's life," our Saviour remarks,—that is, obviously, the happiness of his life,—“consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” Thus God is described as having in Himself “the fountain of life,”—the source of being and enjoyment; while, in direct reference to the future world, we find the expressions, “life,” and, “life eternal,” used perpetually as the equivalents of, salvation, everlasting salvation, and as the direct contrast of such formidable phrases as, “destruction,” the “fire that never shall be quenched,” “condemnation,” “perdition,” “everlasting punishment,” “shame and everlasting contempt.”* This, then, is the life which Jesus here professes Himself to be, to which He here professes Himself to be the way,—a life which, begun in every genuine Christian even on the earth, expects its full development and consummation in the heavens. In the rectification of the ruling powers and principles of his being,—in the peace and harmony with which his faculties now act according to their original nature and towards their appointed ends,—in the re-establishment of favourable intercourse between his soul and the great Father-Spirit of the universe,—in the thought which he is now permitted with humble confidence to cherish, God loves me—a thought in which there lies enfolded profounder cause of happiness than the created universe can furnish,—in the glad sense of present safety, and the bright hope of future glory; even now, according to the testimony of his Lord, he “hath eternal life,”—he has within him an antepast of heaven, a specimen of immortality.† Yet are all these *but* a specimen, *but* an antepast,—the first-fruits of the hastening harvest. Not till he is

* Luke xii. 13; Psal. xxxvi. 9, &c.

† John vi. 47, 54.

translated to that brighter world where Jesus dwells, shall the Christian enter on the full inheritance of life eternal,—the plenitude of everlasting joy. The elements of which this perfect and unfading felicity shall be composed I will not now attempt to describe; knowing that they are things which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man” to conceive. Enough, that it includes in it abundance of all that can contribute to satisfy the soul to everlasting ages,—the materials of endless growth in the perfection, the glory, and the blessedness of an immortal being.

Now, as equivalent to the idea of enjoying this majestic and imperishable life, we find the Saviour, in the last clause of the verse, employing the idea of being brought unto the Father; and He does so in entire conformity with the general train and tenor of sacred conception and phraseology in which such ideas and expressions as “to come to God,” “to see God,” “to appear before God,” “to draw near to God,” “to have fellowship with God,” are continually employed as emphatical descriptions of the supreme felicity of man. They are figurative phrases, denoting in general the admission of the creature to the love and enjoyment of the omnipotent and everlasting Creator,—the maintenance of favourable intercourse with Him “in whose favour there is life, whose loving-kindness is better than life,”—the assurance and the experience of His marvellous loving-kindness who hath, in His own unfathomable being, and in His magnificent creation, infinite resources, and all at His command, for making those whom He chooses to bless completely and for ever happy; with whom is “the fountain of life,”—the exhaustless spring of existence and felicity. More particularly, it is obviously employed, upon the present occasion, as express-

ing that fullest and most beatific enjoyment of the happiness that flows from the favour of Jehovah, reserved for Christians, at the period when they shall be brought nearest, as it were, to God,—when they shall be admitted into that celestial kingdom in which He is pleased to exhibit more glorious tokens of His presence, more precious and abundant proofs of His power and willingness to bless His chosen, than in any other region of His universe, at any other period of their existence. To “come unto the Father,” in this place, is obviously fixed down by the context to the sense of entering and dwelling in the Father’s “house of many mansions;” that is, in other words, entering on the actual possession of the “inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by God’s power unto salvation,”—the actual fruition of that “fulness of joy which is before His face, and of those rivers of pleasure which are at His right hand for evermore,”—the actual enjoyment of eternal life.

Now, to the presence of the Father, in this sense, and to the everlasting life which in that presence is to be enjoyed, Jesus declares that He is the way; that is, that on His account, and through His mediation, those who make a proper use of His interposition may entertain the hope of at length enjoying everlasting life, and dwelling with Jesus in the eternal home of purity and peace,—the house of His Father and their Father, of His God and their God.

To this character Jesus is entitled, not so much because, by His doctrine, He has pointed out the way to heaven,—but because, by His obedience unto death, He has opened up that way, He has made heaven accessible, and because by His intercession, His Spirit, and His power, He actually brings to heaven all those

who seek to enter it through Him,—on the ground of His merits, through the efficacy of His mediation. You know, my brethren, that, according to the doctrine of the Bible, the sin of man, by rendering his enjoyment of immortal blessedness without a Mediator inconsistent with the attributes of Jehovah's character, and the rights of Jehovah's government,—by making it morally impossible that, without an ample satisfaction to the insulted honours of the divine law and the divine perfection, man should be happy, and God remain just, or His throne continue firm,—had, so to speak, interposed an apparently impenetrable and insuperable barrier across the path which led at first from earth to heaven, or, like a torrent inundation, had swept the once uninterrupted path away, and interposed between the dwellings of mankind and the land of bliss and immortality, where the palace is erected, and the paradise is planted, of the King Eternal, a great and fixed gulf, overhung with clouds and darkness and horror, across whose gloomy waters whoever sought to push his frail bark to the bright shores beyond, sunk irrecoverably in their profound and treacherous abyss. Now, what Jesus Christ has by His merits effected to remove this mighty barrier,—to bridge from shore to shore this mighty gulf,—is, that having taken the nature and the place of man, and in that place and nature having magnified the law which man had dishonoured, by a perfect obedience to its precept, and the full endurance of its curse, He has secured that neither the character of Jehovah shall be compromised, nor the moral government of Jehovah put in jeopardy, by His receiving even the guilty and rebellious children of men who shall rest their application for mercy on this ground, into His most blessed favour here and hereafter. Thus the mountain-wall of

adamant hath been removed,—the wild and gloomy torrent has been spanned,—and a free, direct, uninterrupted, if sometimes rough and narrow, path has been opened up, that, setting out from our dim spot of earth, terminates amidst the glories of the inmost heaven. Now, the sinner, who adopts and prosecutes this way to heaven,—that is, who, firmly believing the testimony which God hath given concerning His anointed Son, as having by His merits made salvation possible for the guiltiest of the guilty, and the vilest of the vile, places on these merits all his own personal dependence for pardon, and acceptance, and life eternal,—embraces and acknowledges Christ Jesus as his own almighty, all-sufficient Saviour, while, at the same time, he receives Him with all humble obedience and submission as His righteous Lord, and so, having received Christ Jesus the Lord, is also found walking in Him by a steadfast faith and a persevering holiness,—by “patient continuance in well-doing, seeking for glory, and honour, and immortality,”—he is in the act brought back to life and to God, to the happiness and the enjoyment of the Almighty’s favour here; and he has the certainty of being brought to them in a still more emphatic sense,—to perfect happiness hereafter, and the full enjoyment of the everlasting Source of blessedness in that glorious building of God, “the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” For not only does Jesus call Himself “the Way,” “the Life;” that is, the way of life, He by whom man cometh to the Father; but he styles Himself also, “the Way and the Truth;” that is, the way of truth, the sure way to glory and to God.

The first quality which we seek for in any path which we are called to travel, is, that it shall be the true way to our destination,—that it shall really, if followed out, conduct

us thither. We care not, in comparison, whether it be smooth or rugged, whether it be wide or narrow, whether it be dreary or beautiful of aspect,—all these are secondary and subordinate inquiries;—the first, the main point, is, whether it be the right way, the way of truth. Now, this is what we are assured of in the text, and in innumerable passages of holy writ besides, concerning the way by which Jesus has made heaven accessible to man. It is a path, in pursuing which you may lay your account with having often to encounter hardships, and toil, and trial; in which you may often meet with arduous steeps, and perilous descents,—mountains of difficulty, and valleys of humiliation,—mazes of mystery, and dark passages overshadowed with the cloud of sorrow and the wings of death,—fierce assaults of open enmity, and hidden snares of secret guile;—but then, your support and consolation will be this, that you know it leads to paradise. Even as you tread it, you will feel that it is not all dreary, and dark, and difficult; that even to the pilgrim-wayfarer, while yet his Father's house is far away, there is a “peace and joy in believing,”—a “peace which passeth understanding,” a “joy which is unspeakable and full of glory;” that his path is often lightened with glad sunshine, and refreshed with pleasant breezes,—enamelled with sweetest flowers, and embalmed with smells of Eden,—cheered with soft melodies that float around him, breathed from unseen but heavenly harps, and gladdened with the liquid lapse of murmuring streams, the quiet waters of divine consolation and refreshment. But, while you render your cordial thanks to Him who hath thus relieved with the earnest of celestial bliss the labours of your upward way, you will value them most as being only earnest,—as the foretastes of what awaits you at your journey's end,—as messengers from heaven to tell

you that you are on the right way, the way that leads to the city of eternal habitations.

Finally, my brethren, let us all remember that this, as it is the certain, so it is the only, way to heaven. "No man," saith the Saviour, "cometh unto the Father but by me." The whole spirit and tenor of the New Testament demonstrate that it acknowledges no method of salvation but one,—that Jesus is the only, as He is the all-sufficient, Saviour. "There is none other name given under heaven and among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus;"—"Other foundation can no man lay but that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;"—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Be therefore as sure, my brethren, as that this book contains the oracles of God, that the way here pointed out to heaven is the only way in which you can ever reach the mansions of felicity. Adopt what other path you please, in the hope of reaching the "house of many mansions," the home of true felicity and permanent repose,—substitute what, or whom, you please, in place of Jesus,—associate what, or whom, you please, along with Jesus, in the work of bringing you to God, and know that they will lead you only to disappointment and destruction,—you will find the path you have chosen terminate upon that adamant barrier which sin has erected between God and man, and at another point than where it has been penetrated and made patent to human foot by the power of Jesus,—you will find it land you on the shore of that terrible abyss by which sin has rent asunder heaven and earth, and where there is no bridge across its stormy and devouring waters. Labour to cross that awful gulf by what means you may

* Acts iv. 12; 1 Cor. iii. 11; Gal. vi. 14.

of your own devising, the attempt and the result will be like those of that presumptuous youth who, as ancient fables tell, aspired to pass the immeasurable deep on waxen wings, and left his name to the ocean that entombed him. Let me beseech you, therefore, brethren, to spare yourselves the disappointment and the agony which shall wring the souls of those, when they are undeceived at length, but undeceived too late, who are travelling, as they think, to heaven by any other way than that which God has sanctioned,—who “go about to establish a righteousness of their own, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God, which is by faith” in Jesus Christ His Son. Be assured that the incarnate Only-begotten of God would not have lavished such expense of labour, and suffering, and blood,—“travailing in the greatness of His strength,” and agonizing in the might of His patience,—in order to open up and consecrate a path for guilty men to the celestial blessedness and glory, if means less costly could have accomplished the end, and that, as this is the only way in which it is worthy of Jehovah to grant, so it is the only way in which it is possible for man to receive, access to a holy God, and admission to a holy heaven.

LECTURE IV.

CHAP. XIV. 7.

“If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.”

JESUS, you recollect, is employed, in this and the following chapters, in counselling and comforting His disciples with reference to His own approaching departure from our world. He had told them, for their consolation, that they were familiar with the place to which He was going, and that they were perfectly acquainted with the way by which they might in due time follow Him thither, and rejoin Him, never more to be divided. Yet so obtuse were the perceptions, if not of the other disciples, at least of Thomas, —whose character, as unduly difficult of persuasion, is illustrated, not in this incident alone of the evangelic history,—that Jesus had been compelled to explain Himself in the preceding verse still more directly and explicitly respecting both the end *to* which, and the way *by* which, He encouraged His disciples to hope that they might one day follow Him. “I am the way,” He said, “and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me;”—thus informing them, in respect of the destination to which He meant to guide them, that it was the enjoyment of the Father’s beatific communion, and of everlasting life in His celestial presence; and in respect of the

way by which they were to ascend to that illustrious destination, that the only path to heaven and heavenly blessedness which they, or any of the race of Adam, could successfully pursue, was the believing use of His mediation as the appointed means,—the sure, but only, means of obtaining access now to a holy God, and admission hereafter to a holy heaven. Having thus described, therefore, the sum of human perfection and human happiness as consisting in holding a favourable relation, and maintaining a favourable intercourse, with God, Jesus proceeds to intimate to them that they could judge for themselves whether the description were not just; that they were in a condition to form something like an adequate idea of the privilege contained in the vision and fruition of God, having in some degree enjoyed already that inestimable privilege:—“If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.”

Jesus had, about six months before,—as we read, chap. viii. 19,—made use of very similar terms in upbraiding the obstinate ignorance and unbelief of the Jews; by which, refusing to know the Son,—to admit that truth which Jesus had often most explicitly declared, and most irrefragably proved, respecting His own character and work,—they had rendered themselves incapable of knowing the Father, since only in the person, the doctrine, and the achievements of His incarnate Only-begotten, are either the perfections of His own nature, or the relations which He holds to the human race, revealed in a form adapted to human comprehension, and influential on the human heart. It is plain from the form in which the remark now before us is expressed,—“If ye had known me,”—that Jesus meant to charge even the chosen eleven as still remaining, to a great degree, under the dominion of that

ignorance respecting Himself which He had rebuked so sharply in the unbelieving Jews. They had, indeed, acknowledged Him in the character in which by the Jews He had been rejected,—as the Messiah promised to their fathers, the Anointed Son of God and Deliverer of Israel; but their notions respecting His office and reign under that illustrious character were still, to a degree that, in their circumstances, and with their opportunities, was utterly inexcusable, inadequate and false,—corrupted with the opinions of Jewish prejudice, and the hopes of worldly ambition. It is easy to perceive how the false conceptions of the Messiah's character and office which, at this period, were prevalent among the Jews at large, and still influenced the minds of the apostles in particular, were calculated to damp and darken, even in the apprehensions of those who recognised in Jesus the true Messiah, whatever that name, the Messiah, might denote,—the exhibition which His character and life, in point of fact, contained, of the character and counsels of the Godhead in reference to man. It is in the way of distinctly comprehending the precise object for which the Messiah was anointed, in order to be the spiritual Lord and Saviour of mankind, the Author of a spiritual salvation, the Sovereign of a spiritual empire; it is only by means of this previous knowledge that we can perceive, in all its fulness and its splendour, the illustration which His history affords of the grand moral attributes of Jehovah's character, and moral principles of Jehovah's government,—attributes and principles at once of infinite righteousness and of infinite benignity,—or even of those physical attributes of a wisdom which no difficulty could baffle, and a power which no resistance could overcome, in consequence of which the gospel is entitled, “the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto

salvation." In what degree, therefore, the disciples were ignorant of the real nature and object of that commission with which He was intrusted from above,—in what degree their conceptions of His office and His saving work admitted of correction and improvement; in that degree did their conceptions of the character and counsels of the sovereign Divinity admit of being enlarged and rectified,—in that degree might it be justly said to them by Jesus, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also."

It would appear, however, that in addition to the prejudices and false conceptions under which the apostles evidently laboured, during the whole period of our Lord's personal ministry, in regard to the character and office of the Messiah, they entertained comparatively obscure and feeble apprehensions of the actual dignity of His person, as possessed of the divine nature, and invested with divine perfections. 'It was one of the characteristics of our Saviour's teaching, that He very seldom made direct claims, or formally laid down express assertions concerning Himself. His more usual manner was to propose questions, to introduce acknowledged principles which would be the seeds of others, and to utter deep and comprehensive assertions which carried with them the implication of remoter truths. These He delivered so as to fix them strongly in their minds; and then He left these impressions to produce their proper effect by the exercise of thought and meditation, and by the elucidations that might arise from subsequent communications.* In this way it came to pass, that, while Jesus could not be accused of having failed in giving them abundant materials for acquiring a

* Pye Smith.

just conception of the real dignity of His person, as none other than Incarnate Divinity, and while there were occasions in which the impressions of the mysterious grandeur of the Being who had deigned to take them into familiar friendship and communion with Himself fell with resistless force upon their souls,—yet, in the general train of their conceptions and their intercourse, they did not, to all appearance, comprehend all that was embraced in the majestic title which they acknowledged as pertaining to Him, “the Son of God,”—they did not feel that they were in the presence and society of a Person who was actually one with the Everlasting Father, possessed of the same divinity and entitled to equal adoration. This fact,—for we admit it to be the fact,—has been urged with peculiar strenuousness and triumph by the opposers of our Lord’s divinity, as affording a strong, a conclusive presumption against the truth of that magnificent and precious doctrine,—with how little reason let the text declare. The state of their sentiments and feelings at that period, in regard to the personal dignity of their Divine Master, is there the subject of express disapprobation, of direct reproof. To oppose, therefore, as the Antitrinitarian champions have not scrupled to do, the apprehensions of the disciples in regard to the person of Jesus during His abode with them upon the earth,—the period during which, on this and on many other points of fundamental importance in the Christian faith, they were to so great a degree the victims of ignorance and carnal prejudice,—to the distinct testimonies which, in their latter writings, when replenished with celestial light, the promised inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they bore to the Divine supremacy of their exalted Lord, as “God manifest in the flesh,”—is nothing less than to say, that the censure, if not expressed, yet most distinctly

implied, when Jesus said, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also;" "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" was a censure unjust and undeserved. For the whole context shows, that it was not merely the mistaken notions they had formed respecting His character and office, but those which they entertained in regard to His person and peculiar relation to the Almighty Father, on which Jesus here reflects in tones of just astonishment,—of deserved, though mitigated, censure and reproof. Had they only entertained correct ideas on this fundamental point, such as they might certainly have gathered, in the course of their previous intercourse with Jesus, from much that He had said and much that He had done; had they only carried about with them the habitual impression, that in all that their Master uttered, in all that their Master acted, it was Divinity—the same Divinity which the Almighty Father Himself possesses—that spoke, and that acted, through the organs of a nature like their own,—what vast accessions might they not have derived to the extent, the accuracy, and the clearness of their information respecting the Supreme, in the course of those three memorable years during which the Word, becoming Flesh, had dwelt among them, and given them to behold His "glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father!" And how justly might not that glorious One, when His personal presence was now on the point of being withdrawn from the world which He had consecrated with His holy footstep,—the circle He had honoured with His august society,—thus describe, as here, the loss they had sustained by their failure to improve the opportunities they had enjoyed of acquiring a distinct conception of who He was and what,—that mighty and mysterious Stranger who so often gave them occasion to

exclaim, "What manner of man is this!"—"If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also."

In order, however, to mitigate any appearance of severity which this remark, however just, might carry, Jesus goes on to express His hope that the comparative ignorance of His Father and Himself in which they had been, till now, by their own fault involved, would from that instant vanish from their minds, and allow "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," to shine in upon their souls with an unclouded beam:—"From henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him." From that very instant they were furnished with new advantages for acquiring a profounder and more accurate knowledge of God and Jesus Christ whom He had sent, in the very fact of being given to understand that their former conceptions regarding the dignity of their Master's person, and the deductions to be drawn from His character, as developed in the whole course and tenor of His mortal life, had been inexcusably imperfect and obscure. They had in that warning what, it might charitably be presumed, would lead them straightway, with all teachable and humble diligence, to use the means with which they were favoured so abundantly for ascertaining the genuine truth respecting the personal glory of their Saviour-Lord,—to revolve, with greater care, before their memories and understandings, the manifold intimations which in their presence He had given, by word and deed, of the sovereign grandeur of His being, and so to draw from these the true conclusion, that He belonged to the very highest order of existence in the universe,—that He was none other than "Emmanuel, God with us,"—the same in substance as the Father Almighty, and equal in power and glory. This magnificent conclusion once distinctly drawn, and firmly grasped by their

minds, they opened their eyes immediately upon a revelation of the Godhead the most distinct, the most copious, the most impressive,—a new and brighter illumination was poured on that, the greatest and worthiest of all possible objects of contemplation and regard,—and, in a sense before inappropriate to their experience, they knew Him and had seen Him.

The expression, however, here employed, “from henceforth,” must not be viewed as fixing down the change to be effected on the disciples’ mode of viewing Jesus, and God through Him, to that particular instant of time. The phrase is employed to denote, not merely a period already come, but a period near at hand, as in the first chapter of this very Gospel:—“Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” It seems most probable that even the apostles had not attained to a very distinct and definite conception of the mighty truth concerning the Supreme Divinity of Jesus Christ, till after His earthly history was finished, and they had received the promised ministration of the Spirit, who was to “take of the things of Christ, and show them to” their minds,—not only refreshing their recollections, but enlightening their understanding,—not only “bringing all things to their remembrance,” but “leading them into all the truth.” It was then, therefore, that our Saviour’s declaration in the text was most conspicuously verified in their experience; that, having before their minds the complete picture of their Master’s history,—embracing not only His mortal life, but His death and resurrection, His ascension and His reign,—and contemplated under a new and clearer light, a light that shone abroad from the very Fountain of unerring truth, the illumination of the Holy Ghost,—they perceived the true

glory of that marvellous picture as the very reflection of Divinity. The face of Jesus they then saw to be the mirror of Jehovah; and thenceforward they could truly say, that they knew the Father and had seen Him. It was not that they had seen the Father in His person, or the Godhead in His essence. In this sense, He is "the King Invisible," "whom no man hath seen neither can see." But they had seen His glory and His grace, His character and counsels, exhibited in that of which they had been eye-witnesses for long, the person and the work of His Anointed Son,—of Him one distinguished part of whose office on the earth was, that He might be "the Image of the invisible God." This is an office frequently ascribed to Jesus in holy writ, and it is one of the most interesting and important of all the lights in which He is presented to our faith. "He that hath seen me," says He to the Jews, "hath seen the Father;" and we shall presently find Him making the same statement, in the same terms, to the selected eleven. Hence the Apostle Paul refers us to "the glory of God" as "shining in the face of Jesus Christ," and our great Evangelist declares, in the commencement of this Gospel, that when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," His followers "beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father."* And how great an amount of instruction is the history of Jesus,—even so much of it as was transacted before the eyes of mortals,—fitted to communicate concerning the perfections and the counsels of the Everlasting Sovereign, to those who recognise in Him the lofty Being that He really was,—“God manifest in the flesh!” Had the disciples only carried about with them, in their daily and familiar intercourse with their Divine Master, the

* Col. i. 15; John xiv. 9; 2 Cor. iv. 6; John i. 14.

abiding impression that He was a Being really and supremely Divine, they were placed in circumstances peculiarly favourable for acquiring an exact and adequate impression of the Almighty's character; and as soon as they became fully aware of this majestic fact, which they do not appear to have habitually recognised till after their Master's resurrection,—that He whom they acknowledged as the Son of God was in reality possessed of the essence of God,—they emerged into the light of a brighter revelation than yet had shone upon their minds, with respect to the attributes and to the government of the Supreme, whom to contemplate and to know is much of the felicity of heaven.

LECTURE V.

CHAP. XIV. 8, 9.

“Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?”

YOU remember, brethren, how Jesus, having had occasion to refer to the vision and the fruition of God as that in which the perfection and the happiness of the human soul consisted, had further congratulated His disciples on the privilege which they possessed in having already, to a certain extent, enjoyed this highest of all honours and most precious of all satisfactions,—in having already had the opportunity of seeing God. You know that what Jesus meant by the intuition of God, the vision of the Father, to which His disciples had been admitted, was the close and familiar view they had enjoyed of Himself, when He tabernacled among men, the visible Image of the invisible God; and we noticed, in our last Lecture, the nature of that revelation of the Father which was visibly embodied in the character and life of His incarnate Son.

So determined, however, and deep-rooted, in the minds of the apostles, was the habit of viewing every thing connected with the Messiah and His kingdom in accordance with the long-cherished anticipations of a sensible glory to be then revealed, and a temporal felicity to be then

enjoyed, that Philip could attach to the expression of seeing the Father, no other idea than that of having presented to his eyes some visible manifestation of the Eternal Majesty, such as had more than once, in former times, been vouchsafed to the fathers and the prophets; such, for example, as was enjoyed by the elders on mount Sinai, when, to use the sacred historian's own expression, "they saw the God of Israel,"—when they beheld the enthroned effulgence of His presence flashing from above the sapphire pavement, that, in its pure serenity, lay stretched beneath His feet, "like the body of heaven in his clearness," and had all their faculties so strengthened and sublimed for that mysterious intercourse, that, instead of being blasted with the splendours of His brow, they celebrated before Him a feast of holy gladness on the sacred summit:—"On the nobles of Israel He laid not His hand, but they saw God and did eat and drink." By similar magnificent appearances the disciples knew that Jehovah had often manifested Himself under the Old Economy even to the senses of His servants; as to Moses, its founder, when, at the call of Jehovah, he went up into the thick cloud where God was, and where He spake with him face to face,—to the high priest, its leading minister, when, year after year, he passed within the veil into the mystic darkness of the holiest of all, and gazed upon the apt and awful symbol of Him who is at once an Infinite Excellence and an Infinite Mystery, the cloud of splendour throned between the cherubim,—to Isaiah, when he "saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up, and his train" of voluminous cloud and splendour filling the temple,—or to Ezekiel, when, at the flood of Chebar, he saw the Almighty borne upon His car of thunder, cherub-drawn, with wheels of beryl, and careering fires between. Such manifestations

as these of the adorable Godhead,—by which, though in His essence invisible, and unbounded in His presence, He condescended to afford His favoured servants under the first Testament, the local intimation of His presence, the visible type of His majesty,—the Jews in general believed were to become still more frequent, and still more conspicuous, under the age of the Messiah. In this sense they interpreted the numerous passages in the prophetic volume where, at the era of the great predicted salvation, God Himself is represented as descending from on high, and bringing deliverance to His people with His own right hand and His holy arm,—as when Isaiah, for example, commanded to comfort the people of the Lord with the tidings of the coming Consolation of Israel, declares, “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together;” “O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid, Say unto the cities of Judah, *Behold your God!* Behold, the Lord Jehovah shall come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him,”—or when, in the closing oracle of prophetic testimony, Malachi announces, “The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.” Following, therefore, the Jewish interpretation of these sublime and animating oracles—as the disciples were too apt to do in regard to all predictions connected with Messiah’s reign,—Philip straightway imagined that the vision of God which Jesus had just announced as immediately to be enjoyed, was to prove the accomplishment of all their brightest expectations on this particular; that ere long the glory of the Father was to effulge upon their view in some overwhelming blaze of visible brightness

and magnificence; that from that period forward they should bask beneath the glorious and beatific sun-light of the restored Shechinah; that God Himself, revealed as of old in the pillar of cloud and flame, would interpose to marshal them their way to the expected conquest of the world, and pour the beams of a surpassing splendour around their Master's earthly throne,—the throne, to be erected now without delay, of universal rule. In very much the same signification, therefore, as Moses had of old implored, "I beseech thee, O Lord, show me thy glory,"—Give me to behold some visible symbol, worthy to express the majesty of Thy sovereign presence and perfection,—did Philip now in similar terms conjure his Master, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us;"—an idiomatic phrase the last, by which we express the vehemence of some particular desire, as, so to speak, absorbing and engrossing all other desires into itself,—the sense we entertain of the magnitude and value of some particular benefit as enough of itself to satisfy the soul, to fill up all its indefinite capacity of happiness. The reasons of the intensity of Philip's desire, and the earnestness of his request, are to be found, not simply in that lofty longing which, in each more erected soul, pants after the discovery of whatever is noble and sublime, magnificent and excellent,—whatever is fitted to wrap the spirit in the trance of delighted wonder, the rapture of adoring admiration,—but in the persuasion that the visible interposition of Jehovah, when it did in point of fact arrive, would be in order to effect, by the arm of His Omnipotence made bare in sight of all the nations, the full establishment of the Messiah's reign in all its anticipated pomp and majesty, dominion and renown. Perceiving in the immediate apposition of the Godhead, the

immediate fulfilment of their long-cherished, long disappointed hopes,—hopes that, from the tenor of their Master's recent communications, began to be “like the giving up of the ghost,”—Philip eagerly grasps at the idea which Jesus had suggested of their speedy admission to the brighter vision, the directer contemplation, of the Father, and, with a warmth of expression which represented that as the substance and the complement of all their desires, exclaims,—“Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.”

No one, however, who had duly attended to the words of Jesus, “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him,”—no one who had rightly improved the opportunities which three years' familiar intercourse had afforded of becoming acquainted with the true import of the Messiah's doctrine, the genuine character of the Messiah's reign—could have deduced such a meaning from these expressions as Philip had gathered from them with such eager haste,—a haste, indeed, which seemed to indicate that he was far from sure of the legitimacy of his own conclusion. Hence the tone of obvious, though mild, reproof in which our Lord's reply is uttered:—“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?”

You know how natural it is, in cases like that before us of gentle chiding and rebuke,—when we wish to intimate to one we love that some part of his conduct or conversation was not such as we should have expected from him,—to hint our grief and our surprise by a certain delicately emphatic use, such as we see exemplified here, of his proper name. By thus pronouncing his name, we obscurely, yet touchingly, sum up, as it were, all the cir-

cumstances connected with his character and condition, rendering the actions and the words which we complain of more extraordinary in his case than in that of others from whom that name distinguishes him. By naming Philip, then, our Lord emphatically intimates that there were persons from whom there would have been less occasion of astonishment had such a request proceeded than from him,—those who had not enjoyed the same opportunities of entering into that interior spirit of the doctrine which Jesus taught, and the kingdom which Jesus was to erect on earth. Our Master, however, not willing to trust this topic of deserved reproof to an obscure and evanescent implication, distinctly specifies it in so many words, as imparting a serious aggravation to the ignorance which the petition in question indicated:—“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?” Philip had been one of those who were earliest called to form part of the chosen circle of our Lord’s familiar associates,—His disciples of interior admission,—His household of acknowledged friends, of adopted children; and for above three years, he had been one of those “eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word who companied with the Lord Jesus all the time that He went in and out before the people,” approving Himself, by word and deed, the undoubted Son of God,—declaring Himself, by innumerable verbal intimations and practical demonstrations, the possessor of the same supreme Divinity, invested with the same infinite perfections, as God the Father Himself. In the course of our last Lecture, we called your attention to that peculiarity in the style of the intimations given by our Saviour during His personal ministry, in reference to the dignity of His person, as strictly and eternally divine, which made it possible for His disciples not to have

acquired before His death a distinct and abiding, a principled and habitual, feeling that He in whose presence and society it was their honour and their privilege habitually to move, was none other than "God manifest in flesh," one Being with the everlasting Father. The peculiarity was, briefly, this—that He seldom made distinct claims, or laid down express assertions, respecting His own essence and prerogative. He is never recorded to have said in so many words, 'I am God,'—as the apostles, after they had received the Holy Ghost, were wont to say, with no circumlocution or reserve, "The Word was God," "God over all, blessed for evermore," the "great God our Saviour," "the true God and eternal life."* In this way it was possible for the disciples to avoid having the conviction actually forced in upon their minds that Jesus was Incarnate Jehovah. Yet this did not excuse their ignorance and unbelief in regard to this magnificent conclusion. For although, for wise and holy reasons, Jesus did not account it meet to announce this glorious fact in express words, He had announced it frequently by implication,—yet implication so simple and transparent, that none of His disciples who had exerted on the subject even a moderate degree of thought and candid consideration could have failed to reach the august and overwhelming conviction, that, through the organs of that lowly humanity with which they saw their Master clothed, it was Divinity itself that spoke and acted. Many such intimations occur in this Gospel; of which one special end and object, there can be little doubt, was to illustrate the great doctrine of our Lord's Divinity from His own sacred lips,—intimations supported by passages,—not so numerous, yet sufficient to show that our

* John i. 1; Rom. ix. 5; Tit. ii. 13; 1 John v. 20.

Master's doctrine on this mighty and majestic point was uniform,—occurring in the other three Evangelists. Philip, then, and his brother-disciples had heard their Master, for example, speak of His own sacred person as equally with the Father's beyond the capacity of man to comprehend,—and of Himself, as alone of all existing beings possessing a direct and primary knowledge of the Father, even such as the Father had of Him:—"No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him;" "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father." They had heard Him affirm Himself to be the Son of God in such a sense as to imply equality of power, participation of omnipotence:—"Whatsoever things the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." They had heard Him claim for Himself the same right to perform what acts He pleased on the consecrated day of rest as the Father Himself possessed to carry on the works of nature and of providence:—"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." They had heard Him announce Himself as commissioned to the performance of acts, and the discharge of offices, the performance and discharge of which, even by delegation of authority, required divinity of perfection:—"As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will;" "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die;" "All that are in their graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation;" "The Father Himself judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;"—assigning as the

reason of these magnificent appointments, the Father's good pleasure that "all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." They had heard Him assert His own identity of saving power with the Father, and in confirmation of this, His identity of nature and of essence:—"I give unto my sheep eternal life,—none shall pluck them from my hand,—none can pluck them from my Father's hand,—I and my Father are one." They had heard Him represent Himself as having existed ages before His human birth, as having descended from heaven, as having come from above, as having proceeded forth from God, as having existed before Abraham,—and that with a peculiarity of expression which strongly implies His possession of self-existence, and a claim to that incommunicable name by which it is expressed,—"Jehovah, I AM:"—"Before Abraham was, I am." They had received from Him promises of His perpetual presence to attend His people wherever they were scattered, which amounted to an assertion of His omnipresent consciousness and agency:—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." They had seen Him receive without rebuke and without hesitation divine names and divine homage,—as when Peter exclaimed in the transport of ecstatic admiration, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" and all along, in the days of His humiliation, allow Himself to be approached with reverences and prostrations which not prophets only, but "angels, who are greater in power and might," would have rejected and forbidden, as too nearly approaching to the homage due to the Almighty Godhead. They had heard Him assuming a sovereign jurisdiction in matters of moral and religious duty,—proclaiming the oracles of truth and the maxims of duty, not, as a prophet would have done, with the form of

“Thus saith the Lord,” but with the high expression, “I say unto you.” They had heard Him pronounce the forgiveness of sins in a way which seemed distinctly to imply, and which the Jews, uncontradicted by Him, understood as implying, that He did it by His own inherent authority;—“Son, daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee.”*

Such are some specimens, gathered even from those brief memoirs of the Messiah’s life which have been transmitted down to us, of the abundant materials of evidence afforded by the previous life of Jesus which might, long ere now, have convinced the disciples that He was none other than “Emmanuel, God with us,”—bearing in His person the nature, and exhibiting in His character the attributes, of the Eternal Deity. And such, therefore, are some part of the grounds on which the Saviour might well demand of Philip on the present occasion, in the tone, as it were, of disappointment and surprise, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?” That this was the particular point in reference to which the Saviour here complains of the disciple’s ignorance, is obvious from the tenor of the whole surrounding context. The subject of the whole conversation is the vision of God, the intuition of the Father; and the statement implied,—as a kind of axiom which ought ere now to have been as it were self-evident to His disciples’ minds,—in all that our Saviour had declared respecting the opportunities they had enjoyed of seeing God, was this,—that to see Jesus was the same thing as to see God. Now, what was the truth respecting His own person on which the recognition of this principle depended? What but that

* Matt. xi. 27; John x. 15; v. 19, 17, 21; xi. 25, 26; v. 28, 22, 23; x. 28—30; viii. 58; Matt. xviii. 20; Luke v. 8; Matt. v. 22, 28, &c.; ix. 2; Luke v. 20.

in Him the perfect glory of the Godhead, the total divine majesty, was really inherent,—that He was a living and personal manifestation of the Divinity itself,—that He was indeed possessed of the same nature, the same properties, the same perfections, as the Father,—in plain words, that He was God. This was the knowledge that the disciples wanted in order to comprehend their Master's discourse; and this, therefore, is the subject in regard to which He speaks as if He marvelled at their ignorance. Finding, however, from Philip's shallow and infantine request, that the spiritual knowledge and penetration even of His most intimate followers was limited and superficial, far beyond what might reasonably have been expected,—He goes on to express in a distinct assertion what He had hitherto implied and taken for granted as a known and acknowledged principle:—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

This is the same declaration in another form as He had uttered just before, when He said, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him,"—and was intended just to draw the attention of Philip to the true principle of explication on which that former statement was to be understood and to be interpreted. That principle is obviously not, as most interpreters seem to imagine, that Philip referred to a visible, while Jesus spoke only of a moral and intellectual, manifestation of the Godhead. Both refer alike to a sensible, a visible appearance of Jehovah; and what our Lord declares is, that, whether they knew it or not, whether or not they had with the intellectual eye discerned the spiritual glory of the spectacle, they had, in point of fact, with their bodily eyes seen God,—seen a person who was God, visibly present, visibly acting, in the

midst of them. True, if you will insist on absolute strictness, on the last possible exactness of speech,—even in gazing on the Word made flesh, they did not see God. They saw only part of that human nature which the Godhead had assumed. The Godhead remained wrapt in the majestic shroud of that essential invisibility which is a part of its perfection, and therefore an attribute eternal and immutable. “No man hath seen God at any time.” Robed in august impenetrable secrecy, He lives and reigns for ever,—“the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible,”—an Omnipresent Mystery. Employing, however, the expression of “seeing God” in the more general and popular sense which the common usage of language allows, and in which it was plain that Philip understood it, of having some visible appearance presented to the senses as an indication that God was immediately present, that God was immediately acting,—Jesus could truly say that, in seeing Him, His followers had for three years past been seeing God. They had been beholding that which is more intimately connected with Jehovah’s essence than any other symbol by which He had at any time revealed Himself to saint or patriarch, prophet or priest,—that which was an indication more direct than any among these, of the nearness of Jehovah’s presence, the operation of Jehovah’s energy, and, above all, of the attributes and perfections of Jehovah’s character; the presence, the energy, the character, the one Divinity, which belong alike to the Father and the Son, and in consequence of possessing which the Son is entitled “the Image of the Invisible God,” “the Brightness of the Father’s glory and the Express Image of His person.”* Hence it is, that, in His concluding words to Philip, Jesus virtually prefers the revelation of the Father which He had

* Col. i. 15; Heb. i. 3.

made to His disciples before all the symbolic visions of the Godhead which had been enjoyed before, or which might be now imagined. For such a preference is not obscurely, I apprehend, implied in the connection of the declaration with the demand:—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

Now, in order to understand how much to be preferred the vision of God which the disciples had enjoyed in the face of Jesus was over those vouchsafed from time to time to ancient saints, you must consider that there can be no reasonable doubt, on comparing all the circumstances, that the miraculous appearances and intercourse of God with the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament,—the appearances and intercourse of which Philip now desires the repetition,—were made in the person of the Son. That He who acted as the Almighty Leader and Protector of Israel in their journeyings through the wilderness was the Eternal Son, who afterwards became the Anointed Servant, of the Lord, is plain from the testimony of St. Paul, when he says, that "some of them tempted Christ" in the desert. That it was the Eternal Son whose glory was the Shechinah, the Inhabiting Presence of the holy place,—to whom its altars were erected, and its fragrant censers fumed,—is declared by Malachi in his memorable prediction,—“The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in.” That the majestic apparition of “the King, the Lord of hosts,” upon His throne, which smote Isaiah to the dust with awe and conscious sinfulness, was the vision of the Eternal Son, St. John has assured us, when he says,—“These things said Isaiah, when he saw His glory and spake of Him.”*

* 1 Cor. x. 9; Mal. iii. 1; John xii. 41.

from the beginning in the habitable parts of the earth, and set His delights upon the sons of men," did, even from the period when He said to the Father, "Lo I come; a body hast thou prepared me," delight to anticipate His incarnation, and to present Himself to His chosen servants in the form of that human flesh which He was one day to wear in actual fact and substance among men. Thus it was that all along, in beholding Jesus, Philip and his brother-disciples had been beholding that very person before whom Abraham and Jacob, Moses and Aaron, Isaiah and Ezekiel, had bowed adoring, when they saw and spake with God. How much more highly favoured than those olden worthies, to whom He vouchsafed in comparison but transitory glimpses of His glorious form, but partial revelations of His heavenly truth, were those selected eleven whom He now addressed, and who, for three revolving years, exuberant of wonders, had been ever at His side listening to "the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth," and witnessing the marvels of omnipotent benignity by which He manifested forth His glory, "the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father!" True, He did not habitually reveal Himself to them, as He was wont to do to ancient saints and seers, encircled with the lustre of celestial majesty, "covering Himself with light as with a garment," and uttering His holy oracles as with "the sound of many waters, and the voice of mighty thunderings;" although on one conspicuous occasion, as if to demonstrate that it was by His own merciful choice, that, while He tabernacled among men, He laid aside His ancient pomp of insufferable glory, they that were with Him in the holy mount, and were there the eye-witnesses of His majesty, have told the Church, how "He was transfigured before them," and how "the fashion of His coun-

tenance was altered, so that His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." But it was in mercy and wisdom that, in His familiar intercourse with men, He chose to lay aside the imperial robe of majesty, and to appear, in the midst of them, a man in the midst of men, that His glory might not repel and overwhelm them, nor His terror make them afraid,—that through Him they might become familiar and intimate with God,—that, in the closeness and directness of their communion with Jehovah, Moses might be as far excelled by them as all other prophets were excelled by Moses, by him of whom Jehovah said, "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and I will speak to him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so; who is faithful in all my house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches: and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold;" "And there arose not afterward a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom God knew face to face, to whom Jehovah spake as a man talketh with his friend."* If, therefore, we are right in supposing that Philip was looking back with envy on the visions of Divinity with which the fathers of Israel had once been favoured, when he prayed his Master, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us,"—how little did he show himself aware of his own prerogative and privilege, and how well did he deserve from Jesus the gentle but penetrating reproof,—"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father!"

I fear, my brethren, that we are often justly liable to the

* Num. xii. 6, 7; Deut. xxxiv. 10; Exod. xxxiii. 11.

very same reproof,—that those of us who know in general, and acknowledge in the abstract, the majestic truth of our Lord's Supreme Divinity, do not recollect it and apply it with sufficient constancy and care, when we think of Jesus, when we read of Jesus. Oh, what an additional power and splendour would it not infuse into the history of our Redeemer as fitted to tell upon our minds and hearts,—with what irresistible authority it would invest His words,—with what surpassing dignity it would illumine His every action,—what a mystery of condescension and of love it would reveal in each detail of His sufferings and His sacrifice,—did we, in calling them to mind, more distinctly realize, more truly conceive, the vast idea, that in all these it is God Incarnate that speaks, that acts, that suffers! And let us farther learn from this instructive passage,—to bethink ourselves how often Jesus, our Lord and Master, in comparing the means and opportunities enjoyed by His people of growing in the knowledge of Himself and of His Father with the progress they have actually made in that high knowledge which is eternal life, has reason to regret and censure the flagrant disproportion between the two. To how many among us, my brethren, might He not say in the same tone of just dissatisfaction, 'Have I been so long time with you,'—in my oracles, and ordinances, and offered grace,—“and yet have ye not known me?” As we would, then, escape His merited rebukes, let us labour, brethren, to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” And to this end, while we diligently use all appointed and appropriate instruments, let us evermore remember that it is the office of the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and to show them to our souls in saving light and power, and therefore pray with earnest perseverance that

“the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto us the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, till we all come into the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God,”—that we “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 so we may be filled with all the fulness of God.”

LECTURE VI.

CHAP. XIV. 10.

“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.”

YOU remember, brethren, in what connection the words we have now been reading are introduced. In answer to the congratulations of Jesus addressed to His disciples on the peculiar opportunities with which they had been favoured, of enjoying a more direct intuition of the Father, a more immediate intercourse with Jehovah, than had been vouchsafed to others, Philip, imagining that Jesus referred to an approaching manifestation of the Godhead, in some such form of physical splendour as had been wont of old to indicate to saint and prophet a present Deity,—the restoration of the lost Shechinah, the cloud of excellent glory, to the world,—nor perceiving that what our Lord alluded to was the inestimable privilege they had enjoyed in attending upon Him, of beholding Incarnate Deity, of hearing and seeing Jehovah Himself speaking and acting through the faculties and organs of a man,—had given utterance to his ignorant imaginations and desires in the request, “Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” The inexcusable ignorance and indocility which such a request implied on the part of Philip, had drawn forth from Jesus the grave, though tenderly-expressed, rebuke,—“Have I

been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" Thus did the Master intimate, that it was not for want of abundant materials and means of information that Philip had not yet discovered that He in whose presence and society it had been so long the honour and the privilege of the chosen twelve to move, was none other than Emmanuel, "God manifest in the flesh," one Being with the Everlasting Father; and that in seeing Jesus, therefore, they had in fact been seeing Jehovah,—beholding that which, as more intimately connected with Jehovah's essence, was an indication more direct of the nearness of Jehovah's presence, the operation of Jehovah's energy, and, above all, of the attributes and perfections of Jehovah's character,—the presence, the energy, and the perfection, of the one Divinity, belonging alike to the Father and the Son,—than any other symbol by which He had at any time revealed Himself to priest or prophet, saint and patriarch,

'By vocal utterance, or blaze of light,
Or cloud of darkness, localized in heaven
Or earth, enshrined within the wandering ark,
Or out of Zion thundering from His throne
Between the cherubim.'

In the passage we have read, Jesus is continuing His reflections, though in the tone at least as much of pity as of anger, on the lamentable want of faith and of docility which their ignorance of the real nature and character of His connection with the Father shewed:—"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?"

The formula to be in any one, obviously expresses in general the most intimate connection with that individual. But this connection may be of various kinds in

various cases, and the nature of the connection which it indicates in any particular passage must be determined from the context of the passage itself. It is frequently used in reference to the union which true believers enjoy with their Saviour and their God; as when, in this very chapter, it is declared, "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you;" or when our evangelist, in his first Epistle, observes, "If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is fulfilled in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, that He hath given us of His Spirit. Whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God; and we know and are confident of the love which God hath to us. God is love; and he who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." From these passages it is plain, that the idea of a mutual indwelling is fairly applicable, according to the usage of Scripture, to that union which subsists between genuine Christians and the great Father of spirits,—the interchange of gracious influences on His part, and of devotional affection on theirs, which is denominated in Scripture their communion with the Father. But it does not, therefore, follow, that when the phrase is applied to the mysterious union which subsists between Jesus and Jehovah, it can signify no more than this. It is an expression intimating the closest possible connection between two parties that the case admits of, though not defining the respect in which the conjunction exists. That is in every separate instance to be determined from the character of the parties, and the bearing of the context. And when, therefore, in the case before us, we consider these, it becomes immediately apparent that the kind of connection here referred to as existing between the Father and the Son must consist in

their possession of a common Divinity. The subject of the whole conversation is the vision of God, the intuition of the Father; and the statement implied in all that Jesus had declared respected the opportunities enjoyed by His disciples of seeing God, as a kind of axiom, or first principle, which ought ere now to have been, as it were, self-evident to their minds, is this,—that to see Jesus was the same thing as to see God. Now, what was the truth respecting His own person on which the recognition of this principle depended? What but that in Him the perfect glory of the Godhead, the total Divine Majesty, was really inherent,—that He was a Living and Personal Manifestation of the Divinity itself,—that He was indeed possessed of the same nature, the same properties, the same perfections, the same Godhead, as the Everlasting Father? This was the faith which Philip wanted in order to comprehend his Master's preceding discourse; and this, therefore, must be the import of the peculiar expression employed by our Lord in describing the faith of which He regretted the deficiency. Accordingly, He uses the very same formula of speech in circumstances which leave no doubt of His meaning. In the tenth chapter of this Gospel, Jesus is introduced as advancing, in presence of the Jews, His lofty claim to the possession of precisely the same Omnipotence of saving power as appertained to God the Father Almighty:—"I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one,"—one Being,—one in power, and therefore one in nature. And thus, when summoned, by the furious clamours of the multitude accusing Him of open and daring blasphemy, to vindicate

the claim He had asserted, He is described as doing so by its re-assertion in different terms,—the terms of the passage now before us,—accompanied by an appeal, as here, to the credentials on the strength of which He was entitled to demand that His hearers should receive whatever He declared respecting Himself, however lofty and magnificent, as the infallible truth of God:—"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in Him."* In that passage the expression, "the Father is in me, and I in Him," as is obvious from the whole series of the context, is just the repetition of the former statement, "I and my Father are one," and must be considered as having the same meaning, viz., that the Father and the Son are possessed of one Omnipotence, and therefore of one Divinity. In both the passages, therefore, in which our Saviour uses this very remarkable phrase respecting Himself, the context and circumstances of the case demonstrate its reference to be to that profound and mysterious unity of essence, that sameness and identity of substance, by which the Father and Son are one God.

In the place before us, however, Jesus, besides the general statement of the unity of being in which the Eternal Father and the Co-eternal Son exist for ever undivided, as one Supreme Jehovah, carries out the statement into one or two of its immediate consequences, to the effect that, whatever He said and did might, in consequence of this ineffable unity, be looked upon as said and done by the Almighty Father Himself:—"The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: the Father, that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works;" that is

* John x. 37, 38.

to say, So entirely one are the Father and the Son, that whatever of Divine there was in the words or in the acts of Jesus, the Divinity might be regarded as pertaining not less to the latter than to the former.' What Jesus said, He said not in the exercise of any wisdom or intelligence belonging to Himself alone, but in the exercise of that Divine Omniscience which was not His more than it was the Father's; what Jesus did, He did not in the exercise of any power which was in contradistinction to that of the other Substances of the mysterious Trinity, but by the energy of that Omnipotence which was the common perfection of them all, the one attribute of the Father and the Son. The doctrine, the works, the glory, of the one, are the doctrine, and works, and glory, of the other. In one word, the perfections of the Son were those of the Father, the perfections of the Father were those of the Son. So that the chosen twelve, whose honour and privilege it was to "company with the Lord Jesus all the time that He went in and out among them,"—to listen to, and "wonder at, the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth,"—to behold and to admire the miracles wrought by His right hand—had all along been hearing, in these words, the wisdom of the Father, and seeing, in these works, the power of the Father,—had been hearing and seeing God so clearly manifested, that it could only be from inexcusable ignorance or unbelief in regard to their Master's real character, and real relation to the Sovereign Nature, that any one of them could have besought Him, as for a favour not hitherto enjoyed, "Lord, shew us the Father." They had for three years been gazing upon a more exact and luminous revelation of the Godhead than had they been permitted, with Moses and his attendant elders, to see the God of Israel throned upon the sapphire firmament, or to

pass with the high-priest, year by year, through the curtains of that profound and solemn sanctuary where the bright symbol of Jehovah's presence sparkled above the cherub-guarded ark. They had been allowed with undazzled eye to contemplate *Him*, with familiar intercourse to associate with *Him*, who was the Similitude of Jehovah, the Mirror of the Godhead.

This, then, is the sum of our Saviour's explanations in answer to Philip's ignorant request, that, in respect of the Divine essence and perfection, there was no difference between the Father and Himself,—that the Godhead was but one in the person of the Eternal Father and in the person of the Incarnate Son; and He intimates that it might well appear surprising that Philip should still require to be informed on this momentous particular in regard to His Master's person and prerogative:—"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father, that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works."

We have already explained to you how it came to pass that, in the days of our Saviour's flesh, His immediate followers and friends could avoid making the discovery of His real dignity and actual relation to the Infinite Godhead; and we have also endeavoured to prove that if, in their circumstances, ignorance on this point was not impossible, it was at least entirely inexcusable. That meek and benevolent Teacher, however,—of whom it had been predicted, that He should not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax,"—instead of leaving those who had so ill improved their precious advantages to the ignorance and unbelief under whose shadow they had hitherto, by their own fault, remained,—before He leaves the subject, endeavours to lead them into that faith of His Divine

essence and Divine perfection with which He regretted to find them so faintly impressed, by adducing, in confirmation of the mighty truth, two descriptions of evidence, on which, as on two immovable pillars, the majestic fabric of His doctrines and His claims reposed,—the evidence of His word, and the evidence of His works:—"Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake." He accosts them as persons from whom His simple word should be sufficient to elicit the promptest, and liveliest, and most implicit faith. But if Jesus might demand credit for His statements on the simple ground of the honesty and veracity of His human character, how much more on the ground of His divine commission and Messiahship! For He was now addressing those with whom it was already a point established and admitted, that He was the true Prophet, the faithful Witness, the Christ, the Son of God; and this previous point once ascertained, there could remain no doubt that His simple word and declaration, on any point whatever, ought to be esteemed by them decisive, and that with infinitely better right than were the oracular decisions of that ancient sage among whose followers the brief emphatic argument which solved every doubt, and settled every controversy, was their Master's *ipse dixit*, 'He hath said it.' No one who had the opportunity of observing the character and life of Jesus could doubt that, if He was nothing more, He was at least the holiest and wisest of men,—that there never existed one who was more loftily remote from the suspicion of wilful fraud and deliberate falsehood, or to whom the apostle's language, so beautiful in its simplicity, could be applied with equal emphasis, "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." So that, His word once uttered, His testimony once given, every one to whom that

word and testimony are addressed, is placed in this inextricable dilemma,—either that he must at once receive them as the infallible truth of God,—for the case is not one in which it is possible to suppose that Jesus might be Himself deceived,—or that he must impute to Him than whom never did any that wore the human form exhibit such proofs of purest sanctity and highest-toned integrity, charges of the most flagrant imposture, the most audacious blasphemy. Jesus, however, had still more striking evidence to adduce of His unity with God than His own bare, unsupported declaration. What He now asserted in words He had frequently attested by facts,—by that crowded and brilliant train of miracles, countless in number, and endlessly varied in their character and circumstances—embracing in their range every kingdom of nature and every period of human destiny,—by which that mighty man of wonders showed Himself to be in truth “the great power of God.” By the miracles and wonders and signs which God wrought through Him, in the midst of Israel, was Jesus of Nazareth approved by God to be whatsoever He asserted of Himself. These were the seal and signature of Jehovah, attesting the truth and the authority of whatever Jesus taught in any part of His religious doctrine, and more particularly in regard to His own person and character, and natures, and offices. Nor was this all. The miracles of Jesus not only established the dignity of His person, by proving the truth of His doctrine; but they were of such a kind, and performed in such a way, as seemed plainly to indicate that they proceeded from a Divine energy that was personally resident in the humanity of Jesus. While other prophets and apostles whom God had honoured to be His instruments in the performance of miraculous works, were always accustomed to give unambiguous intimations

that the power of which these marvels were the effects was not their own, we find Jesus, on the other hand, on many occasions, speaking and acting as if the wonder-working energy within Him was equally His own as His Father's energy. You recollect the high tone of equality with God in which He once remarked,—"My Father worketh hitherto, I also work." "Whatsoever things the Father doth," He said on another occasion, "these also doth the Son in like manner." How lofty a consciousness of power and prerogative to "quicken whom He would, even as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them," breathes in the expression and the tone with which He summoned the departed back to life from every region of death's gloomy territories; from the couch of dissolution, from the funeral bier, from the tainted darkness of the sepulchre:—"Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise;" "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise;" "Lazarus, Come forth!" With how unhesitating a confidence does He bear Himself in all His miracles of healing, as not the instrument merely, but the Agent, in these memorable proofs of an Omnipotent beneficence; as when of the blind man at the gate of Jericho He demanded, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" or to the confession of the Galilean leper, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," replied, "I will, be thou clean!" How much of manifest Omnipotence flashed from His erected form, and spoke in His uplifted voice,—the Omnipotence which "ruleth in the raging of the sea," which is "mightier than the noise of many waters,"—when He rebuked the imperious billows and the raving winds, and at the sovereign mandate, "Peace, be still," immediately "the wind ceased, and there was a great calm!"*

* John v. 17, 19, 21; Mark v. 41; Luke vii. 14; John xi. 43; Luke xviii. 41; v. 12, 13; Mark iv. 39.

To any one who will compare the record of our Saviour's miracles with that of the miracles performed by His apostles, a diversity of tone and of demeanour will become immediately apparent, such as befits the diversity of character between the Agent and the instrument. Nay, we find that the apostles, while they manifested a studious desire to avoid any language that could be construed into a representation of themselves as any thing more than powerless instruments in performing works of supernatural might, were in the habit of ascribing the final agency, even in those miracles performed when Jesus in His human nature had departed from our world, "ascending up far above all heavens," to their exalted Master as readily as to God the Father Himself. It was "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," and with emphatic disavowal of any power or holiness of their own to produce obedience to their bidding, that Peter and John, at the Beautiful gate of the temple, commanded the lame man to arise and walk. The signs and wonders which sanctioned the ministry of St. Paul, and of which the number and variety were so great that his modesty declines to speak of them beyond a slight and necessary allusion, he distinctly ascribes to Christ as their *Author*. "I speak," says he, "of those things which Christ hath wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God."* There is sufficient reason, therefore, for believing that, in the passage now before us, the words of Jesus were intended to denote, not merely that His miracles, as wrought through Him by the Father, contained the Father's attestation to the truth of all His claims, and among the rest, to that of

* Acts iii. 6; Rom. xv. 18, 19.

the reciprocal indwelling of Himself and His Father, His unity with God; but that these same miracles, as performed by Himself, by a power which was strictly and properly His own, shewed directly that to Him pertained the Omnipotence, and therefore the whole Perfection and the very Essence, of the Divinity,—that in sovereign might and majesty He and the Father were one:—"Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."

Here terminates, then, the interjected discussion into which our Saviour had been led by the culpable ignorance and unbelief of His disciples,—an ignorance and unbelief, however, which were graciously overruled to contribute to the greater edification and consolation of the Church, by leading to so clear a statement, and so luminous an exposition, of the truth respecting that manifestation of the Sovereign and Eternal Godhead which was presented to the eyes and ears of men, in the person and the character, the discourses and the actions, of Messiah,—of Him "in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," enshrined in His humanity as in a holier temple and more majestic than that of Zion, where Jehovah had His ancient throne between the cherubim. What, then, remains, but that we labour to be ever more firmly believing, more strongly realizing, and more habitually remembering, that "great mystery of godliness,"—"the pillar and ground of truth,"—"God was manifested in the flesh?" Let us endeavour more and more distinctly to trace, more and more reverently to recognise, the Divinity which breathed through all His words and all His works. Let us learn to estimate at a proper rate, and to regard with due emotions, that meagre shadow and vain usurper of the name of Christianity which refuses to perceive in the Anointed

Son of God more than a mere mortal man, inspired of God as prophets were inspired of old,—sacrilegiously seeking to expel Jehovah from that solemn sanctuary which, above all temples, He hath chosen for His habitation, and of which He hath declared, “This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it;” to empty Jesus of His Godhead, and so to exhaust the gospel of its power, its glory, and its life; to stamp the whole work of the Redeemer with the character of poverty and littleness; and to freeze up all warm and raised emotions towards that Redeemer into chillness and apathy. And while we have our minds thus fortified with irrefragable arguments, and our hearts inspired with a generous contempt towards the speculative and avowed Socinianism which reduces all that is most sublime and exuberant and great in Christianity to a thing so poor and paltry, let us learn to be upon our guard against that practical Socinianism which, infinitely far from formally doubting or denying the true character of Jesus the Messiah as Incarnate Jehovah, the visible Image of the Invisible God, yet can too often peruse or listen to the record of His gracious words, and of His wondrous works, with no present apprehension and sense of their Divinity. Let us train ourselves to the habit of tracing, through those innumerable acts of benignant Omnipotence which, as a galaxy of heavenly splendour, illuminate His life, the finger of God stretched forth, the arm of the Lord made bare. Let us receive each several word that drops from His sacred lips, the lips into which grace was poured without measure, with the reverence and godly awe due to the response of the Omniscient proceeding from the inmost pavilion of His presence, the oracle of the Eternal proclaimed in thunder from the cloud of excellent glory. And when we consider that He “who,

at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son," "let us therefore give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that hath spoken to us from heaven." Beware lest in any of you the god of this world should prevail to blind your unbelieving minds, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine into them;" but earnestly pray, and diligently seek, that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, may shine into your hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" that so, "beholding there, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, ye may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

LECTURE VII.

CHAP. XIV. 12.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”

OUR Saviour here resumes the train of His consolatory discourse, which had been interrupted by the remarks, first of Thomas, and then of Philip, and which had for its object to reconcile the disciples to His approaching departure from the world, by pointing out the blessed results which should ensue from that event to their best interests both in time and in eternity. Having, from the 2d to the 4th verse, pointed out the favourable bearing which His departure had upon their everlasting salvation and felicity, He now, from the 12th to the 21st verse, enumerates the various blessings which, by means and on account of it, they might expect to enjoy upon the earth.

The first of the promises relating to the favourable effects which were to follow from the departure of their Master in the earthly experience of His disciples, is obviously suggested by the circumstance of Jesus having been led, immediately before, by Philip's interjected objections and requests, to advert to the miraculous works by which He Himself had vindicated the authority of His mission, and illustrated the dignity of His person. That promise is to this effect, —that they should have it given them to perform the same

miracles, and greater, as their Master had achieved; and aware of the many considerations which might lead them to account it an incredible, or, at least, an improbable thing that they should be thus honoured and exalted,—that God should give such power unto men,—He introduces it by His accustomed form of solemn asseveration, marking at once the weight and the certainty of the declaration to which it is prefixed:—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father."

The works here spoken of cannot, in consistency with the context, be understood of any other than miraculous works, employed for the purpose of confirming the truth, and extending the progress, of the gospel. In this connection, it is obvious that the designation, "he who believeth on me," must be taken in a very limited sense,—as referring, not so much to the reception of Christ Jesus as our Saviour and our Lord, on the authority of the divine testimony contained in the sacred oracles, which is the faith most commonly described in the gospel,—the faith which justifies and saves,—but to that which has been denominated the faith of miracles,—that persuasion of the power of Christ, and of His disposition to exert that power through persons who in this specific sense believed, of which the apostles, and certain others of His primitive followers, were possessed, and the possession of which constituted the prerequisite to the performance, through their instrumentality, of miraculous works. That this faith was not necessarily combined with saving faith is obvious, as from the case of Judas, so from various allusions in the sacred books; as where we read of those who "in that day" shall implore and remonstrate with the Eternal Judge, "Lord, Lord,

have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works," to whom, notwithstanding, that Judge Omniscient shall profess, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity;"—or when, in contrast with the Apostle Paul's declaration concerning that faith which justifies and saves, that it is ever found "working by love," we hear Himself, in another place, represent it as a possible thing that he might "have all faith, so that he could remove mountains, and yet, not having love, might after all be nothing."* The description of the faith of miracles contained in the last of these passages is obviously borrowed by the apostle from the remarkable promise respecting it given, on two several occasions, by Jesus to His followers; which, as calculated to throw the clearest light upon the passage immediately before us, it will be proper to quote at length. The former of these cases you may read as recorded by the Evangelist Matthew, ch. xvii. 20:—"Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you." The second is related most fully and emphatically by the Evangelist Mark, ch. xi. 22; where, on the disciples expressing their surprise at the immediate blight which fell upon the barren fig-tree, when their Master had but spoken the word, we are told that, "Jesus answering said unto them,—Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he hath saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto

* Matt. vii. 22, 23; 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." From these, and other passages of similar import, we learn that, in the age of miracles, it was necessary that even the apostles, and the primitive disciples to whom the wonder-working energy was given, should, in each particular case of its exertion, made a distinct and believing reference to that promise of their Master which taught them to look for His Omnipotence to exert itself through their instrumentality; that they should take care that the whole glory of the miracle was reflected back on Him, by going about its performance in a single-minded dependence on His power, and with earnest supplication for His assistance; and that every attempt to exhibit before the eyes of men a sign from heaven,—a supernatural attestation of their heavenly commission,—would cover its authors with disappointment and disgrace, which was not based on the faith of Christ's power and Christ's promise in this particular.* It is easy to see that the special promise to which this special faith referred,—the promise that every attempt, on the part of the chosen eleven, to work a miracle in confirmation of their mission should prove, in point of fact, successful, which was made in the persuasion that through the Omnipotence of Jesus it should be so,—it is plain, I say, that this special promise is of so peculiar a nature, that it might possibly be believed and acted on by one who had not yet been persuaded to believe and act on the other promises of Jesus relating to still more stupendous and inestimable benefits,—to pardon, and sanctification, and life eternal, and all the blessings of "the salvation

* An example of such disappointment we have in the remarkable incident which gave occasion to the words we have just been quoting from the Evangelist Matthew:—ch. xvii. 14—18.

which is in Christ Jesus, with everlasting glory." Such seems to have been the case with Judas; who, though, in the more familiar meaning of the term, he lived without faith as he died without hope, does not seem to have been less endued than his brethren with the wonder-working energy when the Saviour "gave them power over the unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." It is as plain, however, on the other hand, that whosoever had this special faith of miracles, without possessing the general faith of the gospel,—the faith which could remove mountains, without the faith which is able to save the soul,—was guilty of a most flagrant and criminal inconsistency. All the truths and promises of the gospel rest on precisely the same foundation of authority as did the promise of miraculous power to those in whose experience it was fulfilled. The precise object, indeed, which was contemplated by the verification of the latter, was to afford a demonstration of the truth of the former; and no incongruity can be conceived more gross, or worthy of severer condemnation, than his who, having the evidence within himself that Jesus was indeed a man approved of God to be whatever He had claimed to be accounted,—that Jesus was indeed invested with "all power in heaven and in earth," and intrusted with the whole dispensation of the Spirit, with the whole application of Omnipotent resources,—did, notwithstanding these, stop short, and refuse to this divinely-commissioned Lord and Saviour the homage of his personal reliance for eternity, and of his practical obedience for time. Instances of this kind, it may be well supposed, though possible, were rare; and in the case of most, as in that of the eleven whom Jesus now addressed, the faith of this one promise was but a special act of that

general faith which embraced all the promises and all the truths attested by the same authority, and more especially those which form the grounds of a sinner's confidence in Jesus as his Saviour,—the motives of his submission to Jesus as his Lord. This, then, is the qualification in the apostles, and those who shared with them in the endowment of miraculous gifts, which prepared them for enjoying the fulfilment of the promise,—“The works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father.”

Interpreters have felt themselves very considerably perplexed in the explanation of this passage, looked upon as a direct prediction,—since it seems apparent that neither in respect of number, nor in respect of kind, could the miracles wrought by the apostles or their coadjutors claim a superiority, or even an equality, to those of their Divine Master. In respect of number, there is no reason to suppose,—but every reason to the contrary,—that any one of the apostles was honoured to perform more numerous miracles than He of whom our own evangelist has said,—“Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books which should be written;” while, in respect of intrinsic magnitude and splendour, it is in vain that some have attempted to show that, in certain cases, the miracles of Jesus were surpassed by those of His disciples,—as in the communication of the Holy Ghost by the imposition of their hands, the death of Ananias and Sapphira at the utterance of their rebuke, the healing of the sick on whom their passing shadow fell. Such miracles are of a different description from those performed by Jesus, but surely they are not of more illustrious rank.

They are unexampled, but certainly not unmatched nor unsurpassed. The idea, therefore, which we are disposed to suggest, though, as far as we can find, not countenanced by any former interpreter, is this,—that in the promise now before us, the future is equivalent to the potential,—the expression, “he shall do,” to, he may do, he shall have the power to do. Various examples of this meaning connected with the sign of the future might be cited; but we need not go further than one of the parallel passages we have already adduced, to show, both that it is a legitimate meaning of the term, and that, in this particular case, it is a highly probable meaning:—“Verily I say unto you,” says Jesus, in reply to the disciples, asking for information on this very point, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say,” that is, manifestly, ye shall have power to say, “unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” There is no reason to think that this particular species of miracle,—which, had it literally taken place, might more justly than any recorded sign performed by the apostles have been described as a greater work than those accomplished by their Master,—was ever performed in apostolic times. It is quite certain, on the other hand, that that mountain—the Mount of Olives—on which our Saviour and His followers were standing, and to which in the utterance of the promise He pointed, remains seated on its old foundations to the present hour. Whence it appears, that what He meant to indicate by this emphatical expression was, not that any exertion of miraculous power to this effect should, in point of fact, take place by the instrumentality of His apostles, but simply, that even an event so stupendous, if on other grounds it were necessary or desirable, should not be beyond the limits of that power

which, through the channel of faith in His plighted promise, they should derive from His exhaustless Omnipotence. Thus it is that the expression is varied in a corresponding passage of the Gospel of Luke,—where we are told that, when the apostles said unto the Lord, “Increase our faith,” He answering said, “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the roots, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you.”* The phrases, “ye might say,” in this case, and, “ye shall say,” in the former, are employed interchangeably, with precisely the same extent of meaning, and so, I apprehend, distinctly point to the true method of interpreting our Saviour’s words,—“He that believeth on me, the same works that I do shall he do also, and greater works still shall he do;” that is, Not the splendour and magnificence of my most stupendous miracles shall be beyond the power that shall be given him to rival or surpass, and if the occasion shall require,—if the Spirit shall prompt,—works shall be done by him which, by their transcendent grandeur and glory, shall utterly eclipse the brightest of those marvels by which my earthly sojournings have been irradiated. If any of you, however, should be dissatisfied with this interpretation of “ye shall,” as equivalent to, ye may, the only other explanation which appears to us in the slightest degree probable, is that which supposes that, when our Lord declares that His disciples should perform even greater works than He had Himself exhibited, the reference is not so much to the intrinsic grandeur of the supernatural marvels which they wrought, but to the illustrious effects produced in the extensive conversion of men by their instrumentality to truth and holiness. It is a very fair

* Luke xvii. 6.

principle of classification and comparison, in respect of relative greatness, among miraculous events,—events having for their object to make men perceive and recognise in them the agency of Omnipotence,—to arrange them according to the extent in which they have produced their intended effect,—in which they have prevailed with men to behold in them the finger of a present Deity. Now, arranged on this principle, it is easy to perceive how the works of the disciples deserve to be called greater works than those performed even by their Master,—considering that the latter, stupendous and thoroughly Divine as they unquestionably were, yet prevailed with comparatively few to embrace Him as the Sent, the Sealed, the Son, of God, while the former were made effectual in gathering in, from a much wider range, a much more numerous host of converted souls to the acknowledgment of Jesus as the Anointed Saviour, and Anointed Lord, of man.

But if, in some respects, the works of the disciples might be described as greater works than those of their Master, it did not follow that they were therefore greater than He. “The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord.” The apostles did not, as you know, accomplish these greater effects by their own power or their own holiness,—that they frequently and in express terms themselves denied,—but by the communicated energy and Spirit of their Master. For observe what Jesus, in predicting the marvels to be wrought by His apostles when He should have receded from the visible stage of life, assigns as the cause which should produce these wonderful effects,—His own power exerted in His glorified state:—“Greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father; and whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the

Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." It was from no inferiority in Him, from no superiority in *them*, that their miracles produced superior effects to His; seeing that He was Himself the Author of all those splendid effects which followed the exertion of spiritual gifts in the hands of otherwise feeble and powerless men. It was thought meet by the mysterious and sovereign wisdom of the Father and the Son, for reasons which in their fullest depth and extent we may not pretend to fathom, but some of which the very statement of the case will be sufficient to suggest, that Christ should have finished the work which the Father had given Him to do,—that the system of facts which compose the gospel should have been completed,—that Jesus should have "died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and risen again for our justification according to the Scriptures,"—that He should have fully accomplished the sufferings which were to precede, and should have actually entered on the glory which was to follow,—before the fruits of His exertions and His sufferings should very conspicuously and extensively appear,—before the gifts which He had purchased for men should be shed forth on them in the plenitude of their effusion,—before His apostles were commissioned and empowered to make universal proclamation through the world of His gospel and His reign. The bestowal of the Holy Spirit on His followers, enduing them at once with holy graces and with miraculous gifts, in order that they might be meet heralds of His cross and of His throne, was to be at once a fruit of His death and a part of His reward; so that the text, when it specifies the departure of Jesus to the Father as the immediate cause of the effusion of miraculous gifts on the apostles, only declares what is the uniform doctrine of holy writ,—that if He had not gone away, the Holy Ghost

would not have come,—that, “when He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, then He received gifts for men,”—that the events of the fatal Passover were the necessary forerunners of the glorious Pentecost. One great and gracious object which was answered by this arrangement it is easy to perceive,—that by the descent of the miraculous energies and gifts on the apostles, when they were “endued with power from on high,”—“baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire,”—both the friends and the enemies of our Master’s cause were furnished with a most convincing proof that His disappearance from our world had indeed been followed by His exaltation to the right hand of power,—His accession to the throne of the universe. By previously coupling these two events together in promise and prediction, Jesus had made the one the proof and the assurance of the other,—that which was visible of that which was invisible; and as such, accordingly, St. Peter used it with resistless power in his magnificent and triumphant discourse upon the day of Pentecost:—“Ye men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.”* And while the postponement of the Holy Spirit’s miraculous effusion until the period of the Saviour’s

* Acts ii. 22, 23, 32, 33.

departure into the invisible state, was calculated thus to have the happiest effect in strengthening the faith of His apostles,—in assuring them and the world that His condition in that unseen state was one of ineffable majesty and sovereignty and splendour,—it was fitted also to reconcile them to that arrangement of the Almighty's providence which required them to part for a season with the personal presence and society of their beloved Lord. They were not called to make that bitter sacrifice without a compensating advantage in the present state. How the coming of the Spirit would compensate, and more than compensate, for His personal absence, Jesus largely explains in the sequel of this discourse. But, in the meanwhile, it could not fail to impart a lively consolation to their hearts to know that, if they were no longer to behold that mighty Man of wonders displaying visibly before them the marvels of His benignant Omnipotence, such marvels were not, however, to cease,—only, in respect of them, they were to be exalted from spectators into agents,—and that through them the might of their ascended Lord was to pass forth into effects of miraculous grace similar in nature, but vastly superior in effect, to those which had so long excited their admiration and their awful delight, performed by Him in whom were seen the incarnate Omnipotence and Mercy of the Deity. How elevating and transporting the sensations which the actual possession and exercise of miraculous power were calculated to awaken in their bosoms you may gather from the ecstasy with which the Seventy whom, in addition to the twelve apostles, He endowed, in the days of His flesh, with miraculous powers, reported to Him the triumphs of their expedition. The Seventy, we are told, “returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject

to us through thy name." The answer of our Lord to this triumphant exclamation is the best practical instruction we can draw from the whole subject we have been now considering:—"In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."*

You know that, in our own day, the claim to the power of working miracles has been revived, on the strength of the passage now before us, and of some similar passages in Holy Writ, which have been viewed as containing a promise of such extraordinary gifts addressed to all believers of all countries and all ages. Now, it is admitted on all hands, that these promises were at first and primarily addressed to the apostles and their coadjutors in the primitive age, and that in none of these promises is it either expressly said, or incontrovertibly intimated, that the gifts in question were to continue uninterrupted and unceasing in the church down to the consummation of all things. If it be urged that such phrases as that in the text, "he that believeth on me," are indefinite and descriptive of genuine Christians everywhere and at all times,—we answer, that such indefinite phrases are frequently used in a sense less than universal, and that, according to all the ordinary usages of language, the use of such an expression is abundantly justified if any considerable number of believers were endued with the wonder-working energy here described. If the phrases, "he that believeth," "they that believe," in the promises of miraculous power, are to be interpreted as universal, then they must include not only all ages of the Christian Church, but all individual believers of all ages. Yet it has never yet been pretended, in the face of decisive facts, that even in the apostolic times all that believed

* Luke x. 17, 20.

were without exception invested with a right, on the faith of the promise before us, to attempt the performance of miracles with the hope and expectation of success. The fact, then, whether miraculous powers do now exist in the Christian Church is to be determined, not by exegetical, but by historical proofs,—not by the interpretation of passages, but by the allegation of cases. Cases, accordingly, have been alleged, but how unsatisfactory, both in respect of number and of circumstances, needs not now be told,—one or two cases of recoveries which all physicians testify to have been quite within the range of natural events, pretensions to the gift of tongues founded on the utterance of a rhapsody of sounds which may safely be pronounced to have no meaning in any dialect of the many-languaged earth; and these among a multitude of cases in which the attempt of working miracles has confessedly been followed by utter discomfiture and disappointment. No, my brethren, we must have better evidence before we can believe that any living man is one of those to whom, in the primary sense, the Saviour said,—“He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” Meanwhile, we have no reason to regret it. We have miracles enough on record, as certain as if we had seen them with our eyes, to prove the truth and the divinity of that blessed gospel on which our faith and hope repose; and Jesus has Himself informed us, that the possession of miraculous powers is a privilege infinitely less to be esteemed and valued, than an interest in the spiritual blessings of His spiritual kingdom,—than to be enrolled among that “general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.” To the same effect the blessed apostle, having largely

explained to the Corinthian converts the principles of the dispensation of spiritual gifts, concludes with the exhortation,—“Covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”* The moral graces of the Christian character, we are thus assured, are infinitely more precious than the greatest splendour of miraculous gifts,—the ordinary influences of the Holy Ghost which are continued to the church are infinitely to be preferred to those extraordinary operations which are withdrawn. While, therefore, we gratefully remember the grace and condescension of our God in that of old He gave such power unto men, bearing witness to them and to their testimony “with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost,” let us acknowledge His mercy with yet warmer gratitude and admiration in having bestowed upon the church at first, and continued with her until now, those enlightening and enlivening, those sanctifying and consoling, graces of the good Spirit by which we are transformed into His spiritual image and made meet for His eternal joy. Let us seek, with all the earnestness of our spirits, an interest in that salvation which, beyond all natural, beyond all supernatural, distinctions, is the “one thing needful,” and, by making now “our calling and election sure,” provide that, if we may not rejoice “that the spirits are subject to” us, we may rejoice in this, that our “names are written in heaven.”

* 1 Cor. xii. 31; xiii. 1, 2.

LECTURE VIII.

CHAP. XIV. 13, 14.

“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”

IN the verse immediately preceding, Jesus, with the view of reconciling His disciples to His own approaching departure, had assured them that, in consequence and by means of that event, they should be endued with the power of performing the same miracles,—and greater,—as their Master had achieved; that, if they were no longer to behold Him displaying visibly before them the marvels of His benignant Omnipotence, yet through them the might of their ascended Lord was to pass forth into effects of miraculous grace similar in nature, but vastly superior in influence, to those which had so long excited their admiration and their awful delight, performed by Him in whom was seen incarnate the merciful Omnipotence of Deity. This magnificent promise was followed up by a statement of the grounds on which they might expect, and of the way in which they might secure, its being carried into complete accomplishment. The ground on which they might expect this was the exaltation of their Master to “the right hand of power” and infinite dominion,—the completion of His atoning work, and the consequent removal of all impediments to the more abundant effusion of God’s

Almighty Spirit, in the plenitude, at once, of His ordinary graces, and of His extraordinary gifts:—"He that believeth on me, the same works that I do, shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father." The way by which they were to obtain its fulfilment was by the believing use of that mighty means of grace and channel of celestial influence by which the weakness of man connects itself with the omnipotence of God—the instrument of believing prayer:—"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

That the direct and immediate object of this promise was to encourage the disciples to depend with unshaken confidence upon their Master's strength, and to ask with unhesitating faith their Master's aid, in the performance of miraculous works and the discharge of their apostolical commission, is obvious from the whole connection, as well as from the parallel passage in St. Mark, where the promise of miraculous endowments and the promise of an answer to believing prayer are connected in a precisely similar way:—"Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* But it does not therefore follow that this exhausts the whole import of the promise, expressed as it is in the most comprehensive terms, and

* Mark xi. 22—24.

repeated with an emphasis which seems to protest against the limitation and the meagreness of such an exposition. It is a general promise, of which the communication of divine power for the performance of miraculous works is one, but only one, particular case. All that the context and series of discourse demands is, that the promise should include this at least,—it is far from forbidding that it should include a great deal more. That it was intended really to possess this wider extent of meaning I apprehend is distinctly intimated by the repetition in verse 14; of which repetition I suppose the force and emphasis is this:—Do not imagine that I am speaking now of only some particular class of petitions which it may fall to your lot as apostles to present; I speak of all classes and orders of requests which it becomes you in your character of Christians to offer,—“If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.” It will be proper, therefore, that we first consider this most blessed promise in its more general meaning, in which, though originally addressed to the chosen apostles, it is the property of all genuine believers throughout all ages of the Christian church,—as a promise that, whatever they shall ask in prayer, for their Redeemer’s sake, calculated to promote the glory of God and their own real, that is, their spiritual and eternal, interests, it shall undoubtedly be effected for them by the merciful Omnipotence of their exalted Lord.

That when we speak in general concerning the subjects of acceptable prayer, we are bound to limit the universal expression of the text by such conditions as those we have suggested; that the subject of request should be according to God’s will,—as any thing, we know, is according to His will which tends to promote His glory and our own salvation,—is plain from many passages of Sacred Scripture;

on the principle of interpretation, which all who are familiar with the Bible will admit, that general and universal statements in one place are often to be restricted and modified by conditions which are either obvious of themselves, or stated expressly in other passages of Holy Writ. That Christians, therefore, are not to imagine, from the passage now before us, that every natural desire which arises in their bosoms they have only to frame into the form of a petition offered in the name of Jesus, and then make themselves secure of having it gratified, let the apostle St. John declare,—who thus points out the limits within which the general promise of the text is uniformly verified, “This is the confidence which we have in Him, that if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us;” let our agonizing Lord Himself declare, when, under the crushing burden and in the overwhelming prospect of intenser than mortal agony, He prayed, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”* The soul and essence of all acceptable prayer, as far as its subject is concerned, are summed up and concentrated in that one petition, “Thy will be done;” and the frame of thought and feeling of which accepted prayer is the native language is that of the soul whose choice and condition, as the subject of Jehovah’s sovereignty, are now at one,—which feels it sweet, or at least accounts it right, ‘to lie passive in His hands, and own no will but His.’ It is taken for granted in such universal promises as that before us, that those to whom they appertain have been already brought into this temper of meek and humble acquiescence in their Heavenly Father’s, in their Almighty Saviour’s, will; that they will

* 1 John v. 14, 15; Matt. xxvi. 39.

not, in point of fact, be found presenting at the throne of grace any other petitions than they surely know will be according to God's will,—petitions, that is, as absolute and earnest as they can make them for blessings spiritual and eternal, petitions for things earthly and temporal with a condition always expressed or understood, the condition, namely, that the enjoyment of such blessings shall appear to our Saviour's Omniscient Benignity consistent with those great ends which alone are worthy to be the principal objects with beings such as we,—the glory of God and the salvation of our own imperishable spirits.

So much, therefore, being taken for granted in regard to the nature and character of the petitions which alone, in point of fact, a believer acting in character will present, it is next expressly declared, that, in order to these petitions being accepted and successful, they must be presented in the name of Jesus. The name of any being, as you know, is that word which, when uttered, intimates that the speaker has^r before his mind, and is desirous that there should be before the mind of the hearers, the idea of the person in question. To perform any act or service, therefore, in the name of Christ, is to perform it in a spirit of habitual reference to the character and claims of Christ, as these are disclosed to us in the scheme, and in the revelation, of the gospel. And in this sense are we commanded to perform, not merely every act of prayer, but every service of devotion and every part of duty, in the name of Jesus. The comprehensive precept, applying to every exercise of thought and feeling, to every word of our lips and every action of our lives, is in these words,—“Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” The promise of His gracious presence, and His effectual blessing on the services of social devotion, is limited to those assem-

blies of God's worshippers which meet in His name:— "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." While, finally, the assurance of being heard and answered in any request whatever presented at the throne of grace is, in other instances than that before us, made dependent on the condition of that request having been presented in the name of Jesus:—"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Ask, and receive, that your joy may be full."* Let me exhort you, therefore, all ye who name the name of Christ, to cultivate more and more this devout and habitual contemplation of Jesus in His revealed character, which is the distinctive feature both of Christian holiness in general, and of Christian devotion in particular. More especially, if we are desirous that any act of supplication should prove either acceptable or useful, let it be begun, conducted, and concluded, in this spirit of habitual reference to Jesus,—with all its texture let the thought of Him be inseparably interwoven. That name which "is as ointment poured forth,"—let it breathe its sacred odours through all the train of thought, of feeling, and of utterance; a reviving and refreshing perfume to the suppliant's own soul, the savour of a sweet smell before Jehovah's throne.

But while it is right that the whole course and tenor of a Christian's prayers should be pervaded by this general reference to the general character of the Saviour as revealed in the gospel, there are obviously certain special circumstances in His character, and parts of His office as Mediator, to which a more direct and peculiar reference is highly appropriate, on the part of him who comes to implore the

* Col. iii. 17; Matt. xviii. 20; John xvi. 23, 24.

aid and blessing of Jehovah; and these are, His atonement, viewed as the only ground of a sinner's acceptance with the pure and righteous Majesty of heaven, and His intercession, contemplated as that by which alone the merit of His atonement can be applied, and made available, in each particular case in which an individual sinner approaches to converse with God respecting the supply of his felt necessities and desires. To pray, then, in the name of Jesus Christ, implies, that we use the merits of the Saviour as our leading argument with God why He should bestow on us the benefits we need. For not only are we undeserving of any token of God's favour apart from the merits and the death of Jesus; but we are deserving of the selectest expressions of His displeasure, and that to such an extent, and in such circumstances, that it would have been eternally dishonourable, and therefore eternally impossible, even for the Omnipotent and most Merciful Jehovah to admit us to His favour and His fellowship, had not Jesus interposed to do our duty and suffer our desert, and made it so a righteous and possible thing for the Eternal Majesty once more to hold with men propitious intercourse. Habitually to feel, then, and expressly to declare in every act of supplication, that the only ground on which we expect to receive the benefits we ask is what Christ has done and Christ has suffered, is not less a due act of homage to the majesty of God, than it is a suitable expression of gratitude for the love of Christ; and to suppose, or to pray as if we did suppose, that God can or will confer upon us any spiritual or eternal blessing except for the sake of Jesus is, directly or virtually, to express our expectation and desire that the Sovereign of the universe will gratify us by dishonouring Himself. I leave you to conjecture what acceptance such a request is likely to

meet with on the part of Him whose name is Jealous, and who hath solemnly declared,—“I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” But while he who would pray in the name of Christ must thus habitually feel and express his reliance on the atonement of the Saviour, he must not forget that it is only through the intercession of the same All-Sufficient Saviour that the finished atonement is made practically efficacious in any individual case. That one form in which Jesus discharges His celestial function as the Anointed Intercessor on behalf of “those who come unto God by Him,” is by offering up their prayers in the sanctuary above,—adopting them as His own,—enforcing them with all the interest which He, the Only-begotten, the well-beloved Son, possesses with the Father, is gathered with sufficient certainty from the analogy between the Jewish and the Christian High Priest, as stated in Holy Writ. It was the part of the former, we know, to present the prayers of Israel before Jehovah’s throne and presence in the holiest of all, while the incense of the appointed sacrifice was fuming on the golden altar in the sanctuary,—a function in obvious reference to which Jesus is said to have entered into the true holiest, the innermost shrine of the universe, the heaven of heavens, there to “appear in the presence of God for us;” so that, on this account, we are expressly invited to approach the mercy-seat in the confidence of prayer:—“Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and

find grace to help in time of need.”* It is thus that, in the immediate context, Jesus represents Himself as ready to perform, on the part of His disciples, in that invisible state into which He was about to depart, the office of an Advocate and Intercessor with the Father:—“ I will pray the Father,” He says, “ and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.” And it is thus that genuine Christians of every age may pray in the encouraging belief that the Saviour—He who, both as the eternal Son of the Father’s love, and as the triumphant Vindicator of the Father’s honour, hath so omnipotent a claim to receive whatever He is pleased to ask at the Father’s hand for Himself or for His chosen—will employ His influence on high, in procuring for His disciples praying in His name a favourable audience, and a successful issue with Him who is His Father and their Father, His God and their God.—To pray, then, believing the reality, and depending on the power, of the Saviour’s intercession, as well as of the Saviour’s atonement; that is to pray in the name of Christ,—in a form and spirit bearing a just reference to His revealed character.

Jesus, having thus directed His disciples, and, through them the Christians of all following ages, to the plea which is recognised above as irresistible,—the word of might which opens heaven,—the talisman which puts in their power the resources of Omnipotence,—goes on to assure them of the success which the believing use of this prevailing name will infallibly secure:—“ Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it.” On no subject are the declarations of God’s word more numerous or more express than in regard to the efficacy of believing prayer:—“ The Lord is nigh

* Heb. iv. 14-16.

unto them that call on Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them;”—“The effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much.” “Ask,” says our Lord Himself on another occasion, “and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened,”—and again, in a subsequent part of this very discourse, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you;”—promises these in recollection of which the beloved apostle remarks, “Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him. And this is the confidence which we have in Him, that, whatsoever we ask according to His will, He heareth us. And if we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we desired of Him.” “If any man lack wisdom,” says his brother apostle, St. James, “let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him,”—and again, addressing those who either altogether restrained prayer before God, or endeavoured to pervert it from its holy purposes to be the instrument and slave of their own propensities, “Ye have not, because ye ask not; ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.”*

While, therefore, the passage now before us coincides with the whole bearing of Holy Writ in assuring us of the efficacy of believing prayer, the peculiarity by which it is distinguished from other passages to the same general effect is this,—that Jesus here represents Himself as the

* Psal. cxlv. 18, 19; James v. 16; Matt. vii. 7, 8; John xvi. 23;

1 John v. 14, 15; James i. 5; iv. 2, 3.

immediate Agent in bringing about the fulfilment of His people's prayers; thereby exhibiting Himself to our adoration and our confidence as invested with the perfections, and exercising the powers, of the Supreme Divinity. To any one who will compare the phraseology of this verse with that of the 16th verse of the fifteenth chapter, and the 23d verse of the sixteenth chapter—"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He shall give it you,"—it will be obvious that Jesus, in the text, assumes, as His own undoubted prerogative, an equal honour with the Everlasting Father as the proper Object, the omniscient Hearer, the all-sufficient Answerer, of prayer. Yet, while the Incarnate Son of God did neither on this nor on other proper occasions hesitate to avow, by the distinctest implications, His natural equality with God, He was careful, at the same time, when speaking in the character of Mediator, always to associate His loftiest claims to the honours of Divinity with intimations and acknowledgments of His official subordination to the Father, as His Minister and Servant in effecting the salvation of lost mankind; and therefore He follows up the assertion of His own Omniscience and Omnipotence, plainly involved in the declaration, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it," by a solemn recognition of the Father's glory as the ultimate object, the highest and the worthiest end, to be answered by this and every other part of His mediatorial function:—"that the Father may be glorified through the Son." On precisely the same principle we find it testified, Philip ii. 9-11, that the homage of the whole creation rendered to Christ Jesus, as the exalted Saviour, is intended finally to illustrate and set forth the Father's sovereign majesty and honour:—"God hath given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The whole scheme and method, indeed, of the Christian salvation has this for its grand end and object, "that the Father may be glorified through the Son;" that is, that the perfections of the Everlasting Godhead,—the majesty of which it is the Father's part in the economy of mercy to sustain,—His justice and His grace, His wisdom and His power, His holiness and His truth,—might be manifested in clearer and sublimer illustration before the eyes, not merely of mankind, but of all the intelligent universe. And this great end is more especially answered when, in the exercise of those exalted prerogatives and powers with which the perfected Redeemer has been invested by the Father, He bestows on His suppliant and believing people the blessings they implore; partly, because the way in which they are asked is an acknowledgment, and the way in which they are bestowed is a display, of that blended benignity and righteousness which form His moral character; and partly, because the blessings themselves, when actually conferred, are intended, both in each particular case and in the general system of things, to contribute towards the advancement of His own purpose and cause,—the maturity of that wondrous scheme from the full development of which there will accrue a brighter revenue of glory than all His other works have furnished to Him whose glory is the end, whose will is the law, of the universe,—the God who shall at last be all in all.

We have said that the promise of the text is in its own nature, and, as we suppose, in our Lord's intention, general and universal,—comprehending an assurance addressed to

the apostles, and, by parity of reason, to all Christians, that they should undoubtedly receive whatever they asked for in their Master's name that was really necessary, and really desirable, in the particular circumstances in which they might severally be placed. Viewed, therefore, as originally addressed to the eleven, and taken in connection with the immediately preceding context, it obviously includes a promise to them in particular, that, in the conduct of their inspired ministry, whatever exertion of miraculous power they should pray for, in dependence on His merits and power, which should be necessary or desirable, with the view of demonstrating the divinity of their mission and the truth of their doctrine, should be graciously vouchsafed to them by the Omnipotence of their exalted Lord. Even in this particular application, the strong and all-comprehending expression, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name," is to be understood, no doubt, not in the strictest and most absolute sense, but, as in reference to temporal blessings which may become the subjects of prayer, under certain conditions tacitly supposed; namely, that what is asked shall be according to God's will, fitted to promote His glory and the suppliant's own true interests,—his spiritual improvement, his everlasting salvation. It does not appear that the apostles, even on the faith of this memorable promise, had a right, in all circumstances and at all times, to ask of the Lord their God whatever sign they pleased in the depth or in the height above,—unless, indeed, we shall suppose that, guided as they were by the unerring Spirit in all their choice and their procedure in connection with their apostolic ministry, they never were in danger of asking the performance of a miracle the performance of which was not absolutely proper in the circumstances,—agreeably to the Almighty's purpose, and

fitted to promote His cause. However this may be,—whether or not they were at any time exposed to the temptation of asking for any exertion of miraculous power but such as the honour of their Master permitted, and the interests of His kingdom required,—certain it is they never asked for such a miracle but it was performed,—performed for the sake, and by the power, of their exalted Master; performed for His sake, and therefore to be implored in His name,—performed by His power, and therefore to be acknowledged as His act. We find, accordingly, that the apostles were most express and punctual, when called to the exertion of their miraculous powers, in invoking previously the name of Jesus; and in proclaiming, both in the act and after the effect, that the work was not their own, but their exalted Lord's. “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,” says St. Peter, “rise up and walk.” “Eneas,” says the same apostle on another occasion, “Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.” And in regard to the whole splendid series of marvellous works by which the apostolical commission of St. Paul was sealed, he declares that they were “wrought in him by Jesus Christ, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.”* It was thus that the honour of these stupendous works was most justly rendered by the feeble instrument to the Almighty Agent; while by Him it was again reflected upwards upon that Sovereign Divinity under whose authority He had, for a mighty purpose of love, condescended to act as man's Redeemer. The Son was glorified in His commissioned apostles; the Father was glorified in His Anointed Son; and the effect of all was rapidly and powerfully to advance the progress of that

* Acts iii. 6; ix. 34; Rom. xv. 18, 19.

cause in the commencement, the development, and the consummation, of which the universe is summoned to contemplate the brightest illustration which the annals of eternity record of the perfections of Jehovah's character and the principles of Jehovah's government,—the most illustrious contribution which the mighty host of being, the mighty series of events, has rendered, or will render ever, to the praise of His glory “of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

LECTURE IX.

CHAP. XIV. 15, 16.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments; and I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.”

YOU know, my brethren, that the general object of this discourse of Jesus, delivered to His chosen followers immediately before His final sufferings and death, is to afford them direction, support, and consolation, for the period when they were to be left forlorn of His personal presence, to prosecute their noble but arduous and perilous undertaking, as His heralds and apostles, in the midst of a hostile world. With this view, He had already adduced a number of important considerations admirably fitted to admonish them respecting the duties, and to encourage them amidst the difficulties and the trials, of the season they so much dreaded. In the verses now before us, He proceeds to adduce several new considerations of great weight and moment, directed to the same benevolent object of soothing His disciples' sorrows, and re-animating their shaken courage, in the prospect of approaching separation from Himself.

The emphasis which the prospect of that approaching separation imparts to the solemn charge contained in verse 15, will be felt and recognised by every heart which has

experienced the power of separation,—and especially of that separation which divides us from our friends by more than land or sea,—in developing all our deepest affections towards the loved ones of our hearts, the loved and lost. Never do we feel more deeply the pathetic and constraining force of the appeal, “If ye love me,” than when the friend who utters it is hovering on the brink of that dark gulf of unpenetrated gloom into which no ministries of ours, nor direct assurances of love, can follow him,—ready to go hence and to be no more seen; or when we can imagine it proceeding from the bosom of the darkness where he has his dwelling now,—a voice from the departed, more touching and more awful than any that living lips can utter. It is of this natural and most powerful sentiment of the human heart that our Saviour takes advantage here, in order to secure for His injunctions, after His departure from the world, the cordial and affectionate obedience of His followers:—“If ye love me, keep my commandments.” It was not that He doubted their sincere and profound attachment to His sacred person,—the attachment which expressed itself so visibly and forcibly in the sorrow which, because He said unto them, “I go away,” had filled their hearts; in the profound regrets and vivid apprehensions with which they anticipated the loneliness and desolation of their lot when they should be bereft of His beloved presence. But He was anxious to direct the stream of their affections into another channel,—a channel in which when rightly guided it should be capable of producing effects at once more beneficial to the world, and more consolatory to themselves, than had it been left to expend itself in vain regrets for losses which could not be repaired, for events which could not be undone.

In no case are we allowed, when bereaved even of the

dearest and most valued friend by his departure into another world, to sit down permanently in the indolence of sorrow, and to account our love for the departed sufficiently declared by the tempest of our barren tears and ineffectual sighs. Some moments, minutes, days, when the feeling of desolation is yet new and overwhelming, it may perhaps be permitted by Him who "knoweth our frame, who remembereth that we are dust," that we sit idly on the ground, in the trance of our impassioned sorrows, under the stun and stupor of the severing blow. But this may not always last. We must awake from the vacancy and dreaminess of grief into the activities of real life. We must call in our straggling thoughts from vague excursions into the 'undiscovered country' into which, with our departed friends, all the interest of life at first appears to have been absorbed and swallowed up, and mingle, once more, in the scene of visible objects, and the intercourse of living men. The reign of musing sorrow must expire, and the claims of practical duty resume their interrupted sway. And, while this is the course which propriety in *all* cases, in *most* cases necessity, demands of the bereaved and desolate; so it has been graciously ordered that it should be the course that tends most powerfully to heal the wounds of the stricken spirit, and with gentlest relief beguile it of its sorrows. To him whose soul has been untuned and smitten, as it were, into collapse by the shock of some fierce bereavement, there is no surer method of recovering his just tone and elasticity of soul than, with a quiet fortitude, to make the effort,—an effort it may prove at first, but one that will every day become easier, and every day extract more effectually the venom, and more benignly mellow the acerbity of grief,—to make the effort of setting about the appointed duties of his station

in this living and breathing world, and persevering with a steady patience in their performance, till experience has convinced him, that even by the most desolating sweep of mortal privation the world has not been left without an interest, nor his existence here without an object. And oh, who has not felt how greatly this natural tendency and power of active engagement in the appointed duties of our station gradually to abate and overcome the poignancy of sorrow for the lost is assisted and enhanced, if the fact be so that, in the act of discharging these, we are not only performing what is required by our relations to the living, but what is due to the sacred memory of the dead, and especially if we can persuade ourselves that, though escaped from this visible orb, beyond the reach of our vision and the sphere of our acquaintance, we are not invisible to them; that from their seats in glory,—I speak of those concerning whom “we sorrow not as having no hope,”—they are bending down with eyes of love to watch our steps, and are capable of deriving from our conduct the assurance, of perceiving in it the proofs, that we love them still, and wish to honour them by every possible expression of our reverence and affection,—if the duties to which we betake ourselves are those which the friend whose rapture from our world appeared at first to turn that world into a void commended to us with his dying breath,—and if we can believe that our diligence in the discharge of these can convey to him, even through the mysterious veil which hides his personal presence from our view, the assurance of our unfailing remembrance and of our unchangeable affection? Now, this is the power of consolation which, in the verse before us, Jesus puts in full operation on behalf of His disciples, in the anticipation of His own approaching departure from the bosom of their personal and familiar

fellowship. He directs them, when that dreaded calamity should have befallen them, to occupy themselves, not with regretful musings on the loss of His society, but with active diligence in the keeping of His commandments. He assures them that this would be, in point of fact, a nobler and more convincing expression of regard to Him than loudest lamentation, or torrents of exuberant tears. And by the whole train and tenor of the passage, especially the connection of this verse with the verse that follows, He intimates that such an expression of affection would not pass by Him unnoticed or unknown,—that it would send a thrill of holy satisfaction, not lost nor overborne even amidst the raptures of eternity, up to His bosom where He dwells most high in the glory of the Father, and is made “most blessed for ever” with gladness from Jehovah’s countenance.

You see, then, the appositeness, the beauty, and the pathos, of the exhortation in the text, as occurring in a discourse of consolation, designed to comfort and support His followers under the severest bereavement which ever a human being’s departure into another world occasioned. And while you perceive its beautiful propriety in reference to the peculiar case of the original disciples, you will not be slack, I trust, to gather for yourselves some portion of the practical instruction which it is fitted to convey, not to the eleven alone, but to Christians of all countries and all generations. It reminds us, that one characteristic mark of every true disciple is that he loves his Saviour, although departed and invisible:—“Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice;” “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.”* It reminds us, that in order to acquire the character of a sincere lover, a true disciple, of Jesus

* 1 Pet. i. 8; 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

Christ, it is not enough that we loudly profess our attachment to His person and His cause; or even that we feel our bosoms from time to time enkindled with sudden fervours of admiration and delight, in contemplating His character, His achievements, His sufferings, His glory. These sentiments, however thrilling, however glowing, may be but passive affections of a taste constitutionally sensitive to impressions of grandeur and of loveliness,—susceptible of the fine enthusiasm which is awakened in the breasts of many by the mere contemplation of the heroic or the touching in human character and human life. The love of Christ which is the test of Christianity is the love which is the principle of action,—the spring of holy exertion and activity; which leads a man, above all other ends, to desire and to endeavour that, in all he thinks and says and does, he may afford the greatest possible satisfaction to Him whom his soul loveth; which constrains a man to “live no more unto himself, but unto Him that died for him and that rose again.” It also reminds us, on the other hand, that the obedience which alone is suited to the nature of the gospel and the character of the Christian is that which finds its native impulse, and its sustaining energy, in love to the unseen Redeemer,—the affectionate obedience of those who love the law because they love the Lawgiver; who count the most arduous, the most perilous, duties sweet for the affection which they bear to Him who recommended them to their attention in His departing charge and counsel; and who find the most constraining of all motives to a faithful and diligent observance of Jehovah’s commandments, in the epithet by which Jesus has described them when He said, “If ye love me, keep *my* commandments.”

But while, as we have seen, the exhortation to obedience as the only satisfactory evidence of love was, in its

own nature, admirably fitted to contribute, if faithfully obeyed, to the support and consolation of the disciples, under the calamity of their Master's departure to another sphere, by giving them, in the first place, something else with which to occupy their thoughts than such regrets and unavailing lamentations, and by intimating, in the second, that their affection towards Him would thus express itself in a way at once more appropriate in its own nature, and more pleasing to His heart; it was fitted to promote the same, and still more effectually, in another form, inasmuch as it set them in the right way to obtain the influences of that Celestial Comforter in whose descent from heaven to earth, in plenitude of sevenfold grace, His own ascent from earth to heaven was to be compensated, and the place which He had left empty was to be illustriously supplied:—"If ye love me, keep my commandments; and I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter,"—or, to retain the original word for reasons which will presently appear, "another Paraclete,—that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth."

The first particular which in this verse solicits our attention is the very peculiar appellation which Jesus here ascribes at once to Himself and to the Holy Spirit, when He calls the latter "another Paraclete." The literal sense of Paraclete is, a person who has been called beside another; but technically it is employed, both in pure Greek and in the only other passage of the New Testament where it occurs, to signify a person who patronizes and appears in support of another's cause. It was the custom before the tribunals of ancient Greece, for the parties in any cause to appear in court attended by one or more of their most powerful and influential friends; who were not properly advocates in our sense of the term, employed and paid to

conduct and to plead the cause, but who, prompted only by the affection which they bore their friend, undertook to stand by him in the controversy he was maintaining,—to countenance him and his cause by the authority and influence of their characters, to impart to him their best advice in regard to the proper methods of asserting his rights, and supporting his interests, in each emergency of the case, and to give him the benefit, not merely of their counsel, but of their eloquence,—to interpose an observation or to plead at large in his defence, when opportunity offered and occasion required. Now, these individuals in the Athenian courts were called the party's Paracletes,—in the Roman courts, his Advocates. And that the word in this particular sense was not unknown to the writers of the New Testament, or to our own evangelist in particular, is obvious from the passage in the beginning of the 2d chapter of his first epistle, the only other passage in the New Testament where the remarkable word in question may be found; where he says:—"My little children, these things I write unto you that ye sin not; and if any man sin, we have a Paraclete with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" that is, we have before the Sovereign Judicature of the universe,—the august tribunal of Him who is the Judge of all the earth,—one who is ready, for the friendship which He bears us, to appear, as it were, beside us at the bar; to interpose His character and influence on our behalf; to patronise our cause, and conduct our plea; and, by the virtue of His merits, and the prevalence of His intercession, to procure our dismissal uncondemned, absolved, and blessed of the Father, from before the judgment-throne even of Eternal Righteousness. These things being so,—this being the familiar sense in which the word occurs among the writers of classical Greek, and being also the only sense in which

it occurs elsewhere in the Greek Scriptures,—I can have no hesitation in ascribing to it the same signification in the verse before us. Nor will it be difficult to perceive, on a very slight reflection, how singularly appropriate it is to all the circumstances of the case. The disciples, as the chosen champions and defenders of infant Christianity, the ambassadors and heralds of Messiah's kingdom, the preachers of His gospel and witnesses of His glory, had become involved in a controversy with the human race of mightier import than Attic eloquence had ever pleaded, or the tribunals of imperial Rome, where puissant kings and nations were the parties, ever had decided. On this momentous plea they had perilled their characters, their fortunes, their lives, their all, when first they obeyed the command of Jesus, "Follow me;" and more especially, when first they accepted the lofty, but, in proportion to its loftiness, arduous and perilous, rank of His apostles to the nations. Against them were arrayed the banded subtlety and might of Jew and Gentile, of priest and sage, of emperor and king,—the prejudices, the institutions, the imagined interests, the wisdom, and the power, of an opposing world. The controversy was ere now conclusively begun, the gauntlet thrown down, the stake committed, the risk incurred. Nor had they not already had experience of the bitterness, the fierce exasperation, the deadly hate, with which their antagonists were prepared to pursue their cause and themselves, its selected champions, to the very death. But what recked they, or at least, what needed they to reckon, of the world's dreadest laugh, her fiercest frown, her keenest-edged reproach, her most appalling threats, her deadliest hate,—what needed they to reckon of the confederate enmity of earth and hell,—while they had beside them a Paraclete so mighty and so wise, to counsel and to

guide, to vindicate and to protect, them, as their Redeemer-Lord? While the Lord thus stood at their right hand, they felt that they could not be greatly moved,—that Eternal Wisdom was their Counsellor, Omnipotence their Guardian. Assured of infallible direction and of unconquerable defence, they could in conscious security defy the most formidable league and coalition of their foes. But behold! they had scarcely in this exulting confidence committed themselves to the contest, and jeopardized their all on its results, than the intimation reached them that their Almighty Paraclete was called away from their side,—translated from the scene of conflict and debate to the orb of eternal tranquillity and rest, while they were left behind to struggle alone, as they imagined, helpless and friendless, against the enmity of a challenged and exasperated world. The very idea struck dismay into their trembling hearts; and the visions of discomfiture and ruin usurped the place, in their imaginations, of the glorious and triumphant issues in the confidence of which they had so bravely,—said they not, rashly?—joined issue with the adversary. In these circumstances it is, that Jesus interposes here to reanimate their drooping courage, to dispel their unworthy fears, to pour into their hearts the fresh inspiration of hope and of assured victory, by the promise of another Paraclete, another Friend, of power and wisdom equal to His own, to stand by them while, in the face of an adversary-world, they testified for Jesus; to guide them by His unerring counsel, and to supply them with inexhaustible resources in the conduct of their sacred and illustrious cause; to encourage them to a heroic boldness and heroic constancy, in standing for the right; to make them “valiant for the truth” upon the earth; and to direct the controversy, when at length the period of deci-

sion should arrive, to an expected issue, glorious for them, and triumphant for their cause. Now, exactly a character like this describes the office and work of the Holy Spirit on behalf of the disciples as the apostles of Jesus,—the assertors of His rights and proclaimers of His truths. You know how He habitually directed all their measures, in labouring for the promulgation, and standing for the defence, of the gospel; or if you know not, the book of their Acts will tell you how at the bidding of the Holy Ghost they went,—how at the bidding of the Holy Ghost they came,—how by His motions and His impulses they decided every question of their plans, and regulated every step of their procedure. You know how, in pleading the mighty cause intrusted to their advocacy, He inspired their hearts with the light of heavenly truth, and touched their lips with the altar-fire of heavenly eloquence; how, when they lifted up their voice, as witnesses for Christ, before governors and kings, in councils and synagogues, it was “given them in that same hour what they should say,” so that it was not “they who spake, but the Spirit of their Father who spake in them;” how “they spake with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance,” and made known to men the mysteries of the kingdom “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” You know how He supplied them with resources for the maintenance and vindication of their cause, in the exuberance of miraculous power with which He armed them as its chosen champions, and in which God Himself appeared as a visible witness to the truth of their doctrine and the righteousness of their claims. You know with what noble resolution, and ardour, and steadfastness, and patience, He inspired their martyr-bosoms in the holy contest which they waged for truth

and righteousness, for Christ and God, against the guile, the power, the malice, of the enemy; with what a lustre of grace and godlike virtue He adorned their character, reflecting brighter and more persuasive glory on their cause than even the blaze of miracles in which it shone forth on the astonished nations attested and owned of God, You know what triumphs He, in a thousand instances, achieved for them, and for the truth they stood for, in vanquishing the opposition of the unbelieving world, and bringing many hearts "into captivity to the obedience of Christ;" convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and subduing to the dominion of the right innumerable souls regenerated by His power,—whole nations baptized with His influence. And you know that, when the fierce controversy which has so long divided our race shall be at length determined, and the claims of Christianity shall even in our world, where they have been met so long with proud denial and bitter scorn and eager opposition, be recognised as demonstrated and paramount, the great result will have been wrought out by the countenance and agency of the same Almighty Paraclete of truth and righteousness:—"Not by power nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah."

There are many other particulars of the highest importance either expressly contained, or distinctly implied, in the memorable promise contained in this and the immediately succeeding verse, on which it is impossible to touch at present. I now conclude, then, by reminding Christians, that it is theirs, in their place and generation, to plead the same cause, to maintain the same controversy, which the apostles pleaded and maintained so zealously of old; and that, therefore, it should be theirs to seek the same aid, to be strong in the same power, in which these primeval wit-

nesses for Christ are here summoned to confide. You have risked your all, my brethren, your everlasting all, on the validity of a plea and a protest which you have brought against the system of feeling and opinion and conduct avowed and acted on by the majority of men. You have virtually, as Holy Writ declares of Noah, alleged an accusation,—pronounced condemnation upon the present world; and the question which is now of main interest to you is, where you may find wisdom and strength and consolation to enable you, in all emergencies, to demean yourselves as the defenders of such a cause, against all seduction, temptation, persecution. The text informs you where,—in the countenance and aid of that Almighty Spirit, who, though He no longer seconds and sustains the efforts of the faithful by imbuing their utterance with celestial inspiration, or investing their persons with miraculous power, is still the only source of all that spiritual light, and zeal, and courage, and strength, and patience, which are necessary fitly to endow and qualify the defenders, whether by word or act, of the good, but not the popular, cause. To Him we must look respectively for all that grace which is required for the right conduct of the Christian ministry, and the faithful prosecution of the Christian life. On Him we depend for that convincing energy and influence which alone can make our holy argument, embodied whether in discourse or life, effectual on the minds of others. On Him, in one word, the universal church must evermore rely for all that can contribute to the safety, the progress, and the triumph, of that magnificent and awful cause committed to her keeping,—till at length this mighty controversy, on which the destinies of man are hung, shall have been solemnly decided by the infallible arbitrement of God, the irrevocable sentence of eternity.

LECTURE X.

CHAP. XIV. 16, 17.

“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

IN our last Lecture we entered on the consideration of this blessed promise. Having, in that discourse, explained the meaning of the term by which the office of the Holy Spirit in reference to the apostles is described, we now proceed to the account here given of the Being by whom this distinguished office should be undertaken:—“even the Spirit of truth.”

The first particular of importance which seems here to be intimated respecting this exalted Being is His real personality. This is the main question concerning the Holy Spirit on the determination of which hinges the belief of His Divinity and the Trinity of Persons,—the threefold distinction of subsistences in the one Infinite and Everlasting Godhead. Now, in reference to this fundamental point to the whole doctrine of the Holy Spirit, no passage supplies us with distincter information than the notices which our Saviour’s parting discourse contains of the nature, the mission, and the work of that second Paraclete by whose descent from heaven to earth His own depar-

ture from earth to heaven was to be compensated to His disciples. In the first place, the very name of Paraclete is obviously the name of a person, and not merely of an influence. It is a concrete, not an abstract term,—denoting, not help, but an helper. And, though no one is ignorant of the frequent use in all languages of the figure called personification,—by which abstract qualities are represented embodied and impersonated under the idea of separate intelligent and active beings,—yet no one is ignorant any more that this is a figure for the use of which there are appropriate occasions and occasions inappropriate; nor will any one looking to the circumstances of the passage now before us think that it afforded a fit opportunity for the introduction of so bold an instance of figured speech. To obviate all doubt, however, the Holy Ghost, you will observe, is here entitled not merely a Paraclete, but “*another* Paraclete,”—one who was to succeed into the place of Christ,—to be the disciples’ Advocate and Helper, as Jesus had been such in the days of His flesh, that is, by personal presence, personal instruction, and personal agency. Accordingly, throughout the Sacred Volume, we find the Holy Spirit spoken of as possessed of understanding, of will, of love, of power,—we find Him commanding, forbidding, testifying, acting, and all along described as exercising affections, and performing actions, which it were stretching personification to uttermost extravagance did we ascribe to a mere energy or power of the Father or the Son. The same inference follows very directly from those passages in which we find the Holy Ghost associated with the Father and the Son in a way which could not fail of appearing very strange and incongruous, if He were not possessed of personality as distinct as theirs; as, for example, in the formula of baptism

into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and in the apostolic benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all."* While, finally, in the sequel of this very discourse, and of this very sentence, the personality of the Sacred Spirit is described in a manner too explicit and direct to be mistaken. Had the "Spirit of truth" been merely the Scriptural name for Divine influence, then the grammar of our tongue, and not less that of the original Greek, would have required that we should read "it" and "which," for "he" and "him" and "whom," in all the passages of this discourse where the Holy Ghost is mentioned. Observe, in all the following passages, how regularly the pronouns which denote an intelligent and active Being are employed in reference to the Holy Spirit, in places where, if the term denote merely an energy and influence, there must be, as every one acquainted with the original language knows, a direct violation of the simplest rules of construction,—and say whether, interpreting the Holy Scriptures without bias or prepossession, you can believe that Jesus, in these passages, did not refer to a person, an intelligent agent, a conscious and active subsistence like Himself:—"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you;" "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you;" "The Spirit of

* Matt. xxviii. 19; 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me;" "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak, and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Having thus with sufficient evidence ascertained the personality, let us now attend to the character, of the promised Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, as it is here set forth by the appellation, "the Spirit of truth." This appellation is appropriate to the Eternal Spirit, partly, on account of the infinitude of His knowledge,—that stupendous Omniscience to which the whole circuit of the universe, in both its kingdoms of matter and of mind, and the whole lapse and series of duration, past, present, and to come, are for ever present in one unvaried, undivided, thought,—that wondrous attribute in respect of which it is elsewhere written of this Divine Subsistence, "that the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God;" and partly, on account of the veracity of His word,—that sacred and inviolable attribute, essentially inherent in Him alike as in the Father and the Son, by which it is impossible for God either to deceive or to be deceived, and in respect of which it is declared concerning the Holy Ghost, "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth,"—an Infallible and Incorruptible Veracity. To these reasons for the appellation here ascribed to the Celestial Paraclete, derived from His original perfections and attributes as, with the Father and the Son, the one Living and True God, may be added one derived from the office which He discharged at first in behalf of the apostles, in leading them into all the truth,—in revealing to them, by His pure inspiration, the system of holy doctrine and holy precept of which they

were rendered thus the infallible interpreters to man—and which He still discharges on behalf of all believing men, by opening their minds to the spiritual perception of the truth He has Himself revealed,—acting as “the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Christ,”—“enlightening the eyes of their understanding, that they may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe.”*

Such, therefore, being the description of the person and character of that promised Paraclete who was to supply to the disciples the blank occasioned by their Master's personal departure from our world, we find the manner in which the apostles were to become partakers of this invaluable gift described by an enumeration of the various acts performed to this effect by the Sacred Persons of the Everlasting Godhead:—“I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever.” We have the intercession of the Son followed by the grant of the Father, and both succeeded by the descent and permanent abode with men of the Holy Spirit,—a concatenation of acts which is only a specimen, in an individual case, of the uniform and inviolable order observed in bestowing spiritual blessings upon men, according to the revealed economy of God's almighty grace. As the only foundation on the ground of which depraved and guilty man can receive any spiritual blessing whatsoever is the obedience and atonement of the Son of God, accomplished in our nature and our room; it has seemed good to the Sovereign Wisdom of the universe, in order to make

* Eph. i. 17-19.

this connection the more conspicuous and palpable, to inform us, that Jesus, on behalf of His disciples, for ever pleads in heaven what He performed on earth,—that His atonement is made effectual in each individual case by His intercession,—that what He has purchased for His people by merit He actually procures for His people by prayer. The intercessions and the prayers, again, which are thus offered, in the heavenly sanctuary, by Him who is our High Priest within the veil, our Advocate before the throne, are represented always as addressed to the Eternal Father; to whom it appertains, in the economy of grace, to support the legislative honours of the Godhead,—the inviolable sanctity of the Divine perfections, the inviolable equity of the Divine administration. It was for Him at first to determine, in reference to the mediation of His Incarnate Son, whether it had been so accomplished as worthily to vindicate eternal righteousness, and justify the Holy Majesty of heaven in receiving our fallen race into the possibilities of mercy; and it is for Him, at every period in the progress of the scheme, to decide whether what the Mediator asks in each particular case is consistent with the rights of eternal justice and of universal law, as these have been modified, in their reference to man, by the Saviour's obedience, in his room, to "death, even the death of the cross." But though, according to the theory and strictest principles of the scheme of mercy, it is undoubtedly the Father's prerogative to decide, whether or not the bestowal of any particular blessing in any particular case is within the provisions of the covenant; yet, in point of fact, in the actual working of the scheme, the case never has occurred, never can occur, that the Mediator should ask for any thing which the Father should find it necessary, or should judge it proper, to refuse. This the

participation by the Mediator of the essence and perfections of the Father,—the wisdom and the rectitude by which He infallibly perceives whatever is fit, whatever is right, necessarily and eternally forbade; and therefore, Jesus knowing, as He expressly remarked on another occasion, that the Father heard Him always, assures His disciples of the infallible success which should crown His petition on their behalf:—"I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete."

The Saviour adds:—"that He may abide with you for ever." The ground of the sorrow which had on this emergency filled the disciples' hearts was, that their former Paraclete,—He who had hitherto stood by them with His counsel and His help, and under whose auspices alone they could feel themselves prepared to encounter the opposition and the scorn of a hostile world, was about to forsake them,—to cast them, as they thought, upon their own resources, and leave them to buffet as they might with the exigences of that fierce controversy to which He had committed them. Having reassured their trembling spirits, therefore, by the promise of another Helper as wise and as mighty as Himself, He carries up the consolation to its acme, by assuring them that the Omniscient Guide, the Almighty Helper, whom He was about to send, would never leave them, and never forsake them. In every period of their Christian life, and of their apostolic ministry,—at every emergency of the contest to which they had been sent forth against the world lying in wickedness, He would be at hand, to furnish them with instruction and direction, with wisdom and utterance, with strength and courage, with consolation and refreshment; and not until their course was finished and their warfare accomplished,—not until He had conducted them to "the land of uprightness,"

and restored them to the immediate presence and immediate guardianship of Him whose approaching departure they so bitterly deplored,—would He resign the office of their Paraclete,—their affectionate Patron,—their guiding and protecting Friend. Nay, not even then; for there is nothing which should lead us to limit the “for ever” of the text to the present brief and transitory state,—nothing which should interfere with our believing that throughout that bright and blissful immortality in which the plenitude of spiritual blessings, “the fulness of God,” as the Bible calls it, is to be enjoyed by Christians, the Holy Spirit shall continue to be the Agent by whose immediate influences on their intellectual and moral natures, their progress in celestial wisdom and holiness and joy shall be eternally sustained.

You know, my brethren, how the promise of the text was actually fulfilled in the experience of the apostles. From the time that the influences of the Celestial Paraclete descended upon them in such exuberance and power on the day of Pentecost, there is no reason to suppose that they ever lacked those resources of heavenly inspiration and of miraculous might which were then bestowed to fit them for the conduct of that illustrious cause intrusted to their pleading and their management. But we are not to imagine that the promise of the text refers to those extraordinary gifts alone which were the peculiar property of the primitive believers, as peculiarly appropriate to that condition of the church on which their lot was cast, ere yet the canon of the Christian Scriptures was completed, or the commission of the original proclaimers and assertors of the truth,—of those on whose credit the credit of the cause in all future time depended,—had been sufficiently established. It is quite plain from the following verse,

that the discharge of the office of Paraclete by the Holy Ghost on behalf of the disciples was understood by Jesus as including the ministration of those more ordinary aids, of those more purely spiritual influences, the enjoyment of which was common to them with Christians of every age, and formed, indeed, the distinctive criterion between the converted church and the unregenerate world. These, after all, my brethren, as far as the apostles were themselves concerned, were the most precious of all the influences vouchsafed to them by the indwelling Paraclete; and St. Paul has told us how trifling in worth the richest endowments of inspiration and the mightiest powers of miracle deserved to be esteemed, when separated from those less brilliant and ostentatious, but more vital and essential, graces, which form the spiritual character, and maintain the spiritual life. It was by quickening their Christian faith,—by strengthening their Christian principle,—by inspiring them with holy love, and zeal, and magnanimity, and patience, and hope, and peace, and joy,—that He most effectually stood by them, and counselled and assisted them in the discharge of their perilous and arduous enterprise; and,—what it is our consolation and our blessedness to know,—it is in this way that He still stands by and aids, that He still instructs and strengthens, every one who relies on Him for wisdom to direct, and grace to help, him in the time of need. In regard to these blessed influences, that is true of every genuine believer which Jesus promised at first to the selected eleven,—“The Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, shall abide with you for ever.” For of them it is declared, that the water which Jesus gives them, when He pours upon their barren souls the quickening and refreshing influences of His free Spirit, “shall be within them a well of water springing up into everlasting life;”

and they are represented as "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of their inheritance, unto the redemption of the purchased possession." How highly, then, should we esteem the privilege enjoyed by every Christian man, in being made partaker of the Holy Ghost; in being placed by God under the guiding and the guardian care of a Paraclete so wise, so mighty, and so merciful; in knowing that no emergency can arise in his condition, amidst all the vicissitudes and the convulsions, the toils, and trials, and temptations, of his earthly pilgrimage and warfare, in which he may not find, if he only seek in the appointed way, counsel, and consolation, and support, directly drawn from the resources of Divinity, directly ministered by an Almighty and All-wise, an Ever-present and Ever-watchful, Friend; and in the assurance with which he may be "confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work within him will perfect it unto the day of God!" How earnestly should each of us desire, and use the means of having our desire fulfilled, to have our own hearts imbued with His sacred unction, dignified with His residence, and blessed with His friendship! How eagerly should we avoid the enormous guilt, the no less enormous calamity, of resisting, of quenching, the Holy Spirit! How solicitous should even those of us approve ourselves, who may already have enjoyed the largest measure of that spiritual grace which, once infused, shall never fail,—lest, by thought or feeling, by word or deed, we should offend that best of counsellors, of guardians, and of friends,—lest we should "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom we have been sealed unto the day of redemption!" And how unutterably thankful should we be to the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," that He has been pleased so pathetically to assure us of

His more than parental readiness to confer on every one of us that really desires it, this most invaluable of all benefits, the communion of the Holy Ghost! "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!"* Pray we then, with all the earnestness which a blessing of inestimable worth deserves, as David prayed of old:—"Cast us not from thy presence, O Lord, neither take thy Holy Spirit from us. Bestow on us the joys of thy salvation, uphold us with thy free Spirit,"—or, as the ancient church was wont to sing:—

' Creator-Spirit, by whose aid
 The world's foundations once were laid,
 O Source of uncreated Light,
 The Father's promised Paraclete,
 Thrice-holy Fount, thrice-holy Fire,
 Our souls with heavenly love inspire.
 Plenteous in grace, descend from high,
 Rich in thy sevenfold energy.
 Thou Strength of His Almighty hand
 Whose power doth heaven and earth command,
 Chase from our minds the infernal foe,
 And peace, the fruit of love, bestow.
 Refine and purge our earthly parts,
 But oh! inflame and fire our hearts.
 Make us eternal truth receive,
 And practise all that we believe.
 Give us Thyself, that we may see
 The Father and the Son in Thee.'

* Luke xi. 13.

LECTURE XI.

CHAP. XIV. 16, 17.

“ And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

WE have already, in two distinct Lectures, been engaged in considering the illustrious promise here contained of another Paraclete, to be sent to the disciples in order to compensate for the departure of Him who had hitherto discharged towards them that gracious and benignant office. You are aware that *Paraclete* is a designation which was, in ancient times, applied to such influential and powerful friends as might undertake to stand by a man engaged in a judicial controversy; to countenance him with their support: to counsel him by their wisdom; to support him with their resources; to appear in court along with him; to give him and his cause the benefit of their public approbation; to direct, encourage, and assist him in the conduct of his plea; and, in one word, to appear and to act as persons who identified themselves with him, and took up his side in the controversy as of personal interest and personal concern. I regret that in order to make your conceptions precise, and your recollections distinct, of this, the established meaning of the term here used, I

cannot embody the preceding description in a phrase so brief and memorable as I could desire. The shortest paraphrase of the word I can propose would be to some such effect as this:—The Giver of friendly aid, at hand in a disputed cause. This is the classical meaning of the word; this is its Scriptural meaning elsewhere; and certain it is that no denomination could be more accurately descriptive of the part which Jesus, in the first instance, and the Holy Spirit, in the next, performed on behalf of the chosen disciples, the selected heralds and apostles of His truth. As the champions and defenders of infant Christianity, they had become involved in a controversy with the unbelieving world on which not only their individual characters and fortunes and lives were jeopardated, but the most important public interests of the human race,—the most illustrious and sublime prerogatives of the Almighty's government. In the conduct of this momentous plea, they had hitherto experienced in Jesus a mighty Paraclete,—a Giver of friendly aid, always at hand to instruct them with His infallible direction, to guard them with His unconquerable defence; and it is to console and soothe them under the prospect of losing His personal and present aid that Jesus, in the text, assures them of the arrival, in consequence of His departure, of another Paraclete—another Friend as mighty and as wise as He,—to stand by them in their cause. Concerning the person and character of this second Paraclete we spoke at large in our last Lecture, in illustration of the name here given to Him,—“the Spirit of truth.” We saw, from an extensive induction of particulars, and especially from the circumstances and the manner in which the Holy Ghost is introduced throughout the discourse of Jesus now before us, that this must be the name not merely of an influence, an energy, a power, but of a person, an in-

telligent agent, a conscious and active subsistence; and we saw how justly this illustrious Being was entitled in the text, "the Spirit of truth," when we remembered that to His infinite knowledge all truth and science are for ever present, that to His infinite veracity all falsehood and error are for ever impossible, that from His celestial inspiration have flowed all those communications of heavenly wisdom of which the holy apostles were made by Him the infallible interpreters, and which for their certainty and their extent, their glory and their preciousness, deserve to be entitled, as they are entitled so often, by excellence, the truth. This, then, is the illustrious Being who was to be the successor of Jesus on His departure from our world, in the beneficent office of Paraclete to the chosen disciples,—who was to afford them the communications of His friendly and ever-present aid in the conduct of that magnificent and awful cause for which they stood against a hostile world. You know, no doubt, how, in point of fact, the Holy Ghost fulfilled this gracious office to the primitive believers; partly in the exuberance of extraordinary gifts,—gifts of celestial inspiration and of miraculous might,—in which He descended on the day of Pentecost, and with which He accompanied them through all their conduct of the noble but arduous cause committed to their championship, until its claims were fully vindicated, and its triumph was finally secured; but partly also, by the ministration of those more ordinary aids,—of those more purely spiritual influences,—the enjoyment of which was not peculiar to the first disciples, but by the participation of which the Christians of all times are admitted into the honour and the blessedness of "the communion of the Holy Ghost."

That these more ordinary influences of the Almighty

Spirit, though not exclusively intended, yet are most certainly included in the office here assigned to the Holy Ghost as the Paraclete of the first disciples, is very obvious from the latter part of the verse before us ; where it is declared that, in the sense here meant, “ the world cannot receive ” Him. By “ the world ” in this place, as in innumerable other passages of the Holy Volume, we are to understand all those who, having refused to submit their minds to the faith, and their hearts to the authority, of the gospel, still remain in the condition of depravity into which they were born, and which is still the characteristic condition of the greater part of the human species,—in one word, all unconverted men. Now, that it was possible even for unconverted men to be partakers of the extraordinary influences of the Holy Ghost,—that the gifts of prophetic inspiration and of miraculous agency were no infallible criterions of the presence of saving grace,—seems obvious from various intimations in Holy Writ ; from the example of Balaam, who “ heard the words of God and saw the vision of the Almighty,” although he “ loved the wages of unrighteousness,” and perished fighting against God in the ranks of Midian ; from the case of those who, according to the apostle’s supposition, might “ have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have all faith so that they could remove mountains,” and yet be destitute of charity, and therefore, after all, be nothing ; from the case, in fine, of those, the many of whom our Saviour hath Himself predicted, that, at the awful day of revelation and of doom, they “ shall say unto Him, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?” to whom, notwithstanding, He “ shall profess,—I never knew you ; depart from me, ye that work

iniquity.”* The influences, then, by which the Holy Ghost discharged to the apostles the part and office of a Paraclete, and by their enjoyment of which they were distinguished from the world around,—the mass of unconverted and unregenerated men,—included, besides the endowment of celestial wisdom and celestial power by which they were so marvellously signalized, those enlightening and enlivening graces, those sanctifying and consoling operations, of the Almighty Spirit, of which every Christian soul is still the subject; and in reference to these it is that Jesus describes the Paraclete as the Spirit of truth “whom the world cannot receive.”

This clause is introduced for the purpose, no doubt, of setting forth the value of the blessing which, in being made partakers of the Holy Ghost, not the apostles only, but Christians of our own with those of all former and all following times, enjoy. It is no common-place nor vulgar gift, but the choice and distinguishing expression of Jehovah’s special love. It is no natural nor ordinary blessing, of native growth to the present world, or suited to the faculties and tastes of man’s merely physical being. The most exalted and most transporting blessedness of which the world affords the sources and materials is poor and worthless compared with this. The most pure and elevated and refined capacities of a human nature that has been born but once are still too gross and earthly to enjoy a blessing so ethereal and sublime as this. It is part of the chosen and selected heritage of God’s redeemed, which, like the “hidden manna,” and the “name which no man knoweth save he who bears it,” God has reserved for those with whom is the secret of the Lord, and to whom

* 2 Pet. ii. 15; 1 Cor. xiii. 2; Matt. vii. 22, 23.

He hath shown His holy covenant. "The world cannot receive" it; that is to say, not, that it is absolutely impossible for a worldly man to become a Christian, and so a partaker of the Holy Ghost, but, that it requires a change of nature, a revolution on his being, a transformation of faculty and taste, to do so. The Holy Spirit cannot become the inhabitant of an unholy nature;—of an unconsecrated dwelling-place. True, the conversion and renewal of the soul is itself the work of the Holy Ghost, and the influence, therefore, of which these are the fruits, is first exerted on the soul in its original depraved and worldly state. But this is not the receiving of the Holy Ghost of which the passage before us speaks. It is rather an operation upon the soul than an admission into the soul. It is the Holy Ghost preparing a habitation for Himself, rather than the Holy Ghost received and welcomed as an inmate there. And this is just the truth which the text declares,—that the world, the unconverted portion of mankind, cannot receive Him,—none can become partakers of His assisting and consoling, unless they have previously been made partakers of His renewing and regenerating, grace. To be prepared for participating in His habitual fellowship requires that a man have undergone a change of nature,—that he shall no longer belong to the community entitled in Holy Writ, the world, but that, no longer conformed to the present evil world, he shall have been "transformed in the renewing of His mind," and numbered and naturalized among that peculiar people, who have been "begotten again," and consecrated to royal priesthood, to "shew forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light." All others reject, despise, resent, and scorn, the heavenly Paraclete; nor is their ability less than their desire to have their hearts brought

under His sacred influence, and converted into temples for His pure abode.

In order, however, that no reflection might be cast upon the value of that transcendent gift by which Jesus was to compensate to His followers for His own departure, in consequence of the neglect and scorn with which it was treated by the multitude of men; He goes on to state what was the true origin of the want of welcome which the Holy Spirit meets with in an ungodly world:—"They see Him not, neither know Him;"—they have no experimental acquaintance with the nature of His influences, the effects of His inhabitation. Those among you, my brethren, who have already undergone the transforming change which prepares you for enjoying the habitual presence in your souls of the anointing Spirit, will well understand—you only can—the force of your Saviour's reasoning in this verse. You can remember how utterly ignorant and in the dark you used to be in regard to what the fellowship of the Spirit really meant,—what spiritual thought and spiritual feeling really were. You had no distinct idea of their nature, far less a definite conception of their sweetness,—and how then could you fail to undervalue and contemn them, as you see the mass of men around you undervalue and contemn them still, so making it impossible that they should receive the Holy Ghost till, by the power of that Almighty Spirit Himself, their natures are regenerated, and they made capable of holy sentiment, susceptible of holy emotion? But who that has had his soul enlightened to understand and to enjoy "the things which have been freely given us of God" will the less esteem the heavenly gift, because of the general contempt? Who would value at a lower rate a pearl of price, a jewel that contained a prince's ransom, because the feathered reasoner in the

fable despised it for a grain of barley,—because an infant would prefer to it an apple or a toy? The true reason, my brethren, of the contempt or the indifference with which the influences of the celestial Paraclete, that is to say, the exercises and the principles of spiritual piety, are treated by the multitude of men, is not that they are not precious beyond all measures of preciousness the world can furnish, that they are not sweet beyond all images of sweetness which nature can supply; it is that they want the faculties which can appreciate such worth, the tastes which can relish such delight. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned.”* “The world cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.”

My brethren, the statement thus made at once by the apostle, and by the Lord of apostles, that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned,”—that “the world cannot receive” the blessed Paraclete “because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him,”—richly deserves to be pondered by us all, as affording the key to that preposterous preference which we see the multitude of men giving to the things of the world above the things of the Spirit. There is no comparison,—as the testimony of the Sacred Word and the experience of all those who know experimentally what spiritual religion is, combine to show,—between the preciousness and sweetness of the one and of the other, viewed according to their own intrinsic worth. But then, the worldly man has faculties and tastes for the one which he has not for the other. He knows, and he can relish,

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

the attractions of the world,—its imposing pomps, its fascinating vanities, its spirit-stirring enterprises, and its sense-dissolving pleasures; while, all the time, he has neither perception nor desire for those charms which belong to the experience of the Holy Spirit's influence upon the soul, to the renovated character and state of human nature,—its joys with which a stranger intermeddles not, its peace which passeth understanding, the revelation of Himself which Jesus maketh to the soul in another way than He doth unto the world. Such expressions are to him phrases, words,—no more; so that to exchange the things of the world for the things of the Spirit as the main objects, and the chosen portion of his soul, appears as if it were to forsake realities for shadows, the certain for the doubtful, the warm familiar earth which has hitherto so solidly sustained him, for a thin and unsubstantial void, peopled with fantasies and airy dreams. No wonder, therefore, that he has no desire after the Holy Ghost,—the Author and the Source of all spiritual thought and spiritual feeling; and that, having no desire, he has no capacity, for partaking of His celestial benedictions. Oh, if there are any here who are conscious in their secret souls that something such as this is their state of feeling in reference to the pursuits and the enjoyments of the present world, as compared with the exercises and emotions of inward spiritual Christianity,—let them be assured that it is their ignorance alone, profound and most ill-judging ignorance, which leads them thus to think and thus to feel. Every Christian man will assure them, on the evidence of his own experience, that it is their ignorance. The blessed apostle tells them, by the authority of his celestial inspiration, that it is their ignorance. Jesus tells them,—“the Amen, the True and Faithful Witness,” that it is their ignorance. Will they

not be persuaded by such assurances as these to take the fact on trust,—to desire and pray for that which, though as yet they do not comprehend it, though as yet they cannot directly relish it, yet they have such ample reason to believe is divinely precious and divinely sweet? If even such a desire were only implanted in any bosom,—if even such a prayer were only breathed from any heart,—I should hail it as the dawning and commencement of the Holy Spirit's saving operation on the soul,—I should believe that He who hath promised to give the Holy Ghost to them who ask Him would, in due season, satisfy that earnest desire, and answer that humble prayer, by first enduing the suppliant soul with spiritual capacities, and then replenishing those new capacities with the communications of spiritual grace,—the blessed unction of the Holy One,—the light and liberty and love, the mighty aids and precious consolations, of the promised Paraclete from God.

Oh, happy they on whom this spiritual transformation has already passed; who have already been admitted into the sacred communion of the Holy Ghost; to whom, in contrast with the world, Jesus can say, as once to His selected eleven—"But ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you!" True, the disciples had not yet attained that ample knowledge of the Spirit, in His power and excellence, with which they were afterwards endued. But even then they had some degree of experimental acquaintance with the influences of His grace, the operations of His power, upon their minds and hearts, their characters and lives. They had already acquired some portion of that spiritual discernment for want of which "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit;" and this was proved by the fact that the Spirit

Himself, who never dwells with any save those who have been already furnished with the faculty to apprehend and to relish His communications, had actually taken up His abode with them. Of this peculiar meaning of the particle "for,"—by which it is employed in reasoning forward from the cause to the effect, while its accustomed use is in arguing back from the effect to the cause,—you have a striking example in the explanation which our Saviour gave of the conduct of that weeping penitent who "anointed His feet with ointment, and wiped them with the hairs of her head," Luke vii. 47:—"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." It is plain, not only from the principles of the gospel, but from the nature of the case and the whole tenor of the context, that the woman's love was the effect of her forgiveness, and that, according to the more customary usage of language, "therefore" might be substituted in place of "for." And so, the connection and contrast between the former part and the latter of the verse before us requires that we consider the observation respecting the disciples as importing,—“Ye know the Holy Ghost, and therefore He dwelleth with you and shall be in you.” There is an obvious progression and climax in these words on which much of their force and meaning depends. The heavenly Paraclete, you will observe, is represented, in reference to those who know Him, first, as dwelling with them, and then, as dwelling within them; this intimating, that, in the ordinary operations of God's grace upon the soul, the work of the Holy Ghost is gradual and progressive, and that, in proportion as believers faithfully improve their means of knowing Him, the blessed communion which He permits them with Himself becomes ever more intimate, more familiar, more

affectionate, more thoroughly sanctifying, more intensely satisfying. "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord. His coming is prepared as the morning, as the early and the latter rain upon the earth."

Let me exhort you, therefore, my believing brethren, to labour, in the use of all appointed and appropriate means, that in you the promise of the text may be fulfilled; that the Holy Spirit may be daily taking more complete possession of your nature,—becoming not merely the companion of your lives, but the inhabitant of your souls,—not only dwelling with you, but being in you. Oh, think how high a dignity is that to which ye are here invited and encouraged to aspire; that of having your human natures,—natures that have lain so long in wreck and ruin,—their majesty defaced, their holiness profaned, their altars overthrown,—fashioned and consecrated into habitations of God through the Spirit, into living temples of the Eternal Majesty. You remember in how profound an ecstasy the great soul of Solomon was wrapt by the very thought that He "whom heaven, the heaven of heavens, could not contain," should deign to "dwell with men upon the earth." How intense, then, should not our rapture be of admiration and gratitude and awe, to feel in our experience the overwhelming idea realized, and our own souls become the chosen seat, the immediate shrine, of Deity! For "Know ye not," says the apostle to all believing men, "that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" And again, "Ye are the temple of the Living God; as He hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."* Oh, what unpolluted sanctity of feeling, what

* 1 Cor. iii. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16.

inviolable purity of life, what sacred dignity of character, are incumbent upon those who have thus been set apart as sacred and devoted beings, whose slightest sin partakes of the guilt of sacrilege,—a wrong and insult offered to Jehovah in His own immediate dwelling-place! With what sleepless vigilance should we watch, with what earnest deprecation should we pray, that no thought or feeling may be allowed admission to our hearts but such as befits the residence of that Holy One who is “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” in whose presence evil cannot abide! How jealous should we be lest any idol should be found usurping that place in our affections which belongs of right to Him who “will not give His glory to another!” How careful that every vain imagination, and “every high thought within us which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God” is cast down before the ark of His presence, and the Lord alone exalted,—enshrined in the inmost sanctuary of our minds, enthroned in the very heart of our affections! With what prompt fidelity should we comply with the whispers of His Spirit, the oracular voices resounding from the Holiest, the heavenly inspirations breathing through the shrine; and with what persevering ardour pray that He who prefers

‘ Before all temples the upright heart and pure ’

would Himself, by the transforming might of His presence and His power, sanctify us more and more, in body, soul, and spirit,—cleanse us from all pollutions of the flesh and of the mind,—baptize each vessel of the sanctuary in His own regenerating laver, or purify it in His refining fire,—illumine in us what is dark, rectify what is perverse, exalt what is debased, and make us, through every faculty

and region of our being, temples such as He Himself may choose, as when, of old, He chose Mount Zion, and desired her for His habitation:—"This is my rest; here will I dwell; for I have desired it!"

LECTURE XII.

CHAP. XIV. 18.

“ I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come to you.”

THE object of Jesus, you are aware, in the whole of this discourse, is to comfort and encourage His disciples in the prospect of His speedy departure from the world. Among many other topics of consolation to which He had adverted, He had, in the preceding paragraph, referred to the coming of another Paraclete, another heavenly Patron and Helper, to stand by them in the controversy to which, as the assertors of infant Christianity, they were committed with a hostile world, and, in the management of this momentous plea, to perform on their behalf the friendly offices which He had hitherto Himself discharged. The attachment, however, of the disciples to their Lord was not of so purely selfish and interested a description that its regrets for His departure should be satisfied by the promise merely of another Paraclete, should He even do as much for them, or more, than their former Paraclete had done. They had loved Him for Himself, and not merely for His benefits ; and your hearts will tell you that to such an affection it affords a very insufficient consolation to be told that, by the departure of a benefactor or a friend, they that are left behind will lose nothing, that is to say, will lose nothing but himself. Why, this is the very loss which

such affection will account most grievous, by which to purchase the most distinguished personal advantage the heart would despise itself if it could willingly consent. To satisfy, therefore, this instinct of a pure and generous regard, the Saviour, having in so far comforted His followers by the assurance that, in the way of spiritual help and spiritual advantage, they should not suffer by His departure,—followed as it should be by the descent of the Eternal Spirit to aid, to bless, and to console, them,—fills up the measure of the consolation by assuring them, that the coming of the Holy Ghost as another Paraclete did not imply their final and perpetual separation from Him who had hitherto discharged, on their behalf, the duties of that sacred and benignant charge. Having first encouraged them with the assurance,—“ I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete,” He perfects and completes the encouragement by adding,—“ I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.”

You have probably been informed ere now that the original term here rendered “ comfortless ” is that which, strictly taken, signifies, orphans. It is, in fact, no other than the very word orphans,—a word which has been adopted from the Greek into several languages besides our own. It was common among the Jews to describe the relation between a teacher and his disciples by expressions borrowed from the endearing relation of parent and child. Thus, we frequently find those who, under the government of the judges and the kings, received their education in the schools of the prophets, spoken of by the appellation of “ sons of the prophets; ” and we hear Elisha exclaiming, as his eager gaze followed the bright traces of the celestial coursers and the rushing wheels that rapt Elijah into heaven,—“ My father, my father; the chariot of Israel

and the horsemen thereof." So spake Elisha when he lost his master. And how naturally might the chosen eleven, whom Jesus had so long instructed, guided, protected, and consoled with more than parental tenderness and care, apprehend that, bereft of His sacred and beloved presence, they had nothing before them but to wander, as desolate orphans, along a fatherless and forsaken world, dwelling with sorrowful remembrance on the tokens of paternal endearment which they used to share, the words of paternal kindness they were wont to hear, the gifts of paternal love they were accustomed to enjoy, feeling that such things *were*,—sad contrast to the things that *are*! Natural, however, as such desponding views of their condition and their prospects might be to the minds of the disciples,—they are exhorted by their Master to banish them from their imaginations, and, on the other hand, to comfort their hearts with the assurance that even His translation into another sphere, His departure to 'that undiscovered country whence no traveller returns,' should not divide them from His presence, from His love, and from His power:—"I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you."

Oh, my brethren, how precious, how distinguishing, a privilege was this enjoyed by the disciples,—to have a Father who could say, in the immediate anticipation of His own departure from the sphere of human things, "I will not leave you orphans;" whose power to provide for, to defend, to bless, His own, even the stroke of the great dis-severer could not impair; who, at the period when an earthly parent must leave his children, as far as mortal assistance can avail, dependent upon strangers and exposed to enemies, could confidently assure them of His uninterrupted and unbroken care, as "the Everlasting Father," whose affection and whose power,—His willingness, at

once, and His ability to bless His people,—no change can alter, no accident impair. And oh, how earnestly should not each one of us desire to have a personal interest secured in the love of that Immutable Friend who, amidst all the vicissitudes and all the bereavements by which we are deprived of those on whose guiding wisdom and guardian care we were accustomed to depend, can never leave and never fail us,—that better Parent who, in a thousand instances, according to His promise, has approved Himself to His own, when the stroke of the destroyer had left them forlorn of earthly friend or comforter, and turned the world around them into a desolate wilderness, “a father of the fatherless, the stranger’s shield and the orphan’s stay!”

Our Saviour assures His disciples, however, not merely negatively, “I will not leave you orphans,” but positively, “I will come to you.” There has been much discussion among interpreters in regard to the precise import of this animating promise, and the exact nature of the coming which it speaks of on the part of the Redeemer. One class of commentators understand it literally, and refer it exclusively to His resurrection and reappearance to the disciples in bodily presence after that illustrious event. Others, taking the expression in a figurative sense, limit its significance to the most real, though invisible, presence which, even in His exalted state at the right hand of God, He maintains with all His believing followers, and of which He speaks once and again, when He says,—“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;” “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”* I apprehend, my brethren, that there are sufficient reasons why we should, instead of

* Matt. xviii. 20; xxviii. 20.

limiting the promise to one or other of these senses, understand it as including both. On the one hand, the expressions in the following verse seem distinctly to specify the Saviour's restoration to life, as at least very intimately connected with His return to His disciples; while, on the other, it is not obvious in what sense Jesus could on the ground of His promised return declare to His disciples, "I will not leave you orphans," if that return referred merely to the brief interval of time which He spent with them between His resurrection and ascension,—during which, too, it is obvious from the sacred history, He did not even remain continuously, as He had been wont to do before, in the society of His followers. Moreover, it is certain that that remarkable increase of knowledge concerning the person and the character of Jesus which is mentioned in the 20th verse as the effect of His return, did not take place till after His ascension to the right hand of Heavenly Majesty, and the illumination of their minds in celestial truth by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. The true interpretation of the promise, therefore, must be that which refers it to the whole course and series of Christ's presence with His followers in His exalted state, commencing with His resurrection from the dead, and continuing till the consummation of all things; whether that presence be visibly displayed, or only invisibly enjoyed. It includes in it His return to life; His re-assumption of human existence in its completest form as an embodied spirit; His reappearance to His followers as their immutable and now immortal friend; and His renewal with them of affectionate society and intercourse,—an intercourse and society to be thenceforward continued without interruption and without end. It would have little availed to soothe the sorrow which had filled their hearts at the prospect of

losing the Master they adored, to entertain the hope of receiving from Him, ere long, a visit so brief and transitory as the shortness of His abode upon the earth subsequently to His resurrection permitted. And therefore, not only by implication in the verse before us, but by direct assertion in other cases, He takes care to inform them that His ascension into glory was to produce no change on the reality, however it might interrupt the visibility, of His presence and His intercourse. The more effectually to dispel the apprehension,—so natural to minds over which sense exerts so constraining an influence,—that His disappearance from their view was His withdrawal from their society, almost the last words He spake before the heavens received Him out of their sight were these, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,”—not, I will be, but I am; that is, My presence, which has hitherto been with you, shall continue with you to the end,—even the mighty and magnificent transition which is now upon the eve of accomplishment, and by which my human nature is to be rapt away from earth to an immeasurable loftiness, shall produce no change on the reality of my presence and my intercourse with you upon the earth, and with every several Christian soul, through all descending ages, down to the term of time, the consummation of the universe.

That the continued presence so distinctly and unambiguously predicted in this the final promise of our ascending Lord, is implied in the promise now before us, “I will not leave you fatherless, I will come unto you,” we have already sufficiently proved. And that the promise can in neither case be fitly understood except of a real personal presence,—that it is in vain to interpret it of the disciples acquiring a deeper and more vivid insight into the truth respect-

ing His person and His work than they before possessed,—none, I apprehend, who candidly considers the meaning of the terms will question. Thus, following out the principles of fair and honest interpretation, we are led, no doubt, into a statement which, in reference to any ordinary human being, would be manifestly absurd,—we must believe that Jesus Christ, the exalted Mediator, is not confined, like all created beings, to one region of the universe at one period of duration. You know, my brethren, how, with respect to Jesus, this mystery is solved,—how, since the period of His ascension into glory, He has been at all times present, at once with His Father and His glorified saints in heaven, and with His yet militant and mortal followers on the earth. His, you are aware, is the immensity of that divine essence which filleth all things, and by which Jehovah is at once “a God at hand and a God afar off;” and by its union to this the Omnipotent Godhead, even the humanity of Jesus is invested, not, indeed, with a strict and actual, but with what we may truly call a virtual Omnipresence. For, though to speculate on such questions too deeply or too confidently is not for faculties like ours, still, we cannot but believe that, united as they are in the one Person of Immanuel, the consciousness of the Divine and that of the human nature maintain a constant and uninterrupted communication, so that what is perceived and present to the one, extended as it is throughout illimitable space, is at the instant perceived and therefore virtually present to the other, where it dwells in heaven at the right hand of Majesty. Thus may we conceive that complete intelligence to be poured into the human consciousness, and that ready sympathy awakened in the human heart, of Jesus which we know that, even in the sphere of distant glory

which has now received Him, He still possesses and cherishes in regard to the present state of His people here below. Around that human nature as a centre, if we may venture so to speak, that mighty Essence is expanded which fills immensity, and thither thrills, with more than the rapidity of light, every impulse or impression made at any single point of that uncircumscribed ocean of existence. And thus it is that, when "the man Christ Jesus" was on the very point of being taken from their view up to an unmeasured and unknown remoteness, He could assure His disciples, "Lo, I am with you always;" thus, that He continued through all their mortal existence, that He continues still in every following generation of the Church, to fulfil the promise of the text,—“ I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you.”

The connection of the promise, however, distinctly shows that it is not the mere fact of the Redeemer's presence with His followers that is here asserted, but that of His gracious and benignant presence. The promise is obviously equivalent to,—I will come to you, I will abide with you, as a Protector and a Friend. It is to prevent His people being left as fatherless and orphans in the world that He tells them He will come; that is, will come to perform on their behalf the office of a Father,—to guide them with His counsel, to protect them by His power, to feed them with His bounty, to cheer them with His consolations, to satisfy them with His love. This is the blessed assurance which the text conveyed to the apostles, and which it still conveys to all who, like them, have acknowledged Jesus for their Saviour and their Lord,—that they have ever at their side an Invisible and Almighty Friend; that the presence from which they cannot escape, with which they dwell perpetually surrounded, is that of the great Lover of their

souls, whose eye is ever set on them to mark the varying circumstances of their lot and exigencies of their history, —whose ear is ever open to catch the first whispers of their prayer, the dim sigh or the unuttered groan in which, when words are too imperfect and too gross a vehicle for the emotions of their hearts, the Spirit within them maketh intercession,—whose heart is evermore in closest communication with theirs, beating with a responsive throb to all their innocent emotions, touched with a fellow-feeling of all their innocent infirmities. How high an honour, how rich a blessedness, is this which appertains to every Christian,—to believe, to know, that he is constantly in contact with his Saviour, even though that Saviour testify His presence by no visible tokens such as, of old, brought the sense of His presence home to the minds of the chosen twelve! Simply to know this on sufficient evidence is itself a consolation. For a child to be aware that his father is beside him, even though that father be for the time silent and inactive and invisible,—though he is wrapt in the shade of night and locked in the arms of slumber,—carries along with it a delightful sense of safety, and feeling of satisfied repose. Even so it is with believers and the Father who hath promised that He will not leave them orphans; that He will come to them, and abide with them for ever. He is invisible, indeed, as in the shade of night,—silent, as in the calm of sleep. But He is near, for ever near; so that there is not an instant in the believer's history in which He may not find in Him his very present help, and pillow his head in peace on the breast of an affectionate Omnipotence. Yet let it not be thought from the figure I have used, that, because a silence and a dimness as of slumber and of night invest His presence, therefore He is indeed asleep, unconscious and

inactive, as a child may find an earthly parent. "He that keepeth Israel, He slumbereth not nor sleepeth." He is ever at their right hand, not merely to soothe them with the persuasion and the feeling of His presence, but to afford them active assistance, and active protection, suited to their varying circumstances. This also you are called to believe, O Christian, on the authority of the word which never has deceived you, and never can deceive you,—that Jesus is near, not only to regard and pity, but to help and save, you. And though, in this brief season of invisible intercourse, His person and His power may be alike unperceived by the eyes of flesh, yet mayest thou be as certain as the word of the Living God can warrant, that, as thou canst never escape from His pervading presence, so canst thou never be forsaken of His help and saving strength. "The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade on thy right hand. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. The Lord shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from henceforth and for ever." Therefore, "O Lord, I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. Because the Lord is at my right hand, I shall not be greatly moved."

Such I apprehend to be the true import of the promise, "I will come to you," in its connection with that which precedes, "I will not leave you orphans,"—My presence shall return to you, and shall abide with you for ever, and that the presence of an affectionate Father, of an Almighty Friend. In this sense the promise is alike fulfilled by the visible abode of Jesus with the disciples after His resurrection from the dead, and by His invisible abode with all His believing people on the earth from the period of His ascension to that of the consummation of all things. Nor

should we altogether exclude from the scope and comprehension of this inestimable promise,—though undoubtedly it is not exclusively intended,—the period when the assurance already delivered by our Lord in the 3d verse,—“And if I go away, I will come again and will receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also,”—shall receive its glorious accomplishment; the period when the glorified Redeemer shall come forth to meet the soul of each departing Christian as it struggles out into the unembodied space, to show it the path of life, to welcome it into the gates of heaven, and to establish it in the bright mansion of eternal joy which He has been preparing for it,—and the period, too, when He shall again descend in like manner as the disciples saw Him go into heaven, to perfect the salvation of His chosen, to gather them unto Himself, in their completed natures, from the four winds of heaven, that so they may be ever with the Lord, and to present before the Eternal Father His whole ransomed Church in perfect bliss and beauty,—a glorious family now finally collected around their glorious Head,—exclaiming, “Behold, I and the children whom Thou hast given me.”

Oh happy, thrice and four times happy they who are indeed the children of this Almighty Father, the heirs of this celestial home,—that is, all those who now confide in Jesus as their Saviour, all those who now obey Him as their Lord! This is a happiness, my brethren, open to us all, offered to us all. Oh, let its attainment form to us all the highest object of our ambition and pursuit; that, while yet it is possible, we may escape from the sad condition in which we have already been involved by our rebellion,—the condition of strayed and prodigal children, wandering at random through this sad and perilous world, cheered by no Parent’s love, and shielded by no Parent’s care; and

that we come not at last into the doom of those who, having obstinately refused, while it was still the accepted time, while it was still the day of salvation, to return into the bosom of their heavenly Father's family and love, shall be left through eternity to roam unsheltered, unconsolated, along the desert of interminable woe, the orphans of the universe, the outcasts of creation.

LECTURE XIII.

CHAP. XIV. 19.

“ Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more ; but ye see me.”

IN illustrating the verse immediately preceding, “ I will not leave you orphans, I will come unto you,” that is, I will come in order to abide with you as your Father and your Friend,—we endeavoured to show that the coming there spoken of was not to be confined, either to the visible re-appearance of Jesus to His disciples after His resurrection, or to the invisible presence which we know from other passages He maintained with them after His ascension, and will maintain with all His believing people “ always, even unto the end of the world ;” but that it includes the whole course and series of His intercourse with the disciples in His estate of exaltation, both visible and invisible, both before and after His departure to that sphere of distant glory which has received and must retain Him until the restitution of all things. His presence and His intercourse with His disciples were quite as real after that illustrious event as they were before it; and I cannot perceive, in the mere circumstantial difference that,—while, in the brief space between His resurrection and ascension, His presence was often sensible and visible,—through the long years and centuries which have elapsed since He was received up into glory, it has been for the most part a

presence to be realized by faith and not to be discerned by sense, any reason why His visible and His invisible presence should not be included in one promise, under the notion of that coming to His disciples, and consequent abode with them, by which He was to provide that they should not be left as orphans amidst this bleak and perilous world.

If we have in this respect rightly explained the verse preceding, the interpretation of the passage now before us will proceed with comparative fluency and ease. The extent of significance in the phrase, "Ye shall see me," is obviously to be regulated by the corresponding extent of meaning in the phrase preceding, "I will come to you," with the supplement implied in it, I will dwell with you. If the latter refer,—as we have endeavoured to establish that they do,—both to the visible and to the invisible presence of Jesus with His followers; then the former refers to the perception which they enjoyed both of the one and of the other,—of the one by the bodily sense, of the other by the faith which is the mind's eye, the vision of the soul. The word before us is frequently used in the Bible, and particularly in the writings of our evangelist and the discourses of our Lord recorded by him, in reference to intellectual apprehensions:—"Whosoever seeth the Son, and believeth on His name, shall have everlasting life;" "I speak that which I have seen with my Father, and ye do that which ye have seen with your father;" "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete, even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him."* We do not say that the word "to see,"

* John vi. 40; viii. 38; xiv. 16, 17.

standing where it does in this passage, has two different senses,—a principle of interpretation most dangerous to admit. We say that it has one sense; only, that sense is a general one,—capable of being explained in different modes, embracing different particulars. We take the expression in the simple but comprehensive meaning of, to perceive, or to discern; and it depends on circumstances whether this perception or discernment takes place by means of the bodily organs, or by the instrumentality of the intellectual faculties. Whensoever the disciples of Jesus, after the departure which He accomplished at Jerusalem, whether by the aid of their senses or their faith, were conscious and aware that He was really present with them; so often was the promise of the text fulfilled, “Ye see me,”—that is, according to an idiom frequent in the Scripture style, Ye shall see me. It was not the whole of the consolation prepared for believers in what would have been otherwise their orphan and desolate condition, that Jesus, “the Everlasting Father,”—whom, at His death, the first disciples were ready to lament as finally departed,—was actually to return, and actually to remain with them until the consummation of all things. It was provided that they should enjoy the comfort of His return, and of His gracious presence, by actually perceiving for themselves that He was returned,—that He was present according to His word; and therefore the encouragement afforded by the 18th verse, “I will come to you,” is crowned and completed by the 19th, “Ye shall see me.” They saw Him returning after what they apprehended was to prove a final and hopeless separation, when, once and again, He reappeared to them in His resurrection body, the Victor of the grave and Heir of immortality,—“the Sun of Righteousness” emerging ‘with new spangled ore,’ from under

the shadows of its brief, but bloody and dire, eclipse; appointing to them the places where they should meet Him, inviting them to behold and see that it was He Himself, and affording them the most convincing and delightful demonstrations that He was among them of a truth. "Then," says the holy evangelist, "were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord;" and even the incredulous Thomas, in the ecstasy of the unhopèd for vision, prostrate at the feet of the glorious presence, exclaimed, "My Lord, and my God." Nor was this all. For even after Jesus was again, though in another way, withdrawn from their corporeal view,—even after the heavens had received Him out of their sight, to retain Him in glorious concealment within their sacred veil until those heavens themselves shall have passed away,—they still continued, in the sense which the promise principally intended, to behold Him by that pure and piercing vision which penetrates the veil,—the faith which "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Whenever a Christian realizes his Master's presence,—is aware in his deep soul that Jesus is really beside him, assured of this cheering and elevating truth by the word of the Saviour's own infallible promise, and by the experience which he himself enjoys of operations on his mind and heart which he can trace to none but the Saviour's agency,—so often he participates with the first apostles in the fulfilment of the promise, "Ye shall see me." And, as the way of beholding Jesus was formerly changed from a corporeal into a mental perception, so shall it hereafter be transformed again from mental to corporeal,—when, as it is written, they "shall see Him as He is,"—when in their flesh they shall see God.

The whole train and series of the perceptions, therefore, of which Jesus is the object to His believing people, seems

to us included under the assurance of the text; the note of time, "Yet a little while," obviously referring to the commencement of that discernment of the exalted Saviour's presence of which the promise assures the disciples,—the first perceptions they should enjoy of Jesus as returned, and making His abode with them. Ere three full days had run their course from the period when He now addressed His followers, the time of His absence should have begun and terminated, and they should have had restored to them the conscious enjoyment of that gracious presence which was to remain with them "always, even to the end of the world." For scarcely more than two brief days they were to have the feeling on their minds that they were orphans; and well, therefore, might it avail to assuage the sorrow that, because He said, "I go away," had filled their hearts, to know that their sorrow was not only so certainly, but so soon, to be turned into joy,—a joy which none should take away from them.

The value of the privileges which Christians were to enjoy in the ever-abiding consciousness of their Saviour's presence is here still farther represented, from the consideration that it was no common-place nor vulgar blessing of which they were thus assured, but one peculiar to themselves as the selected objects of Divine beneficence,—the peculiar favourites of heaven. Exactly as Jesus had, immediately before, set forth the magnitude and preciousness of the gift of the Holy Ghost by the announcement, that the world saw Him not, neither knew Him; so, by the same argument, does He assure His people of the value of the gift prepared for them in the enjoyment of His own paternal presence, by the intimation,—“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me.”

“The world,” in this, as in the former case, is obviously

an expression denoting the whole community of unbelieving and unconverted men,—constituting as they do so much the majority of mankind, and therefore, on the ordinary principle of human language by which the name of the whole is familiarly used as that of the major part, commonly described in Scripture as “the world.” In this sense “the world,” as represented by the great body of the Jewish nation, had hitherto enjoyed, in common with His more immediate followers, the opportunity of beholding the visible form, ‘the human face divine,’ in which the Only-Begotten tabernacled among men, moving among them as a breathing living man, and, through the organs of a human nature, exerting and exhibiting the attributes of Deity. But the time was now close at hand when even that privilege was to be withdrawn; the privilege,—of little value, indeed, as the apostle has assured us, when unattended by the power of spiritual perception,—of knowing Jesus after the flesh. On the next succeeding day, the unbelieving Jews for the last time beheld Him, transfixed with agony and crowned with shame,—suffering and expiring, by their own wicked hands, on the accursed tree,—consigned in lowly funeral, with maimed and hasty rites, to the dust and darkness of the sepulchre. That was the last occasion when they saw Him: for, when He rose again, He justly reckoned it no more than a righteous retribution for the scorn and unbelief and disobedience with which all former revelations of His glory had been treated by a perverse and froward generation, that He should not again expose His sacred person to their view, to be assailed with fresh insults and fresh persecutions unsuited to the character of His now glorified humanity, or, at the best, calculated to stir the vacant wonder, to gratify the idle curiosity, of a populace athirst for excite-

ment and voracious of marvels. Having made ample provision of evidence for the fact of His resurrection,—evidence which, both for the number of the witnesses and the quality of the testimony, should be sufficient to set its reality beyond all suspicion to every candid mind,—we say that He did no more than beseemed Him to do,—however the infidel may cavil and object,—He did no more than a righteous respect for Himself and for His cause imperiously demanded,—when He refused to exhibit Himself a public spectacle to a people who had already treated Him with the last extremes of contumely and of cruelty, when He dwelt among them a man “approved of God with signs and wonders and divers miracles, which God did by Him in the midst of them.” “We are witnesses,” said the ardent Peter, in his own glowing and animated style, “We are witnesses of all things which Jesus did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead; and hath commanded us to preach unto all the people, and to testify that it is He whom God hath ordained to be the Judge of the quick and of the dead.”* Nor, while, in righteous judgment, the sight of Jesus in bodily presence after His resurrection was denied to those who had so little improved the sight of Him in this way before His death, was the loss of this privilege compensated to the world,—to any who continued members of the unbelieving and unconverted community whom that name designates,—by the faculty of spiritual vision; that faculty which enables a man to realize the presence

* Acts x. 39-42.

of God and Jesus, when sense can discern no tokens of their nearness, no footsteps of their procedure,—by which we look at the things which are not seen, and live “as seeing Him who is invisible.”

It is not, you will observe, denied that Jesus should be actually present even to the unbelieving and disobedient world. In the way which, in our last Lecture, we endeavoured to explain,—the actual presence of His boundless Godhead through all the immeasurable universe, and the virtual presence even of His limited humanity with all that lives and moves and is throughout immensity, in consequence of the immediate and unbroken communication kept up between the human soul and the Omnipresent Deity of the God-man, our exalted Mediator,—in this way Christ Jesus must be present alike to every human being, whether that human being be His follower or His foe. The distinctive difference in this particular between the church and the world is not in respect of the fact of the exalted Mediator’s presence,—that is a fact in regard alike to the one and to the other,—but in respect of its character,—inasmuch as to the former it is the presence of a Father and a Friend, to the latter not so,—and also in respect of the perception of it, which the one enjoys and the other wants:—“The world seeth me not, but ye see me.” The men of the world have no perception of what is, notwithstanding, the fact,—a mighty fact of most momentous bearing on the character and fate of every soul of man,—that Jesus is evermore beside, around, within, them; that in their path and in their bed, their sitting down and their rising up, they are evermore environed and enveloped with His immensity; that their consciousness is bare to His unslumbering eye; that their natures are encircled with His all-embracing power. Destitute of that faith

which makes a man a Christian, and turns the statements and the promises of the Bible all into realities, the unconverted man wants the faculty for discerning invisible beings and invisible objects,—the essences and the occurrences of that unseen, but most real and substantial, world with which we dwell surrounded, and in which the beings exist, and the events occur, which are, by infinite degrees, the most important to our present condition and to our future fate. And as he wants the faculty, so lacks he also the motive which should make him desire to realize the thought of Jesus as, at all times and in all places, near and present. He wants that spirit of affection towards Jesus, and that well-grounded assurance of the affection of Jesus towards him, which alone can make the idea attractive and delightful. Did he, in his present state, realize the presence of the Saviour whom he has all along rejected and despised, in the aspect which that presence really bears to him; he would start and tremble to perceive himself so near,—near without hope of evasion or escape,—to one whom he has done so much to provoke; he would feel himself encircled with an ever-brooding melancholy, an ever-impending fear,—haunted by a perpetual spectre,—grasped, crushed, and overwhelmed, by a clinging and tenacious foe. And then, in regard to that beatific vision of the Enthroned Lamb in which the promise shall receive its last and most triumphant accomplishment,—true it is that at “the glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour,” when the ransomed church shall begin to see Him as He is, even the ungodly world shall, for one rapid and terrific day, behold the Saviour-Judge. “Hereafter,” He Himself announced to the proud priest who adjured Him by the living God, seated where he was on the tribunal of unrighteousness, the head of the unbelieving world among the Jewish people,

—“ Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man seated on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” “ Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.”* We hear, from the shrieks of earth’s wailing families, how little that hurrying glimpse of Jesus ‘when He comes triumphant, dooming the nations,’ will be to them a blessing and a joy. And then, that awful, that soul-withering glimpse shall be to them the last which they shall have to all eternity, of the majestic countenance which shall prove to all but them the Sun of an unsetting day,—whose smiles shall beam felicity through Paradise. Excluded from the vision of that glorious Being on whom to feast their adoring gaze is the felicity of the redeemed, the rapture of the unfallen, their tortured sense must dwell for ever on scenes of deformity, spectacles of horror, reflected from every region of their inclement habitation, and turning their sight, like every other faculty and organ of their being, into a source of suffering and an instrument of woe. “ They shall be mad, for the fear of their hearts wherewith they shall fear, and for the sight of their eyes which they shall see.”

In conclusion, brethren, let me invite you seriously and solemnly to apply to yourselves the test which the verse before us suggests,—the discriminating test between those who belong to the adopted company of true disciples, and those who appertain to the outcast community of the unbelieving world,—in that the former, in the habitual course of their mental perceptions, see the Saviour, while the latter see Him not. Is it characteristic of the ordinary course of your ideas and your emotions habitually,

* Matt. xxvi. 64; Rev. i. 7.

or at all events frequently, to perceive, to feel, to be aware, that Jesus is present with you, and present with you as a gracious Parent with his children, having come to you expressly for that end that ye might not be left as orphans in a fatherless and forsaken world? Have the eyes of your understanding been enlightened to perceive that there are more beings and more objects round about you,—close upon you,—in immediate and inseparable contact with you,—than those of whose existence and vicinity any of your senses can inform you, and that the relation which you bear to that unseen and spiritual system of existence is one of mightier import, and more momentous influence, than all those combined which you hold to the visible and material universe? Have you learned to look into that veiled and solemn world, and to become familiar with its great realities, by the power of that mighty principle which lifts aside the curtains of invisibility, and makes unseen, eternal, essences the objects of discernment to the human soul? Have you learned from Paul, to look at the things unseen, and with Moses, to “endure as seeing Him who is invisible?” And then, are ye accustomed to observe, conspicuous and prominent among all that it contains, your exalted, yet ever-present, Lord? Know ye what it is habitually to converse with Him, to solicit His advice as your ever-present Counsellor in all your perplexities, to ask His consolations as your ever-present Comforter in all your afflictions, to breathe your sighs into His bosom, to pillow your head upon His breast, and, in one word, in all the exigencies of your life, in all the changes of your history, to know, and to act upon the knowledge, that you have a mightier and more benignant than earthly parent, nearer you than those who cling to you the closest of mortal relatives, and friends, and comforters,—a Friend that sticketh

closer than a brother, from whom none of the events of this changing world can ever more divide you, and to whom he who exults in breaking up the closest intimacies and rending the dearest ties asunder, Death the disseverer and destroyer, can only bring you nearer and bind you closer? O cultivate, I pray you, this inestimable faculty,—inestimable, at once, in order to your sanctification, and in order to your consolation,—of realising the perpetual and gracious presence of your Lord. Only so shall ye be living up to your exalted privileges. Only so shall ye experience the full benefit of having such a Saviour, such a Friend. Only so shall ye enjoy, as far as the present state of shadows and of imperfection will admit, the foretastes of that celestial state when “that which is in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall have come;” when faith shall be transformed into immediate vision, and hope shall be ripened into full fruition; when believers shall see no longer, “as by a mirror, darkly, but face to face;” when, purified and unsealed at the fount of immortality, their now too feeble sense shall be strengthened to gaze upon the enthroned Redeemer,—

‘ That glorious form, that light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,’

before whose visible effulgence, but half-unveiled to mortal sight, saints and prophets used to sink swooning to the earth; when their eyes shall see “the King in His beauty,” and not be blasted with the glories of His brow.

LECTURE XIV.

CHAP. XIV. 19, 20.

“ Because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”

THE particular topic of consolation on which Jesus was now insisting was the consideration that His anticipated departure, which had filled the minds of the disciples with such profound regret, was not to be the withdrawal from them of His actual presence,—of His perceived society,—of His experienced love and quickening power. It was not to be the withdrawal of His presence as a real fact:—“ I will not leave you orphans,” He says, “ I will come to you.” It was not to be the withdrawal of His presence as an object of distinct perception:—“ Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me.” It was not to be the withdrawal, finally, of that beneficial influence, really and practically exerted on their character and condition, which had hitherto flowed from the relation which they held to Jesus:—“ Because I live, ye shall live also.”

This gracious assurance consists of two parts,—an antecedent and a consequent; the antecedent asserting that, even after the departure the disciples so much dreaded, He Himself should continue to live, and the consequent declaring, that, as the result of His living, they should live also.

Even after Jesus, according to the expression of the evangelist, had "yielded up the ghost," we know that, though He had been "put to death in the flesh," He still was "quicken'd in the Spirit;" and that, according to His gracious promise to His penitent companion in death, that day He was present, in conscious and powerful existence, with all the saved in Paradise. The reference, however, in the place before us is, obviously, not so much to that continuance of consciousness and activity in respect of the immaterial portion of His human nature, by which, like every other human being, He was in a certain sense immortal; but to that new and majestic life, in respect of His whole completed and reconstructed nature as the Mediator between God and man, by which He liveth and reigneth everlastingly at the right hand of Heavenly Majesty and Might. He knew that "it was not possible that He should be holden of the bands of death;" for thus, in His person, had the holy Psalmist sung:—"Thou wilt not leave my soul among the dead, neither wilt Thou give Thine Holy One to see corruption."* He could, therefore, with the fullest confidence, assure His disciples that, though for a season He was about to become the victim of death, the tenant of the grave, they should not long lament His dissolution, their sorrow should soon be turned into joy, and they invited to rejoice in Him as risen and revived, alive for evermore, and holding in His victor-hand the keys of death and of the sepulchre.

Nor was this the whole amount of consolation which Jesus conveyed to the disciples in prospect of His return to life. He assures them that, in the very fact that He lived, they should live along with Him. It seems obvious that

* Psal. xvi. 10; Acts ii. 24-31.

this assurance,—like all those with which it is associated,—refers, not exclusively, indeed, but in part, undoubtedly, to a privilege to be enjoyed by His apostles, and by all true believers equally with them, in the present state; and that those, therefore, very unduly limit the application of the promise who refer it solely to the fact that, Christ having arisen as “the first-fruits of them that sleep,” they also that are Christ’s shall arise to meet Him at His coming. The whole context both before and after, plainly refers to topics of consolation of which the disciples were to enjoy the benefit in consequence of His resurrection from the dead,—and that during the term of their mortal, as well as their immortal, being.

Now, in order to understand the propriety of the description which the verse before us gives of the privilege even now enjoyed by Christians as alive through the life of Jesus, you must remember that there is no representation more common in the Bible than that which describes believers as so identified with Jesus Christ that, even as His death, according to the phraseology of the Holy Spirit, is their death, so His resurrection from the dead is theirs, and His life and reign at the right hand of power is theirs: —“We are buried with Him by baptism into death, that, like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we also should walk in newness of life;”—“Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him;”—“For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord;”—“Ye have been buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God, who raised Him from the dead;”—“God,

who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Jesus Christ;”—“If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;”—“Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory;”—“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”* From these passages it is plain, that the scriptural mode of viewing the connection between believers and the Saviour is to contemplate them as one with Him,—one in His death, one in His resurrection, one in His immortality,—so that the life which He now is living in the power of God, He lives in their name, as their Representative and Head. “In that I live,” He is saying to every one of them, “ye live also.” Even now, their life is hid with Him,—even now, they “sit with Him in heavenly places.”

Nor is the vital unity of Christ and Christians of which these places speak a mere form of human conception. It represents the very light in which the blessed relation that binds together the Saviour and His people is regarded by God Himself,—according to whose conception of their existence and operation, all things do really, in point of fact, exist and operate. And when you consider all the blessed consequences which, according to the passages we have been quoting, flow from the fact that, in the estima-

* Rom. vi. 4, 8, 10, 11; Col. ii. 12; Eph. ii. 4-6; Col. iii. 1, 3, 4; Gal. ii. 20.

tion of Jehovah, Christians are one with Jesus,—alive because He is alive,—you will immediately perceive how rich a fund of encouragement and consolation is wrapt up in the assurance, thus interpreted,—“Because I live, ye shall live also.” It implies, in the first place, their justification from the guilt of all those offences of which, by becoming “obedient unto death,” He in their room,—they in His person,—have paid the penalty. To testify His acceptance of the mighty sacrifice which the Incarnate Word had offered as a satisfactory atonement for all the guilt which He bore upon His substituted head, was the express end for which “the God of peace brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus by the blood of the everlasting covenant;” and in contemplating, as He does contemplate, all Christ’s believing people,—the “members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones,”—as sharing His immortal life, the Omniscient Holiness regards them as, equally with Him, their Living Head, delivered from the guilt of sin,—having paid its penalty, and therefore being now absolved from its condemnation.—It implies, in the second place, their sanctification,—their deliverance from the reigning power of depravity,—the infusion and the gradual development within them of a new and purer nature, the seed of an imperishable life. This is another reason why they are described in Scripture, or, in other words, are by God regarded, as having one life with the risen and exalted Saviour,—that all those acts of holy thought and holy feeling, of holy conversation and holy conduct, which constitute what is termed the spiritual life, are prompted and sustained by an influence derived from Him, their exalted Prince and Saviour,—the Source, according to the constitution of mercy, of all pure and spiritual influences,—so that the manifestations of Christ’s

holiness which appear in the characters and lives of Christ's disciples are but the pulsations, and the vital operations, in the limbs, of the life which has its fountain and its fulness in the Immortal Head, and which circulates thence through the whole extent of the sacred body in heaven and on earth,—“the fulness of Him who filleth all in all.”—Another consequence which is, in Scripture, attached to the fact that believers are regarded by God as having one life with Jesus Christ, their exalted Saviour, is this,—that they shall all be finally translated, in their whole natures,—soul and body,—into that glorious form of life on which the Saviour entered at His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into glory. The incongruity cannot be permitted to exist for ever,—although, for wise reasons, the Great Arranger of the universe hath allowed it for a season,—that those whom God Himself regards as forming only different parts of one body, one system of holy life, should remain, the one enjoying an existence of boundless glory, of sinless perfection, of unmingled and incorruptible felicity,—the other degraded in rank, corrupted with depravity, afflicted with suffering. The members must be conformed, in the whole mode and fashion of their being, to the illustrious Head. And it is in reference to the Divine decree, and the moral necessity, that this should be at last the case, that the Apostle says, “Your life is hid with Christ in God,”—while, with respect to its ultimate accomplishment in the final glorification of believers after the example of their Lord, He adds, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, ye also shall appear with Him in glory.”* The “vile bodies” of believers shall be themselves transfigured into the likeness of “His body

* Col. iii. 3, 4.

of glory ;” while still more in the nobler part of their being, purified from every stain of pollution and every shade of imperfection, they shall become, as it were, the perfect mirrors of His spiritual character,—they shall reflect from all their souls, in full limb and lineament, the moral image of Him who is the Model and the Mould of heavenly excellence and beauty,—they “shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is.”

Such, therefore, I suppose to be the true import of the consoling promise here addressed by the Saviour to His disciples—“Because I live, ye shall live also.” And that we have rightly interpreted the promise thus, of the vital unity subsisting between the exalted Saviour and His believing people, we have a strong confirmation in the words which follow:—“And at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”

The subjects in regard to which Jesus, in this part of the passage, promises to His disciples a large increase of experimental knowledge are two,—the sacred union which subsists between the Father and the Son, and that which, in like manner, subsists between the Son and His believing people. The nature of the union in these two different cases is, no doubt, in many respects infinitely different. There are those, indeed, who maintain that the unity between the Father and the Son is not essentially diverse from that between Jesus and His people, and who refer, in proof of their assertion, to this very passage,—where, to express these several unities, precisely the same form of expression is employed. But how irrelevant any such appeal is to prove the point they would establish will appear, when we consider that the phrase of a reciprocal indwelling or inbeing does, as we interpret it, express no more than the existence, in point of fact, of a most inti-

mate and endearing connection, without expressing any idea whatever with respect to the nature and the mode of that connection. To say in regard to two different groupes of human beings, that the parties hold a most intimate relation to each other, does by no means imply that the relation in each case is of the same description; and exactly so, to say that the Father is in Jesus, and that Jesus is in His people, does undoubtedly mean that in either case the Father and the Son, the Saviour and the Church, are most closely and affectionately united, but does by no means necessarily imply that they are united by a bond precisely similar. We must judge from the nature and the circumstances of the application,—we must judge from the information communicated in other passages of Holy Writ,—what is the exact nature of the union which the expression of a mutually interpenetrated being signifies; always adhering to the general idea which in every usage it implies, of a connection as close and as loving as the circumstances show to be possible.

What, then, is the nature of the connection between Jesus and the Father which the expression before us signifies, judging from other passages in which the same phrase is employed in the same signification? In the 10th chapter of this Gospel, at the 38th verse, we find our Lord declaring, “I am in the Father, and the Father in me,”—a phrase which is obviously the repetition, in another form, of the phrase in the 30th verse, “I and my Father are one,” and must be considered as having the same meaning which the context there renders unavoidable, namely, that the Father and the Son are possessed of one Omnipotence, and, therefore, of one Divinity. In like manner, at the 10th verse of this very chapter, Jesus demands of His weak and short-sighted disciple, “Believest

thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" as a reason for what He had just before declared, that whosoever "had seen Him had seen the Father,"—that He was a visible Representative of Deity, Incarnate Jehovah, God manifest in the flesh. It is, therefore, with the most satisfactory and ample warrant of Holy Writ that, when we find the expression in the text applied to the relation between the Father and the Son, we understand it of their existence together in the unity of the indivisible Godhead, and of that unparalleled and inconceivable affection which circulates, with all the power belonging to the emotions of the Infinite Mind, through the inmost heart, if we may so express it, of Divinity.

But while it is held forth as an important branch of the truth which it is the believer's privilege to know, that Jesus is in the Father; not less is it an important part of the same exalted privilege to know that Jesus is in His followers, and they in Him.

This remarkable expression is one that frequently occurs, especially in the writings of our evangelist. He introduces our Lord employing it on various occasions besides the present, in the course of His earthly ministry; while to his own mind it seems to have been an expression possessed of a peculiar charm. For no less than eight or nine times does he either quote, or allude to, it in his first brief epistle; and throughout the whole course of that epistle, he deduces from the principle of the union between God and Christ on the one hand, and Christians on the other, which the phrase expresses, the whole doctrinal system, and the whole practical power, of genuine Christianity. It seems obvious that this is the general meaning of the phrase,—that it represents the mutual relation of Jesus and His people by the image of a most intimate and

indissoluble connection of their beings. You are aware with what overflowing fulness and variety, both of diction and of imagery, this sacred union has been set forth by the Holy Writers. They have exhausted, in its illustration, all descriptions borrowed from the closest and most affectionate relations of earth,—not only those which unite together different individuals, but those which subsist between the constituent parts of a single being,—between the vine and the branches, between the members and the head; while, in such expressions as that before us, a still more intimate conjunction seems to be expressed than even between the several parts of a single substance,—the commixture, as it were, of essences, the mutual incorporation of beings. Now, while it would be improper to press such expressions more closely, or to interpret them more literally, than the tenor of the context, and the circumstances of the case, shall, in every particular instance, warrant; it is plain that we cannot, on the other hand, but extenuate their force, and leave them to appear unreasonable and extravagant, unless we admit that there does really exist between Christ and His people a relation more intimate than any which images borrowed from earthly things and human beings can properly represent. Of this Divine relation we find various particulars stated in the Sacred Record, in respect of which believers are mentioned as being in Christ and He in them, even as if they constituted one individual person. They are one inasmuch as He has borne their guilt and they have been invested with His righteousness. They are one in so far as, by an influence derived from Him, their exalted Head, through the communication of His Holy Spirit, they are enabled to think and feel, to speak and act, as He in their circumstances would have done. They are one inasmuch

as they are reciprocally moved to one another with the most profound and tender sympathy. They are one inasmuch as they hope to spend together a vast eternity in the dearest fellowship of love, of common glory, and of mutual joy. It is a union this which, once really formed, can never be destroyed. Its bond is stronger and more precious than adamant. The shocks of earthly change cannot rend it. The touch of Death, the great disseverer, cannot dissolve it. The lapse of endless ages cannot waste it. In this life, in the life to come, to all eternity, Jesus, in this relation, loves, helps, defends, delivers, adorns, and blesses, His chosen,—while they continually, in the same relation, adore and love and trust Him as the Author and the Finisher of their redemption; and thus, to everlasting days, He dwells in them and they in Him.

The two branches of knowledge, however, respecting the union of the Father and the Son, and the union of the Son with His believing people, are here set forth, not as constituting two separate and unconnected facts, but only as different links in one blessed chain and sequence of relations by which, through their common connection with Christ Jesus, the Father and the Church are mutually connected with each other. Jesus appears as the true Immanuel; the Mediator between God and man; the bond of spiritual union between heaven and earth,—united at once to the Judge and the sinner, and binding them both together in the strictest and holiest ties of amity and love. And we are thus assured of the glorious and animating truth, that all the infinite complacency with which, in consequence of that profound and ineffable relation between them, the Father contemplates the character and work of His Incarnate Only-begotten flows down upon believers through the channel of that relation which binds them to

their Saviour-God. The Father regards them,—the Father treats them,—as one with His Anointed; and so, as we have seen, because He lives, they live also. The glorious immortality which the Father bestowed upon the Son, when “He raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory,” is enjoyed by Jesus in their name; and all that it implies to Him of deliverance from the curse of sin, of free development afforded to all the principles of moral excellence and spiritual perfection, of completed glorification at once in His corporeal and in His spiritual nature,—all this it implies to them. All this,—in consequence of the Father’s love to Jesus, and the majestic life He has conferred on Him in token of His love,—believers even now enjoy in foretaste, in their present justification, in their begun and advancing sanctification, in their assured hopes of perfect glory and perfect bliss to come. All this they shall hereafter enjoy in its fulness and perfection, when the hope they have been taught to cherish, the hope that “maketh not ashamed,” shall have been fulfilled in the inheritance of absolute and unalloyed perfection,—in their entrance on that bright and everlasting world whither Jesus hath already gone, that there He may prepare a place for them.

In the knowledge of these two blessed facts,—the relation which the Incarnate Son bears to the Everlasting Father, and the relation which Christ’s believing people bear to Him, and, through Him, to Jehovah,—is comprised, in all its main and essential points, the knowledge of the gospel. And so, the promise of the text, “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you,” was fulfilled in that vast accession which, after the resurrection of the Saviour, was made, by the communication of the Holy Ghost, to the knowledge of the

disciples in the mystery of Christ,—and especially in the fact of their being then made more abundantly partakers of all those spiritual blessings of which they knew that the source was the love of the Father, and the channel the mediation of the Son. In the more plenteous residence and the more powerful working of divine grace upon their souls, they had an experimental proof,—they had the evidence within themselves,—that Jesus maintained and owned a near and affectionate relation to them, that God had not ceased to hold and to acknowledge a most intimate and most endeared relation to the Saviour; knowing, as they did, that no such blessings are conferred on any sinful man except for the Saviour's sake, and except in consequence of his connection with the Saviour. O let us, my brethren, with all the earnestness of our souls, seek the experimental knowledge of God and of His Son,—whom in this way to know is eternal life. By labouring, after the appointed order, and in the use of the appointed means, to obtain possession and experience of so much of Christ's salvation as is to be enjoyed on earth,—the sense of pardon, the elements of holiness, the spirit of adoption, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, a clear and animating hope of immortal life and joy,—and all this as flowing forth from God, the Fountain of life and of felicity, through Jesus Christ, the channel of gracious communication, the Mediator of favourable intercourse between heaven and earth,—let us seek to have the evidence within ourselves that, through Him in whom all things are reconciled, “whether they be things in heaven or things on earth,” a bond of sacred and friendly relation has indeed been constituted between the sinner and his Judge, between Jehovah and ourselves. For the excellency of this knowledge let us reckon all else but loss.

And let us daily be labouring to acquire it in a more exalted and more blessed degree, until we reach at last the world of perfect light and perfect glory, and there, in the visible perception of the union between the Father and the Son, and between the Son and His ransomed and now glorified church, as well as in the full experience of His completed salvation,—“the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory,” proceeding for ever, through Jesus as its medium, from Jehovah as its source, —shall enjoy, in its most exalted form, the fulfilment of the promise, “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”

LECTURE XV.

CHAP. XIV. 21—24.

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, (not Iscariot,) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, 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. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.”

JESUS, in His gracious attempts to comfort His disciples in the prospect of His departure from the world, had been insisting on this, among other topics of consolation, that the approaching change upon His manner of existence would have, at least, no influence unfavourable for them upon the relation which bound them to Him, and their mutual intercourse in that relation; that His elevation to a new and more majestic life was not inconsistent with the continuance of His habitual presence with them, or of their habitual perception of Him; that, on the other hand, their very natures should be so incorporated with His, their lives identified with His, that all the glory and benefit which should actually accrue to Him by His resurrection to immortal life should virtually even now, and in full perfection ultimately, be enjoyed by them:—“I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you. Yet a little while,

and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me. Because I live ye shall live also. And in that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you."

Jesus, however, throughout the whole of this discourse, has shown Himself sedulously desirous of guarding His disciples against the too natural, but most dangerous and destructive, error which divides in imagination the bond, in fact indissoluble, which connects duty with enjoyment, the precept with the promise, Christian character with Christian privilege. In connection with the illustrious promise which He had shortly before delivered for their consolation, of the descent of another Paraclete celestial like Himself, He had expressly given them to understand, that they alone who loved Him, and kept His commandments, might reasonably look for its fulfilment. "If ye love me," He said, "keep my commandments,—and I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever." And now He takes occasion to remind them, that the same condition and qualification under which they held the promise of another, was implied in the promise which assured them of the continued presence of their former, Paraclete; which declared that He would come to them, that He would be seen of them, that in His life they should live, and that, by a vital and indissoluble union, they should be, as it were, incorporated with Him, and so connected, by a sacred tie of amity and love, with His Father and their Father, with His God and their God:—"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

The disciples are once more reminded, then,—and, through them, all others who shall at any period aspire

to have their right acknowledged to the Christian name, and to the privileges which that name implies,—that one characteristic mark of every genuine disciple is that he loves his Saviour,—according as it is written, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha;” and again, where, describing the character of those who shall be acknowledged and rewarded at “the glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour Jesus Christ,” the apostle adds, “Whom having not seen ye love.”* And they are reminded further, that in order to assert for themselves the character of sincere lovers, true disciples, of Jesus Christ, it was not enough that they loudly professed attachment to His person and His cause, that they lamented His departure with the bitterest tokens and expressions of regret, that they dwelt with softened contemplation and remembrance on His character and achievements, His sufferings and glory, or that they experienced in their fullest force all those passive and indolent emotions of admiration and delight and tenderness which lead to no practical result,—which afford a mere sentimental excitement to the heart, but communicate no necessary impression to the character, no holy impulse to the life; that, on the other hand, the love of Christ which is the test of Christianity was a principle of action, a spring of holy exertion.

The amount of the duty of a Christian man in reference to the commandments of his Lord is here described by the phrases of *having*, that is, knowing, and of *keeping*, that is, performing, them. It is obvious, on the one hand, that none can obey commandments which he does not know, and that, therefore, the first duty of every individual who

* 1 Cor. xvi. 22; 1 Pet. i. 8.

wishes to render to his Saviour-Lord that proof of attachment which alone will be received as satisfactory is, that he labour to acquire, by all appropriate means, an extensive and accurate acquaintance with his Master's will,—with the particulars which that will includes, with the grounds on which the obligation to obey it rests, with the motives and inducements which render compliance with its requirements natural, easy, and delightful. It is equally manifest, on the other hand, that no amount of knowledge which does not result in obedience can have any other effect than to aggravate the present guilt, and inflame the future condemnation, of those “who hold the truth in unrighteousness;” because so they sin against clearer light,—with more marked contempt of the Master's claims, and more deliberate rejection of His authority. There is, in truth, no single remark which the Great Teacher was accustomed to urge with greater force and frequency upon His followers than this,—that hearing without doing, knowledge divorced from practice, the science separated from the art of religion, is ruinous to the soul, instead of saving:—“The servant that knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes;” “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”* And while these two things in reference to Christ's commandments,—knowledge and obedience,—are thus connected with one another; it is easy to perceive how they are both connected with the principle of love, as its natural dictates, and therefore its legitimate tests. You know how desirous even an earthly affection renders him who feels it to discover by all possible means and opportunities,—to collect

* Luke xii. 47; John xiii. 17.

from hints, to infer from glances,—the pleasure and desire of the beloved object, and this for the very purpose that he may have the means of contributing to that pleasure, of fulfilling that desire; to know that he may do. And so you perceive the force and the propriety of the specific and discriminating tests which Jesus in the text, has demanded of genuine attachment to Himself:—“He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.”

Jesus, however,—while He at all times shewed Himself most desirous of impressing His disciples with the sentiment, that only in the performance of Christian duty might they look for the enjoyment of Christian privilege,—is equally careful to assure them, for their consolation, that, in the practical cultivation of the spiritual life, they might be certain that they would enjoy the most encouraging experience of spiritual blessedness:—“He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father.”

The certainty of this promise rests on the veracity of Him who made it,—of Him in whom every genuine Christian recognises “the faithful and true Witness,” and on whose simple word he can repose a more unwavering confidence than on all that creation presents to his attention most stable and inviolable,—on the steadfastness of the firm-set earth, or the ancient ordinances of the sky; for heaven and earth, he knows, shall pass away, but one word that Jesus has spoken shall in nowise pass away. And oh, my brethren, who shall rightly estimate the value of the privilege enjoyed by every genuine Christian, in being loved of God,—of Him who, of all beings in the universe, is the most excellent, the most powerful, the most permanent, and therefore, surely, among them all, the best of possible friends? If the value of a friendship bears

any proportion to the excellence of him with whom that friendship associates us,—how blessed beyond compare the love of Him in whose being are hidden all the treasures of infinite perfection; of whose grandeur and excellence all that is great and good in the creation is but a distant reflection, a faint and feeble image; whom to admire, whom to love, too deeply, is a thing impossible! Or if the value of a friendship bears any proportion to its object's power to bless,—then what friendship may be likened to the friendship of Him who is not only the most glorious and excellent Being, but the most high and mighty Ruler of all; of Him whose power is Omnipotence, whose dominion is the universe,—with whom there can be no limitations such as are wont, in innumerable cases, to make the kind wishes and attempts of earthly friendship powerless,—and who is able to fill the vastest capacity, to satisfy the most eager desire, of enjoyment, either from the streams of happiness which bend their bright course wherever He directs them, or from Himself, the radiant Fountain of living water, the exhaustless Source of glory and of goodness? Or if, finally, the value of a friendship bear any proportion to the intensity of affection with which we are regarded by him to whom it links us,—how shall we form a due conception of Jehovah's love, in attempting to convey but a feeble and faint idea of which the Holy Spirit exhausts the riches and the power of all the imagery which earth's most affectionate relations can supply;—"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing;" "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee;" "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him;" "Can a woman forget her sucking child,

that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee.”*

Nor is it only the love of the Eternal Father of which those who have, and who keep, the commandments of the Saviour are here assured as their portion,—but the love besides, of the Incarnate Son. And if we shall endeavour to estimate the value of such a friendship by the same tests as in the former case,—how shall we place a suitable estimate upon the love of Jesus? In His transcendent character, whatever is august and lovely in the perfection of Deity is met and harmonised with whatever is great and fair in the attributes of a sinless humanity. His power to bless is nothing less than that Omnipotence which rules and controls the universe,—for He hath received “power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him.”† The depth and intensity of His affection were fiercely tried, and illustriously displayed, when many waters came in upon His soul, but could not quench the generous flame,—when the floods baptized Him with their angry spray, and all God’s billows and His waves went over Him, but could not drown His love,—for that was stronger than death, “even the death of the cross.” Having once been tried in all points like as His servants are, more deeply than His servants can be ever,—He still, from the throne of everlasting brightness, looks down on them, amidst the toils and tears of their desert-pilgrimage, with affectionate regard; enters into all their concerns with something like fraternal kindness, yea, with a friendship that sticketh closer than a brother’s; enters into all their feelings, what in them is impure alone excepted,—into the joys with which a stranger inter-

* Zeph. iii. 17; Isa. lxii. 5; Psal. ciii. 13; Isa. xlix. 15.

† John xvii. 2.

meddles not, into the dim anguish of the heart which “knoweth its own bitterness,”—with a fellow-feeling warmer than the warmest sympathies of hearts which have, as it were, one pulse, deeper than the soul’s own deepest consciousness. And, finally, having loved His own which are in the world, He will love them even to the end,—so that they may defy the universe to divide them from the love of Christ, and proclaim aloud, with the apostle, their jubilant persuasion, 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 them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.”*

Still further, they who love the Saviour, and keep His commandments, are here informed by Him that they shall be convinced of His affection, not merely on the faith of His word, but by the evidence of their own experience:—“I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him;” that is, as the context proves, I will reveal myself unto him who loves me,—I will show myself to be his friend,—I will give him distinct and perceptible tokens of my affection and regard,—I will afford him experimental conviction of my love.

This promise was fulfilled in the experience of the apostles. It has also been fulfilled in the experience of all believing men as often as they have been made partakers of any of those spiritual blessings which it is the office of Jesus to bestow in the present state,—as often as they have had sensible enjoyment, in any particular instance, of the “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost” of which the kingdom of heaven

* Rom. viii. 38, 39.

consists, and every special case of which they know, from the infallible Oracles, to be a special instance of the Saviour's love. Every Christian, on the authority of the Bible, is entitled to regard every spiritual blessing he enjoys,—every communication of heavenly light, and liberty, and truth, and holiness, and hope, and spiritual blessedness, of which he may be conscious,—as well as all the circumstances,—the means of grace and the conjunctions of events,—by the instrumentality of which such communications have been poured into his heart, as the direct results and significations of the Saviour's special love to him. And whensoever, from the actual reception and experience of such benefits, he has drawn the inference, Jesus loves me, so often He has had fulfilled in His experience the promise of the text,—“ I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.” Meanwhile, that in this sense it is the ordinary practice, the established rule, of the Saviour's government in the Church, thus to manifest Himself and His affection to those who keep His commandments, is the distinct testimony of all those who alone are qualified to judge, and whose testimony on this subject should be final and conclusive,—I mean those who are really entitled to the name of serious, spiritual, practical believers. They will, with one voice, declare, that the Saviour has not forgotten, at any period of the Church, to give, in the way we have described, refreshing intimations of His love to those who love Him. They will, with equal unanimity, affirm, that just in proportion as they have exhibited the character, have they enjoyed the privilege, which the text describes; in proportion as their love to Christ's person has been fervent, and their obedience to His commandments has been faithful, they have been “ filled with peace and joy in

believing,”—the “peace which passeth understanding,” the “joy which is unspeakable and full of glory,”—they have more distinctly perceived their interest in His salvation, they have more abundantly enjoyed the tokens of His tenderness, they have been more divinely elevated in the hope of His eternal glory, they have found themselves more gloriously illumined and circumfused with the light of their Lord’s benignant revelation of Himself, and they have more profoundly felt what it was the Psalmist longed for when he prayed:—“Many there be which say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me. Thou hast put more gladness into my heart than they can taste, when their corn and their wine and their oil are increased.”

That it is to such spiritual manifestations of His love as we have now been speaking of that the Saviour in the text refers, will, we think, be sufficiently obvious to Christians of these later times who have been instructed in the spiritual nature of Messiah’s salvation and Messiah’s reign. The original disciples, however, to whom this divine discourse was originally delivered, clung with pertinacious adherence, up to the very period when their minds were opened to larger and more spiritual views by the descent of the illuminating Spirit upon the day of Pentecost, to those carnal and worldly conceptions of the expected kingdom of heaven which they had imbibed from the atmosphere of opinion,—from the pervading popular conviction in the midst of which they had lived so long. Under the influence, apparently, of this long-cherished prepossession, we find one of the twelve interpreting the promise of some visible and external revelation of Christ Jesus in the full splendour,—at length, though late, assumed by Him,—of the Messiah’s royalty, and finding some difficulty, as well he

might, of reconciling the promise thus understood with what Jesus had declared, obviously in reference to the same period of His history,—“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me.”

The disciple who ventured to suggest to Jesus the difficulty of which, it is probable, his brother-disciples were equally conscious, was Judas,—“not Iscariot,” as the sacred historian adds with emphasis; supposing, as it were, that the very name might have become so indelibly tainted and engrained with infamy in the recollection of his readers, that a parenthesis was necessary expressly guarding them against the influence of so dark an association, even when it was sufficiently obvious, from the context and circumstances of the case, that it was not Iscariot that was here referred to, but he whose name from a similar sentiment to that we have ascribed to the evangelist, is rendered by our translators, in their version of his Epistle, Jude,—the same who elsewhere bears the name of Thaddeus and Leb-beus, and, from his near connection with Jesus Christ according to the flesh, is dignified with the appellation of “brother of the Lord.” He it was who,—speaking, no doubt, the feeling of his companions,—inquired, “Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” that is, How is it that Thou canst assume the visible splendours of thy long expected reign, and confine the view of that effulgent magnificence to us? Shall not thy bright epiphany blaze forth upon the eyes of all the nations, and the whole earth be filled with thy glory? Shall not the Gentiles flock to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising?

To understand the true spirit of the question, it is proper that you should be informed, that the word “How,” does here by no means signify, In what manner, as if the

apostle's question had simply for its object to obtain information in reference to the nature and mode of that peculiar intercourse which Jesus had just been promising them with Himself. The original, literally rendered, is in these words,—How has it happened? How comes it to pass? The tone is one of disappointment, of remonstrance, of regret; resembling, as nearly as possible, that in which we are told that, on a former occasion, the brethren of Jesus, —Judas, very probably, among the rest,—had said to Him, —“Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples there also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.”* Understanding the question thus,—as an inquiry into the reason why, and not into the manner how, Jesus should reveal Himself to some, and conceal Himself from others,—you will immediately perceive the force and appositeness of our Lord's reply:—“Jesus answered and said unto him, 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. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.”

The reason why the exalted Saviour here reveals Himself as loving some is,—that they love Him, and show their love by keeping His commandments. The reason why He does not reveal Himself as loving others is,—that they do not love Him, and show that they do not love Him by not keeping His commandments. The love of which the Saviour here speaks is not that primary and preventing

* John vii. 3, 4.

love with which He regards His people previous to any movement in their hearts of affection towards Him, and of which the apostle declares, "We love Him because He first loved us;" but that consequent love of complacency and holy satisfaction with which He contemplates His own work in the faithful as worthy of Himself,—delights in the fruits of holy feeling and holy living which that work produces,—and rewards their affection to Him with fresh tokens of His affection towards them, shedding abroad His love upon their hearts, and opening to them the treasures of His more abundant grace. This flow of His divine affection is, by the very constitution of the gospel, limited to those who have already become the true disciples of Christ Jesus,—who have already learned in some degree to love and obey Him. It is their distinctive dignity and blessedness. There is, therefore, an amply satisfactory reply to the question, "Lord, how comes it to pass that thou wilt not manifest thyself unto the world?" in the declaration, ver. 24,—“He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings;”—therefore I do not reveal myself as a Friend to him, nor yet my Father, inasmuch as, in disobeying me, he disobeys Him;—“for the word which ye hear is not mine,”—not mine alone,—“but the Father’s which sent me.” And, then, with respect to the other branch of the inquiry, “How comes it to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself to us,” thy followers and disciples, while thou passest by the world? the answer, proceeding on the same principle, is expressed in ver. 23:—“If a man love me, he will keep my words;”—therefore, “my Father will love him,” for my words are the Father’s also;—“and we will come to him, and make our abode with [him.” Thus, in reference to the Father and the Son, the same illustrious promise is repeated to believers which had before been

given them in reference to the Holy Ghost,—“ I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever,” (ver. 16.)

Behold, my brethren, the majestic privilege enjoyed by each sincere, however humble, Christian,—the gracious visits, not merely the visits short and far between, but the perpetual abode with him, of the Infinite Divinity,—the Father, the Son, the Spirit of Holiness. True, in one sense, it is no peculiar prerogative of the believer to enjoy the perpetual presence of the Godhead. “ In Him we live, and move, and have our being,”—each one of us enveloped and involved in the immensity of Jehovah’s essence. He is “ about our path and our lying down.” He hath “ beset us behind and before.” “ Whither can we go from His presence? Whither can we flee from His Spirit? If we ascend into heaven, He is there; if we make our bed in hell, behold, He is there. If we take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall His hand lead us, and His right hand shall hold us.” But the specific idea which the promises before us express is that not merely of actual presence, but of propitious intercourse. The Eternal Divinity dwells with those who love the Saviour as One of the same family,—as their Guide and Guardian,—their Benefactor and their Father. To them the Omnipresence of Jehovah is the Omnipresence of a Friend; and in the assurance of the coming and the abode of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they have the assurance of enjoying “ the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the communion of the Holy Ghost,” now, henceforth, and for ever,—each several person of the glorious Trinity performing His own benevolent part in making them completely and everlastingly glorious and excellent and happy. Surely, my brethren,

this is an honour and felicity worthy of being sought with most vehement desire,—pursued with most intense endeavour. The way to its enjoyment is conspicuous and open. The promise is to those who love the Saviour, and who show that they love Him by keeping His commandments. Seek, then, my brethren,—as you value the friendship and fellowship of God,—in the use of all appropriate means, to have that purest and most delicious of emotions implanted, and daily cherished more and more, in your inmost souls. By dwelling, in devout meditation, on the glorious excellences, the incomparable beauties, that meet in the transcendent character of Christ,—nor less on all the stupendous instances which He has given of generous, self-denying, self-sacrificing, love to men,—seek to foster and to fan the holy flame, till all the dross of earthly desires is melted and consumed,—till, under its influence, your spirits glow through all their faculties, and all your natures are absorbed into the sacred element. And remembering, too, that that love alone is acceptable, alone is beneficial, which is practical,—which moulds the character and regulates the life,—O let the love of Christ constrain you to live no more to yourselves, but to Him that died and rose again: and so, in the discharge of the requisite condition, expect the fulfilment of the glorious promise,—“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever;” “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.”

LECTURE XVI.

CHAP. XIV. 25—27.

“These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. 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.”

THE circumstance last recorded in the preceding context was a complaint, on the part of one of our Lord's disciples, of the obscurity, and inconsistency with all their previous notions, of some part of what He had been just declaring, and the consequent explanation which that complaint elicited from the Redeemer. The explanation, however, was obviously of such a kind that,—while it contained a direct reply to the difficulty actually alleged by Judas respecting the reasons of the difference between believers and the world, in the manifestation of Jesus to be made to them respectively after His triumph and His glorification,—it still left them, in many particulars, under the power of those misconceptions and prejudices respecting the character of the Messiah's work and reign which lay at the root of their specific objections and perplexities from time to time expressed. Jesus, therefore, in order to relieve His followers from any feeling of unsatisfactoriness which they

might entertain in reference to the explanations He had given, or any part of the doctrine He had taught, refers them to the provision He had made for their ultimate illumination and instruction by the coming of the Holy Ghost, and encourages them to bear with patience, for the present, whatever obscurities might hang about the doctrine He had personally taught, under the firm persuasion that the dawning of a brighter day was nigh at hand, when “in the light of God they should see light,” and all their difficulties should be solved by an infallible Interpreter:—“These things I have spoken unto you, being yet with you;” that is, I have fully and distinctly delivered to you the truth with which I am intrusted; it was my part to make the statements,—it is the part of another fully to unfold their meaning, and to clear away the obscurity with which, to your apprehensions, they appear beset; “but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit,”—appellations which we have already explained with abundance of illustration and detail,—“whom the Father shall send in my name,”—that is, from regard to me and to my prayers,—“He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

It is worthy of remark in passing, that the insertion of the word “He” between the appellation “the Holy Ghost” and the verbs with which that appellation agrees, as well as the whole tenor and character of the passage, render it one of the most distinct attestations to the personality of the Holy Ghost which the Sacred Volume contains. And having called your attention by the way to this remark,—which formerly we illustrated at sufficient length,—we proceed to observe that the office here ascribed to this Divine and Celestial Agent is twofold,—the office, in the first place, of communicating new truth to the apostles’ mind,

and, in the second, of recalling to their memories the truth before communicated by their Lord.

First, it is said,—“ He shall teach you all things,” that is, obviously, all things which it concerned them to know; all things in which they might justly expect to be instructed; all things of which the knowledge was requisite to qualify them for the discharge of their apostolic function,—the foundation and the erection of the kingdom of heaven. In this sense, as denoting the knowledge of *all necessary truths*, expressions which literally taken would signify a strict Omniscience are frequently employed in Holy Writ; as when our Lord again remarked in reference to the teaching of the Spirit, “ He shall guide you into all truth,”—when, in allusion, no doubt, to these, the promises of his Master, our evangelist observes in his first epistle, “ Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things,”—or when the royal preacher delivers it, as at once, the result of his own enlarged observation and experience, and the dictate of the heavenly inspiration that breathed within him, “ Evil men understand not judgment, they that seek the Lord understand all things.”* It is the whole circle and mass of truths necessary to be known by the first teachers of religion that is here opposed to the instructions they had hitherto enjoyed,—adapted as these had been to the weakness of their understanding and to the peculiarity of their circumstances, and, for that reason, falling short of absolute perfection.

‘It entered,’ to use the language of a modern writer,† ‘into the scheme of Divine Wisdom, that while the Messiah was actually sojourning among men, and was pursuing the preliminary objects of His mission, the truth

* John xvi. 13; 1 John ii. 20; Prov. xxviii. 5.

† Pye Smith.

concerning His person and His offices,' and the whole doctrine of His religion, should be slowly and gradually unfolded, and that even His most intimate friends and followers should not be suddenly and at once set free from the dominion of the prejudices and obscurities of conception in reference to the kingdom of heaven which prevailed throughout the Jewish nation at large; and, although 'such a plan of studied reserve and slow development would not have been chosen or approved by human wisdom, yet, whether we can penetrate the reasons for it or not, the fact itself is indisputable, that such was the course adopted' by the Author and Finisher of our faith, and, just because it was adopted by Him, the wisest and best which, in the circumstances, could have been pursued. The reasons of this mysterious procedure are nowhere fully and distinctly stated in the Bible itself. Only this much is plainly intimated, that, in order to the disciples being made capable of fully and clearly comprehending the truth, without suffering, in the mental revolution, so great a shock as should be highly prejudicial to their intellectual and moral health, it was requisite that they should be conducted through a lengthened course of training and of discipline,—that their perceptions should be quickened, and their faculties invigorated, by that indwelling Spirit whose office was not more to reveal the truth, than to make them capable of bearing it, and whose descent, for reasons of which even we can perceive the wisdom, was to be the consequence and the demonstration of the Saviour's ascent to glory. "I have yet many things to say unto you," our Lord remarks in a subsequent part of this very discourse, "but ye cannot bear them now." To the same effect it is observed by the evangelist Mark, in reference to one memorable series of parabolical instructions delivered early in the course of our

Saviour's public ministry,—“ With many other parables spake He unto them, as they were able to hear it.” And,—recognising the same principle of accommodating the quantity and quality of the instruction delivered to the degree in which the previous spiritual discipline of His disciples had made them capable of turning it to good account,—the apostle Paul, once and again, expresses his regret that those to whom he wrote required to be “ fed with milk and not with strong meat,” “ because,” he adds in one case, “ ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.”*

That the incapacity of the apostles for understanding and receiving more of Christ's celestial doctrine than they did receive arose from their own fault, and is therefore in several places spoken of in the language of blame, is certain. And yet, on the other hand, it is obvious that, had it been essential to their Master's plan that they should early rise superior to the prejudices of their condition, and become capable of receiving a full illumination from above, He wanted not the means to have at once dispelled all the errors and all the obscurities with which their conceptions were chargeable, and introducing them at once into all the truth. If, therefore, their comparative ignorance was justly chargeable upon themselves, as implying misimprovement of privileges and opportunities before enjoyed,—still there must have been ulterior reasons why Jesus did not interfere to cure even their blameable ignorance; as He would have done had it been necessary for the plan which He had ordained for the first promulgation of the gospel, and as He did when it became necessary in the actual prosecution of that plan. One of

* John xvi. 12; Mark iv. 33; 1 Cor. iii. 2.

these reasons, we doubt not, was to put honour on the Holy Ghost, and to prevent the disciples from feeling it a degradation and a loss when, in the progress of the Divine economy, they passed over from the teaching of the Son to that of the Spirit. It was reserved to be a point of advantage in the dispensation of the Spirit over that of the Saviour's personal ministry, and a topic of consolation, therefore, in the prospect of the latter being superseded by the former. Such is the view of the fact presented to us in the verse before us. The apostles are there invited to look forward to the advent of the Paraclete consequent on the departure of the Saviour as that which should be the means of unfolding to them, in full and bright illumination, the truths which, dimly shining from their Master's words through the hazy mists of long-cherished prejudice, had hitherto appeared so ill-defined and wavering and dim. For it was to be the Spirit's office to act at once as a Revealer and a Remembrancer,—to make known to the disciples whatever amount of truth untaught before was necessary to complete the system and the circle of Christianity, and to recall to their recollection all the intimations, obscure at first, which they used, in the days of their Master's flesh, to receive from Him of truths to be more fully developed, and more distinctly defined, thereafter:—“He shall teach you all things, and shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said to you.”

To the fulfilment of the latter part of this most memorable promise, the divine composition in which that promise is embodied and inhaled, and the illustration of which has now so long engaged our attention,—not unaccompanied, I trust, with holy edification and delight,—is a standing and conspicuous proof. By the aids of that promised Spirit it was, that the blessed evangelist was enabled to

recall and to record, with such minuteness of detail, those inestimable discourses of which the greater part of this thrice-precious document consists, fresh and unmingled as they proceeded from the lips of Him who spake as never man spake,—into whose lips grace was poured,—from whose mouth salvation flowed. The confidence which we have that this, the assurance of “the Faithful and True Witness” whose words can in no wise pass away, would certainly, in point of fact, be fulfilled, is one main foundation on which we rest our belief in the inspiration of the apostolic records of our Master’s life,—and not of those alone, but of all the writings which apostles have bequeathed to the church in professed exposition of that religion of which they were appointed the authorized interpreters and heralds. The former case is provided for in the clause of the promise which declares, “He shall bring all things to your remembrance;” the latter, in the part of the prediction which assures them, “He shall teach you all things.”

One important consequence there is following from the view here given of the imperfect knowledge which, during the days of the Redeemer’s flesh, even His most intimate followers enjoyed of the truth relating to His person, His work, and His religion, and the large additions and clearer illustrations which that knowledge was to receive from subsequent communications; and it is this,—that ‘we should always study the doctrines and discourses of Jesus Christ by the aid of a constant comparison with the apostolic writings, which were intended from the beginning to be the ministration of the Spirit in the full and final development of the Christian system.’ You may be aware that many of the opponents of what we justly account the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, have insisted much on

the comparative infrequency and obscurity with which the all-important truths of the Divinity and the atonement of Christ are taught in the recorded discourses of our Lord Himself, and the apparent ignorance of His own disciples and constant attendants respecting any such extraordinary facts. Some among them have even ventured so far as to represent the statements of Jesus and His followers not as coincident, but as conflicting, authorities, and to proclaim it as the watchword of the religion they profess, 'Not Paul but Jesus.' Now, independently of the exaggeration and the overstatement with which they are chargeable in relation to the facts, as if it could be truly said that the allusions to the Divinity and to the atonement of Christ Jesus contained in the gospels were really as few and faint as they allege,—we have, in the fact which the text discloses, that which makes it a presumption, not against, but for, the doctrines in question, that they were obviously more clearly communicated to the disciples after their Lord's departure than before, more distinctly apprehended by them, and more explicitly proclaimed. Jesus had Himself assured them that this would be the case,—that the disclosures of celestial truth which they would receive from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost would be vastly more ample and detailed, and the knowledge which they would acquire, both from these new disclosures, and from His own discourses miraculously recalled to their remembrance, infinitely more extended and more accurate. Therefore it is, that, in expounding to you this precious portion of the Sacred Record,—in which the Incarnate Son appears so often delivering in person the oracles of everlasting truth,—we have not confined our illustrations to the statement of that which the disciples might gather at the time from the announcements of their Master, but have endeavoured

to view all His declarations in the light of that more complete illumination which was afterwards reflected on them by the complete development of the Christian scheme, and the complete exhibition of the Christian revelation. And therefore it is, that all who, in support of their opinions, appeal from the views of the apostles after the descent of the Spirit, to those which they held before the departure of the Saviour, do, by the very fact, confess that, before their sentiments can assume even the semblance of Christian truth, they must be withdrawn from under the beams of meridian revelation into the dim twilight of a merely preparatory dispensation, when truths imperfectly disclosed were still more imperfectly perceived.

Jesus, having thus, for the consolation of His followers in the prospect of His departure, told them that they should not be losers in respect of knowledge, proceeds to complete the consolation by assuring them that, in like manner, they should be no sufferers in respect of enjoyment; that the diffusion of a holy light through their minds should be accompanied by the diffusion of a holy peace through their hearts:—"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you."

The peace of which our Redeemer is speaking here is, obviously, that blessed calm and tranquillity of soul which is the opposite of what we mean by mental perturbation, convulsion, and storm; the reverse, more especially, of those agitating emotions of sorrow and of fear particularized in the conclusion of the verse:—"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." There were many circumstances in the prospect which lay before our Lord's disciples calculated to excite either of these painful emotions in their breast,—to overwhelm them with sorrow and

dismay. But even in these circumstances, their Master addresses to them the admonition, that they should learn to moderate at once their regrets and their apprehensions; that they should beware of suffering such emotion to get the mastery of their souls. For why, He had provided for them a sacred and celestial peace,—an inward store of tranquil and reposing happiness,—of depth and energy sufficient, if applied to that purpose, to prove itself an antagonist, and a victorious power, against all the agitating forces of this tempestuous world. This holy and celestial peace,—“the peace of God,” as it is termed by the apostle, “which passeth all understanding,”*—is that which has its main fountain in the persuasion that God loves us; that Jehovah is our Father, that Jesus is our Friend, that the Holy Ghost is our perpetual Paraclete. How ample a provision is there not contained in the assurances to this effect which the preceding part of this chapter embodies, for maintaining the tranquillity of the disciples’ mind in the peculiar circumstances of grief and terror in which they were placed by the anticipation of their Master’s near departure! To be assured,—as they had been, with such strength and variety of expression, assured,—that the Father Himself loved them, and would dwell with them for ever; that Jesus, though, in visible appearance, rapt away, would still be near, affectionately near, them; and that, besides the presence of the Father and the Son, their souls should become the peculiar residence of the Eternal Spirit of truth and holiness and joy,—that it should be His to lead them into all truth, to direct them in all perplexity, to encourage them amidst every danger, to console them under every sorrow;—surely

* Phil. iv. 7.

in all this there was a ground of peace set before them which, even in prospect of that formidable event on account of which sorrow had filled their hearts,—the loss of their beloved Lord,—might well make the admonition seem appropriate, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

Yet not to the apostles is this ground of holy and celestial peace confined, nor its application limited to the particular circumstances in which the apostles stood. Oh, for believers, in any circumstances of trial or of fear, to know that nothing can befall them, whether pleasing or painful, except by the permission and appointment of one who loves them with more than a father’s tenderness, and more than a father’s wisdom,—that, even when involved in circumstances of extremest affliction and most formidable terror, they have His inviolable pledge that, while they cleave to Him, no real evil can befall them, no real plague come nigh them,—that, while He permits the trials of His people to continue for the sake of ends in order to which they would themselves have chosen to be afflicted, He pities their pangs, and sympathizes with their sorrows,—that when the high and precious ends for which affliction was appointed shall have been fulfilled, He will grant them a happy issue from them all, and finally, a glorious entrance into that world of pure delight where “sorrow and sighing shall flee away,” where “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;” for Christians to know that in Jesus they have “not such an High Priest as cannot be touched with a feeling of their infirmities,” but one who, even from the throne of eternity, is bending down on them the glance of fraternal sympathy, and sending forth to them the tokens of His affectionate remembrance,—one who is “anointed to bind up the broken-hearted, and to

comfort all that mourn,—to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;” for Christians to know that in the Holy Spirit of promise they have one prepared to be the helper of their infirmities, and, even in those hours of mysterious and overmastering emotion, of dim and voiceless agony, for which articulate language contains no suitable expression, to “make intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered;”—have they not in all this the materials of an inward and abiding peace such as no tribulations should be able to dispel or to disturb,—such as, when even the wildest blasts of this convulsed and agitated world are howling around them, should make perpetual light and music in the sanctuary of the soul, that sits reposing on the promise of its God, and only feels more vividly the holy calm within from the contrast with the storm that howls without?

This peace the Saviour promises under the appellation of *His* peace, that is, the peace which He, and He alone, has to bestow; and concerning it He says:—“Peace I leave with you,”—When I depart, my peace shall remain behind, to be for ever your companion and your comforter; the enjoyment of that celestial peace does not depend upon my bodily presence; it may be, and shall be, continued when I am gone, and prove itself an effectual antidote to the bitterness of that bereavement;—“My peace I give unto you,”—I solemnly confer on you the right, and entreat you daily to improve the inestimable privilege, of taking for your own, of considering as addressed specifically to you, all those assurances and promises from the belief of which that peace arises. “Not as the world giveth,” the Saviour adds, “give I unto you.” All the peace the world

has to bestow is, at the best, but superficial and external, so that, in the enjoyment of all that it can bestow to produce contentment, satisfaction, and repose, the heart shall be only torn and rent,—heaving with the storm and swell of uncontrollable distress, “like the troubled sea when it cannot rest.” Christ’s peace, on the other hand, is profound and spiritual; reaching to the deepest springs of feeling; and in the heart as its peculiar sphere, laying to rest the turbulence of passion, and saying to the convulsed and labouring spirit, “Peace, be still!”—The peace which the world bestows is uncertain and inconstant,—liable to interruption and extinction by every change of circumstances in this troubled scene of perpetual fluctuation. Christ’s peace is solid, stable, and immutable. Although, peradventure, those to whom it appertains may, by their own fault and folly, suffer it to be disturbed, from time to time, in their own souls, by the eruption of evil passions, or the influence of external circumstances, yet this is their infirmity; the grounds on which it rests are unchangeable as the oath and the throne of the Eternal,—His oath, by which the covenant of His peace is ratified,—His throne, under which that covenant is secured. The peace which the world has to bestow is that which death affrights and eternity extinguishes for ever.—The Saviour’s peace is that which converts death into a messenger of joy, and eternity into the scene of boundless blessedness and glory.—To all which add that, even in respect of that slight, and changeable, and perishable peace which the world has to bestow, she often promises far more than she performs; while the promises of Jesus, in the experience of all who cast their souls upon Him in cordial submission and reliance, are evermore not merely realized, but outdone, by the accomplishment.

And who would not desire to secure, as his own portion and inheritance, that holy and celestial peace which Jesus here confers on His disciples? That peace, it is still the office, it is still the delight, of Jesus to bestow. Seek to obtain it, brethren, in the cordial acceptance of His gospel as the record of eternal truth, the charter of everlasting hope,—of Himself as your all-sufficient Saviour, your acknowledged and most rightful Governor and Lord. So shall you find that there are indeed “peace and joy in believing;” a peace which the world cannot give and cannot take away,—which shall diffuse itself like a holy unction all around, stilling the stormy waters through which your voyage lies over life’s perilous sea, and shall brood at last, a spirit of undisturbed calm, over that bright ocean of eternal blessedness

‘ Where ye shall bathe your weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across your peaceful breast.’

LECTURE XVII.

CHAP. XIV. 28—31.

“Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.”

IN this passage, Jesus concludes the first part of the consolatory discourse delivered by Him, upon the vespers of the Passion, to those affectionate disciples over whose minds the prospect of His departure had shed so deep and so disastrous a gloom. And He begins His peroration, so to call it, by distinctly adverting to the main circumstance which had given occasion to the whole address,—the intimations which He had, more than once of late, been giving them, that the period was at hand when the decease should be fulfilled which He was destined to accomplish at Jerusalem:—“Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away.” But He goes on to remind them, that this was not the whole of His statement,—that there was a counterpart assurance always to be borne in mind, in order that they might have the case fully before them, and look upon it with that balance of feelings which, contemplated in its circumstances

and all its bearings, it was fitted to inspire,—a balance in which the causes of joy and triumph should be felt infinitely to outweigh those of disappointment and regret. “Ye have heard,” says He, “how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you;” referring, as we have already seen at length, partly to His *visible* return to them after His resurrection from the dead,—partly to the invisible, but most real and most influential, presence in which He visited them and remained beside them, and has promised to continue with His Church at all times, “even to the end of the world,”—partly to His coming forth to welcome each individual believer at the gate of Paradise, as he takes his departure to be with Christ,—and partly, in fine, to His advent at the great day of His glorious appearing, to receive the whole risen and immortal Church into His everlasting kingdom.

Jesus, however, was willing that the disciples should draw their consolations, in prospect of His departure, not merely from the lower considerations of the effect which it would have on their condition, but from the purer, loftier, and more generous contemplation of the results it would have on His. He now appeals, in order to reconcile them to the approaching event, not simply to their concern for themselves, but to their love for Him; applying to His peculiar case that rich consolation which, in more ordinary instances of bereavement, it is still the happiness of Christians to enjoy in reference to Christians gone, when they consider that the survivor's loss is the departed's gain:—“If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father.”

Of course, in using the expression, “If ye loved me,” Jesus entertained no doubt of the sincerity of the disciples' attachment and regard. His words are obviously to be

interpreted according to that customary figure of speech by which words, in addition to their accustomed signification, are employed to indicate something connected with it as a quality, adjunct, or condition. The meaning obviously is:—If ye loved me as ye ought,—if you regarded me with an enlightened attachment,—if your affection rested on a just acquaintance with all the circumstances, and, more especially, with all the results which are to ensue from my departure in reference to myself,—the sentiment of affection in your hearts, that pure and generous emotion which finds one of its deepest satisfactions in the advantage and the happiness of the beloved object, would derive a deep and hallowed content from the prospects with which my departure hence is connected. And the first consideration which Jesus suggests as calculated, when rightly apprehended, to afford high gratification and delight to all those who truly loved Him, and therefore wished to see Him happy, is the fact that He was going to His Father,—to Him in whose bosom, the bosom of bliss unspeakable, He had reposed from everlasting, glorified with the glory which, before the world was, replenished and illumined the dwelling-place of Him who inhabiteth eternity. This glory and felicity He had, in some mysterious sense, for a season laid aside. Of this, to use the strong expression of St. Paul, He had “emptied himself,” when He took into indissoluble sympathy and union with the eternal Godhead a feeble and suffering humanity. But into the full inheritance of that glory and felicity He entered once again when He ascended, God-man, into the immediate presence and communion of the Father,—being, both as the only-begotten Son of God, and as the perfected Redeemer of men, glorified once more with “the glory which He had with the Father before the world was,” and

made "most blessed for ever in the light of His" paternal "countenance."

The second reason which Jesus gives for the affectionate rejoicing of the disciples in the prospect of His departure to be with the Father, is more obscurely expressed when He adds, "My Father is greater than I."

These words have been grasped with extraordinary eagerness by those who oppose the glorious doctrine of our Lord's supreme Divinity, as if they contained a strong disavowal on His part that He possessed any claim to Divine prerogatives and honours, or, at least, an intimation that, according to the Arian hypothesis, He was only a subordinate and secondary Deity,—entitled to the name of God only on the same principle, though perhaps in a higher degree, on which that appellation is ascribed to created thrones and dominions on earth and in heaven. In answer, however, to such arguments as these,—opposed to a doctrine which is elsewhere written as with a sun-beam in the Sacred Oracles, and not with least distinctness in the divine book before us,—the doctrine that Jesus, though sprung "from the seed of David according to the flesh," was none other by original dignity than "God over all and blessed for evermore,"—the adherents of that doctrine have conclusively observed, that there is nothing in the truth which they maintain, viewed in its fulness and its symmetry, inconsistent with the remark of Jesus, "The Father is greater than I." We maintain, not merely that Jesus was, by original dignity, God, but that He became, by voluntary condescension, man,—“the Word was God,” “the Word became flesh,”—and that as man, though, by His personal union with Divinity, the most dignified of all created natures, yet still, He was a creature, and, as such, inferior to the Father. We hold, not

merely that, as man, He is by birth and nature, but that, as God-man,—our Redeemer-Mediator between God and man,—He is in office and function, subordinate to the Father. Throughout the whole of this discourse,—throughout the whole of this gospel,—throughout the whole prophetic and apostolic writings,—the Saviour is described as, in respect of office, the Messenger, the Minister, the Servant, of the Father, from whom He had received commission, and to whom He was to render account; for whose glory, and under whose authority, He spoke and acted at every step of His mediatorial ministry; and to whom, at the close of His mortal life, He thus discharged himself of His responsibility,—“ I have glorified Thee upon the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.” In both these senses,—viewed in His person as man, and viewed in His office as Mediator,—Christ is admitted by those who do most firmly believe, and most strenuously maintain, His essential and eternal Divinity, to be inferior to the Eternal Father; and in both these senses, therefore, have different interpreters explained the particular expression now before us, “The Father is greater than I.” I confess, however, that to my mind,—while either explanation is undoubtedly true in itself,—neither seems appropriate to the place which the words before us occupy. I do not perceive how the fact that, in respect either of His human nature or of His official function, Jesus was inferior to the Father, contains a very clear or intelligible reason why the disciples should rejoice in the prospect of His returning to the Father. I am therefore disposed to suggest a third view, which I have not seen proposed by commentators, and in which Jesus might not only truly but appropriately declare that the Father was greater than the Son,—and that is, not only in respect of nature, not

only in respect of office, but in respect of condition. "You know," my brethren, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that, though He was rich, He became poor,"—though He "was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, He yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."* Meantime, while the Eternal Son,—self-divested of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was,—was thus pursuing on the earth His overclouded path of shame and weariness and woe, "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,"—the Father, still enthroned on high in the central brightness of the inaccessible light, retained His glory uneclipsed, His felicity unimpaired; displaying still, in visible exhibition, the full majesty of the Supreme Divinity, and attracting to Himself the adorations of the heavens as "the Blessed and Only Potentate," the Immortal and Immutable Jehovah. With allusion, therefore, to this diversity of condition, as we suppose, the Incarnate Son, in these "the days of His flesh,"—the period of His humiliation,—alleged the argument that the Father was greater than He, in order to reconcile His disciples to the thought that He was now about to go unto the Father; implying that, in the very fact of going to be with one so much more glorious, so much more blessed, He should Himself become partaker of that superior glory and that superior blessedness. From the fact that the Father "is greater than all,"—that He is supreme over the universe in grandeur, in excellence, in felicity,—it follows

* 2 Cor. viii. 9; Phil. ii. 6—8.

that, in proportion as any intelligent being is brought nearer to Him, in that proportion he is exalted,—brought up from a lower to a loftier position in the scale of dignity and of enjoyment. And so, in respect of the Incarnate Son Himself, the statement that, while He tabernacled on the earth, the Father's condition was more glorious and more blessed than His, was the foundation of a most legitimate inference, that, in going to the Father, He should ascend, He should enjoy a vast advancement of condition, He should realize a gain unspeakable,—and therefore might expect that, by those who truly loved Him, the tidings should be received with joy, and not with grief,—should be the subject of congratulation, and not of complaint. Especially might it be expected that such should be the feelings of those who had gathered, from the frequent intimations He had given of His primeval dignity, that His inferiority to the Father was not natural but assumed,—the result of voluntary condescension, of a humiliation chosen and endured to serve a special end. They might readily conjecture, that for one whose voluntary descent from heaven to earth it was that made it possible for Him to say, “The Father is greater than I,”—for such an one to return to the Father,—was for Him to resume His former majesty,—to put on again “the form of God,”—to make again conspicuous His equality with God,—to be “glorified” once more “with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.” To those who had entered so far as this into “the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh,”—to them at least the argument would appear at once most luminous and most convincing, “If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I.”

In the 29th verse, Jesus, with reference to the intiina-

tions He had been giving of His approaching departure, repeats what, in the 19th verse of the chapter preceding, He had said, in predicting the first step towards it, the dark treason of Iscariot:—"Now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe."

One great object contemplated in all the prophecies with which the discourses of Jesus and the Holy Books at large are studded is this,—that the correspondence of the event with the prediction may be, to all who can compare the two, the proof that He who delivered the oracle which the result has ratified is indeed the messenger of Him "who seeth the end from the beginning," who "frustrateth the tokens of the liars and maketh diviners mad," but who "confirmeth the word of His servants, and performeth the counsel of His messengers." Yet it is worthy of particular observation in this particular case, with what holy and benevolent ingenuity Jesus provides, by the prediction to which the text refers,—the prediction of His own departure,—that the event which would otherwise have proved the disappointment of all their hopes, the overthrow and ruin of their faith, might become, except for their own fault, only a fresh argument to hope even against hope, and not to "stagger at the promise of God through unbelief." True, when the exigency came,—when Jesus was at length torn from their embraces by the hand of perfidy and ruthless cruelty,—some of them, at least, through forgetfulness of His parting words, seem to have failed in gathering from the circumstances of the case the confirmation and encouragement to their faith which even that sad and terrible event carried in its bosom. Still deeply imbued with those prejudiced conceptions of the Messiah's character and reign which represented Him as the destined Conqueror and Monarch of the world, to appear amidst a

blaze of earthly power and splendour such as never yet had dawned upon the eyes of men, and so to “reign upon mount Zion before His ancients gloriously,”—they seem to have looked upon the ignominies and the agonies with which they had seen Him driven out from the light of the living as affording the conclusive refutation of His claims. When Jesus bowed His head on the accursed tree, and rendered up His spirit, their hope too would appear to have become “like the giving up of the ghost;” and during the dreary day, and the two yet more dreary nights, during which their Master lay entombed, their expectations lay sunk and buried in His grave. “We trusted,” they exclaimed, “that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel.” Yet surely, had not their minds been stunned and stupefied with sorrow, they might have remembered His own words explicitly predicting, once and again, not only in general terms, but with detail of special circumstances, that dread catastrophe; and remembering these, they must have perceived that, so far from affording ground for aught of suspicion in derogation of His Divinity or His Messiahship, the actual occurrence of all the disasters and calamities, the insults and the cruelties, which He predicted, exactly as He predicted them, was the strongest proof of both which the case admitted of, and, as such, had been pressed by Jesus on their consideration in immediate prospect of that trying hour.

Meanwhile, the time that was thus to try the disciples' faith was approaching fast. With every sentence that the Saviour uttered, with every breath He drew, He perceived the distance between Him and His conflict sensibly diminishing; and therefore He gives His followers warning to store and treasure up His words in their deepest hearts, as these precious words were now well nigh His last. “Here-

after," says He, "I will not talk much with you;" and He adds the reason, "For the prince of this world cometh."

You know to whom the bad eminence belongs which this appellative denotes. It was an appellative, even before our Saviour's time, in use among the Jews, for that guileful and destroying angel who, having refused to keep his principality in heaven, having left his own habitation in proud revolt against the King of kings, and having, therefore, been hurled down to bottomless perdition, himself and all his host, by God's vindictive thunder,—stirred up with envy and revenge, invaded the holy bowers of Paradise, and seduced our original parents to join him in his base and ruinous rebellion; who, having thus laid the foundation of his malignant kingdom in our world, has ever since been employed in diffusing, cherishing, and ripening that moral evil, that alienation from God, that rebellion against God, which is his element and his delight, until, by its all but universal prevalence among mankind,—by the all but universal bondage in which he leads human spirits captive at his pleasure,—he has established only too good a claim to the title here assigned him by our Lord,—“the prince of this world,” or,—as, to the same effect, though, if possible, still more strongly, he is denominated by the apostle,—the demon or “god of this world,” the ruler of this darkness, “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Never, however, did he more distinctly prove himself the prince of this world, the ruler of this darkness, than in that “hour and power of darkness,” when he stirred against the Lord's Anointed “both Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the Gentiles, and the people of Israel,”—when, arrayed under his accursed banner, and goaded on by his fiery instigations, the powers of earth

combined with the principalities of hell to crush and overwhelm the mighty champion of Jehovah's glory and of man's salvation. For, that the dark angel of sin and death, the head of evil principalities and powers, took an active and presiding part in the instigation, the contrivance, and the execution, of that unparalleled crime by which the Prince of life was slain, the Lord of glory crucified, is plain from many intimations of Holy Writ; as well as that the Adversary-tyrant seized that hour of direst extremity when, in his body and his soul, the Saviour was called to struggle with ten thousand meeting agonies, from human cruelty and from Almighty vengeance, in order to let loose upon his human soul the whole collected might of hell, the uttermost resources of fiendish fraud and force and fury. This was the vision that now flashed upon the inward eye of Jesus, and bade Him, in what remained of His discourse, be brief. He saw the monarch of the pit assembling his pale terrific bands; He saw the spiritual wickednesses mustered and marshalled for the onset; He saw the plans of their human instruments completed, the high priest and his satellites convening; the traitor's lantern lighted, the armed men girding on their swords and grasping their gnarled staves; He saw the hostile troops in motion, with their leader, the lost archangel, at their head, advancing with still accelerated pace, and rushing upon Him single-handed, as at the charging step,—and Lo! he exclaimed, “the prince of this world cometh.”

But did He quail or tremble, think you, in prospect of that tremendous conflict? Did He for a moment sink in flat despair, or even did He count the struggle of doubtful issue, when alone He stood against the ruler of the darkness, and the armed might of all his malignant empire? Far other, my brethren, were the feelings that nerved His

steadfast heart, and breathed in His calmly resolute expressions:—"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me;" that is, There is nothing in my nature or my character,—nothing in me or about me, of which he can take advantage; he can obtain no hold of me; he can secure no success against me. True, the dread crime was consummated which Satan put it into the heart of Judas and the Jews, of Pilate and the Gentiles, to commit against the Lord of life and glory. The serpent bruised the Anointed's heel, and perhaps for one brief moment thought, when "the seed of the woman" hung expiring on the tree,—such was his short-sighted folly,—that his machinations had prevailed to the ruin of the Saviour's enterprise. Against any such imagination, however, as utterly unfounded and unjust, Jesus is careful, in the text, to guard His disciples' minds, by explaining to them, first, what was not, and secondly, what was, the reason of the death which was now impending over Him.

The Epistle to the Hebrews describes the devil as armed with the "power of death;" meaning, that it is as slaves of Satan that men at large are the victims of dissolution,—as sinners that we die. Not such, however, was the death of Jesus; not as Himself a sinner, the subject of the Evil One, did Christ expire. This seems, indeed, to have been the main end and object to compass which the Enemy assailed the mind of Jesus with the utmost terrors and resources of temptation, in that fearful hour when even His great soul seemed ready to sink beneath the weight of crushing agony. The tempter knew that could he but extort from the suffering humanity of that Holy One of God an act, a word, a feeling, or a thought, in any, the minutest, degree diverging from the duty,—the duty of unparalleled severity and arduousness,—which His

Father then required of Him, the victory would have been secured for hell,—the life of Jesus would have been forfeited on His own account,—the sacrifice would have been tainted, and so the redemption must have ceased for ever,—Messiah would have been cut off, cut off for Himself, and His sacred life have become the conquest and the prey of “him who hath the power of death, that is, the devil.” I speak, my brethren, the demon’s thoughts; God forbid that we should entertain them as expressing the actual, the possible, event. Says Jesus,—“The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” The Saviour’s death was no indication of the tempter’s victory; nay rather, it was the means of the tempter’s overthrow. “By dying, He destroyed death, and him that had the power of death.” On the cross, “He spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them in it.”* The true account of the Messiah’s death was, not that He sank under the power of Satan, but that He was constrained by the love of God:—“That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.” His death was the grand appointed means by which the honour of the Eternal’s character and government was to be asserted upon earth in the salvation of lost men. As such, it had formed the subject of a solemn compact between the Father and the Son, in the august recesses of primeval eternity; and so, the subject of a high command on the part of the Eternal, when, according to the provisions of the covenant of peace, the Only-begotten entered on His work as the Servant and Minister of the Most High. Thus it was, that for Jesus, though “without sin,” to die, was a proof of love, and a part of

* Heb. ii. 14; Col. ii. 15.

obedience, to the Father. Herein, therefore, lay the necessity which bound Him on the altar, which consigned Him to the grave,—that in the face of man, in the face of the gazing universe, He might afford a demonstration, such as has never before or since been given, of love and loyalty to God. Therefore it was, that, when called to become “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” He went forward to the conflict with a certain divine and awful satisfaction, exclaiming,—“Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.” Therefore it was, that, knowing what awaited Him without,—that in crossing the threshold of that retired and consecrated chamber, and setting out upon a journey which led, by three melancholy stages, to the garden of mysterious agony, to the tribunal of unjust condemnation, to the tree of agony and shame and Almighty malediction,—He did not shrink nor hesitate, but, with steadfast heart and high, invited His disciples to attend Him on that awful journey, and to observe, in the resignation, the patience, the alacrity, with which He should encounter its unimagined horrors, the proof how fervently He loved the Father,—how fully He was prepared, as the Father gave Him commandment, even so to do. “Arise,” He says, “let us go hence.”

In conclusion, brethren, let us, with profoundest amazement and gratitude, remember that, while in the prospect and the endurance of that mighty agony which purchased pardon, the force which sustained the Saviour’s spirit was the energy of love, it was a love which flowed not merely upwards to the Everlasting Father, but downwards to us unworthy. Herein indeed the love of Christ is manifested, that He laid down His life for us. He loved us, and gave Himself for us. Let the love of Christ constrain us; and

let us, from His bright example, learn to make it henceforward the great object of our lives that we may show our love to God by the keeping of His commandments,—that, at what expense soever of toil and sacrifice and suffering, we may glorify Him upon the earth, and may finish the work which He has given us to do. So, having followed Him in the course of duty, we shall follow Him at last along the path to heaven; ascending to His Father and our Father—to His God and our God; and, as it were, addressing those, with our departing breath, who may honour us so far as to regret our loss, even as our Lord addressed His mourning followers,—“If ye loved us, ye would rejoice, because we go unto the Father.”

LECTURE XVIII.

CHAP. XV. 1, 2.

“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.”

THE last words on which we commented, as addressed by Jesus to His disciples, were these,—“Arise, let us go hence.” It is obvious, therefore, that between the close of the fourteenth, and the opening of the fifteenth, chapter, some considerable movement and change of position had taken place among the inmates of that upper chamber at Jerusalem where the interesting discourses had been delivered which have been engaging our attention. But to what length the movement had proceeded, and in what situation the little sacred band of Jesus and His followers were placed, when the former proceeded with the exhortations in the chapter now before us, has been the subject of considerable difference of opinion among interpreters. Many suppose that these were delivered after the company had arisen in obedience to the direction in the verse preceding, but before they finally left the chamber of passover and eucharist. In confirmation of their opinion, they appeal to the commencement of the eighteenth chapter, where, not till after the conclusion of our Lord’s discourse addressed to His disciples, and of His intercessory prayer

directed to His Father, it is said:—"When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth,"—that is, as these interpreters suppose, He left the house with His disciples. Those who are of this opinion further conjecture,—in order to account for the sudden and abrupt transition to the image of the vine,—that the chamber-window may have looked out upon a vineyard near, or even that some spreading vine may have been trained against the walls of the house itself, and, fringing the casement with its ample verdure, may have caught the Saviour's eye as He arose, suggesting that picturesque and vivid image of the union between Himself and His disciples on which He here expatiates; or they observe, that the very wine upon the table which had been provided for the paschal feast, and with which He had so recently crowned the cup of eucharist and blessing,—“the fruit of the vine,” as He Himself had termed it,—may have given the first origin and impulse to the train of association of which we have the result and development before us. I confess, however, that, for my own part, I am much more disposed,—though feeling that the case does not admit of absolute certainty,—to join in opinion with those who think that this and the two following chapters contain what fell from our Redeemer after leaving the place of sacred festival, and setting out upon His journey to Gethsemane. In the first place, I do not see why the parenthesis with which the last chapter concludes, “Arise, let us go hence,” should have been introduced at all unless to intimate that the Saviour with His followers did then in fact arise, and in fact go thence. Again, it seems quite obvious that, in the passage before us, we have the commencement of a new discourse on the part of Jesus, distinct and separate from that in the chapter preceding,—referring, indeed, to the same general subject,

but not cohering with the former so as to suggest the idea of its being a simple sequel and continuation. Once more, I find it said in the commencement of the seventeenth chapter, "These words spake Jesus and lifted up His eyes to heaven,"—an expression which, as well as the corresponding phrases of lifting up, or spreading forth, the hands to heaven, is always used in the Bible of worship rendered in the open air, under the cope of the ethereal firmament. And lastly, the statement in the beginning of the eighteenth chapter, that Jesus "went forth," does not of necessity denote His going out of some particular dwelling, but may very properly describe His going forth beyond what was strictly the precincts of the city, as He did by the act of crossing the torrent of Kedron. The order of occurrences I suppose to have been the following:—In obedience to their Master's direction in the close of the last chapter, the disciples arose from the couches that encircled the paschal board, and girt themselves for their nocturnal walk. Leaving that hallowed chamber, they passed in silence along the streets of the slumbering city, till they reached the path that, sloping down mount Zion, led to the valley of the Kedron, by which the sacred hill was separated from the opposite mount of Olives. Somewhere on or near that for the present unfrequented path they paused, adjacent to some verdant and exuberant vineyard,—for with these we know the banks of the Kedron were abundantly adorned,—which, gleaming in the pale moonlight with its broad foliage and its purple clusters, and testifying by easily-distinguished tokens to the care and prudent culture which its keeper had bestowed, gave apt and beautiful occasion for that image with which the Master resumed the train of His parting consolations and instructions,—“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.”

All who are in any degree acquainted with our Lord's manner,—of which we have so many instances in the Gospels,—of founding His instructions on allusions to points of natural scenery, or circumstances of actual occurrence, around, will feel the intrinsic probability of the supposition we have made. But whatever may be our particular judgment respecting the circumstances in which the parable before us was delivered, and the accession of picturesque associations and immediate effect which it may have derived from these; certain it is that, viewed in itself, apart from all local and circumstantial peculiarities, few images can be conceived setting forth in a more lively and interesting form the importance and the necessity of their vital union with Himself, in order, at once, to their spiritual safety, and to their spiritual fruitfulness.

“I am the vine,” says Jesus,—that is, I occupy to the church the relation, I discharge to them the function, which the vine-stock and its roots bear and perform to the shoots and branches; I am the channel through which my disciples derive all their spiritual life, and vigour, and productiveness. There are those who limit the application of this striking image of intimate and efficacious union to the Saviour, to the case of the apostles, and to the dependence which they were to feel on Jesus, and the help which they were to receive from Jesus, in the discharge of their apostolic ministry. Now, it is by all means to be acknowledged and remembered in the interpretation of this discourse, that it was originally addressed to the eleven, for their immediate instruction and consolation; but that it was addressed to them in their whole character,—at once as believers and as apostles,—and that, while we should be cautious of rashly generalizing and extending what refers to them peculiarly under the latter character, we are

not only warranted, but bound, to apply whatever our Master said to them in their capacity of believers on His name to all who have received "like precious faith" with them. The whole context of the passage now before us, compared with parallel and analogous passages in which the statements and promises here contained are distinctly extended to all the faithful, sufficiently assure us that the parable with which this chapter commences is addressed to the eleven not simply as apostles, but as Christians; and that its commencement, therefore, asserts that they were indebted to their Divine Master, not only for the energy which characterized, and the success which followed, their apostolic labours, but for all that they possessed of Christian character and Christian comfort,—for all the capacities which they enjoyed of thinking and feeling, speaking and acting, in accordance with the will of God, and in due order towards the eternal inheritance, —for all their faith and love, for all their hope and holiness.

In reference to the epithet "true," which our Lord here attaches to the symbolic vine,—you must have observed that, according to His custom in this Gospel, the sensible and earthly, when employed as the image of the heavenly and divine, is always represented as something unsubstantial, imperfect, visionary, in contrast with the reality, the perfection, and the truth, of those celestial objects which it is used to shadow forth. As, in former parts of this Gospel, the Redeemer is described as "the true light," "the true bread;" so here we find Him taking the appellation of "the true vine,"—that is, He to whom all the qualities do with special truth belong of which the vine is here the emblem,—He who, in a nobler and more effectual way, performs to His believing people what the vine performs

to the branches which draw from it their life, their sap, their fruitfulness.

“And my Father,” it is added, “is the husbandman.” In conformity with the uniform doctrine of our Lord, ascribing to the Father Everlasting the supremacy in the whole contrivance and arrangement,—the whole commencement, progress, and completion,—of the method of human salvation, Jesus here describes the Father as the husbandman whose part it was to prepare the chosen soil; to plant the mystic vine; to graft appropriate shoots into the sacred stock; to cherish and direct its spreading and ascending growth; to protect it from the violence and the guile of the destroyers,—“the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines,”—the bear out of the forest that would rend them, the wild beast of the field that would devour them; to take His pastime and delight amidst its loveliness and vernal fragrance; and to gather for Himself the overflowing fruitage which shall at last be seen purpling every bough with its rich deliciousness. That is, in plain and literal expressions,—the Saviour here introduces the Eternal Father in the light in which many other passages of Scripture represent Him, as having made all necessary preparation and pre-arrangement for the manifestation and saving work of His Incarnate Son; as having at length appointed and constituted Him, as Mediator, the only channel of saving grace, and spiritual influence, to the children of men; as having united to His sacred person, so as to enjoy the benefits of His salvation, the whole community of converted men,—the whole vital church of them that shall be saved; as watching and promoting, with tenderest concern, the progress of the Saviour’s work and of His cause,—the growth of holy thought and feeling, of spiritual peace and joy, in the church at large, and in

each individual member of the church particularly; as watering the spiritual vineyard every moment, and “keeping it, lest any hurt it, night and day;” as regarding ever, with holy satisfaction and complacency, the spectacle of spiritual loveliness which Jesus and His people, united as one holy community, present, all fresh and fragrant with “the beauties of holiness;” and finally, as gathering at last from the whole mighty scheme of union between the Redeemer and His people, with all its productions and results, an abundant harvest of everlasting honour to the praise of His own glory,—“the praise of the glory of His grace.”

Of all the various functions, however, performed by the Sovereign Father on behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ, corresponding to those which the skilful and experienced husbandman discharges towards the vine which he cultivates and tends, our Saviour, in the 2d verse, selects two for more particular description:—“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.”

It is quite obvious from the explanations which have been already made, what is meant by the branches in the parable before us; and, indeed, it is specifically stated in the 5th verse, where, addressing His disciples as members and representatives of the visible Church, Jesus observes, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” That in the imagery of the text the denomination of “the branches” includes all the members of the visible, and not merely those of the vital and spiritual, Church, is obvious from the fact,—which the verse before us assumes,—that there are branches which are barren,—which are finally severed from the disburdened stock, and consigned as fuel ripe for

burning to the un pitying flame. The "branch that beareth not fruit" is obviously the symbol of an insincere, a self-deceived, or a hypocritical, professor of Christianity,—one who, while he holds, and glories, perhaps, in holding, an external and visible relation to the Church of Christ, yet shows that he is either involuntarily deceiving himself, or wilfully endeavouring to deceive others, by the fact that his profession is contradicted, or, at least, is not confirmed and verified, by his character. The satisfactory, the one satisfactory, test of sincerity which Jesus requires of His professed disciples is this,—a truly Christian character; and this He always represents as so natural, so necessary, a fruit of vital union to Himself, that He has once and again and frequently, with all solemnity, discharged us from supposing ourselves and others spiritually connected with His person, or interested in the blessings and the hopes of His salvation, unless we and they are found a "people zealous of good works," abounding in the work of the Lord, and fertile in the fruits of righteousness:—"By their fruits ye shall know them;" "If ye love me, keep my commandments;" "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say unto you?"*

Oh, how intensely solicitous, my brethren, should this consideration render us, in "examining ourselves whether we be in the faith,—in "proving our own selves,"—in ascertaining, by the appropriate test that Jesus Christ is in us, that we are indeed "partakers of the root and fatness" of that celestial stock! Alas! how many are there among those who, with the most solemn rites and ratifying mysteries, avow themselves the disciples of the Lord, and most confidently claim the privileges which union to

* Matt. vii. 16; John xiv. 15; Luke vi. 46.

Christ implies, to whom, nevertheless, it were a question admitting of no satisfactory reply, What are the fruits they bear as branches of the holy vine? Oh, let us recollect, my brethren, that they are no professions of outward ceremonial, no verbal testimonies from the lips, no feelings, sentiments, and impulses of the heart, which admit of being separated from sanctity of character and holiness of life,—that can prove a man a Christian, a Christian in spirit and in truth. Not foliage but fruit is what the Heavenly Vine-dresser requires. And let the unfertile branch put forth, in richest verdure, its luxuriant leaves,—let it twine its lithe gracefulness into the form most absolute and exquisite of sylvan beauty,—nay, let it inwreath and interweave itself into one mass and texture with the surrounding boughs, and clasp with tenacious tendrils whatever may outwardly connect it with the celestial stem,—it is, in the eye of Him who keepeth the holy vineyard with an omniscient inspection, as well as an omnipotent defence, a useless load, a noxious burden, a cumberer of the vine, and must ere long experience the sharpness of the severing steel, to relieve the encumbered stem from its weight of barren and superfluous verdure:—“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away,”—that is, All those whose professed and outward attachment to the Saviour is not verified by a Christian character and practice, God will finally expel from the communion of Jesus and His Church.

Even in this present time, the insincere professors of the Gospel,—the self-deceiver and the hypocrite,—may experience the fulfilment of this awful threatening, by being placed, in the course of God’s all-ruling providence, in circumstances which shall lay bare the hollowness of their profession; which shall expose them in their real

character before the eyes of men; which shall force on the conviction of all observers that they have neither part nor lot among the sanctified; and which shall visibly divide them even from the earthly fellowship of Christ and of His Church. But let the false professor enjoy even to the end of this vanishing life his usurped prerogatives and honours, as a member, acknowledged among men, of the visible community of Christians,—there comes an hour, an awful hour, of searching and infallible discrimination, before the blaze of which the self-deceiver's hope shall perish, and the confidence of the hypocrite shall be cut off. Death, the great undeceiver, and Judgment, the revealer of secrets, are at hand; and the test of that tremendous inquisition which shall sit at the day of dissolution, and the day of doom, on every spirit of man, is just the test which the text suggests,—the test of Christian character and Christian conduct. With the rigour of an omniscient examination, shall every branch be then inspected of the mystic vine, and of every branch the fruits of holy living be demanded; while on every one that has them not to show, the word, the condemning word, of the Most High,—“quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,”—shall fall, dividing it, at once and for ever, from the immortal Plant which shall for evermore adorn the Paradise of God,—rendering it useless to any end in the universe of good or of enjoyment. For so, concerning the unfruitful vine-branch torn from its stem, the prophet has strikingly observed,—“Is it meet for any work? behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel.”*

But while the Great Husbandman is thus careful to remove from the sacred vine the entirely barren boughs,

* Ezek. xv. 4.

not less is His diligence and skill displayed in the means which He employs to render the bearing branches productive more and more:—"Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

Our Heavenly Teacher, it is obvious, by the purgation of which He here speaks, alludes to the operations of the pruning-knife,—by which the art of the vine-dresser tames and coerces the gadding boughs; checking their involved and erratic lapse; preventing the tender shoots from running into dry impervious wood, and the prolific sap and vigour transmitted from the root from wasting itself on a prodigal and stifling exuberance of leaves. The value of the knife to each fruit-bearing bough, in lopping its wanton growth, and concentrating the vegetable vigour in the creation of a richer and more exquisite produce, is a thing of familiar knowledge to us all. Even so, it is a proof of the great Husbandman's regard to the vine which "His own hand hath planted, the branch which He hath made strong for Himself," that He does not spare, when needful, the salutary steel, nor suffer the superfluous shoots and suckers, with licentious overgrowth, to drain away the prolific juice, reserved for worthier purposes. For, like the unpruned and undirected vine, the soul of man,—even of regenerate man,—is ever ready, when withdrawn from under the control of strict and hardy discipline, to luxuriate into a swoln and barren rankness. Even the believer in the present state, when left too long unvisited by the severer applications of God's word and providence, is apt to feel a spirit of easy, self-indulgent, indolence creeping over his spiritual faculties, under which the display of Christian character, the exercise of Christian principles, the exhibition of Christian conduct, grows faint and languid; while, like a luxuriance of idle foliage, enfeebling

his soul's productive energies, a profusion of worldly tastes and principles and habits effloresces and overruns his soul. Nor will the Christian, aware, from observation and from experience, how naturally all this is the result of continued exemption from the severe, but salutary, discipline of the amputating knife, fail to consider it as a special privilege and cause of thankfulness to God, that, by His oracles of sharp rebuke, or His strokes of afflictive visitation, the Heavenly Husbandman is careful to tame and chastise, in all His chosen, the gadding luxuriance of their spirits, and,—scattering on the dust, or on the sweeping blast, the leafy honours with which they thought themselves so richly clad, stripping them bare of their dearest worldly hopes and secular delights,—to concentrate all their energies on the one great end and object of their regenerate being,—that they may “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of their Saviour,” and in meetness for the inheritance above, —that they may more and more “abound in every good word and work, which is, by Jesus Christ, to the glory and the praise of God.” However keen the stroke, however deep the wound,—though the biting steel has penetrated to the quick, and left him absolutely naked to the storm of outward beauty and defence,—this is the word on the faith of which he is patient and resigned, say rather, he glories even in tribulation,—that, by all this, the Celestial Husbandman is purifying his spiritual nature, that he may bring forth more abundant fruit; that, though “no chastening,” no reproof, “seemeth for the present to be joyous but grievous, yet afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness,” and that his “light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for” him at last “a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.” Gladly shall he feel himself ripening and maturing, by whatever

means, for that expected day when, transplanted from this ungenial atmosphere into the eternal paradise of God,—decked with unfading verdure, and laden on all its boughs with overflowing fruit, cheered by the sunshine of Jehovah's smile, and watered by the perennial streams of life, the holy vine which the Lord Himself shall then have brought out of Egypt, and planted securely in the heavenly Canaan, preparing room before it, shall stretch its fair and fertile branches immeasurably round, till it hath filled the land,—till its boughs are like the goodly cedars, and the hills of immortality are covered with its shade.

LECTURE XIX.

CHAP. XV. 3—6.

“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

THE Saviour, you may recollect, in the commencement of this chapter, had represented the general truth concerning the relation subsisting between Him and the visible Church by the image of a vine, with its multitude of branches; some of them fertile and productive in their measure, others utterly barren and useless; the latter destined to entire and remorseless abscission from the holy society to which they visibly belonged, the former intended to be gradually improved and strengthened in their spiritual productiveness by the pruning-knife of God's word and providence,—by the removal of all carnal and worldly excrescences and superfluities of idle foliage which might deaden and enfeeble the productive energy of the holy stock diffused into each individual branch and shoot. In the passage before us, the Heavenly Teacher proceeds to apply the general statements of the two preceding verses to the individual case of those to whom, in the first

instance, the parable of the vine was specifically addressed. He had spoken of two distinct classes of members in the visible Church,—the fruitful and the barren; those whose doom is to be finally among the reprobate,—and those to whom the promise appertains of progressive improvement in spiritual vitality and vigour, till they are transplanted to the Paradise on high, to flourish there in perfect beauty and perpetual fruitfulness. In the 3d verse, therefore, our Lord commences His application of the statements preceding to the particular case of the disciples, by stating,—for their comfort, encouragement, and excitement to abound in all the fruits of righteousness,—to which of these two classes they were, in His infallible judgment, to be assigned:—“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

In allusion to another figure which our Lord had then been employing to represent the same thing, we find Him, at the 10th verse of the thirteenth chapter, observing, “Ye are clean,” that is, as the context shows,—Ye have, with one exception, been bathed in the fountain, though still ye require from time to time to wash your feet; ye have been generally pardoned and regenerated, justified and cleansed, forgiven for all your past offences, and purified in the grand principles of your character and the main tenor of your lives,—but still, there are omissions and offences daily occurring in your practice, there are spots of defilement daily appearing on your character, which require you daily to have recourse to the blood which cleanseth from all sin, and to those means of still advancing sanctification through which the baptism of the Holy Ghost descends on them who duly wait for it. Precisely the same sentiment is here expressed, though with an allusion to another figure, when Jesus declares to the eleven, as

branches of the living vine, "Ye are clean," that is,—Ye have been so far renewed and sanctified, so far imbued with emanations of that pure and sacred influence which, streaming upwards from the mystic root, consecrates and fertilizes every branch, that ye have been enabled in some degree to bring forth the fruits of godly living; though still we require that the Heavenly Husbandman, from day to day, should purge you, that ye may bring forth more fruit.

On the former occasion when Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye are clean," He added, "but not all;" alluding to the presence of the traitor, which then cast, as it were, a foul polluting blot upon the sacredness of the scene and the society.* But now, when the dark-souled son of perdition had relieved them of his uncongenial presence, and they stood around their Lord,—a company of sincere and loyal, though imperfect and weak, disciples,—upon the vine-clad banks of Kedron, He assures them, with no subjoined exception, "Ye are clean." Now, the question which I wish to ask, in the present circumstances of this congregation, is—which of those two forms of expression ought, in truth and justice, to be applied to those of us who lately, by solemnly enrolling ourselves among the members of the visible, did as solemnly declare ourselves members of the vital, church? Is that Omniscient Saviour who hath said, "Let all the churches know that I am He who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men,"—is He now saying to us, as He did to the eleven upon the bank of Kedron, "Ye are clean," or, as to the twelve in the paschal chamber, "Ye are clean, but not all?" Alas! alas! my brethren, dare we flatter ourselves with the belief that

* John xiii. 10, 11,

the proportion, among us, between the precious and the vile, approaches even to that which divided the chosen company of whom the Heart-searcher testified,—“Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” Dare we reckon, think you, among those who, last Lord’s-day, encompassed the sacred board, one traitor to every twelve? That man is a traitor,—Iscariot is his type,—who, after having, with such august and sacred rites, professed himself a follower of the Lord, shall not, in all time to come, assert and vindicate that sacred profession by a corresponding character and conduct,—by a life of which the ruling powers are, respect for the Saviour’s authority, and gratitude for the Saviour’s love,—by a life that, in the sense of this parable, shall show that he is clean, and that he is fruitful, by “cleansing himself from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and by perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” While, therefore, the true communicants read their duty, let false communicants read their doom, in the words of the Redeemer now before us. To the former He speaks in the third and the two succeeding verses,—to the latter, in the verse that follows these. To the one He begins by saying, “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you.” For it is the constant doctrine of Sacred Writ, that, in the sanctification of believers, as the Holy Ghost is the All-powerful Agent, so the word of God is the appointed and appropriate instrument. To the same effect we find our Lord, in the prayer subjoined to this divine discourse, entreating,—“Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.” In like manner, the apostle declares it to have been the Saviour’s object in loving the Church and giving himself for it,—“that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of

water, through the word.”* Whence let every one who is sincerely desirous that the work of sanctification should either be begun, or be promoted, in his heart and character and life, learn that, for this end, he bring his thoughts and feelings as much as possible into direct, immediate, permanent, contact with the Oracles of God; laying his whole nature as open as possible to their native influence, and evermore entreating that, by means of that influence, the Holy Spirit would work His effectual work;—that, “being begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever,” he may continually derive from the same enlivening truth of which Jesus Himself hath said, “The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life,” fresh supplies of liveliness, vigour, alacrity, and energy, to his spiritual existence; that he may find the same word which was the instrument of his regeneration still proving its nature and its strength by becoming that of his sanctification, and come experimentally to know the sequence and connection of his Master’s words, “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

Your duty, my brethren, whom the Holy Ghost has once renewed, and whom He is purifying, day by day, through the truth,—the word of the Omniscient, which is truth,—the Saviour has taught you in the words which next solicit our attention:—“Abide in me, and I in you.” “Abide in” Christ,—that is, Continue in all those holy acts and habits which are appropriate to the connection that subsists between your Saviour and your souls; continue loving, admiring, trusting, serving, glorifying, and imitating, Him,—seeking and expecting only from Him,

* John xvii. 17; Eph. v. 25, 26.

through His Holy Spirit, those supplies of grace which you need to guide, sustain, quicken, refresh, and comfort, you in your spiritual course, regarding your connection with Him, and with God through Him, as infinitely the closest and most endearing, as well as the most permanent and momentous, relation in which you stand,—making Him your Prophet, your Priest, your King, your Shepherd, your Example, your All in All: and as the very foundation of your continuance in all these holy acts and habits, you must continue especially in believing. It was by believing the truth respecting Him you were first ingrafted as living branches into the living vine; and it is just by continuing to believe that truth, that you fulfil the exhortation to abide in Him. For it is God's revelation concerning His Incarnate and Anointed Son which alone affords the materials of every act, whether of thought or feeling, in respect of Him that is not mere delusion and enthusiasm; so that from the very nature of the thing it follows, that persevering faith in Christ is the only possible principle of abiding union with Christ. Let, then, the value and importance of this as the grand bond of union by which the soul is connected with the Saviour be settled in your minds; and be it more and more your endeavour to realize, in your personal experience, the description given by the great apostle,—faith's chosen champion in word and in deed,—in which he portrays so strongly, at once the closeness of his felt relation to his Lord, and the power of that fundamental principle by which it was constituted and maintained,—“ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”* And

* Gal. ii. 20.

then, for your encouragement in the discharge of this great duty of abiding in Christ, remember, my brethren, that it is so, and only so, that you can enjoy the lofty privilege of Christ abiding in you,—that is, continuing to convey to you, through the appointed means, the supplies of that gracious influence on which all your spiritual improvement, and all your spiritual enjoyment, are dependent. As the more entirely you give yourselves to Christ, the more abundantly you will feel Him given to you; so, the more perseveringly you abide in Him by faith and holiness, the more habitually He will abide in you in strength and courage, in peace and joy. This is His own gracious promise implied in the text,—a promise couched in the bosom of the exhortation, to render it the more attractive to the Christian's heart,—a promise of which the whole mass of Christian experience felt by the individual believer, or recorded for the profit of the collective church, is one great confirmation.

But besides the implicit promise by which the duty here enjoined is recommended, the Saviour proceeds, by explicit argument, to enforce its absolute necessity in order to the present fruitfulness, and therefore, to the ultimate salvation, of every Christian man. The argument He embodies in two distinct propositions,—first, that separation from Him is necessarily connected with spiritual barrenness; and, secondly, that union to Him is as necessarily connected with spiritual productiveness.

First, Jesus declares that a state of separation from Him is, by necessity of nature, a state of spiritual barrenness:—"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me;" and again, at the close of the 5th verse,—“Without me,”—severed from me,—“ye can do nothing;” or, as the word

“do” is frequently used in the original language in such a connection, ye can produce nothing,—no blossom of spiritual beauty, no fruit of spiritual holiness. These words,—which are too plain to require any remarks by way of interpretation,—constitute one of the strongest and most decisive testimonies which the word of God contains to the humbling, yet most certain and most important, truth of the complete moral impotence of human nature,—its incapacity, even at its best estate, for the discharge of any single duty in such a way as shall be acceptable to the great Lawgiver of morality and Arbiter of doom, except in so far as it is immediately the subject of Divine influence, of heavenly grace. For this spiritual incapacity of which we speak is not to be conceived of as if it were applicable to human nature only in its unrenewed condition; though such be its predominant and pervading prevalence in that condition of our being, that even the brightest displays of heroic character and amiable feeling which may illuminate the history of those who are living without Christ in the world, deserve no higher name than that which an ancient Father gave them, of plausible and splendid sins. We are to feel that even after our regeneration,—after we have become, in the ruling principles of our character and the general tenor of our life, the subjects of a celestial agency,—every thought, and word, and action is in such a degree imperfect and impure, as to be unacceptable in the sight of “Him with whom we have to do,” which does not flow specifically and directly from the promptings and the power of that superior agency. “We are not sufficient,” says the apostle, “of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;” “It is God who worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.”*

* 2 Cor. iii. 5; Phil. ii. 13.

And while it is thus certain that every degree of spiritual holiness which any single believer is permitted to attain, every act of spiritual holiness which he is enabled to perform, is the fruit of a Divine influence; it is no less certain that that influence, in every case, flows down on that believer's character and life from Jesus as its source. It is, no doubt, directly and immediately the influence of the Holy Ghost; but then, it is an influence exerted, in every particular instance, at the pleasure,—according to the will,—of the exalted Mediator. “When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and received gifts for men,”*—all the sevenfold gifts of spiritual grace and spiritual power. The whole dispensation of the Spirit was committed to His hands, to the end that He might bestow it where and how He pleased; and in the text He has distinctly told us where and how He does please, in point of fact, that that power from on high should be communicated by which, and which alone, we can truly please the Father,—by which alone we can “have our fruit unto holiness,” and “prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” Such communications of heavenly grace and strength, we are here assured, are reserved exclusively for those who have been ingrafted into Christ by the primary and initial operation of the same almighty influence leading them to set to their seal to God's testimony concerning Him, and who, by the persevering and habitual belief of that celestial testimony as “a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance,” abide in Him,—continue exercising towards Him all those emotions and regards of which He is the appropriate object to each believing soul.

* Psal. lxxviii. 18; Eph. iv. 8.

And then, while, on the one hand, the Saviour declares negatively,—“As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me;” so, positively, He testifies, upon the other, —“He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.” This is another principle of Christ’s administration in the kingdom of heaven,—here, at the outset, announced and proclaimed by Him for the direction of His subjects, and, through all succeeding ages, as the experience of the church declares, confirmed and verified by fact,—that just in proportion to the intensity, the firmness, and the constancy, with which a believing soul adheres to Him in the exercise of a strong and steadfast faith, in that proportion shall it be replenished with those communications of celestial grace which shall display their purity and power by clothing and adorning the whole character with a bright array of various excellence, glorifying to God and beneficent to man,—enwreathing the living bough’s far-spreading growth with the verdure of holy beauties, and hanging on every shoot the clustered fruits of righteousness. Let every Christian, then, who lately bound himself by the most solemn obligations as at the altar of the Lord, and with the solemnities of a ratifying sacrifice,—the same august and awful sacrifice by the blood of which “the everlasting covenant” is sealed,—to be found more and more “steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” learn, from the place before us, how, and how alone, he may fulfil that solemn sacrament,—by keeping close to Christ; by cleaving to the Lord with full purpose of heart; by cherishing and cultivating into greater clearness and greater strength that fundamental grace of faith which is the very bond of vital

union between the Saviour and the soul; by keeping the communication free and undisturbed between his spiritual nature and Him who is the vital source of spiritual life, and strength, and hope, and joy; by cultivating every day a more profound conviction of his own feebleness and helplessness and nothingness away from Christ; and by casting himself with more entire and unreserved dependence on the promise and the power of Him who hath declared,—“My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is perfected in weakness.”*

And while the sincere professor of Christianity is here instructed in his duty, let the hypocrite and the self-deceiver here also read his doom. “If a man abide not in me,” says “the Faithful and True Witness,”—that is, If any one who has professed himself my disciple, and, in consequence of that profession, has been received into my visible church,—externally connected with the holy and spiritual vine,—shall fail to verify his profession by a life and conversation becoming the gospel,—to prove the vitality of his connection with the sacred stock by the production of sacred fruit,—“he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” As the unfruitful boughs in a vineyard are lopped away, and cast beyond the precincts they deformed; so the time is coming when each untrue, ungodly, unspiritual, pretender to the name of Christian shall be severed, by the avenging stroke of the Almighty, from the communion of the faithful,—shall be degraded and excluded from the enjoyment of all the rights and privileges and rewards pertaining to the holy society; even as the Jews are described by the apostle under the image

* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

of "branches broken off," when "the kingdom of God was taken from them, and given to another nation, which should bring forth the fruits thereof." Nor only so; but, as the dissevered vine-branch may no more be reunited to the stem, but, lying neglected in the dust, waxes sere and red, and droops its leaves and perishes, till, as Ezekiel has strikingly described, it becomes "meet for no manner of work," fit only to serve as fuel to the flames,—so shall the outcast hypocrite, at last, wither without hope of restoration or revival, lose all the semblance he once presented of spiritual life, of holy beauty, of Christian excellence and Christian hope, and, with disastrous rapidity, ripen for destruction,—become useless in the universe except to suffer, and to give his wicked and miserable nature a fit prey to the flames that never shall be quenched. And then, as men are wont to gather, at fit seasons, the faded refuse of a vineyard to a heap, and, that it may no more deform the aspect of the surrounding soil with its unsightly accumulation, to bid the crackling fire consume it from the face of the earth,—even so, the time is coming when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know not God, and obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." Then "shall He send forth His angels, and gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* And remember, brethren, that, according to the declaration of the text, this is the appointed doom not merely of him who avows himself

* 2 Thess. i. 7—9; Matt. xiii. 41, 42.

an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and disdains even the semblance of a Christian profession, but of him who, however decided, however well-sustained, his profession may have been in the sight of men, shall be judged by the Omniscient Holiness at last to have prevaricated in that profession with his conscience and his God. Are there none among ourselves, my brethren, conscious of having, only last Lord's day, committed this base and ruinous offence? Oh! it were a blessed thought,—if we could reasonably entertain it,—that each individual man and woman who then appeared at the sacred board had come prepared with “the preparation of the sanctuary,”—that every one was indeed in Christ who professed to be so at His table; so believing, “our heart should rejoice, even ours.” But ah! my brethren, we dare not, we cannot. We judge no man. We know not who it is; but there is one,—but there are many,—on whom the transactions of the late solemnity have entailed the guilt of false profession,—that fearful guilt whose fearful doom is here described in characters of lightning, in tones of menacing thunder. Who is it? who are they? I leave the answer to your conscience now, or to your Judge hereafter, as ye shall prefer. But how much better now to ascertain the truth, when conviction may lead the way to pardon, than then when it shall only be preliminary to doom!

LECTURE XX.

СНАР. XV. 7—10.

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.”

OUR Lord had been employed, in the preceding context, in setting forth the value and necessity of that vital union between Himself and His disciples which was essential at once to their safety and to their productiveness,—to their escape from final conflagration and destruction, and to their inheritance of a full reward. In the passage before us, He continues His illustration of the advantages to be derived, on the part of the disciples, from their persevering continuance in this sacred union,—that is, as we have already explained, in the exercise of all those habits of thought, of feeling, and of action, which were appropriate to the relation subsisting between Him and them, and more particularly, of the persevering faith which is the very basis and bond of that peculiar connexion which binds the Christian to the Saviour.

The expression which Jesus employs in order to denote the fact of the union in question varies somewhat in form

from that which He had just before been using, but in its meaning and substance is the same:—"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." For it is not by immediate and essential incorporation of His being with theirs, that Jesus fulfils to His people His promise of dwelling in them,—but by the medium of His word understood, believed, and kept in memory. This is the foundation, the necessary foundation, of all those acts of thought, of emotion, and of action, the constancy of which is represented by the believer's remaining in Christ; and it is the channel, the appointed channel, of all those communications of special love and grace from Jesus to His people, the uninterrupted continuance of which is described by Christ remaining in believers. So that, if any one desires that the sacred and saving relation should either be formed, or cherished, in his soul, which is the basis of that blessed interchange of love and loyalty, on the one hand, and of superior love, of protecting care, of gracious influence, of saving mercy, on the other, between the sinner and the Saviour, his course is plain,—to betake himself to the serious study of God's testimony touching His Anointed Son, in its meaning and its evidence, until that testimony be firmly rooted in his steadfast faith and his habitual remembrance:—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." "Let that abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning: if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, then shall ye continue in the Father and the Son."*

The duty of thus holding fast the words of Christ, and so remaining in steadfast union to His person, is here enforced by an exceeding great and precious promise,—a

* Col. iii. 16; 1 John ii. 24.

promise comprehending in its ample bosom all that we can imagine, or can desire, of blessedness:—"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

It will be plain, at the first glance, to every one familiar with the analogy of faith, and the manner of our Lord in the enunciation of His general maxims, that this apparently universal and unlimited promise is to be understood with certain restrictions,—suggested by other parts of Scripture, as well as by the context of this very place. For since it is the doctrine of the Bible that often even the faithful "know not what things to ask for as they ought," and since it is the testimony of experience that certain remnants of short-sighted desire, and of corrupt propensity, adhere to the will even of the most thoroughly regenerate of mortal men,—since the disciples themselves, to whom the promise was first of all addressed, frequently showed themselves imprudent and perverse in the matter of their most intense petitions,—it is plain that Jesus could not have intended, under the name and aspect of a blessing, to inflict on His beloved so ruinous a curse, as to put it simply and absolutely in their power to ask for anything whatever in the power of Omnipotence to effect or to bestow, and then to make themselves sure of receiving whatsoever it might be they had demanded. That such a promise as we have supposed would have been in truth a curse under the guise of a blessing, every one endued with the most ordinary powers of reflection and observation will admit. Even heathen moralists have remarked how often the gifts which men have sought from Heaven with eagerest desire, and most passionate entreaty, have been in point of fact, or might have been in point of probability, the very things which contributed most directly to their disadvantage, their over-

throw and ruin. By an induction of numerous and diversified instances from real history, they have detected and exposed, as they express it, 'the secret ambush of a specious prayer,' and have thence recommended those who would enjoy long life and see good days, that, in their supplications to the power eternal, they should not too rashly judge for themselves of what was expedient and desirable, nor too narrowly limit the procedure of those whom they adored as hearers and answerers of supplications. And if the ancient sages, who gathered their principles merely from such observation and experience as the present world of temporary arrangements and undeveloped results supplied, could thus find reason to rebuke the folly of dictating to Providence, seeing how impossible it was for man to tell what would be really "good for him all the days of this vain life which he spendeth on the earth as a shadow,"—how much more readily and deeply should we imbibe the lesson,—we who, in judging of what is good and what is evil, have to calculate not merely from the term of a man's life, but from that of his existence; who know how possible it is for a man to be "clothed in purple and fine linen, and to fare sumptuously every day," and then, "in hell, being in torment," to lift up his eyes in vain expectation of but one drop of comfort amidst the waste of boundless agony,—how possible it is, upon the other hand, for afflictions, bitter and tedious as we may account them now, "light and but for a moment" as we shall reckon them hereafter, to "work out a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory" in the kingdom of the blessed; who know how even "the Captain of salvation was made perfect through sufferings," and by the cross, around which were gathered like a cloud all circumstances of earthly shame and agony, ascended to inherit the imperial crown

of all creation. I am sure, then, that no Christian mind will feel as if we sought to curtail him of his privilege, or as if we represented Jesus as having promised His disciples more than He actually bestows, when we say, that the statement in the text,—though at first appearance unlimited in expression,—is very considerably limited in fact, and is to be understood and interpreted in strict accordance with that other declaration of Holy Writ on this most interesting point,—“This is the confidence that we have in Him, that we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us.”* It is not necessary, however, that we travel to unconnected and distant passages of the Sacred Record in order to perceive the just limitations under which the promise before us must be understood. It is addressed to those in whom Christ’s words abide,—that is, to those who always act under the belief, and in the recollection, of the truths He has revealed, and the duties He has enjoined. If you insist on the promise being simply, literally, unreservedly fulfilled on His part, I, in His name, insist on the condition being simply, literally, unreservedly fulfilled on yours. I know that whatsoever petition ye shall present in the believing and obedient remembrance of Christ’s truths and Christ’s commands will be, must be, according to God’s will. I know that such a petition will implore of God none but spiritual blessings with absolute, unconditional, importunate entreaty; that for temporal blessings it will be couched in the terms, and offered in the tones, of filial submission to your Heavenly Father’s all-loving affection; that only in reference to benefits connected with your souls and with eternity will you then take upon yourselves to say, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me,”—

* 1 John v. 14.

while, with regard to those whose sphere is but the present world, and their duration the present life, you will never forget to add to your requests, in spirit if not in words,—“Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt;” “Abba, Father, thy will be done.” Such a petition, I know, is the only one which a man in whom Christ’s words do at the time abide will or can present; and every such petition, I say, as surely as there is One in Heaven that heareth prayer, will be, shall be, granted and performed. Your will as so expressed has become identical with His whose “counsel shall stand, and who will do all His pleasure,”—“who doth according to His will in heaven and in earth and in all deep places,”—whose will is the law, as His glory is the end, of creation. The will which is the ruling power of the universe is expressed in Christ’s blessed word. For a man to have this word abiding in him is, therefore, to have for the regulator of his desires the same principle which is the regulator of all being and of all events; and surely there can be no more infallible security against the possibility of disappointment than to have one’s will in accordance with that of the Sovereign Being and Sovereign Governor of all,—no more adamant and indissoluble connection than that which connects the performance of the duty here enjoined with the enjoyment of the privilege here promised. “Delight thyself in the Lord, and He will give thee the desires of thy heart.”*

Now, among all the desires inspired into the heart of those in whom Christ’s words abide, by the believing recollection of those immortal words,—that which holds a paramount and presiding place is the desire of beholding and promoting the glory of the Lord. They have been

* Psal. xxxvii. 4.

taught by the God-breathed oracles that now live within them, and imbue their whole spiritual nature with their celestial inspiration, that the glory of the Creator is the great final object of creation, and more particularly, that their own chief end, as human beings and as holy regenerate beings, is 'to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever.' They have thus been made susceptible to the impression of every argument which enforces the discharge of any duty, by its tendency to promote this, the only worthy end of the universe,—the only worthy destination of man's majestic and imperishable being; and the most profound and powerful springs of action in their souls are awakened by an exhortation like that which follows,—“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.”

Of all the ways in which it is possible for the Christian to advance that great and heavenly end for which principally he now counts it worthy of himself to suffer, to act, to be, there is none whose tendency in this direction is more frequently and impressively set forth than that in which the text encourages the believer to press to the mark of his high calling,—by abounding more and more in the graces and the virtues of personal holiness. Thus, for the Philippian converts the apostle prays, that they may be “filled with all the fruits of holiness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.” Thus, Jesus Himself exhorts His followers, that they should “let their light shine before men,” that is, should become conspicuous examples of Christian holiness,—that others, “seeing their good works, might glorify their Father who is in heaven.” And thus, in fine, the prophet has described the chosen of Jehovah, by an image analogous to that of the text, as “the branch of Jehovah's planting, the work of His hands, that He might be glorified,”—and has

expressed it as the very end and object of all those gracious communications of celestial influence by which the reign of the Messiah should be signalized, that they might be “called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.”* It is, of course, to the praise and credit of a human vine-dresser when the vineyard which he tends bears witness to his skill and his attention by its exuberance of delicious fruit; while, on the other hand, his knowledge of his art, his diligence in its practice, is exposed to merited suspicion and contempt when, instead of the expected luxuriance of useful and delicious produce, the neglected or mismanaged vine presents to the spectator nothing but a dry and lifeless texture of withered boughs, or a more specious, but not more profitable, prodigality of idle verdure, of gadding and unfruitful leaves. Even so, the Heavenly Husbandman is glorified, His wisdom and His power are manifested in the view of all intelligent spectators, when the boughs which, with His own Almighty power, He has grafted into the celestial vine fulfil the declared purpose for which they were inserted there,—that, transmitted through them, the holy sap might give demonstration before all beholders of its purity and power by the luxuriance of vernal bloom, and the abundance of summer-fruit, into which it should expand itself over all its teeming length. It is by thus “abounding in the work of the Lord,”—by cultivating and cherishing “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,”—by abounding in every virtue and every praise,—that Christians afford occasion to all the pure intelligences of the universe,—all who have a taste to

* Phil. i. 11; Matt. v. 16; Isa. lx. 21; lxi. 1—3.

relish and admire the beauties of holiness,—all who are susceptible to the impression of what is spiritually excellent and spiritually fair,—to glorify God in them. And it is thus, too, that they afford to God's converting Spirit the opportunity which He is about to embrace with special delight for producing in those who may have hitherto remained impassive and insensible to such impressions,—in the torpor and unconsciousness of spiritual death,—their first practical apprehensions of true beauty and true excellence,—for leading them to judge aright of the nature, the worth, and the power, of that which is the hidden cause of effects that so irresistibly commend themselves to their now awakened perceptions of moral truth and rectitude,—and for inducing them also, seeing the good works of those who bear, and by their conduct justify, the Christian name, to glorify their Father who is in heaven. O that professing Christians, therefore, did more profoundly and habitually consider in how great a measure is committed to them the honour of their Saviour and their God, and did more earnestly and perseveringly labour, by a life and conversation becoming the gospel, to “adorn in all things the doctrine of God their Saviour,”—to “show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light!” Wherefore, beloved brethren, “giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

In further enforcement of the same important lesson,

* 2 Pet. i. 5-8.

Jesus adds, "So,"—that is, on the condition of bearing much fruit,—“shall ye be,”—that is, shall ye prove yourselves,—“my disciples.”

The religion of Jesus is, in all its parts, a practical religion, intended and fitted to be the parent and the nurse of every form and part of holiness; so that that man is an utter stranger to its whole spirit and tendency,—he has never learned its most fundamental and distinctive lesson, whatever may be the name he bears, whatever the profession he makes,—who has not been taught by it to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,”—to “live soberly and righteously and godly in the world,”—to follow Christ’s example, as well as to depend on Christ’s salvation. All such unpractical and unproductive professors of His faith our Lord here virtually declares to be unworthy of the name of His disciples; emphatically restricting that high and holy appellation to those in whom His words, and so His Spirit, should continue like a pure and vital sap, prolific of sacred graces and sacred fruits. It is observable that to be Christ’s true disciples is here propounded as an illustrious distinction,—a precious privilege. And who would not account it so? If, among the Gentiles, it was esteemed a glorious thing to be enrolled among the followers of some famous sage,—to have mused among the studious shades and walks of Athens, the pillared portico or the olive grove; if, among the Jews, it was held a high distinction to have been brought up at the feet of doctors and of rabbies, to have frequented the schools of the Prophets, and to have been instructed from the chair of Moses; how much more august and precious a distinction to be a genuine disciple of the Sovereign Teacher, the Incarnate Wisdom and Word of God,—whose it was to discover mysteries loftier than human intellect hath ever

reached on its most soaring wing,—whose it was to lead up the immortal spirit, by the light of His heavenly truth, to a glory, a perfection, a felicity, more splendid than the most ambitious philosophy had ever dreamed of as a hope or heritage for man.

Jesus, having, in the preceding context, exhorted His disciples, generally, “to remain in Him,”—that is, to continue in the exercise of all those emotions of which He was the appropriate object, and in the enjoyment of all those holy and beatific influences of which He is the appointed source,—proceeds in the following verse to specify one particular, included in the general exhortation, to which He attached peculiar importance. “Continue ye,” He says, “in my love.”

First of all, however, He assures them that they were already in His love; that He had prevented them with His grace and His affection,—and that an affection of such inconceivable depth and tenderness that no images which earth’s dearest relations could possibly supply were adequate to represent it,—that no instance of attachment among all that illuminate with so beautiful a lustre the page of human history, nay, that no impulse of holy love that thrills through the hearts of the celestial Ardours before the throne, that kindles the bosom of the glowing Seraphim, can afford a just idea of its intensity and force,—that in order to describe it by an adequate comparison, you must ascend to the thought of that ineffable affection which only an Infinite Mind can entertain,—the love with which the Eternal Father everlastingly regards His co-eternal Son, the Only-begotten who, from ages unbegun, has dwelt in the bosom of the Father, the Brightness of His glory, the Image of His person, the Son of His love, and who, to the claims which from eternity He possessed, as God with

God, upon Jehovah's love, has superadded new and unheard-of claims by all that, as "God manifest in the flesh," He has done and suffered in order to vindicate Jehovah's character, to uphold Jehovah's government, to perform Jehovah's will,—concerning whom, in this illustrious character, the Oracle had long of old proclaimed, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," and the Eternal's voice itself, thundering from amidst the excellent glory, had declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* This, then, is the only affection in the universe that surpasses, or that equals, the love of Jesus to His people,—a love that is strictly infinite, a love that is properly Divine. Oh, my brethren, with what astonished and adoring gratitude should we not receive the overwhelming assurance, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you!" And with what strenuous vigilance and care should every one who may with just reason hope that he has an interest in that Divine affection guard the inestimable treasure, and seek to obey his Master's exhortation, "Continue ye in my love!"

In regard to this expression it has been made a question, whether the love alluded to be the love of Jesus to His followers, or the love of His followers to Him. The tenor of the passage seems distinctly to recommend the former interpretation. Nor need we shrink from it, as if it were inconsistent with that glorious and cheering doctrine of the Bible, that whom the Saviour loveth He loveth unto the end,—that nothing shall ever be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord,—and that even when He visits their transgressions

* Isa. xlii. 1; Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5.

with the rod, His loving-kindness He taketh not from them, neither suffers His faithfulness to fail. All seeming difficulty on this point will be removed when we consider that there are two distinct forms and species of affection with which Christ's people are regarded by their Lord; the affection, on the one hand, of benevolence and kindness,—the affection, on the other, of complacency and approbation. With the former species of affection it is the privilege of believers to be immutably regarded by their Lord. It is attached to their persons, and therefore cannot vary any more than their personal identity. But the latter,—the love of complacent approbation,—regards not their unchanging persons, but their changing character and conduct. Its degree is regulated, at each particular instant, by the degree of holiness, of Christian worth, of moral and spiritual excellence, which those who are its objects at each particular instant possess and display. "If ye shall keep my commandments," He says, "ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love." In the discharge of that momentous and arduous work to which Jesus had been appointed as the Father's Ambassador and Servant, He did always the things which pleased the Father. In the face of difficulties, of perils, and of agonies, such as never before or since put human love and obedience to the proof, He failed not nor was discouraged, until, as He bowed to death His anointed head, He could declare, "It is finished;" "I have glorified thee upon the earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do."* It was thus, He knew, and thus alone, that He could abide in the Father's love; could continue to be the object of the

* John xix. 30; xvii. 4.

Father's approbation and complacency,—that complacency which, even in the days of His flesh, expressed itself by so many practical tokens and so many special declarations, so that He was declared to be a man approved of God with signs, and wonders, and miracles, and voices from the excellent glory,—that complacency which has found at length its complete and ultimate expression in the magnificent reward with which, for all that He did, and all that He endured, in order to the Father's glory, and in obedience to the Father's will, the Saviour hath been crowned. where Jehovah hath made Him most blessed for ever, and hath gladdened Him with gladness from His countenance. In all this, my Christian brethren, He hath left you an example that ye should walk in His steps. Let me entreat you, therefore, as ye admire your Master's character, as you esteem your Master's love, to keep in memory what He hath said to you:—"If ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love." By the punctual and persevering discharge of all those duties toward God and toward man of which His command imposes the obligation, and His providence affords the opportunity, labour to "adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things," and to "bring forth fruit with patience," to the honour of His name. Let no temptation seduce you, let no danger terrify you, from the right path of His commandments. Like Him, remain faithful unto death. Amidst all the toil and trial of your conflict, you will be refreshed and strengthened by the thought that even now, the eye of your Almighty Lord, of your most merciful Redeemer, is beaming down on you with complacency and love, and still more by the assured anticipation of that glorious day when the sentence of His gra-

cious approbation shall assign you, in proportion to the purity and the perfection of your obedience here, an exalted station in His own eternal joy; when, with a smile brighter than the radiance of the laughing firmament, in sweeter tones than the harps of rejoicing seraphim, He shall welcome you to your reward with the enrapturing invitation, "Well done, good and faithful servants; enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

LECTURE XXI.

CHAP. XV. 11—13.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

“THESE things,” says the Saviour in the commencement of this passage, “I have spoken to you;” and you remember, I doubt not, to what things He alludes. You have not forgotten, surely, the beautiful and expressive parable of the vine and its branches, by which He had set forth the nature and the necessity of that vital union which exists between Him and His true disciples; nor the exhortations which He had appended to the sacred apologue, to the effect that they should use all proper and appointed means in order to cultivate in themselves those principles of thought and feeling which are appropriate to the relation subsisting between an otherwise helpless, hopeless, sinner, and that most mighty and merciful, that Divine, Redeemer, who is to him the sole and sufficient source of safety, and holiness, and peace, and hope, and joy,—that, to use the Saviour’s own expression, they should remain in Him, in order that they might bring forth abundantly the fruits of holy living, advancing so the honour of their heavenly Father, attracting and securing the complacency

of their Redeemer-Lord. This is the sum of the things which He had spoken; and now He proceeds to tell us the end and object why He spake them:—"These things have I spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you,"—or, that my joy in you might remain.—"and that your joy might be full."

It is not necessary to suppose that the expression, "my joy," in the first clause, signifies, the joy of which I am the cause and object, and that the emotion thus described was, equally with that entitled "your joy" in the second clause, an emotion to be felt by the disciples. Considering that the original does, at least equally well, admit of the meaning, "that my joy in you might remain," and that the Saviour, by the very form of speech which He employs, expressly distinguishes between "my joy" and "your joy;" we entertain no doubt that, in the text, He announces two separate objects as the ends contemplated in His foregoing exhortations,—namely, that His joy in them might remain, and that their joy in Him might abound.

That the redeemed are, in point of fact, the subjects and the causes of rejoicing to the Redeemer, is the doctrine of many striking and fervent passages of Holy Writ. Over every sinner that repenteth, He has Himself assured us that He rejoices, as the shepherd over the sheep that had been lost and has been found,—while the most glowing strains of prophetic song are breathed in celebration of that high delight with which, as the Divine Redeemer and King of Israel, He triumphs in the deliverance and the glory of His ransomed Church:—"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied;"—"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy, He will rest," more literally, He will be silent, "in His love,"—with sensations of reposing

happiness too deep at first for words, till the struggling emotion bursts, at last, into triumphant song,—“ He shall joy over thee with singing;”—“ As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, even so shall the Lord thy God rejoice over thee.”* The grounds of this holy exultation of God the Saviour over His ransomed Church are to be found in the gratification afforded by their salvation to those ruling principles of His character, His holiness and His benignity,—desire for the Creator’s honour, and desire for the creature’s happiness. It cannot but afford the intensest delight to a mind which, like His, has it for its dearest final end to promote, or to see promoted, the glory of that universal Sovereign “ of whom are all things, and to whom are all things,” to contemplate, in their redeemed and regenerated persons, the final result of the most glorious display of Jehovah’s attributes and principles of government which the annals of eternity record. Nor can it fail to impart a keener edge and a redoubled power to this delight, in a mind which, like His, next to the glory of the Creator, longs for the creature’s good, to recollect that, by the same course of transactions and events by which the light of sublimest illustration has been poured upon the character and the administration of Jehovah, those over whom He rejoices have been delivered from an unmeasured extremity of sin and woe, and exalted to a height incalculable of purity and bliss,—that an untold amount of moral and of penal evil has been extinguished in the universe, and an infinite accession has been made to the sum of holiness and happiness among His creatures. Now, it is easy to perceive how the Redeemer’s joy on either of the grounds thus mentioned is promoted and made permanent by His

* Isa. liii. 11; Zeph. iii. 17; Isa. lxii. 5.

disciples continuing and advancing in Christian holiness,—that which, in illustrating the 8th verse of this chapter, we have seen to be the principal means by which they have it in their power to promote the glory of their Father who is in heaven, and that which, as we shall see immediately, in considering the latter part of the verse now before us, is the necessary condition of their own advancement in spiritual peace and joy, of their obtaining at last a conspicuous place in eternal glory and felicity. Whether, therefore, as finding the sources of His dearest joys in the illustration of His Father's glory, or in the advancement of His Church's happiness, it is easy to perceive how the joy of Christ in His people should remain, in proportion as they, in compliance with the things which He had spoken to them, abode in Him, continued in His love, and brought forth fruit with patience. Oh, can there be a more persuasive argument, my brethren, for inducing you to labour, with more intense desire and with more diligent endeavour, after every degree of perseverance and of progress in universal holiness, than that ye shall thus convey a thrill of holy satisfaction and delight to that heart which once travailed in agony for your redemption, when, under the intolerable burden, the mighty soul of the Incarnate God was sore amazed and very heavy,—“exceeding sorrowful, even unto death?” Oh, can ye bear the thought of grieving once more His blessed heart,—of rebelling, and vexing His Holy Spirit? Will ye consent that His very love to you should be the means of wounding Him more deeply,—even as, in proportion to His paternal love, a father's heart is wrung with bitterer sorrow, when the son of his affection, the daughter of his heart, ungratefully offends? Oh, surely, surely, if your hearts are capable of receiving one impulse of generous and grateful

feeling, it will prove to you the subject of warm delight to know that this is a way by which you may, in some degree, repay your Lord for the bloody sweat of Gethsemane and the bitter cross of Calvary, by transmitting upwards to His sacred soul, now made most blessed for ever, a joy which shall make itself distinctly felt even amidst the raptures of eternity,—the joy of seeing His children walking in the truth.

But the encouragement which the Saviour here addresses to His followers, in persuading them to abide in Him, that so their fruit might abound, their Father might be glorified, and He Himself might regard them with complacent approbation and delight, is twofold. His object, in the exhortations He addressed them to this effect, was,—not only that His joy in them might remain, but that their joy in Him might abound. Nor is it difficult to perceive the tendency of our Lord's foregoing remarks towards this blessed effect. He had exhorted them to abide in Him,—that is, in the exercise of all appropriate affections towards Him, and especially of that faith which is the only legitimate basis of such affections. Now, of all the fruits of faith in Christ one of the most legitimate and direct is joy in Christ. The truth concerning Him which is believed is the gospel,—the good news,—the tidings that God hath “so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” And how is it possible for a man to believe all this, and especially to believe it consciously,—to know that he does believe it, and is therefore the heir of such “exceeding great and precious promises,”—and not to rejoice? There is “peace and joy,” we are assured, and we can readily understand it, “in believing.” “In Him,” says St. Peter, “though now ye

see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”*—Again, Jesus had been exhorting His disciples, not simply to abide in Him, but to abide in Him so as to bring forth fruit,—to abound in all the fruits of righteousness. Now, from the very constitution of the Christian’s spiritual nature, as renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, it follows that the practice of holiness is to his taste and in his experience the source of the truest and purest happiness. Independently of that most precious joy which, viewed by reflection, his progress in obedience is calculated to afford, as the proof of his faith, and of his consequent interest in the blessings of the great salvation,—there is a joy in the act itself of obedience, as that in which the powers of the regenerate nature find their proper employment, and the tastes of the regenerate nature their proper satisfaction. “More to be desired are” the commandments of the Lord “than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them are His servants warned, and in keeping of them there is a great reward.”†—Still further, Jesus had been telling them that, by abiding in Him, and bringing forth fruit of holy living, they should glorify their Father who is in heaven. And who of Christian men would not account it meet ground for holy satisfaction and delight to have the privilege of contributing, in any degree, to the advancement of this, the noblest of all ends; the only worthy end of the universe, and the end which they, in particular, are bound by more than simple obligations to pursue,—by the fact of their original destination, and by the superadded claims of gratitude for boundless love?—He had been telling them, in fine, that by keeping His commandments they should

* Rom. xv. 13; 1 Pet. i. 8.

† Psal. xix. 10, 11.

abide in His love. And what consideration can afford the materials of purer and more ecstatic joy than for a man to know that Jesus loves Him,—that He whose approbation is desirable above that of all other beings in this vast universe combined regards him with complacency,—that He from whose lips he is to hear at last the sentence of eternal doom is His brother and His friend? You see, my brethren, how numerous, and how copious, are the fountains of rejoicing which the Christian's compliance with the exhortations of His Lord in the preceding context open up, and how amply they were fitted to fulfil the end which He had so graciously proposed in them:—"These things have I spoken to you that your joy may be full." Understand, then, my brethren, and act upon the understanding, that the Christian life is the path of genuine happiness, and that the greater your progress in the graces and the virtues of the spiritual character, the richer will be your experience of that consolation and felicity which the world cannot give and which it cannot take away.

Jesus,—having thus, in the first eleven verses of the chapter, inculcated on His disciples the practice of universal holiness,—proceeds, in the next section of His discourse, to enjoin on them peculiar care in the observance of one particular precept to which He attached the greatest weight and importance. "This," He says emphatically, "is my commandment,"—a commandment explained by Him with peculiar distinctness, and enforced by Him with peculiar urgency,—"that ye love one another." It was a charge that, while, in obedience to the command of God in either Testament, they extended their benevolent regards to all their fellow-men,—to all who were their brethren by community of nature; exercising towards all the feelings of kindness and the acts of beneficence; wish-

ing, and, as they had opportunity, doing good unto all; they should bear especially towards their fellow-Christians, —those who were their brethren by holding a common relation to Jesus, the Father and the Head of the sacred household,—a peculiar tenderness of affection, prompting to a peculiar force of beneficence; that, as His followers, they should cultivate the fraternal love of the disciples in connection with the general love of man; “adding to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity; doing good unto all, especially to those that were of the household of faith.”

Having given this general exhortation, Jesus proceeds to make the general command more capable of practical application, by putting it into a more distinct and specific shape. Instead, however, of carrying it out into a large enumeration of details, He combines all the advantages which could be derived from the completest possible enumeration of the qualities implied in Christian love, and the duties to which it might afford occasion, by referring His disciples to a perfect model of the love He meant to inculcate,—to His own complete and absolute example, as the great Friend and Lover of their souls:—“This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.” He had loved them with a *spontaneous* love,—a love that did not wait till it was sought for by those who were its objects, in order to express itself in the warmest emotions and the most stupendous acts of kindness; and so, they were to love one another with an affection that should naturally, and of its own accord, flow forth in the impulses and offices of unsolicited benevolence.—He had loved them with a *disinterested* love,—when they had done nothing to deserve,—when they could do nothing to reward His generous attachment. To those who, judged according to

their merits, might have looked for nothing but displeasure and unmitigated vengeance at His hands, He had given testimonies of regard such as required from Him humiliations and sacrifices and sufferings which none but an Incarnate God could render. And so, in their degree, they were to love one another with an affection purified from all selfish taint, from all interested aims, from all worldly and secular regards,—with that charity which “seeketh not her own;” fulfilling the command which the apostle delivers in the spirit, and enforces by the example, of his Master:—“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let that mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ.”*—He had loved them with a *holy* love, which, while it was distinguished by the most gracious condescension to their infirmities, and the most generous readiness to pardon their offences, yet was too purely and too wisely affectionate to suffer sin upon them, or to withhold from them, when need was, that benevolent and fatherly reproof which David counted, and every rightly-affected mind will count with him, a “kindness and an excellent oil;” a love of which it deserved to be reckoned the most precious expression, that the main end and object of all His benevolent cares for their welfare was the promotion of their sanctification,—“that they might be partakers of His holiness.” And so, they were to love one another, esteeming it the most sacred duty of their Christian friendship to advance, by the ministration, whether of suitable encouragement, or of needful reproof, each other’s conformity to the example of their common Lord,—with that wisdom from above which is at once peaceable and pure,—with that charity which, while it “is not easily provoked and thinketh no evil,” while it “beareth

* Philip. ii. 4, 5.

all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," yet "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."—He had loved them with *a constant and indefatigable* love,—a love which no difficulties could overcome, no perils could affright, no sufferings could extinguish,—a love which many waters could not quench, no, nor that fiercer baptism of agony and blood,—a love which was stronger than death, even the death of the cross.—“Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them *unto the end.*” And so, they were to love one another with an affection so deep and firmly-rooted in their souls, as to defy the shocks, or the more gradual decays, which so often dissolve or rend asunder the ties of worldly friendship,—which should be prepared to pass triumphant through the intensest ordeal, and to emulate the love of Jesus even in that extreme and unexampled proof of it which He gave when, at its prompting, He poured out, on their behalf, His own inestimable blood.

That even to the height of this magnificent example it was intended by our Saviour-Lord that Christians should love one another, is plain from what He has subjoined, in verse 13, in illustration of the phrase, “as I have loved you:”—“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

There have been those who, prodigal of their heroic lives upon the battle-field or in the imminent breach, have advanced with steadfast and undaunted step, or rushed with martial ardour, on almost inevitable death, in the sacred cause of their country and their home, their altars and their hearths. And there are dim and beautiful legends scattered over the annals of our race of those who, without the aid of that gallant enthusiasm, that brave intoxication, which is breathed

through the warrior's soul by the sublime and spirit-stirring stateliness of battle, have, in the calm deliberation of their souls, devoted themselves to suffering and to death, and that a death of agony and shame, at the mandate of a ferocious tyrant, or the clamour of a sanguinary populace, in ransom for those whom they loved as their own souls,—whose life and happiness they counted cheaply bought with their own dearest blood. Yet, sooth to say, the legends of which we speak are chiefly to be found floating in the twilight of historic memory, amidst the dubious haze of half accredited tradition; and thus much, at least, is evident from all history and all experience, that this is the extremest limit of human friendship, if even it do not lie beyond the limit,—that, if mortal affection ever went so far, it never did go farther. “Scarcely for a righteous man,”—a man honoured for general excellence and worth,—“will one die; yet peradventure, for a good man,”—a man not merely honoured for his worth, but beloved for his beneficence,—“some would even dare to die.”* You know, my brethren, how far, how infinitely far, this extremest peradventure, this last conceivable supposition, in the case of mortal friendship,—has been surpassed by the reality, in the case of that immortal friendship of which the Saviour's death is the proof, and man's salvation is the fruit. First, He who loved the church so as to give Himself for it, was no mere mortal man,—of equal rank with those for whom He died, and only anticipating by a few vanishing days his own inevitable fate, but a Being to whom the very loftiest rank in the universe belonged,—“God over all blessed for evermore,” and stooping to wed our poor humanity to His Eternal Godhead, that it might be possible

* Rom. v. 7.

for Him to die. Again, they for whom He died were not those who had any, the feeblest, claim on His compassion or His love, but those who, as guilty and depraved, were the meet objects of His abhorrence as the Sovereign Moral Nature, and of His indignation as the Sovereign Moral Ruler of the universe,—proud and presumptuous, though feeble, rebels against His authority,—base and ungrateful despisers of His love. And finally, the death which this majestic Being died for us unworthy, was not a death of laurelled glory, or even a death surrounded only with the ordinary horrors of a public doom, but the death of a felon, a slave, a curse, overhung with all external circumstances of barbarity and shame, and exasperated into tenfold agony by strange mysterious pangs,—the direct impressions of the Almighty's malediction. So much the more persuasive and commanding should we feel His claims on our obedience, when, by His own example, He conjures us so to love those whom He has loved so well, that we shall not shrink, should our circumstances ever put it in our power, and render it our duty, to purchase their happiness with our lives,—to be “poured out,” as the apostle speaks, “a libation on the sacrifice and service of their faith.” “Hereby,” says our evangelist, in his first epistle, probably calling to mind these pathetic exhortations of his Lord,—“Hereby perceive we the love of God, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” “Walk in love,” in the same spirit, and overwhelmed by like recollections, exclaims his beloved brother Paul,—“Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, a sacrifice and an offering for a sweet-smelling savour unto God.”*

* Phil. ii. 17; 1 John iii. 16; Eph. v. 2.

Our Lord's so frequent repetition of His desire that the spirit of holy love and unity might pervade the members of His body the church, demonstrates the extreme importance which He attached to this blessed grace in the character of His disciples,—a grace which an inspired apostle has not hesitated to prefer to both the others of the holy sisterhood:—"Now abideth faith, hope, love; but the greatest of these is love."* Most obvious it is, but most deplorable, that a vastly lower estimate of Christian love has been adopted in the practice of too many than that of Jesus and His like-minded follower Paul. Alas for that fierce and feverish conflict of mutually intolerant opinions in the shock and fiery atmosphere of which all the soft graces and tender blooms of Christian love have been scorched and shrivelled into dust! O when shall we learn to treat the errors, the imperfections, and the frailties, of our Christian brethren,—what are so, or what we account so,—in the spirit of Him whom we profess to follow as our instructor and example; to show our fidelity in a way which shall not compromise our love; and,—by exhibiting to every one in regard to whom we have reason to believe, or have no sufficient reason to doubt, that he "loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" and truth, and is by Him beloved in return, whatever may be our differences of opinion on points subordinate, the spirit of unconquered and unexhausted brotherly affection which the text enjoins,—approve ourselves the genuine followers of Him whose nature and name, whose character and life, were love? When shall we recognise in the one fact that an individual bears with us a common relation to God our heavenly Father, and to Jesus our blessed Redeemer, a principle of unity so pro-

* 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

found and so important as to render a thousand principles of separation comparatively feeble and inoperative? When shall we be persuaded to spend our lives in the exercise of mutual charity to those with whom we are willing to hope that we shall spend eternity together in the enjoyment of a common felicity, and to present on earth a specimen of that harmony and love which are the element of everlasting joy; remembering that when faith is vision, and hope fruition, charity shall never fail, but, with her golden band of perfectness, shall bind together, into one rejoicing and indissoluble brotherhood, the heirs of life eternal, gathered from many a sect and party of the universal church, as from many a tribe and kindred, many a tongue and nation, of the habitable earth? “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments;—as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”*

* Psal. cxxxiii.

LECTURE XXII.

CHAP. XV. 14, 15.

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

THE whole object of our Lord in this paragraph of His parting discourse is to excite the disciples to a firm and decided resolution, and to put them in the clear and patent way of practical obedience to His commandments. For this purpose He avails Himself of every practicable opening,—He lays hold of every practicable handle,—which either the general course of argument, or the particular form of expression, He had been led to adopt supplied. In the passage more immediately before us, we find Him grasping, for this purpose, what we might almost call an accidental opportunity, presented by the use of a single word which had dropped from Him in the illustration of an altogether different point. In inculcating upon His followers the duty of fraternal love, He had referred them to His own example as a standard and a model,—He had directed them to find in the affection which He had shown to them an example of that love which they should show to their brethren; and then, in illustration of what He meant by the phrase, “as I have loved you,” He had subjoined,—“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay

down his life for his friends;" obviously intending, that His disciples should perceive, in this general statement, the particular implication,—Nevertheless, this proof of love I am about to equal, to surpass, in laying down my life for my friends. But in evolving this implied declaration from His words, He perceived that the natural process in the minds of the eleven would be to apply to themselves, without further inquiry, the glorious and blessed appellation, "My friends;" and He was unwilling that, by thus leaving the interpretation of His expressions entirely to their own minds, the opportunity should be lost of enforcing, by a most touching argument, the general lesson which it was His object to impress upon their minds,—the lesson of holiness and practical obedience. "Ye are my friends," he adds accordingly, "if ye do whatsoever I command you."

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The value, my brethren, of any friendship will be admitted to depend chiefly on these three things,—the dignity and worth of Him with whom that friendship associates us, the warmth and intensity of that affection with which He regards us, and the power and resources which He possesses in order to carry into effect, for our advantage, the promptings of His love. In reference to each of these three particulars, how transcendent is the friendship of the Saviour! How can we form too high an idea of the honour and the blessedness implied in being the object of kind regard to Him, the most exalted Being who ever wore the human form,—that Jesus whom you know to be none other than "God manifest in the flesh," possessing, in union with all the perfections and graces of humanity, the essence and the attributes of the Infinite God-head,—that Jesus whose power of loving has been so hotly tried, and so triumphantly displayed, in an ordeal of fiercest

flame,—that Jesus who has carried the love to His believing people which bore Him in triumph through suffering and death, up to the throne where now He sits invested with the glories, and wielding the powers, of universal dominion, armed with infinite majesty, as He is prompted by infinite love and pledged by infinite faithfulness, to save His people even to the uttermost,—to make all things work together for their good, to cause all things to “work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?” O thrice and four times happy the soul which has Jesus for a friend! And, praise to His condescending love!—this is a happiness which even the meanest, which even the unworthiest, of us all may enjoy. For not to the eleven alone, but to every one of us, He says,—“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

No one familiar with the Bible will mistake the meaning of this declaration so far as to suppose, that it represents a man's obedience to Christ's commandments as that by which reconciliation is to be purchased, and at first procured, to Jesus, and to God through Him. The act of reconciliation by which a man is first introduced into the number of the Saviour's friends, takes place in consequence of the unpurchased, the preventing, love of God taking hold upon him while yet “foolish and disobedient and serving divers lusts and passions.” “When we were enemies,” says the apostle, “we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.”* When, therefore, our Redeemer says,—“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you,” His meaning is not,—Ye shall, for the first time, become my friends,—but, Ye shall show that ye have become such already; a sense in which the word, to be, is

* Rom v. 10.

frequently employed,—for example, in the 8th verse of this chapter, “So shall ye be my disciples,” that is, So shall ye approve yourselves to be my followers indeed.

The evidence, then, which Jesus here demands of His disciples, as the only satisfactory proof of their having been received into terms of reconciliation and friendship with Himself, is their practical obedience to His will and to His law. This state of friendship between two parties implies their mutual regard and affection for one another; and he who justly bears the glorious appellation, The friend of Jesus, must love Him, as well as be loved by Him. Now, one of the most natural expressions and results of genuine affection is this,—that he who feels it, is desirous to do all he can in order to please and gratify the person toward whom it is felt,—to promote every object which he has at heart, and especially to perform every service which he has required. Accordingly, you cannot have forgotten, surely, how often, in the preceding part of this very discourse, Jesus had pointed out to His disciples the necessary connection between loving Him and performing His will:—“If ye love me,” He says, “keep my commandments;” “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me;” “If a man love me, he will keep my words;” “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.” Let no one, then,—in the face of assurances so solemn and repeated that all excuse for ignorance or for mistake is idle,—account himself a friend of Jesus, secure from that tremendous anathema which is denounced on all who love not the Lord Jesus Christ, or an heir to the unimaginable dignities and felicities which He is preparing for all those that love Him in sincerity and truth, whom the love of Christ does not constrain to live no more unto himself, but unto Christ. “This,” says the beloved apostle, “is

is from the part of the eye to judge a place

the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.”*

There is one peculiarity, however, of that obedience which alone Jesus will receive in proof of attachment to His person and His cause not distinctly specified in the parallel passages formerly illustrated, but here adverted to with special accuracy and precision,—and that is, the impartiality and universality by which it should be characterised. Our Lord employs one of those very peculiar terms in human language which, when applied to a subject including many particulars, both embrace all, and fix the attention distinctly upon each:—“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” Of course, it cannot be meant that no obedience can prove a man a Christian, but that which is absolutely perfect and complete,—without shadow of imperfection, without blemish of transgression. In that case we must all bid adieu for ever to the glorious hope of being numbered among the friends of our Redeemer-God. But it is meant, that no one whose feeling and conduct are impelled and regulated by that regard to Jesus of which obedience is here alleged as the proof and demonstration, will systematically neglect or disobey any one of His commands which is known and recognised as His. There are those who pick and choose among Christ’s commandments; who adopt for their rule of manners and of life a certain selection from the code of His government and legislation,—a selection made on principles of their own, according to their natural or acquired dispositions and tastes. There are many, for example, who detach the precepts relating to the social virtues,—to honesty, integrity, sobriety, and courtesy,—from those which refer to the

* 1 John v. 3.

graces of spiritual godliness,—to piety, purity of heart, heavenly-mindedness, zeal for the divine honour, and love to human souls,—and flatter themselves that they are obeying Jesus, when they do the one and leave the other undone. There are many who, when you point out to them some part of their habitual conduct,—some systematic omission of duty, some systematic commission of transgression,—as manifestly inconsistent with Christian character and well-founded Christian hope, will yet re-assert and vindicate their claim to the sacred name, by referring you to some duty which they do perform, to some sin which they do not commit, and that very probably when they could not easily avoid the one, when they are under no temptation to be guilty of the other. The total want of moral principle,—the total absence of religious character,—by which an obedience such as this is marked, is well exposed by the apostle James, when he says,—“Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, shall be guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.”* It is quite manifest that such a partial, inharmonious, fragmentary, obedience as this cannot have for its principle and basis any definite and ruling sentiment of deference to Christ’s authority, of attachment to Christ’s person. The constraining power of such a sentiment applies equally to every part of the Christian law; and if, of itself, it supplies a man with a sufficient reason for obeying any one commandment, it affords a reason equally sufficient for obeying every other. “Ye are my friends,” says the Redeemer, “if ye do *whatsoever* I command you.” And he alone comes

* James ii. 10, 11.

up to this appointed test and standard of genuine Christianity the language of whose heart,—of whose genuine thoughts and feelings,—is that of the holy Psalmist,—“Therefore I count all thy commandments concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way.”*

Having thus explained to His disciples the way in which it was for them to show that they were bound by the ties of friendship to the Saviour; Jesus goes on to show what proofs He had already given of friendship toward them, in addition to that most marvellous and overwhelming demonstration of His regard to which He had so touchingly alluded in verse 13,—“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” “Henceforth,” He says, “I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of the Father I have made known unto you.”

There are some who profess to have found some difficulty in reconciling the statement here made with that of the 20th verse, where, with peculiar reference to His disciples, Jesus says, “The servant is not greater than his lord,” and with His language in that ever-memorable conversation which He held with Pilate concerning the nature of His kingdom, when He declared,—“My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight.” All these difficulties have arisen from an exaggerated and over-strained understanding of what our Saviour means in the text. Its obvious and simple signification is no more than this,—Henceforward I shall address you, and shall treat you, more than hitherto, upon the footing of intimate and familiar friends. The negative particle, *not*, in opposition to,

* Psal. cxix. 128.

but, frequently signifies, *not so much*, in opposition to, *as*. For example, we find Jesus declaring in this very Gospel, chap. xii. 44, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on Him that sent me." In the same way His inspired servant Paul, 1 Cor. i. 17,—“Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.” Jehovah Himself, in the use of the same idiom, announces, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.”* Instances are very frequent; and the verse before us, I apprehend, is one. According to this interpretation,—which no one will deny that the usage of language abundantly justifies,—all the microscopic difficulties to which we have adverted vanish into air, and the promise is completely verified if it can be shown, that, on that night in which Jesus spoke the words before us,—the night in which He was betrayed,—and in all the following part of His intercourse with His disciples, He addressed them in the terms and tone of more familiar, more confidential, and, if we may say so, more equal, friendship than before. And that the fact is really so, I am sure that none can fail most vividly to feel who, with the most ordinary degree of susceptibility and taste, peruses the pathetic discourse of which the verse before us forms a part, and the more pathetic prayer, if that be possible, which follows it,—in which we are permitted to look into the very heart of Jesus, and see it overflowing toward His followers with tenderness and love,—in which, more than in all the divine discourses of which the former part of His biography contains the record, we see Him coming down, as it were, to the level of His disciples; exchanging with them the tokens and expressions of a more familiar love, a more, as it were, fraternal affection; breathing the

* Hos. vi. 6; Matt. ix. 13.

spirit, less of the sovereign Master, and more of the sympathizing Friend. And when, from the intercourse which immediately preceded His final sufferings and death, we pass on to that which He deigned to hold with His disciples after God had raised Him from the dead and given Him glory, we cannot but be struck with a certain friendly tenderness and condescension most touchingly expressed in the whole mode of His address, and the whole character of His discourse, especially as these are reported by our evangelist. "Children," He accosted them on one occasion, "Children, have ye any meat?" "Go to my brethren," He said upon another, "and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God."* The whole spirit and character, in short, of the intercourse between Jesus and His followers both on that memorable night and after His resurrection from the dead, distinctly intimate that ripened maturity of confidential friendship of which, in their previous communion, we perceive the earlier and advancing stages; and while we can discern the traces of the disciples' advancement into a more interior place in the friendship of their Lord in the very spirit and manner of their mutual intercourse on this and subsequent occasions, still more distinctly does it appear in the nature and extent of the communications which were made on these occasions by the Saviour to the eleven. To this circumstance He Himself refers in illustration of the fact, when He says:—"The servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

It is not the practice with the master of a household to

* John xxi. 5; xx. 17.

admit a servant, continuing a servant, into the enjoyment of his confidence, the knowledge of his secrets, the recesses of his consciousness. These are not the terms on which the intercourse between master and servant proceeds. The duty of the latter is to perform the will and the commandments of the former, in most cases not knowing, and having no right to ask, the reason why. The only custody in which a wise man, at least, will be ready to deposit the keeping of his confidence is in the bosom of a proved and experienced friend; and to make known to him his private plans and purposes, to reveal to him the principles and motives on which, in the more important transactions of his life, he frames his resolutions, and fashions his conduct,—this he is accustomed to account one of the highest proofs of his entire affection, his all-surrendering and all-trusting love. Thus we find the patient Job lamenting the desertion of his summer-friends in the time of his calamity,—“All my inward friends,”—or, to retain the expressive phrase of the original, as it stands on the margin, *All the men of my secret*,—“abhor me; they whom I loved are turned against me.” Thus, in like manner, we find the holy Psalmist describing the former sweetness of a friendship the memory of which, like Job’s, had been turned into bitterness,—“We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company.” Thus Jonathan, in the full conviction of his father’s love, declared,—“My father will do nothing great or small but he will show it unto me;” and Samson’s treacherous spouse alleged it as the conclusive demonstration that she was the object of a merely dissembled love, that his heart was not with her,—that he had not unbosomed his mind to her, nor told her wherein his great strength lay. And not by human beings only, but by Jehovah Himself, was the principle

acknowledged and proceeded on which represents the communication of secrets as the symbol and pledge of friendship. Concerning him to whom the lofty appellations are ascribed in Scripture, of, "the father of the faithful" and "the friend of God," we find the Almighty Ruler asking,—“Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?” And so, in the case of that other illustrious man of God who spake with Jehovah face to face, as a man talketh with his friend,—we find the one requesting, and the other vouchsafing, the same description of communication as the chosen proof of favour and regard:—“Moses said unto Jehovah, See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people; and Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me. Now, therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee;” “And Jehovah said unto Moses, I will also *do* this thing which thou hast spoken.”* This, then,—which, in the intercourse of man and man, and yet more, in the communion of God and man, together, has always been recognised as the pledge of intimate and confidential friendship,—this is the proof of His regard which Jesus was giving then to the eleven whom He had chosen, in making known to them all things which He had heard of the Father.

At the 12th verse of the following chapter, we find Jesus declaring, that He had still many things to say unto the apostles, which then they could not bear,—which they could not accurately comprehend, nor use appropriately. We must, therefore, interpret some one or other of the expressions of the verse before us in a somewhat modified and restricted sense; either understanding the expression, “all things whatsoever the Father hath spoken to me,” of

* Job xix. 19; Psal. lv. 14; 1 Sam. xx. 2; Jud. xvi. 15; Gen. xviii. 17; Exod. xxxiii. 13, 17.

all things which the disciples were able to bear, or explaining the term, "I have made known to you," as equivalent to,—I have now begun to disclose them, and will gradually unfold them more and more until the revelation of them is complete. The "things which Jesus had heard of the Father" is an expression which obviously comprehends, not, the whole circuit and extent of that omniscient knowledge which pertained to Him as the Eternal Divinity, but, that disclosure which had been made to his human mind, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, under the authority of the Eternal Father, of the scheme of mercy and of mediation of which He was appointed to be the Author and the Finisher,—the clear and enlarged comprehension He thus enjoyed of that system of celestial Truth, the daughter of the everlasting Mind, which was to become the guide and leader of the human soul to immortality. Now, of this wondrous scheme, Jesus had proved His peculiar friendship to the chosen eleven, by largely revealing to them such views and illustrations as had never been vouchsafed before even to the dearest and most honoured of his olden saints. "To you," He had said, "it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to others it is not given;" "Verily I say unto you that many kings and prophets have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."* More particularly in the discourses of which this very declaration forms a part, Jesus had disclosed to them, and was disclosing still, the mysteries of heavenly wisdom and heavenly grace, with a light, an unction, and a power which even to them was marvellous and new who, for three years, had been listening to the voice of Him who

* Matt. xiii. 11, 17.

spake as never man spake, and “wondering at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” Still more, the time was coming when, by the plentiful effusion of that illuminating Spirit whose office it should be to teach them all things,—the Spirit that “searcheth all things, even the deep things of God,”—He should convey to their inspired souls, in its full extent and harmony, the scheme of saving truth; so that they could say of their now completed acquaintance with the counsels of the Eternal and His Anointed Son,—“Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that He might instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ;” “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory.”* And last of all, He was preparing for them, and preparing them for, that glorious era of unclouded light and unbounded knowledge when the mystery of God should be finished, and the ark of His testament,—the veiled repository of the abstruser secrets of His government,—should be opened in heaven; when they who, under the fullest blaze of supernatural illumination, and amidst the rushing gales of celestial inspiration, were still constrained to say, “Now we know in part, and we prophesy in part,”—that which was perfect being come, should see no longer “as through a glass, darkly, but face to face;”† when, from the summits of immortal glory, and amidst the splendours of the beatific vision, their eye, unscaled and purified at the fount of life, should gaze undazzled on the arcana of Divinity; when in the light of God, they should see light clearly, and should know even as they were known.

Thus it was that to the original eleven whom first, in the text, He saluted with the glorious name of friends,

* 1 Cor. ii. 16, 7.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

Jesus proved His confidential love by admitting them into the secrets of His bosom—the inmost recesses of His mind and heart. And as He still is willing to confer this illustrious appellation on all who keep His commandments, so it is still His wont to verify the appellation by bestowing on them similar tokens of His friendly and affectionate regard. Not that, in these latter ages, He makes Himself known to His friends upon the earth precisely as in primeval times,—by voice or vision,—by the miraculous gifts, the prophetic afflatus, of the Holy Spirit. The age of inspiration is long gone by; and all recent pretensions to the sacred gift have been falsified by the want of adequate credentials,—by the lack of miracles, and by the failure of predictions. But still there is a way in which Jesus manifests Himself to His friends “in another way than He doth unto the world.” Still He is conveying to all those who prove themselves His followers by keeping His commandments, a knowledge of His mind and of His will such as none other of the children of men can enjoy, that experimental acquaintance with the true nature, qualities, relations, and effects, of spiritual truth, of which it is written,—“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” By removing the film which is upon the eye of the carnal understanding when directed to the things of God, and by which their just perception is excluded from the mind, and their just impression from the heart; by shining on the sacred page, and bringing out, in full relief and vividness and power, those great ideas which it contains, inscribed, as it were, in hieroglyphic characters which only they can interpret who have received the key of that mysterious cipher from Him by whom the volume was at first indited; and finally, by

giving them experimental explanation of the meaning, and experimental demonstration of the truth, of much that is contained in the Sacred Oracles, in the personal enjoyment of the spiritual life,—Jesus still is opening the eyes of His beloved to behold the wonders of Jehovah's law; “enlightening the eyes of their understanding, that they may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe;” “giving unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him;” and fulfilling His own repeated promise,—“If any man will do His will, He shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God;” “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*—Thus, even here, “the secret of the Lord” is still “with them that fear Him, and He will show to them His covenant,”—while for them, too, is prepared a place in that bright world where the light which is “sown for the righteous” shall spring up in a glorious harvest of knowledge and purity and joy; where, in the perpetual enjoyment of the holy friendship and familiar fellowship of their exalted Lord, they shall receive from Him the solution of every painful doubt, the revelation of every perplexing mystery; where they shall contemplate the whole scheme of the divine administration with a fulness of intelligence, and a consequent fulness of acquiescence, such as the capacious mind of Jesus itself experiences; and where, in one word, nothing shall be found with which to compare their boundless knowledge but God's own Omniscience,—where they shall know even as they are known.

* John vii. 17; viii. 31, 32.

LECTURE XXIII.

CHAP. XV. 16.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you.”

JESUS was now engaged in describing the magnitude and value of that illustrious privilege which the disciples possessed in having been admitted into His friendship, that is, the friendship of the most glorious Being who ever irradiated this distant sphere with His presence, and consecrated this lowly planet with His footstep; the friendship of Him who, beyond all beings in the universe, has proved how intensely and unconquerably He can love,—how fervent and how constant those who enjoy it may count on finding His affection; the friendship, finally, of Him whose infinite benignity has at its command infinite resources for conferring happiness, whose Love has Omnipotence for its instrument and handmaid. Jesus had already enumerated two memorable proofs which He had given them of His unexampled love. The first and most wonderful of all, is that to which He adverts, ver. 13th,—that He died for them, though sinners, and died, moreover, by a death of all that the barbarous ingenuity of man’s contemptuous cruelty has invented the most agonizing, the most igno-

minious, and sharpened in His case to infinite intensity by internal pangs that crucified His very soul,—the fiery onset of the wicked one, the eclipse of His Father's countenance, the endurance of His Father's wrath. The second instance of His friendship is that referred to in the verse immediately preceding the subject of lecture,—the free and unreserved communication which He had made to them, and which He was still to make, of "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven;" the confidential frankness with which He treated them as "the men of His secret," "who had the mind of Christ," and, according as they were able to bear it, received from Him gradually larger information of the counsels and the will of the Eternal,—until, at length, the mystery of God should be finished and the ark of His testimony opened in heaven,—until they should see Jehovah face to face, and know even as they were known. And now, in still further explanation of the nature and qualities of that Divine friendship with which He had deigned to regard them,—in still farther illustration of the claims which He possessed upon their gratitude and loyalty as the objects of His affection,—He goes on to remind them that the friendship which had proved its ardour and its force by such illustrious demonstrations was, in respect of its origin, entirely spontaneous and free, unsolicited and undesired:—"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

The general idea of this expression, in the connection in which it stands, is obviously this,—The commencement of the friendship was on my part: the first desire towards that sacred and blissful union by which we are now one was felt by me, the first step towards effecting it was taken by me. There has been a question raised whether the choosing here mentioned refer to that election which, in

the counsels of eternity, in the exercise of that omniscient sovereignty which embraces all duration,—past, present, and to come,—in one eternal idea and one eternal plan, He “who seeth the end from the beginning” made of the eleven to be His disciples and apostles, or to that selection which He made of them in time, when, in point of fact, He chose them out of the multitude of their compatriots, and effectually called on them to follow Him,—to be the believers of His doctrine, the heirs of His salvation, the ministers of His kingdom. The true interpretation, we apprehend, is that which comprises both of these transactions. It embraces all that was felt, resolved, and done, by Jesus towards receiving the eleven into His holy friendship previous to the first step taken by them in accepting of the offered privilege. Now, in regard to the historical fact, it is quite obvious in the case of the original disciples, how truly Jesus could say,—“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” They were pursuing their customary avocations in the world, their whole minds apparently absorbed in the cares and the concerns of their secular calling, and dreaming of nothing less than the honour and the blessedness of becoming the followers and friends of the Incarnate God,—one sitting quietly at the receipt of custom awaiting the reluctant arrival of the tribute-payers; another seated in his fisher’s boat, moored safely to the beach, after the labours of the day, and employed with his companions in repairing his torn nets for the morrow’s use; a third taking his repose, and pursuing his vacant fancies, beneath the shadow of his own spreading fig-tree; and all of them engaged, each in his own department, in pursuing the objects and enjoying the satisfactions of his peculiar position in the world,—when the voice of Jesus or His messengers prevented them with the

command, "Follow me," and imbued, as it were, with a strange resistless might which was all its own, the command constrained them to obedience, and brought them to the Master's feet, a willing people in the day of His power. But believing as we do that every several step of the Divine Redeemer's procedure in finishing the work which had been given Him to do was the result of an ancient and well-ordered plan,—arranged, not merely in all its greater lines, but in all its minutest particulars, in the high counsels and deliberations of eternity,—we see in the final selection the fruit of everlasting election, in the last effectual call of the apostles, no unforeseen and random consequence of accidental impulses and circumstantial contingencies, but the eternally foreseen, the eternally appointed, result of that all-comprehending plan which began to be accomplished in the creation of the universe.

And while all this is true in regard to the particular case of the apostles, not less does it apply to that of all who have been at any time, like them, admitted into the glorious company of the friends of Jesus. In allusion both to the previous everlasting choice, and to the final effectual calling, the testimony of the Bible is distinct, that the first movement towards reconciliation and amity between the Saviour and His people was on His part, not on theirs. They "love Him because He first loved" them. In the first place, they are by Holy Writ declared to be "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,"—to be "chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world,"—to have been "predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will."* And,—though it be true that,

* 1 Pet. i. 2; Eph. i. 4, 11.

in such passages as these, the everlasting choice of the redeemed is commonly referred to the plan and purpose of the Eternal Father,—yet all the general views which we can form, by the aid of reason or of revelation, respecting the transactions of that mysterious eternity which Jehovah inhabited alone, induce us to consider the Father's predestinating love and sovereignty as equally that of the Son, the Only-begotten who was "in the bosom of the Father,"—"rejoicing," even then, "in the habitable parts of the earth," and setting his delights upon the sons of men. Again, with regard to the practical result, in time, of that spontaneous choice which was first made in eternity,—the act of the Eternal Spirit arresting the attention of such as shall be saved to the gospel-call, leading them to listen to God's testimony as a faithful saying and to embrace it as worthy of all acceptance, and so to enter on the actual enjoyment of the honours and the privileges pertaining to the children of God and friends of Jesus Christ,—this, though the fruit, as we have said, of the Holy Ghost's immediate agency, is not the less on that account to be regarded as indicating the Redeemer's direct and personal election. To His hands the whole dispensation of the Spirit is committed; and every thing that the Spirit does in carrying on the work of grace and human salvation is done under the express authority, and by the express direction, of Him who is the Head and Sovereign of the dispensation—the Supreme Director of all its operations on the character and the condition of mankind. Now, that the grace by which any human soul is, on any occasion, brought into union with the Saviour is, strictly speaking, a preventing grace,—an influence that anticipates,—that, in fact, causes, and, therefore, must anticipate,—the first movement of the soul towards the Savi-

our, is a truth to which all Scripture and much experience bear their united testimony. "No man cometh unto Jesus unless it be given him of the Father." When Lydia attended to the things which were spoken of Paul, it was the Lord who had "opened her heart." And when St. Paul commands the Philippian Christians to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling," he adds,— "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."* Thus it is that, in regard to every believing soul, not less than in reference to the original eleven, the Master's words are verified,— "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

With respect to the practical effect which this undoubted doctrine of Holy Writ ought to exert, it is not my business to enlarge at present, in so far as it presents a subject of consideration involving any difficulty,—that is to say, in so far as it bears upon the duty and the destiny of those who are still unreconciled,—who give no proof as yet of having been the objects of the Saviour's everlasting choice, or of His preventing grace. This inference such individuals will be only too ready to derive from it,—that it exempts them at least from responsibility and blame, in respect of their rejection of the gospel, of their continued alienation from the faith and the obedience of the Lord. But this deduction is utterly unwarranted and false. If you ask me, how it is so,—I answer that I cannot, I fear, to your satisfaction, tell. If you ask me, why I say so,— I reply, Because God has said so before me. I trust Omniscience on this subject. I leave its difficulties with infinite knowledge and infinite veracity, and feel that I am safe when I leave them there. When I find the Bible dis-

* John vi. 65; Acts xvi. 14; Phil. ii. 12.

tinctly testifying that he that believeth not shall be condemned, "because he has not believed on the name of the Only-begotten Son of God,"—I hesitate not to denounce his unbelief as his crime, and not his misfortune, and to warn him solemnly that he beware of stupefying, or of hardening, his heart, by idle dreams of his exemption from responsibility; dreams which, in the light of the last day, the day of revelation, shall arise before his mind in their true character, as delusions of the enemy,—refuges of lies, which the storm shall rend, and the deluge overflow. His hope of safety is to feel, or, at least, on the authority of God to believe, his criminality; and so soon as, casting down before that authority, every proud imagination, and "every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God," he does feel it, and does believe it, so soon there is reason to hope that the Holy Spirit has begun His initial operation on his heart, and that the time will come at length when, with the apostle, he shall be able to rejoice that he hath, not apprehended, but been apprehended of Christ Jesus,—when Jesus shall be able to address him as He here addresses the eleven, and, having testified, "Thou hast not chosen me," to add, "but I have chosen thee." With reference to those, upon the other hand, who have the evidence within themselves, in a heart inclined to keep all His commandments,—to do whatsoever He has said unto them,—that they have already been received into the number of the Saviour's friends, the practical result of the statement in the text is obvious,—that the spontaneous generosity of the Redeemer's love, in combination with all those extraordinary qualities by which it is raised above every other instance of affection which the universe hath witnessed, or the annals of eternity record, should be a fresh impulse to stir and fan within their bosoms that

boundless gratitude with which we are called to "love Him who hath first loved us." "Herein indeed is love,—not that we loved God, but that He loved us." He, the Sovereign Creator and Lord of all, chose us for His friends,—us, the meanest and most degraded of His rational creatures—us, who were but dust and ashes in His sight. He, the High and Lofty Dweller in the high and holy place, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and cannot look upon sin," chose us for His friends,—us, who were defiled through all our faculties, corrupted in all our natures, with the taint of that abominable thing which the soul of Jehovah hateth. He, the most Righteous Majesty of heaven, the sceptre of whose kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness, "justice and judgment the habitation of His throne," chose us for His friends,—us, rebels and insurgents, proud though impotent, deserving not less His indignation than His scorn, and having justly to expect nothing less than "destruction from His presence and from the glory of His power," while the Lord should "laugh at our calamity, and mock when" our terror came. Oh, what sentiments of gratitude shall we reckon warm enough for such sovereignty of love as this! And how profound the humility which should mingle with our thankfulness, while to us, as to His ancient people, it is testified,—"Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon thee, nor choose thee, for thy righteousness, nor for the uprightness of thine heart, for thou art a stiff-necked people; but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn."*

* Deut. vii. 6-8.

But while it is a truth for ever to be borne in mind, and in all humility acknowledged, that the ground, the meritorious cause, for which any individual is chosen to salvation and called into the Saviour's friendship is no antecedent worth or holiness of His; it is to be observed with equal care, and with equal constancy to be remembered, that the object, the final end, for which He is so chosen and so called, is, that He may become holy, and holier day by day. Scripture thus speaks on the subject:—"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son;" "He hath chosen us in Christ, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love;" "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth;" "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."* With the consenting testimony of all the passages relating to the high and venerable mystery before us,—the final ends contemplated by the Divinity in the acts of His electing sovereignty and love,—the intimations of the passage now before us expressly coincide, where Jesus tells the beloved eleven,—“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit,”—an image with which we are already familiar as denoting, in the first instance, all the displays of energy and fidelity and zeal, honourable to God and beneficial to mankind, which the disciples were enabled, by the grace and strength of their heavenly Master, to exhibit, in the discharge of their

* Rom. viii. 29; Eph. i. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Pet. i. 2.

apostolic ministry; and then, more generally, all that exuberance of Christian virtues and of Christian graces in which the vital power produced by union to Jesus Christ expresses itself upon the character and life of believers. Let the declaration of the text, then, confirmed by so many equally explicit statements of the Holy Oracles, stamp with the deserved brand of folly and impiety the abuse which “unlearned and unstable souls that wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction” have sometimes made of the doctrine which asserts the preventing sovereignty of God’s electing love,—let it rebuke the insane security of those who have been found to glory in the confidence of their election, while their lives presented nothing to the observer’s eye but a cold and dreary waste, all bare and barren of the fruits of righteousness. Let every such individual, let every professing Christian, therefore, give the more earnest heed to the admonition of the Lord, and of His blessed apostle St. Peter,—“Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;”—“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

And then, while the Saviour asks of His disciples that their fruit should be abundant, He requires yet further that

* 2 Pet. i. 5-8, 10-11.

it should be permanent;—"I have chosen you that ye should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." That vital union between Jesus as the root, and His disciples as the branches, of the heavenly vine on which their power to bring forth fruit depends,—by which they are made prolific of whatsoever things are just and pure, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, whatsoever things deserve the name of virtue and of praise,—is, by its nature, and according to the obvious meaning of the Sacred Oracles, an indissoluble union. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" is the question which every Christian may ask with an assurance and a triumph proportioned to the degree in which he has already been enabled to glorify the Father by bringing forth much fruit—in proportion to the strength of the evidence which he possesses that he has, in point of fact, been made partaker of the root and fatness of the Holy Stem. So that it is, as it were, the law of nature in respect of this spiritual vegetation, that wheresoever fruit has actually been produced, that fruit should everlastingly remain. No doubt, we find in the conduct and experience of individual believers, this native tendency occasionally frustrated, or apparently reversed. As a season of spiritual langour or of spiritual backsliding is, alas! no unexampled occurrence in the Christian life; so it has been seen that boughs in the vineyard of the Lord which lately were decked with fairest verdure, and laden with most exuberant fruit, seem smitten with sudden blight, and, with their puny, lean, and shrivelled clusters, deform the scene which they once so gracefully adorned. But this is against the tenor of the Holy Ghost's celestial operations. Not one even of these stricken branches, if really it hold of the heaven-descended vine, shall finally cease from yielding fruit at all. The principle

of grace, where once it has been vitally infused, shall never be finally extinguished; and the ordinary course, the native tendency, of things is,—that, on the other hand, the spiritual principle, with the lapse of time, is gradually expanded invigorated, and matured. Among the privileges secured to every true believer by the fact of his being once ingrafted on the immortal stock,—planted together with Jesus Christ,—is ‘increase of grace,’ as well as ‘perseverance therein unto the end.’ “The vine which the Lord’s right hand hath planted, the branch which He made strong for Himself,” it shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots beside the river; “she shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall still be green; and she shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” “The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age,—they shall be fat and flourishing: to show that the Lord is upright.”* And ever as the flight of mortal seasons is prolonged, and time, the parent of decay to all things else, makes more extended proof of the sacred root’s productive energy in all the ingrafted boughs, the natural result will be, that every living branch will spread itself more widely forth, and, over a greater expanse, hang out a fairer profusion of hopeful blossoms, a richer exuberance of purpled clusters; making glad the heart of God and man, and presenting to each illuminated eye a more attractive spectacle of holy beauties and holy fruits,—until, at last, transferred to a more congenial clime, it shall flourish on the hills of immortality.

* Jer. xvii. 8; Psa. xcii. 12—15.

beneath the light of a purer sun, and the soft refreshment of holier dews; where all external influences shall combine to stimulate and cherish the native tendency of the vital energy within; where the bright unsullied air shall shed no blight even on the tenderest bloom; where the storm of trial or temptation shall blow no more, to rend the swelling clusters, or scatter the shadowy leaves; but where the whole ransomed Church of Jesus Christ, in living and indissoluble union with Himself,—the vine of heavenly birth, with all its adopted branches round about it, instinct with an unfailing fertility, and fresh with an unwithering beauty,—shall be for evermore the blessing and the ornament of heaven,—a spectacle on which angels shall gaze with endless admiration, and the eye of God, the Immortal Husbandman, shall repose with an accomplished satisfaction, with an everlasting delight.

What, therefore, remains, beloved brethren, but that I solemnly exhort you, that, while it is yet in your power by your own negligence and folly to counteract in some degree the native spring and tendency of the holy vitality that animates your souls, you will beware of every thing which might check or enfeeble the productive power of the spiritual life within. I am quite sure, that, if you are really Christians, the thought will be utterly abhorrent to your hearts, when presented there as a naked abstract idea, of surrendering yourselves to carelessness and unconcern about your farther spiritual improvement because, as ye apprehend, ye have once been ingrafted into Christ, and, therefore, can never be finally divided from Him. When you recollect that your holiness is the very end and object of your election, of your redemption, of your union to the Saviour; when you recollect that your continuance and progress in holiness is what Christ requires as the best

proof that you can give Him of gratitude for His most generous love, while you feel experimentally that holiness is in truth the highest good of man, his chiefest glory and his chiefest enjoyment even here; and when you remember, finally, the connection of holiness, as a course of preparation, with the state of final perfection and final blessedness; I have no doubt that you will feel it to be an object to draw forth your warmest desires and your most eager endeavours,—that your fruit may remain, and may abound, from day to day, yet more and more. See, then, that the great object which, in the general, you know and feel to be so desirable, be not, in your particular case, neglected, or counteracted by opposing influences. Become not weary in well-doing. “Be ye steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” And, for this end, remember evermore, and act evermore on the remembrance, that on the continuance of the communication free and undisturbed between the Saviour and your souls depends the permanence of your productive power as branches in the vineyard of the Lord. Let nothing, therefore, be permitted to intercept or to obscure the clearness and directness of that communication,—that is to say, the distinctness and the energy of that living faith which is its medium and its instrument. Remember how your Master said,—“Abide in me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit,—for without me ye can do nothing.”*

* John xv. 4, 5.

LECTURE XXIV.

CHAP. XV. 16—19.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated 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.”

THE clause from which we now start,—the last of the 16th verse,—has already been explained by us in full detail, when considering the 13th and 14th verses of the preceding chapter—“Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified through the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.” Between the promise there exhibited, however, and that which is now before us, a two-fold difference deserves to be remarked. For, first, the object of prayer, which in the former case was left unnoticed, is here particularly specified, that is, “the Father;” which agrees with the formula prescribed by Jesus when He commanded His disciples, when they prayed, to say,—“Our Father who art in heaven.” He teaches us, therefore, not merely that in ordinary cases our prayers should be directed to the first Person of the Godhead,—to whom the office in the economy of grace

belongs of sustaining the supremacy and majesty of the Divinity; but that He is to be regarded by the suppliant believer under the relation of a Father, and that in respect, not merely of Jesus, His Only-begotten Son, but of the faithful themselves, His adopted children,—a relation this in the due consideration of which is contained whatever is fundamental to faith and confidence in prayer. And then, in the second place, while, in the former passage, Jesus takes upon Himself the obligation of performing whatsoever the disciples should ask in His name,—“I will do it,”—here He ascribes the same office to the Father,—“that He may give it.” The natural inference from the promiscuous attribution to the Father and the Son of the high office of hearing the petitions of Christ’s suppliant people, is plainly the equality of each to other,—their unity of purpose, and also their unity of essence. For there is but one being in the universe to whom the appellation, Hearer of prayer, can without impiety be ascribed,—the Sovereign Essence who alone is to be worshipped and adored, whose “name alone is Jehovah, the Most High over all the earth.”

The connection of the words before us with those which precede appears to me to be the following:—Jesus is describing the great final ends with respect to His disciples themselves in order to which He set His love upon them in eternity, and effectually called them to Himself in time. These ends were two,—that they might be holy, and that they might be happy. The fact of His having had the former object in His view when He deigned to choose them for His friends He had testified, when He said,—“I have ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit.” But that they might not imagine, that the character of His friends and followers was one which

imposed upon them difficult duties, without conferring on them corresponding privileges,—that their calling and election was to mere unrelieved and unrewarded toil and trial,—He subjoins to a statement of the obligations which admission into the number of His friends exacted, a statement of one, at least, among the benefits which it conveyed; selecting for this purpose a benefit of the most pregnant and comprehensive kind, which included in itself the germ of every other temporal and every other spiritual blessing, —the privilege of having all their supplications heard; of having all the resources of Omnipotence placed at the bidding of their prayers; of having all the treasures of the Father's all-sufficiency in Jesus Christ laid open to their desires, and secured to their enjoyment; of having every request of their lips, every aspiration of their hearts, fulfilled, save when its fulfilment might work them harm or loss; in one word, of having accomplished in their experience, to the uttermost, that "exceeding great and precious," that all-embracing, promise,—"The Lord God is a sun and shield; He will give grace and glory; and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly."*

Now, while, by the preceding description of the excellences of His own matchless love, and of the ends which it contemplated, both of holiness and happiness, in reference to them, it was the Saviour's object to supply them with motives and encouragements to the discharge of every part of the duty incumbent upon them as His disciples; there was one duty on which He was accustomed to lay peculiar stress, and which He especially wished on this occasion to enforce by the arguments arising from the love with which He had loved them,—the duty that they should,

* Psa. lxxxiv. 11.

in like manner, love one another. By looking back to the 12th verse, you may perceive that the whole illustration introduced by Jesus of His own friendship towards the eleven arose out of the charge which He there delivered to them,—“This is my commandment, that ye love one another *as I have loved you.*” In explanation of the concluding clause, “as I have loved you,” He, in the three following verses, describes how He had loved them,—that is, with a love spontaneous in its origin, holy in its objects, self-sacrificing in its force. Accordingly, in closing the description, He emphatically recalls their attention to the object for which it had been introduced:—“These things I command,” or, announce to, “you, that ye may love one another,” that is, with a love resembling mine,—with a love which waits for no service, no merit, in its object personal to yourselves, in order to embrace him in the arms of a pure, disinterested, and generous affection; with a love which shall account it the noblest and most precious benefit it can confer upon a brother to promote his holiness, to stimulate his spiritual fruitfulness; with a love, in fine, which, in order to redeem a friend, is prepared to decline no trial, to grudge no sacrifice,—which he who feels is ready, like St. Paul, to pour out his heart’s dearest blood as a libation upon the sacrifice and service of a brother’s faith; is ready, like Christ Jesus, to demonstrate that though “greater love hath no man than this,” yet such love there are those who, inspired by their bleeding Lord’s example, can feel, and can express,—“that a man lay down his life for his friend.”

The same station of lofty rank and dignity in the bright choir of holy graces which is ascribed by Jesus to the love of the brethren, is uniformly assigned to it by His apostles and evangelists. Love is by St. John set forth

as the very test of Christianity,—by St. Paul it is described as “the bond of perfectness.” The commandment which enjoins it St. James denominates, “the royal law;” and concerning it St. Peter, with earnest obtestation, exhorts,—“Above all things, brethren, have fervent love among yourselves.” “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,”—to conclude with the matchless panegyric of the apostle of the Gentiles,—“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.—And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”*

In the particular case of the apostles, there were many circumstances which rendered the cultivation of brotherly love a duty of peculiar importance to their own happiness and their own success. They were going forth to an arduous and perilous warfare against a hostile world and its

* 1 John ii. 10; iii. 14, 18, 19; iv. 7, 8, 16; Col. iii. 14; James ii. 8; 1 Pet. iv. 8; 1 Cor. xiii. 1—8, 13.

demon-god; and, on the principle that ‘union is strength,’ it was essential to their prosperity and triumph that they should act with one mind and one heart,—that they should give no advantage to the enemy by the indulgence of mutual dissensions, jealousies, and strifes,—and that they should advance, a close and secured phalanx, to battle and to victory, ‘in mighty quadrate joined, of union irresistible.’ And as the precept of mutual love was one intended and calculated to insure their success, so was it meant and fitted to promote their happiness. For how refreshing was it likely to prove,—how cheering and how strengthening,—for each of Christ’s persecuted flock, assailed by the scorn and the enmity of an exasperated world, pierced by the arrows of reproach and cruelty, stunned by the roar of malice and contempt and bloody hate, to fall back upon the sympathy and love of their “brethren and companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ;” to take refuge from the storm without,—the scourge of tongues, and the assault of wicked hands,—in the bosom of the Lord’s yet undiscording church, as in a serene untroubled sanctuary, fenced round against the intrusion of worldly animosities and passions, and breathing, all about, the blessed air of love and charity, fragrant as the oil of holiness, and refreshing as the dews of Hermon! This, then, is the next subject to which the Saviour calls the attention of His followers, in the prospect of His leaving them,—the hatred and the persecution which they should encounter, in the discharge of their apostolic ministry, from an unbelieving and ungodly world.

That the world would hate the disciples Jesus takes for granted,—that is, that the majority of men, and more particularly those in whose hands the authority and power and influence of the present state were deposited, would

treat them, as they went forth upon the noble enterprise to which He had commissioned them, as public enemies of the human race, and would pursue them even to the death with every expression of remorseless hatred, with every weapon of relentless persecution. Even now, the sparks were kindled which, ere long, were to burst forth into a fierce, wide-wasting conflagration. Already the followers of Jesus had been pronounced accursed by the lordly Pharisees. Already had the resolution been recorded, that "if any man did confess that Jesus was the Christ he should be put out of the synagogue." And He perceived the time at hand when they should be exposed to the ordeal of a yet more fiery trial,—when the world should shower with yet more liberal hand, upon the heads of all who bore His name, and would keep faith and a good conscience, reproach and malediction, torture and death. To contend with these was the calling of apostles and primeval Christians,—heroic saints, whom persecutions have made glorious; to become hated of all men for His name's sake; for their allegiance to the Saviour, to "endure the trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment,"—to "wander in deserts and on mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth,"—to brave the jaws of savage beasts, and the rage of yet more ruthless men,—and, amidst glorious shames, victorious agonies, to sprinkle with their martyred blood and ashes the scaffold and the stake. Not such are the trials to which the force of human enmity now exposes the believer; though still there are those among Christ's followers,—and methinks the spirit is becoming daily more conspicuous and avowed,—who, in walking worthy of their high vocation, must lay their account with sustaining the world's dread laugh, her withering frown, her busy opposition, her bitter

scorn, her keen reproach. Still all who would "live godly in Christ Jesus" may look in some form, in some degree, to suffer persecution, and to feel that to them it hath been "given, on Christ's behalf, not merely to believe on Him, but to suffer for His sake." A life of vital, serious, evangelical religion,—the only religion which is worthy of the name,—can scarcely be steadily pursued in a world like this without being somewhere met by such hostility as shall require painful sacrifices, or shall inflict severe suffering. But to every one who is called to suffer in this kind, even as to the apostles and primitive believers, there is ample support and encouragement provided in the Saviour's words,—“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”

That the fact was so is obvious. Christ was "rejected and despised of men." Men "hid, as it were, their faces from Him; He was despised, and they esteemed Him not." In addressing Him of old by the prophetic Spirit, this was part of the introduction which Jehovah used,—“Thus saith the Lord to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the nation abhorreth.”* In His very cradle He experienced the enmity of the bloody and remorseless tyrant who then ruled Judea; and no sooner did He enter on the public walks of life than He became the object of suspicion, and jealousy, and abhorrence, to the dark-souled priests and Pharisees who sat in Moses' chair and governed the opinions of the nation. With what precaution and alarm, at the very entrance of His public ministry, did Nicodemus seek Him under the protecting shade of night, "for fear of the Jews!" How often does the preceding history represent the insidious rulers and the infuriated populace seeking

* Isa. liii. 3; xlix. 7.

Jesus that they might slay Him,—lifting up murderous hands against the Lord's Anointed! And still more awful proofs of deadly hatred the events of that very night on which our Saviour spake, and of the following day, were to supply; when they “came out against Him as against a thief, with swords and staves, to take Him;” when thirsting for His life, they hurried Him away from tribunal to tribunal; when the rulers with dark determination, with sanguinary shouts the populace, demanded Him for the accursed tree; and when, at last, “with wicked hands they crucified and slew” Him, gazing on with savage satisfaction, while the sufferer hung suspended in the endurance of agonies fitted to touch the stoniest heart with some sense of natural pity and remorse,—till their deed of murder was accomplished, and they retired to brood in darkness over their satisfied revenge. Well, then, might the disciples, in encountering the wrongs,—in enduring the deaths,—which they were to suffer at the hands of a godless world, remember that it had hated Him before it hated them, and so nerve their hearts to the conflict which was to be fulfilled in them,—perceiving that suffering in such a cause could bring with it no real disgrace, since in that cause the Lord of glory had suffered before them; feeling that, by His having trodden it, the path of persecution had been softened, and dignified, and sanctified, to all His followers; accounting it an honour to be conformed to their illustrious Head even in the article of suffering, and to become heirs of the enmity which began at Him; knowing that, under the trial of their faith, they were the objects of His most tender and efficacious sympathy in whose cause they were embarked, and who, in that “He Himself hath suffered being tried,” was able also to feel for them, and to succour them, when they were tried like Him; and assured that the sufferings

of the present time would soon be followed, and more than compensated, by “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,”—that a martyr’s death was the way to a martyr’s crown; even as He who had gone before them in every path of trial as of duty,—“having endured the cross, despising the shame,”—“sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens,” and from that glorious summit of peerless dignity and might is seen beckoning His followers along the steep ascent of peril, toil, and pain; is heard proclaiming,—“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life;” “To him that overcometh I will give to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father on His throne.”*

Thus much did Jesus hold forth to His disciples in the prospect of impending persecutions,—thus much does He still hold forth to all who may be called to suffer for His name’s sake,—of support and comfort and encouragement, in the statement,—“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.” It was, accordingly, in the experience of the primitive martyrs and confessors, an abundant source of patience, yea, of triumph and of joy, in tribulation, to remember that, in enduring it, they did but follow in the steps of their Redeemer-Lord. With what intense and spirit-stirring eloquence does the zealous apostle St. Peter urge this animating thought upon his brethren, as enough to render the bitterest persecutions sacred and sweet in their esteem:—“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings,

* Heb. xii. 2; i. 3; Rev. ii. 10; iii. 21.

that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you;” “If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.”* And how touchingly did the same illustrious servant of Jesus show how firm a grasp his own mind had taken of the thought, in circumstances when his faith was put, perhaps, to a bitterer test than when he himself was summoned to “put off his tabernacle, as the Lord had showed him!” ‘The blessed apostle,’ says an ancient historian of the church, ‘beholding his beloved wife led away to death before him, was glad exceedingly because of her calling and departure to her heavenly home; and, as she went, he called after her aloud, exhorting and consoling her,—O my wife, remember thou the Lord.’

In the following verse, Jesus proceeds to a second consideration well-calculated to animate and to console the disciples under the experience of the world’s enmity, by pointing out to them its origin and cause:—“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.”

It is a maxim ratified by all experience, a very proverb and axiom of morals,—that ‘Likeness is the mother of love.’ On this principle, the Saviour remarks, in the first place, on this subject,—that, if the disciples were of the world, the world would love its own; that is, if they were of the same character as the majority of men; if they pursued the same ends, adopted the same maxims, were regulated by the same motives, thought and felt and spoke and

* 1 Pet. iv. 12-14, 16.

acted on the same principles,—with a primary and paramount desire after secular distinctions and secular enjoyments,—with a ruling and habitual devotion to the objects which are seen and temporal, comparatively forgetful and unconcerned about those things which are unseen and eternal,—then they might look to escape the storm of persecution which was gathering and darkening like a cloud above them,—then might they hope, instead, to bask at ease beneath the sunshine of the world's propitious smile. There has been much discussion by commentators on this remark, in reference to the question how we are to reconcile with it the fact that different individuals, and different classes of men, alike belonging to that great community the world, are so often found inflamed against each other with such rancorous passion, and encountering each other with such bitter opposition,—“living,” to use the apostle's vivid description, “in malice and in envy, hateful and hating one another.” But our Lord is obviously speaking with a special reference to that single controversy which exists between the world and Himself,—between its maxims and His religion. He leaves all other grounds of mutual quarrel out of view, and simply says that, in so far forth as this matter is concerned,—in so far forth as the one difference between the worldly man and the Christian man affects the feelings and the conduct of those who themselves are worldly,—it is natural for them to love and cherish the former, to hate and persecute the latter. To be of worldly tastes and sentiments, of worldly conversation and behaviour, is in so far a recommendation to the world's affections and regards. To be spiritual in mind and heart, spiritual in lips and life, is an occasion and a ground for the world's dislike and detestation and contempt. For, having remarked,—“If ye were of the world, the world would love its own,” Jesus

goes on to say,—“ But because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” Those who are now the followers of the Lord were by nature, like the rest of their brethren, the slaves and adorers of the world,—devoted, with the full bent of their desires, and in the main energy of their pursuits, to the objects and concerns of time, forgetful of God and of eternity,—“ worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is over all and blessed for ever.” But, by the Saviour’s gracious choice, and the effectual call of the Almighty Spirit sent forth by Him into their hearts, a mighty revolution has been effected on their character, in all its ruling principles and all its distinctive tendencies. They have heard, and have obeyed, the word of the Lord that called them out of Babylon,—“ Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence ;” “ Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” They are now no longer conformed to the present evil world,—they have become “ transformed in the renewing of their minds.” Their views and estimates of things are fundamentally changed, are directly reversed. Those worldly objects which formerly appeared to them so glorious and excellent and desirable as to attract to themselves their most eager wishes and their most intense pursuit, have now grown poor and sordid and contemptible in their esteem, in comparison of those objects, unearthly, invisible, eternal, which to the rest of men are but a shadow and a dream,—the favour, the fellowship, the enjoyment, of the Living God. And with their change of views, a corresponding change has taken place on the tenor of their feelings and the course of their life,—which tacitly condemns the world they have forsaken of folly and of

crime in every step of that eager chase in which all her children are engaged, after the things that perish in the using, as their chief good and chosen portion. "Therefore the world hateth them." Men cannot bear that living rebuke, that embodied condemnation of themselves, which the character and life of a serious Christian who walks according to his profession and his name present. "They hate him," says the prophet Amos, "that rebuketh in the gate, they abhor him that speaketh uprightly." "He that is upright in the way," says Solomon, the king and sage, "is an abomination to the wicked." "This is the message," says the holy apostle John, referring to these very discourses of his Lord, "This is the message which we have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."*

The cause, then, of the hatred which the world has so often, and by such unambiguous tokens, showed against the faithful followers of the Lord is deeply rooted in the universal principles of human nature,—in the unchangeable relations and oppositions of things. And therefore we have a right to say that, however it may seem sometimes to slumber, it never dies. Of course, I do not mean to say, that a man who is still worldly can never love a man who is a Christian. All I say is, that he cannot love him *because* he is a Christian; that, in fact, he would love him better if he were less serious and less spiritual,—if he were more compromising with the principles, more indulgent to the tastes, more accommodating to the practices,

* Amos v. 10; Prov. xxix. 27; 1 John iii. 11-13.

of the world, than a bold and decided Christian will or can in any case be found. In proportion as the former would like the latter more if he were thus more of the world,—in that proportion the one, in point of fact, dislikes the other because he is thus not of the world. The unpopularity of a Christian as a Christian may be, and often is, counteracted by other circumstances in individual cases; but there are few, if any, genuine and avowed disciples of the Lord who will not, at some part or other of their Christian course, be experimentally convinced of the profound and permanent truth of our Saviour's declaration,—“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.” But oh, who is there of Christian men that would reckon this,—the result of that unworldliness of temper and of character which the Saviour so strenuously inculcates,—the penalty of that non-conformity to secular principles and secular usages which is the badge of genuine Christianity,—who of them would reckon it formidable to anticipate, or difficult to bear, when he remembers that the cause why he is rejected of the world is that he has been chosen of the Lord,—that he is hated of man because he is loved of Christ? Be it then the care of every Christian who wishes to rise superior to the world's enmity and scorn to cherish in his bosom, more and more, that holy principle which sustained, of old, the triumphant agonies of martyrs and of saints, in the ordeal of yet extremest trials,—that faith which realizes the eternal and the unseen; which can fairly balance against each other the hatred of man and the love of Christ, the sufferings of the present time and the glory that is to be revealed; which taught Moses to “reckon the reproach of Christ greater

riches than the treasures of Egypt," and to "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." "This," this, my brethren, "is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith."*

* Heb. xi. 24-26; 1 John v. 4.

LECTURE XXV.

CHAP. XV. 20, 21.

“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me.”

In the 18th verse of this chapter Jesus had entered on a new subject, in regard to which it was necessary, for the ends of this Divine discourse, to furnish His disciples beforehand with resources of support and consolation,—the prospect which lay before them, after His departure, of being called to endure reproach and persecution from a hostile world for His name’s sake. In reference to this prospect He had already called their attention to two highly consolatory and animating considerations;—the first, that, if they were called to suffer the hatred of the world, it was only what their Lord had been summoned to endure before them; and the other, that the cause of the world’s hatred towards them was one which, so far from being intrinsically and on its own account a misfortune or disgrace, deserved to be accounted by them an honour and a privilege,—the most illustrious of honours, of privileges the most precious,—even this,—that they were not of the world, because Christ had chosen them

out of the world, to be the members of a nobler and purer society, the possessors of a holier character, and the heirs of more exalted hopes. Our Lord, pursuing the same course of exhortation, in the 20th verse, reverts to the topic of consolation on which He had first insisted,—that they had no reason to “count it strange concerning the fiery trial which was to try them, as though some strange thing happened unto them,” inasmuch as not only were “the same afflictions accomplished in their brethren,” not only had the world in like manner “persecuted the prophets which were before them,” but He Himself, who was the Lord of prophets, the King of saints, had endured, and by enduring had for ever dignified and consecrated, like baseness of insult, and like severities of persecution:—“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”

The saying which Jesus here recalls to the recollection of His followers had been delivered by Him on various occasions during the lapse of His public ministry,—and more particularly in the course of that very evening on which He now spake, when, by His own example of voluntary condescension in washing His disciples’ feet enforcing on them the duty of humbling themselves to the lowest offices of love on behalf of one another, He had said,—“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.”* It was a comprehensive and frequent saying, ready for appli-

* John xiii. 14, 16.

cation, and rich in instruction, in all those cases,—and how numerous are they!—in which Christ has deigned to become His followers' example and forerunner, whether in the path of duty or in that of suffering. In the first case, therefore, we find it preaching humility and condescension,—in this, patience and submission. For surely, they who remember the relation in which they stand to Jesus,—the relation of servants to a lord,—servants, no doubt, whom He had dignified with the name of friends, but whose condition had not therefore lost, and never could by possibility lose, its inferiority to His,—an infinite inferiority,—could never think it strange or hard that they should suffer some portion of the reproaches and the wrongs which descended, in so fierce and pitiless a shower, upon their Master's sacred head. The true and effectual way to nurse the spirit of patient submission under the endurance of injuries and insults for righteousness' sake, is to cherish just views of ourselves and of our Saviour,—that is, thoughts as low as possible of ourselves, but as exalted as possible of Him,—and then to recollect how He suffered “the contradiction of sinners against Himself;” how He “resisted even unto blood, striving against sin;” how He, at last, “endured the cross, despising the shame.”* And shall we not reckon it, therefore, the highest flight of presumption, the lowest baseness of effeminacy, that any Christian, after this, should repine, should think he has a right to murmur and complain, when Jesus says to him,—“He that will be my disciple must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me;” “He that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution;” “Through much tribulation ye shall enter into the kingdom of God.”† The

* Heb. xii. 2-4. † Matt. xvi. 24; 2 Tim. iii. 12; Acts xiv. 22.

servants of 'the King of sufferings, whose sceptre was a reed of scorn, whose imperial robe was the purple of mockery, whose throne was the cross of agony and shame,' may well account it, as the apostles and primitive disciples did, an honour and a privilege that it was given them, on behalf of Jesus, "not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His name," to bind the reproach of Christ as a garland round their brows, and to bear with triumph, in their persons, "the marks"—the stigmas,—“of the Lord Jesus.”

Jesus,—having thus referred His disciples to His own case as the great exemplar of sufferings, in order to recommend and to endear to their souls the persecutions which awaited them,—goes on to apply this general consideration to the two special forms which the hatred of the world was likely to assume in their experience; to the treatment which it should give, first, their persons, and then, their doctrine:—"If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also,"—that is, they will receive and observe the one no better than they did the other.

Amplly was this prediction fulfilled in both particulars. The apostles and primitive disciples were called to encounter in their persons the extremest proofs of hatred which the malice alike of Jew and Gentile, the enmity of a world confederate against the cross, could inflict. They were scourged and imprisoned, banished and scattered, tormented and slain. Of all the disciples there was not one who died a natural death, save only our evangelist; and even in his case nothing of martyrdom was wanting but the act of slaughter. He would not have counted it an honour to have been exempted from his share in the patience and sufferings of Christ. "I John,"—it was His glory thus to describe and recommend himself to the persecuted Church,—“I John,

who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.* For three hundred years the grain of mustard-seed which was at length to overshadow the whole earth was watered with the blood of saints,—till the number of sufferers had blunted the persecutor's sword, and the host of those who had "come out of great tribulation" stood before the everlasting throne, an exceeding great army. And, while such was the treatment they experienced in their persons, how did their doctrine fare? Even as their Master had predicted, when He said,—“If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.” Whether or no the world had embraced and kept the doctrine spoken by the Lord Himself, we may judge from the complaints of their obstinate and contemptuous incredulity which so often occur in this very Gospel. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” “I am come in my Father's name,” He said, “and ye receive me not;” “Whom the Father hath sent, Him ye believe not.” And so was the word of Isaiah the prophet fulfilled, when, in vision, he beheld the Anointed of the Lord “stretching out His hands, all the day long, to a disobedient and gainsaying people,” and heard Him exclaiming,—“I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain.” Precisely in the same tone and spirit, we find, in the same book of Prophecy, the apostles and primitive disciples reciting their Master's words. “Who,” they exclaim, “hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”—“For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes

* Rev. i. 9.

have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted and be healed."* True, after the effusion of the Holy Ghost, and by the power of His effectual working, the apostles, according to their Master's promise, were honoured to do greater things than He, in respect of the success which attended the preaching of the Gospel by their lips, and the multitudes whom they were honoured to gather into the fold of Jesus, of those who "were as sheep going astray," both from among the Gentiles and the people of Israel. But still, the majority of either class,—the vast majority,—the world, were to treat their sayings, as they had treated those of their great Forerunner, with determined opposition and contempt. The preaching of the cross was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." The election, a small selected number, embraced it; but "the rest were blinded." "The god of this world blinded the eyes of them that believed not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, the Image of God, should shine into them."†

From the fact that Jesus selects the rejection of the apostles' doctrine by the great majority of men, from among the various forms in which the world's contempt and hatred should express itself, as one against the effects of which the disciples required a peculiar consolation, we gather an important lesson,—that every minister of Jesus Christ, every preacher of the everlasting gospel, who is in serious earnest, will count it a manifestation of the world's hatred to the cause of Christ at least as painful and difficult to bear as any form of personal insult and personal suffering, to see the multitude of men wilfully rejecting

* John i. 11; v. 43, 38; Isa. xlix. 4; liii. 1; Matt. xiii. 15.

† 1 Cor. i. 23; Rom. xi. 7; 2 Cor. iv. 4.

the counsel of God against themselves,—putting away from them the word of everlasting life. And how, my brethren, can it fail to be so to one who feels, in the fact, not merely his own most solemn convictions resisted and repudiated, but insult offered to Almighty God, despite done to the All-merciful Redeemer, eternal life rejected, eternal ruin chosen, and the misguided multitude dragging down on their own heads the thunders of fiercer condemnation, the vials of an intenser wrath, than had they never heard the proclamation of mercy and the offer of salvation,—a doom more intolerable than that reserved for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment? Oh, let us all remember, my brethren, that the rejecters of the Gospel are classed by Jesus with the persecutors of Christianity; and let no one, therefore, whom law, or custom, or natural disposition, or existing circumstances, prevent from imitating the violence and savage cruelties of former times against the cross of Christ, flatter himself that he, at least, does not deserve to be denominated, as the Saviour here denominates the world,—the enemy of Him and of His cause,—the persecutor of His ministers and servants,—if still his character be that of those who know not God, nor obey the Gospel of His Son. True, to the heralds of the cross, the preachers of the Crucified, there is consolation and support afforded by the thought that, if the world reject their saying, it rejected their Lord's before them; and they may take refuge in the same consideration as He, in a passage of which we have already quoted part, and in which, to encourage all who faithfully labour in His service with the hope of their personal acceptance, even when their hearts are wounded by the obstinate refusal of those with whom they plead for Christ to hear that their souls may live, He says,—“Though

Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord. Then I said, Surely I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain. Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work is with my God." It is written, precisely to the same effect, of the apostles, for the benefit of all who should succeed the apostles in their calling and their fate, that even in those who perished, in those to whom they were the "savour of death unto death," they were, notwithstanding, "a sweet savour of Christ unto God."* But however calculated such considerations are to support and stimulate the servant of Christ Jesus in the ministry of His word to continued diligence, and patience, and exertion,—they cannot, nor is it intended that they should, prevent him from feeling it a spectacle fraught with intensest melancholy to behold the multitude of men turning the ministry of peace and reconciliation into a ministry of wrath and condemnation, compelling the Gospel, even against its nature, to curse them, and converting what might have been, what should have been, the odour of life unto life, into "the savour of death unto death." Be sure, my brethren, that, in the contemplation of this too frequent spectacle, the serious and faithful minister of Christ, unless he will suffer the frequency of the case to steel his heart against its awfulness, has a source of mental suffering, connected with his holy vocation, which requires him still to seek encouragement and consolation from his Lord as earnestly as when that vocation was a path that led through the fires of persecution, and terminated in the grave of martyrdom. If the world persecute him not as they persecuted his Lord, at least they keep his saying just as they kept his Lord's.

* Isa. xlix. 4, 5; 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

Having thus touched, a second time, upon the topic of consolation arising from the similarity which the persecutions of His followers bore to those which He had suffered before them, our Lord adverts also a second time to the causes of those sufferings as suggesting to them abundant grounds of consolation and encouragement:—"All these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not Him that sent me."

First of all, Jesus reminds the disciples, in general, that all the various forms of persecution which should be showered upon their heads,—whether consisting in the injury of their persons, or in the rejection of their doctrine,—happened to them for His name's sake. Every one acquainted with the early history of the Church is aware how literally, in many instances, this prediction was accomplished. So obnoxious did the very name of Christ and Christian become at last to the ruling powers of the world, that in the simple appellation they found sufficient reason to let loose on those who bore it the utmost rage of their bloodthirsty cruelty. The letter is still on record in which a Roman governor refers to the emperor for direction whether he should inflict the severities which the Cæsars' persecuting edicts denounced, 'simply,' as he says, 'on account of the name, unattended by public offence, or only in cases where crime was found cohering with the name.' 'We count it but fair and equitable,' says a Christian Father, appealing on the subject to the natural sense of justice in the breasts of the heathen persecutors, 'that we shall not be pursued with hatred and with punishment merely because we are called Christians,—that the charge on which we are condemned shall be the allegation, not of a name, but of a crime.' But the expression, "for my name's sake," is commonly employed by Jesus in a

more extensive sense than this, and as denoting generally, —on my account, for my sake. And in this sense the fact was in strict accordance with the prediction. The persecutions and the sufferings which the apostles experienced at the hands of an unbelieving world were but the continuation of those which Jesus had Himself endured, —proceeding on the same grounds, and indicating the same spirit. It was the doctrine which they taught, the claims which they asserted, that excited the jealousy, that galled the pride, that exasperated the passions, that stirred up the whole corruption, of mankind into the mighty storm and conflagration of hatred, contempt, and persecution through which they were called to press into the kingdom of God. But that doctrine was the doctrine of Christ, these claims were the claims of Jesus, and Jesus Christ it was whom they had to thank for all that they endured from the enmity of an infuriated world. Think not, my brethren, that I use the phrase in that ironical and scornful sense which it is wont to bear. For they counted it really cause of thankfulness,—they thanked Him from their inmost souls,—that it was given to them to suffer for His dear sake. It took the venom and the sting from suffering to know that they suffered for His name. They felt that they had a noble cause, that they fought beneath a glorious banner, that they served an illustrious Lord,—a cause in which, a Lord for whom, ‘it were a sweet and sacred thing to die.’ What sacrifices, think you, what toils, what sufferings, could they grudge for Him who had surrendered so much, who had achieved so much, who had endured so much, for them? And how blessed a source of holy cheer and comfort was it to know, amidst the intensest fierceness of their fiery trial, that their Master recognised and owned the struggles they maintained, the

persecutions they endured, as service done to Him, as sufferings endured for Him, and that, therefore, they had His approbation and His sympathy to attend them through the trial, His kingdom and glory to receive them at its close! Not wonderful, therefore, will it be esteemed that Jesus should allege it as an argument of comfort to His disciples in the prospect of impending persecution, that it was persecution to be suffered for His name; not wonderful that, when the first blast assailed them of the rising tempest, the bold confessors departed from the presence of the council "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name," or that, through the whole course of this incessant and relentless storm, they fell back upon the thought for strength and comfort, that it was for Jesus' sake they bared their bosom to the thunder and bowed their necks to death. "If any man suffer as a Christian," exclaimed the ardent-souled apostle, "let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf;" "If ye be reproached *for the name of Christ*, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."*

In order still further to demonstrate to His followers the utter causelessness of the hatred and the persecution with which they should be assailed by the unbelieving world, and to encourage them with the assurance of Almighty approbation, and Almighty aid, in patiently encountering them, Jesus adds,—that what the world did to His disciples for His name's sake, they did because they knew not Him that sent Him. They might have known, as our Lord, in the

* Acts v. 41; 1 Pet. iv. 16, 14, 13.

following verses, proves at large,—and therefore theirs was not an ignorance that exempted them from blame and condemnation,—but still they knew not, they would not believe, that Jesus was indeed the Sent, the Sealed, the Anointed, of the Lord,—that His cause and kingdom were under the special protection of the Almighty Ruler of the universe,—and that, whoever they might be that opposed its progress, and persecuted its heralds and defenders, they should be found at last to have been fighting against God,—to have been warring with Omnipotence. But the disciples knew this, although the world did not; and it is easy to perceive, how inexhaustible a treasure of courage and of comfort they possessed in that single thought,—that “the Lord of hosts was with them, the God of Jacob was their refuge.” How lofty the tone of confidence and triumph with which they might exclaim amidst the fiercest onsets of a hostile world,—“Greater is He that is with us, than he that is with them;” “If God be for us, who can be against us?” “The Lord is my light and my salvation,—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life,—of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.”

LECTURE XXVI.

CHAP. XV. 22—25.

“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.”

JESUS, by way of comfort to His disciples under the persecutions they were destined to sustain from an unbelieving and exasperated world, had assured them that whatever opposition they might be called to encounter from this quarter was founded in total ignorance, on the part of their opposers, of the real nature and true merits of His cause:—“All these things they will do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not Him that sent me.” But lest this statement might appear inconsistent with the terms of severe condemnation which He had employed concerning the treatment of His cause by the unbelieving Jews, who constituted a conspicuous portion, who were in fact the immediate representatives, of that “world” to which He had been referring; He proceeds, in the passage now before us, to show that the ignorance which was, in their bosoms, the mother of so intense a malignity towards Him and His disciples was not of such a nature as ex-

empted them from blame and punishment, being an ignorance that was maintained and cherished in their minds by wilful, obstinate, determined resistance to the most abundant opportunities and means of knowing better,—to the clearest information and the most convincing evidence, brought to their very door, and pressed on their attention and acceptance.

There are two circumstances to which our Saviour more particularly refers as rendering the continued ignorance of the unbelieving, and therefore persecuting, Jews a fit subject of blame and condemnation,—first, that they had heard His doctrine, and secondly, that they had seen His miracles.

In reference to the former particular Jesus observes:—“If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin,” that is, in so far as they knew not Him that sent me.—Their ignorance in regard to the celestial origin, at once of the person, and of the religion, of the Saviour, would not have been criminal, on the supposition that the appropriate means for dispelling that ignorance had not been employed. No man, we may be sure, will ever be condemned for not knowing that which never has been told him. The nations to whom the glad tidings have never been proclaimed, will assuredly not be held responsible because they know not the joyful sound. Alas! my brethren, such nations will have crimes enough to answer for against the law with which they have peculiarly to do,—the law written in their hearts; but on account of the particular crime of not knowing nor believing the gospel,—on account of an ignorance involuntary,—and, as far as they were concerned, invincible,—they have nothing, be assured, to fear from the justice of the Everlasting Judge. Far different from this, however, was the actual condition of the

Jews, concerning whom our Saviour having made the admission,—“If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin,” follows it up with the assertion,—“But now they have no cloak for their sin,” that is, no cloak of this description. The plea of an involuntary ignorance was one they dared not urge. They could not even pretend that it was for want of sufficient information they knew not nor believed that Jesus was the predicted Prophet, the promised Saviour, the Messenger of Heaven, the Anointed of the Lord. Jesus had come and spoken to them, and that in such a way as became the expected Prophet and Saviour of the world; so that no criterion nor characteristic of Messiahship was wanting, either in the circumstances of His coming, or in the character of His discourse. Every thing about His person and His doctrine breathed of their high original, and testified that that original was from above; and therefore He adds,—“He that hateth me hateth my Father also.” Their hatred, of course, had its origin in the opposition between the qualities of His character and the qualities of theirs, the peculiarities of His doctrine and the prejudices of their belief, the course of His conduct and the bearing of their imagined interests. But then, the character, the doctrine, and the life, of Jesus bore, in all their parts and all their details, no other impress than that of the heaven from which they came,—no other impress than became the character, the doctrine, and the conduct of one who was “the Brightness of the Father’s glory and the express Image of His person,” and who was intended to be upon the earth the revelation of Divinity, the visible image of the invisible God. It was the character of God, then, in its brightest manifestation and display, which they hated, when they hated Jesus; and in their example, we have a warning and a proof how

very comprehensive a charge is that of hating God, and what multitudes of men there are who would think it foul scorn to have the imputation directly made upon themselves concerning whom, however, the declaration of the apostle retains all its unmitigated truth, "The carnal mind is enmity against God."* It is not enough to entitle any one to say that he loves God, that he is conscious of certain emotions of adoring, grateful, affectionate sentiment expanding his heart, when a certain idea is present to his mind which he thinks and calls the idea of God,—unless that idea, that conception of the Deity which occupies his thoughts and excites his feelings, corresponds to the revelation of the Godhead which has been made to man in the person and the doctrine of Jesus Christ; unless it truly represent that just and holy, as well as wise and powerful and merciful, Being whose "wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness of men," and who can by no means clear the guilty without an unreserved compliance with the terms He has proposed in the Gospel,—without the unreserved submission of the sinner's mind and heart to "the obedience of faith,"—without the full acquiescence of the man that would be saved in the method of salvation which He has announced as alone consistent with the attributes of Deity, alone adapted to the circumstances of mankind. The Jews professed to honour and to love the Father; and many of them, we need not doubt, did really cherish such feelings towards an Almighty and Eternal Being whom they conceived of as the Father and the King of Israel, pledged by covenant to save them and exalt them as the seed of Abraham his friend,—and that irrespective of all

* Rom. viii. 7.

other circumstances, or, at least, in full consistency with their rejection of the claims of Jesus as the Father's Begotten Son and Anointed Messenger. But in loving such a being, they were not loving God. No such being existed in the real universe, or except in their own imaginations. And so there are innumerable cases still in which men, moved with the impulses of a merely poetical or sentimental piety towards a Being whom they picture to themselves as indulgent to their frailties, and pledged by His own benevolence to their salvation, adore, forsooth, and love this fiction of fancy, this creature of a dream, and think they are adoring and loving God. I beseech you, brethren, that, in every question of the love of Jesus and the love of God, you will form your conceptions of the one and of the other from the representations of their own infallible Gospel, and solemnly ask yourselves,—as that on which the whole value and denomination of your feelings depends,—whether the Saviour you love is the Saviour of the Bible, whether the God you love is the God of the Bible.

But to return. Before you can justly accuse a man of wilful, and therefore inexcusable, ignorance and unbelief, you must be able to show that he was furnished not merely with the statement, but also with the proof, of that which you charge him with criminally refusing to believe. And Jesus, therefore, proceeds to intimate that, in proportion to the clearness of statement with which He had announced the fact that He had come from God, was the abundance of evidence with which He had established it:—"If I had not done among them the works which none other man did they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father."

It is true that,—as our Saviour's words in the 22d and

23d verses seem to imply,—the Jews were furnished then, and we are furnished still, with no ambiguous evidence that His doctrine was of loftier than human origin and human authority in the simple fact that He had declared them so to be. No one who had the opportunity of observing His character and life could doubt that, if He was nothing more, He was at least the holiest and the wisest of men, and that there never existed one whose whole apparent character and conduct exalted him to a height so loftily remote from the suspicion of wilful fraud, of deliberate falsehood. What, then, did this man of purest sanctity, of highest-toned integrity, profess concerning the source of his commission and authority? Things which, unless it was Divine, cannot be exempted from the charge, not merely of direct untruth, but of daring impiety and blasphemy,—charges which it may well strike us with horror even to imagine in connection with His name. You need not, surely, to be told how uniformly through the whole tenor of His life He was accustomed to claim for Himself a celestial origin and celestial mission, in public and private,—before enemies and friends,—with no variation of sentiment and tone,—with every conceivable variety of statement and of illustration,—so that no one who admits His human integrity can feel himself at liberty to doubt His Divine commission. But still, conclusive and satisfactory as we cannot but hold this evidence to be,—the evidence arising from the solemn declaration of one concerning whom the whole tenor of His character and life entitle us to say, that He “did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth;” Jesus, knowing with what hardihood and obstinacy of unbelief He had to contend in the minds of the unbelieving Jews, expressly consented to wave this argument in His own behalf. “If I bear witness of my-

self," He had said, "my witness is not true,"—that is, Had this been the only evidence I could produce, I am contented that I should have been accounted a deceiver. And therefore, in asserting the divinity of His commission and His doctrine against the opposition of the unbelieving Jews, we find Him always appealing to the testimony of God Himself to this effect, embodied in the miracles which, by the manifest finger and power of the Most High, He had wrought before their eyes,—miracles of which it may be remarked, in one word, that, as they were countless in number, so they were endlessly varied in character and circumstances, embracing in their sphere all the kingdoms of nature,—the air, the land, the deep,—and proving themselves, in all, the works of Him, the Universal Sovereign, who "doth according to His will in heaven, and on earth, and in all deep places." "If I do not the works of my Father," He said to the Jews, "believe me not." "Believe me," He said to His own disciples, "for the very works' sake."*

But, in the passage before us, Jesus claims to be regarded as "a man approved of God," not merely by such miracles as had demonstrated the Divine commission of former messengers from heaven, but by miracles proportioned in their number and magnitude to the supremacy He claimed among the legates of Divinity,—by miracles unparalleled and unexampled, works such as no man had done before Him. It is written concerning the ancient lawgiver of Israel, that "after Him there arose not a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, in all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great

* John xiv. 11.

terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.”* And it is surely unnecessary, by any detail of examples, to prove the justice of this eulogy,—to show you how, by signs and tokens more numerous and more majestic in their accumulation than had signalized the history of the most gifted of ancient seers,—Joshua, or Elijah, or Elisha,—Moses proved his commission from above, and stood unrivalled and alone amidst the glorious host whom Jehovah armed with a portion of His own Omnipotence. Yet there was one to arise in the end of the days by whom even the lawgiver of Israel was to be eclipsed and dethroned from his superiority among men of sign,—that He, the Anointed, “might in all things have the pre-eminence.” That the miracles of Jesus excelled those of Moses and of all succeeding prophets in multitude and in variety will be readily admitted; and other circumstances of superiority might easily be pointed out,—for example, the fact that the Saviour’s miracles were wrought by a power which was not more His Father’s than it was rightly and essentially His own; that this miraculous power was exerted by Him not only when He was present, but often at considerable distances of place; and that He could communicate the miraculous energy which He Himself possessed to His disciples and followers. In one quality, indeed, the miracles of Moses have been represented as equalling, at least, if not transcending, those of the Messiah,—the terrible sublimity by which the former were distinguished. The Divine authority of the Jewish lawgiver was chiefly seen and heard in thunderings and lightnings, great plagues and fearful judgments,—in the darkened air, and the flashing firmament, and the corrupted waters, and the

* Deut. xxxiv. 10-12.

divided sea, and the rending earth, and the devouring fire, and lamenting families, and armies overwhelmed, and terror-stricken nations; so that most emphatically does the sacred historian, in summing up the character of Moses as a worker of miracles, declare, that none ever equalled him "in all that mighty hand, and in all that great *terror*, which he showed in the land of Egypt and in the sight of all Israel." The glory of our Saviour's miracles, upon the other hand, is of a different kind, and better suited to the genius of His dispensation. He gave, indeed, abundant testimony that it was not for want of power He did not signalize His mission by signs and wonders in the style of those performed by Moses,—when, for example, over His cross the sky was shrouded with the pall of funereal darkness, while fierce earthquake tore the flinty rocks, and the temple-veil was rent asunder by an unseen but mighty hand, and the buried dead arose and mingled once more, mysterious visitants, among the haunts of men. But the characteristic tone of the Redeemer's marvellous works was of another and a more benignant kind. The mighty man of wonders by whom came grace and truth "went about doing good," the power of the Lord being present with Him to heal and to bless. Consolation and Joy and bright-eyed Health attended all His steps. Mercy went before His face; and at His heavenly smile Diseases vanished, Pain expired, Fear ceased to quiver, Sorrow dried her tearful countenance, the broken heart was whole. "When the ear heard" Him, "then it blessed" Him; "and when the eye saw" Him, "it gave witness unto" Him. He "was eyes to the blind, and feet" was He "to the lame. The blessing of Him that was ready to perish came upon" Him, and He "made the widow's heart to sing for joy." Now,—prone

as we are to be more vividly affected, and more deeply impressed, by the glory of that which is physically awful than of that which is morally beautiful,—no one, surely, can candidly consider the distinctive character of our Saviour's miracles, as contrasted with those of him who alone, of all the prophets, can ever be brought into comparison with Him, and not feel that the difference is really a superiority,—that it is one, at least, which, in the proportion in which it exists, should commend the Saviour to the admiration and the love of men, as representing the blessed character of His religion whom the Lord had “anointed to preach glad tidings to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to announce the acceptable year of the Lord, to comfort all that mourn.” With what abundant reason, then, could Jesus make the affirmation obviously implied in the negative supposition by which the 24th verse is introduced,—that He “had done among the Jews works such as none other man ever did.” Had it not been so, He would have wanted one evidence of Messiahship which was generally expected, and expected reasonably, by the Jews. Their faith would have been demanded by a comparatively trifling weight of proof; and their unbelief would, therefore, have been comparatively guiltless,—their sin comparatively none at all. “But now,” says Jesus, “they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.”

I have no doubt that, after the expression, “they have seen,” we are to supply the words, these works, these unexampled works of mine; and that Jesus means to intimate, that such works had not merely been performed before their eyes, but had attracted marked observation and regard. That the fact was so, the whole tenor of His history demonstrates,—that the multitude and splendour of His miracles

arrested universal attention, so that great multitudes “ followed Him because they saw the miracles that He did,” and so that even the jealous and exasperated Pharisees were compelled to admit the fact which stung them with rage and distracted them with doubt. “ What do we?” they exclaimed, “ for this man doeth many miracles.”* What, then, must have been the strength of that ruling principle of hatred towards Jesus and His doctrine which could triumph over the acknowledged fact that this man did many miracles, and, in the face of that fact, could prompt them to deny that He bare indeed the credentials of one commissioned by the Father; yea, could impel them, in the frenzy of their self-blinding hate, to ascribe the works of God to the power of Beelzebub,—wonders of mercy, wrought in defence of a doctrine of purity, to the agency of him whose sole end and aim it is to dishonour God and to destroy mankind; of whose dark nature the fundamental principle and ruling resolution is, ‘ Evil, be thou my good!’ Of hatred towards Jesus and, therefore, for the reason we have explained, towards His Father, no proof can be imagined more overwhelming than the victory of unbelief over evidence like this. To men that acknowledged the reality of the Saviour’s miracles, and yet denied the truth of His doctrine, no cloak was left for their sin. What, then, shall we say of the conduct of those,—who are still to be found, and that among ourselves,—who avowedly reject the Gospel, if not in spite of miracles which they acknowledge, at least in spite of miracles which they cannot disprove; or of those who, admitting the truth of the Saviour’s miracles and the divinity of His religion, yet have not submitted their minds and hearts, their characters and lives, to its

* John vi. 2; xi. 47.

regulation and control,—of those who, professing to believe that the Gospel is the word of God, yet show that they do not believe that word Divine, condemning themselves and making God a liar?

Meanwhile,—extraordinary as prodigies of unbelief like these might seem, and deserving, if viewed merely by themselves, to be spoken of in terms of surprise and of astonishment,—Jesus goes on to intimate that, in another point of view, they were no more than what might certainly have been anticipated; and that, so far from being a stumbling-block in the way of the disciples' faith, to find their Master assailed as He was by the scorn and hatred of an unbelieving world ought, upon the other hand, to confirm and settle their persuasion that He was indeed the Messiah, as being the fulfilment of an oracle conspicuously inscribed in the prophetic volume concerning the promised Christ,—“But this cometh to pass that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law,”—that is, in their Sacred Books,—“They hated me without a cause.”

This expression is to be found in no less than three passages in the Book of Psalms:—Psal. xxxv. 19, “Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me, neither let them wink with the eye which hate me without a cause;” again, at the 4th verse of the 69th Psalm,—“They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty;” and last of all, in the 109th Psalm, at the 3d verse,—“They compassed me about with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause.” In all these Psalms, and more particularly in the two last quoted, the 69th and 109th, there are manifest indications of a reference to the Messiah,—whether directly, or secondarily, through David His progenitor and type, it

matters not at present to determine. Enough that, in one way or another, it was distinctly predicted of the Christ, that, when He came, He should be hated of the multitude without a cause, and be compassed about by those that were His enemies wrongfully. Having been predicted, it was necessary that it should be fulfilled; and its fulfilment, so far from operating as an offence, deserved rather to be accounted a fresh demonstration of His claims. We are involved, indeed, by the consideration of this verse, in that ever-recurring difficulty which meets us wherever we can turn ourselves,—the difficulty of reconciling the Almighty's prescience and pre-ordination of all events with the free agency and just responsibility of man. To effect this reconciliation absolutely and completely, has always proved a task too arduous for the faculties of man. Reason and Revelation combine in representing each of the apparently conflicting truths as most indubitably true; and therefore it is our duty, at once as rational and as religious beings, to believe them both, and to believe, yet farther, that, since all parts of universal truth must be consistent with each other, those doctrines, established each by its own proof, must be reconcilable together, and must, in fact, be reconciled in the perceptions of that all-embracing Mind to which all science, truth, and knowledge are for ever present, compacted and summed up into one vast idea. I demand it, then, as one proof of the homage which your subject understandings owe to the Monarch-Intelligence of the universe, that,—while ye believe all the persecution and the hatred which “He whom man despised, He whom the nation abhorred,” had to endure from the ungodly world, came upon Him, “that it might be fulfilled which is written, They hated me without a cause,”—ye shall believe, at the same time, that this consideration has no

force to lighten, by the very faintest shade, the darkness of their guilt who, having heard Him speak as never man spake, having seen Him do such works as no man ever did, yet hated, as He says, both Him and His Father,—hated them without a cause. The perfect consistency of supposing that a moral agent shall be contracting on his own head the most inexcusable and flagrant guilt, and yet be, in the fact, fulfilling some part of the Almighty's eternal plans, some portion of His recorded oracles, is plainly assumed by our Saviour in the text; as it is by His inspired apostle when, in reference to the last and crowning expression of their malignant hatred against the Lord's Anointed, he declared,—“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” “Of a truth,” exclaims the suppliant church, in concert with the apostle and the Lord,—“Of a truth, against thy Holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”*

Let me beseech you, then, my brethren,—whatever your sentiments may be respecting the prescience and predetermination of all events by Him to whom “known are all his works from the beginning of the world,”—to beware of imagining that the field of human responsibility is thereby narrowed, that one shade of guilt is on that account removed from the unbeliever and the disobedient now, or that one degree of punishment will be spared to them hereafter. Let me entreat you that,—whatever speculative difficulties may rise up in your minds, from this quarter or

* Acts ii. 23, iv. 27, 28.

from any other, in reference to the responsibility of man for his belief,—when you find the Bible, through its whole tenor, distinctly asserting or assuming the existence of such responsibility, you will cast down before the simple word of the Most High every proud imagination, and “every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,” and, in the inmost sanctuary of your intellectual beings, will do reverence to Him who is of right the Sovereign of your understanding, not less than of your will. You have before you a plain revelation. Had it not been so,—in rejecting it, ye had not had sin. You have before you a well-attested revelation. Had it not been so,—in rejecting it, ye had not had sin. Were the statement which God has given you of the truth not in itself intelligible, were the evidence which He has furnished you in support of it not of itself convincing,—ye could not in justice have been required to believe. But I am bold to say, that none of us, at the last day, will dare to plead, in defence of our unbelief, any want of plainness in the gospel, or any want of proof. He who, as infinitely wise and infinitely acquainted with our frame, knows well what belief may be equitably required of man as a duty,—and who, as supremely intelligent and supremely just, can, in point of fact, require none other,—has declared His infallible judgment, that the revelation He has given us is abundantly intelligible, and so abundantly accredited, that whoso heareth and doth not receive it is guilty in His sight, and guilty inexcusably,—that his conduct has, and can have, no purer source than a principle of moral depravity, corrupting the action of his intellectual faculties,—that it originates in hatred of the truth, and therefore of Him from whom the truth descends, the daughter of His voice, the image of His character. If, after all, you

will continue to cavil and dispute, the day of revelation must convince you of your error,—you shall be refuted from the judgment-seat,—and then, if not before, ye shall feel and shall acknowledge the truth and the righteousness of the solemn declaration:—“He that believeth on the Son is not condemned; but he that believeth not the Son is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the Only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”*

* John iii. 18, 19.

LECTURE XXVII.

СНАР. XV. 26, 27.

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”

IN the preceding context Jesus had warned His followers that, in their future history as His ambassadors and the heralds of His gospel, the world would hate them, as it had hated Him,—would persecute them, as it had persecuted Him. But as, in the idea of being hated and persecuted, and that more especially by their countrymen, so long the depositories of the heavenly oracles,—by the priests and rulers of the Jews, from whose lips they had been accustomed to receive the law, and whose dignity it was to sit in Moses' chair,—there was something which, both to their feelings as men, and to their prejudices as Jews, seemed to suggest a presumption against the cause of which they were to be the champions and the advocates; the Heavenly Instructor goes on to show that the virulent and persecuting hatred with which He had been treated, and with which they, His followers, were to be treated in their turn, by the unbelieving world, could not be ascribed to anything about the gospel itself, or the mode of its announcement, inconsistent with its claims to be regarded as Divine. He shows, on the other hand, that the truth

of His religion had been so abundantly proved in the course of His own ministry, and would be so abundantly confirmed in that of His apostles, as to leave the unbelief of men without excuse, and to render the mode in which they had treated, and would continue to treat, the gospel, a verification of the Psalmist's prophetic complaint, "They hated me without a cause." We have already illustrated the verses in which our Lord has established this with reference to His own personal ministry, showing that the only legitimate sources of unbelief in reference to any truth,—that it had not been plainly declared, or that it had not been sufficiently proved,—were totally wanting in reference to the doctrine which He taught:—"If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, They hated me without a cause." In the passage before us, Jesus goes on to show that the hatred with which His doctrine, as delivered by Himself, had been met by an unbelieving world, was not more unreasonable than that with which it should be assailed in the mouth of His disciples; that it would be unbelief without excuse, sin without a cloak, as against the clearest evidence,—the most abundant and convincing demonstration. "But when the Comforter," He says, "is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."

The evidence to which the Saviour here refers, as that

by which the truth of His gospel should, in the course of His disciples' apostolic ministry, be established beyond all reasonable doubt and controversy, is twofold,—the one celestial, terrestrial the other; the one, the testimony of the Holy Ghost,—the other, that of their own solemn declaration as having been “from the beginning eye-witnesses and ministers of the word.”

In regard to the former of these distinguished testimonies, Jesus begins by describing the person of the Heavenly Witness under all those epithets of honour which, in the preceding part of this discourse, He had applied to that Celestial Agent, and which we have already, therefore, explained at large. He describes Him, in the first place, as the Paraclete,—that is, the Sovereign Defender, Advocate, and Champion, of their Cause; He whose office was to stand by them in their controversy with the ungodly world,—to direct, to encourage, to support, to plead for, them,—to lend them, in each emergency of their great emprise, His gracious countenance and His almighty aid. He describes Him, next, as “the Spirit of truth,”—He to whose mind all science, truth, and knowledge are for ever present in one immense and everlasting thought,—the Spirit who “searcheth all things, even the deep things of God,” and who, as He is utterly incapable of ignorance, so is equally incapable of deceit. He describes Him still farther, as the Spirit proceeding from the Father,—an expression remarkable as the subject of much elaborate discussion to the Fathers of the ancient church from the council of Constantinople downwards. This council, which sat in the fourth century, had it for one of its principal objects to determine the true scriptural doctrine of the Holy Ghost, and, among other points relating to this high mystery, laid it down that the personal

property of the Holy Spirit, that is, the statement which may be peculiarly made of Him as distinguished from the Father and the Son, is this, that He proceedeth from the Father. I cannot think, however, that the place before us is to be understood as describing the personal property of the Holy Ghost. It seems much more obviously and naturally to express that official descent and mission from the Father of which the Holy Spirit is the subject no less than the Anointed Son, in the discharge among mankind of His peculiar functions in the economy of grace. The mention of this circumstance is strikingly congenial to the whole object and spirit of the passage, as showing that the rejection of the Holy Spirit's testimony was equivalent to the rejection of that of the Eternal Father Himself, from whom, as the Sovereign Patron of the Christian cause, He held His commission and authority,—in like manner as it had been stated, at the 23d verse, in reference to the testimony of the Son, "He that hateth me hateth my Father also," because, as it is expressed in verse 28th of the chapter following, "He came forth from the Father, and came into the world." At the same time, we have no hesitation in agreeing to the doctrines taught by our church, and almost all the western churches, respecting the person of the Holy Ghost,—that, while the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding, the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son; because the very appellation, Spirit of God, or Breath of the Lord, by which this Divine Agent is designated, implies the idea of issuing, coming forth, proceeding, and because, with this idea involved in His very name, He is termed in the Bible, equally, the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of the Son. We believe, therefore, and acknowledge the doc-

trine which our Confession declares; although we doubt the validity of the evidence derived from the passage now before us in proof of the everlasting procession of the Spirit from the Father, and although we count it more becoming the limitation of our faculties, and the lowness of our place upon the scale of being, not to pry with too curious eyes into that august and venerable darkness in which these "deep things of God" are hidden, and not to obscure, perhaps to profane, with scholastic terms and definitions, subjects of which the place and the abode is in the profoundest abysses of the uncreated light,—which touch and penetrate the abstrusest essence of the Deity. Jesus, finally, describes the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete whom He would send to His disciples from the Father. Concerning the mission of the Paraclete in general we had occasion of speaking formerly, in explaining the 26th verse of the preceding chapter. This difference, however, will be observed between the verse referred to and that which is now before us,—that the mission there ascribed to the Father is here attributed to the Son. This difference can be easily explained by calling to mind the intimacy of that ineffable unity by which the Father and the Son are one in the indivisible and everlasting Godhead,—one in will and counsel, one in power and act; and still more, by recollecting that the power of conferring on His disciples the influences of the Holy Ghost in larger abundance than they had before been enjoyed by the church, was part of the glory and reward bestowed by the Father upon Jesus, as the now perfected Redeemer of men, when, "ascending up on high, He led captivity captive, and received gifts for men." "Therefore," said St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, in allusion to the marvels of that memorable day, "Therefore, being by the right hand of

God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost,"—that is, the promised Holy Spirit,—“He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.”* Knowing, therefore, that, as a part of that universal sovereignty with which, for the suffering of death, He was on the eve of being crowned, He was to have committed to His hands the whole dispensation of the Spirit, He says,—“I will send to you the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth;” and, acknowledging, at the same time, the Father as the Head of the whole economy in which He had deigned to become the Minister and Servant of the Godhead, and, therefore, as the source of all that dignity and blessedness to which, as Mediator, He should be exalted, He adds,—“I will send Him to you from the Father.”

Having thus described the person and character of that illustrious Being who, after His departure, was to descend to earth as the Patron and Defender of the Christian cause; Jesus goes on to state the work which He was to perform as such, and by which He was to leave the unbelieving world without excuse:—“When He is come, He shall testify of me.”

As it is quite obvious from the whole context, that the testimony here referred to is that which the Holy Spirit, at and after His effusion on the day of Pentecost, addressed peculiarly to the rejecters of the gospel, so as to leave them no cloak for their sin,—we are not so much to understand it of that inward demonstration of the Spirit with which the gospel is accompanied in the minds of those to whom it comes, “not in word only, but in power;” but of those external proofs which, by His Almighty operation, were presented to the attention of men indiscriminately, and

* Acts ii. 33.

which, though in their own nature most potent and conclusive, yet with the multitude of men proved ineffectual and vain, through the operation of their own prejudices and their own passions,—the “evil heart of unbelief” within them. Such proofs the Holy Ghost afforded, (1.) by the fact of His descent upon the day of Pentecost; thereby demonstrating the honour with which the Eternal Father regarded, and had crowned, His Anointed Son, whom they, with wicked hands, had crucified and slain,—the truth of the promises which Jesus, in the days of His flesh, had given concerning the coming of the Holy Ghost, to be the Paraclete of His disciples, and the Asserter of His cause,—and the certainty of His exaltation to the right hand of eternal majesty and universal rule, as the true, and now the perfected, Messiah;—and, (2.) by the effects of His descent on that illustrious day,—by the amazing change effected on the whole mind and character of the apostles, when, from unlettered and ungifted men, they became, in one moment, expert in many tongues, profound in heavenly mysteries, and masters of divine persuasion; when, from shrinking, timid, feeble-minded, and sometimes apparently but half-convinced, disciples of the Lord, they became clear and strong in the faith, intrepid asserters of the truth, and bold to defy the face of man in the prosecution of their Master’s cause,—by the multitude and splendour of the miracles wrought by the apostles in the name of Jesus, and the miraculous gifts abiding in them, and imparted, by the laying on of their hands, to those that believed,—by the marvellous conversion of so many from among their hearers, and of those, too, who had borne their part in crucifying the Lord of life, and invoking on their heads the guilt of His innocent blood,—and by the confusion of the haters and persecutors of the truth themselves,

when, as it is written, "they could not resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which" its martyrs "spake." In all these various forms the Spirit became a witness, in the course of the apostles' ministry, to the truth which they announced,—and a witness so explicit, so conclusive, so authentic, as satisfactorily to demonstrate that any one to whom that testimony was addressed, and who yet rejected the truth in defence of which it was alleged, was wilfully, and therefore guiltily, an unbeliever.

This was a testimony that needed no support nor confirmation. But to remove all shadow of pretence for reasonable hesitation, the testimony of the Celestial Spirit was to be seconded by the corresponding evidence of human witnesses, placed in the most favourable circumstances for ascertaining and attesting all the facts:—"Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."

The truth of the Gospel, or, at least, its claims to be believed as truth by men, rests very much upon matters of fact which are alleged to have occurred in the presence of the disciples, and during the ministry of Jesus,—more particularly, the reality of the "signs and wonders and divers miracles" by which He was approved of God in the midst of Israel, and of that glorious resurrection from the dead by which He was at last "declared to be the Son of God with power." Now, of the truth or falsehood of the statements which described "the man Christ Jesus" as thus conspicuously attested by the Father, the disciples were of all men the best qualified to bear distinct and trustworthy testimony, "because they had been with Him from the beginning,"—that is, from the beginning of His public ministry, from the very commencement of the period in which the facts alleged are stated to have occurred.

They had been His constant companions ; were witnesses of all His mighty works,—admitted into the very recesses of His confidence,—placed, as it were, behind the scenes, and necessarily aware of all the contrivance, if contrivance there was, which was employed to impose upon the senses and the credulity of the deluded multitude ; in one word, witnesses who, with reference to the facts in question, were placed in circumstances which rendered it impossible that they should be themselves deceived. Jesus, then, in the clear and lofty consciousness of His own integrity,—of the truth of all His claims, and the validity of all the proofs He had alleged in their support,—appeals to those who were so well qualified to judge,—to judge, I mean, of the actual occurrence of His miracles and His resurrection as real facts ; and, knowing what their testimony would be, declares,—“Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”

We find, accordingly, that this was, in point of fact, the character which, after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the apostles specially assumed, and in which they specially presented themselves to the notice of the world,—the character of witnesses for Christ. Hence, when they gathered themselves together, at the commencement of their apostolic ministry, to supply the vacant place from which Judas by transgression fell, we are told of the special care they took in selecting, for that glorious ministry, one who could of personal knowledge, from ocular observation, depone to the reality of the Saviour's miracles, and particularly the crowning miracle of His triumphant resurrection. “Wherefore,” said St. Peter, “of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must

one be ordained to be *a witness with us of His resurrection.*" For this was the character to which they themselves had been appointed by their Lord, not only before His death, in the passage now before us, but after His resurrection, when He was on the eve of ascending to His Father. "Ye are witnesses," He had said, "of these things;"—"Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." "We are all witnesses," they said upon the day of Pentecost, "that God hath raised up Jesus from the dead;"—again, "Ye killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses;"—yet again,—“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him; and we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God, even to us; and He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify;"—and once more,—“We are His witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him.”* With constancy and clearness, then, the apostles recognised it as their office and vocation to testify of Jesus; and in their testimony all conceivable qualities and circumstances were combined which are calculated to warrant, and to command, unhesitating and undoubting belief. How perseveringly did they relate the facts in question with all their circumstances, as facts fully ascertained, and

* Acts i. 21, 22; Luke xxiv. 48; Acts i. 8; ii. 32; iii. 15; x. 38—42; v. 32.

actually seen, by them,—as facts concerning the reality of many among which they could appeal to the evidence of thousands, and these their bitterest enemies, their most unrelenting persecutors! How consistent a narrative did they all deliver, in all places and at all times,—varied indeed, by different circumstantial specialties, and different modes of relation, according to the different characters and circumstances of the individual witnesses, but all agreeing in the main substantial facts, and all susceptible of reconciliation in every detail and minuter circumstance! Every thing that appeared in the character and conduct, as well as in the circumstances and situation, of the men, bore witness to their simplicity and their integrity, proving that they had not the capacity, if they had cherished the desire, of inventing so cunningly-devised a fable,—that they could not have conceived the desire, had they possessed the capacity, of imposing on the world by such an invention. Little temptation had they from any worldly interest to falsify in such a case,—and how strong an inducement did every secular consideration supply to withhold so obnoxious a testimony, and to bury the truth they knew in safe and oblivious silence! They were men whom their Master had forewarned, that they were to expect, as His ministers and witnesses, not crowns and sceptres, not power and ease, not praise of men and wealthy possessions, but sacrifice and self-denial, trouble and vexation, poverty and labour, persecutions and prisons, the scourge and the chain, the rack, the stake, the lions, and the cross. How valiantly, in defence of that which they declared to be to their own knowledge the truth of God, did they endure all the indignities and all the barbarities their enemies could heap on them! How triumphantly did they meet the brandished steel, the lion's gory mane, “for the word of God and the

testimony of Jesus,"—avowing their firm and unclouded persuasion that their witness was in heaven and their record was on high, and looking for their rest and their reward hereafter, from that Being whom they themselves knew and taught to be faithfulness and truth, in that world where they themselves declared that "all liars," and chief among these, the false witnesses of God, "shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone!" What human testimony, my brethren, can even be imagined possessing characteristics of veracity more numerous and more strong? What rational man would not risk, on evidence like this, the greatest and the dearest of his secular concerns? And to what excuse shall he betake himself in the judgment who shall then be called to answer for having resisted and rejected the testimony of such human witnesses as these, accompanied and confirmed as we have seen it was by the testimony of a Witness nobler still,—of God's own Almighty and Infallible Spirit? "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which" have been spoken, "lest at any time we let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation,—which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?"*

In conclusion, my brethren, I wish you to observe that the most striking and conclusive summary contained in the subject of this and of our last preceding Lecture, of

* Heb. ii. 1—4.

the external evidence by which the truth of the Gospel was demonstrated,—first, in the ministry of Christ Himself, and then, in that of His apostles,—is addressed by Him, not to the unbelieving world, but to His own confiding followers and disciples,—and that with the view of extricating their minds from the sore perplexity in which they were involved by the fact of the rejection of the Gospel by the great body of their countrymen, including those who, by their station and their character, might naturally be regarded as persons whose opinion was entitled to a high degree of weight and authority in matters of faith and of religion. Now, the way in which our Saviour meets this occasion of perplexity and difficulty is, by simply calling the attention of His followers to the true nature and amount of the evidence which the Jews, with their priests and rulers, had rejected, and leaving them to judge whether the fact of such rejection could be fairly accounted for by any deficiency in the offered proof. Our Lord's example strongly teaches us the proper way of dealing with similar difficulties and perplexities among ourselves. There is no circumstance that is more commonly alleged by the enemies of the Gospel against the conclusiveness of its evidence than the fact that it was unsuccessful at the time with the people of the Jews, and the corresponding fact that it has been, and is still, rejected by many among ourselves distinguished for intellectual capacity and cultivation, and whose opinion on a matter of evidence should seem worthy of high consideration and regard. Now, what is the way in which our Lord has taught us to deal with such a difficulty? It is this,—that we should look at the evidence itself, and not at the reception it has met with. Our faith, believers, “standeth not upon the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.” We have the evidence in our own

hands. We perceive it in our own minds to be irresistibly and overwhelmingly conclusive. And we are not to surrender the deep and settled convictions of our own understanding, on any subject whatsoever,—especially on a subject of infinite and everlasting moment,—to the authority of any man or body of men, be they who and what they may. To the man who, in his own mind and heart, feels the evidence of the gospel, as addressed to himself, to be convincing, the difficulty arising from the discredit of the same evidence by others is reduced to the question,—Whether he shall prefer the opinion of men or the oracle of God. “Yea,” let him exclaim with the apostle, “let God be true, and every man a liar.” “Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” “We preach Christ crucified,—to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”*

* Rom. iii. 4; 1 Cor. i. 20, 18, 23, 24.

LECTURE XXVIII.

CHAP. XVI. 1—3.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.”

IN these verses Jesus continues and concludes the section of His farewell discourse which more immediately relates to the persecutions to be endured by His disciples after His departure from the world. His remarks upon this subject had consisted of two parts,—the first, from the 18th to the 21st verse of the chapter preceding, containing direct consolations and encouragements fitted to reconcile them to the endurance of the tribulations which lay before them; and the second, from the 22d verse to the end of the chapter, presenting an encouragement to steadfastness and courage in the hour of danger more indirect, though not less efficacious, by dispelling from their minds every doubt which might at first arise in regard to the truth of the doctrine they were called to teach, and the cause they were appointed to maintain, from the fact that, in proclaiming the one and asserting the other, they brought upon themselves such eager persecution,—and that on the part of those who, by the circumstances in which they were placed, and the privileges which they had long enjoyed, might

have been supposed the best-qualified judges the world contained of religious truth and claims to Divine authority. In regard to both these parts of the preceding section of discourse, Jesus declares, in the beginning of the chapter now before us,—“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.”

To offend, as some of you are aware, is, in its origin, a Latin word, of which the literal meaning is, to come against any obstacle,—for example, to dash the foot against a stone,—and so to stumble and fall. It is in this sense that it corresponds to the Greek term used in the original here and in similar passages. Now, the figurative application most commonly made in the New Testament of this idea of coming against an obstacle or stumbling-block is to the man who, by the existence, in the course set before him of some real or fancied impediment, is deterred from duty, or betrayed into sin,—and more especially to those who, by something in the system of Christianity itself or the condition of Christianity in the world, are prevented from embracing it at all, or, having once embraced it in profession, are seduced or affrighted from “holding fast the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end.” It is to the former of these two modes of being offended,—that of being induced to reject the Gospel altogether,—that the apostle refers when he speaks of the “offence of the cross,”* that is, the doctrine of a crucified Saviour making the truth repulsive to the apprehensions and feelings of the worldly-minded Jews; while it is to the latter of the two,—the case of those who, after having professedly embraced the gospel as the truth of God, yet presently are turned aside and fall away from their good profession,—

* Gal. v. 11.

that the Saviour here refers, in mentioning the danger of His disciples being offended.

The natural tendency which the endurance of persecutions and tribulations in the cause of the Gospel has to shake the constancy, and damp the ardour, of those who appeared at first to "receive the truth in the love of it," is easily understood, and is frequently referred to in the Sacred Book. Thus we read of those in whom "the word of the truth of the Gospel" is as seed received by a shallow and superficial soil, which springs up amain, with rapid and apparently prosperous growth, till, stricken by the fierce summer's sultry beam, and having no depth of root to gather from the subjacent earth the moisture which the baked surface and the scorched air deny, it presently shrinks, and shrivels, and droops its head, and dies,—of those who, "when they have heard the word, anon with joy receive it, yet have no root in themselves, and dure but for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended." Hence we find our Lord, in another place, in reference to the same scene of things as that to which He here alludes, predicting that, "because iniquity should abound,"—because the deluge of lawless power should overflow and rage against the truth,—"the love of many should wax cold." "Then," He says, "they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another."*

It is obvious through how many principles and passions of our nature a state of things like this,—when the profession of the Gospel not only offers no earthly reward, but

* Matt. xiii. 20, 21; xxiv. 12, 9, 10.

calls to every earthly sacrifice and suffering,—is fitted to detach those from their avowed attachment to the Gospel in whom the power of faith has not obtained entire dominion over every other passion and mental principle whatever. Avarice clings to its beloved lucre, and cowardice shrinks from peril, and pride revolts at the bearing of the cross, and natural instinct is in love with life, and natural affection cannot endure the anger or the scorn of friends. To such persons the peremptory voice of the Master speaks amidst the storm,—Whosoever hateth not houses, and lands, and brethren, and sisters, and mother, and children, yea, and his own life also, cannot now be my disciple; and whosoever denieth not himself, and taketh up his cross, and followeth me cannot now be my disciple,*—and straightway they are offended in Him, and exclaim,—“It is a hard saying, who can hear it?” We have already seen, moreover, how this natural tendency of persecution, by its own nature, to raise up an offence in the way of those who have taken up the profession of the Gospel, was strengthened and enhanced, in the case of the apostles, by the fact that the persecutions they were called to suffer proceeded from those whose opinion in matters of religious faith and religious duty they had always been accustomed to regard as of the highest authority,—from those who might have been expected to have led the way in the acknowledgment of the truth,—from their own countrymen, whose prerogative it was to have committed to them the Oracles of God, and, among these, from those especially whom it was most natural for a Jew especially to venerate as the masters of sacred learning and the heads of ecclesiastical authority.

In the two last Lectures of this course, we have seen

* Luke xiv. 26.

how amply and conclusively what our Lord alleges for this purpose obviates the particular occasion of offence to which we have now adverted. He showed that the virulent and persecuting hatred with which He had been treated, and with which His followers were to be treated in their turn, by the unbelieving Jews, could not be traced to any thing in the Gospel itself, or in the mode of its announcement, inconsistent with its claims to be regarded as Divine. He showed that, on the other hand, the truth of His religion had been abundantly proved, in the course of His own ministry, by the character of the doctrine which He taught, and by the splendour of the works which He performed, and would be abundantly confirmed, in the ministry of His apostles, by the testimony both of Divine and of human witnesses,—of those who had ‘been with Him from the beginning,’ and of “the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” He showed that the unbelief and hatred of the Jews was perversity without excuse,—a sin without a cloak,—a direct and flagrant verification of the Psalmist’s prophetic complaint, “They hated me without a cause.” In reference, again, to that general and universal tendency which persecution for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s has in itself, independently of the quarter from which it comes, to shake the constancy of professing Christians, we saw, in other three Lectures, how abundantly sufficient what Jesus had stated in the 18th and three following verses of the foregoing chapter was, when understood and believed, to prevent them from being thereby offended. He had there reminded them of three most consoling and animating considerations, in the prospect of suffering in His cause. First, He had reminded them that, if they were called to suffer the hatred of the world, it was only what He, their Lord and Master, had been

summoned to endure before them; that they had no reason to “count it strange concerning the fiery trial which was to try them, as though some strange thing happened unto them,” inasmuch as, not only had “the same afflictions been accomplished in all their brethren,”—not only had the world “so persecuted the prophets which were before them,”—but He Himself, who was the Lord of prophets, the King of saints, had endured, and, by enduring, had for ever dignified and consecrated, like extremes of insult, and like severities of persecution. Secondly, He had reminded them that the cause of the world’s hatred towards them was so far from being a misfortune or disgrace, that it deserved to be accounted by them a most illustrious honour and a most precious privilege,—even that they were not of the world, because Christ had chosen them out of the world, to be the members of a nobler and purer society, the possessors of a holier character, and the heirs of more exalted hopes. And thirdly, He had admonished them that what they suffered for the Gospel they suffered for the sake of One who had infinite claims upon their love and their obedience even unto death, and for a cause in which, although their enemies knew it not, they had God Himself, Him by whom their Master had been sent, for their Patron and Ally. This was the sum of the things which He had “spoken that they might not be offended” by whatsoever tribulation should arise against them because of the truth. And think you not, my brethren, there is enough in these considerations to arm the Christian’s faith against all the terrors which the world can muster to turn him from his right-onward path,—enough to sustain him in the fiercest trial which her malignant ingenuity can invent or her malignant power inflict, and to induce him, through reproaches and anathe-

mas, through bonds and stripes, through flames and blood, to press onward for the glorious prize which Jesus is preparing for him that overcometh and keepeth his work unto the end?—"Blessed," He says, "is that man whosoever shall not be offended in me;" "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*

But while the Master thus reminds His followers of those consolatory and animating thoughts which were sufficient, if rightly understood and believed and applied, to make them "more than conquerors" in the trial that lay before them, He was unwilling that, in their secret hearts, they should be drawing any kind or degree of consolation from the hope that the trial itself might turn out a slight and easy one,—He was desirous that they should be distinctly aware how formidable and intense the conflict was to prove, that, by more deeply pondering what He had spoken, they might raise their courage to its due height and temper. He goes on, therefore, by specifying one or two particulars, to let them know how "fiery a trial it was that was to try them,"—how "great a fight of afflictions" it was which they were summoned to encounter and to overcome. He gives them to understand that there was no degree of mortal suffering which should not be heaped upon their heads; no severity within the reach, whether of ecclesiastical or of civil power, of which they should not be made the subjects:—"They shall put you out of the synagogues, yea, the time cometh when whosoever killeth you shall think that he doeth God service."

In these words, our Lord, without entering into large details respecting the sufferings to be endured by His followers from those in whose hands the administration,

* Matt. xi. 6; Rev. ii. 10.

whether of spiritual or of secular authority, was lodged, specifies at once the highest penalty in each kind which could be inflicted upon men; implying, of course, that all kinds and degrees of suffering inferior to these which human rage and cruelty could shower upon their victims might *a fortiori* be expected by them.

In the first place He declares,—“They shall put you out of the synagogues,”—they shall make you excommunicated men; not merely excluding you from their places of sacred convocation, but severing you, as far as decrees and rituals of human condemnation can do, from all communion with the congregation of the Lord. We read of three distinct species of excommunication among the Jews, the severest of which, there can be no doubt, is that referred to here,—according to which the excommunicated person was stripped of all the privileges of an Israelite, and, with fearful execrations pronounced upon his head, was driven forth from the society of his people, to be shunned thenceforward as a condemned, plague-stricken, object of Jehovah’s malediction, and treated “as a heathen man and a publican,” an “alien from the commonwealth of Israel and a stranger to the covenant of promise.” The practice of pronouncing on atrocious and incurable transgressors this tremendous anathema seems to have come into use in the decline of the Jewish state, and, when its magistrates were deprived of the power of life and death, to have been substituted in place of the punishment of stoning,—the offender before its infliction being publicly scourged in the synagogue with rods. The Jews, therefore, had it not in their power more solemnly to devote an individual to destruction,—to declare a man worthy of the most disgraceful and agonizing death,—than by pronouncing against him the sentence mentioned in this place. We are told, accordingly, once and

again, in the preceding history, that, even in the life-time of Jesus, the Jews had "made a decree, that if any one acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue."* And there can be no doubt that the decree remained in force after our Lord's departure, and was often, in particular instances, applied to those whom the apprehension of it did not deter from avowing their conviction that, in the person of Jesus, the Anointed of the Lord had at length appeared among mankind. The Jews, indeed, have told us themselves how exactly this part of our Lord's prediction was fulfilled, by the account which their rabbies have preserved,—to the disgrace, as they imagine, of the Christian cause, but really for the verification of its great Founder's word,—of the solemnity with which, at the first rise of the way which they call Galilean heresy, it was put under the ban of the synagogue, and the damnatory sentence was proclaimed, with sounding trumpets and all the pomp of solemn execration, against the crucified Nazarene and all His followers, as blasphemers of Moses and of God.

Yet there were more substantial perils and penalties to be apprehended and encountered by the primitive confesors of Jesus before men, than these, the brute thunders, the void anathemas, of a falling hierarchy,—decrees, which God, in whose name they were pronounced, disowned; which, at the instant, He reversed. "But the time cometh," the Saviour added, "that whosoever killeth you shall think that he doeth God service." The word rendered "killeth" is one that may be applied alike to violent death in all its forms,—whether by private assassination, by popular tumult, or by public execution; and the history of the

* John ix. 22; xii.42.

primitive disciples abounds in examples in which they were unjustly doomed to death in all these various forms. The life of St. Paul, in particular, presents us with numerous instances in which the assassin's secret poniard was whetted against his devoted life,—when, for example, the Jews of Damascus watched the gates day and night to kill him, or when, at Corinth, the Jews laid wait for him at the harbour whence they expected him to sail for Syria, or when more than forty men of them at Jerusalem itself banded together, and “bound themselves by an oath, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.” Even in the brief memoirs of the apostles which the Book of their Acts contains, often do we find them placed in peril of their lives by the fury of an excited and exasperated multitude; and authentic records testify of the multitudes who, in the first ages, sealed their testimony with their blood, shed by the sword of public vengeance,—from Jesus Himself, the King of martyrs, and Stephen, his nearest follower,—nearest in time, and nearest in the beauty of his death,—down to the last of that noble army of witnesses who, rank after rank, pressed on to grasp the wreath of martyrdom, till the incessant stream of ungrudged and unexhausted blood had quenched the persecutor's fires and blunted his remorseless steel. Of the selected eleven to whom the discourse before us was at first addressed, there was not one save our evangelist that was denied the honour of a martyr's death. Yet while, in looking back to the victorious agonies, the triumphant deaths, of these heroic saints, we cannot help,—no Christian can,—adorning them with epithets of honour and of praise, we must remember that, in the act of yielding their dying testimony to Jesus and His cause, they were not cheered and animated by the admiration and the plaudits of mankind. A

small and feeble flock there was, indeed, who understood the glory of their sufferings, and encouraged them to die valiantly for Christ. But to the multitude of men, their life was madness, and their death without honour. Super-added to the agony, they had to endure the ignominy, of the cross,—to be chased out of the world as felons and traitors, malefactors and blasphemers, abhorred of men and accursed of the Lord. “For whosoever,” says our Saviour, “killeth you shall think he doeth God service,”—that is, shall think he serves Him in ridding His fair earth of those that blotted and deformed it, in sweeping from the face of it men who were the off-scourings of all things,—shall think he offereth to God a sacrifice well-pleasing to His holiness and His avenging righteousness, like that which the bold and fervent prophet commissioned to execute the vengeance of Jehovah against the idolatrous worshippers, offered at the brook of Kishon, when the priests of Jezebel were slain before the altar of the Lord. And, my brethren, in the early persecutions of the Gospel, zeal for religion was commonly the pretext with which, whether in ignorance or in hypocrisy, the enemies of Jesus veiled their impious cruelties. Isaiah, referring to these very times, had long before predicted,—“Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His word. Your enemies that hated you, and that cast you out, said, The Lord be glorified; but He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.” Thus, Paul informs us that, while yet a persecutor, and a leader in the sanguinary work,—“breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,”—he “verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” And in reference to the Jews in general, after his conversion he bears them witness, that they had “a zeal of God, though

not according to knowledge.”* The Gentiles, too, were accustomed to colour their persecutions of the truth with similar pretexts. One of the Christian apologists complains that they held the disciples chargeable with every conceivable crime against gods above and sovereigns below, against the laws of men and the very nature of things. And, hence, the enormous calumnies and false accusations of atheism and impiety, of incest and infanticide, which were alleged against the Christians, to excite against them the passions of the multitude, and justify upon them the doom of the most hideous and disgraceful death.

In order, however, to dilute the gall of this most poignant ingredient in the mortal sufferings which lay before them,—the bitterness of dying under the infamy of crimes which their soul abhorred, and especially the charge of impiety and blasphemy against the God whose honour was dearer to them than their lives; Jesus goes on to state that, however sincere the zeal might be of those who thought that, by shedding the blood of His disciples, they were doing God service, it was an utterly ignorant and mistaken zeal:—“These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me.” Had they known the Father,—had they been acquainted with His real character, His counsel, and His will,—they would have known that the cause which they opposed was the cause of God, the work which they maligned was the work of God. Had they, on the other hand, known Jesus,—had they been aware who and what He really was,—in Him whom they rejected as a deceiver, whom they crucified as a malefactor, whom they everywhere spoke against with scorn and hatred as the ring-leader of the hated sect of the Nazarenes, they would have

* Isa. lxvi. 5; Acts xxvi. 9; Rom. x. 2.

recognised none other than God's Begotten and Anointed Son, "the Brightness of the Father's glory and the Express Image of His person," the Revealer of His counsels and the Minister of His love. Had they known,—that is, had they fully understood, had they firmly believed,—thus much of the Father and the Son, it is scarcely conceivable even of the blinded and the hardened heart of men, that, by persecuting to the death the followers of Jesus, the saints of the Most High, they would have consciously placed themselves in avowed and fronted hostility to God, and 'madly dared the Omnipotent to arms.' I believe that many of them had secret misgivings on the subject,—suspicions more or less frequent, more or less strong, that, in fighting against the Gospel, they were fighting against God. But that any of them had arrived at that degree of Satanic hardihood, that, fully and absolutely knowing Jesus to be the Son and the Messenger of the Eternal, they boldly blasphemed and persecuted Him, willing to abide the awful risk,—I think may well be doubted. In every case, in a greater or a less degree, I suppose the explanation of our Lord to have been applicable,—“All these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.”

It is easy to perceive how ample a source of consolation and encouragement was opened to Christ's persecuted people in the consideration thus suggested,—that all the insults and all the wrongs which were heaped on them by the ungodly world were the fruit of ignorance and of mistake. They knew what their enemies would not know,—that God was on their side. They knew in whom they had believed, and were “persuaded that He was able to keep what” they had committed to Him. They knew the Father and the Son, as alike the Patrons of their cause and the

Guardians of their persons ; and well, therefore, in the ordeal of extremest trial might they repose upon the thought,—“Greater is He that is with us than all that can be against us.” This, then, is the way in which the consideration here presented bears on the duty of disciples,—the consideration, namely, that all the persecutions which Christians have been, or may yet be, called to endure at the hands of the ungodly world, arise from the circumstance that that world knoweth not the Father nor the Son.

A question still remains, however, of some interest and practical importance ; and that is the inquiry, whether and how far the Jewish persecutors of the Gospel were culpable in acting as they did from a sincere persuasion that they were doing God service, though a persuasion founded on mistake and ignorance,—from a real “zeal toward God, but not according to knowledge.” The question is one of no very difficult solution. That the plea of ignorance, and especially of ignorance combined with good intentions, will be admitted, in some degree, to palliate the criminal acts to which it leads,—that is, that these acts would have involved a yet more atrocious guilt had they been perpetrated at the bidding, not of a misguided zeal for God, but of a direct and daring hostility against God,—is obvious from our Saviour’s prayer upon the tree,—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ;” as well as from the apostle’s declaration, that, though he had been, in the days of his darkness, “a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious,” yet even so, he had not sinned beyond forgiveness, because he had sinned in error:—“I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”* Yet most distinctly obvious it is, upon the other hand, that an ignor-

* Luke xxiii. 34 ; 1 Tim. i. 13.

ance which itself is criminal cannot excuse, however it may palliate, the sins to which it gives occasion, and that the plea of sincerity, which some would fondly persuade themselves God will in every case accept from His responsible creatures, can only be sustained in the case of those who, in arriving at the sincere conviction which they hold, have honestly employed their faculties, and honestly improved their opportunities; who have sought with all simplicity of purpose, and all docility of heart, to know the truth and the will of their Creator,—casting down every proud imagination, and “every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,” and, in the inmost sanctuary of their intellectual nature, sacrificing, on God’s altar, their fondest prejudices, their dearest predilections,—bowing their souls before Jehovah’s oracle, and trembling at His word.

LECTURE XXIX.

CHAP. XVI. 4—11.

“But these things have I told you, that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to Him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”

IN the preceding context, you may remember, our Lord had been minutely predicting to His followers the severe tribulations and persecutions to which, for His sake and the gospel's, they were after His departure to be subjected, and in fortifying their minds, by various arguments, against the discouraging impression which these of themselves were fitted to produce,—against the temptations which they presented to their human fears and their Jewish prejudices to take offence at Jesus and His cause, and to stumble in the path of their high calling as His ambassadors and the champions of His truth. In addition to all the more direct and cogent arguments of consolation which He had adduced in the body of the discussion, He now

terminates the subject by pointing out the encouragement and comfort which, under all their tribulations, they might hereafter derive from the very fact that they had been predicted, and predicted by Him, their Saviour and their Lord:—"These things have I told you, that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them."

We saw in our last Lecture how well-fitted was the remembrance of the considerations themselves adduced by our Lord to support and animate His followers under their approaching trials,—to teach them even to "glory in tribulation." But more than this,—the simple circumstance of having been taught to expect the coming of a time when they should be called to make use of these considerations was calculated to prepare them for the coming of that hour. It was an ancient proverb,—'The arrow falls less perilous of which we have observed the flight.' To be warned is to be armed beforehand even against inevitable ills; inasmuch as we are so enabled to gird ourselves for the encounter by steadfast patience, and resolute will, and meditation of all appropriate motives to courage and to constancy. Besides, in the case immediately before us, the fact that the tribulations which the disciples suffered in the world were the fulfilment of predictions delivered to them by their Lord, assured them that they all occurred according to the counsel and fore-appointment of their Father in heaven,—a counsel which, as it is always infinitely wise in itself, so likewise is always infinitely benignant towards those that love Him. The same fact, moreover, was a conspicuous demonstration that their Master's word was indeed "sure word of prophecy," and that, as it had been ratified by the event when it foretold of suffering and death, so should it be, in like manner,

confirmed when it predicted the glorious deliverance, the immortal reward, in which their sufferings should terminate, when, having “come out of great tribulation,” they should receive the palms of immortality, and wreath their victor-foreheads with eternal praise. In the original there is a peculiar emphasis laid upon the word *I* in the expression, “that I told you of them;” an emphasis by which we are reminded of all the claims which our Saviour-Lord possesses on the steadfast allegiance of His followers, in the face of all opposition, and under the pressure of all affliction,—claims arising at once from His authority as their Sovereign, and from His love as their Redeemer; an emphasis which hints at all that can be supposed to alleviate, to endear, affliction to the hearts of Christians, when they know that it is endured by the appointment, and in the cause, of one whose property they are, to command and to dispose of, as the creatures of His power, the purchase of His blood, the subjects of His royalty, the soldiers of His cross, and the heirs of His salvation.

It was with this view, therefore, that Jesus told the disciples now of what they should have to encounter in the discharge of the arduous service to which He had appointed them,—not that He might afflict and terrify them before the time by the shadow cast before of approaching calamity; but that they might have their resources collected, and their resolution confirmed, to meet and vanquish the trial when it came. This was the reason why He told them so soon; and he concludes the subject by assigning the reason why He told them not sooner:—“These things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.”

Many have found difficulty in reconciling the statement here made with the facts of our Lord’s history,

as recorded by the several evangelists, and more particularly with what is related of Him in the 10th chapter of St. Matthew; where we find Him, with at least as great distinctness as in the place now before us, predicting the persecutions and reproaches to which in the discharge of their office as His apostles the chosen twelve should be exposed:—"But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues: and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles;" "And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." The solution of the apparent contradiction is to be sought, not merely in the fact that the disciples had been for some time attached to His person, before He delivered to them the predictions which we have just been quoting from St. Matthew, of the sufferings to be endured by them, at the hands of an unbelieving world, in the prosecution of their apostolic labours,—and so He had actually not told them "from the beginning,"—but chiefly in the circumstance that what He formerly predicted at a distance He now forwarns them of as "near, even at the door." "The time cometh," He says in the 2d verse, "when he that killeth you shall think that he doeth God service." He had, at first, in general terms foretold what lay before them in the discharge of the office to which He then appointed and inaugurated them; because it was just and right that, in accepting of such an office, they should be able to count the cost,—that they should not be cheated or deluded into an undertaking that brought along

with it so arduous a responsibility, and involved them in so hard and perilous a conflict. But having thus relieved Himself, in the act of appointing them His apostles, from all imputations of injurious concealment and reservation, He did not after that revert to the topic as one of habitual conversation,—as one to which He felt it necessary minutely to call the attention of His disciples,—until the near approach of the time when His predictions should be fulfilled, and His consolations should prove of use, made it necessary that they should look the danger directly in the face, and when the immediate proximity of His own departure from the world required that, as they should not then have their Master among them personally to consult, they should have His declarations on the subject seasonably to remember. So long as Jesus was yet with them, He drew directly on Himself the hatred and persecution of the world; behind Him they were sheltered from the brunt of the battle,—or if some stray shaft that had been aimed at Him descended upon them, they had their living Master at their side, directly to apply to for counsel, for sympathy, and for relief. Therefore said their Lord,—the mingled tenderness and prudence of whose procedure towards His disciples “in the days of His flesh” we are entitled to look upon as affording, even now, the assurance and the pledge of the wise, yet tender and affectionate, charge which He still takes of all events and circumstances affecting the character and welfare of His chosen,—“These things I said not unto you from the beginning, because I was with you.”

Having thus concluded the exhortations and encouragements which He saw it meet to address to His disciples, in reference to the hatred and persecution which, after His departure, they were destined to encounter from the unbelieving world; Jesus takes up another subject of

alarm and grief that now oppressed their minds, that is, the fact that He, their beloved Lord, was about to leave them,—a fact which of itself, and independently of the other sufferings in reserve for them, was enough to plunge them in profoundest apprehension and regret. To this topic He had again and again alluded in the preceding part of His discourse, and had adduced a great variety of arguments and of considerations well fitted to mitigate their sorrow, if not to turn it into joy. Perceiving however, that, notwithstanding all He had already said, the tumult and anguish of His disciples' mind in reference to this afflicting prospect were still unallayed, and touched with compassion towards their infirmities, He recurs to the subject, illustrates and confirms what He had already stated, and adduces various new arguments and motives why they should not permit themselves to be “swallowed up of overmuch sorrow.” And in again undertaking the exposition of this topic, that kind Physician of the wounded soul begins by describing the disease, and then proceeds to the application of the remedy.

“But now,” says Jesus, describing the cause and character of their regrets, “But now I go to Him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your hearts.” It may seem strange that Jesus should complain of His disciples for neglecting to ask, when informed that He was about to leave them, whither His course was bent. In the close of the 13th chapter, we find Peter asking Him in so many words, “Whither goest thou?” and at the 5th verse of the chapter following, we hear Thomas observing, with all the force of an inquiry and request for information,—“Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?” But it is

plain that, in making these requests, the disciples totally misapprehended the meaning of their Master, and, when they heard Him speak of going His way, dreamed of nothing less than His departure to that undiscovered country that lies beyond the grave. The meaning, however, of his intimations and allusions had now dawned upon their minds. They understood that they were about to be separated from Him, so long their Guide, their Guardian, and their Friend, by more than land or sea,—by the gulf that divides between the shores of life and those of immortality. In this meaning of His words, now understood by them, it was, that our Lord could have desired His followers to show some interest and concern with regard to the causes, the objects, the results, of His departure from the world, instead of being lost, as they were, in a speechless and absorbing sorrow that, dwelling exclusively on the loss and the calamity they were about to suffer in being deprived of the personal presence of their Lord, left them no heart to inquire respecting the consequences of that departure to Him,—concerning the new state in which He was going to exist, and the new functions which He was going to perform. Although, however, He could not but remark in passing, and gently reprove, the selfishness of their regrets, He condescends to argue even with their selfish sorrow, and to impress on His disciples that, respect being had even to their own advantage, His leaving them was not an event to be regretted and deplored:—“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter,” or Paraclete, “will not come; but if I go away I will send Him unto you.”

You know, my brethren, who it is that is here promised by the appellation of Paraclete,—the Holy Spirit of God,

the Spirit of truth and purity and power; and why it is that He is so denominated,—because His office was to be the Helper, the Patron, and the Advocate, of the apostles in the controversy to which they had been committed with the unbelieving world, by inspiring their minds with heavenly wisdom, by arming their voice with miraculous power, by replenishing their souls with spiritual grace. Now, though it be true that the Holy Spirit, as the Author both of sanctifying and consoling grace, and of inspiration and miraculous power, wrought upon the hearts of men, not only during the period of our Saviour's humbled residence upon the earth, but throughout the whole course of the ancient economy,—still, the uniform testimony of the New Testament assures us that, on the day of Pentecost, a vast and unexampled extension took place in the measure in which His sacred influences were given to men; to the apostles in the first instance, in the shape of those miraculous endowments which suited their office and their calling in the Church,—and to the souls, in general, of Christian men, as the source of faith, and holiness, and peace, and hope, and joy. That the apostles, by the more liberal effusion of the Spirit which followed their Master's return to glory, were actually placed in a better condition,—were furnished with more precious advantages,—were exalted to a loftier strain of character here, and to the hope and the capacity of acquiring a more glorious reward hereafter,—than they enjoyed even when the Lord Jesus went in and out among them,—every one who can compare them with themselves before and after that glorious event will immediately perceive. But the effusion of the Paraclete which produced this so highly advantageous and desirable elevation on their character and their condition, was the immediate fruit of that departure of their Lord in

prospect of which their souls were so deeply dejected and overwhelmed within them. Such was the arrangement of that infallible and unfathomable wisdom by which the economy of grace was contrived and arranged in all its parts, ends, relations, and dependencies, that the effusion of the Holy Ghost, in such measure as that in which He was poured out upon the day of Pentecost, should be suspended on the completion of the Saviour's work by His death, resurrection, and exaltation to the right hand of everlasting Majesty. The right of bestowing on His chosen the promise of the Holy Ghost was a part, a primary part, of that illustrious reward which it was proposed that Jesus should purchase by His death,—of that “joy set before Him” for which He “endured the cross, despising the shame.” And the actual communication of that glorious gift was wisely affixed to the period of His exaltation immediately succeeding His final departure to the Father,—partly, that the presence of the Paraclete might serve as a compensation, and more than a simple compensation, to the Church, for the departure of the Mediator,—and partly, that the communication of the Spirit by the power, and according to the promise, of Jesus might serve on earth, both to friends and foes, as an unambiguous proof that He was indeed exalted at “the right hand of power,” “a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the remission of sins.” Hence in so many passages of Scripture are the ascension of the Saviour and the descent of the Paraclete connected together, as caused the latter by the former. “Thou hast ascended, O Lord, on high,” so spake the oracle of old, “Thou hast led captivity captive, Thou hast received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them.” “The Holy Ghost was not yet given,” our own Evangelist remarks in the seventh

chapter, "because that Jesus was not yet glorified."* And therefore says our Lord, in conformity with the scope and tenor of the whole discourse,—“It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.”

The proper idea of a Paraclete,—as I have more than once in these illustrations informed you,—is that of a person who stands by another in a judicial cause, to countenance, direct, assist, and plead for, him,—to give his friend the advantage of all his talents, authority, and influence, in order to secure the decision of the controversy in his favour. In conformity with this idea, our Lord in ver. 8—11, describes the Holy Spirit fulfilling His office as the Paraclete of the apostles,—their great Patron and Assistant in the vindication of the Christian cause,—by predicting the triumphant decision which, through His agency, should be at length pronounced in favour of Christ and Christianity, against the world, and the ruler of this world, that is, the devil.

“And when He is come,” says Jesus, “He will convict the world,”—will gain the cause against the world,—“with respect to sin, to righteousness,” or acquittal, “and to judgment,” or condemnation. The whole scenery presented to our fancies in this and the three following verses is that of a judicial controversy in regard to the comparative claims of Jesus the author of the gospel, and Satan the ruler of this world. On the side of the former are arrayed the Christian church, the apostles, and their celestial Paraclete; on that of the latter, the world,—the majority of men, those who principally wield the resources and enjoy

* Psal. lxxviii. 18; John vii. 39.

the distinctions of the present state. There is, therefore, a double controversy represented here as in suspense,—the primary dispute between the Saviour and the Demon, and the secondary question, dependent on the former, between the church and the world. Now, the point of this complicated controversy at which, in the verses, the Holy Ghost is represented as interposing for the help of the apostles, is when the primary question,—that between Christ and Satan,—has already been determined, and when only the secondary question remains,—that between the church and the world. And the way for the heavenly Paraclete to determine the still remaining question for the apostles against the world, is by proving that the principal question has already been decided for the Saviour and against the Enemy. Such is exactly the view presented, as I apprehend, in the somewhat difficult passage before us; where, according to this view, Christ declares that when the Paraclete should come, He should prove in behalf of the disciples against the world three several things,—guilt, justification, condemnation; the guilt of the world itself, the justification of Him whose cause the world opposed, the condemnation of him whose cause the world supported.

The fundamental point, then, which it was requisite for the Holy Spirit to prove, as the Patron of the cause which the apostles were commissioned to assert,—a point from the establishment of which the decision of both the other questions in their favour followed of necessity,—was the righteousness of Jesus,—His justification as the Teacher of truth, the Messenger of heaven, the Anointed Son of the Most High. On this point, therefore, we find our Lord declaring,—“When He,” the Paraclete, “is come, He shall reprove the world of righteousness,”—that is, He

shall triumphantly establish, in opposition to the world, my righteousness,—“because I go to the Father, and ye see me no more.” The world had numbered Jesus with the transgressors. They had consigned Him to the doom of a felon and a traitor. And having suspended Him as such to the ignominious and accursed tree, they imagined that they had accomplished the conclusive refutation of His claims; that they had proved Him to be what they had often called Him, a deceiver, an impostor, a blasphemer. So they imagined,—but how grievously were they mistaken! The cause which they supposed was buried in perpetual shame revived into mightier power and brighter splendour than before,—even as He in whose sepulchre they had entombed it did Himself arise, and, ascending above all heavens, sat down on the right hand of everlasting Majesty, the acknowledged Son of the Father, the appointed “Heir of all things.” The exaltation of Christ Jesus, after His obedience unto death, to “the right hand of power” is referred to by the apostles, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as the triumphant vindication of their Master’s claims,—the demonstration of His righteousness in demanding to be acknowledged, believed, obeyed, as the Christ, the Son of the Living God,—the Divine attestation to the truth of the character He had assumed, and the perfection of the work which, in that character, He had accomplished, as the chosen Legate of Divinity, the promised Saviour of men. It is thus that we read that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection from the dead;” and thus that, by the use of the very verb of which the word righteousness before us is the noun, we are told that God who was “manifested in the flesh” was “justified,”—proved righteous,—“in the Spirit,” when He was “seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed

on in the world, received up into glory." And precisely to the same effect it is, as appears to us, that the promised Paraclete is here described as proving the righteousness of the Redeemer, because He went to the Father, and the disciples saw Him no more,—that is, He returned no more to reside upon the earth; He took up His permanent abode with God; He sat down for ever at "the right hand of power," "from thenceforth expecting until His enemies should be made His footstool."* That this was indeed the actual fact,—that the Father had, in reality, raised up Jesus, and given Him glory,—the Paraclete proved against the world, by the very circumstance that He Himself had come. His coming was the fruit of the Messiah's exaltation,—the accomplishment of the Messiah's prophecies,—the fulfilment of the test which the Messiah had previously proposed as that which should decide whether or not He had gone to the Father, and been acknowledged by the Father as all that He professed to be, and claimed to be esteemed.

In the very act, however, of thus justifying Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete of the Christian cause, did of necessity condemn the great antagonist of Jesus, "the prince of this world." This appellation we have already found applied in this Gospel to that dark spirit who finds, in the reign of moral evil through the universe, his element and his delight, and who, from the sad extent to which that moral evil prevails in our apostate world, has worn, and still with too ample reason wears, the regal appellations of the "prince of this world," "the god," or demon, "of this world," "the ruler of this darkness," "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience."† This was

* Rom. i. 4; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Heb. x. 13.

† John xvi. 11; 2 Cor. iv. 4; Eph. vi. 12; ii. 2.

he who was the instigator and the leader of all the opposition directed at once against the person and the doctrine of Jesus. This was he whom the demonstration and acknowledgment of the Messiah's claims was to spoil of his usurped dominion, to frustrate his dearest aims, to undo his malignant triumphs. This was the grand antagonist with whom the Saviour's controversy lay; and so it followed of necessity that, by the very same circumstances by which the cause of Jesus was vindicated, the Enemy's allegations were disproved, the Enemy's plea was set aside, the Enemy himself was condemned,—that the Paraclete, when He “reproved the world of righteousness, because Jesus had gone to the Father,” reproved it, at the same time, “of judgment, because the prince of this world was judged.” From that moment the adversary-tyrant's doom was sealed. His farther efforts against the claims of Jesus were but the idle struggles of the losing party in a decided cause. And, however he might succeed in deluding his blinded victims,—the subject world of the ungodly,—still to espouse his defeated cause, and in making the worse in their opinion still appear the better reason; yet, in the minds of all right-minded intelligences in heaven and on the earth, the question had been finally determined, without possibility of appeal or of reversal,—the claims of the Redeemer shone out upon their view, in all the unsullied radiance of Divinely-acknowledged righteousness and truth,—and the arguments of the accuser were driven back to the darkness whence they sprung, branded with the foul stigmas of detected falsehood, of baffled malignity and fraud.

Such was the statement which the Paraclete, when He arrived, was to make, and was to prove, concerning the result of the primary and fundamental controversy between

the Deliverer and the Destroyer, in regard to the truth of the pretensions of the former. He was to assert the justification of the Saviour, the condemnation of the Demon; and so, He was to leave the world without excuse in still rejecting the triumphantly established claims of Jesus, in still adhering to the exposed and baffled sophistries of Satan. Hence our Lord represents the Paraclete as arguing against the world of its own sin, as well as of the condemnation of its infernal ruler, and the vindication of its Divine Redeemer:—"He shall reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me." By doing so, they rejected the truth which God had manifestly ratified; they embraced the falsehood which God had conspicuously condemned; they impeached of error and injustice the sovereign tribunal of the universe; they made God a liar, and preferred to His infallible decision the frontless assertions, the whispered insinuations, of him who is a liar from the beginning,—“a liar, and the father of lies.”*

Alas! my brethren, how many are there even now who dare be guilty of this impious insult to the Omniscient Righteousness, the Sovereign Judge and Arbiter of all things! How many are there who either avowedly represent, or practically treat, the claims of Jesus as if they had been built on a now detected imposture, or, at least, had never been confirmed by the authentic decree and signature of Heaven! With many, indeed, ever since the Holy Spirit entered on His heavenly ministration as Paraclete and Patron of the Christian cause upon the earth, the demonstrations of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment have prevailed to withdraw them from the Apostate's accursed cause, and attach them, in humble faith, to Him, as their acknowledged Saviour and their rightful Lord,

* John viii. 44.

whom "God the Father hath sealed." Oh, happy they,—only happy and only safe,—who, in the fierce warfare that divides our world between the followers of the Anointed Son and the partizans of the Rebellious Angel, have, from their hearts, embraced the side on which Jehovah has declared Himself. For those who refuse, and shall refuse to the end, to be persuaded,—who, either avowedly rejecting, or practically disobeying, the Gospel of Christ Jesus, have irrevocably linked their interests and hopes to the cause of the Spiritual Tyrant,—have jeoparded their souls on the truth of his assertions, and undertaken to stand or to fall with the justice of his plea,—for them there remains an awful day when the decision already pronounced by the sovereign tribunal shall be affirmed and ratified, so that none should be able to gainsay or resist,—when, with all the overwhelming solemnities of final and eternal judgment, the mighty controversy, more important far than all combined on which human judgment-seats have ever arbitrated, than all for which contending nations have pleaded with the sword on earth's ten thousand battle-fields,—the controversy which the Spirit of truth and the spirits of falsehood have been pleading, for long generations, before the consciences of men,—shall be for ever laid to rest, and when those who, during the progress of that momentous cause, have taken part with the king of hell must be content to share with him the shame of detection, the anguish of defeat, the sentence of eternal condemnation, and the doom of everlasting fire.

LECTURE XXX.

CHAP. XVI. 12—15.

‘ I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore, said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.’

IN the verses which formed the subject of our last Lecture, Jesus had resumed the task of comforting His followers in reference to His own approaching departure from the world. The leading topic to which, with this view, He had referred them was the fact that, by His departure, they were not to be left as orphans in the midst of a hostile world,—that, when deprived of His presence, they were to be visited by that of a Guide, a Guardian, a Friend and Patron, equally Divine,—that the place of the ascending Saviour should be speedily occupied among them by the descending Paraclete. And in order that the disciples might justly estimate the value of the gift which He thus promised them,—the coming of the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth,—Jesus had entered into some details respecting the kind of assistance which that Celestial Agent should afford them in the fulfilment of the great work to which they were devoted, and which was thenceforward to form the main object and

employment of their lives,—the discharge of the apostolic ministry. The great end and object of that holy ministry to which the disciples were consecrated was,—to assert, establish, and maintain, the claims of Jesus as the Anointed Son of God and Saviour of men, against the opposition of a hostile world. As it were, a great judicial controversy was commenced between the apostles on the one hand, and the unbelieving world upon the other, of which the subject was the truth or falsehood of the pretensions advanced by the crucified Nazarene to be received as the Saviour and the Lord of man. And in the progress of this momentous controversy the Holy Spirit is represented coming forward as the Paraclete of the disciples,—that is, their Patron, Advocate, and Helper,—and, in that capacity making good His case, establishing His point, against the world, respecting guilt, respecting righteousness, respecting condemnation: respecting guilt,—that is, the guilt of the world itself, in refusing to believe on Jesus; respecting righteousness,—that is, the vindication of the Redeemer's cause as just, and of Himself as the righteous one, by His glorious ascension to the Father; and respecting judgment,—that is, the condemnation of the Saviour's great accuser and antagonist,—the prince of this world, the leader of the Antichristian faction in the universe, the ruler of the wide domain of unbelief,—by the disproof of all his calumnious assertions, the detection of all his subtle sophistries, the overthrow of all his fallacious pleas. All this the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, was, on behalf of the disciples, to make good against the world, by one conclusive series of argument,—(1.) by the very fact that, as the fruit of the Messiah's exaltation, and in fulfilment of the Messiah's promise, He had Himself descended to the earth, proving so that Jesus had indeed been acknowledged

by the Father to be all that He claimed to be reckoned among men; and (2.) by the wonders, both of miraculous and of moral operation, which He wrought in the fulfilment of that which was the especial object of His mission to the earth,—“to testify of Jesus,” and to ratify the truth and celestial origin of the doctrine which the apostles taught concerning Him.

Such is the first view,—and it is a very striking one,—which, in this part of His discourse, our Lord delivers to His followers respecting the benefit to be derived by them, as His apostles and the champions of His cause, from the descent of the Celestial Paraclete. In the verses before us, our Lord proceeds to state a second reason on account of which they should reckon the advent of the Holy Ghost a thing desirable, though to be purchased by the departure of their Master; and that is, the vast accession which, under His instructions, was to be made to the extent and clearness of their acquaintance with the truths of the kingdom,—of their insight into spiritual and celestial mysteries. In introducing this glorious promise, our Lord, in the first place, adverts to the need which the disciples had of such a blessing as that of which it gave them the assurance:—“I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now.”

The comparison of the Christian system, as developed and expounded by the apostles in their discourses and writings after the day of Pentecost, with the views of the kingdom of heaven which they entertained before the departure of their Lord, will best explain the nature and extent of the “many things” which He had still to say to them, had their circumstances and their state of mind permitted. Every one who makes this comparison will immediately perceive how much more luminous and

ample after, than before, the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the views of the disciples were in regard even to the truths before communicated respecting the person, the work, the kingdom, of the Messiah; and how many truths entirely new and of the greatest importance in the Christian system were then for the first time made known,—for example, the abrogation of the ceremonial law, the abolition of the distinction between Jew and Gentile, and the transference of the character of God's peculiar people from the seed of Abraham to the Church of Christ. The reason why, in the days of His flesh, our Lord abstained from opening and enforcing so fully as He might have done "the mystery of Christ," He here informs His followers, was, that they were as yet unable to bear its revelation. What remained to be made known to them of Christian truth required, in order to be fully comprehended and justly appreciated, that they should have obtained, by the more faithful use of the opportunities they had hitherto enjoyed, a more accurate acquaintance with the truth already revealed,—that they should have been more completely disabused of their perverse and prejudiced opinions concerning the Messiah's character and reign,—in short, that not only an accession should be made to their means of information, but a change should be effected on their capacities and modes of perception. Desirous, therefore, as their Master would have been to have led them yet deeper into the interior economy of His religion and His kingdom, and inviting as was the field of yet sublimer discourse which opened before Him; yet, considering their present weakness and inability to receive without misunderstanding and perversion the highest and most spiritual truths of Christianity, He spares Himself the useless toil, and refers them for more ample knowledge

to the fuller and more systematic instructions of the promised Paraclete:—"Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."

The expression, "all truth," as here used, does not, of course, denote the whole magnificent expanse and system of universal truth,—embracing, in its range, all knowledge, erudition, science, of things past, present, and to come,—involving, in its complex and immeasurable tissue, all worlds and ages, all beings and relations—presenting all the seeming incongruities of things in harmony, and all the mysteries of God and nature, of time and eternity, in light; that universal truth which is the adequate object of Omniscience, and which, in the nature of things, Omniscience alone can grasp. Being "led into all truth," plainly signifies no more than acquiring that acquaintance with the whole range and compass of the Christian system; that enlarged and infallible perception of evangelic doctrine; that knowledge of the mystery of Christ,—which, as the apostle Paul observes, "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it was afterwards revealed unto His holy prophets and apostles by the Spirit,"—which enabled them to deliver the gospel to the world in its complete revelation,—to make known to men "the whole counsel of God," the perfected record of salvation. This, with the similar promise contained in the 26th verse of the 14th chapter, forms one of the principal foundations on which we rest our belief in the divine inspiration of the apostolic doctrine in the statement of the whole, and every part, of the system of religious truth,—of all that they said, and all that they wrote, in professed exposition and recommendation of the faith whereof they were the authorised interpreters and heralds. We know that He by whom the promise of the text was given, and who, not many

moments before, had said to the same effect,—“The Paraclete, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father shall send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance,” was the Faithful and the True Witness whose words, though “heaven and earth shall pass away,” can “in no wise pass away.” Had we no other evidence, therefore, on the subject, we are as certain as that these words were spoken, that they were fulfilled,—a previous assurance which we find abundantly confirmed by the testimony of the apostles themselves, acting on their high commission; “God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and divers miracles.” “We have the mind of Christ,” they said; “The things that I write to you are the commandments of the Lord;” “The word of God which ye received of us ye received not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of the Living God;” “He, therefore, that despiseth, despiseth not man but God, who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit;” “We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error;” “The things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God;” “Now, we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual to spiritual,”*—expressing inspired thoughts in inspired

* Heb. ii. 4; 1 Cor. ii. 16; xiv. 37; 1 Thes. ii. 13; iv. 8; 1 John iv. 6; 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10, 12, 13.

words. Oh, then, with what reverence and gratitude, with what undoubting faith and confidence, with what entire submission of the understanding and cordial acquiescence of the heart, should we receive each precious word of their heaven-breathed discourse, each inestimable relic of their heaven-guided pen, as containing, not the visions of human fancy, not the conjectures of human speculation, not the discoveries of human reason, not the production of human faculties, but “the true sayings of God,” the authentic oracles of heaven, breathing the inspiration of the Omniscient Spirit, embodying the testimony of Him “that cannot lie,”—direct emanations from the Fountain of heavenly Wisdom, unreflected rays from the Sun of everlasting Truth.

In order still more emphatically to express the pure and uncorrupted divinity of the testimony of which the apostles were to be made the bearers by the promised Paraclete, our Saviour adds,—“He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak.”

Jesus had been accustomed to represent His own trustworthiness, as the Messenger and Legate of Divinity, by expressions of similar character:—“I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear I judge;” “As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things;” “I am not come of myself, but He that sent me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him.”* The import of such expressions, when used in reference either to the Son or to the Spirit, is to be explained by the recollection of the subordination of official character which both are represented as holding to God the Father Almighty in the economy of grace. Whatever is said or

* John v. 30; viii. 28, 26.

done by the Son as Mediator, and, in like manner, whatever is said or done by the Holy Ghost as Paraclete, is said or done by them as servants of the Father,—by authority and commission from Him. You know how entirely consistent the idea of official subordination is with that of essential equality,—at least, until you admit the consistency of the two, I am sure you cannot even approach to a satisfactory explanation of the language used by the Bible in reference to those Divine Agents through whom our knowledge of the Godhead is derived from above, the Holy Son and the Holy Spirit of God; dignified as they are, in a multitude of places, with the names and the ascriptions proper to the Sovereign Divinity, yet not less frequently set forth, as in the instance before us, acting a part inferior and secondary,—implying delegation, instruction, and responsibility. Now, what is here asserted of the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, is, that He should be rigorously faithful to His instructions and commissions,—that, in speaking to the apostles,—that is, conveying information, and suggesting expressions, to their minds,—He should say nothing more, and nothing less, than it was the will of the Sovereign Father, of the whole consenting Divinity, that He should communicate. He fulfilled, without excess and without defect,—without deviation of any kind or any degree,—the part assigned Him when, in the counsels of the Everlasting Mind, the plan of our salvation was settled and arranged.

In order still further to assure His disciples, and the church through them, touching the Divine origin and authority of the revelations to be made by the Spirit after His decease, as well as to exalt their apprehensions of the dignity and privilege assigned them in being appointed

the Spirit's organs and instruments in this matter ; Jesus informs them that these revelations would not simply recall to them the past or unfold the present, but would disclose to them the veiled and mysterious future. Not merely does He declare of the promised Paraclete, " He shall bring all things to your remembrance ;" not only, " He shall lead you into all truth ;" but, " He shall show you things to come."

Our Saviour, in making such a promise to the eleven, obviously exposed the truth of all His promises in this discourse, and consequently of His whole doctrine and religion, to a test than which none can be conceived more perilous to falsehood and imposture. Well may we trust to that whole doctrine as Divine of which a constituent part is prophecy fulfilled by the event. And well might the apostles be assured that He who opened to their gifted eye the visions of futurity spake to their minds with Divine commission and authority, when He unrolled to them the scheme and harmony of spiritual truth. That the promise was in reality fulfilled, the apostolic history and the apostolic writings abundantly demonstrate. There we read of the gift of prophecy as familiarly enjoyed, not by the apostles alone, on whom the Paraclete descended in largest plenitude of heavenly unction, but by many in the Christian church of inferior rank and authority to them. When the Lord " ascended up on high, and received gifts for men," He appointed " some apostles, and some" besides the apostles " prophets," as well as " some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." How frequently do we read in the record of their Acts minute and particular incidents connected with their sufferings and their labours, their lives and their deaths, announced to them before the time ! And how vividly do we find the great lines and features

of the church's history, down to the consummation of all things, portrayed in their works with a pencil dipt in heaven,—the excision of the unrepentant Jews; the adoption of the believing Gentiles; the rise, the progress, the dominion, and the overthrow, of the great Apostasy; the recall of Israel; the gathering of the nations; the coming of the Judge; the resurrection of the dead; the flaming dissolution of the world; the radiant birth of “new heavens and a new earth” from out the ashes of the old; and the period of final development and consummation, when the enigma of Providence shall be fulfilled, and “God shall be all in all!” This illustrious series of events,—of which some are even already parts of history, the sign and pledge that those also which are only predictions now will one day be actual facts,—is foretold, in terms of which the import cannot be mistaken, in many passages of apostolic scripture; did we even omit to speak of that mysterious book—than which none more distinctly utters the very tones of Deity, but of which the greater part yet waits the day that shall declare it,—where, rolling on through scenes of gloom and of glory infinite, visions of splendour and of all unutterable woes, amidst thunders and lightnings and voices, the clangour of unearthly trumpets, the flight of ministering angels, the attention and eager interest of all the gazing universe, we behold the Divine administration of our world, the unfathomable mystery of God, evolving at last into the state of irreversible arrangement, when He that sitteth on the throne shall say,—“Behold, I make all things new;” “It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.”

It is easy to perceive how useful in the case of the apostles this part of the Spirit's work,—the revelation of things to come,—was fitted to prove, not merely as estab-

lishing the truth and divinity of His testimony to them, and to the world through them, but as calculated to cheer and animate their hearts, under all the toils and sufferings that awaited them, with the assurance that all events of this world's mysterious history were under the direction and control of Him whose ministers they were, and that all would ultimately issue in their own eternal deliverance and joy,—in the complete and imperishable triumph of the cause to which they had vowed their lives, and for which they were to shed their blood. This, then, is that which the Saviour promised when He said,—“The Paraclete shall show you things to come.” And this too is that which long before was spoken of by the prophet Joel:—“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith the Lord, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; and your young men shall see visions; and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out, in those days, of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy; and whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

Now, in the whole communication of celestial knowledge to the apostles' minds, whether in the revelation of future events, or in the disclosure of spiritual truth, Jesus had already said that the Paraclete should not speak of Himself, but as He had heard should speak. In the 14th and 15th verses, therefore, He proceeds to state somewhat more particularly the sources from which that heavenly Instructor should derive what He was to deliver and transmit to them:—“He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.”

* Joel ii. 28, 29, 32; Acts ii. 16—21.

As that which our Lord designates by the epithet of "mine" is, in one verse, represented as the subject of proclamation, and, in the other, of common possession to the Father and the Son; it can scarcely be interpreted of anything but His complete acquaintance with the great whole,—and that in each particular detail,—that constitutes the scheme of universal truth, and especially that appertains to the system of Divine grace, the economy of human salvation. "In Him," we are told, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."* Out of this inexhaustible fulness, this boundless ocean, of heavenly truth, the Holy Ghost is here represented as drawing forth the revelations which He makes to men. By this, of course, it cannot be meant that He, the Spirit of truth, who "knoweth the things of God" even as "the spirit of a man knoweth the things of a man which are in him,"—He who "searcheth all things, even the deep things of God,"—can receive from any quarter of the universe fresh information, knowledge that shall be new to Him. The language is merely meant to intimate that the communications which the apostles should receive from the illumining Spirit were to be made under the authority and sanction of the now exalted Mediator, and in express conformity with the knowledge He possesses, with the views He takes, of all to which these revelations should relate. The disciples, therefore, were not to apprehend that, in being transferred from the instructions of the Saviour to those of the Paraclete, they were to pass into another school, and to be taught another doctrine. The revelations of truth which the Holy Ghost was to address to them were to be, in fact, derived from the Saviour. They were still to remain under the teaching of Christ, although through the intermediate agency of the

* Col. ii. 3.

Celestial Spirit; who, acting under the direction of the now crowned and glorified Messiah,—declaring nothing that, so to speak, was not set down for Him,—was so to glorify the Saviour by becoming His Messenger and Minister, and by adhering, with exactest fidelity, in every part of His official administration, to the instructions He had received from Him.

Lest any, however, might imagine that, by the statement of the Spirit's receiving and communicating what is Christ's, the Father was secluded from all share in this great work; our Saviour adds, that the very ground on which He made such a representation of the fact was the essential unity everlastingly subsisting between the Father and Himself, so that the wisdom of the Father and the Son were one, the authority of the Father and the Son were one, and, in deriving from His knowledge,—in acting under His commission,—the Holy Paraclete was, in the very fact, informed with the wisdom, and armed with the authority, of the Father Everlasting and Almighty:—"All things that the Father hath are mine,"—all the perfections and prerogatives of Godhead belong alike to both. "I and the Father," He said on other occasions, "are one;" "Whatsoever things the Father doeth, these the Son doeth likewise;" "All things that are thine are mine, and all things mine are thine;" "That all men may honour the Son even as they honour the Father."* "Therefore," He adds, "I said unto you,"—without any derogation from the sovereign honours of the Father,—"the Spirit shall receive of mine and shall shew it unto you." And thus were the apostles taught to consider each iota of the revelations made to them, as Christ's ambassadors, after His departure

* John x. 30; v. 19; xvii. 10; v. 23.

from the world, as doubly, so to speak, yea, and trebly, Divine,—not only given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but given under the distinct authority and sanction of the Father and the Son,—a stream of truth, flowing, like the river of life, from the throne, the common throne, of God and of the Lamb, and bearing to all ages and kindreds of mankind the testimony of the whole consenting Trinity.

Let us, my brethren, view them evermore in the same exalted light. Let us value every fragment of apostolic preaching, every work of apostolic writing, as breathing the genuine inspiration of eternal truth,—as containing the word, the testimony, the oracles, of God. Let us receive them with the reverence, the faith, the confidence, the joy, which are befitting a gift so thoroughly Divine as that which has thus come down to us from above; descending from “God the Father of lights;” testifying of His Anointed Son, our Saviour; and dictated by the motions of the Paraclete, “the Spirit of truth.” Let us yield them that devout and earnest study which is demanded alike by their origin and by their subject. And remembering that they can be truly understood, and practically improved, only by the aid of that good Spirit by whom they were communicated, let us ask and receive His gracious influence.

LECTURE XXXI.

CHAP. XVI. 16—22.

“ A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again a little while, and ye shall see me; because I go to the Father. Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said, therefore, What is this that He saith, A little while? we cannot tell what He saith. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while and ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”

IN this section of our Lord's discourse, He is consoling His disciples, in the prospect of their separation from Himself by His departure from the world. He had, with this view, in the context immediately preceding, repeated to them the promise of another celestial Patron, Advocate, and Helper, to stand by them in the controversy to which, as the defenders of infant Christianity, they were committed with a hostile world, and to qualify them for the

discharge of their great office by the ampler revelation of celestial mysteries, and the sublime endowment of prophetic gifts. In this way He gave them to understand that His place, as their Instructor and their Patron, was to be more than filled up to them, after His departure, by the descent of the Holy Ghost, and that, as far as the benefits they had derived from Him in this character were concerned, they should be gainers rather than losers by that dreaded event. The attachment, however, of the disciples to their Lord was not of so purely selfish and interested a description, that their regrets for His departure should be assuaged by the promise merely of another Paraclete, should He even do as much for them or more than their former Paraclete had done. In Jesus they had loved, not merely the Patron, but the Friend; and it was at least as much in the one character as in the other that they were ready to lament His loss. The Saviour, therefore,—having in so far comforted His followers with the assurance that, in the way of spiritual help and spiritual advantage, they should not suffer by His return to the Father, followed as it should be by the descent of the Eternal Spirit to instruct, to inspire, and to plead for, them,—proceeds to fill up the measure of their consolation, and to minister to that peculiar sentiment of regret which flowed from their attachment to His person rather than their value for His instructions, by encouraging them, at the same time that He assured them of the certainty and nearness of His departure, to cherish the hope of His return:—“ A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me; because I go to the Father.”

That in these words—though in their first utterance obscure to the disciples, yet interpreted to us by the event,—our Saviour referred to His disappearance from

their view during the brief interval between His death and resurrection, and to His reappearance in the midst of them subsequent to the latter event, until He ascended, in His whole person, to the Father, and took His seat at the right hand of God, seems very obvious. The only question of any difficulty in the interpretation of the verse is, to determine whether the expression, "A little while," in the two clauses, describes the period after which, or the period during which, He was first to be withdrawn from them, and then to be seen again among them. The former is the meaning suggested by the majority of passages in which this form occurs; although it is to be observed that in all these we have the word, "Yet," prefixed to the expression "A little while,"—indicating that the time was to be reckoned from the point at which the words were spoken. The omission of that word in the case before us affords a considerable presumption in favour of the view that our Lord's expressions in the text denote,—For a little while ye shall not see me, and for a little while ye shall see me. This interpretation seems almost necessitated by the clause which follows, "Because I go to the Father,"—a statement which, as far as we can perceive, has no force as a reason why, after a little while, they should see their Lord again, but which most satisfactorily accounts for the fact that, after His return, it was only for a little while that they did see Him. If, however, you adhere,—as it is always best to do when possible,—to what appears the natural meaning of the phraseology when taken by itself; you must at least suppose that some such limitation is to be supplied by the reader's mind, and that the words are to be interpreted as meaning,—Yet a little while, and ye shall not see me; and again a little while, and ye shall see me for a time; because I go unto the Father. You know

how the facts did actually occur. It was after a little while,—before another sun had set,—that He was rapt from their view, His spirit into the world unseen, His body into the darkness of the tomb. For a little while they saw Him not,—during that day of dire eclipse, and those two nights of double darkness, through which He slept amid the shades of the sealed and guarded cave. For a little while they saw Him again; when, casting aside the cerements of the tomb, and bursting its rocky barriers, He rose to an immortal life, and, from time to time, for forty successive days, presented himself alive to their amazed and enraptured eyes,—until, at length, the time arrived that He should go unto the Father, and, as they looked on, “He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven,” ascending to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God.

But plain as the intimations of the verse are to us, instructed by the event; they seemed far otherwise to the disciples to whom they were at first addressed:—“Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?”

It is not easy to discover what was the precise nature of the difficulty felt by the disciples. The whole statement of our Lord was cast in a paradoxical and enigmatical form,—no doubt, for the express purpose of exciting their attention, awakening their curiosity, and impressing their recollections. But it would appear that, if they felt any particular point less intelligible than another, it was the shortness of the time during which one or both of the states described by “seeing Him,” and “seeing Him not,” were to continue. They had begun to perceive,—they could not

fail to do so from many allusions in the preceding discourse,—that the departure which He spoke of was His departure into the world unseen,—His ascent into the presence of God in heaven; and that, in all probability, by His passing through the gate of dissolution. But they knew that a departure such as this was not commonly described as for a little while, and that they who stood upon the shore of time ready to set sail for the undiscovered country, were wont to take of the friends they left behind a long, if not a last, adieu. The intimation, therefore, now conveyed to them, that the departure to which their Master was girding Himself, would terminate but in a brief separation, seems to have, for a moment, revived their hopes that He was not to die, but only to retire from their communion for a time, in order to mature His measures for the commencement of His long-expected reign; at least, it rendered it to them a question of no little difficulty to determine which, or whether any, of these interpretations were correct:—“They said therefore, What is this that He saith, A little while? We cannot tell what He saith.”

These inquiries, however, of the disciples among themselves, in reference to this new subject of perplexity, seem to have been conducted in such a way as that they might not be overheard by their Master; who, as He had so often had occasion to reprove them for their slowness of heart to understand and to believe, might express displeasure with this new instance, on their part, of shortsighted ignorance. Yet were not their doubts and their desires on that account hidden from the view of Him of whom, in the outset of this Gospel, it is written, that “He knew all men,” and that He “needed not that any should testify of man, because He knew what was in man,”—of Him who is so often, in the course of this history, represented answering

to voiceless thoughts, so that they started to feel His Omniscience, as it were, within them, and shrunk before the gaze of that eye,—so calm and gentle as it seemed,—which could accurately read the secrets of their soul, and infallibly interpret its most obscure suggestions. In like manner, on the present occasion,—deriving His knowledge from no human information, but from the all-embracing and all-penetrating consciousness of His Omniscient Spirit,—He “knew that they were desirous to ask Him,” and, anticipating their request, proceeded to explain Himself,—not, indeed, directly or specifically, but by a general statement of the effects which the verification of His prophetic enigma in its different parts would produce upon their minds. It has almost uniformly been God’s method, in conveying instruction to the church by means of prophecy, to arrange the prediction so that, when at last it is fulfilled, its correspondence with the event shall be evident and undeniable, yet not so that men shall be able, by means of it, to anticipate beforehand the mode, and the details, of its historical accomplishment. “No prophecy,” says St. Peter, “is of private interpretation,”* that is, No prophecy is its own interpreter. That this was the general principle of prophetic instruction under the Old Testament, St. Peter has assured us; that it is so under the New, St. Paul’s predictions of the great Apostasy, and the whole tenor of the Apocalypse, with the history of its interpretation, may satisfactorily prove to us. Into the final causes of this arrangement we do not enter now, nor is it possible fully to draw them out from among the secrets of the Eternal Mind. But the fact is plainly so, that, through all ages, in the disclosure of future events,—while He who “seeth

* 2 Peter i. 20.

the end from the beginning” has so far withdrawn the veil as to afford occasion for the general emotions of hope or fear, of joy or grief, which the character of the coming events was fitted to inspire,—He has not portrayed in plain and literal words the very facts, with all their specific circumstances, from which these emotions are to spring; thus demanding from those to whom His oracles were originally addressed the homage of a more implicit faith, and obliging them, in order to acquire the full measure of knowledge which lay within their reach respecting the mystery of His Providence, to show their fidelity and diligence, in searching the Scriptures, and comparing with each other the scattered fragments of prophetic revelation they contained. Thus we are told that the holy men of God themselves who “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” were wont to search “what, and what manner of time, the Spirit which was in them did signify, when it showed them beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.”* Following, therefore, the general principle of the Divine economy in the revelation of future events; and so affording better scope for the disciples’ submissive faith in His word, and care in recollecting and comparing with His present intimations the clearer predictions He had given to them before of His sufferings and His glory,—Jesus does not, on the present occasion, at once satisfy their curiosity, by disclosing, in the most distinct and specific form, the import of the allusion which perplexed them; at the same time that He adds another to their collection of data from which they might by comparison infer it. He “said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and

* 1 Peter i. 10, 11.

ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

The word translated, "lament," is that which, strictly taken, denotes lamentation for the dead,—the singing of the dirge or funeral-song. And this circumstance quietly, but very touchingly, pointed out to the disciples what was to be the cause of the mourning here predicted,—the death of their beloved Lord. And can you doubt that the prediction was fulfilled to the very letter, when you remember the history of that tremendous night and of the succeeding day? Who is there that cannot enter so far into the feelings of that day? Who knows not the sorrow for the dead? Who has not wept at the grave of a friend? But ah! my brethren, who before or since has ever lamented such a death? Who before or since has ever wept at the grave of such a friend?—a friend whose excellence and whose love were alike unparalleled, and cut off by a fate, as the most terrible for nature to endure, so the most hideous for affection to contemplate; the death of a felon and a slave, sharp with intensest agony, and dark with blackest infamy. Ye have heard, perhaps, the low moan, the stifled sobbings, of the heart that yet struggles with its desolation,—ye have marked, perhaps, the shriek of piercing woe, the swoon of over-mastering anguish, with which it yields at last the victory to grief, and pours itself wildly out in sorrow that will not be comforted. But where shall ye find a sorrow meet to have deplored the Messiah's death, in the light in which His followers viewed it at the instant? Where shall ye find such tears as Mary must have shed, when, "the sword piercing through her soul," she received into her arms the body of her glorious, her beloved, her

murdered, Son?—where, such regrets as must have swelled the bosoms of the holy women, or even the disciples' manlier breasts, as they accompanied the sad procession which bore His pierced, dishonoured, frame from the cross to the sepulchre, and laid His gory head to rest upon its rocky pillow? Add to all these, my brethren, the natural sorrows of the heart for a departed friend, sharpened, in this case, by the recollection of how He lived and how He died,—the bitter sensations of disappointed hope, of baffled faith and frustrated desire, which the seeming victory of His enemies, the apparent refutation of His claims,—for so they accounted of His death,—inspired. Remember “what manner of communications they had with one another,” on the second following morning, as they “walked together and were sad,” and, in the tone of those who resign a long cherished, but now plainly fallacious, hope, exclaimed, “We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel,”—and say, whether the prophetic expressions of the Saviour are likely to have been too vehement and strong, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall weep and lament;” or whether the representations of St. Mark appear exaggerated when, historically adopting almost the very words of the prediction, he tells us that the first tidings of His resurrection reached them “as they mourned and wept.” Meanwhile, the very circumstance which imparted such peculiar bitterness to their regrets for their Master's death inspired the world,—that is, the opposers of Messiah's cause, and more particularly, the unbelieving Jews,—in regard to that event, with triumph and delight. They saw in it the decisive overthrow of all the lofty pretensions which had provoked their jealousy and hatred, their indignation and their scorn. As the Psalmist had predicted long before, “They

said in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it." "They said, We have swallowed Him up; yea, they opened their mouth wide against Him, and said, Aha! aha! our eye hath seen it." Even while He hung upon the tree, in the sufferance of anguish which might have moved even an enemy's heart with some compunctious visitings of nature, the joy of their malignant triumph overflowed in many a bitter and barbed taunt against that meek and patient Sufferer. And when at last they set their signet on the stony barrier of His grave, they exulted in imprinting on His cause the ineffaceable brand of falsehood, and returned to hold their passover with the infernal joy of satisfied revenge,—of victorious malice, craft, and cruelty,—brooding around their gloomy hearts, and lightening over their sanctimonious visages. So, while the city of the Lord cried out, the camp of the Philistines rejoiced when the ark of God was taken.

Brief, however, was the triumph, premature the joy, of Messiah's enemies; while equally unreasonable, on the other hand, was the despondency, and short-lived the lamentations, of His friends:—"Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." And so it was, when, as they mourned and wept together one gloomy morning,—the second after their Lord's decease,—Mary Magdalene broke in upon their lamentations, with gladness and amazement, in equal measure, painted on her countenance, and told them that He was alive and had been seen of her. Not marvellous it is that they believed not at first for joy; even as we read of that ancient patriarch, that when they told him,—"Joseph is yet alive, and is governor over all the land of Egypt," Jacob's "heart fainted, and he believed them not." But gradually, as proof multiplied on proof, that it was even so,—that the

Lord was risen indeed,—the tumult of mingled feelings which the first conception of an event so glorious had inspired subsided into one unmixed, pervading emotion of triumphant ecstasy. “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord;” and, prostrate at His feet, the most incredulous among them all exclaimed in words of adoring rapture, “My Lord and my God!” Oh, how did they find the promise confirmed, in the experience of that glorious day,—“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning!” and how well might they not,—perhaps they did,—have poured their glad hearts and voices into the holy Psalmist’s strain,—“This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it;” “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the doing of the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes!”*

In order to illustrate the speedy succession of joy to sorrow which lay before them, our Saviour has recourse to a comparison of admirable force and expressiveness. As, in the case of a mother, pain is recompensed by satisfaction, brief pain by long delight, when she gazes on her living child, and pours out on it the fulness of her maternal heart; even so, He adds, though “ye now have sorrow, yet I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”

Well did the Saviour know, my brethren, and put to proof in His own case, the power of the consideration which He thus suggests for the support and consolation of His followers under their approaching sorrows,—the consideration that, in the Almighty’s government of man, the sharpest pangs are often the way to the richest joys, joys that shall more than compensate for the pain. It had been

* John xx. 20, 28; Psal. xxx. 5; cxviii. 22—24.

predicted by Him long of old,—“ He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied ;”^{*} and therefore, when the time arrived, when His hour was come, He “ endured the cross, despising the shame,” and, by throes which tasked the powers even of His mighty nature, salvation arose upon the world. And oh, if He was willing to purchase this great result at such untold expense of labour and of suffering, did it beseem His followers to complain if their path led, like His, through sorrow into joy? That such would be indeed the issue of His absence He had already assured them, and He here assures them once again; declaring that, though He wondered not that the prospect of His departure and His absence filled them now with sad and terrible anticipations, and though a crisis of yet deeper agony was near, even at the door, yet that agony should be as brief as it was sharp, and, by His speedy return, should lose itself in joy the sweeter for the sorrow of which it had been born,—as spring is lovelier for the winter-storm, and the sun looks out with more refreshing beam, ‘ clear-shining, after rain,’ and with his radiant finger scattering the thunder-clouds.

One idea the Saviour here subjoins to which He had not before adverted, and it is this, that the joy which the apostles should derive from His reappearance should be a permanent and unfading joy :—“ Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” Superior far in this to the mother’s anguish-bought delight,—a delight uncertain at the best, and often shining for a moment to be quenched the next,—

‘ Blossom of joy, no sooner blown than blasted ;
Soft silken primrose, fading timelessly,’—

the joy which Jesus promised to His followers was to be

* Isa. liii. 11.

one which no man, no, nor the conqueror of conquerors, Death and the all-devouring Grave, should be able to take away. True, having revisited them, Jesus soon again withdrew from them; but the joy which His return had brought He left behind Him, to remain with them for ever. From that time forward the disciples,—though they wanted for a few short days the pleasure which, no doubt, His personal presence and intercourse is, in its nature, fitted to inspire,—yet knew that He was invisibly beside them, and would remain with them, according to His promise, “always, even unto the end of the world.” They knew that His departure was no proof of the falsehood of His claims and the failure of His promises, but the full demonstration of the one, the everlasting confirmation of the other. They knew that, where He now dwells within the veil, He was not idle on their behalf,—that He there “appeared in the presence of God for” them,—that He was there preparing a place for them,—that, seated on the throne of universal government, He was making all things work together for their good, and for the final triumph of the cause of which He had appointed them the ministers and champions. They knew, in fine, that, in due time, having glorified Him upon the earth, and finished the work which had been given them to do, they should be received by Him unto Himself, to behold, yea, and to share, His glory,—to dwell with Him in His Father’s house, to sit down with Him upon His throne,—and that so they should “be ever with the Lord.” Therefore, “though now they saw Him not, yet, believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Therefore, they themselves experienced in the thought of their risen and exalted Lord, and instructed all who learned Christianity of them to find in that thought, the source of never-failing satisfaction,—a fountain, ever

flowing and ever full, of living waters. Therefore they proclaimed it as their maxim and their motto, "Rejoice evermore." Therefore they gloried in tribulations also. Therefore they "rejoiced when they were counted worthy to suffer shame for their Master's name." Therefore they bound the reproach of Christ as a garland round their brows. Therefore they welcomed dissolution as a friend, and hailed the sentence of bloody martyrdom as glad tidings of great joy. And so, through triumphant deaths, victorious agonies, they entered into the joy of their Lord, to dwell eternally amidst the cloudless sunshine of His countenance, and to experience that "in His presence there is fulness of joy, and pleasures at His right hand for evermore."*

My brethren, the possession of this unfailing and perpetual joy is no exclusive prerogative of the apostles. The same considerations by which it was awakened in their bosoms are still meet grounds of triumph for the past, and exulting hope for the future, to every Christian soul,—the consideration that Christ who died has risen again, and is at the right hand of God, making "intercession for them that come unto God by Him," and ruling the universe, at once of beings and of events, so as to secure the final triumph and dominion to the great cause of truth and righteousness, and a glorious immortality of boundless perfection, dignity, and blessedness, to each individual soul that loves Him. Oh, who that is assured of these things, and of His own individual interest in the victories and blessings which are thus made sure, shall not, as He meditates upon salvation and the Saviour, feel the sense of exultation,

'like the day,
Break on the soul, and, by a flash from heaven,
Fire all His faculties with glorious joy?'

* 1 Thess. v. 16; Rom. v. 3; Acts v. 41; Psal. xvi. 11.

Even under the heaviest of earthly pressures, the bitterest of earthly disappointments, the keenest of earthly pangs, the darkest of earthly expectations, he has only to betake himself to this everflowing spring of deep exhaustless satisfaction, that he may feel himself refreshed and comforted and strengthened, and may rejoice even with "a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory." True, it may often appear meet to the Almighty Father, in the course of that wise and strenuous discipline by which He trains His children for immortality, to mingle trials and afflictions with their holy joys, and, as far as outward causes are concerned, to permit the world occasion to rejoice, while they are called to weep and lament. But oh, where is the Christian who, even in the hour of his own severest sorrow, has cause to envy the world's brightest triumphs, or its most overflowing ecstasies? He knows that often, in the world's loudest laughter, the heart is sad; he knows that the joy of the wicked is but for a moment, and that soon his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness: while he, on the contrary, has that within which enables him to understand what the apostle felt,—“as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.” And he knows, moreover, that, from his bitterest trials,—the intensest travail of his soul,—glory will, at length, be born and everlasting joy, and that,—guided by the great Precursor who, having trod before them the course of suffering, shall show them now the path of life,—“the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads,—they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

LECTURE XXXII.

CHAP. XVI. 23—25.

“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak to you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.”

THE whole subject of our last Lecture was connected with a difficulty felt by the disciples in comprehending a certain allusion which Jesus had made, in their hearing, to His death and resurrection, and with the desire which, though it had expressed itself in no direct interrogation, His omniscient eye saw lurking in their bosoms, to ask for further information in regard to the mysterious meanings of His words. Now, it is in reference to this circumstance that our Saviour remarks, in the commencement of verse 23, “In that day ye shall ask me nothing.”

Among the many excellences of our authorized translation of the Scripture,—for which we can never be sufficiently thankful,—one has occasion, now and then, to regret certain deviations from the *form*, although not involving any misconception of the *sense*, of the original. Thus, in the pathetic description contained in the 12th chapter of Ecclesiastes of old age and approaching death, we find the dissolution of the constituent elements of human nature

thus strikingly, though figuratively, represented,—“ Ere ever the silver cord be loosed, and the golden bowl be broken, and the pitcher broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern;” where the repetition of the word “broken” three several times in three successive clauses can scarcely fail to fall heavy and monotonous upon the ear. In this respect the verse, as we now have it, though true to the *sense*, is false to the *form*, of the original; in which we have a different word employed in every different clause, with a wonderful accession of force and spirit to the passage:—“ Ere ever the silver cord be loosed, and the golden bowl be rent; and the pitcher be broken at the fountain, and the wheel be shivered at the cistern.” Although, in the two clauses of the verse before us, the same word, “ask,” is employed, it is not the same word that is made use of in the original, nor is it in the same sense that the two are used. The terms, indeed, both correspond to the word “ask;” but in two different meanings. You know that this word in English signifies, both, to put an interrogation, and, to prefer a request,—to ask a question, and, to ask a favour. In this way it is the representative of two distinct words in Greek; which two distinct words are employed in the verse before us,—the word in the first clause denoting, though not uniformly, yet generally, to put a question, and the word in the latter clause denoting, with perfect uniformity, in the New Testament, to ask, that is, to demand a right or to beg a favour. I have no doubt, therefore, that when our Lord says, “In that day ye shall ask me nothing,” the meaning is,—In that day, that is, in the period of your ministry subsequent to my resurrection, you shall have no need to put any further questions to me, respecting the events of my history, or the nature of my kingdom. He alludes to

that period of full illumination in heavenly mysteries into which, in conformity with the plan and economy of His kingdom, they were to be introduced, partly by His own instructions after His resurrection, and partly by those of the Holy Ghost after His ascension. Inquiry, of course, supposes ignorance; and he that inquires no longer, considers himself as already abundantly instructed, and testifies his acquiescence as in a doctrine now fully explained and understood. The declaration of our Lord, then, "In that day ye shall ask me nothing," is equivalent to an assurance that ere long the disciples should enjoy such ample knowledge of the scheme and economy of His celestial reign, and such ample means of acquiring whatever further knowledge might be requisite, independently of His personal presence with them to solve their doubts and answer their interrogations, that they should have no occasion on that account to regret His absence, or to wish Him once more among them. In this way the promise of the text is illustrated and explained by the similar promises occurring in other parts of this discourse:—"In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and the Father in me;" "The Paraclete shall teach you all things;" "He will guide you into all the truth." Nor is it a sufficient objection to this interpretation that we find the apostles, even after their Master's resurrection, in the commencement of "that day" here spoken of, still putting to Him the question recorded by St. Luke,—“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” For, first, the words before us may be understood, as many understand them, with an express reference to the subject then in hand between the disciples and our Lord; with reference, I mean, to the difficulty which they felt in discovering the meaning of His words,—“A little while and ye shall not

see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me." That prediction was amply interpreted, as all predictions will one day be, by the event; so that, in express reference to this subject, it is written,—“None of His disciples dared to ask Him, Who art thou? for they knew that it was the Lord.” Or rather, in the second place, we are to remember that the words “in that day” are not to be restricted to the period immediately following the resurrection of our Lord, but are to be understood of the whole period of the apostles’ lives and ministry subsequent to that event,—the day which, after the night of temptation and of sorrow, dawned upon their heads with the first beams of that glorious morning that saw the Lord arise, and which, from that happy moment, brightened and brightened still,—shone more and more unto the perfect day,—until it was lost in the cloudless and unsetting splendours of eternity. Not wonderful it was that, while the promised day was yet in its imperfect twilight, some shades of dimness should yet invest the objects which they were ere long to behold in full illumination,—some clouds should attend the rising of that Sun which, from his high meridian tower, was at length to pour down a flood of glory over the whole expanse of Christian truth, the whole sphere of spiritual contemplation.

In order, however, to the full accomplishment of this illustrious promise in their happy experience, Jesus goes on to remind them that certain means were to be used on their part. In order to obtain instruction in the truths of the Christian system,—explanation of the mysteries of the Messian kingdom,—they had been accustomed hitherto to go directly to their Lord, and to propose to Him their doubts, or to find them anticipated by His own benignant Omniscience. They had just been informed that this

means of instruction was to be no longer enjoyed, and no longer needed; and therefore their gracious Master tells them that others were to be substituted in the place of those withdrawn,—means not less effectual and serviceable,—and that the way in which they were hereafter to grow in the knowledge of the truth was to be, not by addressing their inquiries to Jesus, but by directing their prayers to God:—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He will give it you.”

Our Lord thus repeats, in reference to a particular case, the general and all-comprehending promise which He had already more than once delivered to them in the course of His preceding address, and which we have, therefore, more than once, in its general reference, illustrated in detail. We have only, therefore, now to remark, that the context both before and after shows that the repetition of the promise in the case before us bears a peculiar reference to the need which the disciples felt of spiritual illumination, and that the universal declaration, “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father He will give you,” is here introduced merely as carrying in its bosom the special and particular principle,—“If any man lack wisdom, let Him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.”* This was the means of growth in Christian knowledge and celestial truth by the faithful use of which, after the withdrawal of their Master’s bodily presence from among them, they were to find that, as it was no longer possible, so it was no longer needful, that they should personally consult Himself. And in order, therefore, that they might enjoy the full benefit of the means of

* Jam. i. 5.

spiritual illumination thus provided for them, He goes on to encourage them practically to employ these means,—to perform with fidelity the condition, that they might receive in abundance the fulfilment of the promise. “Hitherto,” He says, “ye have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

The disciples had hitherto asked nothing in the name of Jesus. They had not as yet made proof of the efficacy of that prevailing plea which, ever since the death of Christ and the full revelation of the Gospel, has formed the church’s most powerful and triumphant argument in urging her request upon the Everlasting Father. It had not been a part of the ordinance of prayer under the Mosaical economy,—under which the disciples had hitherto lived,—that supplication should be generally presented in the name of the Messiah; although one or two cases do occur in which reference is apparently made to the promised Saviour as the “one Mediator between God and man,” through whose hand alone our request can pass with acceptance to the Father, or His favour can descend without dishonour upon us,—for example, the memorable passage in the 84th Psalm, “Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed;” and although the whole economy was so constructed that the idea of sacrifice and mediation as requisite to the sinner’s acceptance with God in any act of service whatsoever, was most undeviatingly enforced, and most vividly illustrated. Still, it is obvious, both from the law and from the practice of the Old Testament church, that, in the prayers presented in that economy; the name of the Messiah was not employed, as it has been since, as containing the all-sufficient and all-powerful plea by which the suppliant sinner is enabled to enforce his petitions to the Father. It seemed meet to that Sovereign

and Almighty Wisdom under which the whole development of the scheme of mercy and mediation proceeded, that the free and habitual use of this great argument should be one of the peculiar privileges reserved for the last and best dispensation of His grace; for the period when the transactions on which that argument is founded should have been completed,—when Jesus, having completed His work of expiation on the earth, should have entered on His work of intercession in the heavens. Hence it does not appear,—indeed the reverse is obvious from the very passage before us, as well as from the form of prayer which our Saviour, at the commencement of His ministry, instructed His followers to employ,—that previous to His resurrection they had ever employed the name of their Redeemer-Lord in their approaches to the throne of grace, as we are permitted and commanded now to use it, as the argument why God should hear us which should take precedence of all others,—the plea which imparts validity to every other plea whatever, as that the use of which embalms our feeble, and too often tainted, supplications with the incense of the Saviour's merit, the sacred odours of His accepted sacrifice, so that, having thus their defects supplied and their sinfulness abolished, they go up before the eyes of the Lord of Sabaoth as a peace-offering in righteousness, and thence again descend upon our heads in sweetest dews and richest showers of blessings. “In that day,” however,—the day when their Master, “having offered one sacrifice for sins,” and passed, with His own immolated blood, through the star-spangled veil, into the heaven of heavens, was “there to appear in the presence of God for “them,—they were to receive the inestimable privilege of being permitted,—of being commanded,—to arm all their petitions with the force of this

resistless plea, to imbue all their services with the fragrance of this thrice-precious name, and to make themselves sure that petitions so enforced for anything within the scope and sphere of prayer should not fail of audience and acceptance. "Ask," He says, that is, as every one will gather at once from the connection, Ask in my name, "and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

Jesus had, in the part of His discourse immediately preceding, promised that, though for a season the disciples should be sorrowful because of His death, their sorrow should be turned into joy by His resurrection,—a joy which should never fade, and never be taken from them. The joy to which He then alluded was obviously the spiritual joy which springs from the faith of those spiritual truths which His Gospel reveals, and the experience of those spiritual benefits which His Gospel confers; a joy which, because it has its source above and its seat within,—its source in those eternal heavens to which the storms of earthly violence and agitation never penetrate, and its seat in the recesses of the soul over which they that can kill the body have no power,—our Lord has well described as that which no man can take away from those that love Him. There is but one thing that has power to interrupt this everspringing joy, and that is, sin,—sin, the blight of paradise, the desolater of the universe. In proportion as a Christian gives way to thoughts and feelings, to tempers and dispositions, to habits and pursuits, inconsistent with his character and calling as a follower of Jesus and an heir of immortality, will He feel the holy serenity and gladness of his soul disturbed; while, on the other hand, in proportion as his faith is strengthened, and his hope confirmed, and his charity influenced, and all his holy graces expanded and matured, will his spiritual peace and

satisfaction become more enlarged and more intense, till his joy is "full,"—till his soul is replenished with a pure delight which is the very foretaste of heaven and specimen of immortality,—till his spirit, that it may be more capacious of blessedness, should require to be delivered from the burthen of the flesh and disimprisoned from the shackles of mortality. Joy, then, the joy which Christ has promised to His followers to abide with them for ever, is doubly the operation of the Holy Spirit in the soul,—partly, because the very sensation of spiritual joy arises in the heart not without His presence and His agency; and partly, because the previous principles and feelings from which that sensation springs,—the faith which makes the future present, and the distant near; the hope which is the "anchor of the soul, entering into that within the veil;" the holiness in the pursuit and exercise of which each faculty of the mind finds its appropriate object, each sensation of the heart its appropriate satisfaction; every thing that is included in that "pure religion," that heavenly wisdom, which is the mother of celestial peace and joy, whose "ways are ways of pleasantness and all whose paths are peace,"—all these are themselves the gifts and working of the heavenly Paraclete, so that to be filled with holy joy is nothing else than to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Whence also we find the peculiar satisfaction of believers described by the appellations of, the "consolation of the Spirit," and, "joy in the Holy Ghost."

But the testimony of all Scripture, and the experience of all believers, agree in testifying, that the primary means of obtaining in large and larger measures the inhabitation in the soul of the Holy Ghost, with all His sevenfold plenitude of grace, is faithful, fervent, persevering, prayer:—"If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your

children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!"* By the employment, therefore, of the same thrice-honoured instrument of prayer may the Christian hope to find his soul replenished, day by day, with more abundant and delicious illapses of the peace and joy that are in believing,—the “peace which passeth all understanding,” the “joy which is unspeakable and full of glory,”—until his “peace shall be as a river, and his righteousness as the waves of the sea.” Not unintelligible, therefore, nor obscure, is the consequence predicted by our Saviour in the text,—“Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full;” and not without reason do we find the apostle placing in such immediate contact and coherence the apparently distinct and unconnected exhortations,—“Rejoice evermore, Pray without ceasing.”†

Our Lord, however,—while He thus takes occasion, in passing, to promise to humble and believing prayer the supply of all spiritual blessings which could become the subjects and sources of spiritual joy,—does not forget that it was more particularly with regard to the blessing of spiritual illumination that the reference to the efficacy of prayer presented in His name was introduced. And therefore, in the 25th verse, He proceeds to describe the happy change which was soon to be effected on the condition of His disciples, in respect of the clearness of their spiritual perceptions, and the distinctness of the heavenly revelations to be addressed to them:—“These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs; but the time cometh when I shall no more speak to you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.”

* Matt. vii. 11.

† 1 Thess. v. 16, 17.

In consequence, partly, of the actual imperfection of the disclosures which,—in conformity with the principle of gradual revelation adopted by “the Father of lights” in all His intercourse with men,—Jesus had delivered to the disciples in that, the early morning of His economy; and partly, of the dimness of their spiritual vision, perverted by their deep-rooted and still unconquered prejudices respecting the nature and character of Messiah’s promised reign, which would have misapprehended the true forms of objects placed under the full effulgence of meridian revelation, much more when only struggling through the shades of the grey ambiguous dawn; they had as yet obtained a very confused and very partial knowledge of the plans and counsels of Divinity in connection with the mission and the work, the sufferings and glory, of their Master, the Incarnate God. To them His oracles as yet were “proverbs,” that is, comprehensive and pregnant sayings, containing in them more than met the ear,—general maxims of which the special application was yet to be discovered,—dark images of which the illustrative force yet needed an interpreter,—dim types of which the antitypes were mysteries. No one can look back, especially upon the inestimable discourse of which we are now approaching the conclusion, without perceiving how much it is pervaded with the use of general ideas and general expressions. To take but one example, you may observe that, throughout the whole series of His remarks, He never mentions expressly His approaching death, or resurrection, or ascension. He condenses all this mighty series of events into the general phrases of, His going to the Father, His glorification by the Father. This is but a specimen. The whole of His discourse is constructed on a similar principle, and is cast in a similar mould; by which it has, no doubt,

been rendered unspeakably more rich in instruction and consolation to all following ages of the church, and to the apostles themselves after they were enlightened by the event and the communication of the heavenly Paraclete, but which cannot but have made it obscure and difficult of apprehension when first delivered,—so that, according to His own description, He spake to them in proverbs and enigmas.

The time, however, was to come, and even then was nigh, when the character of His instruction, and of its impression on their minds, should be delightfully transformed; when the day should dawn of clearer revelation, and the day-star of unclouded light arise upon their hearts; when the curtained concealment in which heavenly truth had dwelt till now should be pierced; when the jealous veil should be rent asunder, and the inmost recesses of the shrine laid bare:—“The time cometh when I shall no more speak to you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father,” that is, concerning the Father’s counsel and decrees in reference to the salvation of mankind through His Incarnate and Anointed Son,—concerning the whole system of truth and grace of which the return of Jesus to heaven constituted so important a crisis, and which, in all its special details and all its mighty harmonies, is tending, as to its final and alternate result, “to the glory of God the Father.” That promised time did, in fact, arrive,—when, after having not seen Him for a little while, they again for a little while beheld Him,—when, “showing Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, and being seen of them forty days, He spake of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,” when, “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Him-

self," so that their hearts burned within them as He talked to them by the way,—when, having said to them, "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you," He "opened their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures."* Still more conspicuously the promise was fulfilled, and the day of predicted revelation reached its glorious noon, when, the Spirit being poured out from on high,—the Paraclete whom Jesus was to send, and who was to instruct the disciples in His name,—they were put in full possession of the mind of Christ,—they were led into all the truth, and had all things brought to their remembrance whatsoever the Lord had said to them. And oh, with what sensations of surprised delight, with what thrilling rapture of intellect and of emotion, did not their hearts, to use their own expression on the occasion, "burn within them," when that ethereal splendour came flashing through the gloom,—when the sphere of their spiritual vision, overhung so long with dimness and obscurity, and peopled with shadowy forms looming indistinctly through the twilight or floating by in mystery, was suddenly lighted up as by a new-created Sun, under the beams of which each object came forth distinct and palpable, and the whole mighty scheme of heavenly grace and truth, so far as the necessities of their state required, or the limitation of their faculties permitted, burst forth in harmonious grandeur on their illuminated view!

Let us, my brethren, from our inmost souls rejoice, and render thanks to "the Father of lights," that He hath cast our lot, and reared our dwellings, under the meridian blaze of revelation, when the types and shadows and enigmas of

* Acts i. 3; Luke xxiv. 27, 32, 44, 45.

former dispensations have vanished in the light of Gospel-day,—when “the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give us the light of the knowledge of salvation by the remission of our sins, to guide our feet into the way of peace,” so that he that runs may read, and “the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.” Let us solemnly remember that if, after all, we come short of the life and immortality which, and the way to which, have now been fully brought to light by the Gospel, this will be our condemnation “that light had come into the world, and we loved darkness rather than light, because our deeds were evil.” “Come then, O house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.” In the clear and steadfast faith, the faithful and diligent improvement, of that ample measure of celestial truth which has been made known to us on the testimony of the Living God, let us pursue our heavenward journey, from strength to strength, from glory to glory, until we reach, at last, that world of yet serener and more perfect light where even the noon-tide of the Gospel-revelation shall be eclipsed by the splendours of a sublimer economy,—when, purged and unscaled at the very fountain of celestial radiance, our eye shall be fitted to endure the blaze of a brighter day, and, under the effulgence of that heavenly firmament of which the Lord Jehovah is the everlasting light, we shall be transported with the revelation of secrets which once overwhelmed us with perplexity and awe, the august and awful secrets of His unfathomable nature and His mysterious providence,—when the mystery of God shall to us be finished, and the ark of His covenant opened in heaven.

LECTURE XXXIII.

CHAP. XVI. 26—32.

“At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”

JESUS, in the preceding context, had promised to His disciples that, after His departure to the Father, and the consequent descent of the Celestial Paraclete, they should ask Him nothing,—they should not require His personal presence among them, to answer their interrogations and to solve their doubts, in order that they might acquire a far more extensive and accurate acquaintance with the mysteries of the kingdom of God than they now enjoyed. He had intimated that the way in which they were to obtain accessions to their spiritual knowledge, and fresh degrees of celestial illumination, during the period of their ministry after His departure, was to be, not by their carrying their inquiries personally to Him, but by their address-

ing their prayers, in His name, to God; and had, therefore, enjoined on them, with this particular reference, the faithful use of that supremely honoured and efficacious instrument of prayer presented in His name to which, as all things whatsoever had been promised, so no communication of wisdom and of truth they stood in need of would be denied. In the 26th verse Jesus anticipates the obedience of His disciples to the command in the 24th verse; and, having there declared authoritatively, "Ask in my name," He here declares prophetically, "In that day ye shall ask in my name."

This prediction has been fulfilled in the habitual usage of the church ever since the perfected Redeemer, the Priest of the eternal sanctuary, ascended, with the blood of His own accepted propitiation, into the heavenly temple, there to appear in the presence of God; and more particularly, fulfilled in the practice of the apostles, when they duly bowed their knees in supplication for spiritual blessings to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, though not accustomed, apparently, to use so regularly as we the verbal formula, "for the sake," or, "in the name, of Jesus," yet with a constant reference upon their minds to Jesus as the one Mediator between God and man, the only medium of favourable intercourse with the Eternal Father,—carrying into this, as into every other part of their obedience, the spirit of the all-comprehending precept,—"Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."*

The efficacy of such prayers as should be thus presented in order to obtain the gift of heavenly illumination or any other spiritual blessing in heavenly things, our Lord goes

* Col. iii. 17.

on to assert, by assigning two distinct grounds on which the disciples might be assured that their Almighty Father would be more than ready to hear their cry, and fulfil their petitions,—His own prevailing intercession, and their Father's own preventing love.

No one, surely, will suppose that in the words, "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you," Jesus means to deny that He will plead His people's cause, as their interceding High Priest, before the heavenly mercy-seat. On the contrary, He had expressly told them, in a preceding part of this discourse, that He would pray the Father, and that, as the fruit of these petitions, the Father would give them another Paraclete. And the apostles, with unanimous testimony, assure His believing people, that they have still "an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,"—that He "appeareth in the presence of God for them,"—and that "He is able to save unto the uttermost, because He ever liveth to make intercession for them."* We are accustomed to use the phrase "I say not," in order to introduce any proposition which appears to be so much a thing of course as not to require a particular statement, or a proposition the explicit enunciation of which is rendered unnecessary to the argument in hand by something that precedes or follows. In this sense plainly it is that our Lord remarks,—"I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you;" that is,—It is not necessary that I should assure you that whatever influence I have with the Father shall all be employed for your advantage, when I go on to tell you that the Father Himself loveth you; He does not require to be prompted, and besought, and importuned, by any

* John xiv. 16; 1 John ii. 1; Heb. ix. 24; vii. 25.

other Being in the universe on your behalf; to you His heart flows out directly and spontaneously in gushing and exuberant affection, and He needs no other impulse to bless you and to do you good than those which are native to His own paternal heart.

Why the disciples were regarded by the Everlasting Father with a love so tender, and so prompt to bless them, our Saviour states in the following words,—“Because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.”

There are those who, in their zeal for the great doctrine of the Gospel, that the love of God to sinners is a sovereign and preventing love,—a love that can be purchased by no previous merit, that requires no previous worth or excellence on the part of those who are its objects,—have found difficulty in admitting that the faith and love of the disciples to the Saviour is really here laid down as the ground and cause of the Father’s love to them. All difficulty, however, of this kind will be removed when we consider the distinction which I pointed out to you, in explaining the 10th verse of the preceding chapter, between the two different kinds of affection with which Christ’s people are regarded by Jehovah; the affection, on the one hand, of compassion, benevolence, and kindness,—the affection, on the other, of complacency and approbation. With regard to the former,—the love of compassion, and kindness, and benevolence,—the ideas of the interpreters to whom we allude are indubitably just,—that its moving cause is not in those who are its objects; that it anticipates the existence in their characters of all spiritual excellence, the performance of all holy duty; and that its exercise toward the sinner is the free spontaneous evolution of God’s own sovereign, undeserved, and, as far as the sinner is concerned, uncaused benignity. The other species of affection,

however,—that of complacency and approbation,—does, by its very nature, imply the previous possession by its objects of certain qualities and habits that are morally well-pleasing to Jehovah, and is actually excited and produced in God by the perception of these qualities and habits as actually possessed by them. This holy approbation and complacency, then, is here described as excited in the heart of the Eternal Father towards the disciples, first, on account of the love which they bear to His Anointed Son, and which they had testified by forsaking all to follow Him. “This is my beloved Son,” Jehovah had once and again proclaimed from the bosom of the excellent glory, “in whom I am well-pleased.”* Surely, then, from the very nature of the case, it must prove well-pleasing in His sight to perceive His own emotions towards the Son of His eternal love reflected from the hearts of men,—to see them offering the warmest homage of their hearts to Him whom He Himself delighteth to honour, and whom He loved before the foundation of the world. But of this sacred principle of love to Jesus,—as well as of all other qualities and habits of human character which are morally well-pleasing in the sight of Him who “is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and who cannot look upon sin,”—faith is uniformly represented in the New Testament as the very principle and root. “Without faith it is impossible to please Him;”† while he, upon the other hand, who believes with his heart the whole testimony of Jehovah in His word, and more especially, His testimony concerning His own Begotten and Anointed Son, possesses, in that faith, a magazine of motives and ruling principles of which the native fruit is universal holiness,—that in which Jehovah finds His chief and everlasting delight, and on which He has set

* Mat. iii. 17; xvii. 5.

† Heb. xi. 6.

His supreme and immutable affection. Both, therefore, as it is itself a part of holiness,—for “this is the Father’s commandment, this is the work of God, that we believe on Him whom He hath sent,”—and as the parent of all holiness besides, the principle of faith in the Redeemer is natively and necessarily the object of Jehovah’s complacency and regard, wherever, and in whatsoever measure, it exists; so that, however weak and obscure the faith of the disciples had showed itself till then, however faint and imperfect even now the faith of any among us may be, if only it be genuine and sincere, to them the Saviour said, to us the Saviour saith,—and oh, my brethren, what could He say more glorious and delightful?—“The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved^e me, and have believed that I came out from God.”

Meanwhile, in order to strengthen and confirm yet more and more within their bosoms that faith which is the special object of the Almighty’s love, our Lord goes on to assure them that, in setting to their seal to the statement that He had come out from God, they had “followed no cunningly-devised fable,” they had accredited nothing but the most sacred and authentic truth:—“I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world.” From the inmost recesses of the heaven of heavens; from the pavilion of eternity,—the glory of inaccessible light in which Jehovah dwells alone, high-throned above all height, and curtained round with thickest mystery; from the very bosom of the Father, He had come forth, in His mysterious condescension, to visit our poor distant world,—so stained with sin, so dark with misery; that, in human nature and human life, He might accomplish the work, and endure the sufferings, which human salvation required. And now that the object of His mission to the earth was on

the eve of being consummated; now that, by the events of another day, His mission was to be finished, and an end was to be made of sin, and everlasting righteousness brought in, and reconciliation made for iniquity, He was preparing to retrace the mighty journey; to reascend from earth to heaven; to reassume the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; to carry up His holy humanity to the position of grandeur and of blessedness which had been from eternity the peculiar seat of Divinity; in His own person to re-enter the tabernacle of the Godhead, and sit down on the right hand of power and everlasting majesty:—"I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world and go unto the Father." The descent and the return were both alike necessary steps in the accomplishment of that stupendous scheme which He "of whom are all things, and to whom are all things," had devised for "bringing many sons unto glory," and in the execution of which He saw it meet that "the Captain of salvation should be made perfect through suffering," and, having "descended first into the lower parts of the earth," should then "ascend up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things."

It is somewhat difficult to say what the disciples really understood by these words of their Master; although it is obvious, from verse 29, that they thought at least they understood them perfectly, and found a new light reflected by them on the import of the whole discourse:—"Lo, now," they exclaimed, "thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverb,"—no enigma. It is of little consequence, however, for us to know what they really thought upon the subject, as it is plain from their subsequent history that their views were, at the best, very imperfect and obscure. For, immediately after, we find them offended

by His death, and doubting of His resurrection; and there can be no doubt that they framed their conceptions of their Master's ascent to heaven and subsequent return to earth in some such way as to accord with their long-cherished, and yet unextinguished, prejudices concerning the temporal glory and felicity to be enjoyed by Messiah's followers under the Messian reign. Thus much, however, they were able distinctly to perceive,—that, whether they rightly understood or not the import of their Master's closing words, these words were the reply to their secret and unuttered questionings of heart concerning the import of that mysterious saying,—“Yet a little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me; because I go to the Father.” Conscious, therefore, that He could have obtained the knowledge of their wishes and mutual inquiries by no information of sense or merely human faculties, they recognised, in the answer which He gave to their voiceless thoughts,—their private communings with one another,—a fresh proof of that infallible Omniscience which, in the case of some of them, had first flashed conviction into their minds that Jesus was indeed the Christ:—“Now we are sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee.” Not that they were ignorant till then of this wondrous attribute of their Master's character, this majestic faculty of His great mind. In the very outset of this Gospel, Nathanael, when Jesus said to him, “When thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee,” had exclaimed,—“Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.” “He needed not,” we are assured, “that any one should testify to Him of men, because He knew what was in man.”* And often, in the course of this history, He

* John i. 48, 49; ii. 25.

is represented as answering to men's unuttered thoughts. Every fresh example, however, of the same kind which the history of Jesus afforded was calculated to make fresh impression, and to add fresh confirmation to the faith which, on the ground of His manifest possession of heavenly attributes, of celestial knowledge, and celestial might, they had already reposed in Him, as the accredited Messenger, the Anointed Son, of the Most High. And therefore we find them, under the conviction that the very circumstances in which He made the assertion proved it, expressing their belief as now more firm than ever that Jesus was in truth all that He had claimed to be:—"By this we believe that Thou camest forth from God."

Meanwhile, the Omniscient Saviour knew them better than they knew themselves. Amidst all that eagerness of faith which they so strongly and unhesitatingly expressed, He perceived that there was mingled a degree of self-confident presumption which but ill prepared them to resist the fiery trial which was now about to try them. He denies not, however, by the expression, "Do ye now believe?" that their faith was genuine and sincere. At the 27th verse He had assured them, that the Father Himself loved them because they had believed that He came out from God; and, in the solemn prayer with which He concluded His communings with them at this momentous crisis, He once and again commended them in this character to God. "They," said He, "have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me."* But while He admits the sincerity, He more than hints a doubt of the strength and stability, of their faith. He gives them to understand that it was not altogether the settled and unconquerable

* John xvii. 8.

principle which they supposed and boasted it to be:—“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.”

It is probable, that, even in the strictest and most literal sense of the word “hour,” this observation was true,—that already the armed cohort was assembling, that already the traitor’s lantern was lighted, and that the high priest’s palace, even at that dead hour of gloom and silence, was alive and busy with dark preparation for the expedition to Gethsemane. Ere many hours, at any rate, were past, that expedition had reached its destination. Advancing, as against a thief, with swords and staves, against that meek and willing Sufferer, the rude soldiery, though smitten to the dust even with the sound of His calm majestic voice, had taken Jesus and bound Him. Nor sooner did His weak and pusillanimous disciples,—even those who now so boldly professed their faith in Him as the undoubted Legate of Divinity,—perceive Him a fettered captive in the hands of His blood-thirsty enemies, than cowardly concern for their own safety prevailed over all the force of faith and love and reverence which had hitherto attached them to His person. Too glad to avail themselves of His generous interposition, “If ye seek me let these go their way,”³ they “all forsook Him and fled,”—scattered from Him and from one another, each to His own particular hiding-place; fulfilling to the letter the prediction of the text, and that other, uttered by Him on the same memorable night,—“All ye shall be offended because of me this night; as it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.”* Thus they left Him alone,—

* Matt. xxvi. 31.

alone in the hour of His utmost need,—when, if their countenance could not have assisted, their sympathy might yet have soothed, Him. Alone He had to confront the inquisition of the high-priest's hall,—alone, the insults of Herod's court,—alone, the condemnation of Pilate's judgment-seat. Alone for them, He had to tread the steep ascent of Calvary. Alone, save for the presence of but one among all that confident eleven,—the one whom Jesus loved and who was wont to lean upon His bosom,—He had to suffer the protracted tortures of the tree, amidst a like protracted scorn and contumely. He “looked on His right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know Him; refuge failed Him; no man cared for His soul.” He “looked, and there was none to help; and He wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore His own arm brought salvation to Him,” His own Omnipotence upheld Him.

“And yet,” adds Jesus, “I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” When human friends deserted Him, he had still the consciousness, the vivid perception, of the presence of a Friend Immortal and Divine to support Him through His sufferings and conduct Him to His crown. There was, indeed, one dark mysterious moment, the crisis and the midnight of that awful passion, during which the sense even of His Father's helping and benignant presence was withdrawn, and the abandoned Sufferer shrieked out in His amazement,—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” But the eclipse of the Eternal's countenance was only for a moment, and, during all besides of that tempestuous night and the dark succeeding day, its light was shining on His soul with an unclouded beam; so that scarcely had He uttered that exceeding loud and bitter cry, when He exchanged it for the blessed consciousness

of His Father's returning presence, of His Father's constant love. "Father," He exclaimed,—perceiving the Lord as He stood at His right hand, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,"—then meekly bowed His head and died.

Nor is this lofty privilege the peculiar prerogative of Jesus, but shared by Him with all His genuine followers in the hour of their necessity. "At my first answer," says St. Paul, when placed in corresponding circumstances to those in which His Master stood before the high priest's bar, and the tribunal of the Gentile governor,—“At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Nevertheless the Lord stood by me and strengthened me. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to His heavenly kingdom.”* O let us all, my brethren, labour that we may each for ourselves secure this never-failing friendship,—that, through Jesus Christ, we may have peace with God, and may be permitted evermore to regard Him as our Father and our Friend; that so, amidst all the experience which human life brings along with it of the insecurity of mortal friendships and companionships,—when, amidst the shocks and mutations of human things, those whom we loved and trusted in our heart of hearts are smitten down, or drop away from beside us; when, in the time of our need, our summer-friends desert us, or gaze on us with ‘cold unkindness’ altered eye,’ so that, with the patriarch, we exclaim, “My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, as the stream of brooks they are passed away;” or when, by the visitation of that stern destroyer from whose stroke no human ties or sympathies

* 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17.

are sacred, "lover and friend are put far from us, and our acquaintance into darkness,"—when the world has to us become a solitude, our home a desolation,—we may be able, at all times, to take refuge in the thought by which our Master was sustained when left alone to struggle through His sorrows,—“ I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” In the assurance of His paternal regard, let us find that which shall more than compensate for the departure of human sympathy,—in the enjoyment of His gracious communion, that which shall be sweeter to our souls than the sweetest of human fellowships,—in the experience of His Almighty aid, that which shall more than reconcile us to the loss of all human resources and assistances.

And while, from the example of our Lord when deserted by His friends and followers in the hour of His sorest need, the Christian is taught where to retire for consolation and support when placed in similar circumstances, let us not refuse to learn, from the case of the disciples, the equally important, though more humiliating, lesson which their conduct, as here predicted, is calculated, as it was no doubt intended, to convey. The prediction of the cowardly ingratitude with which they were to treat the Lord ere many hours were gone, was delivered in reply to the expressions they had uttered of confidence in their now, as they thought, established faith,—of exultation in their already secured attainments. And the reason wherefore such expressions were met with such a reply was plainly to teach them, and to teach us, the general lesson,—that the spirit of presumptuous confidence and self-exalting triumph in respect of the degrees we have already attained in faith or hope or any grace is a spirit most perilous to our stability and progress; that the self-adulation and self-

adulation and self-confidence into which even the most thoroughly renewed are apt to be betrayed, are faults which God is wont to rebuke by suffering those who cherish them to make trial of their own strength in the ordeal of strong temptation, and to obtain demonstration of their own weakness by the experience of grievous declensions and grievous falls; that those who think most undoubtingly that they stand are those who have reason most sedulously to take heed lest they fall; and that the most steadfast and mature believer of us all is still called to be sober and to be vigilant, that he may give no place to the devil,—to “watch and pray,” that he “enter not into temptation.” “He that trusteth to his own heart is a fool.”* Let us not be high-minded, then, but fear.

* Prov. xxviii. 26.

LECTURE XXXIV.

CHAP. XVI. 33.

“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.”

THESE are the closing words, my brethren, of the matchless farewell-discourse by which, in the immediate prospect of His sufferings and death, the Saviour endeavoured to console His disciples in regard to His approaching departure from the world and them. With the same statement, somewhat differently expressed, with which, in the opening of the 14th chapter, He commenced the discourse, He now concludes it in the end of the 16th:—“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace,”—that is, the repose and tranquillity of mind which are the reverse of those agitating emotions of sorrow and fear to which He saw that, in approaching circumstances, they were likely to be exposed, and against the indulgence of which He had warned them in the outset when He said, “Let not your heart be troubled.” Jesus knew that it was not enough for Him to issue forth a command like this in order that it might be obeyed. And accordingly, the whole of the preceding discourse has been employed in addressing to the minds of the eleven solid and substantial reasons why their hearts

should not be troubled nor afraid,—why they should possess their souls in patience and in peace. Now, therefore, that we are on the point of leaving the consideration of this most precious and affecting discourse, let us glance slightly back on its contents, and gather into one brief sum the consolations and encouragements which are expanded and illustrated in these three inestimable chapters; that we may perceive how amply they were calculated to fulfil the declared object for which they were delivered,—that in the Saviour His followers might have peace.

What a boundless store of comfort and encouragement, amidst all the sorrows and the fears which were naturally awakened in the bosom of the disciples by the prospect of being separated from their thrice-honoured and beloved Lord,—to follow whom they had forsaken all,—and of being left, as they imagined, without His guiding wisdom, His guardian power, His sympathising love, to contend against the snares and the violence of a hostile and exasperated world, was there not contained in the revelations and the promises of the three preceding chapters! There He assured them, in all emergencies of the great enterprise to which they were devoted, of the constant love and the Almighty aid of the whole consenting Godhead,—of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In reference to God the Father Everlasting and Almighty, have ye forgotten how Jesus had told His followers that the Father Himself loved them; that He would manifest Himself to them; that He would come to them, and make His abode with them; that He would tend, and care for, them as living branches in the holy vine, purging them that they might bring forth fruit; that He would give them another Paraclete, to supply the place of Him whom He was about to receive unto Himself; yea, that whatsoever they should

ask of Him in the name of His Anointed Son, their own beloved Lord, He should do it for them? Have ye forgotten how, on His own part, He had assured them that there was nothing connected with His approaching departure that should excite their sorrows on His account,—that, on the contrary, they ought, in this, as far as He was concerned, to rejoice because He went to the Father; and that, in reference to themselves, though removed from them in visible presence, He would not leave them orphans in a fatherless and forsaken world,—that He should, in a little while, be seen of them again even in sensible appearance, and, in His spiritual presence, should abide with them “always, even to the end of the world,”—that, even in the sphere of distant glory to which He was departing, He should not be inactive on their behalf, but should there employ all the resources of His exalted being and His glorified condition in procuring a favourable audience to their prayers, and preparing a glorious mansion for their home,—and that, in due time, He should come again to receive them to Himself, to show them the paths of life, to open to them the gate of immortality, to introduce them to the kingdom and the home prepared for them, that so where He was they might be also? Have you forgotten how, in regard to the Eternal Spirit of truth and holiness, he had assured them that He would descend on them as their Paraclete,—the Advocate, and the ‘strong siding Champion,’ of their cause; that He would qualify and strengthen them for the faithful and triumphant discharge of their noble but arduous office, as the ambassadors of Christ and the heralds of His cross,—bringing all things to their remembrance that their Lord had said unto them, leading them into all the truth, and Himself demonstrating, on their behalf, the truth and cer-

tainty of the high argument which they maintained, when they pleaded against it the three great points of sin, righteousness, and judgment; of sin because men believed not on the Christ, of righteousness because the Christ ascended to the Father, of judgment because the prince of the world was judged? Have you forgotten how, in addition to the direct encouragement and comfort conveyed to them by the thought, thus largely expounded and enforced, that the Infinite Jehovah was their Friend and Helper, and would continue so amidst all possible emergencies of their mortal pilgrimage and warfare, He had laboured, as to inculcate on them the duty, so to supply them with the means, of strengthening and cherishing in their hearts those holy principles and graces which should enable them most successfully to perform the duties, and to endure the trials, which He did not affect to conceal were impending over them,—the graces of faith in Him and love to one another, of activity in duty and patience under suffering? He had endeavoured to enliven and animate their faith by reminding them of the conspicuous proofs which both His doctrine and His miracles had afforded that He was in the Father and the Father in Him; by demonstrating that those who, in spite of the manifest divinity of His words and of His works, rejected Him sinned without pretext and without excuse; by appealing to what themselves had already witnessed, and what the Paraclete would in future testify; and by telling them beforehand, in minute detail, what lay before them in the world, that, when the things He had predicted came to pass, they might remember that He had told them, and might know that He was indeed the Prophet who should come into the world. He had entreated and excited them to love one another, in order that they might stand

the firmer, a united band of brothers, against the enmity and persecution of the world, by addressing this to them as His commandment, His "new commandment,"—by urging it upon them as the very test of their discipleship before the world, and one of the best proofs to Him that they had felt the constraining power of the love with which He had loved them. He had stirred them up to activity in the high and holy service to which He had appointed them,—by beseeching them, if they loved Him, or desired that He should love them, to keep His commandments; by reminding them how much His glory and that of the Father was concerned in their bringing forth much fruit; by pointing out to them the means of increased, and yet increasing, productiveness in every good word and work, by abiding in Him, and continually imbibing from Him that holy influence which is the principle of spiritual life and vigour and fertility; and by assuring them that their labours in the cause of truth and righteousness, of God's glory and man's salvation, should be crowned with the most glorious success,—a success far more extensive than had attended even His own,—that greater works than He had done should be done by them, because He went to the Father. And finally, in prospect of the hostility and persecution which awaited them from the unbelieving world, He had exhorted them to fortitude and steadfastness and patience, by the animating considerations, that if they were called to suffer the hatred of the world, it was only what their Master had been summoned to endure before them, and, by enduring, had for ever dignified and hallowed; that the cause of the world's hatred towards them, so far from being a misfortune or disgrace, deserved to be esteemed an honour and a privilege,—even that they were not of

the world, because He had chosen them out of the world; and that what they suffered for the Gospel they suffered for the sake of One who had infinite claims upon their love and their obedience even unto death, and for a cause in which, although their enemies knew it not, they had God Himself for their Patron and Ally.

This is, in brief, the sum of all the Divine discourse which has so long been engaging our attention; though, of course, so rapid and condensed a summing up can embody nothing of that exquisite pathos and tenderness of manner by which even the richest of these consolations, the most powerful of these encouragements, was made to fall with double force and sweetness on the soul. Yet, with your own recollections of the manner, and this imperfect review of the matter, of our blessed Master's farewell-discourse, I leave you to determine whether or not the words which He had spoken were fitted to answer the end for which He tells us here that He had spoken them,—that in Him His followers might have peace; to prove themselves, if fully admitted and firmly embraced by the disciples, an antagonist and victorious power within their breasts, against all the agitating forces of a tempestuous world, and to make it easy for them, in the discharge of their arduous office, and the endurance of the stern tribulations that lay before them, even when they should enjoy no more the comfort and the aid of their Master's sensible presence, to repel the assaults of despondency and of alarm, and to feel that in Him they were secure for the present, and that through Him they would be triumphant in the end.

The peace, let it be observed, which Jesus declares it the object of His parting counsels and assurances to produce in His disciples' minds, is described by Him as peace to be enjoyed in Himself:—"that in me," that is, from me

and through me, "ye might have peace." And how well does the peace which flowed to the apostles, and which still flows down to the church, from such sources as we have pointed out, deserve to be thus described and specified! You have seen to how great an extent it is derived directly from the consideration of what Jesus is and where,—of what He has done, is doing now, and will persevere in doing, for His chosen; how great a part of its materials and its grounds consists in the experience of the Saviour's kindness, the assurance of the Saviour's love, and the recollection of the Saviour's history. Moreover, whatever grounds of spiritual peace the apostles possessed of old, and the church possesses now, not so immediately connected with the Redeemer's person, are all, however, derived through the Redeemer's mediation. The love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost are the fruits of His work, and the purchase of His death. In this way, from whomsoever of the sacred Three in One any spiritual gift which becomes to us the source of spiritual rest and comfort may more immediately proceed, it is, on the part of our exalted Lord, no unwarranted assumption when, in predicting and promising it, He declares,—“These things have I spoken to you that *in me* ye might have peace.”

Before we leave this clause of comprehensive conclusion and summing up, let us remember that not to the apostles are the grounds of holy and celestial peace confined which are set forth in these blessed chapters, nor its application limited to the particular circumstances in which the apostles stood. Some specialties there are in our Lord's expressions referring directly to the peculiar circumstances which the eleven were soon to occupy as His apostles and inspired ambassadors. But all the main fountains of encouragement and consolation which pour their living waters

through this bright and beauteous region of Holy Writ, are open to the approach, and invite the thirsty lip, of every Christian soul. Every Christian, as well as the apostles, has had a work assigned him by his Master, in the discharge of which he must encounter arduous toils and painful trials ; while, in respect of personal and sensible presence, He on whom they must depend for guidance, strength, and comfort is far remote, concealed from mortal view in the glorious recesses of the heaven of heavens. They are sometimes disposed, perhaps, to look back with envy and regret, amidst their pilgrim toils and sufferings, on the lot of those who were wont to “company with the Lord Jesus all the time that He went in and out among them,” to gaze upon His manifested glory,—“the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father ;” to hear and “wonder at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” With how little reason let them judge when they reflect that they, too, are possessed of that magnificent prerogative to which the apostles were directed to look for ample comfort in the absence of their Lord,—the friendship of the Everlasting Godhead,—the love and the communion of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. What more can believers ask to keep their minds in perfect peace, amidst all the labours and all the sufferings of time, than to know, first, that in God they have a Father who loves them with more than parental tenderness, and more than parental wisdom ; whose ear is ever open to their prayers, and His right hand stretched out for their salvation ; who, while He permits the trials of His people to continue in order to ends for the sake of which they would themselves have chosen to be afflicted, still pities their pangs, and commiserates their sorrows ; and who, when these glorious ends are answered, will give them a triumphant issue from them

all, and an abundant entrance into the kingdoms of eternal joy,—secondly, that in Jesus they have a Saviour who, though “the heavens must retain Him till the restitution of all things,” yet is ever making intercession for them there; who, even from the throne of eternity, is bending down on them the glance of fraternal sympathy, and sending them the tokens of His affectionate remembrance; who is gone before, to prepare and to arrange for them a dwelling and a throne,

‘ High in salvation and the climes of bliss ;’

and who will come again, to “gather His elect from the four winds of heaven,” that they may behold and share His glory,—in fine, that they have in the Holy Ghost, a Guide, a Guardian, and a Comforter, to enlighten their understandings in the knowledge of the truth and to imbue their hearts with its power, to direct them in all perplexity, to encourage them in every danger, to comfort them under every sorrow, to be the helper of their infirmities, and, when the over-fraught and struggling heart knows not what things to pray for as it ought, to “make intercession for them with groanings that cannot be uttered?” All this is as true of every genuine believer as it was of the first among the chosen eleven; while almost all the arguments and enforcements that form so great a part of these golden discourses of our Lord, to faith and concord, to diligence, fidelity, and patience, are, at least, as applicable now as they were applicable ever, and the connection between the faithful discharge of all these holy duties, the earnest cultivation of all these heavenly graces, on the one hand, and the full enjoyment of Christian peace and repose and tranquillity of mind, in the midst of all afflictive cir-

cumstances and all threatening appearances, on the other, is now as close as it was ever. Whenever, therefore, and from whatever cause, your hearts, my Christian brethren, are ready, like those of the disciples, to be troubled or to be afraid,—whenever, in the prospect or the discharge of duty, in the anticipation or experience of affliction, you feel yourselves sinking in despondency, or harassed with alarm,—I cannot commend you to a more appropriate or more effectual antidote than that which the believing perusal and meditation of these chapters will supply. Well may they be, as I believe they are, the favourite chapters of the fainting and of the trembling Christian,—shedding a sacred and pacific unction over the stormy waters, and calling peace to brood upon the boisterous surge, ‘a halcyon bird of calm,’—bidding light arise amidst the darkness, and heavenly music to breathe its soothing strains through the clamour of the shrieking whirlwind.

In order that the disciples might not mistake the nature of the tranquillity and rest which they were promised by their Master,—that none might have any reason to complain, as if they had been deluded by ambiguous expressions into hopes of worldly prosperity and peace which were never to be realized,—as well as to set forth the pre-eminent excellence and power of that holy peace which it was His to confer, a peace that can survive and that can flourish in the soul under the heaviest pressures of outward trouble and alarm; the Saviour adds to the promise, “In me ye shall have peace,” the counterpart forewarning, “In the world ye shall have tribulation.”

This intimation will require no lengthened illustration, after the many similar predictions we have already met with in this discourse of our Lord’s, and the exactness with which we have seen that these predictions were veri-

fied in point of fact. He had taught the disciples to expect that, in prosecuting the great enterprise to which they were devoted as His sworn servants,—by sacrament His soldiers and His champions,—the world should hate them as it had hated Him, should persecute them as it had persecuted Him; that they should be put out of the synagogues, devoted by priestly ban to the anathema of God; yea, that the time was coming when whosoever killed them should think that they did God service. And so it was. From Jew and Gentile; from priests and kings; from rulers and from multitudes; from all the world,—however in other points divided, confederate in this,—they had to endure the last extremes of outrage and of suffering which civil tyranny, or ecclesiastical persecution, or popular madness, could invent and could inflict. Against them, as against the Master whom they served and the cause which they defended, “the heathen raged and the people imagined a vain thing, the kings of the earth stood up and the rulers took counsel together,” to root out the odious truth by the extermination of its advocates, and quench the abhorred light in the blood of those that kindled it. “The floods of the ungodly compassed” them about, “the bands of death gat hold” upon them, till they were ready to sink compressed and stifled,—for such is the idea on which the original term is founded—amidst the multitude of their assailants, and under the weight of their tribulations. “We would not have you ignorant,” says one of them, “how, by our trouble which came unto us, we were pressed out of measure, beyond strength.” Cast, as it were, beneath the wine-press of crushing tribulation, the apostles of the Lord, chief in suffering as in dignity,—“whom God, as it were, had set forth last, a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men,”—had to

endure a load and intensity of suffering which tasked even their mighty patience to the utmost stretch, and under which, at last, their martyred blood was poured out like water.* Yet even a load and pressure of affliction such as this it was expected by their Lord that they should show to be incapable of wringing from within them, of exterminating from their souls, those blessed sensations of reposing happiness which the parting promises and exhortations of their Lord were fitted to inspire:—"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

The meaning of the expression, "I have overcome the world," is plainly determined by the context to be this,—I have deprived the world of its power to harm you; to injure either your individual interests, or the interests of that public cause of which ye are the appointed champions. By the victorious accomplishment of that great enterprise in which the Incarnate Only-begotten came forth to do battle with the world, and with its demon-god; our Lord, as Mediator, as the Head of Christians and of Christianity, has acquired over the world the rights and power of a Conqueror over a vanquished enemy, a subjugated realm. The spirit of hostility, indeed, is not extinguished. Vanquished and captive though she be, the world still finds means and opportunities to testify how intensely she hates the Gospel, its Author, and all its genuine followers. And when our Victor-King, in His mysterious wisdom, sees it meet to slacken so far the chain that binds her, she gives free course to her enmity, in inflicting on them, as she did on the apostles, what she esteems the last of disgraces and the last of sufferings.

* 2 Cor. i. 8; 1 Cor. iv. 9.

Fond and mistaken that she is ! All that she attempts or works of intended mischief to the Gospel and to Christians she attempts and works by the express permission of the Conqueror. She can do nothing even in apparent opposition to His people and His cause save as He relaxes her captivity ; and His character, His relation to His Church, and His express declarations and promises, assure us that He never will allow her enmity to break forth in act except in so far as He means to turn it at last to the advantage of His religion and His saints. He "maketh the wrath of man to praise Him ; the remainder of His wrath will He restrain." As to the true, that is, the spiritual and eternal, interests of each individual believer,—He is taking infallible and perpetual care that, by all the machinations and all the assaults of the world, these are not only not destroyed nor injured, but promoted and secured. "All things work together for their good ;" so that they are invited to "glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope," and anticipating the glorious time when the martyrs and confessors of Jesus, in supereminence of beatific vision exalted over the inferior orders of the blessed, "shall stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and having palms in their hands,"—even those who have "come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*

Oh, was there not enough, my brethren, in a faith and hope like this, founded on the victory achieved by our Redeemer-Lord over the world and its tyrant-angel, to make it possible, yea, and easy, for the disciples, in anti-

* Rom. viii. 28 ; v. 3, 4 ; Rev. vii. 9, 14.

icipation even of the fiery trial which was to try them, still to be of good cheer, and, even amidst the fiercest onsets of their exasperated enemies, still to feel the peace of God ruling in their hearts,—the “peace which passeth all understanding?” And is there not still enough, more than enough by far, to sustain the courage and the comfort of believers now, in the comparatively easy conflict which they have to wage with the scorn and violence of the world? Every Christian has more or less even now to feel that the world has not been reconciled in heart, however she may sometimes assume the mask of courtesy, to serious, vital, spiritual Christianity. Still is the apostle’s statement true, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.”* But let the Christian who may be called to encounter even the bitterest expressions of opposition and hostility in maintaining faith and a good conscience fall back, for consolation and encouragement, on this animating verse, and, as with a trumpet’s voice, it shall sing him back to battle and to triumph,—it shall pour into his heart the heaven-born strength which sustained of old victorious agonies of saints and martyrs in the knot of yet severer struggles,—and it shall, above all, remind us of Him, the King of saints, the Lord of martyrs, whose conflict with the world is our model of emulation, His conquest of the world our pledge of safety; on whom the world tried her utmost force of subtlety and terror alike in vain; who is now pointing out the enemy to all His followers as a defeated foe, and proclaiming to them aloud, when their spirits are ready to sink amidst the heat and dust of battle,—“Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

* 2 Tim. iii. 12.

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