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Section F946

No.



LECTURES,

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL,

ON

THE EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL

TO THE

ROMANS.

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Church to the Present Time, on the
Plan of Milner.

SECOND EDITION.

"He that would have an enlarged view of true Christianity, will do well to study
this Epistle."—LOCKE *on the Romans*.

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P R E F A C E.

THE Epistle, which it is the object of the following Lectures to explain, may be regarded as forming, in some respects, the most important part of the Sacred Writings. For though "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and we are bound to acknowledge the same divine authority in every portion of the sacred volume; yet it by no means derogates, either from the perfection of the Scriptures, or from the honour of that Spirit under whose immediate influence they were written, to ascribe to some parts a superior excellence and importance, and to conceive of others as having only a subordinate use.

For this view of the Divine Oracles, we have indeed the sanction of St. Paul himself. Contrasting certain parts of Revelation, he observes, "For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of that which excelleth." It will also occur to every attentive reader, that THE MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION, the great subject of revealed religion, is only gradually unfolded in

the page of Scripture, and that its fuller manifestation is reserved till the sacred volume draws towards its close. The light of the Gospel burst not all at once in full splendour upon the world: it arose rather "like the morning light shining more and more unto the perfect day." Its earliest dawn is seen indeed in the promise of God to our first parents; that "the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head." But how long the interval of suspense! How dark are the clouds of error which gather and obscure the rising of this heavenly day! It shines brighter, at length, in the oath and covenant made with Abraham and the forefathers of the Jewish race; and brighter still when David, and Isaiah, and the later Prophets are inspired to speak of HIM THAT WAS TO COME. Still, however, it is only "the morning spread upon the mountains:" "darkness covereth the earth, and gross darkness the people." Nay, such were the circumstances of the birth and life of Jesus of Nazareth, that "the sun of righteousness" may be said to have arisen upon earth almost unperceived: nor was it till, ascending on high, he shone from the heavens in the glory of the Divine Majesty, that the mists of darkness were dispelled, and the spiritual day fully illuminated his church.

Agreeably with this representation, we are referred in the Scriptures themselves, to the times subsequent to the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, for the more full disclosure of the counsels of God. "The mystery of Christ," says the Apostle

“in other ages, was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy Apostles by the Spirit.” For, though, at first sight, it may appear extraordinary, it will nevertheless be found to have been the fact, that the disciples discovered less of the will of their Divine Master from their personal intercourse with him during his abode on earth, than they did from the communications which they received from him after his departure into his glory.

Our Lord indeed, in his discourses recorded by the *Evangelists*, has left intimations, more or less, of every truth of the Christian scheme; but, for the most part, he veils his instructions in parables, which, even when explained in private to his disciples, leave confessedly much untold. “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;” and he refers them, in plain terms, for their fuller information to a future period, and to another mode of instruction. “Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth.” “These things have I spoken to you in proverbs; but the time cometh when I shall no more speak to you in proverbs, but I will show you plainly of the Father.”

As a late author has very justly remarked, “the Son of God came from heaven, not to make the Gospel revelation, but to be the subject of it, by doing and suffering all that was necessary to procure the salvation of mankind*.” Our blessed

* Macknight on the Apostolic Epistles. See also Magee on the Atonement, vol. ii. 349.

Lord, in short, did “bear witness of himself:” he reserved it for the Holy Ghost, whom the Father was to send in his name, “to testify of him.” “He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine, and show it unto you.”

The records which are preserved of the Apostles of Christ, after the descent of the promised Spirit on the day of Pentecost, clearly illustrate the statement given above of the dispensations of grace. How striking the difference which appears between their former “carnal and worldly” notions concerning “the mysteries of the kingdom of God,” and the heavenly instructions which from that period began to fall from their inspired lips, and which were by them in their subsequent ministry communicated to all the churches of the Saints! The *Acts of the Apostles*, however, which contain these records of the church of Christ, after his ascension, are chiefly filled with the narrative of the labours of his followers, and contain only short and occasional allusions to the “scheme of doctrine” which they delivered.

It is to the *Apostolical Epistles*, therefore, that we naturally look for the full developement of the Gospel dispensation. These Epistles are, in fact, pastoral letters written by the Apostles, under the full inspiration of the Holy Ghost, either to distant churches which they were prevented from visiting, or to their younger brethren in the ministry. In these Epistles they give a full account of the doctrine which they preached, explain its difficulties, and obviate errors which had arisen con-

cerning it. We are fully warranted, therefore, in asserting of this portion of Holy Writ, that it contains the fullest declaration of the will of God, and that, in reference to this clearer manifestation of the truth, all preceding revelations are to be understood.

Proceeding further to compare these Apostolic Epistles among themselves, we discover circumstances which invest *the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* with a character of peculiar importance, insomuch that we seem compelled to assign to it the first place among the oracles of God. It is an Epistle addressed by the Apostle of the Gentiles to the great metropolis of the world, when he was, very much against his own inclinations, prevented from personally discharging there the duties of his office. St. Paul would necessarily feel this to be a grand opportunity of displaying the true system of the Gospel to the world at large. In writing to the Roman Church, he could not but be aware, that he was conveying his instructions into a channel, the streams of which, at that time, communicated with the whole habitable globe. And we find, in fact, in reading this Epistle, that it professedly treats of the most fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, and on these enters more into regular detail, and treats of them more *systematically*, than any other of the Epistles taken separately. We may, therefore, with propriety, observe, in the language of the celebrated Locke, “ He that would have an en-

larged view of true Christianity, will do well to study this Epistle *.”

The importance of the *subject* of the ensuing Lectures, it will be acknowledged, has been fully made out. How far they have succeeded in the high attempt, “to justify the ways of God to man,” the church of Christ will judge.

But, unquestionably, it behoves us all, in applying our understandings to such a subject, to recal again to our recollections the case of the disciples before alluded to. While our Lord was with them, something was wanting, as we have seen, in order to their comprehension of spiritual things, which deficiency induced the Divine Teacher to refrain, for the present, from giving them more particular instructions on these subjects: what they wanted, it appears, was the inward illumination of the Holy Ghost; till they had received this heavenly gift, they *could not bear* these spiritual doctrines.

We ought still to be sensible of our need of the same divine teaching, to enable us to bear these same spiritual truths, as they are now revealed in the writings of the Apostles. For, after these “ministers of the word” had themselves received the “promise of the Father;” and what eye had not seen nor ear heard, nor had entered into the heart of man, the Lord had now “revealed” to them “by his Spirit,” St. Paul is still compelled to observe, with respect to the hearers of

* Preface to the Epistle to the Romans.

the Gospel, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." There were some among the Corinthians to whom he "could not speak as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ.

An humble sense of our need of divine teaching, with earnest prayer for the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, must, therefore, always accompany our researches into the mysteries of the Gospel. Destitute of this help, it will assuredly turn out that *we* cannot bear them yet. We shall be ready, perhaps, to exclaim with the disciples of old, "these are hard sayings, who can hear them?" or shall imitate the proud example of our Gentile forefathers; "professing ourselves "to be wise," we shall "become fools!"

A language but too consonant with these sentiments, we sometimes hear in the church. Some "who seem to be pillars," have been remarked as extolling highly, indeed, the beauties of the Sacred Volume, the parabolical instructions of our Lord, and the preceptive parts of Scripture in general; but as refraining, with a caution bordering on dislike, from those sublimer doctrines of the Christian faith, which, though not exclusively so, form the principal subjects of the Apostolic Epistles. Nay, some boldly prefer a complaint of *mys-*

teriousness, and *metaphysical subtilty*; and, with affected regard for the poor and simpler Christians—whom they forsooth can teach better than their Master—for fear either of bewildering their understanding, or of diverting their attentions from their moral duties, they omit in their instructions almost all allusions to these parts of Scripture:—a practical comment, it is to be feared, of the passage quoted above: “The things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man!” a proof at least that the censure passed by our Lord on his immediate followers, is still merited by his disciples of the present day: “O fools, and slow of heart to believe!”

We must be careful, however, of an error on the opposite side. We ought not to regard a mere discernment of the more peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, or even a relish for its higher mysteries, as a decisive proof of spirituality of mind. For, when the word of God asserts, that a knowledge of these things can come only from the teaching of the Spirit, we are to bear in mind, that, by the term we render *knowledge*, it ever conveys the notion of the *affectionate embracing of the heart*, as well as the *discernment of the understanding*. There certainly is a knowledge of divine truths, a critical discernment in the things of the Spirit of God, which seems an exception from that ordinary state of the unregenerate mind, which counts them to be foolishness; and yet this illumination

has no marks of being the work of the Holy Ghost in his sanctification of "the elect people of God."

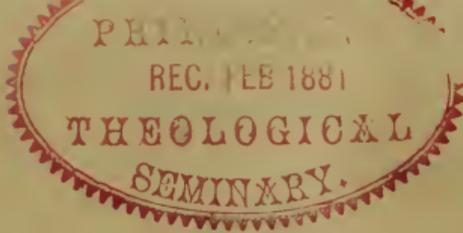
This St. Paul clearly supposes, when he speaks of a knowledge which "puffeth up," but does not "edify;" when he speaks of "understanding all mysteries and all knowledge," and yet "being nothing." St. James also supposes there may be among the "wise men of the church," and those "endued with knowledge," "a wisdom" not "from above," but "earthly, sensual, and devilish." In order to distinguish this wisdom and unsanctified knowledge from that teaching of the Spirit of God which is decisive of the purpose of grace, and which is indeed "the knowledge of salvation," the Apostle Paul bids us observe its want of connexion with Christian love and charity. St. John decides, "He that loveth not, knoweth not God." And the wisdom which St. James reprobates, he marks as accompanied in the heart with "bitter envying and strife." And when he comes to contrast the wisdom which is from above, he describes it as "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*."

Are there, then, envyings and strife amongst us; Paul would tell us, that we are unfit to hear that "wisdom" which the teachers of Christianity "speak among them that are perfect; that he

* James iii. 17.

could not speak unto us as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ ;” who could only to their profit be “ fed with milk,” that is, receive only the elementary principles of the Gospel.

Conscious, therefore, of our ignorance and of our weakness, how liable we are, through the proud imaginations of our hearts, to mistake the wisdom of God for foolishness; and even when we are engaged, as we think, in the sincere and zealous pursuit of religious knowledge, how easily it may happen, from the same cause, and through the subtilty of the great adversary, that our illumination be any thing but heavenly, and bitter zeal and strife be all the fruits of our knowledge; “ let us bow the knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that, being *rooted and grounded in love*, 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 *all knowledge*, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God.”



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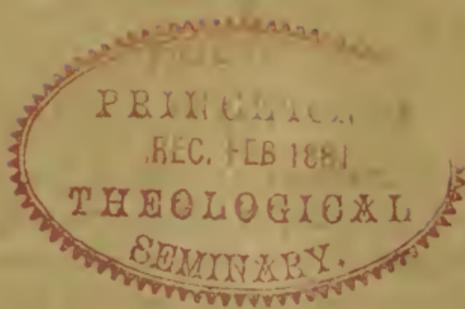
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LECTURES,

&c.

LECTURE I.

ON THE SEVEN FIRST VERSES OF THE FIRST CHAPTER.

WE have to consider, in the opening of this Epistle, St. Paul's account of himself, and of the nature and chief objects of his mission: in other words, the character in which he writes to the Roman Christians, and the occasion of his writing. These matters occupy the first *six verses*, which, with the address and apostolic blessing contained in the *seventh verse*, will be sufficient to form the subject of our first Lecture.

Verse 1. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an Apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God."

Such is the account St. Paul gives of himself and of his office. How Saul of Tarsus began his career, his former enmity to the cause of Christ, his wonderful conversion, and the zealous labours of his subsequent life, will be read to best advantage in the history of the Acts of the Apostles. To this account I refer; and shall here only notice so much of it as may appear to illustrate the expressions made use of in the text.

Paul calls himself "a servant of Jesus Christ." Servant is an appellation sometimes given to the people of God in general; but is more frequently, both in the Old and New Testament, used to distinguish those persons who were

immediately devoted to the service of God as his priests or ministers. St. Paul, it appears, was devoted to the Christian ministry from the time of his conversion: "He is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel*." Accordingly we read that "straightway he preached Christ †." And in a subsequent chapter of the Acts ‡ we find him, together with Barnabas, exercising the office of a teacher in the church of Antioch.

At this place it was that St. Paul was outwardly called and consecrated to the discharge of the apostolic office. The event is thus recorded, in the 13th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed." Hence it appears that Paul was already an acknowledged teacher in the church, and, perhaps, endowed also with the spirit of prophecy; but that on this occasion he is called, and publicly ordained to an higher office, even to the highest order of the Christian ministry§, to be an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Apostle signifies, literally, a person sent from another; not, perhaps, simply as a messenger to carry tidings: the term Evangelist, a name given to another order of ministers in the primitive church, more nearly accords with the notion of the simple messenger, or preacher: but Paul tells us he was ordained "a preacher and an Apostle||." The

* Acts ix. 15. † Ver. 20. ‡ xi. 26. § Ephes. iii.

|| 1 Tim. ii. 7. 2 Tim. i. 11.

term, indeed, seems to imply a person sent on some more solemn occasion, charged and intrusted with powers to treat with others in the name of him who sends him—one sent with delegated authority to negotiate some important business. It, therefore, corresponds better with the term ambassador, or legate, than with that of messenger. Thus Jesus Christ is called the “Apostle and High Priest of our profession*,” “whom the Father has sent into the world †.” And thus, when our Lord speaks of the mission of his Apostles, he uses the remarkable words, “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world ‡; which passage a learned critic § has translated, “As thou hast made me an Apostle to the world, I have made them my Apostles to the world.” St. Paul, we may add, though not at this time numbered with the Apostles, had equally with them his appointment immediately from Christ ||.

Now, the object of this mission, with which the Apostles were sent abroad, was the dispensation of the gospel. Hence St. Paul speaks of himself, in the passage before us, as “separated unto the gospel of God.” The word gospel literally signifies “good news;” and the term rendered in our translation, “preaching the gospel” is used by Greek writers for the spreading abroad, by messengers or despatches, the welcome news of some victory, or of some great event that had occurred of importance to the public welfare. Such is the nature of the preaching of Christ—“glad tidings of great joy to all people.”

Ver. 2. “Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.”

The great events which this gospel reported, though of late occurrence, had long been the theme of prophecy.

* Heb. iii. † John x. 36. “Consecrated his Apostle.”

‡ John xviii. 18. § Campbell. || Acts xvi. 18.

The Jews, therefore, and those who, through their means, were acquainted with the Scriptures of the Old Testament, would recognise that it was the same gospel which had been revealed in various ways, by the Spirit of God, from the beginning of the world; “the Apostles of Christ saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come to pass*.” This, of course, would be considered as of great importance to be told to the Jews: and not to them alone,—for the Gentiles were equally called to examine the Scriptures, and were equally capable of appreciating their authenticity and divine authority. There is, also, abundant reason to suppose that, in many parts of the world, the instructions of the synagogue, contrary, indeed, most frequently, to the wishes and endeavours of its rulers and chief members, very usually led the way to the understanding and reception of the religion of the gospel.

What then did these glad tidings concern, which occasioned this mission of the Apostles? The following verses answer the question:

Ver. 3. “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

Ver. 4. “And declared to be the Son of God, with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

Or, to attempt the style of the original, “Concerning his Son, born of the seed of David, according to the flesh—appointed† the Son of God in power, according to the

* Acts xxviii. 32.

† *ὀφείλω*, though its etymology rather favours the sense of *declaring*, will be found in the following passages to have the sense of *appointing* or *ordaining*: Acts x. 42.; xvii. 31. The miracles of Christ had long before declared Jesus to be the Son of God. His resurrection, according to the divine appointment, invested him with the power and glories of that character.

spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead ;” or, “ on his rising from the dead—even Jesus Christ our Lord.” The good news, emphatically called the gospel, was concerning Jesus Christ,—concerning his incarnation and resurrection, with the important consequences resulting from these events. Hence we find, that “ to preach Christ,” and “ to preach the gospel,” are equivalent expressions. In virtue of these grand events, therefore, the Apostles now appear as ambassadors of peace, seeking to reconcile the world to God, and charged with a commission to form among mankind a new society and kingdom under the spiritual dominion of the Anointed of Jehovah.

In this short statement of the contents of the gospel, it is important to notice the threefold subsistence of our Lord, which is here distinctly marked.

First, He is spoken of as “ God’s Son”—the Son of the Father*.” Such he was prior to his appearance on earth. “ No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.”—“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God †.”—“ He was in the form of God,” “ the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person ‡.” Father and Son are indeed relations taken from the circumstances of humanity; but they are, doubtless, selected in order to convey to us the most correct notion which we can be made to conceive, of those distinctions which subsist in the Godhead, and show themselves in the work of creation, and of redemption, which distinctions are in themselves far above our comprehension.

Secondly, The text speaks of Christ as the Son of Man, made of the seed of David with respect to his human nature. So St. John speaks, “ The word was made flesh.”

* 2 John iii.

† John i.

‡ Heb. i. 3.

And St. Paul in another place, "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,"—"being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no esteem*, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men†."

Thirdly, We are called to contemplate him in his exalted state, as risen from the dead, "sitting at the right hand of power," and invested with the *character* and attributes of the Son of God. "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Sit thou on my right hand." And again: "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." For all this, it is evident, is not spoken concerning the eternal generation of the Son, nor of the "taking the manhood in to God," in the *reality* of divine counsel and design, before the foundations of the world were laid,—in which respect he is celebrated as the "image of the invisible God," "the First Born of every creature,"—nor yet concerning his coming into the flesh, but concerning his visible investiture in power and glory, which took place at his resurrection: it was the name, more excellent than that of angels, which by inheritance he had obtained‡.

"According to the spirit of holiness," that is, I conceive, in his spiritual and glorified nature, in opposition to "according to the flesh," being put to death in the body," *our Lord was "quickened in the Spirit."* He became the "first born from the dead,"—"the first fruits of them that slept." "There is a natural body, and there is a *spiritual body*; and so it is written, The first Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." But it is evident our Lord became not a quickening spirit till after his resurrection. It is in this state of existence that he *is appointed the Son of God in power*; "being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Where-

* 'Εαυτον κενωσας.

† Phil. ii. 6, 7.

‡ Heb. i. 4.

fore God has highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—“ We now,” to use the language of the Apostle, “ know Christ *after the flesh* no more,” but we are to consider him as our spiritual head, “ a quickening spirit,” communicating divine life and sanctity to all his members. “ For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth*.” We behold him seated at God’s right hand, having received all *power* in heaven and in earth, that he may, by his mighty working, subdue all things to himself, and establish a kingdom and dominion which shall be for ever.

Ver. 5. “ By whom we have received grace and apostleship for the obedience to the faith, among all nations for [or of, or concerning] his name†.”

From his exalted Saviour, Paul, with the rest of the Apostles, had received his commission, together with that measure of the spirit of grace which was necessary to its discharge, and which authorized him to proclaim the glad tidings in all the world, to call sinners to repentance, and in his Master’s name to receive into his church all that would embrace and submit to the faith of the gospel. “ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ: as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God ‡.”

Such was the nature and object of the apostolic office, and indeed, in their respective degrees, of the several orders of the Christian ministry. By some members of this ministry, some of those, probably, whose names are so honourably mentioned in the last chapter of this Epistle, the gospel had already been preached at Rome, and had

* John vii. 19.

† See Parkhurst.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 18.

been preached with success; so that a flourishing church had been called together and established in that great city*; which induces the Apostle to say,

Ver 6. Among whom are ye also (the) called of Jesus Christ."

Among the Gentile nations to whom the gospel was now sent, *they* were called of Jesus Christ. That some of the Roman Christians were Jews by birth is evident, but what proportion they bore to the Gentile converts nowhere appears. In one respect, indeed, every individual of these nations was called; for the Apostles were directed "to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven;" and, as far as concerned their mission to the world, there was no restriction whatever. "God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth†." But in another respect, with regard to the secret agency of the Holy Ghost, directing and rendering effectual these general means of grace, so that the hearts of men should be influenced to receive the gospel and to obey it, *here* we are constrained to own a *call* of a different nature, and to acknowledge a special providence and a special manifestation of divine grace. "Whom he predestinated, them he also called‡."—"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God, for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance§." In this peculiar sense, it appears, God had visited the Romans, to take out of them "a people for his name." These were "the called of Jesus Christ."

To build up such in their most holy faith, as well as guard them against the various errors by which the truth of the gospel had been perverted, and through the divine blessing to increase their numbers by the

* Mark xv. 16.

† 1 Tim. ii. 4.

‡ 1 Tim. viii. 30.

§ 1 Thess. i. 4.

conversion of their fellow-citizens, were the objects which the Apostle had in view in writing this Epistle. And let us pray to God, that, while we are pursuing our task, the same objects which were proposed by the Apostle in writing this Epistle, may be accomplished in us who hear and read it. O! let us hope that there are among us some who are the called of Jesus Christ in that higher sense, to whom "the gospel has come, not in word only, but in power," who are not content to be hearers only, but are also doers of the word! who, to use the language of our church, "have been called by the Spirit of God, working in them in due season," and have "through grace obeyed the call." May such, through God's blessing, be edified by the present attempt to expound this Epistle! may they be preserved from error, and taught to know the things which are freely given them of God! may they increase their joy in the Lord, be provoked to love, and to good works; and may it please the Lord to add unto the church daily of such as shall be saved!

In the seventh verse, to which we now proceed, we have to notice St. Paul's address to the Christians in Rome, and the blessing which is usually found in the beginning of all the apostolic Epistles.

Ver. 7. "To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

To the whole Christian church residing at Rome this Epistle is addressed, under the charitable supposition that all were what they professed themselves to be, and were walking worthy of their vocation.

To illustrate the title, "Beloved of God," we may remark, that there is a love of pity, or rather of the

spontaneous overflowing of grace, as well as a love of friendship in God, of which the believer in Christ is the object.

The compassionating love of God the Father is the primary cause of our being called to partake of the divine life, the sole origin of all those glorious privileges which distinguish the saint. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*." Agreeably to which view of the tender pity of the heavenly Father, St. Paul thus declares of himself, and of the first converts of the Christian faith: "And were by nature children of wrath, even as others: but 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†." There is also a love of manifested friendship, of which, as we have observed, through Christ, the believer is a partaker; agreeably to which our blessed Lord makes the following declaration: "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God‡." Of this love, also, St. Paul makes his boast, in a subsequent part of this Epistle: "We glory in God, having received the reconciliation."

"Called to be saints." Some translators consider "called" as a distinct title; "beloved of God, called, saints." Taken in this sense, the term is, doubtless, applied to the Christian in reference to that inward and effectual call, of which we treated above. Compare Rev. xvii. 14.

The term saint deserves particular attention. Saint signifies a holy, or rather a *consecrated*, person. Great pains, we know, were taken in the figurative and preparatory canon of the Jewish worship, to teach the

* 1 John iv. 10.

† Ephes., ii. 4, 5.

‡ John xvi. 27.

distinction between that which was holy* and that which was profane and common. Whatever persons or things the Lord was pleased to direct to be separated from their common and usual employment among men, in order to their being occupied in his own immediate service, in the divine worship which he had instituted, were pronounced "holy." This indicated that man, and all the creatures of God, in this lower world, as employed in the service of mankind, were defiled through sin, and were unmeet for their Creator's use; but, at the same time, that God would separate to himself a people from the midst of mankind, for whom he had devised the means of being washed from their corruption, and of being sanctified to his holy service; all which is realized in the separation of Christians from the world by the gospel call. They are by that means separated as a people set apart for God.—"Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures †." The whole world lieth in wickedness, alienated

* The word ἅγιος, agreeably with the Hebrew קדש, does not signify holy in the sense in which we generally apply that term, as distinguishing the practice of a godly life flowing from spiritual affections from the far meaner pretensions of moral virtue taught in human ethics. This, perhaps, is more properly the notion conveyed by ἁγιος, and its corresponding Hebrew term קדש. ἅγιος and קדש denote, more strictly, that sanctity of character which is conveyed to the soul through the gift of the Holy Ghost, when he communicates to it *participation* in Christ. The washing of regeneration and purification of the soul from moral pollution is most certainly implied, and the virtues of a godly life—"as becometh saints," is unquestionably the service to which the Christian is consecrated. But as in the ancient ceremonial the consecration by the sacred oil, mingled, as was the practice, with the blood from off the altar, was a rite distinct both from the washing which preceded it, and from the services which followed; so we shall not have a clear and correct notion of the meaning of *saint*, or *sanctification*, as used in the New Testament, if we limit its signification to the purifying from sin, or confound it with the holy exercises of a Christian life, which are its symptoms or its fruits.

† James i. 18.

from God through wicked works; but these come out at his call from among them, and are separate. The blood of Christ, and the anointing of the Holy Ghost, consecrate them to God's service, to be "an holy priesthood *," to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. These are holy; they may approach to a holy God, for they are clean: but all besides are unholy, common, and profane. Sin contaminates all the works of men; and until they are accepted in Christ—washed, sanctified, and justified, according to the gospel method of salvation, even their necessary and common employments are sinful.—The ploughing of the wicked is sin †;" and even their devotions partake of the same defilement: "The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord ‡.

There is further conveyed by the term holy, or saint, the important consideration, that God has a claim and right of property in the persons and things so denominated. Henceforth the devoted thing is sacred; none can with impunity profane it; or, without incurring the horrid guilt of sacrilege, attempt to alienate or to secularize it. So, by the anointing of the Spirit of God, the true consecrating oil, a sacred and indelible character is stamped upon the Christian; insomuch that the same gift of the Spirit, which consecrates to the service of God, is considered as the *seal* of God, and the *earnest* of the eternal inheritance.—"The Lord's portion is his people;" therefore, "a peculiar treasure to him of all the nations of the earth:" "Israel was holiness to the Lord, the first fruits of his increase; all that devour him shall offend," or "be held guilty of a trespass §."

Lastly, the circumstance which was, on some occasion, held out as particularly conveying this sanctity of character to the creature, was an indication given of the inhabiting of

* 1 Pet. ii. 5.

† Prov. xxi. 4.

‡ Prov. xv. 8.

§ Jer. ii. 3.

the divine presence. It was this which rendered the ground of the desert holy, when God appeared to Moses in the bush. This, too, made holy the worldly sanctuary in the camp of Israel and in the temple of Solomon. The same indication is given us respecting the saints of Christ: "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them and walk in them*." "For the temple of God is holy; which temple ye are†." "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy,—for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." But to learn the consummation of this holiness, read John xxvii. 21, &c.

We conclude with noticing the blessing of the Apostle, "Grace to you, and peace." Perhaps, at first sight from the usual and proper meanings of the words grace and peace, St. Paul may be interpreted to mean no more than this, "God be favourable to you, and send you prosperity:" but from the important sense in which we shall hereafter find the terms *grace* and *peace* used in application to the concerns of the Christian life, we may be allowed to understand the Apostle as imploring, under the term of GRACE, the continual manifestation of the Father's *favour* and *kind affection* towards the objects of his choice in his Son Jesus Christ. And, since the grand agency of this manifestation is the communion of the Holy Ghost, who is called, therefore, "the spirit of grace," the blessing, in fact, invokes the Father and the Son for that operation of the Holy Ghost, which is the source of all spiritual life, and joy, and holiness. A father of the Old Testament church would have said, "Jehovah lift up the light of his countenance upon you."

Under the term PEACE, also, we may infer that the Apostle means the possession of this sense of divine favour, in a secure, contented, humble, and affectionate state of mind,

* 2 Cor. vi. 16.

† 1 Cor. iii. 17.

This will be found to be the meaning of peace in its religious acceptation. It implies a state of mind in regard of divine things, released from a sense of guilt and fear of wrath, and free from those violent temptations of the ghostly enemy, that, while they prevail, cloud the sense of mercy. In regard of earthly things, it implies a mind acquiescing in the will of God, under the comfortable persuasion of his special providence "caring for us," guarding us from ill, and causing "all things to work together for good." Lastly, in regard to its own habits, peace implies a mind infused with that holy unction which allays the tumultuous conflict of pride, envy, ambition, and all inordinate affections, and which disposes us to humility and universal love. For, without the "inestimable gift" of charity, there can be no true lasting peace of mind.

LECTURE II.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.—FROM THE EIGHTH TO THE SEVENTEENTH VERSE.

IN treating on the first seven verses of this chapter, we have seen St. Paul's account of himself and of his mission; we have considered his address to the Roman Christians, and his apostolic blessing. He proceeds, in the eight following verses, to mention several incidental circumstances, which afforded him an opportunity of conciliating the regard of his readers, and of removing any impressions they might have received to his disadvantage: at the same time, assigning the true reasons of the seeming neglect why he, the Apostle of the nations, had not yet borne his testimony in the metropolis of the world.

These verses will require but little elucidation. But the two last verses, the 16th and the 17th, will demand a greater share of attention, as containing matter of importance to the understanding of the Epistle in general: the former exhibiting the state of parties in the world as opposed to the gospel of Christ; the latter stating summarily the grand subject of the gospel revelation.

In addressing the Roman Christians, a happy opportunity, it seems, was afforded the Apostle of congratulating them on the celebrity of their faith.

Ver. 8. "I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Ver. 9. "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that, without ceasing, I make mention of you always in my prayers;

Ver. 10. "Making request, if by any means now at

length I might have a prosperous journey, by the will of God, to come unto you."

Or, as these verses may be rendered, "For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, how continually I make mention of you; always in my prayers petitioning, that, by some means, now, at length, I might be prospered in my journey, by the will of God, to come unto you." He could solemnly attest that, wherever he travelled in the service of the gospel, in which service his heart was sincerely engaged, he made the Roman Christians the subject of his conversation: everywhere was he either gratified with a good account of them, or was himself the means of causing others to rejoice in consequence of the pleasing report. It was, moreover, he could assure them, his constant prayer, that it might please God to afford him an opportunity of visiting them. He had very often, as he tells them in a subsequent verse, projected the journey, and had as often been prevented from accomplishing it.

Ver. 11. "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to the end that ye may be established."

By spiritual gift the Apostle means, probably, some advancement in spiritual knowledge and experience, through the instrumentality of his ministry. Or, he may mean some of those extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost with which, we know, the church, in those trying times, was sometimes indulged, for the confirmation of the faith.

Ver. 12. "That is, that I may be comforted, together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me." Or, as the verse may be translated, "And this, too, is *what I propose to myself*, that I shall be comforted, together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me." I also, promise to myself that, while I am amongst you, my faith will receive confirmation, and my heart be com-

forted and encouraged by witnessing the exercise of your faith, no less than you in witnessing mine. Thus we see the great Apostle, in the midst of his brilliant course, counting it his happiness and reward to be himself partaker of that comfort which he administered to others.

The inspired Apostles do not seem to have been so far advanced above other Christians in their religious experience as some may be ready to suppose. They were, it appears, often harassed with the same fears and doubts, and had to struggle with the same temptations and infirmities, as others; and they seem, in general, to have derived their consolation and joy in the same way as the poorest of the flock. For as the power of working miracles, which the Apostles possessed, was never exerted to relieve their own temporal wants, when they hungered, or thirsted, or were exposed to distress or injury; so we discover their extraordinary spiritual gifts could only be exercised for the public benefit, and did not, at all times, set their own minds, in sensible experience, above their less distinguished brethren. Did the Romans expect great improvement and comfort from the visit of the Apostle?—So did St. Paul, from the society of such eminent believers. And it is noticed by the sacred historian, that St. Paul did actually first meet these Christians in circumstances when the sight of them, and the marks of attention which they showed him, revived his drooping courage. The incident is thus recorded by an eye-witness of the scene: “And also we went towards Rome, and from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us, as far as Appii Forum, and the three taverns; whom, when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage*.” The Apostle proceeds:

Ver. 13. “Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I proposed to come unto you

* Acts xxviii. 15.

(but was let litherto), that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles."

For this intention and endeavour he begs them to give him credit. It is not unlikely that the Christians at Rome had thought themselves neglected by the Apostle of the Gentiles, as he had never yet appeared among them. Insinuations, also, might have been made in another quarter; as to the reasons why the advocate of these new doctrines, whose preaching had been attended with such great effects in the distant provinces, declined to make his appearance before the more civilized and intelligent inhabitants of Rome.

It appears from Celsus, who wrote against the Christians, not more than a century after the date of this Epistle, that it was a common slander against the preachers of the gospel, that they shunned the examination of the wise and learned, and addressed themselves only to the rude and unintelligent multitude. "We see them," says he, "showing their tricks to the vulgar, but not approaching the assemblies of wise men, nor daring there to show themselves; but wherever they see boys, a crowd of slaves, and ignorant men, there they thrust in themselves, and show off their doctrine." "These are our institutions (speaking of Christians, with a sneer): let not any man of learning come here, nor any wise man, nor any man of prudence; for these things are reckoned evil by us. But whoever is unlearned, ignorant, and silly, let him come without fear. Thus they own that they can gain only the foolish, the vulgar, the stupid slaves, women, and children*." The chief matter of fact, indeed, here stated, might be true, that the ignorant, the poor, and the despised embraced the gospel; while, for the most part, the wise, the noble, and the learned, treated it with contempt. But it was not true that the gospel shunned their

* Milner.

examination; or that its advocates shrunk before the force of their strong arguments. Some insinuations of this sort, however, it is probable, led the Apostle to assert the obligation, under which he considered himself, as a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and to repel the idea that he was ashamed to appear in that character among the more intelligent inhabitants of Rome.

Ver. 14. "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise.

Ver. 15. "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also."

That is, in virtue of my office, I hold myself bound to bear testimony to the truth of the gospel, and to give a reason for the hope of the Christian to all descriptions of persons; to the more polished and better educated part of mankind, no less than to the rude and uncivilized; to the scholar and philosopher, no less than to the unlearned and ignorant. As far, therefore, as depends upon myself, I am ready to appear amongst you as a preacher of the gospel*.

Ver. 16. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it in the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Ver. 17. "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

The Apostle, rejecting the imputation that he is ashamed of the gospel, asserts, on the other hand, that it is the power of God; the means made use of, and rendered

* The 14th and 15th verses are rendered in the following manner in the ancient Syriac:—"As among other nations, Greeks and barbarians, wise and foolish: because to every man am I bound to preach. And e manner am I solicitous, that even among you that are at Rome I may spread the glad tidings."

effectual, to the salvation both of Jew and Greek, by the Almighty God himself. Why, then, should he shun to meet the Jew or the Greek, in opening to them that message of God, which was necessary, and alone sufficient to rescue their souls from eternal ruin? They might, indeed, in blind prejudice, oppose the gospel; but the Apostle is anxious to address them, under the glorious hope of undeceiving them, and of saving their souls. It is, therefore, with this view, being prevented from coming himself to Rome, that he now writes this Epistle, which we may consider—the former part of it, at least—as a vindication of gospel truth, addressed to the more enlightened and better-informed part of mankind. And here we have pointed out to us who the chief opponents of the gospel were; to notice which will, of course, be a matter of great importance towards the understanding of the Apostle's reasoning, as his arguments are intended to meet *their* objections.

The Apostle, it appears, expected opposition chiefly from two descriptions of persons, the *Jews* and the *Greeks*.

Multitudes of the Jews, it is known, were at this time dispersed throughout the world. "Moses had in every city them that preached him." They were, of course, to be met with in Rome; and, of however small importance, in a civil or military survey of the Roman people, in the contemplation of an Apostle from the God of their fathers, we do not wonder, to find *them* the first object of consideration; agreeably, indeed, to our Lord's directions respecting the preaching of redemption—"To the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

By Greeks the other description of opponents, are intended the Gentiles in general, more especially their philosophers, their men of science and polite literature, who would be likely to stand up as the advocates

of philosophy and natural religion, against the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, in the eyes of the Jews, the gospel of Christ appeared as the imposture of a wild enthusiast—as a dangerous heresy from the true religion of the scriptures. With respect to the Greeks, whether or not they took the pains to distinguish between the opinions of the Jews and of the Christians, they, in their wisdom, pronounced it to be all superstition and nonsense, unworthy the attention of the polite scholar or of the learned philosopher.

Such, then, was the state of parties in the world when Paul and his companions stood forth as the apologists for the religion of Jesus Christ. As he observes to the Corinthians, “For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but 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 Christ the wisdom of God*.”

Nor is the statement here made, to be considered merely as an exhibition of the opinions of former times, of those long-forgotten principles which, nearly eighteen hundred years ago, influenced the world to reject the newly-published gospel. A little reflection will convince us, that the state of the question, between the world and the professors of the gospel, is with some small variations, the same now as it was at the time of its first promulgation.

The Divine Spirit has, indeed, for a season, ceased to contend with the Jews; and the Greek has perished in the lapse of time: but the same sentiments and opinions which distinguished these characters, and rendered them respectively so averse to the preaching of Christ, do still survive,

* 1 Cor, i. 22, 23, 24.

and still prevail to the same fatal effects. The world, it is true, has taken the name of Christ, but the offence of the cross has not thereby ceased; and though, through the providence of God, the form of godliness has been propagated, to the extinction of some of the abominations of the heathen, yet the world is by no means disposed to receive with sincerity the religion of Christ, and abide by the regulations of its spiritual precepts. It will also be found, upon inquiry, that not only is the gospel invariably the same in all ages, but that the main opposition to it, has appeared to arise uniformly from the same quarters; that, in fact, very similar principles to those of the Jew and of the Greek have ever divided the opponents of the truth into two parties.

We find, accordingly, by comparing their respective tenets, that the post first occupied by the Jewish pharisee hath since been filled by the Romish and other apostate churches; and by the formalist, the self-righteous, and the prejudiced bigot, in all the various classes and denominations of Christians; and that the station maintained in the Apostle's days by the Greek, and we may say by the Sadducee before him, has also been occupied, in succession, by a long list of freethinkers, infidel philosophers, and disputers, of this world; so that, to this present hour, the preaching of "Christ crucified" is to some a "stumbling-block," and to others "foolishness!"

The atonement, with its consequential doctrines, taken in their full extent, and faithfully applied, runs as counter to all the preconceived notions of some of "the straitest sects of our religion," and to all the principles which they have imbibed, from revelation misunderstood, as it did to the traditionary opinions of the disciples of Moses, in the days of Christ and his Apostles. And both Pharisee and nominal Christians have taken offence and been scandalized by the preaching of the Gospel in much the same way.

In both, has mistaken zeal arisen to such a height, that they have thought they did God service, when they persecuted or killed the faithful followers of Christ: they have both “stumbled at that stone of stumbling.”

On the other hand, the infidel philosopher and that numerous host of half-taught sciolists and pretenders to reason, whose numbers have so prodigiously increased in our days—these, like the Greeks of old, agree to despise the gospel as foolishness and blind superstition, unworthy to divert the man of sense and refinement from his more learned and elegant pursuits.

At the same time, the faithful preacher of Christ is still cheered and emboldened, in the midst of censure and contempt, by the same conviction and experience which the Apostle expresses in the passage before us: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Though he hears, on the one hand, the pure doctrines of the gospel slandered as a detestable heresy in the church, as the ravings of fanatics; and, on the other hand, finds himself and his office the butt of profane wit, and only noticed to be ridiculed: still he is not ashamed or put to silence—“He knows in whom he has believed.”

He has also witnessed the powerful effect of the faithful preaching of the gospel upon others. Let ignorant men call it what they will, this, he is satisfied, is the means appointed and blessed of God for the salvation of fallen man. Generally, indeed, he is compelled to acquiesce with his divine Master—“I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Yet it has sometimes happened, that the pharisaical bigot, losing his prejudices, has been brought to own the gospel

to be the power of God ; it has sometimes happened, that the most wise and learned have been brought to own that they have found a better wisdom in Christ, and would gladly become fools, that they might be wise according to the excellency of this knowledge !

But, to proceed with the Apostle's statement : what then, it may be asked, is this gospel, despised and rejected both by Jew and Greek, but of whose efficacy and sovereign virtue St. Paul is, notwithstanding, so satisfied ? In what consists this efficacy ?

We have already seen that the gospel signifies good news ; and that the tidings spread abroad by its preachers were concerning Jesus Christ—what he had done to redeem lost mankind, and the great and glorious power, which he had now attained, to save to the utmost them that come to God by him. We are told, in the verse which follows, wherein the power and efficacy of the gospel to save men consists.

Ver. 17. " For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith." So that it appears, to preach Christ, to tell of what he has wrought and endured, and of the power and glory which he attained at his resurrection, is to reveal or make manifest the righteousness of God—or the righteousness which is of God by faith of Jesus Christ : because, as the Apostle is about to explain to us, what Christ has done and suffered, form, in the estimation of the just Judge, the righteousness of the redeemed sinner.

It is called " the righteousness of God," because it cometh to man as God's gift ; and is not, properly speaking, his own, but that of another, graciously counted to him. A man's own righteousness consists in the conformity of his affections and actions to the moral law ; this were justly called his own, because, however assisted, it had been the fruit of his own exertions and labours.

But the righteousness which the gospel makes known consists not in the actual deeds of men, or in the performance of any stipulated conditions, but consists alone, as will be more fully explained in the Epistle before us, in the atonement made by Jesus Christ, and his merits, imputed to the believer—"He is our righteousness"—"made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

This righteousness is said to be "of faith to faith." This phrase has been differently expounded; we shall seek its exact meaning when we come to treat of the more enlarged statement of the same truth in the third chapter. "The righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe." It will be sufficient, for the present, to observe, that, according to the universal language of Scripture, all the saving benefits of the passion and death of Christ belong eventually to believers, and to believers alone; and that they are conveyed to them personally, in possession or in hope, on their believing in Christ. Hence the tenor of the Lord's commission to his Apostles was, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*." "All that believe are justified from all things†." Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life‡." And we shall see, that one important conclusion, which the Apostle draws in the argument he holds in this Epistle, is, "that by faith a man is justified without the deeds of the law."

Of the nature of the faith which justifies, and the manner in which it becomes the means of salvation, the Epistle will, in due order, call upon us to treat. I shall only here

* Mark xvi. 15, 16.

† Acts xiii. 39.

‡ John v. 24.

state, generally, that, as the gospel is a message sent from God—his record concerning his Son; so faith, or believing, is the receiving as true the message which is sent, the record which is given. This is faith taken in its simplest sense. But the gospel embassy does not only report facts, it contains also a tender of Christ, and of his redemption, for the penitent sinner's acceptance. Hence, in the language of Scripture, "to receive Christ" is an equivalent term with believing in Christ. The gospel, moreover, comes to us in the form of a promise, or of a solemn covenant or engagement, into which, it has pleased God to enter with fallen man, respecting the salvation of his soul. Now, belief in a promise implies a trusting and reliance on the word and faithfulness of the promiser; hence saving faith, according to the definition of our reformers, involves the notion of trust and confidence in God, as we shall see illustrated in a subsequent chapter.

From what we have here briefly intimated, it appears that the grand truth revealed to mankind in the gospel, is the method of a sinner's salvation in the sight of God. It answers the important question, "What must I do to be saved?" Considered in another point of view, it explains a difficulty which must occur to every thinking mind, How can God be just, when he spares the guilty in judgment?—How is he just, and the justifier of the unjust, merely because of his faith? It had been, indeed, from the beginning known, that there was a righteousness of faith; when the Apostle first mentioned the gospel of God, in the second verse, he said it was before promised by the Prophets in the Scriptures: so, in the verse we are now considering, he quotes an expression of God in the Prophet Habakkuk, "As it is written, The just shall live by faith;" or, as many learned expositors render the words, "The just by faith, shall live*."

* Chap. ii. 4.

To speak of a man just by his faith ; or, perhaps, of a just man's, living by faith, in some senses of the word living—which it is unimportant here to consider, as the Apostle's meaning is plain—evidently implies that there *was* a righteousness by faith, respecting which the Prophets bore testimony. But, in what this righteousness consisted, though shadowed and foretold in the Old Testament, was reserved for the Apostles and preachers of the gospel fully to develop and explain : “ This was a mystery which had been hid from ages and generations, but was now made manifest to his saints*.”

Such, in a leading point of view, were the contents of the gospel ; it spoke of Christ, it described his mysterious person, it represented him as dying for the sins of men, and rising again for their justification. This was proposed to mankind as the only means of salvation ; he who heard this report, and truly believed it, should be saved, being justified by faith ; but he who believed not, must die in his sins, the wrath of God abiding on him. Such, then, being the importance of the gospel—such its indispensable necessity to all descriptions of persons, notwithstanding the offence taken against it by his countrymen, and the contemptuous sneers with which it was treated by the more enlightened of the Gentiles, the Apostle still professed his earnest desire to preach it, as being, in the state to which mankind have been reduced by sin, the only effectual remedy for the salvation of their souls.

To argue this point, to explain the nature of this salvation, and to show its happy consequences, is, as we have seen, the object which St. Paul had in view in writing this Epistle. It was to supply the place of his personal teaching and instructions, until it should please God to afford him an opportunity of coming to Rome. And we and all the churches of God have reason to be thankful,

* Col. i, 2, 6.

that the Divine Wisdom did so order it, that this most important statement of gospel truths should be committed to writing, and in this manner communicated to the Romans, rather than that they should receive it from his own lips, to be handed down to us by uncertain tradition. And if the present church of Rome, instead of vaunting tradition, will abide by the doctrine of this Epistle to their forefathers, most readily will we acknowledge her to be a pure church of Christ.

Let us, too, reflect with thankfulness, that we are no more left to the vague and uncertain experiences of fallible men, than to the tradition of churches, in order to learn the doctrines of Christ, their genuine influence upon the heart and affections, and their proper application to the fears and hopes of the people of God. The Epistle before us has preserved, by divine appointment, a statement of the doctrines of true Christianity, a standard of spiritual experience, and not a few principles of Christian obedience. We are enjoined to "search the Scriptures;" and were this command duly observed, instead of receiving of our religious principles so much on trust, it were reasonable to suppose, there would not be that endless variety of opinions among professed Christians, which is now the grief of every thinking man.—We should be "no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*."

* Ephes. iv. 14.

LECTURE III.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.—FROM THE EIGHTEENTH VERSE,
TO THE END.

ST. Paul had just asserted, as we have seen in our last Lecture, that the Gospel was the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, because it made known the righteousness of God by faith, and the method of a sinner's justification in the sight of God. Before he proceeds, however, to unfold more particularly the nature of this righteousness, and to explain the mode of its attainment, the Apostle stops to prove the universal necessity of such a salvation, by showing

The actual state of guilt and depravity into which the whole race of mankind were plunged; and by announcing at the same time, that there was a judgment to come, where every man must give an account of himself to God, and receive the just recompense of his deeds.

It is obvious indeed, that the only thing, which can render the exhibition of a Saviour's righteousness acceptable and precious in the eyes of men, is a conviction of their guilt and wretchedness, and of their liability to condemnation. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." And we invariably find, that those who are defective in their views of the depravity of human nature and of their responsibility before God, and do not utterly despair of saving themselves, will never appear as humble supplicants at the foot of the cross.

There is something in the doctrine of justification by faith alone in a crucified Saviour, not only humbling to the pride of man, but while the actual state of human nature

is overlooked, so contrary to the dictates of human wisdom, and to what we conclude to be the surest principles of morality, that the mind revolts from the doctrine, and cannot credit it as coming from God. But when once we are enlightened to perceive the entire corruption and guilt of human nature, and to understand, at the same time, that all are justly, and without excuse, amenable to a strict and righteous judgment; when we are brought to contemplate, in this state of things, the utter inability of human wisdom to find a remedy, and the practical inefficacy of all laws, human and divine, to prevent the awful consequences, we then feel compelled to "submit to the righteousness of God," and gladly put ourselves into the hands of the great Physician of souls.

Hence we discover the propriety of the method adopted in this Epistle, which is, first to point out the nature of the malady, and then to prescribe the remedy. The Apostle has asserted that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, both to Jew and Greek; an assertion which implied two things in respect to both parties, namely, that their respective systems did not furnish the means of accomplishing that great end—that, without having recourse to the gospel, they could not obtain salvation, but must inevitably perish for ever.

And now, proceeding with his argument, he begins with considering the case of the Gentiles, for whose depravity and guilt the wisdom of the Greek, though it could despise the gospel, had found no remedy. This subject occupies the remaining part of the first chapter, from the eighteenth verse to the end. To expound these verses in the order in which they stand, is the design of this present Lecture.

The state of religion and morals in the heathen world, whether "Greeks or barbarians, wise or unwise," being so corrupt and debased as to admit of no justification upon

the principles of reason and conscience before a strict and impartial judge, the only plea that could be started to do away their guilt and responsibility, was, their *ignorance of the true God and of his holy religion*. This, it might be suggested, would excuse them at the equitable tribunal of God.

To obviate this objection, and to show that sinners of the Gentiles are amenable to the righteous judgment of God for their evil deeds, and deserving of punishment, is the aim of the Apostle in the passage now under consideration. He states in the clearest manner, and in the most precise terms, that the ignorance of the Gentiles concerning God, and the true principles of religion and virtue, so far from being a venial ignorance, was without excuse, inasmuch as it resulted from a wicked suppression of the truth, in the first instance, followed, it was true, by a judicial blindness and hardness of heart, which though they proved the source of the abominable vices here specified, could by no means vindicate them, either at the bar of conscience or at the tribunal of God.

Proceed we now to expound the passage in detail.

Ver. 18. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Or, as the last words are by some translated, "who restrain or suppress the truth*."

The plea of ignorance, we see is obviated at once: for, that very ignorance is pronounced to be criminal; and the vengeance of a holy and just God is declared against all the deeds of impiety and wickedness which have been perpetrated in this state of ignorance. This "was revealed

* *κατεχω*, to restrain, withhold, suppress. PARKHURST, "Impedio," SCHLEWSNER; which is in some measure countenanced by the rendering of the vulgate, "detinent," and by the Syriac אררר, from the Hebrew ארר, to lay hold on. Compare 2 Thess. ii. 6 and 7.

from heaven;" that is to say, it is one of those truths which divine revelation had manifested. It had been revealed by the law and the prophets; and when the gospel was proclaimed in the Gentile world, the ambassadors of Christ were charged to declare, "that God commanded all men every where to repent, because he had appointed a day in which he would judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he had ordained *."

Concerning this judgment, and the amenableness of all men, both Jews and Gentiles, to its righteous decisions, the Apostle treats at large in the following chapter. He now substantiates the charge, that the ignorance of the Gentiles respecting the nature and the worship of the Deity, was altogether inexcusable, nay, was a wicked suppression of the truth.

Ver. 19. "Because that which may be known of,"—or, "concerning God,—is manifest in them,"—or, "to them ;—for God has showed it,"—or, "made it manifest to them."

Ver. 20. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"—or, to use a translation plainer and equally faithful, "For his invisible [attributes] from the creation of the world, being contemplated in the things which are made, are evidently discerned, even his eternal power and Godhead: so that they are without excuse †:

Ver. 21. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations,"—or, "vainly employed themselves in their reasoning," or, "played the fool in

* Acts xvii. 30, 31.

† "For the secret 'things' of God, from the foundations of the world, in his creatures, are by the understanding discerned, &c. &c." Syriac.

their reasonings *,”—“ and [then] their foolish heart was darkened.

Ver. 22. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

Ver. 23. “And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.”

The great crime of the Gentile world, as is well known, was that of idolatry. Ignorant of the true God, yet sensible of their dependent situation, and at the same time full of superstitious fears, they transferred that religious worship, which they felt to be due somewhere, to created objects, or to the representations of imaginary beings. To dispense with religion altogether, was reserved for the more enlightened infidelity of after times: in the ancient world, the great mass of mankind, at least, never thought but of paying adoration to some God or other.

That they so fatally mistook the object to whom this worship was due, might at first sight seem, to have arisen from their being destitute of the means of attaining the knowledge of the true God. But the Apostle asserts that this was not the case; that from the works of creation, a book open to the eyes of all, the glorious attributes of the Creator were clearly distinguishable by the common sense and understanding of mankind; so as to leave the idolater without excuse, when, in the place of a perfect, eternal, and omnipotent Being, he chose, as the object of his religious fear, the image of some inferior creature.

From whence the shameful rites of idolatry did in fact take their rise, we are next informed: they sprang not from any insurmountable ignorance of the Divine attributes, but from the guilt and foolish vanity of man. That great and gracious Being, who in his works was every

* So the word is used in the Septuagint, 1 Sam. xxvi. 2.

where presented to the view of his understanding, man did not regard or honour suitably to his character: ungrateful for the bounties he was continually receiving at his hands, instead of employing his faculties to meditate upon his Maker and Preserver, and to praise him as the author of all his mercies, he betook himself in the pride of his heart, to vain and foolish reasonings and idle speculations. The consequence was, that his mind became by such exercises unwise and undiscerning, till at length its faculties were overwhelmed with darkness.

In language very similar to that of the text, we find the Lord expostulating with the idolatrous Jews, in the book of Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they have gone far from me, and have walked after vanity and are become vain?"—"The stock," observes Isaiah, "is a doctrine of vanity;" such as could only have arisen from the vain and foolish imaginations of a darkened understanding.

The reflection of the Apostle is particularly striking: while they professed themselves to be wise, set themselves up, as it were for reasoners and philosophers, "they became fools." In this proud affectation of superior wisdom, they overlooked the simple truths of nature; and a greater instance of folly and debasement of intellect, except in the fool who says in his heart, "There is no God," can scarcely be conceived, than to substitute, as they had done, the image of a man, and even of a beast, or a reptile, for the Supreme and Glorious Majesty of Heaven. But mark the consequences!

Ver. 24. "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves."

Thus is accounted for, that astonishing degree of lewdness and bestiality into which, we know, as well from the authentic records of their own historians as from this charge of the

Apostle, the old pagan world was plunged. Man, though under the restraints of morality, and even under the influences of the Spirit of Grace, finds in his own heart an index too true, to leave him at a loss in accounting for most of the vices and wicked propensities of mankind: but the vice here alluded to, is, with propriety, denominated the *unnatural crime*; for scarcely can any thing be conceived more abhorrent to the feelings of human nature; nor did there ever exist a society, though possessed but of the form of revealed religion, which has not agreed to consider this bestial propensity as the mark of a monster, and not of a man. Yet in heathen times, it not only was not reprobated, but was common and acknowledged; hardly censured by their gravest philosophers, and by one of their most admired poets celebrated as a matter which was by no means grossly improper, or shameful in the recital. This will necessarily seem to us amazing; but we are acquainted by the Apostle, that there was something *judicial* in this very great debasement of the moral feeling; “God had given them up in the desires of their hearts to uncleanness.” The restraints which are commonly impressed, by the God of nature, on the minds of men, in regard to the gratification of sensual appetites, they were suffered to break through as a punishment for their idolatry.

Ver. 25. “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.—Amen.”

They changed the truth of God into a lie. The true notions respecting the Supreme Being, so easy to be inferred from the works of creation; these, in their fancied wisdom, they altered into the idle falsehoods of the pagan mythology, “and adored and worshipped the creature in preference to the Creator.” Deified men, and various animals, and certain imaginary beings, endowed in their conceptions with the qualities, and even with the vices of

creatures, were, as we have seen, the objects of their religious worship. These they chose in the room and stead of the Creator, "who is blessed for ever.—Amen." That is, who abides, notwithstanding, the only object worthy of praise and adoration. To which assertion, after the manner of the Hebrew writers, in token of his firm persuasion and hearty concurrence, the Apostle affixes his *Amen*.

Ver. 26. "For this cause God gave them up to vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.

Ver. 27. "And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the women, burned in their lust one towards another; men with men working that which is unseemly"—or rather, "effecting that which is shameful,"—"and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error, which was meet."

God withdrew his restraints, and suffered the tide of their corruptions to have its full course; and then the scenes here alluded to followed. They became themselves the victims of their folly and wickedness: a just retribution for their departure from the truth of God.

Ver. 28. "And even as they did not like,"—or "thought not fit to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."

St. Paul's language in this place seems particularly designed to call our attention to the just *retaliation*, which appears in God's dealings with the idolatrous heathen. What can be known of God, as he had observed before, even his eternal power and Godhead, was obvious to the understandings of all; but, as has since been the case with numbers under the teaching of revelation, "they received not the love of the truth." For the word knowledge, we should observe, in the Scripture language, very frequently includes the notion of the approbation,—or, due appreciation

as well as of the perception of the mind.—They approved not that pure theology which nature and right reason would have taught them. This doubtless bespeaks great depravity of heart; it had not otherwise been possible that they could have rejected those nobler notions of the Deity and of his service, for the monstrous absurdities and unholy rights of paganism,—or have lost their traditionary knowledge of a Saviour to come*.

In this shocking depravity of the heathen world was verified the following observation of our Lord,—for this observation holds equally true of men who extinguish the light of nature as of those who shut their eyes against the brighter beams of revelation:—“Light was come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil; for he that doeth evil hateth the light.” This accounts for their wicked “repression,” or “suppression” of the truth. It was not to their taste. Any absurdity rather, which would not seem to reprove their evil deeds! And we are all sensible how soon a man will contrive, in opposition to the strongest evidences, to reason himself out of the belief of that which he dislikes!

It was thus, then, that the knowledge of the true God was lost among the heathen; and we have before us the reason that a Jupiter, a Venus, or a Bacchus—gods suited to their worshippers—were preferred by his apostate creatures before the HOLY LORD GOD. “They refused to retain God in their knowledge;” literally, they reprobated the retaining of the notion of the Divine Being in their hearts;”—or, to express the meaning of the original word † more at large, “they exercised the discriminating powers of their minds, to essay and put to the proof the

* See Bishop Horsley's Dissertation on the prophecies of the Messiah dispersed among the heathen.

† Διακρίμαζω

pretensions of these truths to their acceptance; and then, with the solemn decision of experienced and skilful judges, they pronounced them unworthy or improper to be retained. Their sages accordingly invented a new religion instead, for the unthinking multitude, who liked to have it so; and themselves, probably, were content to live in doubt, or to amuse themselves in speculative and abstruse reasonings. Thus “the world by wisdom knew not God.”

What a striking picture does the great poet Milton exhibit of the more grave and philosophical part of mankind, as living without God in the world, where, in the different descriptions of the imagined employments of the fallen angels, we are told—

— Others apart sat on a hill retir'd
 In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
 Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
 Fix'd fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute;
 And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost.
 Of good and evil much they argued then,
 Of happiness and final misery,
 Passion, and apathy, and glory, and shame,
 Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy:
 Yet with a pleasing sorcery could charm
 Pain for a while or anguish, and excite
 Fallacious hope, or arm th' obdurate breast
 With stubborn patience as with triple steel*.

But to return. As a punishment for their thus reproaching the knowledge of God, God gave them up to a “reprobate mind:”—a mind reprobate in respect to those things which concerned their own honour and well-being. A reprobate mind signifies a mind that has lost its powers of just discrimination. The human mind had so ill and wickedly discriminated in rejecting the knowledge of God, that it was doomed for ever to the same *wayward choice*, and to the same practical insensibility to the beauties of

* Paradise Lost, book ii., p. 557.

virtue and holiness. Thus, in the shocking instances just recorded, it desired and chose things, not only incompatible with the welfare of man, but absolutely unsuitable to his nature.

Such was the recompense of their error! They, as rational creatures, rejected the Holy and Eternal God; henceforth their reasoning faculties served not to keep themselves from sinking in sensual gratifications, not only below the dignity of rational creatures, but below the level of the most unclean beasts. The same proud reason, which had *undeified* the Creator, was permitted to go on till it had worse than *brutalized* the man! A similar description we find given of the Gentiles by the Apostle in his Epistle to the Ephesians*: “Walking in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts, who being *past feeling* have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”

The unnatural crime has been held forth as a notorious proof of this reprobate mind; but it appears from what follows, that the abandoned morals of the Gentile world in a general point of view, was a consequence of the same unhappy cause. The same reprobate indiscriminating mind, blind to every sense of right and propriety, and to the true interests of mankind, “seared, as it were, with a hot iron” to all the better feelings of humanity, affected their character universally.

Ver. 29. “Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers:—30. Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents:—31. With-

* Eph. iv. 18, 19.

out understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."

Such is the picture which an unerring hand has given us of the world alienated from God, through the ignorance which was in them. That every individual of the heathen nations was not every thing that is here specified, the nature of things forbids us to suppose. But such was the general character of society, and the same consequences of a reprobate mind were universally felt,—and so felt as, more or less, in some way or other, to affect every individual.

They were "filled with all unrighteousness." In other words, dishonesty and injustice were become so prevalent, that the world might be said to be full of it,—you might expect to meet with it in all your intercourse with mankind. In like manner, "fornication," or the violation of the laws of chastity, was become common. Also "wickedness." The term used by the Apostle signifies vicious depravity in general, but, in its more special application the malignant desire of injuring others. This is, probably, its meaning in this place, as St. Paul couples it with two other "desires of the mind"—"covetousness"—"maliciousness;" as though he would say, You will universally find these pagans to be designing, covetous, malicious characters.

They are "full," he continues. The expression seems to imply an allusion to a vessel standing up to the brim, and ready to overflow at the slightest touch,—"full of envy, murder, strife, deceit," or "cunning" and "ill-nature:" for so the word we render malignity in this place appears to signify,—a disposition to take every thing in the very worst light possible, or, as we express it by a familiar phrase, "to take things by the wrong handle."

The Apostle proceeds to designate the objects of his censure as "whisperers" and "evil speakers;" that is,

engendering secretly suspicions of others, or openly reviling them.

Next as “haters of God;” that is, as I conjecture, by adverting to the following epithets, at the head of which it seems to stand, abominating all idea of a Supreme Being: not only disliking to retain the knowledge of the true God, which we shall recollect was before mentioned as the general cause and source of all this depravity, and of which crime the superstitious idolater had been guilty, no less than the philosophizing atheist, whom I suppose to be here meant, proudly denying the existence of a Deity, or by their tenets excluding him from the government of the universe. Such persons are enemies to all religions, to false religions, not because they are false, but because they recognise the hated truth, that there is a God, and that he governs the world. But we must hasten to finish the dark catalogue. They were “despiteful,” or rather “insolent,”—“proud,”—“boasters,”—all characteristic of the rebellious spirit that casts off the fear of God, and, in self-estimation, places itself in his throne.—“Inventors of evil things:” enlisting, as I should explain it, the powers of imagination in the service of impiety.—“Disobedient to parents:” nor can we wonder that the parental authority, and in general the claim of every earthly superior, should be despised by “*the hater of God.*”

“Without understanding,” or unintelligent; meaning, I suppose, to glance at the vaunted scepticism of the atheistical philosophers. They affected to know nothing, to believe nothing.—“Covenant-breakers;” false to their solemn engagements: for what oath can bind the atheist?—“Without natural affection;” such especially as parents ought to have for their children.—“Implacable;” irreconcilable, or difficult to be brought to any agreement.—“Unmerciful.” The Apostle concludes:

Ver. 32. ‘Who knowing the judgment of God, that

they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them*.”

Though they could not but be sensible that those who did these things must be obnoxious to the judgment of the Supreme Being—for, as St. Paul afterwards shews, they possessed a sufficient knowledge of the law of God, from the light of nature, to condemn their evil deeds,—yet they not only did them, but even showed marks of their approbation to those who followed the same unclean and wicked practices. Dr. Macknight thinks, “ In this stricture the Apostle glances at the Greek legislators, priests, and philosophers, who by their institutions, example, and presence, encouraged the people in the practice of many of the debaucheries here mentioned, especially in the celebration of the festivals of their gods.”

Or, if we interpret the passage more generally, this last circumstance may be considered as a mark of the most accumulated depravity,—that a man should not only, when following the corrupt propensities of his heart, transgress what he knows, or ought to know, to be the laws of his Creator, but should even commend, and express his wicked satisfaction in others who do the same, is, indeed, the highest pitch of wickedness imaginable. And it might easily be shown from history, that, among the Gentiles of the Apostle's days, many of the above-mentioned enormities were practised without rebuke or disgrace in the eyes of the world; nay, either confessedly, or under some shallow pretence or other, received the approbation of the public opinion, and, strange to say, were interwoven with the sacred rites of their religion!

Thus have we seen the character of the Gentile world

* “ Qui cum justiciam Dei cognovissent, non intellexerunt quoniam qui talia agunt, digni sunt morte: et non solum qui ea faciunt, sed etiam qui consentiunt facientibus.”—VULGATE.

estimated by an infallible Judge,—by that Spirit who was to “convince,”—or rather convict—“the world of sin, seeing they believed not in Christ.” We are taught, that the ignorance which might be pleaded in their behalf, was not such as to extenuate their guilt, and so render salvation unnecessary; neither was the wisdom, which some of them admired, sufficient to preserve them from its contamination, or to find out a remedy in order to its removal. Their ignorance was criminal,—a wicked suppression of the truth. Their wisdom, though it speculated much, and erected many a specious theory, left *the true God unknown, the heart of the teacher unchanged*; and neither corrected his own morals, nor the morals of the people.

And have we any reason to conclude that the heathen and infidel world is, at this day, in any better state in the view of a judgment to come? Will the ignorance of the savage in the present age be found more excusable? or are there any grand discoveries, now, in the Pagan or Mahometan world, respecting the true God and the way of salvation, with which the philosophers of Greece and Rome were unacquainted*? No! The Christian at this present hour, contemplating the world around him, must adopt the language of St. John, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness; and we know that the Son of God is come, and has given *to us* an understanding that we may know him that is true, and *we* are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

If such, then, be the situation of the unconverted nations

* The last accounts published of the Chinese empire are quite sufficient to show that the largest and most civilized association in the pagan world are exactly characterized in the above description of the ancient heathen.—See BARROW'S *Travels*. The latest accounts, also, published of the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, exhibiting a picture of mankind in as different a state of society as can well be supposed, still discover the very same features of the moral depravity of the human race.—See TURNBULL.

of the heathen world, surely, if we have any thing more than the mere form of Christianity, and do indeed experience its transforming, peace-giving influence, we cannot feel uninterested in those exertions, which are at this present time making around us, to convey into these dark regions of the earth the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Our zeal, indeed, for dispersing the blessing, will, probably, be in some proportion to the good which we have received from our holy religion. Because, not only will the instructions we have received, by teaching us our own condition as fallen creatures, have opened our eyes to the real state of a world without the knowledge of a Saviour; but, it is the nature of the divine mercy, that it renders merciful the soul that receives it; and he that has "tasted that the Lord is gracious," longs to communicate to his fellow-creatures a knowledge of that pity and "loving-kindness," of which he is the happy partaker in Christ.

But if we have "neglected this great salvation," and "have not known, in this our day, the things which make for our peace," by a fatal consistency, our eyes will be closed to the utility of sending the gospel to the heathen, nay, perhaps, we shall secretly feel offended at the zeal of missionaries and missionary societies; because it reminds us of our own slighted mercies, and conveys a tacit reproof of our folly. Indeed, one hope which the faithful servant of Christ cherishes in his breast, of good to spring from these exertions in behalf of the heathen in the remote regions of the earth, is, that the attention of careless professors at home may be excited, to the inestimable treasure which they possess, without seeming to know its value. "I magnify mine office," says the great Apostle to the Gentiles, "if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them."

LECTURE IV.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.—FROM THE FIRST TO THE SIXTEENTH VERSE.

WE have seen the Apostle portraying the character of the Gentile world. We have read the dark catalogue of those abominable vices which characterized the nations that had forgotten God. Such were the fruits of a reprobate mind. There was, indeed, as St. Paul has taught us, the effect of a judicial hardness in this debasement of the moral character and principle; but there was no excusable ignorance, which could be pleaded on their behalf, so as to lessen their responsibility in the prospect of the judgment to come.—“They had changed the truth of God into a lie.” “For this cause God gave them up to vile affections.” But the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all their unrighteousness. In the prospect, therefore, of this denounced judgment, St. Paul would teach them the need of that salvation which he was sent to preach among the Gentiles.

The Apostle, we shall find, is proceeding, in the chapter before us, to lay down the doctrine “of eternal judgment.” But, previously to his entering upon this subject, he makes a transition from the case of the Gentiles to that of the Jews, whose guilt and accountableness to the judgment of God he asserts in terms equally strong.

At the same time it must be acknowledged, that the Jews, as a body, differed much from sinners of the Gentiles; for, so great was the corruption of principle in the heathen world, that the most abominable vices passed uncensured, were excused, and, in a manner, sanctioned by public opinion; nay, even by their religious rites and ordi-

nances. It was not so among the Jews; however corrupt in their morals, wickedness was not allowed by public approbation: on the contrary, their popular teachers, the Pharisees, were forward to pronounce the judgment of God against such transgressions. They ever stood forth as the public reprovers of sin; and, whatever defects might appear in their sentiments, when exposed to the superior light of the gospel, they did not suppress the truth concerning God, as the Gentile philosophers had done: and accordingly we find our Lord referring the people to the Scribes and Pharisees as moral instructors: "Whatsoever they command you, that observe and do." At the same time, in exact agreement with the charge of the Apostle in this place, he points out their deficiency: "But do not after their deeds, for they say and do not*."

Chap. ii. ver. 1. "Therefore"—or, as we are warranted in rendering the word, "In like manner, and for a similar reason †, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things." The Gentiles, he had said, were without excuse, because, knowing the judgment of God, that they which did such things were worthy of death, they not only did the same, but had pleasure in them that did them. In

* Matt. xxiii. 3.

† As an authority for this rendering of "Διό," see Heb. xiii. 11, 12. For the bodies of the beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin were buried without the camp; wherefore (Διό, in like manner, and for a similar reason) Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." So again, Luke vii. 6, 7: "Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; wherefore (Διό, in like manner, and for a similar reason—or, and so, on the same account) neither thought I myself worthy to come to thee." In both these passages, as well as in the text, the connexion meant to be expressed by Διό is not, according to its more common usage, the deduction of a consequence from a fact or argument going before, but merely an inference, as from a parallel case.

like manner, and for a similar reason, namely, because thou doest the same, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest. This is, indeed, a bold charge; a charge at which the mind of the self-righteous and self-applauding moralist will not fail to fly; and will recriminate the accusation of uncharitable and unfounded censure.

But mark the grounds upon which the Apostle brings this charge!

Ver. 2. "But we are sure"—(or, we know)—"that the judgment of God is according to TRUTH against them which commit such things."

Those who profess to censure the sins of others, and to denounce the divine judgment against them, should at the same time bear in mind, that this judgment proceeds not upon outward appearances and professions; but according to the real and naked TRUTH, as that truth is seen by the eyes of Him who searches the reins and the heart: for we read in the sixteenth verse, "*In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men* *;" and it is in view of this judgment that the Apostle is speaking.

The emphatic phrase, "According to TRUTH," renders conclusive the reasoning of the Apostle—that whosoever of all the sons of Adam condemns sin in others, doth in that judgment pass sentence upon himself, and is therefore inexcusable. For, however fair his character may stand, as exposed to human cognizance, or whatever be his opinion of himself, we are assured by the unerring word of God, "that there is no just man living, that sinneth not."—"All have sinned, and come short."—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the TRUTH is not in us."

Such, then, if we credit the word of God, is *His* estimation of the most plausible characters among mankind.

* Τα κρυπτά.

“The Lord, indeed, seeth not as man seeth.” Who would have thought, when those zealous advocates for justice, the Scribes and Pharisees, brought to our Lord the woman taken in adultery, that every one of her accusers would have retired, self-convicted, from the presence of that Judge to whom, of their own accord, they had appealed? So, when He, who then wrote upon the sand in their presence,—meaning, it should seem, to exhibit an emblem of their forgetful minds,—when he shall, in the day of judgment, collect the dispersed imaginations of the hearts of men, and cause the treacherous memory faithfully to record the secret evidences of guilt, then will be seen, standing abashed and confounded in guilty silence, many a self-applauding moralist, whose zeal and severity in the condemnation of others in the eyes of men, had led to the presumption of his own purity.

Well might the Apostle ask, what it was that emboldened these proud censurers of their fellow-sinners to reject the Gospel, to spurn that righteousness which it revealed for the justification of a sinner in the sight of God, and at the same time to expect impunity in the day of judgment.

Ver. 3. “And thinkest thou this, O man that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?”

Can you flatter yourself, when you are denouncing the divine wrath against those sins, in the guilt of which you are yourself involved, that the all-seeing eye of God will not find you out; or, that he will recede from the impartiality of his judgment in your favour, because you are a reprover of others?

And, if aware of your equal responsibility at that awful tribunal,

Ver. 4. “Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”

Ver. 5. "But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."—Is it possible, that, acknowledging a judgment to come, where you must abide the scrutiny of the omniscient God, you can choose to stand upon your own merits, and despise the proffered mercy?

St. Paul is speaking particularly to the Jews. To them, in the Holy Scriptures, from the beginning, a rich display of goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, had been made; the same, in fact, which was now more fully unfolded before their eyes, and revealed to all mankind in the gospel of Jesus Christ. But this dispensation they despised; or, as the word may, perhaps, be more correctly rendered, they "overlooked," "disregarded," or "neglected*." Such was plainly the fact with the

* The meaning given to *καταφρονειω* by Parkhurst is, to despise, to scorn, to condemn: q. d. to think against, conceive an ill opinion of. But the comparison of the two following texts will perhaps enable us to discriminate more nicely the notion meant to be conveyed in this place: "No man can serve two masters; for, either he will hate the one and love the other; or he will hold (*αυθεξειται*) to the one, and despise (*καταφρονειωσι*) the other." Matt. vi. 24. "Who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." In the former of these texts the notion is evident. The servant, situated as is there supposed, would disregard or "neglect" the one, in order to hold to, or "adhere to, the other." So, in the latter text, our Lord is said to have despised the shame of the cross; that is, "he disregarded it and overlooked it," whatever it was, as not worthy of his consideration in view of the happiness he proposed to himself in accomplishing the purpose of his love. In the same manner did the self-righteous Jew despise the offer of mercy contained in the Old Testament, and now still more richly displayed in the gospel. The dispensation under which they were placed comprised both a law of works and a gospel message; but, ignorant of the right use of the law in subserviency to the gospel, they held to the law, and despised or neglected the gospel; they disregarded and overlooked it; so that, in their attempt to establish a righteousness of their own by the works of the law, Christ was "a stone set at nought and refused." Dr. Macknight renders the

* Campbell. Parkhurst.

self-righteous opponents of the gospel. In the vain persuasion of their own integrity, they despised the notion of a justification by faith, and disregarded all overtures of mercy from God the Saviour, who had long borne with them, and still waited to be gracious to as many as should receive him. No! they were whole, and needed not a physician. They had kept the laws of their Maker, and would wait the decision of his just judgment: not knowing, or not adverting to this—that the goodness of God would lead them to repentance. They were ignorant that the declared design of God, in all his dispensations, was to bring them to this point: that the good proposed by God, for instance, in giving his holy law to the seed of Abraham was not to set them upon the endeavour after righteousness, according to a judgment of works; but to bring them to a knowledge of sin and of its consequences, that so they might discover their ruined state, and be led to REPENTANCE.

And here an important inquiry arrests our attention, the consideration of which will the better enable us to understand the meaning of what follows in the text. What is this “repentance,” to which the goodness of God would lead all men, even the self-righteous, in order to their salvation?

“Repentance,” according to the simplest notion we attach to the term, means a sorrow and regret for something we have done amiss: it implies a wish, in the present state of the mind, to reverse its former voluntary act. This repentance, it is obvious, may arise from two causes. It may arise either from the fear of punishment, and from

word “misconstructed;” but for this meaning there appears not the least foundation; which is, indeed, particularly unfortunate for his strange interpretation of this part of the Epistle, as that interpretation rests in a great measure upon this conjectural meaning of *καταφρονειν*: The rendering of the Syriac is *על מרח*, to dare or venture against.

an apprehension or experience of the evil consequences of what we have done; or it may arise from a change in the state of the understanding, and in the choice of the mind itself. The former is that repentance which overtakes the wicked when, in hopeless despair, they see the approach of judgment. The latter is that repentance unto life which is here spoken of, to which the goodness of God would lead us. For, though the fear of punishment may form a part, and may perhaps be the first manifest symptom of true repentance, yet if this be all, there is, in fact, no repentance unto life: the heart has undergone no real *change**; it is only diverted from its natural course for the present. Remove but the impediment, and all will return to its former state! The man for the time, indeed, chooses the ways of religion, but not for the love of them, only upon the principle of choosing the lesser evil: "It is better to submit to these displeasing measures and ill-brooked restraints, than to be tormented with the fear of hell."

In true repentance there must be, also, an hatred of former sinfulness, arising from a change wrought in the state of the mind; a change which has disposed it to choose the good and to refuse the evil; which has awakened it to a sense of the defilement of sin, and of the beauty and agreeableness of virtue and holiness.

Moreover, this repentance implies not only a sorrow for sins actually committed, but also a sense and acknowledgment of inward depravity and wretchedness; which, though unfelt by the self-justifier, are charged upon all men by the word of God. Repentance, therefore, in the case of the self-righteous, would amount to such a change of heart and principles, as would render his former goodness, with which he was once well pleased, defective, mean, and contemptible in his present views: "Behold, I am vile!"—"I abhor myself!" would be his language.

* *Μετανοια.*

Such, then, is the great *change* which repentance denotes: it is, in short, *conversion*,—a requisition justly enforced upon every depraved intelligent] being, who would flee from the wrath to come, and which “in the law of the spirit of love,” is the preparation of heart which leads to that new and spiritual birth, without which no man can see the kingdom of God.—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God *.”

But these masters in Israel knew not these things. “According to their hardness and impenitent heart,” in their unregenerate state, without waiting that change of which we speak, or acknowledging its necessity, they proceeded in their attempts to justify themselves in the sight of God. And what was the consequence? Despising the plan of mercy which the wisdom and goodness of God had devised for the salvation of men, notwithstanding all their labour, their strictness, and the painful austerities which they endured with the view of establishing their own righteousness, they were but, in fact, “treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath.” They were but adding sin to sin, and provoking, more and more, their insulted God; whom, by this conduct, instead of welcoming as their Saviour, they challenged as their Judge: “For, the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God would be a day of wrath to guilty sinners, who, in the day when mercy was proposed, knew not the things which belonged to their peace †.”

* John iii.

† Dr. Macknight observes, *Αμετανοητων* literally signifies, “which cannot repent;” but here it signifies, “which does not repent.” The literal signification, however, properly understood, is perhaps the more just, and agreeable to the Apostle’s meaning. An invincible refusal, resulting from the specific qualities of the mind, is, in fact, in morals, what natural impotency is in physics; and is, therefore, in Scripture, and in the writings of the most eminent men, spoken of in

II. Having asserted that the self-justifying Pharisee, in like manner with the sinners of the Gentiles, would be accused and condemned in the day of judgment, being found equally inexcusable, the Apostle proceeds now to a description of the just and equal process of this great day of account:—the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Ver. 6. “Who will render to every man according to his deeds.

Ver. 7. “To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life:

Ver. 8. “But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath,

Ver. 9. “Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile:

Ver. 10. “But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.”

Such will be the final issue of the judgment of the great day; and from this judgment those who shall have

the same language, and designated by the same terms. It is not only said, in such cases, “that a man *will not*,” but that “he *cannot* ;” for, taking into the account the actual state of his mind, the thing proposed is impossible. Thus, in the conversion of a soul, we are taught in Scripture, that, before it can turn to God, there needs a work of grace, a divine operation upon it, which, in some sort, changes its very nature; that, previously to this, it *cannot* repent: there is a hardness, an obduracy, which will not let it; or, to speak more properly, which renders it impervious and unsusceptible to those motives and considerations which, in the usual course of things, would lead to repentance. Hence we find our Lord exclaiming, “No man *can* come to me unless the Father, which has sent me, draw him.” And so, when God promises to remove the hindrance, and give converting grace, we read, “I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”

despised and neglected the gospel dispensation of mercy, whoever they may be, must receive their everlasting doom.

In the description of this judgment we notice, first, that it will be a judgment according to the law of works: God will render to every man the just recompense of his *deeds*. No place for favour or for pardon is left; justice is to take its course, without respect of persons. By the deeds of men, moreover, we should remember, that not their outward actions only are intended, but their words also, and the acts of their inmost souls—their intents and purposes: for, our Lord assures us that “for every idle word that men speak, they must give an account in the day of judgment.” Under the term “deeds,” too, it is evident that St. Paul, in the thirteenth verse of the eighth chapter, comprehends all lusts and evil affections. Compare, also, Prov. xiv. 12; “Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it; and He that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it; and shall not he render to every man according to his works?”

2d. Again: we are told that, in this judgment, eternal life is, on the one hand, to be awarded to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek glory, honour, and immortality: on the other hand, the vengeance of God is denounced against those that are contentious and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness. And, in the next verse, we learn, that the effect of this wrath of Almighty God against the evil doers will be tribulation and anguish; that is, punishment and hopeless misery*:

* *θλιψις και στενοχωρια*, according to their etymological significations, denote—the former, the *pressure* of affliction in general; the latter, those *straits*, as it were, to which the mind is reduced when it views its troubles as insurmountable, and, looking round on all sides, sees no way to escape, but is compelled, in the anguish of despair, to give itself up for lost. Compare 2 Cor. iv. 8: “We are troubled (*θλιβομενοι*) on every side, but not (*στενοχωρουμενοι*)—we are perplexed, but not in despair.

we learn, too, that the circumstances in which the righteous enter into life are glory, honour, and peace.

3dly. We have, also, a plain description of the persons who will be accounted righteous or unrighteous in this judgment. The first are those who shall be found to have preserved a constant, undeviating course of obedience; having had for their motive no earthly object or praise of man, but the glory of their Maker, *his* approbation, and an eternal recompense at his hands. Those, again, who will be condemned in this judgment are designated as “οἱ ἐξ ἐξεθείας”—*those who are contentious*, and obey not the truth: those who, from a principle of contention, “obey not,” or, as the word strictly signifies, resist with contumacy and obstinacy “the truth, but obey unrighteousness,”—yielding, on the contrary, an easy and willing subjection to rebellion and wickedness. These two opposite descriptions illustrate each other, and will be found exactly to characterize the just and unjust, in the present circumstances of mankind.

In the description of the just man, we notice the full demand of the law. It claims, at the hands of all, a perfect obedience to the will of God, as far as known. It demands that this obedience be uninterrupted, and continued to the end of life. It demands, further, that the *motives* be pure; and thereby reprobates, as spurious, all those actions, in themselves virtuous and noble, to which the agent was stimulated by emulation, earthly ambition, or any end or motive besides that honour which he was to receive from God.

In the description of the unrighteous we find “*contention*” held forth as the principle of all evil. This, at first sight, may appear extraordinary: but we must bear in mind, what is the object against which this contentious spirit is exhibited: it is, in fact, nothing else than God, and his righteous will. The human mind is in a state of

enmity against God. From this dislike there arises in the mind a disposition to dispute against, and evade the requisitions of truth and justice; so that, instead of an ingenuous acknowledgment of the truth, the mind sets itself in opposition to it; first partially sides with falsehood, and at length embraces it. Instead of seeking to do the will of the Creator, out of an earnest desire for his favour, it "savours not the things which be of God;" impatiently bears the restraints of law and conscience, quarrelling with the hard service, until, to the degree permitted, it casts off the fear of God, and follows altogether its own unrighteous bent and inclination. We have seen already the effects of this contentious spirit among the Gentiles; how it led them wickedly to repress the truth, and to reject God from their knowledge. We shall have an opportunity, ere long, of tracing the effects of this same bad principle of fallen nature, in the perverse and refractory conduct of those who were separated from the rest of mankind, to be intrusted with the revealed will of God. But to return:

Jew and Gentile, we read, must appear at the tribunal of God, to receive the just recompense of their evil deeds:

Ver. 11. "For there is no respect of persons with God."

However unequally God, as a *Sovereign*, is pleased to bestow his favours, whether spiritual or temporal, yet, when he shall appear in the character of a *Judge*, at the last day, he will proceed with each individual alike, according to the same rules of impartial justice.

Ver. 12. "For as many as have sinned without law shall perish without law: and as many as have sinned in"—or under—"the law, shall be judged by the law."

The judgment will be universal; Jew and Gentile will be equally amenable to its sentence; there being nothing

either in the ignorance of the one, or in the religious professions and privileges of the other, which can destroy their respective responsibility in the sight of God. The Gentile, who enjoyed not an express revelation of the divine will, if it be found that he has sinned—"been contentious, and obeyed not the truth, but obeyed unrighteousness"—will perish, as justice demands, without respect to any thing peculiar to that revelation which he knew not; but according to that righteous judgment which, St. Paul had before asserted, he did know. As to the Jew, if it be found that he is a sinner, that revealed law, which, together with the common obligations of piety and virtue, enacted his particular duties as an Israelite, has already denounced his condemnation; as it is subjoined in the following verse:

Ver. 13. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."

The Jews, therefore, if found sinners before God, could claim no exemption from this judgment, in virtue of that particular dispensation which distinguished them from others. For, by the very terms and conditions of their law, "not the hearers"—those who merely acknowledged its obligations, and *professed* obedience to its precepts, were to be considered as righteous; but those, and those alone, who performed, in all points, its stipulated services: all others it consigned to curse and condemnation. As it is written; "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." They, therefore, could have no just plea to advance in arrest of judgment.

Ver. 14. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature* the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

* Some would read, "Which have not the law by nature, do the things," &c. The meaning of the Apostle, I think, is not dubious;

Ver. 15. "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts; their consciences, also, bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another:"—or, as we may render the last clause, "as their conscience testifieth, and their reasonings with one another either accusing, or vindicating*."

It will be sufficiently evident to any one who attends to the argument of the Apostle in this place, that, as the 13th verse is subjoined, by way of parenthesis, to assign a reason why sinners, under the law of Moses, were not exempted from the approaching judgment; so these two verses are subjoined—as it were, a second parenthesis, to assign, in like manner, a reason why sinners of the Gentiles, who had not a revealed law, were, nevertheless, justly amenable to the same tribunal. The reason assigned is, that although they had not a revealed law, yet God had not left them without a knowledge of the guilt and desert of their evil deeds;—a knowledge sufficient to obviate every plea of involuntary ignorance.—"Knowing the righteous judgment of God, that they who did such things were worthy of death, they not only did the same, but had pleasure in them that did them."

For, continues the Apostle, when we see these Gentiles, as we do, in some instances—to a certain extent, at least—observing the grand principles of the moral law as revealed

he calls the state of the Gentiles "a state of nature," and "without law," to contrast it with the supernatural, or extraordinary dispensation under which the Jewish nation lived. Whatever light was found in the heathen world, in this state of nature, is not, certainly, to be ascribed to any other source than nature's God.—"He nurturcth the heathen," and "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." "He had not left himself without witness." If he had done more for the Jews in their *supernatural state*, he has done so much for the Gentiles in their *state of nature*, as left them without the excuse of involuntary ignorance at his just tribunal.

* "Κατηγορουμένων, accusing, and απολογουμένων, defending or answering for themselves, are forensic or law terms; and correspond to *plaintiff* and *defendant*."—TAYLOR *in loco*.

to the Jews, we have an evident proof that, in the exercise of that reason which God has bestowed upon them, they are to themselves a law. It shows that the work of the law is written on their hearts: that they have, inscribed by the hand of nature upon their minds, a sense of right and wrong corresponding to that which it was the chief object of the revealed law to inculcate. This, argues the Apostle, is attested also by their conscience. The minds of the heathen, we know, were, in their natural state, subject to be visited with remorse and inward upbraidings on account of the crimes they had perpetrated. So, also, they could exult and glory in the remembrance of their virtuous actions. This clearly bespeaks a monitor within; and a monitor not uninformed respecting the distinctions of virtue and vice.

As another proof, St. Paul points out the reasonings or disputations which the heathen often held one with another; in which, when their object was to accuse each other of sin, they could describe it in its real character, and paint its enormities in their true colours; so, when falsely accused of any crime, if some particular motive induced them to maintain their character, as was often the case, they would either vindicate themselves from the charge, or enter into an apology for their conduct; and that with all the tender sensibility and becoming indignation which a virtuous mind could be supposed to feel. This, at any rate, discovered a just sense of the evil and defilement of sin. Hence it appears, that whatever darkness did actually exist, through culpable ignorance, in the heathen world; or whatever consequences had followed from their being given up to a reprobate mind, they had, nevertheless, that knowledge of the righteous judgment of God which left them without excuse at the bar of his impartial justice.

Ver. 16. "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."

Thus have we before us a clear and unequivocal statement, that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness and truth; when not merely the outward actions of man, which form his character in the eyes of the world, will be examined, but when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and the judgment be passed according to TRUTH, as that truth is manifest in the sight of the omniscient Judge. This Judge, we are moreover informed, is Jesus Christ: the gospel preached by Paul and the other Apostles always announcing to mankind, "that it is He which was ordained to be the judge of quick and dead;" so that if men reject Christ as a *Saviour*, they will be compelled to meet him as their *Judge*—"The Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son*."

Now, if it be certain that we must all stand at the judgment-seat of Christ; and if it be also true, that, in point of fact, the guilt and depravity of man is universal and inexcusable, it follows, as a clear consequence, that, in order to meet this judgment, and escape its certain condemnation, both Jew and Gentile, if they were wise, and understood their true interests, would acquaint themselves with that goodness of God which leadeth to repentance. It becomes every individual of the human race, in these circumstances, to welcome the glad tidings of the gospel of Christ, wherein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith; and carefully to inform themselves respecting the plan devised by Almighty Wisdom to justify the sinner, in a manner agreeable to justice; so that, believing in Jesus Christ, he shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Such, if I mistake not, is the consequence which the Apostle means us to draw in this part of his Epistle. He introduces this statement of the certainty of a judgment to

* John v. 22.

come, of the universal guilt, and inevitable condemnation of mankind in the course of justice, in order to show the universal necessity of a Saviour, and of that righteousness which was of God by faith. And it seems altogether extraordinary, that some expositors should conceive the above account of the last judgment to include a description of the Redeemer's bestowing the reward of the inheritance upon his people, and that of such the Apostle speaks when he says, "To them that, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life;" "Glory, honour, and peace, to every one that doeth good."

For, most assuredly, this is not the language of the righteousness of faith, but the exact manner of speaking which the Apostle ascribes to the righteousness of the law. And though it behoves us to maintain carefully that there is an important sense, in which a believer is justified by works, yet we are instructed to observe, that this has no place in our justification *before God*; and it is manifest, that justification in the sight of God, and that alone, is the event here supposed.

To say, with some, that the good works of believers will be proclaimed at the last judgment, in order to show the justice of God in his favour towards them, is also to speak a language hardly suitable to the gospel of the Grace of God; since the *justice* of God, in bestowing the kingdom on his chosen people, is not vindicated from any superiority in their characters above others—however great that superiority must necessarily be, where divine grace has had opportunity to discover in this life its genuine influence—but from the *atonement and righteousness* of Jesus Christ, according to one of the grand doctrines taught in this Epistle.

And even should we admit that there is a cognizance to

be taken of the works of believers, in order to the adjustment of the reward of grace or of its different degrees; yet this cannot be shown to be within the scope of the Apostle's design in this place, nor can that interpretation be adopted without greatly perplexing his train of argument. For what is the design of the Apostle in this part of the Epistle, but to prove to mankind the necessity of the righteousness revealed in the gospel, by showing the insufficiency of their *own* righteousness to justify them in the sight of God, before whose tribunal both Jew and Greek, in point of fact, guilty and without excuse, must appear to be judged according to their works?

The difficulty, however, which has been started, and which has led to these forced interpretations, is, that we should find here a statement of the reward of the righteous, which, according to the law and judgment of works, is *unattainable* by fallen man. But the difficulty will vanish when we recollect that this is the uniform language of the law in Scripture. It sets before us not only death, but life. If none can possibly, in the present state of mankind, attain life thereby, as is the fact, this alters not the case, nor does it impeach the impartiality or the goodness of the Lawgiver. The universal failure arises from another cause, the universal depravity of human nature. But, though all have sinned and come short, and by the deeds of the law no flesh living will be justified; it remains, nevertheless, as true, that God will give eternal life to them that do well, as that indignation and wrath await those that do evil. In describing, therefore, the process of this judgment, it is by no means inconsistent, nay, it is proper, in order to vindicate the ways of God, to describe the reward of a righteous man; though it was known that no one would eventually attain that character; but that all would be found involved in one common charge of

guilt; since the just Judge, who awards death to the transgressors, cannot but be supposed ready to assign the reward of life to the obedient.

It must be admitted, then, that the mention of the righteous as well as the wicked, in this place, is no objection to the assertion, that the judgment of the law of works is alone treated of here, and that the passages before us have no reference whatever to the acceptance of the just by faith; except to show the necessity of such a justification, in order to our escaping certain and everlasting condemnation.

The hope of the believer is, that he shall not be accused and condemned in that fearful judgment. As he feels himself a sinner, self-convicted, he knows that the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God will be the day of wrath; but in his blessed Saviour, in whom he has believed, he contemplates that which "delivers" him "from the wrath to come." The advice of the gospel is, "Agree with thine adversary whilst thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge*," &c. The self-righteous, as we have seen, despised that goodness which called him to repentance: presuming on the issue of this judgment, at least flattering himself that some false confidence would bear him out, he seemed to challenge the examination of his Judge: but he who has been brought to a true sense of his sins, will, with cause, seek "to be delivered from his Judge;" his prayer will be "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified†."

* Matt. v. 25.

† Psa. cxliii. 2.

LECTURE V.

FROM THE SEVENTEENTH VERSE OF THE SECOND CHAPTER
TO THE FOURTH VERSE OF THE THIRD CHAPTER.

OUR attention was called, in the preceding Lecture, to the judgment of the great day, when God will render to every man according to his deeds, when the whole world will be convicted of sin, as well the professed admirers of virtue and the self-righteous Pharisees, as the most abandoned and profligate workers of iniquity. It was among characters of the former description, that St. Paul expected the chief opposition to that plan of mercy and grace exhibited in the gospel; one of the distinguishing characteristics of which was to reveal the righteousness of faith to all who felt themselves condemned by the just sentence of God's holy law.

The profligate Gentiles would, generally, be content to refuse the gospel invitation, and to follow their lawless pleasures; and what their philosophers pronounced to be foolishness, was of course not worthy *their* serious refutation: but the Jewish teachers would feel themselves attacked, and would attempt to combat, upon principle, the doctrine of this novel heresy. With the Jews the Apostle now closes in argument.

First, He charges their conscience with secret guilt, notwithstanding their professions and the purity of the moral instructions which they gave to others.

Secondly, He beats them off from their mistaken notion of their religious privileges; for, as is ever the case with the self-justifier, their claims were built, partly on moral duties, and partly on religious observances.

Thirdly, The Apostle states the true nature of these

privileges; which leads him to anticipate some strong objections, which the Jewish opponent would make to his statement.

First he charges their consciences with secret guilt.

Chap. ii. Ver. 17. "Behold,"—or, according to a more received reading,—“how if,”—or “if then—thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

Ver. 18. “And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law,

Ver. 19. “And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

Ver. 20. “An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law.”

Let us suppose, then, that you are nominally a Jew, and rest the hopes of your acceptance before God on the terms of the law; that it is your boast that he is your covenanted God, and that you are his peculiar people. Let us take for granted, that, being taught by revelation, you know the will of God more perfectly, and can explore, and form a judgment of moral truths, far beyond the understanding of the wisest among the heathen; so that you may consider yourselves as contrasted with the world around you, “guides to the blind,”—“a light in the midst of darkness,”—“instructors to the ignorant,”—“teachers to babes.” Let us acknowledge that such is your superiority over the Gentiles, because on you has been bestowed, exclusively, the privilege of receiving, by divine revelation, a transcript of the true knowledge of God; and because many more particulars respecting God’s dispensations are made known to you than either the light of nature, or the traditionary knowledge of the heathen, could ever have manifested.

Ver. 21. "Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest, A man should not steal, dost thou steal?"

Ver. 22. "Thou that sayest, A man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?"

Ver. 23. "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?"

Ver. 24. "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written."

But then, asks the Apostle, do you practise what you preach? do you act agreeably to your superior light? The Gentiles, for instance, in regard to certain dishonest practices, and in regard to incontinence, are not only very guilty in practice, but even so lax and abandoned in principle, that they seem scarcely to consider those vices as criminal: but you, instructed by the law, cannot help justly appreciating these actions; and are not indeed backward to point out their guilt. But are you at the same time clear yourselves from these sins? I mean not only so far as to support, in the presence of mankind, the character of consistent reprovers of sin; but in the presence of Him who will judge the secrets of men, by a law requiring purity in the inward parts. "To the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst unto him, and hast been partaker with adulterers*."

You again, who, from your juster notions of the Divine Being, abhor the idolatry of the heathen, do you commit sacrilege, and thus become involved in equal and similar guilt? To commit sacrilege is properly either to apply to one's private use, or divert to another purpose, what has

* Ps. l. 16, 17, 18.

been dedicated to God; to rob God of his rights. And in what did idolatry consist, but “in giving his name to another, and his praise to a graven image?”

You, continues the Apostle, glory in that covenant which God made with your fathers on the terms of the law. How vain the boast! when the curse, and not the blessing, of that law is visibly come upon you; when, by breaking that covenant, you have provoked your God so to punish you, and to give you up into the hands of your enemies, that you have not only brought disgrace upon your religion, but have even given occasion to the world at large, to think lightly of the power of that God whom ye profess to serve, and of the privilege of being his people! As it is written, Ezek. xxxvi. 10 (and the Jewish nation is now in a similar situation), “And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went they profaned my holy name, when they said to them [or concerning them], These are the people of the Lord, and are gone out of his land.” The heathen either could not, or would not understand, that their God had forsaken them for their sins; but attributed it to his want of power, that his people were driven from their country. How vain then their boast in God under such circumstances!

Such is the secret guilt, so entirely subversive of their claim to righteousness, with which the Apostle charges these proud reprovers of the sins of others. For the present, he leaves it to their own consciences in the sight of God—whether this accusation were true or not: afterwards, as we shall see, he appeals to the decisions of the Sacred Oracles themselves respecting the character of these people, and produces the sentence which God has pronounced upon them.

Paul himself had once been of the number of these self-righteous Pharisees, as zealous a contemner of the Gospel of Christ as any of them; but the same application

of the law to the thoughts and intents of the heart, which he is here endeavouring to press upon his countrymen, had discovered to him the insufficiency of his own righteousness. The command, "Thou shalt not covet," spiritually understood, had made him, who, "according to the strictest sect of their religion, had lived a Pharisee," to appear, in his own eyes, as the chief of sinners, without prospect of deliverance, but through the righteousness of that Saviour whom he had so madly reviled and persecuted.

II. But the Apostle now proceeds to beat off the Jews from those extravagant notions, which they held respecting circumcision. It appears that they imagined this sacred rite was efficacious in itself to recommend them to the favour of God, and that it placed them on a very different footing from the uncircumcised Gentiles, in regard to their acceptance with him. But St. Paul tells them, that the mere outward rite of circumcision, on which their hopes were built, made in fact no difference between them and the heathen, either in the sight of a pure and holy God, or in the prospect of the final judgment of the great day.

Ver. 25. "For circumcision verily profiteth—or, circumcision indeed does truly profit*,—if thou keep the law: but, if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision."

St. Paul does not in this place speak of circumcision according to its real and more important design and signification: as "a seal of the righteousness of faith," a sacramental sign of conversion of heart; but he considers it merely in that view wherein these Jews themselves considered it; as the initiatory rite of their religion, the bond of the Mosaic covenant, the mere badge, so to speak, of Judaism†. Reasoning upon this ground, the Apostle's

* "Circumcisio quidem." VUL.

† Thus in John, vii. 22, 23 at the same time that circumcision is carefully marked by the Evangelist as having a higher origin than

argument is, that if the engagements thereby entered into were truly performed, the right was of great importance, being a pledge of God's acceptance of them and of their services according to the terms of their law. But, on the other hand, if it should be found that they had broken these engagements, and had not performed the stipulated conditions, their bond and pledge of course were become cancelled and good for nothing.

Ver. 26. "Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?"

Is it not therefore reasonable to suppose, nay, must it not follow, since "God is no respecter of persons, but will judge every one as his work shall be," that if one of the uncircumcised Gentiles shall be found to have fulfilled the conditions of the law, though he possesses not the outward bond and seal, yet the just Judge will not reject him on that account, but will *hold himself bound* to reward him? Thus will his uncircumcision become circumcision.

Ver. 27. "And shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?"

Nay more; upon the supposition of such a fulfilment of

Moses,—“not that it is of Moses, but of the fathers,” the Jews are represented, in the scrupulous regard which they showed to this rite, as considering it a part of the Mosaic law: “ye circumcise a man, that the law of Moses be not broken.” So we find again, that when the Judaizing teachers made that disturbance in the church, by insisting on the necessity of circumcision, it was by no means in the real and spiritual view of it, afterwards explained by the Apostle. What they held was this: “Except ye be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved^a.” In this view also St. Paul considers it when, writing to the Galatians, he observes, “If ye be circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing^b.” But we may well imagine that it was not in this view of the ordinance, nor in circumstances where he could seem to countenance this notion, that he took Timothy and circumcised him, as is recorded, Acts xvi. 3.

^a Acts, xv. 1.

^b Gal, v. 2.

the moral law by an uncircumcised Gentile, would he not rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you, who, possessed of the advantages and encouragements attached to the outward dispensation of the covenant, have notwithstanding transgressed the law and broken the covenant?

So far then, it appears, was circumcision from being of any profit at the tribunal of God, to those who had been transgressors of the law, that it would in fact make them the more reprehensible! So far, on the other hand, would uncircumcision be from proving of any disadvantage to the Gentile, supposing him to have kept the precepts of the law, according to that work of the law written upon his heart, that the want of it, and of all the other encouragements, which the situation of the Jews afforded them, would be rather considered, by impartial justice, as an enhancement of his merits.

Such appears to be the meaning of St. Paul in these two last verses. Much difficulty has been created in the interpretation of them, and many erroneous notions have arisen, from considering the Apostle as taking for granted, and meaning to assert the fact, that some uncircumcised Gentiles did by nature fulfil the law. From this assumption, some have argued against the entire corruption of human nature, and the total, practical incapacity of man to attain a righteousness by the moral law; and others, to get rid of this consequence, suppose that St. Paul means a Gentile converted to Christianity: for which supposition, however, there appears not the least ground of probability, and the language would ill accord with the description which the Apostle gives us in this Epistle, of the manner in which a converted Gentile obtains righteousness.

The truth is, the Apostle, for the sake of argument only, *supposes the case*; in order to show, in a stronger point of view, the futility of that boast which the Jews made

in the mere external rite of circumcision. But that no uncircumcised Gentile, any more than any circumcised Jew, did indeed fulfil the righteousness of the law, is manifest; or else what becomes of the Apostle's conclusion, that both Jew and Gentile are all under sin; and that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God?

Nor is this hypothetical mode of reasoning at all unusual with the Apostle, that we should feel any difficulty in admitting the above interpretation. Compare only his manner of speaking of the Jews in particular, under the operation of *their* law in the thirteenth verse: "But the doers of the law shall be justified." Here it will be admitted by all, that the Apostle neither intends it should be taken for granted, nor means to assert the fact, that there were among the Jews doers of the law, and that they would in consequence be justified.

St. Paul next takes occasion to lay down a clear distinction between the real meaning and import of the terms circumcision and Jew, and their signification in that external and popular sense, in which alone the carnal Jews regarded them. And this is a distinction of no small importance for us to attend to; because there is a great resemblance between the nominal Jew and the nominal Christian, both in their misapprehension of the terms of their acceptance with God, and in the prejudices which they are naturally disposed to entertain against the pure doctrines of the gospel.

Ver. 28. "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh:

Ver. 29. "But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise—the praise of which—is not of man, but of God."

Jew and circumcision, we here learn, have a farther

and more important signification, than those who "sat in Moses' seat" were accustomed to teach. Not every member of the Jewish commonwealth, who had submitted to the outward rite of circumcision, answered to the appellations in their true and spiritual meaning, or was entitled to those privileges which might be pointed out from Scripture as belonging to the persons who bore them. A real character and inward change of heart, were in fact signified by these terms. The proof of the genuineness of Jew and circumcision in their better sense, the Apostle tells us, was not ascertainable by human approbation in accrediting the outward sign of profession; but by the approbation of God, who saw and prepared the heart. To have regularly received the outward sign satisfied men; it was indeed all that they had in their power to bestow, or had a right to demand, in order to the participation in the outward privileges of the church. But far more was required in the sight of God, and benefits of far more importance were communicated by the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit.

The real meaning of Jew is, a confessor of Jehovah, a member of the church of the true God. Such, in reality, they alone were, who worshipped God in spirit and in truth: "for God is a spirit,"—"and seeketh such to worship him." With regard to the mere outward and worldly professors of the true religion, whatever attachment or zeal they might discover for the name of Jew, we read, "They say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan*."

Agreeably to this representation, circumcision is expressly applied in Scripture to signify a change wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God: "Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart,"—"and the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, to love the Lord thy God with all

* Rev. ii. 9.

thine heart," &c. So far were the Pharisees from viewing the matter in this light, that when one of them, with a sincere desire to be taught the truth, came to our blessed Lord, he was astonished above measure at the solemn assertion that "a man must be born again." So, it may be feared, many christian teachers, for want of an experimental knowledge of what they are called to teach, have been equally perplexed about the doctrine of the new birth and spiritual regeneration: without the real experience of which—whether its external sacramental sign be "the circumcision of the flesh," or—"the baptism of water"—no one can be either a spiritual worshipper of God, or a true member of his church*.

III. The Apostle, having stated the true nature and import of these privileges, is led, in the third chapter, on which we are now entering, to anticipate some objections which he is aware his Jewish opponents would be ready to urge against his statement.

Ver. 1. "What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there in circumcision?"

This question is obviously not put respecting Jew and circumcision in their spiritual signification just mentioned; for, of the privilege and advantage of being a Jew inwardly, and of the circumcision of the heart, there could be no question: but the Apostle had made a distinction between the outward character and sign, as possessed by the Jews in common, and the inward and spiritual grace which the sacramental rites denoted, but which they did not *necessarily* convey to their possessors. This naturally leads the Jew to exclaim, What advantage is there then at all, either in being a member of the visible Jewish

* More, perhaps, must be acknowledged to be depicted in the sign of Baptism, than in that of circumcision, but the spiritual grace in both is, of the operation of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, making free from the law of sin and death—is the work of a supernatural agency.

church, or in having submitted to those ordinances which God enjoined to our fathers? To which the Apostle answers :

Ver. 2. “ Much every way: chiefly, because that to them were committed the oracles of God.”—Or, “ Much in every respect, chiefly, indeed, because to them were intrusted the oracles of God.”

In many points of view the situation of the Jews, as members of the visible church of God, was preferable to that of the Gentile nations: what these privileges were, the Apostle enumerates, chap. ix. ver. 4. He only instances, in this place, what he considered as the principal advantage, their being appointed the depositaries of the revealed will of God,—the keepers of the Holy Scriptures*.

Ver. 3. “ For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?”—or perhaps, “ For what if certain of them † have not believed? will their unbelief destroy the faithfulness of God ‡?”

Ver. 4. “ God forbid!—or, abhorred be the thought!—Yea, let God be true, but—or, and—every man a liar! as

* “ This dialogue, I cannot doubt, relates to the rejection of the Jews; which subject would have come in here naturally enough: but then it would have broken in too much upon the Apostle's argument. For which reason he doth but just touch upon it here, reserving the full consideration of it to the 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters.”—TAYLOR.

† *TIVES*, Dr. Macknight observes, is often used by the sacred writers, when, not a few, but the greater part, are intended. See Heb. iii. 16. “ For some, when they heard, provoked, howbeit not all that came out of Egypt with Moses.”—“ Some,” “ but not all.” Here *TIVES* plainly implies the greater part. Indeed we read of but two exceptions, Caleb and Joshua; though this should be understood with respect to the men capable of bearing arms. So that it seems, at that early period the true spiritual Israel must have been sought for among the women and children, the old and infirm, with a small remnant, we may hope, of the Priests and Levites.

‡ “ Nunquid in eo quòd non crediderunt fidem Dei irritam reddiderunt.” Syriae, *Schaaf*.

it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

Some difficulty has been felt in ascertaining the precise meaning of the Apostle in this passage. Two expositions have been offered of the former of these verses. The one supposes "the faith of God" to signify that faith which God had appointed to be the means of salvation. On this supposition the Apostle's meaning will be as follows: That the advantage of being in possession of the Oracles of God, which offered and pledged eternal life to those who believed them, could not be destroyed by the unbelief of that considerable body of the Jews who had rejected them: those who did believe would nevertheless obtain the blessing; and prove the method of the institutions and ordinances of the church of God.

The other exposition supposes the faith of God to signify his faithfulness to his promises and engagements—"Shall their unbelief destroy the faithfulness of God?" And this I conceive must have been the Apostle's meaning, from what follows in the next verse: "Let God be true and every man a liar." From whence it is evident, that the inference so abhorrent to his feelings, was an impeachment of the Divine Veracity. But how, it may be asked, could such an inference be drawn from the circumstance of the *unbelieving* Jews, not receiving the blessings promised "to them that *believe*?" This could neither have the appearance of calling in question the truth or faithfulness of God, nor require to be met by so solemn a protestation!

This, however, though the gloss of some Commentators, is by no means the objection which the Apostle has in view.

The reader will recall to mind, that the difficulty or objection that St. Paul, after his manner, starts, and reprobates with a "God forbid," arose from the distinctions he had laid down between a "Jew outwardly," and

“circumcision in the flesh;” and “a Jew inwardly,” and “circumcision of the heart in the Spirit.” It is supposed to be understood by the objector—as is, indeed, plainly asserted in the ninth chapter, where St. Paul again takes up the subject, and enters upon it more at large—that this distinction between the outward and the real Jew, between the carnal and the spiritual circumcision, implied a second gift of God, namely, the operation of his inward and spiritual grace. The objector supposes, and supposes with truth, that the *unbelief* of the Jews was a proof that they had not been made partakers of this grace. Their being made members of the Jewish church, therefore, together with their sign of circumcision, he argues were useless, the oracles of God could be of no advantage to them. Was there not then unfaithfulness in God, in his dealings with this deluded people?

Paul had pointed out the possession of the divine oracles as a great privilege to the Jews, even when considered in their outward capacity; but of what use were the oracles of God, the promises and covenants they contained, to those whose hearts God has not circumcised, and to whom he has not given that grace which makes the distinctions of Jew and circumcision to be realities? Did not God in this case mock them with an empty name? Did it not impeach the truth and faithfulness of God, to suppose him to invest the unregenerate with such useless and nugatory privileges?

This I conceive to be the objection which the Apostle means to obviate in this place. “For what if some, and they the most considerable part, did not believe these oracles, and, not believing them, derived no benefit from their possession; will their unbelief destroy the faithfulness of God? Does it call his good faith in question, in dealing in this manner with the children of the Patriarchs? Does it prove that God is insincere in his offers of mercy,

and that his promises, made to all generally, are vain and delusory, because without effect; where it is admitted, that to have rendered them effectual, required, in consequence of the invincible obstinacy of the human heart, another gift of God; which he was pleased to grant only to some few, and not to the general body of the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

By some, I doubt not, these objections will be pronounced unanswerable: but let us all take care how we charge God foolishly. The Scriptures make it evident, that God doth in fact hold out the possession of Revelation, and of all those privileges which the Jews once had, and which Christians now enjoy, as highly advantageous, considered in themselves; so that, for the neglect of them, men are deeply responsible. At the same time, it is equally clear from Scripture, that in the actual circumstances of mankind, without God's special grace, which is not, nor ever was designed to be the portion of all, neither Scripture, nor Sacraments, nor any ordinance whatever, will be of final benefit to the possessor, nor will in any measure screen the offender from the just recompense of his evil deeds.

Still, perhaps, these consequences will be inferred by the opponents of the gospel of the grace of God, and, it may be, by the carnal reasoning of our own hearts. The Apostle's manner of arguing supposes that a difficulty will be felt here by the human understanding: and the spirit of his instructions to the humble disciple of Christ, is, to reject with abhorrence all conclusion drawn against the truth and justice of God; but at the same time, to believe his word, even if we feel obliged to leave the vindication of its equity to his superior wisdom. "God forbid!" let God be true, and every man a liar!—with whatever difficulties, in our comprehensions, the avowed measures of God are attended, let us lay down this as an unshaken

principle: that God is true, though it should appear that the united wisdom and reason of mankind contradict him, and are unable to explain the justice and propriety of his declarations. "As it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." Whatever may be the surmises of human wisdom, when God shall condescend to explain his ways and dealings with mankind; his justice, his wisdom, his goodness, will be fully manifested, to the confusion of his puny and arrogant assailants, who have presumed to arraign the Almighty at their bar, and to enter into judgment with their Maker.

Even in human affairs, a man of very deep and extensive understanding, when acting upon a large and comprehensive view of things, will often so perplex and bewilder a man of inferior intellect and more contracted habits and means of information, as to render him for a long time incapable of forming a judgment of his measures; so that, it is not unlikely, he may be most scandalized, and most disposed to censure, in those very circumstances, where, if possessed of greater wisdom and better information, he would have felt himself most of all compelled to approve and admire. What wonder then, if in contemplating the mysteries of God, or when we read of him and of his works in the Holy Scriptures, there should be more than the human understanding can at first, or perhaps at all, reconcile with our own conception of the Divine wisdom and government.

The experienced Christian finds, as he grows in knowledge, that he can make out much which once appeared inexplicable. The wisest, however, here on earth, confessedly know only in part. But we are taught to look forward to a period, when "that which is perfect shall come," and we "shall know as we are known." Then, probably, all will be explained; and, in the mean time, the humble man

will not take offence, if he find that, to his present understanding, the paths of God, as well in the measures of his Grace as in the proceedings of his Providence, “are in the great waters, and his footsteps not known.”

And here one cannot but execrate that mode of reasoning adopted by some of the admired opponents of the doctrines of grace, who first deduce from reason what they imagine God to be,—what are his attributes,—and how, in conformity to these, he must needs act in all cases and circumstances; and then by these preconceived notions—as if “by searching they had found out the Almighty to perfection,”—regulate their belief of the mysteries of Revelation, admitting only so much as they judge suitable to the Divine character, and either contradicting or explaining away, what the Only-Wise God *ought not* to have said or done.

What more frequent than to hear such arguments as the following, in allusion to certain doctrines: “This were to represent God as partial and unjust”—“This were to ascribe to God the cruelty of a tyrant?” But most awfully do such reasoners commit themselves, even supposing, a bare possibility, that their understanding has failed in its attempt to scan the Almighty; a bare possibility that those very measures which they vilify and condemn, and which many are persuaded they read in the Holy Scriptures, should be found in the last day to have been indeed from God. Surely it were safer to take the plain and simple declarations of God’s word, however hard, and at first sight revolting to the human understanding, than to depend upon such uncertain deductions concerning God, the sufficiency of which would, indeed, have rendered a divine revelation unnecessary.

The human understanding, as we have been already taught, is adequate to discern in the works of the creation, so much respecting the attributes of the Deity, as to

infer "his eternal power and Godhead;" but, either to fathom the depth of his wisdom and knowledge, or to trace the reason of his unsearchable judgments, is far beyond its reach. "For who has known the mind of the Lord, and who has been his counsellor?" The learned Greek—and the human intellect had never attained a higher degree of cultivation than in Greece—when the things of God were related to him, called them "foolishness*." The masters in Israel, too, found Christ "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence†." What humbling lessons these, when human wisdom would attempt to reason about the things of God!

When, therefore, we see the vaunted reasoners of our day compose a God, by putting together what they conceive to be the perfection of every attribute, and demand of us that we should bow down and worship him, let us first consult the sacred scriptures; for, after all, if it speak not according to these, it is an idol and not God: it is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,—Jehovah. At the same time let us reflect how nearly does the case of the nominal christian resemble that of the Jew, if, in the external profession and outward ordinances of his religion, he has sought a refuge from the accusations of a guilty conscience; instead of seeking in Christ that better righteousness, which his gospel reveals, and experiencing in his heart that effectual grace and new birth, which makes him a christian inwardly, and gives him what the sacramental signs of the church token and seal to the faithful, and hold up to the sight of all men, as the only way of salvation to lost and helpless sinners.

* 1 Cor ii. 14. † Chap. ix. 33.

LECTURE VI.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.—FROM THE FIFTH VERSE TO THE TWENTIETH.

THE Apostle is still reasoning with the Jewish opposer of the gospel: "All were not Israel which were of Israel." All were not the objects of the distinguishing grace of God, who were taken into the bond of the outward covenant. But in his dealings with these nominal Jews, "uncircumcised in heart," the faithfulness of God would, notwithstanding, be found unimpeachable; though it is supposed that the wisdom of man *would* see cause for objection.

"Their unrighteousness would commend"—fully clear and illustrate—"the righteousness of God." The conduct of the unregenerate, while numbered with the people of God, in rejecting the offers of mercy, and abusing the privilege they enjoyed, would fully vindicate the justice of God; and would show, in the clearest point of view, the necessity of the righteousness of God by faith. Would the opposer insinuate, that, if this were the design of God, in including the unregenerate Jews within the bonds of his covenant, he could not righteously punish them for the result,—the only result which his foreknowledge could have contemplated from the measure?

On this ground the Apostle meets his opponent; which, accordingly, is the first subject which will claim our attention. We shall then follow the Apostle where he substantiates, from the word of God, that charge of guilt which he had before brought against the Jews. This will lead us to the general inference and conclusion which St. Paul draws from the foregoing reasoning—that both

Jews and Gentiles are in a state of guilt, exposed to condemnation, without any real excuse which can be pleaded in arrest of judgment; so that they must of necessity look to the gospel revelation, as the only effectual means of salvation.

I. Ver. 5. “But if our unrighteousness commend * the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? I speak as a man.

Ver. 6. God forbid! For then how should God judge the world?”

Let it be acknowledged that the end here specified is that, which divine wisdom has in fact accomplished, by so constituting the visible church on earth as to include a multitude of carnal and unregenerate persons. By their depravity, thus exposed to light; by their stubbornness, and by their constant hostility to the spirit of grace, God has indeed commended—or afforded, an evident demonstration of his righteousness! For whether, by “the righteousness of God,” we understand the justice of his judgment concerning mankind; or the righteousness, so much the subject of this Epistle, “which is by faith of God unto all and upon all them that believe;” both are commended, and, in a very conspicuous manner, set forth to public view, by the transgressions and impenitency of the “many called.”

That man is the depraved being, which God has adjudged him to be, does not appear more manifest from the abominations of the heathen, even when given up to a reprobate mind, than it does from the many sins and provocations, the constant unbelief and unfaithfulness of the children who were born to Abraham after the flesh, and invested with the religious privileges of his family. A similar reflection may be made respecting the multitudes who have since been privileged with the form of christianity,

* סקמ—*Syr.*

but who have hated its power and its light; and, living in the midst of that light, have chosen, in preference, the concealment of the kingdom of darkness.

The unrighteousness, too, of those persons who possessed every advantage and every inducement for the acquirement of moral virtue, sets in a strong point of view the necessity of the righteousness which is of God, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth.

With respect to mankind at large, ignorance, or the force of evil example, might be pleaded. But is it ignorance alone? Is it the want of more express discoveries of the divine will, or of better encouragement to virtue and religion, that is the cause that “all flesh hath corrupted its way upon the earth?” Behold an experiment made in the church! Together with the heirs of promise, numbers of others, by the constitution both of the Jewish and of the Christian church, are taken into its holy society, are invested with the same privileges, “do all eat the same spiritual meat, and all drink the same spiritual drink*.”—“Theirs is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises †.”

And what is the result of this experiment?—Read the Scripture history: read the history of the church “since the fathers fell asleep:” look at that pure and reformed part of it established in these kingdoms—for, comparatively speaking, we may use these expressions with exultation—and what shall we pronounce to be the result of this experiment? That no laws of God or man, no religious instructions or sacred ordinances, no examples of good men; neither threats nor promises; neither the prospect of hell, nor the professed expectation of eternal joys;—nothing, in short, that the Creator could do for his apostate creatures, could effectually stem the torrent of

* 1 Cor. x. 34.

† Chap. ix.

human corruption, and bring back the alienated heart of man to God.

Does this language appear too harsh and severe? Let us hear God's own declaration: "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard: *What could have been done more for my vineyard that I have not done for it? Wherefore, then, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?*" "What could have been done more?"—that is, dealing with them agreeably to their nature, in a way consistent with the established laws of that nature; for, no one can doubt the extent of the power of the Almighty, considered absolutely.

In the case before us, God could, no doubt, have regenerated and "disposed the hearts" of all these people towards the attainment of eternal life, as he had regenerated and influenced the hearts of that remnant which was among them, according to the election of grace. But the gift of regeneration belongs to an extraordinary dispensation; a dispensation affecting a few only in comparison of the bulk of mankind, at least in the present era of the history of redemption, these being selected from the rest for a special purpose, and exempted from the common law and from the general doom; though, as we shall see, by a most just and holy provision—a provision large enough to bless many of us—for, to us is this salvation sent; yea, practically, to bless every soul that repents, and believes the gospel: so that never will there be found an instance of one who asked, and had not; who sought, and did not find; who knocked, and the door of mercy was shut against him.

The results of this peculiar dispensation, however, are not to be taken into the account, when we consider God merely as the moral governor of his creatures; when we consider man—and certain of the angels, as it should seem—

about to be summoned and tried at his just tribunal, for their evil deeds and abused privileges.

He formed them as he saw proper, according to his heavenly wisdom, and has given them laws suitable to their natures; degrees of light and capacity for action, as it seemed good to him: and, speaking as the Judge of man, God has declared, that where he has given little, little will be required; but where he has given much, much will be required: and thus, of course, has he rendered it more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for those cities where his mighty works have been done; and where the pale of his church has been extended, but the proclamation of salvation has been treated with contempt or neglect.

But it might be objected by the Jew, If this be the case—if we are brought into the church to answer God's own purpose, and not for our final good, and he designs, by those very transgressions to which our sinful nature is sure to give rise under laws so holy, to set forth his own righteousness and glory,—surely you make God unrighteous in punishing these transgressions? for, because of transgression of this nature, arising out of their particular situation as the visible church of God, the Jewish nation has often smarted under his most heavy displeasure! “Is God unjust who taketh vengeance?” “I speak as a man.” That is, the Apostle anticipates what will be the seeming dictates of the human understanding.—“God forbid!” Far from it! Abhorred be the thought, that what I say should involve such a censure on the divine proceedings!

But is such an inference just?—By no means; for, if it were, how then shall God judge the world? If punishing the sins of the Jews were unjust, because, as the objection supposed, by these sins God has accomplished his own righteous ends, it would be equally unjust, and therefore a thing impossible with God, that he should judge the

world. By a divine pre-ordination, inscrutable to human comprehension, all the sins of mankind will be made subordinate and conducive to the glory of God; and will, in some way or other, answer a righteous end: and yet, as has been declared, indignation and wrath await, at the last judgment, all that have done evil.

St. Paul next proceeds to show the justice of God in such punishment; or rather, as we should be careful to bear in mind, the Holy Ghost, by his messenger, condescends to reason with us on the justice of the divine proceedings: "Are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal? O house of Israel!"

Ver. 7. "For, if the truth of God has more abounded through my lie to his glory, why am I also yet judged as a sinner?"

Ver. 8. "And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil that good may come, whose damnation," or condemnation, "is just."

St. Paul draws his argument here from an analogous case: as though he should say, Suppose, by telling a lie, or setting on foot some pious frauds, as they are called, I should promote the cause of God and of truth, so as to advance his glory:—for instance, suppose I should be the instrument of more extensively propagating his holy religion; men would not hesitate, in such a case, to pronounce me a sinner, and justly liable to punishment. Now, if a lie, when spoken with a design to promote the truth, is judged not to lose, on this account, its criminality; much less an evil deed, where no such design can be pretended, merely because that deed has been overruled for good.

"May we then say," continues the Apostle, pursuing the same mode of reasoning, "that it is lawful to do evil that good may come?" Shall we teach that pernicious

doctrine, "that the end sanctifies the means?" It appears that such principles had been actually, by the voice of slander, attributed to the Apostle: some, it seems, asserted that they were fairly deducible from his doctrines. He, however, fully agrees with his slanderers, that persons holding such principles, and acting upon them, were justly liable to condemnation. But, he argues, if you can see the justice of punishing a sin where a good design is supposed and admitted, why then question the justice of the divine vengeance on the sinner, who, with no such design, fulfils, eventually, some righteous end, which the Almighty had in view in his disposal of him, and in ordering the circumstances of his being?

Was the sin of Joseph's brethren less, in selling him into slavery, because "God meant it for good*?" Or the sin of Judas, in betraying his Master, because he did no more than accomplish that which was appointed‡? Or, on the same principle, were the Jews excusable in murdering the "Just One," "when," as St. Peter observes, "they were gathered together for to do whatsoever God's hand and his counsel determined before to be done‡?"

II. Having now cut off all shadow of excuse, and all pretence of refuge from the just responsibility of their sins, the Apostle reverts to the general subject, the actual guilt of the Jews; to prove which he appeals to the sentence of God himself in the Holy Scriptures.

Ver. 9. "What, then, are we better than they?—No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin."

If there is no excuse or privilege of exemption which will screen us Jews in the view of a judgment to come, how stands the question respecting our actual guilt? What then? Are we, in point of fact, better than the Gentiles?

* Gen. i. 20.

† Luke xxii. 22.

‡ Acts iv. 27, 28.

This the Jew certainly expected that the Apostle would admit, after the horrible picture he had given of the Gentile world: but the answer is, "No; in no wise*"—"on the whole, by no means"—"not as to the principal point in view." Shades of difference there might be, and were; but as to the grand issue, of guilty or not guilty before the righteous judgment of God, the distinctions amounted to nothing!

"For we have before proved"—or rather, "Since we have before alleged"—or "lodged an accusation to prove†," that Jews as well as Gentiles are all under sin,—in the sight of the just and omniscient Judge, are all under the condemnation of sin.

This the Apostle had asserted, chapter the second, verse the first: "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things," &c. And, in the questions St. Paul put to the Jew, in the twenty-first and following verses of the same chapter: "Thou that preachest, a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" &c.; he appealed to the secret testimony of their consciences, whether it was not so. But, whatever might be the judgment which they would pass upon themselves, he now refers to the judgment, which God himself had passed upon them in his holy word.

Ver. 10. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

Ver. 11. "There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God:

Ver. 12. "They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

* 'Ου πάντως.

† קרינו בסקן.—"We have before determined or stated."—*Syr.*
"Causati enim sumus."—*Vulg.*

Ver. 13. " Their throat is an open sepulchre ; with their tongue they have used deceit ; the poison of asps is under their lips :

Ver. 14. " Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness :

Ver. 15. " Their feet are swift to shed blood :

Ver. 16. " Destruction and misery are in their ways :

Ver. 17. " And the way of peace have they not known :

Ver. 18. " There is no fear of God before their eyes."

This estimate of the Jewish character, compared with that of the Gentiles in the latter part of the first chapter, fully proves the assertion of the Apostle, that, " upon the whole," or " as to the main point," the Jews were " by no means better than the heathen."

It is, however, important to remark, that though their guilt be equal, or, at least, equally fatal to their claims of justification in the sight of God ; yet there is a striking difference, in many respects, between the two characters. Some of those shameful abominations, which disgust us in the delineation of the Gentile character, we find here to be wholly passed over. On the other hand, guilt of another description, which the Gentiles had no opportunity of incurring, fixes an indelible stigma upon the character of these possessors of revelation ; so that, perhaps, it were difficult to say which, in the sight of God, were most criminal.

The subject now before us, we may also observe, requires particular consideration from us, who live in a nation and community professedly Christian ; for, as we have noticed before, with respect to infidels and Pagans, we occupy the same station, as did once the members of the Israelitish church, in respect of the surrounding nations. And there is too much cause to fear that the character here portrayed

bears a strong resemblance to that of the bulk of professors in many Christian nations and societies.

“There is none righteous, no, not one,” or, “no, not so much as one.” Such is the judgment of God respecting his professed people; that, with all their advantages and opportunities of instruction, and extraordinary inducements, there was no individual whatever, who had so acquitted himself, according to the rule of his commandments, as to be entitled to the reward of righteousness.

We are first referred to that inspection, which the omniscient Judge is represented as taking of his people in the fourteenth Psalm: “God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God.” And what was the result of this inquiry? “There was none that understood, there was none that sought after God; they were all gone out of the way; they were altogether become unprofitable; there was none that did good, no, not one.”

Such is the testimony of God. Though brought up under the instructions and public preaching of the word of God, there was no one who understood it; like as when the seed fell by the way-side, he whom our Lord compares to the birds of the air, had “caught it away;” or, if it had made a little impression, it was lost in the time of trial, or stifled with the multiplicity of other cares and pursuits; it was not “retained in their knowledge:” they “let it slip*” out of their minds. And how exact a description is this of the Christian world! With every means of instruction, it is found, “that the natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness to him†.” We see verified continually what was spoken by the prophet, “Let favour be showed to a wicked man, yet will he not learn righteousness; in

* Heb. ii. 1.

† 1 Cor. ii. 14.

the land of uprightness, he will still deal perversely, and will not behold the glory of the Lord*.”

There was none that sought after God.” The Heathen, as we have seen, reprobated the retaining of God in their knowledge, and chose in preference the abominations of idolatry. The possessors of revelation showed, on many occasions, a strong inclination to follow their example, and often actually burst the bands, “and bowed the knee to Baal!” But even in the times of their highest profession, when they abominated an idol, they could not be brought to cultivate the knowledge of God with true devotion of heart and love of truth; so that to every saving purpose, except where the special grace of God corrected their natural propensities, they knew no more of God than the Heathen. “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider †.” In the same strain the Prophet Jeremiah: “Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord ‡.”

“They are all gone out of the way:” they had receded from the prescribed rule of God’s holy word, both in faith and practice, had “altered the law, and broken the everlasting covenant.” How often did this take place among the Jews, who had every inducement, temporal and spiritual, to preserve the truth inviolate, and to observe its precepts! Indeed their history is filled with little else than accounts of their backslidings and corruptions, after the repeated restorations, which the mercy of God from time to time effected for them, when “he pitied their misery,

* Isaiah, xxvi. 10.

† Isaiah, i. 1, 2, 3.

‡ Jer. viii. 7.

and wrought for his own name sake." On such occasions, the Psalmist reflects, "They believed his words, and sang his praise: they soon forgot his works, they waited not for his counsel, &c. *." And since the incarnation of the Son of God, and the establishment of the Christian Church, universal experience has shown, for how short a time the true doctrines of God can be maintained in purity, or *his* word abide the rule of practice, among any people. Frequently has it happened, at those seasons of revival which God brings about in his church, that the truths of the gospel have been agreed upon, as the common faith, and perhaps interwoven with the laws of the state; and yet again and again has it been seen, even while the public formularies remain unaltered, that the religious principles of the people have undergone a total change; so as to exhibit a scene of inconsistency, unknown under other systems of religion, which men have adopted and entailed upon their posterities. "The words of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons—are performed:—notwithstanding, I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking, but ye harkened not to me †."

"They are altogether become unprofitable." All, as one man, are become unprofitable, rancid, or useless. To refer to a metaphor of our Lord's: "The salt hath lost its savor, and henceforth is profitable for nothing." What so detestable as a decayed professor? what so distressing as the sight, where, after much promise, the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things, choke the word, so that it matures no fruit?

"There is none, not so much as one, that doeth good;" who practises that kindness and benevolence which is so particularly characteristic of the real child of God. And what is the reflection that forces itself upon us, in contemplating the conduct of many christian professors? They pro-

* Psa. cvi. 12, 13.

† Jer. xxxv. 14.

fess, indeed, a religion of mercy, but they show no deeds of mercy: as the wicked servant, who had been forgiven his ten thousand talents, went out from the presence of his lord, and exacted with rigor and harshness his pence from his fellow-servant; so, while they profess to believe a religion, which teaches them that all their sins are forgiven on their earnest supplication, they can depart from the throne of Grace, and on the very first provocation, forget to shew that goodness to others which God had shown to them. These are not they which “have obtained mercy,” but, “with the same measure that they mete, shall it be measured to them again*,” they are those “who shall have judgment without mercy, for they have showed no mercy †!”

St. Paul next adduces a proof from the fifth Psalm: “Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongue have they used deceit.” A striking description of an unregenerated heart, awkwardly accommodating its language to the profession of a pure religion: every now and then, evidences of the corrupt state of the affections, and of the spiritual death and corruption of the soul, will vent themselves in his conversation, like the stench from the opened sepulchre!

Again, from the hundred-and-fortieth Psalm: “The poison of asps is under their lips.” Evil speaking and slandering is very frequently mentioned in Scripture in terms of the most pointed caution; and this vice does often in fact betray the unregenerated heart, even where the profession of religion in the outward conduct is, in many respects, consistent and conspicuous.—“The cruel venom of asps” is but too true an emblem of the mischief conveyed by the secret slanders of many a canting hypocrite!

“Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.” The whole of the third chapter of St. James may be referred to, as a comment upon these words. How often, indeed,

* Matt. vii. 2.

† James, ii. 13.

has it been seen, that under the most eminent profession of religion, and under the pretence and most confident persuasion of zeal in the cause of God, a secret vent has been found for some of the worst and most malevolent affections of the human heart! Such was the case in respect of the Jewish bigots. "Pleasing not God, and contrary to all men*," we hear them, in the bitterest rancor of heart, denouncing curses and damnation on all around them. And is not exactly such the case with numbers of controversialists—masters and promoters of sects and religious parties, in this present day, to the great disgrace of the Christian name?

"Their feet are swift to shed blood;" or, to read the whole passage as it stands in the Prophet Isaiah*, "their feet run to evil, they make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths; whosoever goeth therein, shall not know peace." The rest of the chapter may serve as a further comment. The whole is a picture, drawn by an unerring hand, of the state of religion and morals among the Jews; and will be found applicable to the character of those nations, who have been distinguished from others by the possession of a Divine Revelation, in every age of the world, and in every state of society.

It has ever been made to appear, that, though kept in general from plunging into those excesses of vice and uncleanness, that were the abominations of the heathen; and though the sanctions of the moral law were avowed and outwardly revered; yet, that nations, professing the gospel, still possessed the same natural propensities, and could in another way, though not so overtly yet as entirely, cast off the fear of God from before their eyes—of *those*, it was said, "they were full of murder,"—of *these*, "their feet were swift to shed blood."

* 1 Thess. ii. 16.

† Chap. lix.

The life of a fellow-creature, we know, was held very cheap among the heathen; as is illustrated by many of their histories. Their cruelties to captives taken in war, the unfeeling exposure of children, the fact that, in the combats of the gladiators, numbers of poor creatures were every year murdered as a spectacle exhibited for their amusement; these circumstances stamp the character of the heathen as *murderous*, to a degree unknown in the worst state of things among those who have lived under the establishment of revealed religion.

But at the same time, when we reflect upon the blood that has been shed either at the command of tyrants, or in popular commotions, both among Jews and Christians; when we remark the readiness and evident delight with which, for the most trifling causes, bloody and destructive wars have been waged; and also when we notice the levity of mind and unconcern, with which lives are squandered in wars admitted to be just and necessary, we must acknowledge the judgment true: "Their feet run to evil, they are swift to shed blood."

Such, then, was the sentence which the Sacred Oracles, of which they were the keepers, had pronounced upon the Jews.

III. This leads us to the general inference and conclusion, which the Apostle draws from what has been said, that both Jews and Gentiles are in a state of guilt; and according to the operation of the moral law and in the natural course of justice, must inevitably fall under the sentence of eternal wrath.

Ver. 19. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped,—or, so that every mouth must be stopped, and all the world may become—or, must be pronounced, or, must be brought in guilty before God."

There can be no doubt that these declarations of the Divine judgment, which have just been adduced from the law, that is, from the Old Testament Scriptures in general, are pronounced on *them* who lived under that dispensation; even on these self-justifying Jews, who made their boast of the law, and went about to establish their own righteousness. These persons, then, whatever they might think of themselves, were in the estimation of God guilty, and exposed to condemnation.

The guilt of the Gentiles was stated in the first chapter. It followed of course, that both Jews and Gentiles, in other words, all mankind, were "under sin:" that every mouth must be stopped, and all claims to righteousness, all excuses and palliatives of guilt, must be rejected. Neither the plea of ignorance made on behalf of the heathen, nor the pretence of peculiar privileges set up on the part of the Jew, can be heard in arrest of judgment.

In regard to the Gentiles, the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who wickedly had suppressed the truth which nature itself would have taught them.

With regard to those who were under the law, and possessed of the external privileges of the church of God, we have seen, from that law, God's declared opinion concerning them; that they were "on the whole, as to the principal point at issue, by no means better than the Gentiles." And who shall dare to reply against the decision of the Omniscient Judge? or, who can hope for any other issue, than what he has afore declared, when the books shall be opened in the day of the final judgment?

It is therefore ascertained, beyond all doubt, that the whole human race are involved in guilt, and are all, without exception, obnoxious to eternal death, the penalty of their transgressions.

Ver. 20. "Therefore, by the deeds of the law there

shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

The consequence is undeniable. If the moral law, whether the work of it written upon the Gentile's heart, or the more correct transcript of it which formed the basis of the Jewish dispensation, be applied to determine the righteousness or unrighteousness of mankind, no individual person, either among the Jews or among the Gentiles, can be adjudged righteous. Nay, so far from it, "that by the law is the knowledge of sin;" that is, wherever the law is applied as a rule and balance of human actions, whether now in the enlightened conscience, or in the terrible day of account when the books shall be opened, it discovers every where some deviation from its righteous and holy standard.

Suppose, indeed, the actual guilt and total depravity of mankind, and the result is clear. The law, therefore, not only cannot justify, but must condemn; and "till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled*." They who slighted and despised the proffered mercy, and who chose rather to stand upon their own righteousness, were but in fact "treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath."

But are we to suppose, it has been asked, that in the estimate of the Gentile character in the first chapter, and in that of the Jews just taken, the Apostle means to include every individual, absolutely and without exception? "It might apply," it has been said, "to the general character of the bulk of the Jewish and Gentile people; but we know, both from profane and sacred history, that there were exceptions: among the heathen, persons who loved and cultivated virtue; among the Jews, characters eminent for piety and commended by God himself."

* Matt. v. 18.

In regard to the meaning of the Apostle there can be no doubt. His argument requires the fact of the absolute and universal, not merely the general guilt of mankind; for this could not lead to the conclusion that, "by the work of the law, *no flesh* could be justified."

To say that the conclusion, as well as the premises, may be taken in a general sense only, is to divest it of all sense whatsoever; for, of the very general guilt of mankind, neither Gentile nor Jew would probably have any doubt. The question would entirely relate to persons who, in profession and external habit, stood aloof, as it were, from the general body of the people. These, in fact, were the only candidates who laid claim to the righteousness of the law. The general guilt of mankind, they would not dispute; on the contrary, they much plumed themselves upon the contrast between themselves and the rest of the world. The highest of these pretenders took, indeed, their name, that of Pharisee, from this very circumstance of their claims to sanctity above the mass of their countrymen. "This people which know not the law are accursed," was their proud reflection on one occasion. They would have felt little affected with the argument of the Apostle, if it went only to show that the bulk of the Jewish nation, in some particular ages, had been corrupt and condemned by their own law! Besides, has not the Apostle expressly challenged these supposed exempted characters? "*O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest!*"

We are fully warranted, therefore, to conclude, that, in these judgments, every individual person, Jew or Gentile, was intended to be included: *more or less, indeed, when compared one with another; but invariably to that degree which precludes justification in the sight of God.*

If pressed with the case of the virtuous heathen, we must answer, on the evidence of the decision here recorded, that, however brilliant their characters are made to appear

to us by the report of their contemporaries, yet they could not stand the scrutiny of the Divine Judgment. This judgment, we may be well satisfied, goes upon surer grounds of evidence, than the testimonies of erring mortals, who see not the heart.

With respect to the Scripture characters, our answer is, that they were justified by the righteousness of faith. According to the law, they were under the curse; but, being redeemed from the curse of the law, and sanctified by divine grace, being made Jews inwardly, having their hearts circumcised to love God, they “ worshipped him in spirit and in truth.”

Should it be asked again, whether there might not be some characters of this description among the Gentiles, and whether the moral virtues of the more eminent of the heathen might not be the fruits and evidences of a regenerating work of the Spirit? we may observe, in answer, that with God, most certainly, nothing is impossible; that we are confessedly ignorant of many of his proceedings: he might, for aught we know, have had a secret reserve among the heathen.

But it must at the same time be acknowledged, that the Scripture no where countenances the supposition of there being a “ remnant according to the election of grace,” among the heathen nations; as it attests there was, in the worst of times, among the Jews. It seems rather, in its general language, to suppose the contrary: and there appears a difficulty, to us inexplicable, though not for that reason insurmountable, in conceiving how, upon Scripture principles, the Gentiles, after the time of their refusing to retain God in their knowledge, could have been righteous by faith, since they had no word of God to be the occasion of that faith.

Divines, indeed, talk of a spirit of faith, by which they mean a disposition of mind ready and prepared to believe,

should the word be brought to their knowledge. But this notion is not clear from Scripture. The regenerating influences of the Holy Ghost, by which that disposition could alone be produced—since man “cannot of his own natural strength and good works turn to faith,”—are uniformly in Scripture represented as accompanying the hearing of God's word. Hence this operation of the Spirit is termed “a call,” and we are said “to be begotten by the word.”

If any amongst us, however, feel disposed to indulge the thought, that, among the heathen nations, there might be a secret mode of conveying the virtual and sanctifying influences of the great propitiatory sacrifice, as in the case of infants, of whom the Redeemer himself has said, “Of such is the kingdom of God,” I do not feel zealous to oppose their notions. But only let them be held with extreme diffidence and hesitation, as becomes the occasion; not in that affectation of liberality of thinking, which discovers itself in some; which liberality, if untrue, may prove cruel and disastrous to its objects: not so as to induce us to lightly estimate the means of grace, and those privileges with which Christian nations are alone invested; not so as to sooth our pity for the perishing state of the heathen, to cast a damp upon the zeal of the laborious missionary, or to withhold our support from him in his charitable, but arduous undertaking.

We know St. Paul's view of the heathen world: “How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?” And when, let the depositaries of ministerial trust reflect, did the commission of the Chief Shepherd terminate, with which he charged his Apostles, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature: he that believeth

and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned ?”

With these views, and with this commission, as we have seen, St. Paul went forth; holding himself debtor to Greek and to barbarian, to wise and to unwise; anxious to preach the gospel every where, from the thorough persuasion that the gospel was the appointed and only powerful means of saving a lost world; because that gospel revealed to mankind the righteousness of God by faith—the method of a sinner’s justification before the Holy and Just God: while all mankind, as well the heathen as those who possessed the revealed religion, were destitute of righteousness in themselves and from their own works, were all, equally, without excuse or plea of exception, awaiting an awful and righteous judgment.

Respecting these truths, this part of the Epistle, which we have already considered, has most distinctly informed us. The next portion of the Epistle will explain to us particularly, in what consists that other righteousness, which may shelter the penitent from the curse of a broken law, take away the sting of death, and entitle him to a share in the resurrection of the just.

LECTURE VII.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.—FROM THE TWENTY-FIRST TO THE TWENTY-SIXTH VERSE.

IN the beginning of these Lectures, from considerations which, it was presumed, would preclude all appearance of improper comparison, we ascribed to the apostolic Epistles the first degree of rank and importance among the Oracles of God; and among the apostolic Epistles, to this of St. Paul to the Romans.

Were the selection to be continued further, perhaps, of individual passages, that before us would be fixed upon as of all others the most important for man to know. For it contains an account of the doctrine of a sinner's justification before God: it acquaints us how man, though guilty and condemned by the righteous law, may yet, upon an equitable plan of God's devising, "of unjust be made just before him;" so that, as to the final issue, it will be as though he bore away the palm of merit from the judgment-seat. Not only are his sins forgiven, and the punishment due to his transgressions remitted, but he receives "a crown of righteousness" from the hands of the righteous Judge.

The doctrines already considered—the depravity of human nature, the actual and inexcusable guilt of all mankind, with the certainty of an impartial and unavoidable judgment to come—are doubtless most important to be known. But, alas! what avails the knowledge, unless some method of obviating this depravity, of cleansing this guilt, and of escaping this terrible judgment, can be shown?

Most important too are the truths afterwards related in this Epistle: the present peace and future glory of the

righteous, God's unchanging love to them, and their unconquered love to him! We shall seem, indeed, in some respects to be ascending in the scale of the excellency of divine knowledge; but the doctrine of a sinner's justification is of *all* doctrines the most important. It is the foundation, the corner-stone of all our religious hopes. For, while we stand charged with guilt, what to us are all the privileges and happy experiences of the righteous? Unless, by some means, we can be satisfied of our acceptance with God, we read but of the enjoyments and expectations of others, while we ourselves are miserable, more miserable from the contrast!

When, however, I argue the importance of the passage before us, from the subject which it unfolds, I cannot of course be understood to imply, that in this passage alone the subject of the justification of guilty mortals is treated: for no truth is, in fact, so often insisted upon in the New Testament, so often published to the world, so often explained to the disciples. But there is, perhaps, no passage where the subject is so fully developed, so systematically detailed, as in the one which will now occupy our attention. St. Paul is here treating, professedly, upon the nature of a sinner's justification before God: he comes, in the order of the topics which his Epistle was designed to embrace, to give an explanation of this fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion.

That this is the case will appear evident, if we carefully notice the connexion of this part of the Epistle.

At its commencement nearly, the Apostle had stated that the peculiar efficacy of the gospel dispensation consisted in its "revealing the righteousness of God from faith to faith." Hence it was, that it became the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believed*. He did not, however, in that place, explain either what that righteous-

* Chap. i. ver. 16, 17.

ness was, or wherein it consisted: but in addressing himself both to the Gentile world and to the professing church of the Jews, he endeavoured to convince them, from the light of nature and revelation, that they were both guilty and amenable to judgment, and must equally despair, in the course of justice, of escaping condemnation and eternal misery. Having finished his statement of these important facts, so necessary to make men feel their want of a Saviour, and properly to appreciate the value of the salvation offered, the Apostle now returns again to this great subject of the gospel revelation:—having shown the universal danger, he now points out the only remedy.

Ver. 21. “But now the,”—or, more correctly, “a—righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the Prophets:

Ver. 22. “Even a righteousness of God, *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe. For there is no difference.

Ver. 23. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Ver. 24. “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Ver. 25. “Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

Ver. 26. “To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.”

“But now a righteousness without law is manifested.” Observe the contrast*. A righteousness of the law has

* This contrast one would have supposed sufficient to prevent that unnatural gloss of Dr. Taylor, that by *δικαιοσύνη*, when applied to God, as in the passage before us, may be signified goodness, kindness, benignity, mercy, favour. It is true the Septuagint version employs this

been before described by the Apostle in the second chapter. This righteousness, both as it respected the Gentile and the Jew, consisted in performing the deeds of the law. The supposition in regard to the uncircumcision is, "if it fulfil the law*:" in like manner, of the circumcised, "The doers of the law shall be justified†:" for the Apostle had shown that the Gentiles, though not under the Jewish dispensation, had the "matter of the law" written upon their hearts.

But, as we have just seen, by the operation of this law, all the world was, in point of fact, become guilty before God. The law, therefore, though it was still supposed to contain an offer of life, in the existing circumstances of human nature, could only discover sin, and award its punishment. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified."

But now, "a righteousness of God without the law‡,"

term with a latitude not easy to be accounted for, as they use it to translate both צדקה and חסד. But no two terms can have their meanings more distinctly marked, in the original Hebrew, than these, and few words are of more frequent occurrence. And צדקה, like Δικαιοσύνη in the New Testament, can never be made to convey necessarily, or even with probability, the meanings given above. How the authority of the Septuagint ought to be estimated in this case, let the Doctor himself determine; "but we can hardly suppose so good a scholar as St. Paul, who was perfectly acquainted with the Scriptures in the original Hebrew, nor indeed any of the Apostles, would rest their arguments upon a *translation*, or risk their reputation, by making themselves answerable for all the faults that might be in it. They quote it indeed; but, I suppose, no otherwise than as they would have quoted our English translation, had they wrote their letters in English to the inhabitants of Great Britain; not so much to adopt the sense of the translation, as to refer to the passage of Scripture.—Where the Hebrew and Greek differ, I cannot find the Apostles ever argue from the Greek. It is upon this ground, that, for my own part, I pay no regard to the words of the Septuagint, as quoted in the New Testament. The Hebrew is my standard; because I am persuaded it was so to the Apostles." TAYLOR'S *Notes to the Romans*, p. 262 (chap. iii. ver. 4.)

* Ver. 27. comp. 26.

† Ver. 13.

‡ Χωρίς νόμου δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ.

apart or separate from it—a righteousness which, as it respects the receiver of it from the hand of God, consists not in fulfilling the law, or in doing its works—a righteousness so distinct and remote from all consideration of our obedience to the law, that by supposition it may become the portion of those very persons who, by the law, are condemned as unrighteous.

It is called the “righteousness of God;” by which appellation it is still further distinguished from the righteousness of the law. Had man been pronounced righteous, as a doer of the law, that righteousness had, with strictest propriety, been called man’s own righteousness, since it would have consisted in his own actions; and, however assisted, have been the fruits of his own exertions. Thus the contumacious Jew, who refused to submit to God’s righteousness, is represented by the Apostle as “going about to establish his own righteousness *”—“He sought it not of faith, but as it were by the deeds of the law †.” The righteousness, therefore, observe, which we are now to consider, is not of man’s own performing, but is God’s righteousness. It is his gift to man, and consists, as we shall see, in the sufferings and merits of another, graciously imputed to the believer in Christ.

Further we are told, that as to the existence of such a righteousness, though a righteousness without law, both the law and the Prophets bear witness. The law, by the injunction of those figurative rights which were connected with its moral precepts, was rendered, as we are elsewhere taught by the Apostle, “a schoolmaster to lead men to Christ, that they might be justified by faith †.”—“Christ was the end of the law, for righteousness to every one that believed ‡.”

As to the Prophets, their continual theme was Christ—

* Chap. x. ver. 3.

‡ Gal. iii. 24.

† Chap. ix. ver. 32.

§ Gal. x. 4.

his righteous character, his undeserved sufferings, and the glory that should follow; subjects nearly connected with the righteousness in question, and by which in fact it was accomplished and wrought out. Nay more; the Prophets assert, in plain terms, that “the righteousness” of the people of God should be “of him*;” and that the promised Messiah should be that righteousness†! They describe him as “wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities:” the chastisement whereby our peace was procured, as being laid upon him, so that by his stripes we are healed.—He, “the righteous servant” of the Father, was to justify many, for he was to bear their iniquities‡.”

The Apostle, as we have intimated before, whenever he mentions this righteousness of faith, is careful to remind the Jews that it was no new invention; but that, though now more fully explained by the gospel, the very same method of justification was taught in their Scriptures. This righteousness is in the following verse further designated, as being “by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe;” as the Apostle had said in that part of his Epistle just referred to, in the gospel of Jesus Christ “is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith.” Interpreters do not seem to be agreed in regard to the precise meaning and distinct signification of the Greek prepositions in these passages; but we are by no means left to an uncertainty, how the righteousness of God is to the believer “by faith of Jesus Christ:”—how it “is revealed” in the gospel “from faith to faith;” and comes “unto all and upon all them that believe.”

The nature of saving faith and the office assigned to it in the justification of a sinner, I have reserved for the following Lecture, and shall only here notice, that God has appointed faith as the means whereby we are to receive

* Isa. liv. 17.

† Jer. xxvii. 6.

‡ Isa. liii.

“the gift of righteousness” from the God of our salvation: so that though he imputeth righteousness without works, yet he doth not impute it without faith. Hence it is called both “the righteousness of God,” and “the righteousness of faith *;” that is, “the righteousness which is of God by faith:” and hence the “faith” of the believer is said “to be imputed to him for righteousness.” We are said both to be “justified by faith;” that is, as another Scripture explains, “by grace through faith †.”

We shall not, therefore, I think, be far from the meaning of the Apostle, whether we understand him, with Mr. Locke, to say in the former passage, that in the gospel “the righteousness which is of the free grace of God, through Jesus Christ, is revealed to be wholly of faith;” or whether we adopt the interpretation of Dr. Macknight, “for the righteousness of God by faith is revealed in it, in order to faith.”

In explaining the original ‡ of the passage before us, we may also adopt the exposition of either of these authors: “The righteousness of God,” says Mr. Locke, “by faith in Jesus the Messiah, is extended to, and bestowed on, all who believe in him.” Is “graciously counted unto all, and rewarded upon all who believe,” according to Macknight. Perhaps, however, from a recollection of the Scripture metaphor, wherein righteousness, as the gift of God, is compared to a robe or garment of state and ceremony, some will prefer this idea, referring to the beautiful language of the Prophet: “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness §.”

For there is no difference, continues the Apostle; “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” He

* Chap. iv. 6, 13.

+ Chap. iv. 5.

‡ *Εἰς πάντας καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας.*

§ Isa. lxi. 10.

is speaking of believers, who do in fact obtain righteousness. The inquiry is, How do they obtain this righteousness? Considered in themselves, they are all alike guilty and condemned by the law; there is in this respect no difference or distinction between them.

Whatever might have been the different degree of their criminality and allotted punishment, had God entered into judgment with them, and had they received the just recompense of their evil deeds; yet as to the general issue of that judgment, as to the justification or condemnation by the works of the law, all were adjudged to have sinned, and to have come short of the glory of God; they had failed both of attaining the approbation of their Judge, and of glorifying their Creator. Hence it followed, that in the view of God, in justifying them by faith, they were all, without difference or distinction, considered as sinners: "by nature the children of wrath even as others," and justly condemned for their evil deeds.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is by Christ Jesus." Here, then, we have, plainly unfolded to us, the mystery of the righteousness which is of God by faith of Jesus Christ. We are told the manner in which a guilty sinner comes to be esteemed righteous, or to be justified in the sight of God, and also the means whereby this justification of the guilty has been procured, and rendered consistent with divine justice:—*by grace, through a redemption.*

But before we enter upon the consideration of this momentous subject, it may be useful to inquire into the exact meaning of the term *justification*, so often used to express the immediate effect of the gift or imputation of righteousness.

Justification is commonly said to be a juridical or forensic term—a term used in relation to the proceedings of justice. "If," says the law of Moses, "there be a con-

troversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked*." In the dedicatory prayer of Solomon, the same meaning is distinctly marked: "Hear thou in heaven and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked to bring his way upon his head, and justifying the righteous to give him according to his righteousness †." These passages do indeed exhibit to us the exact notion of justification; only it should be noticed, that the cases alluded to are not such as occur in the usual course of *penal* justice: they are rather causes to be tried between two parties, who appeal, in their dispute, to the decision of the judge; the judge, in his sentence, declaring who is the righteous man, and who the transgressor, vindicating the one in his rights, and pronouncing the penalty to be inflicted on the other.

In cases of this sort, *justification* is the proper term used in opposition to *condemnation*. But this does not hold true in the usual proceedings of the courts of criminal justice. Here a case cannot occur in which any thing perfectly analogous to justification, as used in a theological sense, can take place. A felon is condemned or he is acquitted, being pronounced guilty or not guilty of the crime laid to his charge: but this declaration of the innocency of the accused, though a justification from the imputation of the crime, does not reach the full meaning of justification as used above. And especially after the guilt of the prisoner has been ascertained, which ought to be the supposition in order to render the analogy perfect, the term justification is totally inapplicable to his case. If any thing is either urged to extenuate his guilt, or is pleaded from his former merits in mitigation of his sentence, it pretends not his justification. He may be pardoned: he may be absolved from pains and penalties: he

* Deut. xxv. 1.

† 1 Kings, viii. 32.

may be restored, by an act of grace, to the possession of his forfeited rights and privileges: but all this is very far remote from the notion of his *justification*. The culprit is not justified “as a righteous man, to give him according to his righteousness:” nor is there any *supposition* of this sort in the lenity or favor shown him.

What is called an honourable acquittal in a court-martial, bears a much stronger resemblance to the justification concerning which we are inquiring; especially in those cases, which are not of unfrequent occurrence, where the prisoner stands to be tried not simply, upon a specific charge which has been brought against him; but where he joins issue with the public accuser, whether or not he has done his duty, every thing that could with justice have been expected from his character and situation, and the means and powers with which he had been intrusted. The decision of the judges in this case will be, either that he has been deficient in the duties of his place and station, and is therefore obnoxious to condemnation, or that he is honourably acquitted; not acquitted simply, as a prisoner might be of crimes falsely laid to his charge, or not proved against him, but acquitted with honour. He is adjudged not only to have done no wrong, but to have done well: to have ably and fully performed his duties, and that too, it may have been, in hazardous and critical circumstances, so as justly to have entitled him to rewards and honours from his employers, to the stipulated wages at least of his services.

Now, it will be recollected, it is in very similar circumstances that man, at the termination of his career, stands in judgment before his God. The question is not as to guilt or innocence on some particular charge; but whether, “by patient continuance in well-doing, he has sought for glory, and honour, and immortality:” or whether he has been “contentious, and obeyed not the truth, but obeyed

unrighteousness:" whether he has performed all that his Maker may justly require of him, in order to his fulfilling the purpose of his creation, or whether he has sinned, and come short of the glory of God," has been deficient in his duties, and faithless in the exercise of those talents with which he was intrusted. Such is the nature of the trial at the tribunal of the Divine justice; and according as a man's work shall be, he is either condemned or he is justified, and receives, in consequence, punishment or reward.

Let us now further suppose, that, in the judicial process above referred to, an instance should occur, where, through the undue favour and partiality of the judges, a person altogether undeserving, a person in the highest degree criminal, obtains a decision for his acquittal; so that, by the sentence of the court, he is not only vindicated from all blame, but actually pronounced worthy to be remunerated with the rewards of valour and merit.

In this case we should have, I conceive, the exact counterpart of the *justification of a sinner*. An offender deserving of punishment is accounted just and meritorious, and is treated accordingly. The iniquity of the judges would be indeed most flagrant; and "he that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord*." But, as we are proceeding to notice, it is part of the mystery revealed in the gospel, "how God is just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly:

"Being justified freely by his grace,—Through the redemption which is by Christ Jesus."

First, then, if you regard the transaction as it respects the prisoner and Judge: the guilt of the former is supposed and avowed; the sentence which pronounces him righteous, which justifies the sinner, is a mere gratuitous

* Prov. xvii. 15.

act of the judge; and the motive of this procedure is drawn from no circumstances of comparative merit or demerit in the case of the favoured offender.

The words “freely,” and “by his grace,” in the original* denote, as strongly as terms can convey, the notion of a perfectly gratuitous act, both as to the mode of its conveyance, and the motive for which it was vouchsafed. It is granted as a free gift, for which the justified sinner is indebted solely to the favour and good pleasure of the giver. To be saved by grace, in the phraseology of the Apostle Paul, does not imply merely that the terms and conditions of salvation are, on the whole, favourable to man; or that the reward may be said to be of grace, because there is no proportion between the value of the wages, and the service they remunerate: but salvation by grace excludes the notion of remunerating any stipulated services, or any work whatever.—“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work †.” “Now, to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, *his* faith is counted for righteousness.”

So that, according to these distinctions of the Apostle, had a work or service been the stipulated condition of justification, it would not, in his sense of the word, have been of grace. Man is justified by faith alone; and the act of faith is made the constituted medium whereby man receives the gift of righteousness; for this very reason, as St. Paul assures us, because it destroys not the gratuitous nature of the gift.—“Therefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace ‡.”

* Δωρεάν, τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι.

† xi. 6.

‡ iv. 16.

In St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, we have another statement of the doctrine of salvation by grace, which will fully corroborate the interpretation we have given of the passage before us: "And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But 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 ye are saved, &c.

Thus it appears that the primary cause of a sinner's salvation, justification by faith being an eminent part of that salvation, is the love of God the Father, graciously fixed upon the undeserving—on those that were in a state of enmity against him. He pities them; he chooses them of his "mere accord;" he exempts them from the course and operation of the law; he imputes to them righteousness; he authoritatively, in the character of "the Judge of all the earth," pronounces them just and righteous, and deals with them accordingly. And in this procedure he allows us to speak of him as of "HIM THAT JUSTIFIETH THE UNGODLY."

How such a measure can be reconciled with what we are elsewhere taught to conceive of the inviolate justice of the Deity, his never-changing hatred of sin, and most strict impartiality in judgment, we come in the second place to inquire, as we proceed to attend to St. Paul's account of the means, or meritorious cause, whereby this justification of the guilty has been procured—"Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And here we are called upon to contemplate, in our view of the economy of grace, at once, a tremendous display of strict and impartial justice, and of amazing pity and love—of excusing mercy and distinguishing favour!

Redemption, according to its usage in the sacred writings, is a term which, in its most extensive signification, compre-

* Chap. ii. 3, 4, 5.

hends the whole of that salvation which has been or shall be accomplished for us by the Saviour of mankind*. But the particular view which the Apostle takes of redemption in this passage, is clearly pointed out in the following verses: “Whom God had set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus†.”

* It answers both to the נֹאֵלָה and to the פְּדוּיָה of the Old Testament; the former of which terms designates the interference of a kinsman in behalf of his injured or unfortunate relation; and that whether he was to ransom him from captivity, to attempt his deliverance by force, or to avenge his blood upon his murderer. And in a sense analagous is the term applied to the interpositions of Jesus Christ in the affairs of men, his acknowledged brethren: he is their ransomer, their deliverer, and the avenger of their wrongs.

† The passage before us is thus stated by Dr. Magee: “Whom God had set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness (or, as Primate Newcome rightly renders it, to show his method of justification) for the remission of past sins, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness (or, as before, to show his method of justification): that he might be JUST and (at the same time) the JUSTIFIER of him that believeth in Jesus.”—Vol. ii. p. 83.

Or, if we may venture to adopt, as I think we may, the mode of punctuation suggested by Griesbach: “Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith,—in his blood to *make* a manifestation of his righteousness (or justice) in respect of the passing by of sins which have been done^a (or which were before committed). In (or through) the forbearance of God, for a manifestation of his righteousness (or justice) at this time^b, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him who is of the faith of Jesus.”

From the ancient Syriac the following translation may be given:

^a See Macknight and Parkhurst; and compare Micah, vii. 18: “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?”

^b Compare 1 Pet. i. 20: “Who verily was fore-ordained, before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”

It is obvious that the view here taken of the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, or that part of it which the Apostle has in his eye, is his being set forth to be a propitiation for the remission or passing by of sins; and it is evident that St. Paul represents this propitiation to be of such a nature, as fully to demonstrate the righteousness of God;—that he is just, and at the same time the justifier of the sinner, being of the faith of Christ Jesus. As the same Apostle writes to the Ephesians*: “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” The truth, therefore, is undeniable, whatever obscurity may be attempted to be thrown upon some expressions in the language of the passage before us, that the forgiveness of sins which is according to the grace of God, is in some way or other connected with a redemption, which is obtained for us by the death of Christ; and that his being set forth or ordained to be a propitiation, is that which effects this redemption.

The word we render “propitiation†” there can be no

“Whom God has set forth *to be* a propitiation (or, whom God had before appointed^c, to be a propitiator), by faith in his blood, because (or, on account of) our sins which we previously committed^d; in (or through) that space which God afforded us in his forbearance, for the showing (or the exhibition) of his justice, which is at this time: that he may be just, and justly (or, with righteousness) justify him who is in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

* Chap. i. 5, 6, 7.

† The adjective “propitiatory”—*ἰλαστήριον*, some maintain, is to be applied to Christ, in reference to the mercy-seat in the Jewish tabernacle—the כפרת, which the Septuagint render by *ἰλαστήριον*. The ancient Syriac translates the word by ܩܘܨܝܐ, Propitiator, or that which

^c דקרים סמא, quem preconstituit.—*Lex. Syr. Schaaf.*

^d Or from the beginning sinned.

doubt, designates the setting forth of Christ to be the *propitiatory medium*—and that medium was the offering of a propitiatory sacrifice, through which the holy and righteous God conveys his gifts to sinful man: agreeably with that passage of St. John, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins:” or with what St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: “God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses to them, for he has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*.”

Thus the Apostle, in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews †, having described at some length the Jewish sanctuary, and its ordinances of worship, observes, “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” “He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal

propitiates. The Vulgate, like our own translation, renders it by Propitiation.—Michaelis remarks, that “in this passage *ἱλαστήριον* has been taken by some in the sense of *mercy-seat*; but that Kypke has properly preferred the translation ‘propitiary sacrifice,’ *θυμα* or *ἱερίον* being understood as its substantive.”—*Vide* MAGEE *on the Atonement*, vol. i. p. 206.

* He was made sin; that is, as the word frequently signifies, an offering for sin, which is the same with *ἱλασμος*, or the propitiation; and, indeed, if the term be referred to the Jewish tabernacle and its furniture, the same great mystery of redemption will be found to be typified in the general display of all its emblems:—that an atonement was to be made for the guilty, by the substitution of an innocent and holy victim to suffer in their room and stead.

† Ver. 11, 12.

inheritance. For, where a testament* is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator : for a testament is of force after men are dead ; it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth : Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood." " And almost all things are by the law purged with blood ; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

From a comparison of these and many other passages, it is evident that the vicarious sufferings of Jesus Christ, the victim substituted in the place of the guilty, " bearing their sins in his own body upon the tree," is that which forms the ransom, or redemption price for the souls of believers. " We are redeemed not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The connexion between the payment of a *redemption price* and the substitution of a *propitiatory victim* in the stead of the guilty, does not perhaps appear in the common usage of our English word redemption : and yet there is no difficulty in supposing the case, where the delivery of one to suffering and death, might prove the ransom for the forfeited life of another.

In the language of the ancient scriptures, however, the terms used to express the ransom, and the atonement or propitiation, have a very near affinity to each other. The radical meaning of the word †, which in the original Hebrew expresses the notion of *propitiation* or *atonement* is, " to

* I conceive, with Dr. Macknight, that " a covenant made by sacrifice," and not the last will and testament of a dying person, is the allusion employed by the Apostle in this place. The following is Dr. Macknight's translation ; which he has, I think, well established in his notes: " For where a covenant is *there is* a necessity that the death (*του διαθεμενου*) of the appointed *sacrifice* be brought in. For, a covenant is firm over dead *sacrifices*, seeing it never hath force whilst the appointed *sacrifice* liveth. Hence, not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood. For when Moses," &c. &c.

cover.” The very same term is used, also, for the *ransom-price* brought by a redeemer or kinsman:—whether the priest makes an atonement for the soul of the offender upon the altar, or a sum of money is offered for the discharge of the captive, it is equally “his covering*.” The commutation for an offence paid to the magistrate, we may also add, whether legally or illegally, would be designated by the same term.

It must be acknowledged that the notion of an atoning sacrifice, the supposition that the sufferings and slaughter of an innocent victim would render the just God propitious to the real offender, when he beheld him sprinkled with its blood, or eating its mangled limbs, and when he perceived the savour of its roasting fat ascending up to heaven, is at first view the most extravagant and unlikely notion that could have entered the mind of man; and yet this very notion has prevailed in all ages, and in all nations of the world.

Abel offered his victim from the firstlings of his flock. It was the grateful smell of a burning sacrifice, which is represented as inducing the Almighty to promise Noah, that he would not again punish the sinfulness of mankind, as he had done, by a general deluge. The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, worshipped with sacrifice.

When the Gentiles had lost the knowledge of the true God, and worshipped in his stead some abominable idol of their own invention, still they universally retained the notion that punishment was to be averted, and favour obtained, by appeasing the wrath of their gods with bloody sacrifices. Nay, playing the fool in their imagination, supposing the more excellent the victim the more acceptable the sacrifice, they not unfrequently immolated human beings, sometimes their own children, in their horrid rites!

Among the Jews, whose religious ceremonies were appointed and ordered, in their most minute circumstances, by immediate revelation, we still find the expiatory sacrifice, as the leading and most essential object in their public and ceremonial worship.

From all these facts we argue, that sacrifices were originally of divine appointment, invented on purpose to prefigure the redemption of man by the sufferings of the expected Messiah.

Upon any other supposition, indeed, their origin is unaccountable; since, as we have observed, the notion of a vicarious sacrifice seems to be contradictory to the most obvious principles of justice, especially where, as was almost always the case, the victim was dragged involuntarily to the altar, to bleed for the sins of those whose very violence had brought him there.

We shall be reminded, perhaps, of the other unreasonable inventions of the heathen, when they had lost the knowledge of the true religion. But sacrifice was not an invention of the heathen. It prevailed as a religious rite before the apostacy of the nations to idolatry. Had it been only a vain custom of Paganism, it is impossible to suppose that God himself, in establishing a revealed religion, would have adopted these rites, and have made such great use of them, as he has done in the Old Testament dispensation.

But to draw our reflections on this important subject to a conclusion. It would soon, we may easily conceive, have been understood among mankind that a "COVERING*" might be found to pacify the rage of a conqueror, to induce him to spare the life of his prisoner, and to restore him to his friends—his redeemers. It would also too often have been found out, among the administrators of justice, that a COVERING might be bought by those who

could pay its price, to blind the eyes of the venal judge, to pervert the course of justice, and to procure the condemnation of the just and the justification of the wicked. Indeed, among some nations, the commutation of crimes, by paying a certain sum either to the injured party or to his representatives, was customary and allowed.

But, unless God himself had taught it, it is inconceivable that man would ever have extended the notion, to the justification of his soul in the presence of his God. What could be offered to the just Judge of all the earth? Where could an equivalent be found to make a commutation or afford a ransom? It must have been felt by all, that, to use the language of the Psalmist, “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him (“*HIS COVERING* *”); for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever †.”

The propitiatory sacrifice, however, certainly conveyed this notion, and mankind were taught to look forward to something of the kind, as the mean of their deliverance from the displeasure of Almighty God. These rites conveyed, further, the clear information, that the *COVERING* would be the substitution of an innocent victim to suffer in the place and stead of the guilty.

But where could such a victim be found?—Abraham inadvertently foretold the truth, when, to stay the painful inquiries of Isaac, he said, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.” But gross and carnal indeed must have been the mind, that could suppose it saw, in any of the accustomed offerings of those days, an equivalent for the ransom of souls. The language of the truly enlightened must have been, “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?

* כפרו.

† Psa. xlix. 7, 8.

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" But all was explained, when the great forerunner of the Messiah, looking upon Jesus, exclaimed "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."

In the sacrifice, therefore, of the Lord Jesus Christ, dying, the just for the unjust, we contemplate that, which the almighty Sovereign considers as an equivalent for the forfeited lives of his rebellious creatures. There is in this oblation a price which forms a COVERING, not to blind the eyes of an unrighteous Judge, while the course of justice is perverted; but, which forms a consideration, which the righteous and most holy God esteems perfectly satisfactory in behalf of the claims of violated justice, so that he may now in strictest equity proceed to clear the guilty, nay, to justify the wicked. Thus it is, that, through faith, the redemption of man has been accomplished by the appointment of Christ, to be a propitiation. The sufferings and death of Christ, taking into the account his merits and the dignity of his person, demonstrate this equal and impartial justice.

"Through the forbearance of God to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness." That is, through the forbearance of God, in not exacting sooner the payment of this ransom or atonement, which had been stipulated and agreed upon in the councils of God; and in virtue of which, on the credit of it, as it were, he had from the beginning extended mercy to believers. Through this forbearance, the Apostle says, it had been reserved for that age, which had witnessed the incarnation and death of the Son of God, to make this full manifestation of God's justice in justifying sinners.

This seems to imply, that, before the actual sacrifice of Christ, it had not been fully manifested how the justice of God would remain inviolate, and yet sinners be justified.

The ancient believers knew that God had promised to provide a righteousness for them; they saw pointed out, in the rites of the typical sacrifice, the mode in which it would be effected; and they referred it, no doubt, to his wisdom and power to make good his promise, and to provide the sufficient atonement. But it is easy to conceive that, notwithstanding some first fruits of that teaching Spirit, which has since been so abundantly poured out into the minds of believers, their expectations were often involved in much obscurity and perplexity. Even the prophets themselves are represented as “wondering what, and what manner of time, the Spirit which was in them did signify, when it prophesied of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow.”

But now, in the blood of the Son of God, we may all contemplate a full and complete demonstration, that God is just when he justifies the believer, though the believer is in himself considered a wicked and unrighteous person, deserving condemnation no less than others. For, upon every principle of equity, if a substitute has been admitted,—and no one can question the right of God to admit a substitute,—if that substitute, I say, has been admitted, and, according to the appointment of God, has “died, the just for the unjust,” has been “made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him:” if he, *with all his merits and perfect righteousness*, met the fate and punishment of the wretched sinner; having stipulated that for this “travail of his soul” the people for whom he was surety should be pardoned, *and receive the reward of his righteousness*: if this offering of himself has actually taken place, and has been accepted of God, it is plain to the comprehension of all, that God, as a judge, is as strictly just, when he pronounces the justification of one for whom Christ has died, as when he condemns another, who has no interest in Christ, to receive the recompense of his evil deeds.

Thus we see that there is *another righteousness*, separate

from and independent of the works of the law, by which a sinner may be accepted and justified before God. We have seen a plain development of the righteousness which is of God, by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all that believe. We have seen how "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other;" how mercy rejoices against judgment, and yet judgment remains inviolate.

The explanation of this mystery labours, indeed, under one difficulty. It will be asked, "How can that which is bestowed as a free grant, and mere favour, be at the same time purchased by the payment of an equivalent? You set out with stating, that God justifies man freely by his grace; and the pity and mercy of God are held up to our admiration. But it turns out in the sequel, that this is by no means a true statement; that in all this transaction God is the inexorable judge, insisting to the last on the full demands of justice, and not dismissing his victims, till what he deems an equivalent is offered, at least, stipulated, to appease his wrath. Does not this destroy the *freeness* of the gift, and entirely overturn the notion of salvation *by grace*?"

Thus it has been argued; and the reasoning is just and unanswerable, if he who pays the ransom be not one and the self-same Being with him who justifies the sinner. The doctrine of justification *by grace, through an atonement*, therefore, is seen to rest entirely on that of the proper deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If Jesus be not very God, one God with the Father, we stand convicted of inconsistencies and contradictions; but admit that "the Word," who "was made flesh," "was" both "with God, and was God;" that though there is a distinction of personality between the Father and the Son, yet that they are one in essence, and one in deity; admit this, and all difficulty and inconsistency in the Scripture plan of salvation vanish at once; for then the possibility

is apparent, how God can justify sinners freely by his grace, and, at the same time as an impartial judge, exact the payment of a ransom for their souls, without destroying the freeness of that grace.

If, I repeat, the Redeemer who brings the ransom, be not, strictly speaking, one God with the Father, it is undeniable that, as respects God, the gratuitous nature of the justification of a sinner is destroyed. But if, in the unity of the divine Essence, there is a Trinity of persons, Father, Son, and Spirit—which is the name into which every Christian is baptized; and, if in the person of God the Son is found the Redeemer of men, then it is true, that within the sacred circle of Deity—in the councils of the Eternal Trinity, there is indeed a ransom stipulated and paid, and made to be the satisfaction of justice; but at the same time, to all out of God—as this justification is received by the creature at the hands of the Creator, it is perfectly free, unmerited, and unbought; and “He is both a just God and a Saviour, and there is none beside*.”

So, also, when we shall come to extend our reflections to the work of the Holy Ghost in the salvation of man, though HE exercises a distinct agency, and, in the operations of his grace, effects that, without which the gift of the Father would be ineffectual, and the redemption of the Son abortive, because inapplicable to their objects; yet we shall see, that this operation of the Spirit destroys not *the grace* of the gift, nor affects the *completeness* of the redemption; because the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is the very and eternal God; so that, as it respects the creature, the same hand that gave and that bought salvation carries it into execution. The grace of God is unalloyed; no one *besides* shares with him in the work; for within himself is found both the ransom which purchases the souls of believers, and the quickening power which applies this redemption to its destined objects.

* Isa. xlv. 21.

LECTURE VIII.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.—FROM THE TWENTY-SEVENTH TO
THE LAST VERSE.

THE important subject of our last Lecture, the righteousness of faith, must be still kept in view.

It had been shown, we shall recollect, in the former part of the Epistle, that all descriptions of persons were amenable to the righteous judgment of God, and must all appear before him to be judged according to their works. We had been moreover “warned of God,” that according to the law which appoints and regulates these works, and by which the issue of the last judgment is to be determined, every individual would be brought in guilty, and consigned to everlasting misery. But to the penitent and humbled sinner is revealed in the gospel *another* righteousness, of which he may yet become possessed, and in virtue of which he may yet be justified, and be presented faultless before the presence of the righteous Judge.

This righteousness, as we have been instructed by the Apostle, consists not in any stipulated services on the part of man: it is a free gift, resulting from the tender love and unmerited favour of God: it is derived from the payment of a ransom—from the offering of a propitiatory sacrifice, even the substitution of the righteous Jesus to die for the sins of his people. As the Apostle has told us in another place, “God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” This is that wonderful expedient which the “only wise God has devised to reconcile mercy with judgment, and to enable him to show favour to the guilty, consistently with the rectitude of an impartial judge; or,

as we read in the twenty-sixth verse of this chapter, “that God might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

From this view of the manner in which a sinner is justified in the sight of God, the Apostle infers, in the beginning of the passage which forms the subject of this Lecture, that *boasting* is necessarily excluded in the mind of a justified person: he then insists that this exclusion of boasting, is a peculiarity of the law of faith, in which it stands opposed to the law of works; whence he draws the following conclusion, that justification is by faith alone, without the deeds of the law, both as it respects Jews and Gentiles; asserting, at the same time, as he proves at large in a subsequent part of the Epistle, that this doctrine, rightly understood, tends to the establishing instead of the subverting of the moral law.

I. The Apostle’s reflection upon the foregoing statement of the method of a sinner’s justification before God, is—

Ver. 27. “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.”

“Where is boating then?”—or, “Where is the glorying then?” Boasting, or glorying, signifies, in the sacred writings, the self-satisfactory view which the mind takes of something it either possesses, or has attained, and to which, in conscious worth, or at least in the consciousness of being possessed of something valuable, it appeals and adverts with joy and exultation. It is thus that “the wise man glories in his wisdom,” “the mighty man glories in his might,” and “the rich man glories in his riches*.” So Paul tells us, in the 15th chapter of this Epistle, that he had “whereof to glory”—in respect of the great gifts, with which he was endowed for the discharge of the apostolic office. We may be sure, to use his own expression, that, “he did not glory as if he had not received them†:”

* Jer. ix. 23.

† 1 Cor. iv. 7.

still, however, they were subjects of pleasing exultation ; and, if compelled to it, he might mention them. And we may observe in general, that the consciousness of any endowment, either of mind or body, of any religious attainment, or any moral performance, must necessarily fill the mind of the possessor with emotions of joy and pleasure : and that these emotions may, on some occasions, be discovered without incurring the charge of arrogancy ; that is, of boasting, in the usual sense of the term.

But in the plan of a sinner's justification, as unfolded by the Apostle, all glorying of every kind is excluded, as to any thing possessed or attained by the sinner who is justified : because, in fact, God considers him, in the very act of justifying him, as a sinful undeserving object ; no less so, indeed, than others, whom, in the course of justice, he visits with the punishment of their evil deeds.

In these circumstances, it is most evident, that there is no place nor room for man to glory. There is nothing in himself, that he can either reflect upon with pleasure, or mention with exultation : unless he could glory in his sins, in his shame, and in his wretchedness ; for these alone are the acquirements which he brings into the presence of his Judge. He may glory in his God, when he has " received the reconciliation ;" he may glory in reflecting upon many things which God shall afterwards do in him and by him : but in the article of justification, all glorying, except in the Saviour, all pleasurable and joyful reflections, except in HIS righteousness, are excluded.

In our justification, that which procures the favourable decision is supplied by another hand ; and is not bestowed upon us in the way of a *qualification* ; then, indeed, in one sense, we should have come with boasting. But the consideration in the sight of the Judge, why he justifies the ungodly, is wholly out of ourselves ; it is on account of the merits of another, who suffered what he deserved

not, that we, who deserve to suffer, are adjudged to be treated as meritorious. In all this transaction, we do nothing more than receive a favour. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*.”

II. “But by what law,” asks the Apostle, is boasting excluded? “Of works? nay; but by the law of faith!” As though he should argue: Since man’s justification is of such a nature as to exclude all glorying on his part, by what law is this boasting effectually excluded? The Apostle having laid it down as one of the first principles of the doctrine of grace, that, in the matter of a sinner’s justification before God, boasting is absolutely excluded—the question is, How is this exclusion effected? If it be asked whether the law of works excludes glorying, the answer is, Certainly not. For, if we admit that law to be the rule of attaining justification, a foundation is necessarily laid for glorying. In that case, the candidate must advance his claims to the reward, exulting in the self-gratifying reflection of having done his duty, at least the portion of it stipulated as the condition of his acceptance with God. The Apostle, therefore, by the answer he gives to the question proposed, means to imply, that the law of works was not the proper channel for conveying to the object of grace the gift of righteousness, so as to preclude glorying, inasmuch as, upon that ground, the gift would cease to be wholly gratuitous. And then he would have *whereof to boast*, which would ill accord with the circumstances of one *receiving mercy*, that he “should be to the praise of the glory of” God’s “grace†”.

“But” it is excluded, says the Apostle, “by the law of faith.” By which is meant, that appointment of the

* 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

† Ephes. i. 6—13.

divine will, which establishes believing, and not working, to be the medium of a sinner's acceptance with God. The law of faith is, in other words, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the new covenant in his blood; the direction of which, to the sinner inquiring what he must do to be saved, is not, "Do this, and thou shalt live;" but, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Now this law does indeed exclude boasting; for, on this plan, the man comes with acknowledgment of guilt; self-condemned, he pretends no works, no goodness, no performance of conditions, no improvement of means. "To him who thus worketh not," as the Apostle illustrates his point in the next chapter, "but believeth on Him who justifieth the ungodly," his faith is counted for righteousness. This is the law of faith, a law which most unquestionably leaves no room whatever for glorying, excepting in God alone.

Is it argued, that faith itself is meritorious and praiseworthy? at least, that believing is in fact the performance of a work, or a stipulated condition, in order to the attainment of salvation, and thus may become the ground of self-glorying?

An answer to this objection will be found in considering the nature of faith; for it will appear, that though, in certain points of view, faith will in some measure agree with the representation of the objector, yet it is not as a duty discharged, nor as a conditional service performed, that it procures justification; but, as the Apostle's statement requires, in such a manner as to exclude all boasting.

Faith, in its most simple acceptation, may be described to be "an evidence of unseen things;" a conviction produced in the mind by testimony, either verbal or written, respecting the truth of something of which we either have not more immediate means of information, or have not availed ourselves of those more immediate means; our

knowledge and persuasion of the fact or truth received, being derived from hearing or reading. Now, the scriptures in general, and the gospel in particular, come to us in the form of tidings sent from God. It is a record of God concerning his Son; accompanied with the relation of various events and points of doctrine, in some manner connected with the affair of a sinner's salvation; and containing, at the same time, warning of "things not seen as yet." To receive these scriptures as the word of God, and consequently all their contents as true, is *faith* taken in its simplest sense, or more enlarged acceptation.

But saving faith stops not here. The gospel does not merely report the fact of redemption by Christ, nor publish only, as a truth to be known, the righteousness which is of him, and the method of its being procured: the gospel record contains itself the formal tender of the gracious gift of a Saviour, and of all the benefits which he is exalted to bestow. This, the ministers of the word are commissioned to proclaim as heralds, and offer as ambassadors, on God's behalf, while a spiritual agency accompanies the offer to carry it into execution. The gospel is, if we may so speak, a *deed of conveyance*. When it comes, "not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost," as it must do to produce the "faith of God's elect," there is then, on the part of God, a *transfer*; and, on the part of the humbled sinner, an *act of acceptance*. "But as many as *received him*, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name*." "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith †." The believer not only "sees afar off" the objects of his faith, and "is persuaded of them," but he also "*embraces them* ‡."

Moreover, the gospel comes to us in the shape of a promise; it is represented as a solemn covenant or engage-

* John i. 12.

† Ephes. iii. 17.

‡ Heb. xi. 13.

ment, into which it has pleased God to enter with sinful man, in the person of his everlasting surety respecting the salvation of his soul. It is presented to us as a testament sealed with solemn pledges and tokens; and even an oath has been interposed to satisfy the believer's mind, and to disarm him of his fears respecting the fulfilment of all that God has promised. Now, belief in a promise, from the very circumstances of the case, demands from the believer a trust and reliance on the word or bond of the promiser; and hence it is, that faith implies, in its very essence, the notion of trust and confidence in God, according to the definition of faith, given by St. Paul himself, in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, where we read, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for*."

From the above view of faith, it will be evident, on reflection, that in none of its exercises is there any room for glorying, as when a man recounts his duties discharged, or exhibits the proofs of his stipulated services.

It is true, indeed, on the other hand, that to discredit the testimony of God, and so to make him a liar; to refuse the salvation of his Son, and shut out, as far as in him lies, the energy of the Holy Spirit; to stagger at God's promise and oath, as though he wanted veracity or power, bespeaks in the mind of man the grossest folly and wickedness, and may be justly punished as contumacy and rebellion against God. Yet it does not follow, that to believe a testimony which is manifested to be of God, to receive at his hands what his bounty bestows, or to rely on *his* promise who cannot lie, is a virtue, or possesses the shadow of a merit. It cannot be said, properly, to correspond with the nature of a duty discharged; and, as such, to be a subject of boasting. In fact, faith can only be said to justify in conveying to us an interest in Christ. It is by the act of believing that we obtain this interest, and

* Ἐπιζομένων ὑποσπουσῖς.

not by producing our faith as a proof of our being qualified to receive justification; which might indeed, in a lower sense, have afforded room for boasting. But, according to the view we have given of the law of faith, all boasting whatever is excluded; and every interpretation of justifying faith, which affords the least room for self-complacency or self-glorying, must be rejected as inconsistent with the Apostle's views, and subversive of the very foundation of the gospel.

Whence we are led to the Apostle's conclusion in the 28th verse, "That a man is justified by faith, *without* the deeds of the law."

III. Ver. 28. "Therefore we conclude"—or, according to the more approved reading, "For we conclude"—or, "we conclude verily"—"that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

This conclusion, if we attend to the reasoning of the Apostle, is not a mere repetition of what he had said before: "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." He is, there, speaking of a person's proper and legal justification from his own righteousness; but in the place before us, he is speaking of a sinner's justification from another righteousness; not his own, but the gift of God. In the former case, man was not justified by the deeds of the law; not because they were not the appointed conditions, but because he had failed in their performance: but in this latter case, though the performance of the works of the law is secured, yet they are not the appointed conditions.

The depravity of mankind had, indeed, precluded the possibility of justification from works; yet, supposing God to have in view the justification of man, as a gratuitous gift on account of Christ's merits, still he might have suspended his grant upon the acquirement of a certain measure of comparative righteousness: the regulations of a

mitigated law, levelled and adapted to the fallen state of man, might have been made use of, and appointed as the instrument and condition of our receiving this grant. The righteousness of God might have been "unto all and upon all them that came up to a certain standard of morals," instead of "unto all and upon all them that believe." God might have set forth Christ to be a propitiation, not "through faith," but through comparative merit, or through the performance of any particular stipulated service.

But, as we have seen, boasting was to be excluded. The *mean* of man's receiving the gift of righteousness was to be of a nature which could not even seem to affect the freeness of the grant. Justification was to be of grace, not in part, but altogether. Therefore it pleased God to make faith the sole and only requisite, in order to justification, in preference to any other fruits of his quickening and regenerating Spirit, all of which, in other points of view, are as necessary to salvation as faith itself. "It is by faith, that it might be of grace."

Against this conclusion of St. Paul, we must of course expect to be confronted with the apparently opposite conclusion of St. James: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

Now, supposing an apparent contradiction here, which it were beyond the powers of our comprehension to reconcile, would it be fair and safe to explain St. Paul by St. James, or St. James by St. Paul? We consider them both, indeed, as organs of the same Spirit: but St. Paul is employed to write more at large upon the doctrine in question; he goes more into detail, and treats professedly upon it. St. James, on the other hand, mentions what he says upon the subject, among other unconnected topics, and that very briefly. Which of the two statements, therefore, it may be asked, are we most likely to mistake? For,

if they prove irreconcilable, there must be a mistake; and the mistake must be with us; for the Spirit of God could not cause to be written inconsistencies and contradictions.

But it will be found, on careful examination, that neither of the terms "works," "faith," "justification," is used by St. James in exactly the same sense as by St. Paul. By "deeds of law," St. Paul means moral and religious duties. St. James clearly speaks of works attesting faith,—not of the common duties of the moral law, as such, but of actions proving a confident persuasion in the truth and faithfulness of God:—actions by which a sacrifice of present good is made, and something valuable ventured, upon the promise and at the call of God.

By "faith alone," St. Paul cannot mean that faith which is, in its effects, without the works of St. James. They speak, therefore, of a different faith. St. James means a mere profession of faith, which does not exhibit the proofs of its being real and in earnest; he terms it "a dead faith." But St. Paul most certainly must be understood to speak of real and lively faith, the same which wrought in the minds of Abraham and Rahab; which made the one willing to kill his only son at the command of Jehovah; and the other to renounce her country, for an heritage among the people of the God of Israel.

Even the term justification is used in a different sense by the two Apostles. St. Paul means, as we have seen at length, the act of God, when he esteems a sinner to be righteous on his believing in Jesus Christ. But St. James speaks of justification rather in the sense of exhibiting a proof to our fellow-men that we are in a state of salvation. The fact at any rate is notorious, from the Scripture account of the justification of Abraham before God, when his faith was counted to him for righteousness, that, at that time, his faith had not produced the works James notices. But, as a genuine, and a pretended faith are chiefly dis-

tinguished from each other, by their works ; so, by these works, is the reality of our claim to justification *vindicated* in the sight of men, to the increased confidence and joy of our own minds.

It may be necessary to notice further, that the important truth contained in this conclusion of St. Paul, is attempted to be overturned on another ground:—namely, the various meanings of the word *law*. It means, we are told, sometimes the law of nature ; sometimes the law of Moses ; sometimes its moral, and sometimes its ceremonial part. The insinuation is, Take the law in this place in one of its restricted senses, and you still leave room for some sort of works, as necessary in order to justification. But I believe, if we attend carefully to the use of the term “law,” or “law of works,” as used by St. Paul, we shall seldom find any ambiguity or uncertainty,—especially in the passage before us.

We have met often with the term “law of works” in the foregoing part of the Epistle. It has appeared, all along, to designate, that rule or directory which the Creator has appointed for the regulation of the deeds of men,—their thoughts and words being included in that general term. It is according to this rule, as we have seen, that all descriptions of persons are to be condemned, or justified, in the last day : unless they can claim exception, as justified, by that other righteousness, which is revealed in the gospel. The obligation of this LAW, as the Apostle has explained to us, is universal. The Jews, indeed, were under a particular dispensation of it, which, except as a testimony to the gospel, affected directly only themselves. But, at the same time, the Gentiles, who in this sense “had not the law,” and transgressing, “perished without law,” we are expressly told, had nevertheless “the work” or “matter of this law written upon their hearts.” Nay, they understood also its sanctions ; for they knew the

judgment of God against transgressors; so that, without being acquainted with the legislation of Moses, they were amenable, in the main, to the same divine law. If, however, we would have a complete transcript of this law, we certainly must look, not to the heathen moralists, but to Moses and the Prophets.

When, therefore, the law of works is mentioned generally, we naturally refer it to the law, as revealed in Scripture, not as being a thing distinct and different from the moral law taught by nature; but as including it, as the more perfect copy includes that which has been mutilated and impaired by time and other causes.

With respect to the notion that the term, law, means only the directory of the Jewish ceremonial, or their civil polity; it is certain, that the Apostle has never used it in that sense, in all the foregoing reasonings. It was not the matter of the ceremonial law which was written upon the hearts of the Gentiles; neither was it this law which said "that a man should not steal," nor "commit adultery," or "by which was the knowledge of sin."

The celebrated conclusion of the Apostle, therefore, is plain and unambiguous: "BY FAITH A MAN IS JUSTIFIED, WITHOUT THE WORKS OF THE LAW;"—without the works enjoined by the law of Moses, and, by consequence, without the works of the law of nature; for the latter was but an imperfect copy of the former. The force of the above conclusion is therefore to be applied to Jews and Gentiles.

IV. Ver. 29. "Is he the God of the Jews only?"—Or rather, is God "the justifier" of the Jews only? "Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.

Ver. 30. "Seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith."—Or rather, "Since, in truth, it is one God"—or, "one and the same God"—or "God is the same, who

justifieth the circumcision by faith," and not by works or ordinances, "and the uncircumcision through," or "by means of faith *," and not by the works of the law of nature, nor by subjecting them to the law of Moses.

It would appear, no doubt, to the zealous advocate of the law, that this statement of the Apostle entirely destroyed the sanctions and the obligation of the moral law: this objection, therefore, the Apostle obviates.

Ver. 31. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! yea, we establish the law."

That the Apostle has here in view the precepts of the moral law, the grand and unchangeable principles of the religious and moral duties of mankind, is evident; for, by the promulgation of revealed religion through the gospel the imperfect code of nature would of necessity be superseded. Though nothing really good therein would be either destroyed or altered, it would be lost, as the lesser light is absorbed by the greater. The Jewish polity and ceremonial too, we are all aware, were now to be set aside—removed as an appendage which had only been added for a limited time, and for a particular purpose; which time was now expired, and the purpose accomplished. But the great moral precepts of the law were to abide fixed and unalterable, and of equal force and obligation under the gospel dispensation; and it would be found that greater assistance was afforded to the believer under the gospel, to enable him to keep these precepts.

Will it be objected, But the works of the law are no longer to be the conditions of justification? nor were they ever of that justification which is of grace; to which justification alone a sinful creature can aspire. In respect of a man's own righteousness, and his justification by his proper merits or stipulated services, the works of the law are still

* בה במצותא "Per eam ipsam fidem." By that very same faith.—*Syriac.*

the conditions; only, by the gospel, being forewarned of the issue, we are called off from the attempt of seeking salvation in this way. And indeed, if we consider well the plans of God, we shall perceive that this law was not inscribed on the consciences of men, nor proclaimed after a lapse of years afresh from Mount Sinai, in the form of a covenant dispensation with the view of affording to mankind, in their present fallen state, an opportunity of attaining life. That was known to be impossible; the means was totally inadequate: "it was weak through the flesh:" the seeking of righteousness by the deeds of the law was a perverted use of it.

It is true, therefore, that what the law could not do has been accomplished under the gospel dispensation. But the law has not thereby been made void or destroyed, as to any of the purposes for which it had been designed among the fallen sons of Adam. And great, truly, are its uses both to nations and to individuals, even as taught by heathen moralists, and especially as promulgated by Moses and the Prophets.

It was a check upon the consciences of men, and led to many wholesome regulations of society; and to many penal laws which in a great measure curbed the wickedness of mankind from breaking out into excesses injurious to one another. As applied to the hearts of men by the Spirit of truth, the law also was designed to answer an important purpose, to convince of sin, and to teach the necessity of another way of salvation. And when that salvation has been attained, and the man is become furnished for every good word and work, the law is to instruct him in his duties towards God and towards man. These ends, speaking generally, were all which were designed to be effected by the law of works: for all these purposes the gospel dispensation does not make void the law, but establishes it, and makes effectual use of it.

The gospel sanctions every institution of society calculated to enforce the external observance of the law. The Spirit of God generally makes the preaching of the gospel successful, by the previous application of the law to the sinner's conscience; and, though the curse pronounced upon transgressors is removed with respect to the believing penitent, yet a principle of obedience more effectual than fear is fixed in the breast, namely, that of love. And "love is the fulfilling of the law."

But this subject will come to be treated more at large in another Lecture. St. Paul in this place has only anticipated and obviated, according to his accustomed manner, a conclusion which he knew would be made, but which he abhorred.

LECTURE IX.

ON THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

ST. PAUL, in the chapter before us, considers the way in which Abraham and the ancient Patriarchs obtained justification. His Jewish opponents, he knew, would single out Abraham's case as an instance of a different mode of justification from that on which he had been insisting. For, though not under the Mosaic law, Abraham had several manifestations of the will of God, in addition to what he knew by nature or by tradition, respecting the conducting of his own life and the regulation of his family; and he is, indeed, celebrated in Scripture for his ready obedience to these commands.

According to their fond notions, therefore, of their great Father, and of the holy integrity of his character, the Jews would little imagine, but, as St. Paul anticipates, would be exceedingly offended to hear, that Abraham was justified by faith, as an ungodly person: like the publican and harlot, and the convert of the gospel from among the profane heathen.

This, however, the Apostle shows to have been the case, both with Abraham—and also with David. And he holds up the former in particular, as designed to be the great pattern and example of justification by faith, both to Jew and Gentile, to circumcised and uncircumcised. Nay, more than this, he tells us, that God in his dealings with Abraham was pleased to regard him as a common father of all true believers, in all subsequent ages of the world; and in that character to give him important promises, equally affecting all his spiritual seed. So that the case of Abraham,

when properly considered, instead of overturning the doctrine of justification by faith alone, maintained by the Apostle, established and illustrated the same, and formed a striking example of the testimony which the Old Testament bears to the righteousness of faith. Such will be found to be the contents of the chapter before us.

I shall comment upon the words of the Apostle, in the order in which they stand.

Ver. 1. "What shall we then say that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?"—Or rather, "What, shall we then say? That Abraham our father obtained *justification* according to the flesh?"

This mode of reading the passage is that which has been adopted in the best editions of the Greek Testament*, and is obviously the usual style of St. Paul, in introducing or anticipating an objection, or a conclusion, contrary to the object of his argument. The word literally rendered in our translation "found," often signifies "obtained."—"Justification" also seems the only proper word to be supplied, as the question evidently is respecting the way in which Abraham obtained justification. Flesh, in this place signifies, as a late author observes, "services pertaining to the flesh or body, on account of which the law of Moses is itself called flesh †." Gal. iii. 1. And thus, in particular, the Levitical law of the priesthood is called, Heb. vii. 16, "the law of a carnal commandment."

Now of this nature, we are to bear in mind, were circumcision and all the other ordinances and observances of the Jewish and patriarchal religions. They were considered in themselves as to the act performed (*opus operatum*), "according to," or "pertaining to the flesh;" they were bodily services. We are to observe, moreover, that it was in this view of them, and not according to their typical signification or sacramental influence, that the Jews

* Vide Griesbach.

† Macknight.

argued, for their being considered as the means of justification with God. Nay, more; according to these interpreters, the great moral precepts of the law required little more than services pertaining to the flesh; for of their spirituality, they had nearly lost sight, and seemed to insist merely upon an external obedience to the letter. The arguments of the Apostle which follow, go to prove that it was, by no duties nor services of this sort, that Abraham obtained justification; though he is indeed commended in Scripture for the prompt obedience which he paid to all which God appointed him to do.

Ver. 2. “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God.”

Let us suppose that Abraham was justified by works of some sort; we must admit, in that case, that he had something whereof to boast. His language before God might have been, without arrogancy—for it is not that sort of boasting that the Apostle considers as the necessary concomitant of justification by works—“I have obeyed thy will; I have done that which thou commandedst me to do.” But in the passages of Scripture, where the justification of Abraham is described, no boast of this sort is heard; nor could, in the circumstances there recorded, have had place.

Ver. 3. “For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness.”

Such is the account of Abraham’s justification; and on the authority of this statement the Apostle argues.

Ver. 4. “Now to him that worketh the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt:

Ver. 5. “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*.”

* “Reputatur fides ejus ad justitiam secundum propositum gratiæ Dei.”—*Vulgate*.

The stress of the argument rests on the force of the scriptural phrase, "His faith was accounted unto him for righteousness." This the Apostle considers as equivalent to an assertion, that the reward, or the award, was reckoned, accounted, or esteemed, as of grace—gratuitously, or as a mere favour. But this, argues the Apostle, could not have been the fact, if Abraham had been considered as having performed any works in order to justification. The award, in that case, had been rendered as a debt; as something *due* to him, and not as a gratuitous gift. And this had been true, though the reward had not, strictly speaking, been merited by the services performed; it would have been sufficient, if these services had been the conditions appointed by God, for the attainment of justification. The imputation of righteousness had then been *a due*, according to the engagement, and not *a grace*, however gracious God might be considered, in another view, in having appointed such easy terms, for the acquirement of so valuable a recompense. Thus, where all merit is out of the question, we read, "God is not unrighteous that he should forget your labour of love."—We are *permitted* to esteem it a debt, and not a grace merely, that God should remember the "labour of love."

But the only case in which this phrase can be used—"His faith was counted unto him for righteousness," the Apostle tells us, is, in the case of a man that worketh not, has not performed any duties or appointed services *in order* to obtain justification; but, whatever good works he may have to boast in another place, before God he remembers them not, but simply believes on him as justifying an ungodly sinner. In this case, and in this alone, can the phrase which the Scripture applies to Abraham's justification be used in truth and propriety. Such, therefore, was the case of Abraham.

St. Paul corroborates this from what David has said of the justification of a sinner:

Ver. 6. “ Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works :

Ver. 7. “ Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered ;

Ver. 8. “ Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

We have here a plain account of what sort of justification Abraham and all the fathers obtained. If words have any meaning, the Apostle certainly designs to inform us, that the blessedness which David here describes, was that very blessedness which Abraham, in the case before us, obtained.—“ God imputed righteousness to him without works ;” “ his iniquities were forgiven ; his sins were covered.” The Lord would not impute sin to him—would not esteem him a sinner, though, in the view of justice, he was so. This was, in fact, without works to esteem him righteous. And here we may note, that, as in some other passages of Scripture, the whole effect of redemption is described to be the forgiveness of sins ; as if forgiveness, or the remission of sins, were tantamount to justification. And so, in truth, it is, if we take remission of sins in its utmost extent of signification ; because not only actual transgressions may be remitted, but sins of omission, failures of duty, and imperfections attached to their discharge, are also capable of becoming the objects of pardon and remission. And if not only actual transgressions, but every failure and imperfection in the performance of duties are remitted, and *covered* in the sight of the Judge, if he will not impute them, the man’s duties are then considered as having been perfectly performed, which amounts to the same as justification : and this I conceive to be the full signification of the original words* of the Psalm.

Ver. 9. “ Cometh this blessedness, upon the circum-

* נשוי פשע כסוי חטאח .

cision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say, that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness."

Circumcision, we know, was one of those services, as pertaining to the flesh, which were mainly urged by the Jews as necessary to salvation. The circumstances, however, in which Abraham obtained the happiness above described, would afford a clear confutation of that erroneous supposition, and would likewise afford an opportunity of reconsidering the true nature of that mistaken ordinance.

Ver. 10. "How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision."

In what circumstances did Abraham obtain justification? when he had been previously circumcised, or before he had submitted to that ordinance, in obedience to the command of God? The answer is plain from the scriptural account of the transaction: it was before he had been circumcised; circumcision, therefore, was no necessary qualification for justification.

The Apostle next explains the true nature of this ordinance:

Ver. 11. "And,"—or, "moreover he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

Ver. 12. "And the father of circumcision to them that are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had, being yet uncircumcised."

St. Paul says, "the *sign* of circumcision." Circumcision, we may remark, answers exactly to what we define a sacrament to be: "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us." The outward

sign of circumcision was the cutting of the flesh; the inward and spiritual grace, the circumcision of heart in the Spirit:” “the true circumcision,” as St. Paul speaks*, “made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.” St. Paul accordingly, in the passage before us, tells us that Abraham received the *sign* of circumcision. It is common, indeed, with the sacred and other writers, to speak of the outward part of a sacrament as a sacrament complete; the distinction, however, is obvious; and, when the occasion requires, ought carefully to be marked.

The sign of circumcision was to Abraham a seal of the righteousness of faith. A seal, we know, is used among men to authenticate writings, and to serve as a visible token of the engagement thereby entered into; or, more correctly perhaps, according to the usages of ancient times, the seal here referred to should be considered as a pledge or mark given by way of a voucher for the performance of a verbal agreement or promise.

In this manner God was pleased to appoint this figurative rite as a seal or token of his covenant of grace, *viz.*, that believing Abraham had received remission of sins as the sign denoted, by spiritual regeneration in his living Redeemer who was to come into the flesh.

But it is well known that this covenant and promise was made with Abraham before any visible seal was appointed. He believed and was declared righteous; and his heart had been “circumcised to love God,” before he received that circumcision which was outward in the flesh. So that the *outward sign*, as to justification, could only authenticate and confirm its possession; it could not possibly be considered as qualifying him for its reception, nor as being a necessary condition to that end.

Now all this was so ordered, the Apostle intimates, that

* Col. ii. 11.

Abraham might be considered as a common father of all believers, whether circumcised or not. The meaning and import of the title given to Abraham, "Father of the Faithful," will come shortly to be considered more particularly. Suffice it for the present, to regard him as the example and pattern, in conformity to which all the children of God are to obtain justification and salvation. Both Jew and Gentile may see, in God's dealings with Abraham, an exhibition of the plan, in which each is to seek the imputation of righteousness. Let the uncircumcised believe in God, as Abraham, when yet uncircumcised, believed in God; and his faith shall be counted to him for righteousness, as Abraham's was. Let the Jews, too, learn, from the case before them, that though, like circumcised Abraham, they bear in their bodies the seal of the covenant, yet the sign of circumcision alone will not ensure the blessing signified, unless at the same time they are found resembling Abraham in the exercise of that faith, in consequence of which, the seal was fixed upon him.

The *seal* of the righteousness of faith can be of no final benefit, it seems, to any but a believer; and the reason is plain: in respect of the unbeliever it seals a privilege, and an agreement to him under a name and character, to the description of which he will not, on examination and proof, be found to answer; and therefore, of course, the bond can avail him nothing. Esau was circumcised in like manner with Jacob, in virtue of the same command, and, no doubt, with the same degree of liberality, so as to have had an equal claim to the approbation of man. Circumcision, moreover, signified in both the same spiritual grace,—that is, in itself considered, and as far as man could tell.—It was to both, a *seal* of the righteousness of faith. Jacob walked in the steps of Abraham's faith; he was a believer, as Abraham had been; his faith was counted to him for

righteousness; his circumcision confirmed the fact, and was a pledge to him of all the blessings annexed and consequent to justification. But Esau turned out an unbeliever; therefore, though he had been numbered with the people of God, his circumcision was not, nor could possibly be, of any final benefit to him. For, what was the bond or covenant, in his case, sealed by the sign of circumcision?—That God imputed righteousness to believing Esau? But there was no such person! Profane Esau could not claim as such! Thus, we see, to be of the circumcision only, gives no title to covenanted mercies.

And here I cannot forbear a short digression respecting the very near resemblance between circumcision and Christian baptism. They differed, indeed, in regard to the outward sign; the sign of the one being a cutting of the flesh; the sign of the other a washing of the flesh; but the spiritual signification was the same: both ceremonies denoted the inward purification of the soul; and in every other respect and circumstance of importance the two rites exactly agreed with each other, except that baptism, as connected with the dispensation, of a risen and glorified Saviour, shadows forth, a further operation of the spirit of grace, on the believer in Christ.

The circumstances of their institution were similar. Upon Abraham's believing the gospel promise which God had revealed to him, he is commanded to observe this ceremony, and all his seed after him, on penalty of their being cut off from God's church and people. So now, under the New Testament, wherever the "blessing of Abraham" comes, by the preaching of Christ, whosoever believes is commanded to submit to the ceremony of baptism. Abraham, before he was circumcised, was justified by faith; so is he who believes in Christ—his justification waits not for his baptism. Baptism, in like manner as circumcision, may be regarded as a seal of the righteous-

ness of faith which the believer had, being yet unbaptized.

Again: in virtue of God's command, the descendants and servants of Abraham were, when infants, to receive the sign of circumcision, in order to their union with the church of God. So in regard of baptism, it has been understood in all ages and nations of the Christian world, that little children are to be baptized, received as disciples of Christ, and admitted into the church, as the Jewish infants had ever been. Indeed, without a positive direction, so great a change in the constitution of the visible church, as the exclusion of children, ought not to have been presumed upon. Nor is there any clear evidence that such an exclusion was ever thought of, till many years after the death of the Apostles.

But then we are to remember, that, as circumcision, received in infancy, did not secure to Israel after the flesh the blessing signified, unless they also walked in the steps of that faith of their father Abraham, which he had, being yet uncircumcised; so also the outward form of baptism does not secure to the children of professed Christians the mercies thereby sealed to the believer, unless they also walk in the steps of the faith of the first Christian converts—of Paul, of Lydia, of the Philippian gaoler, which they had, being yet unbaptized.—“He that believeth not shall be damned.”

With respect to little children themselves, while they continue such, and should they die in this stage of their pilgrimage, the positive direction of God to affix upon them the seal of the righteousness of faith, may be construed to be a plain intimation, that God would impute to them righteousness without works. Even Esau was to be esteemed by his fellow-creatures in this capacity, notwithstanding his future destiny, while he continued a child in the family of the patriarch. Nor has the blessed Re-

deemer himself omitted to discover his intentions towards children: "Suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. And he took them up in his arms, and laid his hands upon them, and blessed them." That the church of England, therefore, should call baptized children regenerate, and that their baptism should be considered as equivalent to their justification, as it is in one place in the Homilies, is, in the particular view just considered, defensible and significant, and need not necessarily be understood as confounding the shadow with the substance: the reflection, also, is big with comfort to every religious parent. But to return:

Ver. 13. "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."

A promise was made to Abraham and to his seed, that they should be heirs of the world; that is, should be lords, possessors, inheritors of the world; by which promise, no doubt, the eternal inheritance which is now the common expectation of all believers was intended.

The world, which Abraham was to inherit, with his seed, could not be this present evil world. He was confessedly a pilgrim and a stranger upon earth, "looking," as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" "a better country, that is, a heavenly*." Our blessed Lord, on one occasion, uses the same language respecting the state of bliss: "The children of *this world* marry and are given in marriage; but they that shall be counted worthy to obtain *that world* neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God†." St. Peter also observes‡, that, "when this world, and all that therein is, shall be burnt up, we, according to his promise,

* Heb. xi. 10—16. † Luke xx. 35. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 13.

look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

This promise, St. Paul tells us, was made to Abraham and to his seed, not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. This he proceeds to show.

Ver. 14. "For, if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.

Ver. 15. "Because the law worketh wrath. For where"—or "where indeed"—or, "but where* there is no law, there is no transgression."

If an observance of the law be a necessary condition, in order to the receiving of the inheritance, faith is made void; faith alone can be of no avail. According to the original, "It is made empty." Faith, so justly represented as a hand stretched out to receive the things freely given us of God, is, on this assumption, evidently emptied of all its blessings, as having no right or warrant to take them, till that other condition, the performance of the law, shall have been fulfilled. Hence we see, that salvation by faith and by works cannot stand together.

Moreover, the promise is made of no effect." If keeping the law be the condition, on which future bliss and glory are made to depend, the promise amounts to nothing;

* The use of the word " $\gamma\alpha\rho$," commonly translated "for" creates a difficulty in the connexion here. Dr. Macknight would render it "*but*," in an adversative sense. There are, however, no sufficient proofs for this rendering of $\gamma\alpha\rho$, in the sacred writers. The Alexandrian MS., with some others, reads $\delta\iota$; according to which we might translate, "But where there is no law there is no transgression;" which is to be taken in opposition to what goes before, "For the law worketh wrath." This gives a clear meaning; and, indeed, the very meaning which the argument of the Apostle seems to require. But there is no necessity to have recourse to this alteration of the text; for $\gamma\alpha\rho$, though its usual signification be causal, not unfrequently expresses a strong asseveration, and may be rendered *truly, verily indeed*.—See *Parkhurst*. Taken in this sense, the meaning will be nearly the same.

it is idle and illusory ; an effectual bar has been put in the way of its attainment.

The reason is assigned: "Because the law worketh wrath." Take into the account, the fact of the actual guilt and depravity of the human race, and the argument is clear and conclusive.—If it be true that man is "dead in trespasses and sins," that his carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, "because the law is spiritual," and he "carnal, sold under sin;" let this be admitted, and the result is obvious. The law can but expose and increase the guilt of man; and if it be ordained as the condition of life, must necessarily prove to be unto death. It could only work wrath: the promise of life would be therefore without effect.

"Where, indeed, there is no law, there is no transgression." If you consider faith alone, and the righteousness which is by faith, as the appointed means of our receiving the promised inheritance, there can then be no transgression; that is, no transgression of the law, which can affect the promise, or render it of no avail. The believer as a believer, without regard to the works of the law, is entitled to it; and whatever be the punishment of the transgressions into which the believer may fall, it amounts not to the forfeiture of the purchased possession.

Ver. 16. "Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end, the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all."

For these reasons, therefore, it pleased God, willing to bestow on his people the eternal inheritance, to appoint faith as the only means and instrument of attaining the promise. First, that the inheritance might be a free grant, and be received as a mere favour. *Faith*, as we have seen,

does not destroy the freeness of the grace ; but the condition of works would have done so. Secondly, the reason that faith alone is the appointed means, is, "that the promise might be sure to all the seed"—sure as to its actual accomplishment to all the spiritual seed of Abraham—to all true believers—for, of all true believers *he* is considered as the father.

This spiritual seed, the Apostle has already told us, is found, partly among the natural descendants of the Patriarchs, circumcised and under the Mosaic law ; partly among the uncircumcised Gentiles, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. To the whole seed the promise is sure ; not to that which is of the law alone, but to that which is of the faith of Abraham.

Here we notice the difference between "the seed which was of the law," and they "which are of the law," The latter are those who vainly seek justification by the deeds of the law: the former are no other than believers living under the Mosaic dispensation, as a yoke of bondage imposed upon them, till Christ should come. These, as Abraham, were justified not by law—the law they found to be a ministration of wrath—but through faith in Him who was to come ; who was to deliver them from the curse of the law.

Our attention is next summoned to consider the meaning of Abraham's being constituted the 'Father of the Faithful.' The Apostle has said, "Who is the father of us all:" he proceeds—

Ver. 17. " (As it is written, I have made thee father of many nations), before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were."

In those circumstances, in which we have seen Abraham standing in the presence of God, when he believed in him, and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he re-

ceived the promise that he should be the heir of the world; he is not to be regarded only as a private individual, nor merely as an example and pattern as any other believer might be, of whose salvation the Scriptures give us an account,—but there was a constituted union—in type at least—between Abraham and the whole body of believers, in all subsequent ages.—“Before, or in the view of God, in whom he believed”—believed in him as able to raise the dead—believed when he spoke “of things that did not appear as yet;” which had at that time no existence in the visible world: Abraham was considered as “father of the faithful,” in that capacity was addressed and covenanted with; as the supposed head and representative of the whole body of believers, whom God, in the ages to come, would raise up to him, as his children.

The promise and the oath, therefore, come to all believers, in the character of the children of Abraham; and in no way, except in this connexion with Abraham, can any individual of the human race obtain salvation. This is the scriptural representation of the matter. Hence the gospel privileges, as bestowed upon the nations of the world, are called “the blessing of Abraham come upon the Gentiles.” The Gentile believer is counted as his seed, “that he may be blessed with faithful Abraham.”

In proof of the above, the Apostle quotes a passage from Gen. xvii. 5. As it is written, “I have made thee a father of many nations.” The expression, “many nations, or “a multitude of nations,” the Apostle leads us to understand as implying something very different, from the Patriarch’s being the natural stock, from whence the nations of Judah and Israel should spring. Neither can the inheritance of the world, promised to him and his seed, be understood of Israel’s being put in possession of the land of Canaan. “Had Joshua given them rest,” we

should not have heard of another "rest, which remaineth for the people of God."

It is true, Israel must again be restored to the promised land, and have it in everlasting possession: but how far the prophecies, which foretell these things, regard an earthly, and how far an heavenly country; or how soon after the restoration of the Jews, the new Jerusalem shall come down out of heaven, and Messiah's kingdom fully come; or how soon time shall immerge into eternity, and mortality be swallowed up of life, events, perhaps, alone can fully explain.

This however we know, that whatever dispensation may partially or locally affect the natural descendants of the Patriarchs in their adoption into the church and kingdom of God, in the latter days, all THE SEED shall finally be put together in possession of the same eternal inheritance. For so He who "came to fulfil the promises made to the fathers" has acquainted us: "other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them must I bring, and they shall be one fold under one shepherd*." "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven †."

To the father of the faithful, therefore, we may look as an example and precedent, and as a *holder of promises* for us. If we walk in the steps of his faith, the promises made to him stand good to us; and the oath, which God condescended to swear to him, is to be to us, as St. Paul asserts in another place, "the ground of strong consolation," showing to the heirs of promise the immutability of the Divine counsels. The example of Abraham's faith we are now to consider.

Ver. 18. "Who," or "He against hope believed in

* John, x. 16.

† Matt. viii. 11.

hope, that he might," or "should become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken: So shall thy seed be."

The event promised to Abraham, was, to a man in his circumstances, humanly speaking, a hopeless case; it was contrary to every expectation which could reasonably be formed; yet, notwithstanding, relying upon the testimony of God, he confidently expected that it would come to pass. When ordered to look upon the stars of heaven, and told, that so numerous should be his children, the aged Patriarch believed!

Ver. 19. "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb;

Ver. 20. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

Ver. 21. "And being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform."

His confidence in God, we are here told, was so strong, and the thoughts that he entertained respecting his power and faithfulness, were so worthy of the Divine character, that he did not once suffer his mind to dwell on the difficulties and seeming impossibilities which lay in the way of the accomplishment of the divine promise. These seeming impossibilities did not stagger him: "Is any thing too hard for Jehovah?"—"Hath he said, and shall he not do it?" was the confident language of his faith.

Ver. 22. "And therefore,"—or, "accordingly it was imputed to him for righteousness."

This faith of Abraham was accordingly imputed, or reckoned to him for righteousness. This was the means of his justification: he was one of the just who lived by faith.

From a careful consideration of what has been said on this most important subject, there will appear no place for the mistake, which some have made, in their interpretation of the passage before us; namely, that faith itself is the valuable consideration which is accepted instead of complete obedience; since it has been declared, that the redemption which is by Jesus Christ who was ordained, or set forth, to be a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, is the consideration—the meritorious cause of justification; that which satisfies the divine justice in the place of our obedience. Herein consists “the righteousness of God from faith to faith:” “the righteousness which is of God by faith:” faith being clearly the instrument by which we receive it; and that which is the instrument whereby we take or receive it, cannot be the thing itself, or the gift which is thereby taken and received.

From the Scripture before us, moreover, we learn the nature of that belief which justified the father of the faithful. It evidently was not the mere conviction of the truth of any doctrine; though it is clear that the truth of several doctrines must have been acknowledged, and firmly impressed upon the mind of Abraham, to enable him to exercise this act of faith. Neither was it the bare assent of the mind to certain facts related to him, like the faith which arises either from the records of history, or the report of a relater, telling us of things we have not seen; yet, at the same time, several facts must have been credited by Abraham, upon the truth of God's word, before the faith in question could have been exercised. But the act of faith which we have seen described above, is clearly, faith in God as a promiser, as solemnly engaging and covenanting to bestow certain blessings upon Abraham; blessings which the Patriarch understood to be of a heavenly nature, and for which he was content to be a stranger

upon earth; taking God “for his shield and his exceeding great reward.”

Now, faith in a promiser engaging to bestow some future benefit, necessarily embraces and involves in its very essence the notion of trust or reliance; and, after all the refinements which have been introduced in attempting to define faith, none, perhaps, is more accurate and scriptural than that given in one of our Homilies: “The right and true Christian faith is, not only to believe that the Holy Scriptures, and all the aforesaid articles of our faith”—the articles contained in the Creed—“are true; but also to have a sure trust and confidence in God’s merciful promises to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ; whereof doth follow a loving heart to obey his commandments*.” Such, most clearly, was the faith of Abraham, as described in the passage before us.

Let us now, in the last place, consider the application which the Apostle makes of the example of Abraham to the case of every believer.

Ver. 23. “Now it was not written for his sake alone”—or, “in reference to him alone, that it was imputed to him:

Ver. 24. “But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

Ver. 25. “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification †.”

Abraham, as we have seen, was, in the view of God, the father of all believers, who in the character of his children, “walking in the steps of his faith,” were to be partakers of the same promises, as to the grand and final issue. Hence it follows, that what was said to Abraham, and re-

* Third part of the Homily on Salvation.

† מטל דגודקו—That he might justify us.

specting his faith, is applicable, in like manner, to every believer, and belongs to each individual of them as much as to him. It is upon the assumption of this same most interesting truth, that the Apostle, when writing to the Hebrews, declares of the promise and oath of God which he made to Abraham: "The two immutable things in which it was impossible that God should lie;" that they were designed not for Abraham's security alone, but to "show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel"—"that they might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them *."

As, therefore, the promises made to Abraham were made to us; so also we behold in Abraham's faith an example and pattern of what our faith should be. Like his, agreeably to what we have observed above, it stands not only in the acknowledging of some particular doctrines, or in the accrediting of some particular facts; but, together with such acknowledgment of doctrines, and such allowance of facts, as in our circumstances are necessary to support the mind and empower it so to act, it consists in putting our trust in God, to accomplish for us what he has graciously promised.

We admit, that, in order to support the mind and empower it to trust in God, as accomplishing for us what we are called upon to believe and expect under the New Testament, we must be persuaded of many more facts, and must be brought to acknowledge several doctrines, of which it is possible Abraham was ignorant; yet, the act of faith is, in itself, essentially the same—a trusting in God to make good his declarations, and perform all that he promises.

What was the extent of Abraham's doctrinal views, or how much of the plan of future redemption he could make

* Heb. v. 16—20.

out, we do not exactly know ; but we see, that nothing could exceed his trust and reliance on the word and promise of God, and on the oath he had so condescendingly interposed. As to the expected blessings, it may be uncertain whether or not he thoroughly understood the method of procuring them ; as for instance, how faith could by a just God be imputed for righteousness, and afford him a ground of present peace, and a title to eternal rewards. Yet these promised blessings had such hold upon Abraham's mind, that no present enjoyment, nor earthly interest, was too dear, to be parted with for the sake of that better inheritance.

Whatever, then, were the limits of Abraham's knowledge, we have in him an example as to the nature of saving faith. At the same time, it cannot be doubted that Abraham might, safely, have been ignorant of some truths and facts, which for us not to hold and acknowledge were a damnable error : and that for this very plain reason, God has revealed much more to us, than he did to Abraham ; and we are called upon to believe the promise, after a more full explanation of its meaning, especially as to the character and work of the Redeemer. There are, therefore, truths and facts necessary for us, in our circumstances, to know and believe, in order to exercise trust in God's declarations made to us in the Gospel of Christ ; the knowledge and belief of which, it may be, were not necessary to support the mind of Abraham, and empower him to trust in God for the fulfilment of the general promise he had received.

Let us, for instance, take for granted—which however we cannot assert to have been the fact—that at the time, when Abraham was justified by faith, he was ignorant of the mystery of the Trinity ; or that he did not rightly, as to all its important circumstances, believe the incarnation

of our Lord Jesus Christ ; it would not follow, that because Abraham was justified without the persuasion of these truths, we also may. To enable Abraham to trust in the promise made to him, the acknowledgment of these truths might not be fundamentally necessary ; but with us the case is different. We are not called upon simply to believe in God, as raising the dead, and calling those things that are not, as though they were ; but we are called upon to "believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;" and to consider him who is to perform the promises made to the fathers, "as delivered for our transgressions, and raised again for our justification." Our creed, therefore, must of necessity be much enlarged : it must comprehend many additional articles respecting the person of the Son of God, his incarnation, the nature of his sacrifice, and the causes and consequences of his death and resurrection.

Had Abraham formed wrong notions respecting the power and divinity of Jehovah, had he thought it a thing incredible for him to raise the dead, or to invest with supernatural powers his body, now dead as to the procreation of children ; had Abraham entertained doubts respecting these matters, he could not have exercised the faith he did exercise, in the promise and undertaking of God. So, I hesitate not to assert, unless we believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and do keep whole and undefiled the Catholic faith respecting the sacred Trinity, and the doctrine of the atonement through the blood of Christ, we cannot possibly receive this saying which is contained in the two last verses of this chapter.

A person can, now, no more believe what is here required of him to believe, in order to the saving of his soul, without a knowledge and belief of the above-mentioned doctrines, than Abraham could have believed the

promise made to him, had he doubted the power of that Being which spake to him, to quicken his enfeebled body. In the case of Abraham, the performance of the promise depended altogether upon the fact of his having a son, otherwise his seed could not become like the stars of heaven for multitude. In our case the performance of the promise, respecting the righteousness of faith and its happy consequences, rests on the truth of several facts and doctrines, as we have seen in a late Lecture, which unless they are true, "our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins;" and God is not just, and the justifier of him that is of the faith of Jesus!

LECTURE X.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.—FROM THE FIRST TO THE ELEVENTH
VERSE.

ST. PAUL having stated and illustrated the doctrine of a sinner's justification by faith, proceeds now to trace its effects, when known, upon the feelings and affections of the believer's mind; and "the doctrine of justification by faith alone will be found in these its effects," as one of our Articles pronounces, "a wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort."

The portion of the Epistle on which we now enter, may be justly regarded as *the standard of religious experience*, teaching us, how to appreciate the thoughts and conceptions which arise in our minds respecting that most important of all concerns, the state of our realised acceptance with God. It cannot be denied, that much has been vaunted in our day as religious experience, which is, in truth, no better than a mixture of superstitious fears and enthusiastic fancies. Religious experience has indeed, in some quarters, appeared like a commodity, which the cunning craftiness of man has supplied, in exact proportion and resemblance to the demand and taste which existed for it. Unscriptural, wild, and extravagant notions have accordingly gone forth relating to religious experience, which, besides the injury they have done to the minds of the weaker brethren, have given birth to many cold cautions and mistrustful suspicions from the instructors of religion, that have tended not a little to rob the children of God of their wonted peace and consolation. Nay, it is to be feared, these abuses of the ignorant or designing have in the minds of some, who value themselves on their rationality, been

turned into a temptation of the great adversary, to lead them to question all perceptible intercourse, whatsoever between the Holy Ghost and the souls of the faithful.

If, however, we are to take our notions from the Scriptures, nothing can be plainer, than that religion is no less conversant with what passes in the mind, than it is influential upon the conversation and practice. In truth, it will be found that our inward mental conceptions about the things of the Spirit of God, have no small effect upon the spiritual health of the soul, and in the formation of the Christian character. It is, in the secrets of his heart, that the man of God first perceives the operation of the divine agency: here the law performs its afflicting but useful office, the new birth is first distinguished, the spirit of adoption bears his testimony, and gives an earnest and foretaste of heavenly joys. Here, finally, is shed abroad the love of God, and its kindred charity to man, the source and mainspring of all evangelical obedience. In experience, therefore, or the mind's reflection on what passes within itself in relation to spiritual things, much of the Christian life must be admitted to consist: "as the man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

In consulting our experience, however, we must be much upon our guard; aware that "the heart" of man "is deceitful above all things;" and that there is always room to fear, nay, a continual call for godly jealousy, lest the subtle adversary of our souls should corrupt us from the simplicity of Christ. There are some, of whose participation in the divine life we can entertain no reasonable doubt, concerning whose religious experience, notwithstanding, we have too frequent reason to exclaim, "Whence has it these tares?" It should therefore be our constant care to submit all the inward workings of our minds on this important concern to the test of the written word. For, this is to be our only rule and standard in judging of the

nature and purity of our spiritual conceptions; no less than in deciding on points of doctrine, and in regulating our outward conduct.

In availing ourselves also of the experience of others, the same rule must be observed. "To the word and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." It is the same Spirit who dictated the words of Scripture, who realizes its sacred truths in the experience of the believer's mind.

What accords with the Scripture is therefore sound experience; but all experience besides is unsound, is delusive, perhaps *demoniacal*, and may lead to the most pitiable mistakes and to the most dangerous consequences. Let us, therefore, with care and thankfulness, attend to the admonitions of the Spirit in the Scripture before us, respecting what ought to be the feelings of our minds, in the experience of justification and its happy effects.

The prophet Isaiah had foretold that "the work of righteousness should be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." So, in enumerating the grand concerns of the kingdom of Christ, St. Paul mentions "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Righteousness has been the subject of the former part of the Epistle; we have there read, how man may be just with God; that, there is "a righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe:" the operation and effects produced by this righteousness, we shall see, are peace and joy.

Ver. 1. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Mankind, by nature, are in a state of enmity with God, having every thing to fear from him, who is a just and righteous Judge, "to whom vengeance belongeth,"—"who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, who cannot look on sin." Hence it is declared, "There is no peace,

saith my God, unto the wicked, but the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*." A striking description of the uneasy restlessness of a guilty conscience, trembling at every breath, the sport of every fear, and liable to be agitated perpetually by various tumultuous passions!

“The elect of God” also, “whom he has chosen,” notwithstanding their high destiny in the secret counsels of God, are, “by nature, children of wrath even as others.” The Father of mercies has indeed, in his tender love and pity, determined that they shall not perish in this state, but that they shall be brought “as vessels of mercy unto glory.” In this state of guilt and enmity, however, they are born, and generally grow up,—apostates, as far as in them lies, to their baptismal vows. They are strangers, consequently, to peace with God, and perceive nothing in him but indignation and wrath.

Such is their state, until the time comes, when God, by his Spirit, makes known his kind intentions towards them, and disposes their hearts to look to him for salvation. Nay, the future heirs of salvation are often found, in their unconverted state, more troubled than other men, and more filled with uneasy apprehensions of the wrath to come; because the goodness of God, designing to lead them to repentance, permits them not to rest quietly in any of those delusions of the vain world which divert the thoughts of others, and so frequently afford a deceitful peace to multitudes.

“Thy terrors,” says one, “have I suffered from my youth up, with a troubled mind.” And such, in some degree, must ever be the state of a mind not altogether unacquainted with its sinful state, in which some notions of a Holy and Just God are either kept alive, or renewed from time to time, by convictions of conscience or im-

* Isa. lvii. 20.

pressive judgments. Such, especially, must be the case when the soul, first awaking from the sleep of death, is made sensible of the spiritual nature and extensive demands of the righteous law of God, but sees not clearly as yet the plan of mercy revealed in the gospel.

When once, however, the favoured object of divine love is brought to a knowledge of his justification before God, from that moment—except in cases of particular temptation—the Almighty ceases to be an object of terror. The just Judge is no longer dreaded, because a righteousness is revealed, which satisfies the demand of justice. This righteousness the believer knows to be imputed to him, on his believing in Jesus Christ: “Being justified by faith, he has peace with God.”—“The effect of righteousness is peace.” The mind is relieved from its heavy burden; the distressing apprehensions of God’s displeasure are dispersed—“Though thou wast angry with me, yet thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me.”

The mercy of God, it is true, and his love towards his people, do not first begin when faith is counted for righteousness; but it is then that these are first discovered to the believer’s mind; and he is then first taught to understand that God is well pleased for Christ’s righteousness’ sake. This is the message of peace, which the gospel brings; this being received in power, the troubled conscience is at rest, and quiet from the fear of evil. True happiness is found at last! That blessing of which all men feel the want, which so many have sought in the unsatisfactory pleasures of life; and when they found their mistake, suspecting the cause, in order to obtain remission of their sins, have submitted to rules of abstinence and austerities—have inflicted torment upon their suffering bodies scarcely credible, and all to no purpose;—that blessing, which they have wearied themselves to find, is at length obtained—obtained upon the easy terms of believing in

the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith alone is necessary for the attainment of this great object: the mind reflecting upon the sufferings of Jesus, his perfection, and his glorious exaltation, reads at once its full discharge from punishment, its perfect safety, and its title to everlasting joys.—“The chastisement whereby our peace was procured was laid upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.”

Ver. 2. “By whom also we have access by faith into the grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

The word “also *,” it has been observed †, shows that grace, in this verse, is a different blessing from peace in the last. This further blessing, which the mind of the believer enjoys through faith, is an introduction into a state ‡ or covenant § of grace. Not only is our peace made with God, so that we have nothing to fear from him, or from the instruments of his wrath; but we have also something to expect from him: like believing Abraham, we have a promise that we shall be heirs of that better world. This promise is by faith sure to all the seed—to every believer: it is the reward of that righteousness, by the imputation of which we are justified; it is an inheritance which the Redeemer has purchased for us.

Hence it follows, that, when the sinner attains to the persuasion of his justification before God, he not only experiences the withdrawing of that displeasure, which, as a sinner, he feared; but he experiences also a sense of the favour shown to a righteous man. The expectation of heavenly joy which is the reward of the righteous, is also raised in his mind by the promises of God; for, all the blessings pronounced in Scripture upon the righteous attach to the justified sinner.

Conducted, therefore, by the hand of his Saviour into

* Kai.

† Macknight.

‡ Macknight.

§ Doddridge.

this happy state, he can stand in the attitude of confidence and glory—that is, make his joyful and exulting boast, in the hope or expectation of the glory of God—that state of glory which God has promised as the portion of all the righteous. Not only, therefore, is there *peace* in believing, but *joy*—“joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Thus St. Peter leads us to reflect, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time; wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations*.”

The believer has a perpetual subject of rejoicing, because a confident expectation of eternal happiness is excited in his mind, by the quickening word of God: of a happiness not pending upon conditions which he must perform: this would indeed have prevented all glorying for the present: there could have been no joyful boast in the heart, till these conditions had been fulfilled. But the believer expects a happiness, which the resurrection of Christ has secured; a happiness which is reserved in heaven for him, and for the inheritance of which, so that he shall not fail at the appointed time, he is kept on earth,—kept by the *power* of God. This rejoicing, it is true, though springing from an unchangeable and inexhaustible source, may yet be interrupted for a season, through various trials and afflictions; for it is admitted that “many are the trials of the righteous,” and “through much tribulation,” often, they “enter into the kingdom of God.” But these trials St. Peter represents not as endan-

* 1 Pet. i.

gering these joys: nay, he represents them, in some way known to our all-wise Keeper, as necessary to their attainment; insomuch, that the Apostle, in the passage before us, insists that, not only does the believer in Jesus glory in the prospect of future happiness, but even in those afflictions which are sent for the trial of his faith.

Ver. 3. "And not only so"—or, as some would render it, "And what is more, we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience."

A great happiness were it, truly, and a fit occasion for the mind of glorying,—instead of "a fearful looking-for of judgment," to possess peace with God; nay, to be able to look forward in sure confidence of eternal rest and joy beyond the grave! But it is still more, to feel such a present interest in that eternal state, as to be able to esteem even present suffering, considered as conducive to its attainment, matter of joy and exultation. Not that the Apostle means we can rejoice in afflictions as such: "no affliction for the present is joyous, but rather grievous:" yet affliction, painful in itself, may be matter of joy on the whole: as when, for instance, we perceive that by the enduring of this lesser evil, some greater good will be experienced. Of this nature, and over-ruled to this effect, are the tribulations of the righteous; and it is in this view of them, that the Apostle points them out as occasions for glorying: "Our short affliction," says he, in another place, "which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*:" and when a little passed over, as the same Apostle tells us, "they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby†."

"Knowing that tribulation worketh patience." The word, in the original, which we render patience, signifies

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

† Heb. xii. 11.

not only the bearing of distress with an even, submissive mind, the usual acceptation of the word patience, but also constancy or perseverance*: it is rendered, in the seventh verse of the second chapter of this Epistle, "patient continuance," and such is the real meaning of the word in this place. Now, the known effect of affliction and distress upon the true believer's mind is this, it weans him more from his attachment to earthly things, and often checks his wandering feet in the pursuit of objects which, too far followed, would lead from God: the consequence is, that he is kept more *steady* to his purpose, more *constant* in waiting upon his God, and is rendered more anxious for that rest which remains to crown his labours. We are accordingly taught to consider afflictions as the chastisement which our heavenly Father, though unwilling to afflict, sees proper, in order to train his beloved children in the paths of holiness: "I know, O Lord, that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled." "It is good for me to have been afflicted, that I might learn thy law." "Before I was afflicted I went wrong, but now have I kept thy word." To this corresponds the uniform experience of the followers of Christ. Prosperity, indeed, casts a pleasing lustre upon the things of the world; they assume, in the view of the prosperous, a gaiety and interest unknown to the children of misfortune: while, however, these more immediately surrounding objects are thus strongly illuminated, the more distant things of the eternal world appear proportionably faint to the dazzled eye, are even seen with difficulty, and seem almost lost in the hazy atmosphere: but, when affliction comes like a dark cloud along the intervening prospect, and involves in shade the nearer objects of time and sense, then is the auspicious moment, though the tempest threaten, when the eye of

* Campbell.

faith can most easily penetrate beyond, and descry the fair scenes of a brighter world.—To this distant land the pilgrim's steps are directed; the animating prospect quickens his lingering course; he feels revived: and though he must descend from his Pisgah, the pleasing scene is long remembered; and proves a lasting encouragement amidst all the chances of his protracted journey. Other blessed fruits also are enumerated as arising from the enduring of affliction.

Ver. 4. “And patience, experience; and experience, hope.”

Affliction, as we have seen, produces patience, or rather perseverance, constancy, or patient continuance. This patient continuance again produces “experience,” or more properly, “proof.” The notion conveyed by the original word, is the proof had of the genuineness of metals, or of their purity from alloy, by exposing them to heat. So St. Peter speaks, immediately after the long passage we quoted above: “That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” This metaphor is indeed very common in the sacred writings: “The refining-pot for silver, and the furnace for gold;” but the Lord trieth the hearts*. “For thou, O God, hast proved us; thou hast tried us as silver is tried†.” So Job: “When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold‡.”

Affliction is the refining-pot, the furnace which tries of what sort a man's faith and religion are; and moreover, it consumes its dross. When a hypocrite or unsound character is exposed to this test, it produces, perhaps, desertion from the cause of Christ, or apostacy; at least it

* Prov. xvii. 3.

+ Psal. lvi. 10.

‡ xxiii. 10.

presents to view such blemishes as are inconsistent with the Christian character, "things which" do not "accompany salvation;" but, in the real believer, it produces patience, constancy, or more steady perseverance. It may have been, that the former persons, as well as the latter, "received the word with joy," and "for a time, believed." But when persecution or affliction arose because of the word, "by and by they were offended."—"Reprobate silver shall men call them, for the Lord hath rejected them*."—"But blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him †."

Again: Proof produces or gives occasion to hope; that is, an increase of hope. Hope had been already mentioned as experienced by the believer. By faith in the gracious engagements of God, previous to all practical proof, he stands and rejoices in hope of the glory of God, relying upon *his* strength to keep him in the hour of trial, and to preserve him to the end. And the believer is warranted in this confidence: for, "the covenant of his peace is ordered in all things and sure;" and it is declared, that "he is kept by the power of God, through faith unto the salvation ready to be revealed ‡."

But suppose him to have passed through the fire, and to have actually experienced that affliction does not separate him from the love of God, he has then an additional proof, both of God's faithfulness, which, though unquestionable in itself, the heart is sometimes "slow to believe" in confidence; and also of his own sincerity, concerning which there is, perhaps, no believer but has at times doubts and misgivings. Thus it is, that whatever affords a proof of his own sincerity, leads to an increase of hope.

* Jer. vi. 30.

† James i. 12.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 5.

Besides, the precious metals are subjected to the fire, not so much with a view to ascertain their nature, as to separate them from their earthly bed, and to remove some debasing alloy with which they have become mixed; in order to refine them, and to raise the standard of their purity. So, in the case of the believer, He “who sits as the refiner of silver,” when he brings him into tribulation, seeks not a proof of the reality of that faith which his own Spirit has wrought within him; for, “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,” as gold is gold, in every combination of its ore, and in every mixture of which it forms a part: but he assays it, to exhibit it separate from the fruits of the flesh, to purge away all its dross, and to increase its purity and strength.

The reflection of the Scripture upon Abraham’s trial, when his faith was put to that severe test—whether, relying upon the promise of God, he could at his command sacrifice his son, is, “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect*?” Now, whatever increases the purity and perfection of faith, will consequently lead to the increase and to the greater assurance of hope; for, “faith is the foundation of things hoped for†.”

But here it will be proper to inquire concerning the meaning of *hope*; which is the more necessary, as the English word is rather inadequate to convey the complete notion of this Christian grace.

We use the word hope to express the simple desire, or wish of good; even when there is no actual belief or expectation that the good desired will be obtained. The word denotes, at any rate, little more than that the mind is not in a state of absolute despair. But this is by no

* James i. 12.

† Heb. xii. 1.

means the Christian grace of hope, for that is founded upon faith, and arises out of it: hence faith is called, as we have just observed, "the substance or foundation of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is the inwrought proof and conviction of the mind respecting those unseen joys which God has promised to his people. On this support and foundation, the believer rests his mind, trusting and relying on God to perform all that he has said. Hence there arises, of course, in the mind an *expectation* of the promised good; an expectation which gives a real and present interest in those future blessings, though they are "things not seen as yet."

It is not a wish merely, excited by the accredited description of unseen joys. Many persons, under the preaching of the gospel, attain to such a faith and such a hope, who never exhibit any proof that they are born of God. That mind must be hardy indeed, and blind to the most unquestionable evidence, that can treat as altogether untrue the things contained in the Scripture. To be really an infidel, requires much pains and many hard efforts of perverted reasoning. And who that reads or hears, does not wish, and *hope* in that sense, that the portion of the redeemed of Christ may be his portion, when he shall enter on the eternal state?—"May I die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his!" But all this, to whatever height for a time it may grow, is far different from saving faith and hope.

To repeat what we have said in a former Lecture, faith is not merely the accrediting of facts, or the acquiring of information. It stops not here: the word is life and power, and all the powers of the soul acquiesce therein, receiving an impulse from an invisible agent: the quickened sinner hears, as chaos heard the word of the Creator! Much of the gospel revelation, moreover, is matter of pro-

mise and of solemn engagement. Faith, accordingly, has to respect the word of the Promiser, receives the things spoken, not as true only, but as promised—conveyed by covenant or testament: it is in fact an act of trust and reliance upon the faithfulness of God. Now it is evident, that the effect produced by this faith in the views of the mind, will not be the formation of a mere wish or desire. An *expectation* will be created; and that, more or less confident and lively, as faith shall be more or less strong and in exercise.

It is thus we read of Abraham, that against hope he believed in hope: evidently, against every reasonable expectation which could be formed in his circumstances, he conceived an opposite expectation, built upon faith in the promises of God: “He beheld the promises afar off, and was persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed himself a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth*”.

Such is the nature of Christian hope; and it will be obvious, that whatever operates to produce proof in the Christian character, whatever tends to increase the conviction of unseen joys, and to deaden the influence of the things of time and sense, must in the issue produce an increase of hope or of the expectation of heavenly things. Now this, as we have seen, is the effect of affliction. “Affliction,” therefore, “produces constancy; constancy, proof; and proof, expectation.”

Ver. 5. “And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts,”—or “poured out into our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.”

This hope maketh not ashamed. Shame, in this connexion, is very often used in Scripture, to denote that confusion of mind, which is occasioned by the failure of some boasted confidence, or too fondly indulged expecta-

* Heb. xi. 13.

tion. "They shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images*."—"They shall not be ashamed, that wait for me†".—"Lest we should be ashamed in this same confident boasting ‡."

The Apostle has represented the believer in Christ justified by faith, at peace with God, rejoicing in expectation of future glory; nay, glorying in present afflictions, as they are felt to increase that expectation.—He now assures us, that the expectation of the believer is of such a nature, that it cannot cause disappointment, or make him appear ashamed of his confident boasting concerning it. As a proof and pledge of this, he alleges, that the love of God is poured out into our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

This is a matter that most assuredly demands our careful attention. It is a part of Christian experience, which it much concerns our happiness to know. The expression in the original§ may in itself signify either our love to God, or the love which he has manifested toward us. But as the Apostle immediately enters into a description of the love of God, as manifested towards his people, both from the Father and from the Son, this latter sense is plainly his meaning in this place.

It is equally evident, indeed, that love to God, in the former sense, is involved in the description here given. The Apostle says, that the love of God is poured out in our *hearts*. The Holy Ghost affects and fills the heart with a sense and conviction of God's great love towards us; he does not merely inform the understanding, which might possibly be the case, and the heart at the same time remain cold and ungrateful, but he pours it into the *heart*, which certainly implies the moving and captivating of the affections.

* Isa. xlii. 7.

† xlix. 23.

‡ 2 Cor. ix. 4.

§ Ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ.

This is the Christian grace of love, an affection kindled in the mind by divine grace, not by philosophical contemplations of the excellencies of the Divine Being:—such considerations do in fact seldom touch, and but little affect at any time the hearts of sinful creatures. It is, rather, a grateful persuasion, which grows in the mind through the invisible agency of the Holy Spirit, respecting the pity and love which God has bestowed upon us in Christ. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he first loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*.” The Scriptures also teach us further respecting this affection of the heart, that in its exercise it is not spent in the secret contemplation of an Invisible Being, but embraces all the creatures of God for his sake and at his express desire. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar †.” And hence, with “love, joy, and peace, grow as fruits of the same Spirit, “long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ‡.”

This heavenly affection, as we read, “is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.” And here, a most important part of the plan of salvation breaks upon our view!

It was the promise of Christ to his disciples§, when he was about to be separated from them, by the execution of that dreadful sentence, for the enduring of which he was made man, that he would send them another Comforter; or, as the word in the original||, more fully translated, signifies, *friend, adviser, patron*. This was to be “the Spirit of Truth.” He, unseen, and disallowed by the world at large, was to be known and perceived as dwelling in the hearts of the people of God:—to manage there the interests of Christ, and to carry on the work of grace:—

* 1 John iv. 10.

† v. 20.

‡ Gal. v. 22, 23.

§ John xiv. and xv.

|| ‘Ο Παράκλητος.

to mortify their earthly members and carnal affections, and to draw up their minds to high and heavenly things:—to teach, to admonish, to console, and to perform, in short, every office which a wise and powerful friend would perform, for those who were the objects of his patronage.

These influences of the Spirit of grace are no less appointed means in the salvation of men, than is the redemption by Jesus Christ. Both are together the appointed channels through which the love of God flows, *worthily* and *effectually*, to its unworthy and ruined objects. Gracious in itself, and fraught with tender pity, the Father's love, through the atonement of the Son, becomes just as well as gracious; and, through the operation of the Spirit, that love becomes effectual, as well as gracious and just. For, the grace of God had been ineffectual, and the ransom of Christ's blood paid in vain, unless, through the agency of the Holy Ghost, fallen man had been made susceptible of the help afforded, and rendered a proper recipient of the proposed blessing.

Too late arrives the forgiveness of the relenting parent, useless are all his proffers of returning favour, when his profligate child is already sunk, past recovery, the fell victim of pernicious vices. In vain, also, the zealous friend and relative brings, in full tale, for the wretched captive, the ransom price of his redemption, when he has already perished in his dungeon. In like manner, the tender love of the heavenly Father, and his acceptance of the propitiation of Christ, is in vain proclaimed, or preached to man "dead in trespasses and sins," destitute of all moral powers to avail himself of the liberty offered, or even of remaining sense enough respecting spiritual things, to understand truly, and appreciate the goodness intended for him.

It is here the vital agency of the Holy Ghost interposes. *He* comes forth from God charged with the execution of

these purposes of love ; comes, not with impotent tenders of love to the expiring wretch, or to proclaim unheeded news of glorious deliverance to the senseless ear, benumbed in death ; but he comes with power and energy divine to quicken the dead, “ to breathe breath into the slain ;” to restore the blind to sight ; to open the ears of the deaf, and put new strength into the limbs of the decrepit ; in one word, the Holy Ghost *regenerates* the soul of man : he experiences that spiritual birth, which, as our divine Master has told us, is absolutely necessary in order to our entering into the kingdom of God*.

Such indeed is the helpless state, in which divine mercy overtakes its favoured objects, that they are found in themselves to have no mind, no will, no power, to know, to relish, or—without a previous work of grace—to cooperate with the gracious purposes of God ; and, therefore, means and instruments of grace prove in vain, until the Spirit of grace communicates new life to the souls of men, and “ works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure †.”

Now, as we have seen, it is, from the inward operation of this heavenly agent, that the heart of the believer receives the impression of the love of God. It is not, therefore, merely a return of human gratitude, arising from a sense of favours received, which is spoken of in the passage before us : that would often, indeed, be found too weak a principle to fix the affections and secure the obedience of the pardoned and liberated sinner : it is an effectual grace, an influence of Heaven, whose sweet constraint is irresistible. Where it is *indeed* present, we may sing with the church, in one of her old Psalms,

“ O God, my strength and fortitude,
Of force I must love thee.”

What this sense of the divine love is, in what view the

* John iii.

† Phil. ii. 12.

mind of the believer is guided by the Spirit to regard it; and how its very nature precludes all apprehension of his ever being ashamed in his confident boasting, we are next to consider. And who, reviewing the extraordinary and wonderful provisions of this love, can forbear exclaiming with the beloved disciple, "What manner of love is this, which God hath bestowed upon us!!"

Ver. 6. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*.

Ver. 7. "For, scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man:"—or rather "for a good man, indeed, some would even dare to die!"

Such is the view which we are taught, by the Spirit, to take of the love shown to us by our great Redeemer. We are bid to recollect the circumstances in which we were, when,—according to what had been stipulated in the divine councils,—Christ died for us; in that due time when the punishment of our sin "was exacted, and he became answerable." We are bid also to remember, what were our qualifications at that time; and from these considerations we are led to infer, that such a love cannot be frustrated by any deficiency on our part, so that we need, from a sense of our infirmities, to moderate our joy and boasting till our probation shall be ended.

First, we are to notice the circumstances of the people of Christ, when the proof of his singular love to them was shown. They were without strength, incapable of making any exertions, or of co-operating in any measure with Christ in the work of redemption. It was at a season, indeed, when Paul, and most of them, to whom he was writing, were totally ignorant of the circumstance, living in a state of sin and rebellion against God. Even those, who were at that time the followers of Christ, and near

* "But," or, "For if Christ because of our infirmity at this time has died for the wicked."—*Syr.*

his person, were as yet possessed of little spiritual strength, and scarcely savoured the things which were of God. The three Apostles whom the blessed Jesus chose to be the witnesses of his agony and passion, had so little share and interest in the conflict which at that sad hour so heavily afflicted the Saviour, that they fell asleep and took their rest. The helpless sheep, indeed, were all scattered and fled, when the shepherd exposed himself to the jaws of death for their safety. His answer to the officers of justice, was, "If ye seek me, let these go their way." Thus we are made to see, in these narrated circumstances of our Lord's apprehension, that the weakness of his people, their want of co-operation, did not impede the Saviour's purpose of love, in the most trying of all its exercises.

Again, what qualifications, what piety or virtue, were seen or foreseen in his people which could commend them to his love?—For whom did Christ die? It is expressly said, For the ungodly, a word denoting the absence of all good. "Ungodliness," as a late author observes, "signifies wickedness in general, neglect or violation of duty towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves, joined with and springing from impiety towards God*."

There was, therefore, nothing more of worth in the characters of those, for whom Christ died, to excite his love, than there was of power in their own arm, to co-operate with the assistance afforded them by their great Deliverer.

It is this peculiarity in the love shown to him by his gracious Saviour, that encourages and warrants the confidence of the believer's hope, even when deeply compelled to feel the sense of his own unworthiness and ingratitude, and to see every cause for alarm on account of his frailty

* MR. PARKHURST.—'Ασέβεια, "Contempt of divine worship, impiety towards God, the neglecting of the knowledge and worship God."—SCHLEUSNER.

and the dangers which surround him. If, indeed, his safety depended upon the co-operation of his own will and native powers, there could be no security; it were in that case presumptuous to boast in confident expectation of the prize: it would become him rather to wait, in awful suspense, the event of future conflicts, and the final decision of the righteous Judge. But St. Paul warrants us to consider *that* to be a true impression concerning the nature of the divine love, which teaches us to regard it as being irrespective of any thing in us, of any worthiness known or foreseen, or of any co-operation expected from us, excepting such as his own preventing grace should effect and prepare.

As Abraham, when he was told that he should be the parent of a numerous progeny, considered not the (humanly speaking) insurmountable obstacles in the way of its accomplishment, but gave glory to God, believing him able to do what he had promised; so the believer, receiving the promise of the heavenly inheritance, as a sinner justified by faith in Christ, though it seems almost impossible, in his diffident views of himself, that he should be able to resist temptation, and attain to that holiness, without which, it is written, "no man shall see the Lord;" yet he staggers not at the promise because of these rising fears, being fully persuaded, that Christ is able to supply all that pertains to life and godliness; that he will accomplish in him all that he has said, and will not suffer his mercy and truth to fail, till all the plan of grace shall be completed, and him, whom the Lord justifieth, he doth also glorify.

Very different, indeed, is the love and friendship which Christ discovers towards his people, from the love and friendship which mortals bear to each other. Men, in their affections, regard the worthiness, or supposed worthiness, of the object; and therefore, if they change their opinion

respecting the desert or amiableness of the object of their love, their love of course changes with their sentiments. But the objects of the love of Christ are acknowledged unworthy; and they cannot turn out *more* unworthy, than it was supposed, at the season, when he pledged his life for their souls! So that Christ has, in fact, shown an instance of love to the *ungodly*, which equals the highest proof that any rational being could possibly give of his love to the most deserving and best.

“ Scarcely indeed for a righteous man will one die; for a good man indeed some would even dare to die.” With difficulty could one be found among men, who, at the expense of his own life, would interpose to save the life even of a just person. It is admitted, indeed, that on behalf of a good man, one whose character stood high, and who had attached others to his interest by his kindness and benevolence; for such a person a friend might be found who would hazard his life, and even dare to die. But such a sacrifice would be admired, even in these circumstances, as a most extraordinary instance of friendship and love; as more than a return for the greatest obligations received. This highest proof of affection, ever shown to the most eminent benefactors, and best beloved friends, and in circumstances with which no human sacrifice can bear comparison, has Jesus Christ shown to ungodly sinners! From such love, what is too much to expect?

Ver. 8. “ But God commendeth his love towards us”—or rather, “ God also hath commended his own love to us, in that, when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

According to the public translation of this verse, it appears to stand in opposition to the former, and God’s love seems to be contrasted with human friendship: God’s love in giving his Son for sinners, with a man’s love in dying for a good and worthy friend. But the opposition, it will

strike us on reflection, is not complete. If the interpretation which I have adopted be correct, the supposition of some man's daring to die for the good, was introduced to heighten the exhibition of *Christ's* love in dying for the ungodly; and St. Paul is now proceeding a step farther in his argument, and showing that the love of *God the Father* is also irrespective of any goodness or worth in us. God also* has commended, or given a convincing proof of his *own* love to us†, since, when we were yet sinners, he gave his only begotten Son to die for us. The important inference is,

Ver. 9. "Much more then being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

The inference cannot easily be mistaken, only that it seems, to our unbelieving hearts, too good to be true.—If God showed such affection to us, when considered under the condemnation of sin, that, in order to screen us from the immutable laws of eternal justice, he spared his only begotten Son, and gave him to punishment in our place and stead; much more, now that this great event is accomplished, ought we to conclude, that the same love will bear with us; and, notwithstanding our many infirmities, or whatever may happen, that God will not be angry with us, to cut us off from the promised inheritance, so that we should become ashamed of our once confident boasting.

The same inference, in other terms, is again repeated.

Ver. 10. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

If such is the love of God towards us, that even when in a state of enmity to him, when, as a just God, he could but regard us as objects of his wrath and indignation; if

* Δι. הרקא—"Hic," "hoc ipso in loco."

† Τῆν ἑαυτοῦ ἀγάπην εἰς ἡμᾶς

even then, in his love, he hesitated not to stipulate the death of his own Son, as the honourable amends to his divine justice, in order to our being advanced to his friendship; now that that friendship, bought at so great a price, is actually possessed, can we fear that any possible occurrence will be able to separate us from his love, or that the life of Christ, “who is risen again,”—“who sitteth at the right-hand of God,”—“who maketh intercession for us,” will be less efficacious for our preservation in a state of favour, than his death has been for our exaltation to that state?

Will God, who made us the objects of his love and grace, when in a state of sin and enmity to him, now that he has bought our souls, and in part renewed us in holiness,—will he stop short in the work—for it is *his* work—and on account of our remaining corruptions, our sins, which we shall commit, discard us from his favour? Will not He who died plead for us, that we should not perish? Yes. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.”

For, what is the wrath mentioned in the verses above, as endangering the believer’s safety, after that he has rejoiced in hope of the glory of God, and which, it might be feared, would put him to shame in his glorying? Not, surely, lest God should reverse the sentence of his justification, and call again to remembrance the sins which he had blotted out and cast behind him? No: but his fears are, lest himself, through temptation, after all the favour shown him, should fall into sin, and God for that should cast him off as a monster of ingratitude! This is the wrath he fears, and has reason to fear; and unless a provision were made in the life of the risen Saviour to relieve him from this fear, it would most effectually stop the boasting of every saint upon earth.

But when he is taught to regard himself, as the undeserving object of divine mercy, in every progressive step of his salvation, and in every time of need, then he has grounds to hope, that the same love which advanced him, a wretched and helpless sinner, to the enjoyment of peace with God, will never leave him nor forsake him, until he is perfected in glory, and made partaker with the saints in heaven. With unspeakable joy, accordingly, he reads the promises of God's unchanging love, and of his everlasting mercies. "He that believeth is passed from death unto life, and shall not come again into condemnation*."—"For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for, as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy upon thee.†"

Lastly. The Apostle finishes this account of the believer's experience, and of the grounds of his confident rejoicing before God, by going yet one step further.

Ver. 11. "And not only so, but"—or, "and what is more, we also joy in God"—or rather, "we glory even in God, having received the atonement"—or as it certainly should be translated, "the reconciliation."

This completes the climax of the Christian's glorious boast: the Almighty God himself, as his reconciled Father in Christ, is also a subject of his glorying.

We have contemplated the believer, justified by faith through Christ, at peace with God; nay, conducted by his Saviour's hand into such a state of grace, that he could rejoice in prospect of the heavenly inheritance; and even could find a matter of joy and glory in tribulations also; that is, in their happy fruits, which lead to an increase of

* John v. 24.

† Isai. liv. 9. &c.

hope :—of this hope, the Apostle assured us further, there could be no danger, that it would disappoint, or put to shame the confident believer. This he argued, as we have just seen, from the nature and circumstances of that love of the Father and of the Son, with a sense of which the Holy Ghost fills the believer's heart, causing him "to know the things freely given to him of God." To crown the whole, he is now represented as glorying and making his boast in the Great Jehovah himself, through that same Saviour, by whose means he has been reconciled to him.

There is enough in the thought of a holy God, to fill the mind of an Angel with fear and dread ; yea, "the heavens are not clean in his sight ; He looketh upon the sun, and it shineth not : " yet, with the interposition of a Mediator, a merciful High Priest to bear our iniquity that we die not, even the filthy and abominable sons of men may stand without fear, in the presence of the Holy Lord God ;—may rejoice in him as their Father ; and, with exulting boast, contemplate all his attributes as reconciled in their deliverance, and all as engaged and pledged in the eternal covenant to make them blessed, "BY MYSELF HAVE I SWORN, SAITH THE LORD."

The believer is now arrived at the fountain-head of all his mercies. For, from God they issued, and to him, as he ascends the stream, it leads him. We may conclude, therefore, in the beautiful language of an ancient catechism of the Church of England : "The first principall and moste perfect cause of oure justyfyenge and saluation, is the goodnesse and loue of God : wherby he chose vs for his before he made the worlde. After that, God graunteth vs to be called by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, when the Spirit of the Lord is poured into vs : by whose guyding and gouernaunce we be led to

settle our truste in God; and hope for the performauce of all hys promises—to say all in summe, whatsoeuer is in vs, or maye be done of vs, pure, honest, true and good, that altogether spryngeth out of thys most pleasaunte roote, from this most plentyfull fountayne, the goodnesse, loue, choyse, and unchaungeable purpose of God. He is the cause, the rest are the fruites and effectes, &c.*”

* King Edward the Sixth's Catechism. Enchiridion Theologicum, vol. i.

LECTURE XI.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH—FROM THE TWELFTH TO THE TWENTIETH VERSE.

THE plan of a sinner's salvation by Christ, with its happy consequences, has been fully unfolded in the part of the Epistle already considered. The Apostle, in the passage to which we now are proceeding, for the further illustration of this subject, points out to us the strong resemblance, which there is, between the fall of man in Adam, and his restoration in Christ.

At the same time, however, that there is a resemblance between the two cases, so as to make Adam a type of Christ; there is also, the Apostle bids us to observe, a great inequality in the *amount* of the evil conveyed by the first Adam to his children, and in the amount of the good conveyed by Christ, the second Adam, to the spiritual "children which God hath given him." It is true, that "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive:" but in comparing the two cases, we shall find that the people represented in Christ had far more transacted for them in *their* federal or covenant Head, than mankind at large, in their first parent, who stood in similar relation to them, or is to be considered as the fountain from which their existence flows, the root from which they spring.

In considering the passage before us, we have,

FIRST, to follow the Apostle in the statement, which he makes of the fall and ruin of mankind in their FIRST parent.

NEXT, we shall have to remark, that after mentioning

that Adam in all this was a type of Christ, before St. Paul proceeds to illustrate this point, he acquaints us, by way of parenthesis, in the fifteenth and two following verses, that there is, notwithstanding, in one point of view, a great *disparity* in the two cases. Having pointed out this, he

Lastly, leads us to reflect upon the *similarity of the mode* in which the type and antitype convey, to their respective seeds, what they *do* convey of evil or of good—the disparity being in the *amount* of the evil or good conveyed; the resemblance, in the *mode of conveyance*.

First, then, we are to attend to St. Paul's statement of the fall and ruin of mankind in Adam.

Ver. 12. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Ver. 13. “For, until the law, sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law:

Ver. 14. “Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the image of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come.’

Such is the scriptural account of the origin of moral evil, at least of its introduction among mankind, and of their condemnation, in consequence, to “death, the wages of sin.” It pleased the Almighty Creator, in fixing the destiny of the human race, to deal with them in their first parent and common stock, rather than individually, by a separate personal trial. Adam, therefore, was, treated as the federal or covenant head, the surety and representative of his race; and all his posterity were to stand or fall in his probation. He was, if we may be allowed the comparison, *the specimen* which the Almighty put to the proof from which he has judged of the whole mass. And whatever the presumptuous reason of man may urge against

this appointment, we may rest assured that the righteous Governor of the universe would not have adopted it, had it not been holy, just, and good.

The event was, as we have all occasion to know, that the integrity of our first parent stood not the test proposed: Adam sinned against the positive command of God. By this act, from an innocent, holy, and upright being, he became a guilty, depraved, and fallen creature—"dead in trespasses and sins." He threw off his allegiance to his Maker, revolted from his service, and, at the suggestion of the creature, went in search of a greater good in forbidden objects. Such as Adam proved, such, in the judgment of God, were all his posterity deemed to be:—alike depraved and guilty, and implicated in the transgression and fall of their first father.

It had pleased God so to constitute human nature, that, after the apostacy of Adam, his children should be born like himself in his fallen state, and not like Adam, as first formed by his Maker. There is most clearly an imputation of Adam's transgression to his posterity, because the sentence pronounced in consequence of that transgression is executed upon them. Yet it cannot be said, in this case, that the innocent children suffer for the criminal act of the parent, but that, deriving from him a depraved and corrupted nature, and being the very same in the view of God as Adam was when he had perpetrated the deed, God has thought it meet that the judgment by that one offence should rest upon all his descendants, and it so rests accordingly. The sin of Adam may be termed, perhaps, the *formal plea* by which judgment attaches to a guilty race.

We pretend not to fathom the wisdom of the divine ordination in this structure of human nature; but, that moral character and dispositions of mind should be conveyed, as from one common source, by natural generation,

is not so unlike the ways of the Author of nature in respect to other creatures, that we should affect to think it strange, when the scriptural account of the formation of man is laid before us. Certain it is, that many of the inferior animals exhibit a counterpart of what takes place in the propagation of mankind. Cruelty, ferocity, mischief, and other odious qualities are the innate propensities of various orders of animals: nor indeed does man, in his lordly dominion over them, hesitate to treat them according to the specimen he has had of their kind; and there are some which, from their known instinct, he invariably dooms to be extirpated as far as his power extends.

That this constituted order of things is wrong, is not for us to say. What had been the advantages or disadvantages of a different system, our wisdom cannot inform us; if we profess to know, we only demonstrate our folly. Still you will say, It is difficult to conceive that a just God, delighting in good, should bring into existence a race of rational and accountable beings, in a state of sinful corruption and of imputed guilt; in short, should mature them such as he cannot but abhor, and feel himself bound in justice to punish!

The question respecting the origin of evil—why Almighty power, united as it is in the Deity, with the perfection of goodness, should have thought fit to permit the existence of evil and its continuance, must be acknowledged far beyond the understanding of man to explain. The fact, however, is undeniable: evil does exist. And as to man, he is, without dispute, if we credit the word of God, “born and conceived in sin,” and “is by nature a child of wrath”—of the wrath of the just and holy God, who assuredly would not be angry without a cause.

But whatever may be the difficulty of accounting for the Almighty's permission of evil, we are forbidden to

consider man in his present state, as that creature which he was when he came out of the hands of his Maker. Why he was made fallible, why the workmanship of God was suffered to be marred in his hands, we cannot explain. It is enough for the purpose of every useful inquiry, that God himself permits us to speak of man as *a being that does not answer his original design in his creation upon earth, and with whom he only bears for a time for special reasons.*

This is, in fact, as though the Divine Wisdom, in giving its instructions, had said, "I know that I can reconcile the Almighty power and wisdom of God with the permission of sin, which he hates, and on account of which his vengeance will be wreaked upon the works of his own hands. Leave then the Almighty power and wisdom of the Deity out of the account; and rather than lose sight of God's hatred against sin, and of the vengeance threatened, consider the case of man, as one in which God's good plans have failed, in which he has been frustrated in his aims! Say, *It repenteth the Lord that he has made man upon the earth, and that it grieveth him at the heart*.*"

It will doubtless be much safer, in all our inquiries on this subject, to be content to think and act on this partial, imperfect view, than to indulge in any speculations which may either have the least appearance of making God the author of sin, or have the least tendency to take away the odium of guilt, or the dread of its consequences. Bearing this in mind, let us proceed with the account before us.

By one man, as we have seen, sin entered into the world, and death, which was the penalty threatened on Adam's transgression, entered with it, and so entered as to pass through to all men, for that all have sinned; that is, are adjudged to have sinned in their covenant head. "In

* Gen. vi. 6.

Adam all die;" being implicated alike in his sin and in his punishment. That this is the meaning of the Apostle in the verse before us, I think plain, from the inferences he draws from his own statement, in the verses below: "For if through the offence of one many be dead:" "it was of one that sinned:" "the judgment was by one to condemnation:" "for, by one man's disobedience many were made sinners."

The Apostle, if I mistake not, means, in the 13th and 14th verse, to prove this statement, that all men die for the imputation of Adam's guilt, and *that* independently of the transgression of the moral law, which they have to answer for besides. This he does by an appeal to facts: "For until the law sin was in the world:" in the times previous to the revelation of the divine law sin was in the world, men were actually transgressors, and *might have been* charged therewith, and condemned for their personal acts. This, however, was not the case.

"But sin is not imputed, there being no law"—or, "However, no charge of sin is brought, there being no law"—or, "the law not existing*." That "the work," or "matter of the law," was written upon the hearts of mankind, in the first ages, as St. Paul, in the first chapter, has asserted in respect to the Gentiles, who knew not the law of Moses in his day, is obvious from what he there says; for his reasoning is equally applicable to the state of mankind previous to the giving of the law, as to those who were ignorant of it after it had been delivered. "The world, from Adam to Moses, were a law unto themselves, their conscience bearing witness, &c.;" and there is no reason to suppose but that, in the day of the final judgment, *they* will also be judged by their works. But there being, at that time, no revelation which set life

* "Peccatum autem non imputabatur, cum lex non esset."—*Vulg.*

לא חשיבא הוה הטיחא מטל דלית הוא נמוסא—*Syriac.*

and death before them, upon the terms of the moral law ; no law making death the penalty of man's personal transgression ; mankind in suffering that penalty, though they deserved it, and might be sensible that they deserved it, are not to be considered as condemned to die for their own actual sins. " Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses." They perished, therefore, under the imputation of Adam's sin.

This reasoning is rendered stronger by what follows : " Even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." By which observation, St. Paul is generally understood to allude particularly to the case of infants, dying without having committed actual sin. Now, in the case of such, it is still more obvious that they suffer the penalty of sin in consequence of the sentence passed upon Adam : it can be no other than his act which constituted them sinners.

Will it be said, then, the innocent *do* suffer for the guilty ? God forbid ! let the thought be far from our minds ! Who can tell what is the state and condition of an infant's mind, when, taken from its feeble body, its faculties expand in another state of existence ? In point of equity, it must be confessed, the prospect is gloomy ; but in regard of mercy, the declaration of Him who redeems the souls of lost mankind is perfectly satisfactory ; " Of such is the kingdom of heaven." But to proceed :

Adam, in the capacity in which we have been considering him, as the covenant head of the human race, involving in his fall all his posterity, is a figure or a type of Him that was to come ; of the promised Messiah, who in a similar manner was to convey righteousness and life to his spiritual seed. But before the Apostle proceeds to show what is parallel and similar in the two cases, and to compare the type and antitype ; he,

II. Points out, as it were in a parenthesis containing the

15th and two following verses, that, notwithstanding the general resemblance, there is a great disparity and difference, in one point of view, in the *evil* entailed by *Adam*, and in the *good* conveyed by *Christ* to their respective seeds.

Ver. 15. "But not as the offence"—or, "not as the fall*", so also is the free gift"—the grace bestowed. "For if, through the offence of one many be dead"—or, rather, "For if, through the offence of the one, the many (ὁ πολλοί) be dead, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many"—or, "the many †."

Ver. 16. "And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification"—or, to use a translation of this verse a little differing in its structure, "And not as by one transgressing is the gift. For indeed the judgment *was* from one to condemnation, but the grace, from many offences unto justification."

Ver. 17. "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ"—or, "For if by the offence of the one, death reigned by the one; much more shall they who receive the abundance"—or, "this superabundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, in life reign by the one, Jesus Christ!"

There is, as has been said, in a general point of view, a great resemblance between Christ and Adam *at the head of their respective seeds*: the one entailing sin and death, the other righteousness and life. Yet the resemblance holds not in every respect; for if, as is the fact, in regard to Adam and his posterity, "by the fall of the one, their

* שׁוּרְעָתָא—Lapsus.

† How much more abundantly has it abounded.—*Syr.*

covenant head, "the many," that is, those who were related to him in that capacity, or the body of people whom he represented, "died;" much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is from Jesus Christ," the covenant Head of another people, "hath abounded unto the many;" unto those who stood related to *him* in that capacity, or the body of people whom *he* represented.

"*Much more has abounded.*" Here is the dissimilarity. Grace and the gift of righteousness are received from Christ, by his people, in the same *way* and *manner* as guilt and condemnation are derived by mankind from Adam; but then it is in a much more abundant measure, and to a much greater extent.

And again, "not as by the one transgressing, is the gift:" the gift which is bestowed upon Christ's seed, through his sole obedience, is not in all respects parallel or like to the judgment which came upon the sons of Adam by his offending; for truly the judgment was from one to condemnation." The sentence passed upon all men, was condemnation for that one offence. The grace vouchsafed to the seed of Christ, is justification, not from that one offence alone, but from many offences. It does not only reverse the sentence passed upon them in Adam, and so restore them to the place from whence Adam fell; the grace extends much farther.

Adam, as we have seen, was created upright; in the perfection of that scale of being in which it pleased the Almighty to create him. From this state he, by the offence alluded to, fell; lost his innocency and integrity, and became a depraved, wicked creature. Had the grace of the Restorer reversed merely the consequences of this fall, man had indeed been rendered innocent, and had been restored to his integrity: yet, even if we suppose his actual transgressions at the same time forgiven, still his integrity

would not entitle him to the reward of eternal life; since eternal life is the reward of a persevering to the end. An integrity like that of Adam's, in the day of his creation, would have still to be exposed to trial and probation: his virtue, though entire, was unstable, frail, and perishable—in short, in his own keeping. “But the free gift is of many offences unto justification”—justification from all sin, original and actual; a gift, not merely of the innocency and perfection, in which Adam was created, and placed in this world: but a gift of the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who had passed the probation, fulfilled every “jot and tittle of the law,” and being “made perfect through sufferings,” had merited eternal life and glory for all his people.

“For if,” continues the Apostle, “by the offence of *the one*, death reigned by that sole offence,” as it did, and was sufficient to subject *the many*, even all mankind, to its penalty, without their personal transgressions, and even where no actual transgressions had been committed; “much more shall they,” that is, the seed represented by Christ, who “receive the abundance,” or surplusage of grace and of the gift of righteousness;—“much more shall they, in life, reign by *the one man*, their covenant Head, Jesus Christ.”

The objects of God's grace are not only restored to life, after the manner in which Adam's posterity was submitted to the sentence of death, but they are said “to *reign* in life;” not only to have the gift of justification to life, but to *reign* in it by Christ: as death in the former case was said to reign, that is, to hold and to exercise efficient dominion. Through Christ the believer is secured in life, so that over him the second death has no power; “Because I live, ye shall live also*”—“I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me†:” “Your life is hid with Christ in God‡.”

* John xiv. 19.

† Gal. ii. 20.

‡ Col. iii. 4.

Having pointed out this striking disparity in the two cases, the Apostle leads us,

Lastly, to reflect upon the similarity of the mode in which the Type and Antitype convey to their respective peoples, what they do convey of evil and of good:—the *disparity* being in the *amount* of the evil and good conveyed; the *resemblance* in the *mode of conveyance*.

Ver. 18. “Therefore, as by the offence of one” *judgment came* “upon,” or, “was unto all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one *the free gift came upon*”—or, “*the grace is unto* all men unto justification of life.”

Ver. 19. “For as by one man’s disobedience many are made sinners”—or rather, “For as by the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”—“So also by the obedience of the one, the many are constituted righteous.”

Adam was, in the transaction described above, where he stood as the surety and head of his race, a type of Christ: so that in regard to their respective peoples, at the head of whom they were placed, they may be compared together; as Adam conveyed the curse, so doth Christ convey the blessing. Therefore, righteousness and life are brought to the people of Christ, in the same manner, as sin and death come by Adam to his posterity.

This the Apostle had already inferred in the twelfth verse, where he first introduced the subject: his inference was drawn from what had been said in the foregoing part of the chapter, in which he had explained how Christ procured for his people by his redemption, justification, peace, and hope—assured hope, and reconciliation with God the Father.

On the one hand, therefore, we behold the type, Adam, constituted by God the natural head and fountain

of all his race, and dealt with on his own and their behalf. On the other hand we contemplate the Antitype, Jesus Christ, in a manner exactly corresponding, constituted of God the surety and covenant head of another seed, "the children which God has given him," all the spiritual seed of Abraham, all believers. We behold in the type, "how by the offence of the one, sin enters into the world, and death by sin; and so death passes upon all men, for that all have sinned;" that is, in the estimation of God, have sinned in the act of their head and surety. Corresponding to this, we see in the case of the Antitype, how by the obedience of the one, righteousness is brought in, and life eternal by righteousness; we see also life eternal passing through to all men—to all the seed, for that all are righteous; that is, are esteemed to be so in the sight of God, for the sake of Christ's righteousness.

In the type, sin reigned unto death, without any allegation of transgression from the law of works, by the mere imputation of Adam's sin. So, in the Antitype, man is justified by faith in Christ, without the deeds of the law; a righteousness without works is imputed to him. So far the cases are parallel. But there is a *superabundance* in the Antitype, above what exists in the type. In the type, sin indeed reigns by Adam unto death; but "there will be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust:" for "it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment." Beyond this infliction of the penalty of death, it should seem, the imputation of Adam's sin reaches not. It is expressly declared, that in this judgment, "every man shall give an account of himself to God;" "receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad;" shall be judged according to his works," "without respect to persons."

The imputation of Adam's sin has then no place here: the second death is not awarded by that, as the first

death was. But, lo! the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, abounds much further; the grace promises salvation at the appearance of the Judge, the gift of righteousness is pleaded before his tribunal. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth! It is Christ that died; yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us." And as the Apostle had just before argued, "When we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

Such, as we have observed before, is the *surplusage* of grace and righteousness, as conveyed by the second Adam to his seed, beyond the sin and condemnation entailed by the first Adam upon his children. But, notwithstanding, this great difference in the quantity of evil and good, the general conclusion of the Apostle in the two verses before us, as to the mode of conveyance, in both cases, is strictly true: "as by the offence of one, judgment comes upon all men to condemnation; as all are on that account adjudged to be guilty, and subjected to the penalty; so by the righteousness of one, the free gift, or the gift which is by grace comes upon all men for justification of life:" for such a justification as entitles to life eternal, or, "to the adjudgment of life." "Because, as by the disobedience of *the one*"—of Adam, "*the many*," those whom he represented, and held within his loins, were, without regard to any actual breach of the law, "constituted sinners," and treated accordingly; so it also appears, that "by the obedience of the one," Jesus Christ, the covenant head and surety of another people, "*the many*," that is, the body of

people whom he represented, were constituted righteous; and that without regard to any works of law performed by themselves.

It may be proper to notice, that the *all men*, in the eighteenth verse, upon whom the free gift is said to come to justification of life, are unquestionably the same persons as *the many*, οἱ πολλοί, who in the nineteenth verse are said to be constituted righteous by the obedience of one. For their being constituted righteous is the mode in which the free gift comes upon all to justification of life. But *believers* only are made righteous by the obedience of Jesus Christ; for faith is imputed to righteousness: it is “a righteousness of God by faith unto all, and upon all that believe,” and on none besides. Those that believe not, die in their sins. Nay, of those who seek justification, not by faith, but by the works of the law, it is said, “Christ will profit them nothing.” The *all men*, and *the many*, therefore, must be limited to the general body of all true believers, whose head and surety Christ was. For there were *the all*, *the many*; with respect to him, *the one*; in like manner as the whole human race were *the all*, *the many*, in respect of *the one*, Adam, *their* head and surety, or more properly, the stock and root from which they grow.

The Apostle, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, states the same truth much in the same manner: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” But does the *all*, in the two branches of the comparison, apply to precisely the same body of people? Who the *all* are that die in Adam we know—the whole human race. Who the *all* are that are made alive in Christ, the Apostle himself specifies in the following verse: “Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming*.”

Therefore, though it should be made manifest from other

* Chap. xv.

passages of Scripture, as I doubt not it may, that the general state of human nature is greatly affected by the mediation of Christ; and whatever consequences may be known, or supposed to result therefrom to all mankind—this is not the subject of the present comparison; since “all men have not faith,” and all men do not “reign in life by Christ Jesus.”

To conclude: We have seen in the passage of Scripture before us, the similarity between the fall of man in Adam and the restoration of the people of God in Jesus Christ. We have seen, also, how far the consequences of the suretyship of Christ, on behalf of his seed, extend beyond the effects of Adam’s fall upon his posterity. A question will arise out of the observations we have been led to make upon this subject, an attempt to answer which, if it do not satisfy every inquiry of the speculative mind, may nevertheless afford matter of useful reflection, strictly connected with the subject we have been considering.

The question is, What is the meaning of death, as denoting the penalty of Adam’s transgression upon himself and his posterity? Is it, as has been stated, death temporal, spiritual, and eternal?

Whether temporal death—the separation of the soul from the body, be the death denounced as the penalty of Adam’s transgression, I much doubt. I rather conjecture, that temporal death should be considered as a *circumstance* only in God’s disposal of his fallen creature, already dead in the real import of that term. So that, had the soul of man never been separated from his material body, still the threatened death had passed upon him. But, if not the death immediately threatened, temporal death, was certainly equally a *consequence* of Adam’s transgression, and, being a visible effect, marks, in the sight of men, the extent of the spiritual, unseen death. Were not

“the dead” doomed “to bury their dead,” they would own, indeed, no spiritual death.

The term *spiritual*, therefore, I should select as alone sufficient to express the threatened penalty. That this death is also, as to the bulk of mankind, *eternal* in its duration, seems to be most certain, for from this death in sin millions never awake. Yet still, I think, it appears from Scripture, that the judgment, which fixes and determines the eternal states of men, is not the imputation of Adam's guilt, and therefore no part of the sentence pronounced on his posterity through him, but is to be considered as the wages which, under an inscrutable Providence, they have been permitted to earn and merit by their own sinful deeds and perverse rebellion against God and his Son.

Death eternal is called the *second* death, not with respect to the spiritual death of the soul, of which we speak, but with respect to temporal death, or the death of the body, and is in fact a new circumstance in God's disposal of his fallen creatures, still spiritually dead, but restored again from temporal death, the soul being reunited to the body.

The import of this sentence of spiritual death we will now endeavour to collect from Scripture. In the divine prohibition against eating of the mysterious fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was asserted in the plainest terms, “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die* :” which words, if we understand them literally, imply that on that very day they should suffer the threatened penalty. Both the woman and the tempter

* “Thou shalt surely die,” is a just and accurate rendering of the Hebraism—“Dying thou shalt die:” the reduplication of the verb in this manner being in the Hebrew and its kindred dialects nothing more than a strong *asseveration*.

seem aware of effects *immediately* to follow from the eating of the forbidden fruit. He assured her, “that *on the day* they ate thereof, their eyes should be open, and they should be as gods, knowing good and evil;” and it appears, that the effects which the seducer termed “the being as gods, to know good and evil,” and which, if I mistake not, God called “death,” did follow immediately on our parents’ eating of the tree. “The eyes of them both were open, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” All this seems plainly to indicate that some great alteration of being had passed upon them: they are immediately sensible of a change; they themselves proclaim that a glory, which covered them in innocency, was now departed.

Death, applied to the body, is the change it undergoes when the principle of vitality ceases, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. The change which our guilty parents experienced, was the death of the soul: this took place by the departure of a quickening and sustaining influence of God that held it in higher life. A link of the moral dependence, so to speak, of the human soul upon the Creator, was broken. Man did in one sense become “as a God;” he was henceforth “to know,” that is, to approve for himself “good and evil.” And in man, perhaps we may say, an experiment has been made, to show that an intellectual being, left independent of divine influence, is *free only to evil*;—and, living without God, can only work his own misery and wretchedness: so ill do the prerogatives of Godhead assort with the condition of creatures! The human mind in this state could still, however, exercise its faculties, and the body its functions; man still survived, a rational animal, far superior to the beasts that perish, and with far different endowments and responsibilities: but life in its highest sense—spiritual life, was lost. The

soul was separated from God, and sunk into a very different scale of being; as different from what was possessed by Adam in his primeval state, as when the soul of the sinner, departing from this temporal life, lifts up his eyes in hell: to a scene as different, from what they knew before, did the eyes of our parents open in that fatal hour.

You will notice too, that "the tree of life, which was in the midst of the garden," and which we can view in no other light, than as a sacramental pledge of the spiritual sustenance, supplied to the soul from God, was henceforth to be guarded from the profane touch of man. This interposition of God to take away the sign, seems to announce that the thing signified was forfeited and gone: "Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever."

That the major part of the sons of Adam are so little sensible of the great loss here said to have been sustained, and seem to do so well without this *spiritual* life, that they can indeed be scarcely made to understand what it means, need not surprise us, when we consider that they never knew by experience, in what that better life consisted. But the believer in Christ knows something of that better life: a life far more exalted above the rational, than the rational is above the animal. He has moreover a food to eat that the world knows not of: he can therefore better appreciate the meaning of these things.

But to proceed. The sentence of *temporal* death, we read, was afterwards passed upon man. This, together with the afflictive circumstances in which he was doomed to spend his days on earth until that event should happen, may be indeed considered as part of his punishment, and of the reign of death. But, in another point of view, it was the disposal which it pleased the Lord to make of his

fallen creatures, sunk into a new state of being by the execution of the threat, and already *dead* in the more eminent and important sense of the term. So long, and in such circumstances of sorrow, were they to live on earth, and then their bodies must return to the dust, from whence they were taken, and their spirits depart into another place:—a place where, if the fears of the wicked are to be credited, and if the plain assertions of God's holy word are to be believed, the rebellious creature is not surrounded with so many abused mercies as in this present world:—a place where all those animal gratifications which form the delusive happiness of those who are *living without God* in the world, being enjoyed no longer, the soul feels some bitter consequences, till then suspended, of its spiritual death.

But though these consequences are suspended and unperceived till “the sinner lifts up his eyes in hell, being in torments,” yet, nevertheless, in the midst of his sensual life, he was “in death.” And when raised from this *temporal* death, and sent once more to re-animate his dust, still, unless he has been the subject of another resurrection, the life of his soul is not regained. Those that awake to everlasting shame and contempt in the resurrection of damnation, though justice no longer seizes them on the *formal plea* of Adam's imputed sin, but calls them to account for their own transgressions and abused privileges; yet there is no reason to suppose, that, in order to their receiving the final sentence, when both body and soul will be cast into hell-fire, there is a previous restoration to the life of God from which Adam fell.

We may venture therefore to conclude, that the death, which entered into the world by the one man's sin, and so passed upon all men, was the loss of spiritual life, the separation of the soul from God:—that this death took effect upon the soul of Adam immediately on his eating of

the forbidden tree, and that all his children are born destitute of this life—they died in Adam. Yet still some of the sore consequences of this death are suspended and unperceived, till “the dead bury their dead,” and the soul departs into the separate state:—consequences which, through the mercy of God in Christ, may be suspended and unperceived for ever.

Having indulged these reflections upon the nature of the death entailed by Adam, let us now compare and contrast with it, what we know of the life, which comes through the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

The gift of life, as we have seen, far surpasses, in the extent of its consequences, the condemnation of death to which it is opposed; but, as we have been led to expect, we shall find them parallel to each other in some respects. In treating of the death pronounced on Adam, we considered that it referred not immediately to temporal death. So it is obvious, that the life given us in Christ has not reference immediately to the resurrection in the last day, which puts an end to this temporal death. This resurrection, indeed, respects alike the whole human race; “for, all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of *life*, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of *damnation*.” There is to be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust. But all, it appears, are not raised to life in its most important sense. Christ has received power over all flesh; and, in his capacity of Son of Man he will execute judgment upon all; but the special design of his mission is, “that *he may give eternal life to as many as God hath given him*.” It is here that we are to regard Christ, as the antitype of Adam, conveying righteousness and life to his seed, as the first Adam conveyed sin and death to *his* seed.

Now, our Lord does not only promise life, when he shall

raise up his people at the last day, though then, we know, they receive the consummation of their bliss both in body and soul;" but even now, he is, in a spiritual sense, to the souls of his people, *the resurrection and the life*. "He that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die."—"Believing unto righteousness, they have life through his name."—"They have passed from death unto life"—"have *eternal life* abiding in them."

It appears, therefore, that as by natural generation, when we begin to grow out of Adam, we are partakers of death; so also, as soon as by regeneration we are grafted into Christ, and made to grow in him, we become partakers of a spiritual and heavenly life. But, as in the former case, some of the consequences of death were suspended, till the departure of the soul to its abode beneath; so the believer expects, in the resting-place of the spirits of the just, when he shall be entirely free from his carnal nature, that he shall have this life more abundantly; and that he shall receive a still fuller manifestation and communion, when Christ shall give him a spiritual and glorified body like his own.

"By man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."—"For, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." But every man in his own order; "Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming."—"The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven." And, as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality;" and so shall "death be swallowed up in victory."

LECTURE XII.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH—FROM THE TWENTIETH VERSE TO
THE END OF THE CHAPTER.

WE now enter upon that part of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in which he treats of the design and use of the law, as it respects the heirs of promise.

This important subject is first stated in the two last verses of the fifth chapter, to which we are now proceeding. Its full and detailed consideration, however, forms the contents of the seventh, and part of the eighth chapter: the sixth chapter being interposed to answer an objection.—For, stating this doctrine concerning the law's being used in subserviency to the gospel, and being superseded by it, a consequence seemed to result, unfavourable to the interests of virtue and godliness. The Apostle, therefore, contents himself with the general statement, and reserves till afterwards the full discussion of the subject, first obviating a consequence so contrary to the holy nature of the religion of Jesus. Such is the connexion of this part of the Epistle.

We are now to consider the *general statement* of this doctrine respecting the law, which is contained in these two verses:

Ver. 20. "Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

Ver. 21. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

In order to the understanding of this passage, there are two subjects to be inquired into:

First, What law the Apostle is here alluding to?

Secondly, What is intended by its entering?

We may then consider the effects here attributed to this entrance of the law, and attend to the description of that superior operation of the grace of Christ, which prevails beyond the power of the law, and abolishes it.

The somewhat disproportionate share of attention which we propose to bestow upon these two verses, will, I trust, be excused, from the consideration of the importance of having a right understanding upon the subject, and from the consideration of the many mistakes which have been made respecting it, to the great confusion of the Apostle's reasoning in the subsequent part of the Epistle.

First, What law is St. Paul here alluding to? With respect to this, there can be little doubt, both from the general meaning of the term in all the former part of the Epistle, and from the express allusion to Moses in the fourteenth verse. The law here spoken of is, therefore, we may safely conclude, the law revealed from heaven during the ministration of Moses—the law summed up in the ten commandments, written by the finger of God upon two tables of stone, and afterwards commented upon in the books of Moses and of the Prophets.

But, at the same time, we are to bear in mind, as we had occasion before to reflect, that though the law of Moses is especially referred to, every other law of works or of moral obligation is virtually included. For, whatever knowledge of true morality, or of the righteous judgment of God, was discernible by the light of nature, or had been handed down by tradition, was not only contained in the law of Moses, but was by it taught more perfectly, and enforced with more powerful sanctions. So that the effects of the moral law, of whatever nature they may be, will be *here* found more abundantly, and will be *here* more visible, because, under this dispensation, the law exists in its greatest

purity and vigour. Hence we find, that when the Apostle is arguing to prove the abrogation of the law of Moses in the business of salvation, he never once seems to suspect, that any other law of moral obligations would have any pretensions. Indeed, it were preposterous to suppose, that what the law revealed from heaven with such awful sanctions could not do, might, nevertheless, be effected by some less perfect system, under the ordinary impressions of conscience.

Some, indeed, would deny the argument taken from the abolition of the law of Moses, to the exclusion of every other moral law, from the assumption that the gospel introduces a new law of works. But the assumption is altogether unauthorized; for, the law regulating moral actions, under the gospel dispensation, is the same law which was given by Moses.

In a few instances, perhaps, some of its rules, from circumstances which have since arisen in the church, may have received a new and different application; yet still the code or law is the same, and its general precepts remain unaltered. Witness our Lord's summary of the Law and the Prophets in his two great commandments:—his sermon on the mount:—his referring his disciples to those who sat in Moses' seat:—the frequent appeals of the Apostles to the ten commandments, when enforcing the moral duties of Christians. The same law is also expressly referred to, as the law which Christian love fulfils. We may add, that this too is evidently the law of which God is speaking, when, foretelling a change of covenant, he promises to put his laws in the inward parts of his people, and to write, what once he wrote on two tables of stone, upon the fleshy tables of their hearts*.

The law of Moses, therefore, is the law under consideration. This law, however, is no other than the moral

* Jer. xxxi. 33. comp. 2 Cor. iii. 3. Heb. viii. 10.

law of the creation; the same law, in fact, which must abide till the end of time, the rule of the creature's duty to his Maker and to his fellow-creatures. The "work" or "matter" of this law is written upon the hearts of all men, by the hand of the God of nature; but the most perfect copy is that contained in the Mosaic and prophetic writings, the sum and substance of which was delivered, with circumstances of such peculiar solemnity, by the Almighty God himself, from Mount Sinai. We are now,

Secondly, to inquire what is meant by the entering of the law, spoken of in this passage. The Apostle tells us, that the law entered, *Νόμος δὲ παρεισήλθεν*. "The law was added," "came in the mean time;"—"made a little entrance*;"—"entered by the by†;"—"stole privily in‡:" for, such are the different explanations given of the original expressions. Moreover, the end to be answered by this introduction of the law was, we are told, that the offence might abound. It was to be, *occasionally*, the cause of offences abounding; and to increase the enormity of their guilt,—"that sin might be more exceedingly a sinner:" as we shall see more fully explained in the seventh chapter of this Epistle. We cannot, therefore, but feel highly interested in the inquiry concerning what is meant by this "entrance of the law," intended to serve a purpose, at first sight, so extraordinary!

Now it is plain, by this entrance of the law cannot be meant, its first introduction into the universe; for that took place, not four hundred years after the promise made to Abraham, the date assigned by St. Paul, in another place, to the entrance in question, but as soon as intelligent creatures began to exist: for so soon the obligation lay upon them, and they knew the obligation, to love their

* DODDRIDGE.

† PARKHURST.

‡ MACKNIGHT. "Lex Mosaica verò accessit."—SCHLEUSNER.
"Lex autem subintravit."—*Vulgate*.

Maker, and to love their fellow-creatures, on which two commandments hang all the law and the Prophets. Neither was the law, in this introduction, designed to cause iniquity to abound, but the very reverse! Nay, after man became an apostate, and a depraved being, and had revolted from the law in its most essential requisitions, still what remained of the law upon the conscience, and what reason pleaded in his behalf, did not increase sin, but served, in a considerable degree, to check and restrain it.

In pursuit of our inquiry, our attention is, therefore, necessarily directed to the period of the promulgation of the revealed law, under the ministration of Moses. It was obvious indeed, from what had been previously observed, that it must have been at this period, that "the entrance of the law" of which we are inquiring took place.

Still one can hardly be brought to conceive of the legislation of Moses generally, that the abounding of sin, or merely its discovery, was either its design, or the end which it did effect. So far, indeed, was this from being the case, that the legislation of Moses was contrived to separate the Israelites from the rest of the nations, for the service of a more rational religion, and far superior morality. This end, we must admit, was often defeated, by their depravity and stubbornness; yet such, nevertheless, was the tendency of the law, and such was its effect, as far as it did prevail. And, in point of fact, it often proved a check upon the wicked propensities of the people, and often served them as a rallying-point, when brought by misfortune to penitence and humiliation. It has been accordingly the repeated source of national reformations, and, in consequence, the occasion of restoring the Jews to prosperity, when contemporary nations, filling up the measure of their iniquity, perished from off the earth. It is not, therefore, the legislation of Moses, in a general

point of view, which answers to the inquiry we are pursuing. We cannot, however, be at a loss as to the object of our search, though some confused notions entertained on this subject have led to the above specification of what this "entrance of the law" was not.

It is notorious to every reader of the word of God, that on the Exodus of the children of Israel out of Egypt, God was pleased to negotiate a covenant with his visible church, on conditions, apparently, very different from those on which the hope of the spiritual seed of Abraham had previously rested. It was, indeed, upon the terms of the law of works, at that time proclaimed by God's own mouth, and written by his finger upon two tables of stone. This covenant respected not the outward condition only of the Abrahamic family. That it did do this, and so gave a particular aspect to the visible state of the church from Moses to Christ, is indeed true. But, besides this, it had respect to the religious hopes of the spiritual children of Abraham. This is equally plain from several passages of the law, which can neither, in their threatenings of death to the disobedient, allude to earthly troubles and disasters; nor, in their promise of life to the righteous, to prosperity in an earthly Canaan. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die:" "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." But he that did these things, it was declared, "should live in them."

Now, it is the moral law in this view, as a covenant of life and death, which we uniformly find contrasted with the gospel. That was "the old," "the former covenant:" this "the new," "the better covenant." The former, too, is frequently represented as a merely provisional measure, to last only for a time, and then to give place to one more excellent.

This appointment of the law of works, therefore, bind-

ing every candidate for heaven, is the entrance of the law in question; and it not only exactly answers to the description here given by the Apostle, but its effects, as we shall see, are also exactly those which he attributes to it: "Moreover the law was added," "Entered in the mean time," "Made a little entrance," "Entered by the by," or "stole privily in;" whichever interpretation may be thought preferable; and entered, "that sin might abound."

The covenant of grace, we know, had long before this time been revealed: it had been in an especial manner confirmed of God in Christ, to Abraham and to his seed. The promises which conveyed the eternal inheritance to believers through a righteousness of faith, the law could not disannul; so that it could make the promise of no effect: yet still, as we have seen, the law entered, to a certain extent, and for a limited time, and even the heirs of promise were put under the yoke—"were shut up under it," as the Apostle speaks, "until faith should come"—"until he should come to whom the promises were made*." It was, in truth, a yoke of bondage, which made the child, in his actual privileges, to differ nothing from a servant; and cast a gloomy aspect upon the whole church of God, during all this interval from Moses to Christ.

Not that the children of God were even then entire strangers to gospel liberty; they saw, by the manifestation of the Spirit, their deliverance from the law, through Him who was to come to fulfil the promises made to the fathers. David, as we have seen, could describe "the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputed righteousness without works." The ceremonial part of the law of Moses was, in fact, a typical gospel, designed to shadow how, by means of an atonement, and of the sanctification of the unholy, the transgressors of the moral

* Gal. iii. 23.

law might expect deliverance and spiritual peace. The prophets also, as has been frequently intimated to us, bore their testimony to the righteousness of faith. Yet, notwithstanding, the communion of saints received, as it were, a tinge and distinctive character from the nature of the dispensation, under which they were placed till the time appointed by the Father; and there is reason to suppose that the Jewish believers seldom, and with difficulty, attained to that experience of liberty, of peace and joy, which now, since the "bringing of life and immortality to light through the gospel," "since grace and truth are come by Jesus Christ," and since the effusion of the Holy Ghost, may be said to be the public standard of religious experience: the standard, which is to be held up as attainable by all, at which all are directed to aim; and which, by the blessing of God upon the means of grace, none need fear of attaining. "The weakest shall be as David," "for the house of David is now as God;" since the King of Saints is sat down at the right-hand of the Majesty on high.

But though, as respects the general privileges of the church, liberty is now her state, as bondage was under the former dispensation; yet as then, through the visitation of the Spirit, the children of God while living under the law, had many triumphant views and happy anticipations of the blessings of Christ's kingdom—"the better things prepared for us;" so, in like manner, under the gospel dispensation, God is often pleased, especially in leading his children to their first knowledge of Christ, "till faith is come," in this sense, to make use of the law: so that, generally speaking, the law still makes its little entry, enters by the bye, steals privily in. Nay, not unfrequently, probably owing to the prevalence of false doctrine, and to their own perverseness and unbelief, Christians are seen to labour under this heavy yoke a great

part of their pilgrimage. This, however, is not to be considered as the will of God; in respect of his obedient children, Christ has "spoken unto us, *that our joy may be full* *." And the promised Comforter is sent to make us "*know the things which are freely given to us of God* †." But of these subjects we shall have to speak more at large, when the Apostle, in a subsequent part of his Epistle, enters more fully upon them.

From what has been said, we may conclude, that the entrance of the law spoken of in the passage before us, is that covenant which God appointed to his church at Mount Sinai; according to the terms of which, life was made to depend upon their observance of all the precepts of the moral law, and death denounced against every transgressor:—that we are not, however, to look for the peculiar effects attributed to this entrance of the law, in the state and circumstances of the Jewish nation at large, but in the experience of the spiritual seed of Abraham, who lived under that dispensation, or who are now, from whatever cause, labouring under the same spirit of bondage. This entrance, or addition of the law, was, if we may be allowed so to express it, *that partial interference which the law of works, on account of the Sinai covenant, seemed to have with the covenant of grace, which was before confirmed to Abraham.*

If we behold Israel after the flesh, we perceive, that this Sinai covenant materially affected them, in their going to possess the temporal Canaan; and indeed, but for the remembrance of the original covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had prevented it altogether. For even this possession of Canaan was given by promise, and therefore the law could not disannul it, or make the promise of no effect. All this is strictly analagous to what takes place among the true Israel of God, in going to take

* John xv. 11. xvi. 24.

† 1 Cor. ii. 12.

possession of their heavenly inheritance, and was intended for a type of the same. And it is here, as we have observed, that we must look for those peculiar effects ascribed by the Apostle to the entrance of the law. It is plain indeed, from what is said in the seventh chapter, that St. Paul is speaking of no effect of the law that had ever touched or affected the Jews of his days in general; no, not himself before his conversion, though, according to their straitest sect, he had lived a Pharisee, and had been most zealous for the law. He was, then, according to his own account of himself, “alive *without* the law.” The effect of the law, of which we speak, he describes by saying, “*The commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*”

In order, therefore, to contemplate this effect of the law which is the object of our attention, we must set before us a truly converted person, one led to sincere repentance, brought by the convictions of the Spirit to a real and spiritual knowledge of the law, which, as a rule of self-examination, he applies to the inmost actions of his heart. By this he ascertains his state before God. He has, according to the case we are supposing, but obscure notions of the covenant of grace, and of the righteousness of faith. He seeks God, and truly hungers and thirsts after righteousness. But “the law has stole in;” the great effort of his mind is to endeavour to keep all its righteous precepts, as the only means of attaining justification and eternal life. For though he knows of Christ, and has, perhaps, a general knowledge of the plan of redemption through his blood, yet, in his own mind, he has clogged the terms of his free acceptance in Christ, with the condition of his first keeping the law; and he refuses to hope in the promises till he has brought his heart to the standard of the precepts.

In this state of things, we find the exact effects attributed to the entrance of the law in the passage before us: “Sin abounds!” Not only, on account of the light,

which has now broken in upon the mind, is sin become more manifest, and the secrets of the heart more exposed to view; but there is also an *excitement* felt by corrupted nature; and, as must necessarily be the case, admitting the utter depravity of mankind, the more the convert knows of his duties and the stronger the obligations are, which he feels to fulfil them, the greater will be the guilt of his failures and transgressions. Thus sin, by acting against light and conviction, by breaking through new and more sacred bonds, by forfeiting every pledge, and violating, again and again, its own voluntary engagements, becomes in fact more exceedingly a *sinner*. Here then it may with strict propriety be said, "The law enters that sin might abound;" but in no other respect whatever, that I know of, can such a design or use be attributed to the law of works. For, in fact, in all other cases and circumstances, except in this *spiritual application of it to the converted soul*, both in the church and in the world, the design and tendency of the moral law is of a nature directly opposite to that of the increase of sin. Moreover, in this case *alone*, what we read in the following sentence of the Apostle is true:

"But where sin hath abounded, grace hath abounded more; that as sin reigned to death, so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life." In respect of the general operation of the law and its consequences, every one will acknowledge, that the very reverse of this statement is true. "Where sin hath abounded, wrath hath more abounded; for every one will be judged according to his works."—And "he who knew his Lord's will, and transgressed, will be beaten with many stripes:"—"To whom much is given, from him much will be required." But in the case before us, that of the truly penitent sinner, whom God is bringing to salvation, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, in this case, though the entrance

of the law, in its spiritual application to the heart, when seen as a covenant of life and death, is indeed attended with the effects above described,—sin abounds; yet the law cannot make faith void, nor the promise of none effect; so that, when the penitent is brought by faith to Christ, though by means of the law, he appears before him a more wretched and, in fact, a more guilty sinner; yet the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin: “The free gift is of many offences unto justification of life.”

Therefore, notwithstanding the law, which is indeed “the strength of sin;” and notwithstanding its curse, which was the most difficult to escape; “by the obedience of the one man Jesus Christ, the many are constituted righteous.” Though, besides the condemnation pronounced upon mankind in the first Adam, there lay upon us also the curse of the law, which must have consigned us, in the great day, to the bitterness of eternal death, still grace abounds, so as to reverse the one as well as the other: the curse pronounced upon actual transgressions, as well as the imputation of original guilt. “Christ was made a curse for us;” and, having fulfilled the law, he is become to his people “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

Out of Christ, over them that believe not, sin reigns unto death both before the law, and under the law; and men are seen to perish, whether their sentence is awarded as being implicated in Adam’s transgression, or as personally transgressors of that law which promised life to the obedient. But in Christ grace reigns through righteousness, through the righteousness of Christ, so as to deliver his people both from original sin and from their actual transgressions, and gives the victory over sin and the law; and they who receive the abundance or superabundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, reign in life by one man, Jesus Christ.

Such is the use and design of the law, as a covenant;

and such are the effects produced in the consciences of the spiritual seed of Abraham, and in the manner we have seen, are these effects over-ruled and reversed. But a formidable objection seems to lie against this statement,—a consequence appears to follow, subversive of the obligations of morality. The objection is thus anticipated by the Apostle: “What shall we say then”—or “what do we say then,—may we continue in sin that grace may abound?”

From what had been said of the superabounding of grace where sin had abounded, so that the law, as it affected the eternal hopes of the believer, was clearly set aside, and, as an addition to the covenant of grace, removed; it would not fail to be urged by the objector, by one who was ignorant of the powerful influence of divine grace upon the heart, for such only can mistake the nature of gospel liberty, “Whatever sin then the law discovers, or stirs up in the heart or conduct, the believer need not regard it: for, according to this statement, there is grace in store to pardon all. He may indulge in sin, grace will abound; and, the more sin abounds, the more will grace abound, and will prevail above it.”

Such, we may admit, would be a fair objection, and a natural consequence, did this abolition of the law extend to a man in his unregenerated state: or were it true, that in the minds of the regenerate there was no principle of obedience adequate to secure the obligations of morality and piety, when the curse of the law on disobedience is removed, and men no longer feel themselves compelled to seek life by the works of the law. Did the grace of God do nothing more for his people, than justify them as ungodly persons, and make them heirs of eternal life, on account of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, imputed through faith; then we might admit, that there was occasion for the above objection; and a just suspicion would arise, lest, by this doctrine, a door might be opened to

licentiousness, and inferences drawn, of which the depravity of human nature would not be slow in taking the advantage. But we shall find, as we enter upon the contents of the following chapter, which is intended to meet this objection, that a moral and spiritual change is presupposed, in every true believer, who is entitled to these privileges. We shall find that he who is united to Christ by his quickening Spirit, so as to receive the imputation of his righteousness, which for ever satisfies the demand of the law, receives, at the same time, a new and holy nature from his covenant Head, experiences a quickening power, animating his heart with the love of God, and making it the desire of his soul to serve him in holiness and righteousness of life. Let this be granted, and whatever imperfections may be admitted on account of the remainders of corruption, whatever failures and deficiencies, yet it is impossible that such a person should choose to live in sin, or be content to be held under its acknowledged power.

Should a person, indeed, without experiencing in reality this change of heart and nature, argue himself into the persuasion of a right to Christian privileges, we may grant, that it could hardly fail to follow, that he would abuse them all, the doctrine we are here considering among the rest. "He would turn the grace of our Lord into lasciviousness," and would "use the liberty of the gospel for an occasion of the flesh," if not "for a cloak of licentiousness." But suppose true repentance: suppose that a new heart and a new spirit are given unto him: suppose it a fact, that he "delights in the law of God after the inward man," and that he regards it ever as a drawback upon his happiness, "that a depraved nature, which cannot be subject to that law, still forms a part of him, and prevents his fulfilment thereof in its utmost extent: suppose him further endued with power from on high, to "cru-

cify," from time to time, "the flesh with its affections and lusts: suppose the indwelling of the Spirit of grace, purifying and sanctifying his heart; let all this be supposed, and then ask the question, Is there danger of such an one, that he will sin that grace may abound?"

Now, this is the character and the actual state of the believer. And we shall find, as we proceed, that the Apostle appeals to it, as a matter of fact, that such a change of principle and conduct had been the consequence of "obeying the form of doctrine, which had been delivered" to the Roman Christians. And we shall find, that in judging the real characters of pretenders to the faith of Christ, it still remains invariably true, "His servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." That criterion also of our Lord must for ever remain: "By their fruits ye shall know them:" for, though Christians are not saved and called by works of righteousness which they have done, but by the mercy and grace of God; yet they are "his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works*." But all these are subjects, which that part of the Epistle upon which we are now entering will lead us to consider more at large. We have only, therefore, to observe in this place, that in bringing the redeemed of Christ to glory, though their only title to that blisful state is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, imputed by faith alone; yet, provision is made, that they should receive from their risen Saviour a new and holy nature: that, "being washed and sanctified," as well as justified, they may finally be "presented to God without spot and blemish." But, at the same time, so entirely removed from all conditions of works is this salvation, so plain and full the information, that where sin is made to abound by the entrance of the law, grace shall more abound; that we cannot but expect the

* Eph. xi. 10.

faithful teachers of the gospel will be slanderously reported, and some will affirm, as they did of St. Paul, that they say, "Let us do evil, that good may come."

It is, however, remarkable, but, generally speaking, will be found strictly true, that if all is right and consistent in the Christian character, the world will not only exclaim against the believer in Jesus, on account of the imagined immoral tendency of his doctrines, but also on account of the over-strictness of his life! Not only shall we hear the slander of "Antinomian," and "Antimoralist," when the doctrines of grace are fully avowed; but also, when the Christian's rule of life is inspected, we shall as often hear the cry of "Righteous overmuch!" And, extraordinary as it may appear, that charges so opposite in their nature should lie against the same person, yet, let the Christian suspect both the exactness of his creed, and the strictness of his moral conduct, if both these censures are not, occasionally, cast upon him, especially if his situation in life be in any degree public.

There is a way, we all know, of smoothing down, and *qualifying*, as it is called, but a truer name would be, of *neutralizing* doctrines, so that the world will allow them as being of a harmless and indifferent nature; and little or no shame attaches to the confessor. So also there is a way of partially conforming to the world, a mode of connivance and good-natured compliance, which much abates the dislike of careless sinners to the Christian's life and conversation. But, if offence was given by the doctrines preached by St. Paul, and even Jesus Christ himself,—one so amiable!—was hated for the holiness of his precepts, it becomes us to be upon our guard, lest the approbation and allowance, which the world shall at any time vouchsafe to our doctrine, or to our practice, may not have been produced by the compromise of something, which ought to be found in the believer's faith or character.

LECTURE XIII.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

WE now enter more at length into the answer to that objection, which we saw anticipated by St. Paul, in our last Lecture—the supposed immoral tendency of the doctrine of the believer's deliverance from the law, as an institution holding life and death suspended on the observance of its righteous precepts. The Apostle had asserted, that, in the case where, by a spiritual application of the moral law to the hearts of the regenerate, sin was made to abound, there grace would abound the more, and would still reign, in the pardon of their multiplied transgressions, to eternal life. An objector, unacquainted with the influence of the Spirit of grace, might infer, "The believer then may live in sin, that grace may abound!"

Ver. 1. "What shall we say then?"—or, "What do we say then?" "Shall we"—or, "We may continue in sin, that grace may abound.

Ver. 2. "God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin*, [or "by sin†,"] live any longer therein?"

Such an inference the Apostle rejects with abhorrence: God forbid! And he shows the impossibility of such a consequence, in the circumstances of a true believer in Christ; and that because of a moral change, wrought in his nature, by that same divine agency that had enabled him to exercise justifying faith in the Redeemer.

The nature of this divine change, and its effects, are now to be considered, and our attention is called to it as a

* לחטיותא

† MACKNIGHT.

subject of prime importance, inasmuch as no one can assure himself that he is in the faith, and that he possesses the privileges of Christ's kingdom, unless the effects of this change of nature are experienced in his heart, and visibly displayed in his life and conversation.

“How shall *we*,” says the Apostle, “who are dead to sin,” live any longer therein? What the Apostle means by being dead to sin, and how the supposition of a believer's living any longer therein, though released from the penalty of the law, appears a manifest inconsistency, which revolves upon the objector, will be best seen in his own account of the fact, and of its necessary consequences, as contained in the remainder of the chapter.

First, St. Paul begins his subject with an allusion to the nature and design of Christian baptism; and appeals to the general notions then entertained by Christians, respecting this initiatory rite of their religion.

Ver. 3. “What! know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death?”

The doctrine of baptism is stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as one of those which are to be reckoned among the “principles of the doctrines of Christ* ;” and Christians ought, unquestionably, to attach a great importance to baptism and the doctrine concerning it; since we find baptism mentioned, together with faith, as a grand requisite in order to salvation. “He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.”

But can we suppose that by baptism here is intended merely an act of obedience in submitting to an outward ceremony. That were, indeed, to join a work with faith, in the procuring of salvation. But let the Apostle Peter decide: “A like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us: not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but

* vi. 2.

the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*." Here we are plainly informed in what light the outward form of baptism was considered. It was a washing of the flesh. And, at the same time, we are taught to distinguish between this outward sign and an inward spiritual grace; and the saving effect of baptism is attributed not to the washing, but to the answer of the conscience towards God by the resurrection of Christ. So that, as has been observed before, we may use the same language respecting baptism, which the Apostle uses respecting circumcision; "That is not baptism, which is outward in the flesh."—"Baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit, the praise of which is not of men, but of God."

Water indeed is to be used as a sign; for *man* is commanded to baptize; but the outward act, as performed by man, is only to be regarded as emblematical of an inward act, which can alone be accomplished by the Spirit of God poured out from on high. In baptism, therefore, our chief regard must be had to Him, who promises to baptize with the Holy Ghost. This alone can produce what baptism signifies, "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness;"—"the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh†:"—this "answer towards God of a good conscience, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead:" as it is elsewhere described—"a conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God‡:"—the experiencing of the power of Christ's resurrection§.

Indeed, the effects spoken of in the passage before us, as resulting from our baptism into Christ, forbid us for a moment to suppose, that the Apostle means only, our being initiated into the profession of Christ's religion by a

* i. iii. 21.

† Col. ii. 3.

‡ Heb. ix. 14.

§ Phil. iii. 10.

figurative rite. And, in order to perceive his real meaning, it is only necessary to recal to our recollection his language in another place: “By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body:”—to quote the passage at length, since it affords a clear illustration of “being baptized into Christ”—“For, as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For, by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

There are, we may observe, two means, or instruments, whereby the children of promise obtain the salvation prepared for them in Christ—*faith*, and the *grace of the sacraments*. Faith is the instrument which is put into our hand, the means whereby *we* receive Christ. The grace of the sacraments is the operation of God’s hand upon our souls;—quickenings us from spiritual death, and planting us in the living Saviour, as shadowed in the outward sign of baptism, and nourishing us in this new and heavenly life, as represented in the Lord’s supper. Hence Christians are said, in different passages of Scripture, to be saved in different ways; as their own act, under the influence of the spirit, or as the exclusive operation of God is considered. If the act of man is the object in view, what *we* must do to be saved, faith alone is always mentioned. If the operation of God is considered, it is differently stated: we are then said to be saved, “by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;” and to live, by eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ. Hence it is said, “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*:” and “except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you†.”

* 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

† John iii. and vi.

The effect here attributed to baptism by St. Paul is, that we are thereby spiritually united to our new Head; are made, as it were, part of him: to use the words of a late commentator, "implanted into and made part of the body of Christ by baptism. The Apostle's meaning is, by baptism being united to Christ as our federal head, all that has happened to him may be considered as happening to us*." "As many," therefore, "as were baptized into Christ, were baptized into his death." Because, being made one with him by baptism, and he having died to sin, [or having been put to death by sin,] the same act, as to all intents and purposes, is considered as having passed upon us; we are made sharers in it. The Apostle proceeds with the consequences resulting from baptism:

Ver. 4. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by or into the glory of the Father †, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Ver. 5. "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

As Christ, our spiritual head, died to the conflict with sin, in our nature, and after falling the victim of sin—"for he bare our sins"—was buried as no longer belonging to this world, nor of any farther use in it; so the people of Christ, being put to death in their head, are—"in Him in whom they are held,"—and with respect to that new nature which is propagated in them from Christ, considered as given up by sin, as no longer suitable to its service: as a master would give up the dead body of his murdered slave, to be conveyed to the silent grave, as no longer a fit subject for his employ or for his tyranny. Again: "Christ was raised from the dead by"—or, perhaps, "into the glory of the Father:" consequently, according to the

* Macknight.

† "Into the glory."—*Syriac*.

Apostle's reasoning, a corresponding effect will be found in what has happened to his members;" even so we also should walk in newness of life." This same effect St. Paul thus describes in another place: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through faith of the operation of God, who raised him from the dead*."

And we are to observe, that what is here said does not merely imply, that it is the *duty* of the baptized to lead a new life; but that this resurrection to a new life is a supernatural effect, which would certainly follow in all who were in reality baptized into Christ. "For, if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." "Baptized into Christ" is here explained by being planted together with, or growing together, coalescing † as the graft upon the stock, into which it is grafted or *inarched*. The doctrinal inference is clear: if we have been so united to Christ, our New and Federal Head, and have been made, in a mystical sense, to grow into one being with him, so that we are become partakers of his death, and its effects—redemption, and a death unto sin; the same union with Christ will have made us equally sharers in this resurrection; the effects of which are justification and liberty, and a resurrection from the death of sin to the life of righteousness.

Ver. 6. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

This is one important truth, which we should recognise in the mystery of our Lord's passion. "Our old man." That is, our original nature, as received from Adam, which is denominated in Scripture the "old man," to distinguish it from that new and spiritual nature, which is generated in every member of Christ which it calls "the new man."

* Col. ii. 12.

† Parkhurst.

This, our old nature, was crucified with Christ; *He*, according to the divine appointment, our Head and Representative, was put to death in the flesh, that "the body of sins," our sinful body—the body subject to sin, where it had hitherto reigned and exercised its authority, "might be destroyed:" "who his own self bare our sins in his own body upon the tree, that we, *being dead to sin*, should live unto righteousness*." The original nature of man, as we shall see, in a subsequent chapter, is entirely enslaved to sin, and cannot be subject to the law of God. Even in the regenerated child of God, though he has put on the new man, and is renewed in the spirit of his mind to delight in the law of God; still "the flesh." "the old man, corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," "serves the law of sin." It cannot be reformed, or won over to the cause of God. It must, therefore, be put off, mortified, destroyed; no deliverance besides can be expected. The accomplishment of this end, accordingly, the plan of our great Restorer embraces, as part of his undertaking for us. He took man's nature upon him, not only that he might therein become a sacrifice for sin, but that he might purify that nature by his passion; or, rather, kill it in his death, and then propagate it afresh in all his members.—He was that "corn of wheat which fell into the earth and died, and brought forth much fruit†." "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me‡."

Ver. 7. "For he that is dead is freed from sin;" or, according to the original, "is justified from sin."

The meaning is evident: he is justified from its claim of dominion; *vindicated* from it, and put beyond the reach of its usurped power:—as the slave, in dying, becomes free from his master §.

* 1 Pet. ii. 24.

† John xi. 24.

‡ Gal. ii. 20.

§ אחרוב—liber factus, manumissus.—*Syriac*.

Ver. 8. "Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."

It is the believer's persuasion and experience, that the same union with Christ, which entitles him to the benefits of his death, places him, at the same time, within the reach and influence of that quickening power, from his risen Saviour, which renews him to a spiritual life. He sees the causes of his release from the punishment of sin, and of his generation to a holy life, as being closely connected together. In like manner he expects and experiences the effects of these causes to be closely and indissolubly united. Thus, when the Apostle expresses his anxious wish "to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness," he adds, "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death*." And so, in the passage before us, he leads us to reflect upon the present circumstances of our exalted Head; the influence of which we must necessarily feel, if we are indeed united to him.

Ver. 9. "Knowing this, that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death has no more dominion over him."

We are to regard Christ, in all this, as our Head and Representative; and what has happened to him, we are entitled to consider as having happened, virtually, to us; and we are authorized to expect the consequences. And on this occasion we can scarcely fail to recollect the words of Christ when he appeared to St. John: "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore †." Connect with this the former sayings of our Lord: "Because I live, ye shall live also ‡."—"As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth

* Phil. iii, 20.

† Rev. i. 18.

‡ John xiv. 11.

me shall live by me*." Let these passages be considered and compared, and the fact will be clearly made out, that the believer, who, through the death of Christ, is released from the law, receives from his risen Head a communication of a new and spiritual life. "The second Adam," the Lord from heaven, is indeed "A QUICKENING SPIRIT!"

Ver. 10. "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

As some explain this verse—He who has died, has died *by* sin; for, by sin death entered into the world; and, because all have sinned, it is appointed unto all men once to die. He, therefore, that dieth, dieth once by sin. And he who liveth—who is recovered from this state of death, by the power of God, he dieth no more; death has no more dominion over him. Now, has this taken place with respect to our Head and Representative? The consequence will be, that all his members are sharers with him. But, I conceive, we are in this passage to recognise the wonderful mystery of the "Son of God, sent in the likeness of sinful flesh." He was spotless and sinless, but he had to maintain the conflict with the deceitful lusts of the flesh, in his own bosom. He was perfect in holiness, but it was maintained by a perpetual victory and triumph against sin, the world, and devil. To this strife and conflict he died, made perfect through sufferings, obtaining eternal redemption for us: "For, if one died for all, then were all dead; and he died for all, that they who henceforth live should not live unto themselves, but unto Him who died and rose again." St. Peter uses much the same language, and it is the common language of Scripture: "Forasmuch, then, as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourself likewise with the same mind; for, he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he should no

* John vi. 57.

longer live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lust of men, but to the will of God*." Exactly similar is the conclusion of the Apostle in the passage before us:

Ver. 11. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The members of Christ are to consider themselves as persons in whom sin has done its utmost, it has reigned unto death. This the law, applied to the conscience, clearly shows. But then we are united to a new and living Head, who hath died to sin, communicating a new and divine life to the soul: so that, although we are compelled, with the Apostle, to say, "In us, in our flesh, dwelleth no good;" but sin ruling unto death: yet in Christ that sentence has been executed, the sting of death has been wasted; and through Christ who liveth in us, we rise, in heart and life, above our corrupt nature, subdue, mortify, and crucify it: not, indeed, through the law, or from our own conscientious endeavour to keep its righteous precepts, in order to inherit eternal life; but through the life of Christ, and through the communication of his Spirit enabling us to mortify the deeds of the body.

Take, for instance, the case of a man whose leading master-sin has been some species of coveting. This has ever been the chief vent of his innate depravity: were he to live after the flesh, this would stamp his character in life; an intemperate man; an extortioner; an adulterer; the slave of ambition or of avarice. But the blessing of the Saviour is come upon him to turn him from his sin. He is regenerated by the Spirit of God. The law in its spiritual sway enters into his conscience. If the outward life had been corrupt, it produces *reformation*; for no man, with the terrors of the law upon his mind, can calmly indulge

* 1 Pet. iv. 1.

in outward vice. But still the law cannot alter this propensity, nor effectually check it. Though it breaks not out into *finished acts* of sin, yet it perhaps rages with greater violence than ever within him, so as, in the sight of God, to cover him with guilt from day to day.

The law has exposed it in the secret recesses of his mind. It seems to be his *very nature*. The man appears to himself *made* of nothing else. The leopard might as soon change his spots, and the Ethiopian his skin, as he obey, in heart, that precept of the law which is pointed against his particular lusts. The law, therefore, can do no more than discover his misery. This was all it was designed to do. At length, the gracious Spirit leads him to a knowledge of his free justification in Christ, and gives him the blessed assurance, that though this coveting is working death within him, yet he shall not die, for it killed Christ instead of him—"He died in Him in whom he was holden;" Christ has delivered him from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for him. What then? shall he look with indifference upon the working of his besetting sin in his members, because he is not under the law?—No! his renewed mind has already been influenced to hate and detest it; and he is rendered thereby vile and wretched in his own eyes. Will he "use his liberty," then, "for an occasion of the flesh?" He fears not now, indeed, those dreadful consequences of concupiscence, which he once saw no means of escaping. But his heart being "right with God," the information, that his enemy has not power to ruin him, that he has, in fact, discharged his dart, and that that dart was received in the interposed breast of his murdered Lord,—this has given him new courage against him, yea, new hatred! He carries on the conflict with much greater advantages than heretofore.—He perceives himself endowed with new energies, new powers, and new resources.

He still feels, indeed, that in himself, when left to himself, and so far as nature is at any time suffered to get head, he is, in the view of God's holy law, the same guilty wretch as ever; but, "renewed in the spirit of his mind," and assisted by the Spirit of God, he can so far curb and mortify this wicked propensity, as to exhibit, in the general state of his affections, a very opposite disposition. "The spirit that is within him," it is true, "still lusteth to envy," but "God giveth more grace." He dares not, however, to be high-minded, nor to forget that "it is God who worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure;" "through Christ that strengtheneth him he can do all things;" but, "as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so, without Christ, he can do nothing."—It is thus that the believer estimates, on the one hand, his *strength*; and, on the other hand, his *weakness*.

On these considerations, and adapted to such a state of things, St. Paul gives the following exhortations:

Ver. 12. "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof*:"

Ver. 13. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

These exhortations, it is sufficient to observe, allude to the communication of a supernatural power, and call for its exercise. It is added:

Ver. 14. "For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

Considered as under the law, as at times, perhaps, the believer is constrained to feel, he has no power to help himself—all his resolutions are baffled and defeated: "his goodness appears like the morning cloud, or the hasty

* That you should obey its lusts.—*Syr.* and *Vulg.*

dew." But under the reign of grace he is not cast down: the mercy and forbearance of God dispel his fears, and, communicating with his New Head, he wages successful war, being "strengthened with might by the Spirit of God in the inner man."

How forcible, in this view, is the exhortation to the Colossians: "If, then, ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; set your affections upon things above, not on things on the earth; for 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. Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth. Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, and evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry, for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience*."

This exhortation to obedience, we are to observe, is not enforced, by the threat of death and promise of life, according to the terms of the law. Believers are not under the law, but under grace; and the notion of being under grace implies that they are the objects of unmerited favour; that it is intended they should be dealt graciously with, and not considered as obnoxious to the just recompense of their deeds.—God hath sworn that he will no more be angry with them, nor rebuke them†; "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

But, the objectionable inference will again be drawn, which St. Paul anticipates:

Ver. 15. "What, then, shall we sin because," or, "since we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid!"

The Apostle repels the inference with his usual expression of abhorrence.—That man, in his unregenerate

* Col. iii. 1.

† Isa. liv. 9, 10.

state, should draw such an inference, we must admit to be natural: for, since his chief inducements to virtue and piety, as far as he affects to practise them, are, the fear of punishment, and the hope of reward in some way or other; to suppose these motives removed, is, in his view, to remove every sufficient restraint and encouragement, and to give liberty to sin. But the case is not so, where that change of heart and nature, of which we have been speaking, has in reality taken place. For, this change supposes, in the prevailing power of the soul, a hatred to sin, and a delight in the law of God. Admit this to be a fact,—and it stands upon the same authority as the release of the believer from the penalties of the law,—there is then no fear of the detested conclusion. Nay, let us admit this, and a good life may yet be appealed to, as the only and indispensable proof of true religion. Waving all considerations of the *principle* of obedience to the law of morals—whether it be to procure life and escape condemnation; or whether it be, as the gospel teaches us, from a principle of love, excited by a supernatural influence,—whichever way you state it, a good life is an essential part of salvation; and while men live in sin, they cannot be manifested to be the children of God; but, continuing without repentance, and fruits meet for repentance, are manifested to be the children of the devil.

Ver. 16. “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”

As to the *necessity* of virtue and piety, there is no dispute. Under the Gospel, as well as under the Law, “the wicked man must turn away from the wickedness which he has committed, and do that which is lawful and right.” Our Lord tells us respecting his disciples, “By their fruits ye shall know them*.” “He that

* Matt. vii. 16—20.

hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: he that doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother†." In this point of view, also, the statement formerly noticed, of St. James, must not be lost sight of: "You see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." For though, as we observed, the works spoken of by St. James are not the common duties of life, but actions demonstrating a real belief in God's word and promise; yet, by fair implication, every commandment of the moral law may, with respect to the believer, be considered in the same point of view; and "faith, if it hath not works" of this description, "is dead, being alone."

But, in the case of them to whom he was writing, St. Paul could appeal to the fact. The reception of the gospel had been to them a deliverance from the service of sin, and the means of their becoming the servants of God in holiness and righteousness.

Ver. 17. "But, God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin"—"Thank God, however, that ye (who) were the servants of sin," have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

Ver. 18. "Being then made free from sin"—or, "And being set at liberty from sin, ye become the servants of righteousness."

What had been the effects of embracing the gospel, as attested by the conduct of the Roman Christians? The Apostle is thankful that they had among them true believers; those who *from the heart* had obeyed the scheme of doctrine delivered to them. Which seems to intimate, that it is only in the cases of unhearty and unsound believers, that any doubt can arise, as to the moral tendency

* John xiv. 21.

† 1 John iii. 10.

of the doctrines of grace. And we may without hesitation observe, that a reference to the lives of those, who hold these doctrines in simplicity and truth, is the best answer to the objection which the world, strangers to the superior motives by which they are actuated, are ever disposed to bring against their principles from their supposed immoral tendency.

St. Paul, in the following verses, still retains the comparison, which he had made use of, to illustrate the nature of conversion to the Christian faith; *viz.*, that of a slave who, being released from the bondage of one master, who had cruelly oppressed him, becomes the willing servant of a new master, to whom he owes his liberty, and whose service he loves.

Ver. 19. "I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh: for, as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness," or "sanctification."

Ver. 20. "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

Ver. 21. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

Ver. 22. "But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life:

Ver 23. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

In using this comparison, which needs no comment, the Apostle tells us, that he accommodated himself to the understandings of the weak—"because of the weakness of your flesh;" and his observation, "I speak after the manner of men," denotes, that the comparison he here makes use of, is to be understood only in a popular,

general view ; and not as exhibiting, correctly, in every respect, the nature of the new engagement of the believer with his God. Indeed, he himself points out a disagreement, as we shall see in the sequel.

The believer was once the servant of sin, " serving divers lusts and pleasures, walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience*." But now, since the grace of God has visited his mind, he holds himself bound to another service, that of righteousness: too pure a service, indeed, for him to think of fulfilling it perfectly ; but still this is his aim, and he gladly presents himself as the subject of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, that he may be " cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit;" and " created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

There was a time when he felt no inclination or desire to serve righteousness ; nor was he at all influenced as a devoted servant, bound to comply with its demands. But now, perceiving the awful end to which all his former labours tended, he looks with shame and self-aborrence on all that period of his wretched slavery to sin. Generally speaking, the believer remembers a time when, by the operation of divine grace, he was set at liberty from this wretched slavery, and became the servant of God. Since that happy time, the main object of his labour has been the advancement of his soul in all virtue and godliness of living ; nor has he laboured in vain ; he has some fruits of his labours, and he sees the end, through grace, to be eternal life. So far, we may illustrate the case of the believer, by a situation of a servant in respect of his two masters, one of whose services he quits, to enter into the service of the other. But we must be mindful of one very essential difference in the obedience of the servant of sin, and in the obedience of the servant of righteousness; a dif-

*Ephes. ii.

ference, of which if we lose sight, we destroy the very nature of grace—confound the gospel with the law of works—and carry the notions of a slave where the glorious liberty of the children of God alone should be contemplated—“the royal law of liberty inscribed upon the heart.”

The wages of sin, we are told by the Apostle, is death. Death is the reward and just recompense of the obedience of the servant of sin. Not so, with respect to eternal life, which is the end of the obedience unto righteousness: eternal life is not the wages or reward of the fruits unto sanctification, but it is the gift of God in Jesus Christ: it is bestowed according to that plan of redemption which we have already seen unfolded, “not by works of righteousness which we have done. But the service to which the believer is called is that of love and gratitude, springing from a sense of mercies received, and aiming at the attainment of greater capacities of nature, to enjoy the presence of God, and enter upon a more exalted state of being, even that glory which God has prepared for them that love him!

LECTURE XIV.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.—FROM THE FIRST TO THE
FOURTEENTH VERSE.

THE Apostle having obviated the objection which had been started, from the supposed immoral tendency of the doctrine of the law of works being set aside in the business of a sinner's justification before God, and having shown the true nature and far more efficacious principles of evangelical obedience, now *returns* to treat more fully of this doctrine, of the abrogation of the legal covenant, on the right understanding of which much of the Christian's happiness depends. For, "the law is good if a man use it lawfully:" but, like many a salutary medicine, when administered by an unskilful hand, it proves destructive of health, and ruinous to the constitution it was intended to benefit.

In the passage before us the Apostle,

First, Illustrates, by comparisons well understood by those to whom he writes, the way in which the obligation to the law ceases with respect to the believer.

Secondly, He describes the effects of the law upon himself when in the flesh; the meaning of which term we shall be called upon to consider.

Thirdly, He cuts off an occasion, which some might take from what he says, of charging the law with being the cause of sin. The law he pronounces pure, and argues the cause of the evil to be his own depraved nature; and shows the use of the law in discovering it.

Ver. 1. "Know ye not, brethren (for I speak to them

that know the law), how that the law has dominion over a man as long as he liveth *?"

You to whom I am writing understand the nature and obligation of the moral law. You know that it possesses authority over a man during the period of his natural life, it is the law of his nature, in its present circumstances and relations; so that, while he abides in this life, he cannot but be amenable to its rule. But his death releases him, and places him beyond its reach. He then enters into another state of being, and becomes subject to other laws, as circumstances, to us unknown, shall require.

Ver. 2. "For the woman which has an husband"—or, "the married woman, indeed, is bound by the law to her husband, so long as he liveth: but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

Ver. 3. "So, then, if while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adultress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adultress though she be married to another man."

This was another legal case, which those to whom the Apostle was writing well understood.

In the former case, which showed the dominion of the law in general, nothing but the death of the subject could release him from the obligation. But in this case of the married woman, it is different; her obligations as a married woman do not last during her own life, but are pending upon that of her husband. During his life the transfer of her person would be criminal, as the law has determined;

* Many render this last clause, "as long as it liveth;" as though the Apostle meant to show, how, with respect to believers, the law once in force had now *expired*. And this, certainly, cannot be very far from his meaning. But I think, from what follows, his notion to be, that the believer is become dead to the law, not the law dead to the believer.—"Ye are become dead to the law by, or in, the body of Christ:" "that being dead," or, "having died in that in which we were held."

but suppose her husband dead, she is free from that law, she is absolved from the tie and obligation, which brought her within the dominion of that law which pronounced her an adulteress if she married another. Now, from these two cases, taken together, the Apostle means to point out and illustrate the manner of the believer's deliverance from the law, and his entrance upon his new engagements under the gospel.

Ver. 4. "Wherefore"—or, "So, then, my brethren, ye are become dead to the law," [or, "have been put to death by the law] in the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

I. The believer is become dead to the law in the body of Christ. This clearly follows from the doctrine which we have already considered, that there is such a constituted union between Christ and all who are baptized into him, that what has happened to him, their Federal or Covenant Head, is considered as having happened to *the many*—the members of his mystical body, and is, to all intents and purposes, made over to them. It follows, that when Christ died to the law, or was put to death by the law, being numbered with the transgressors, all his people did then die. The law, therefore, has extended its authority to its utmost limits, and can affect the members of Christ no further. We are, consequently, through the law, become dead to the law, that we might live unto God*." The law, as it were, with its own hands, has put us to death when it killed our Head and Surety.

II. To proceed to the further illustration of this great change in the state of believers, from the case of the married woman. We are still to bear in mind "the spiritual union, that there is betwixt Christ and his church:" that they are one with Christ, and Christ one with them;

* Gal. ii. 19.

such an union, in fact, as amounts to a transfer of characters; so that Christ as the Head of his body, the church, acts as their representative and surety. Now, in this view of the case, it is not during their own lives, that they are bound to the law, but during the life of Christ: just as a wife during her husband's life is bound by him by the law of matrimony. If she outlive her husband, as we have seen, she is free from that law. So if those for whom a surety has been stipulated and accepted, outlive that surety—he having, in dying, satisfied all demands—like the law and obligation of matrimony, in the case alluded to, the law ceases with respect to them; it is of the nature of a bond cancelled and destroyed. Supposing, I repeat, a transfer of persons, and that Christ acted as our Representative, our Surety, our Federal Head, it was during his natural life, and not during our own, that we were amenable to the law. So that our situation is aptly compared to the obligation of a woman to the law of marriage, which ceases with the life of her husband.

Considered in himself, a man is bound to the law as long as he lives: but as "*held in the body of Christ,*" as one of his members, the law is to him what the particular law of matrimony is to a woman which has an husband: while he lives she is under that law; so previously to the death of Christ, all his people were subject to the law; for he himself was made subject to the law, that he might redeem them who were under the law. It was not till his death had dissolved the bond, that his people were free.

Those believers who lived and died before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, lived and died under the law; through the forbearance of God, however—in credit, as it were, of what was to be done, the penalties of the law were suspended; and they anticipated in hope, the enjoyments of the adoption of sons—for sons they were, though under

tutors and governors, differing nothing from servants.— But, in point of right, the law had still a demand upon them, and it appears they did not generally enjoy that happiness, which those that are spiritual now enjoy. They were “all their life long subject to bondage through the fear of death:” as the misinformed Christian is to this present hour. But when the Redeemer died, the obligation to keep the law on peril of death, ceased. The husband, Christ, made under the law, whereby we were held to that obligation, is dead. Our humanity, our natural state, as sons and daughters of Adam, is, as it were, destroyed; and we are bound to our risen Saviour, as to a new husband, by new and different obligations.

We are become new creatures, all past obligations are dissolved, the law of the former state affects no more, because that state is destroyed. To quote a passage referred to in a former Lecture: “for the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again. Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new*.”

Such is the believer's happy state, in communion with his risen Saviour, receiving out of his fulness supplies of grace and strength to enable him to “serve God without fear.” How different to his former state, when dead in trespasses and sins: or especially—for the dead know not any thing—how different to his state, when, previous to his receiving the spirit of adoption, he endeavoured after

* 2 Cor. v. 14—17.

the life according to the law, which his enlightened conscience began to understand in its spiritual extent! The Apostle now describes the effect of the law.

II. Ver. 5. “For, when we were in the flesh, the motions* of sins, which were by the law †, did work in our members to bring home fruit unto death.”

And here it is of great importance to the understanding of the Apostle, to inquire, in what sense he uses the phrase, “in the flesh.”—Flesh is used by the sacred writers with some variation of meaning, but still always in allusion to one common notion. Flesh strictly and properly denotes human nature in its present mode of existence. “To be born after the flesh,” denotes the natural generation of mankind: “To be in the flesh,” denotes our abode in the body. When the Son of God takes human nature upon him, he is said “to be made flesh.” The period of his tabernacling among men is called “the days of his flesh.” Properly and strictly speaking, therefore, a person is in the flesh, as long as he continues in this mortal state. This, however, it is plain, cannot be the Apostle’s meaning here.

But let us recal to our recollection that important truth, which we have already considered—the constituted union between Christ and his people, with the consequences therefrom resulting; how that, dying in his death, we are cut off, as it were, from our original stock, are transplanted from the state of nature; and, communicating with Christ, as risen again from the dead, are grafted into a new tree, are made members of a new state, become possessed of a new nature. When this mystery is acknowledged, and we have occasion to consider the people of God, at one time, as growing out of the original stock of Adam, and, at another time, as ingrafted into Christ, and in spiritual

* כאב, dolor, morbus: passio affectus, &c. (*Syr.*)—Passiones peccatorum. *Vulg.*

† בחופשי.

union with him; there arises a new meaning, or application of the terms, "being in the flesh," and "not in the flesh."—He that is in Christ is a new creature."—"Ye must be born again."—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit*." So that, in a general point of view, the terms *flesh* and *spirit* denote the natural and the regenerate states of men.

We shall not, however, find these terms, "in the flesh," and "not in the flesh," applied to denote these two states *simply*. But, since every regenerated person is confessedly of a twofold nature, both flesh and spirit, these terms are used to denote the *prevalence* of the one, or the other; they are used in reference to the subjection of the children of God to fleshly principles, and "the elements of this world;" and, with relation to their emancipation from them and their obtaining the Spirit of adoption to enable them to exercise the privileges of their new state. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwell in you †." It is this indwelling of the Spirit, that stamps the character of *spiritual* upon the people of Christ. For, as St. Paul observes, "The heir, so long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all ‡." And in this state, though he is then began to be quickened by the spirit of life, the epithet carnal or fleshly is applied to him in the view of the gospel, as we shall see hereafter.

In order to the clearer illustration of this usage of the term in question, let us still bear in mind, that even in regeneration, the old nature, or flesh, is not destroyed; it still remains with all its members in every child of God: he is flesh as well as spirit. Hence, in every regenerated man a twofold person and a twofold nature is recognised by the Apostle: "Me, my flesh," and "I myself," as distinguished from "me, my flesh." And agreeably to

* John iii. 6.

† viii. 9.

‡ Gal. iv. 1.

this double constitution and particular situation of the regenerate, we find them addressed in Scripture, and peculiar duties enforced upon them, which could have no place in a being that was altogether flesh, or altogether spirit. They must “mortify their earthly members;” must “put off the old man, and put on the new man;” and many precepts of a similar tendency.

Now, this being the state of a Christian, we need not be surprised to find both the epithets carnal and spiritual applied to him, according as his carnal or spiritual nature is considered; or as the prevalence of the one or the other is discernible in his views and conversation: “Ye that are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness*.” “Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” “I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ †.” The terms, therefore, “to be in the flesh,” “to be carnal,” do not simply distinguish the unregenerate from the regenerate state; but the term carnal, or “in the flesh,” extends to all that period of the regenerated state when *carnal principles prevailed*. It applies particularly to that early period of the divine life, when the new man has not yet sufficient growth and strength to know the things freely given of God, and to live according to the spiritual principles of the gospel: until, in short, the Spirit of adoption is given, and the child is no longer in bondage like a servant ‡.

Such is the sense which we must attach to the phrase, “When we were in the flesh,” as used by the Apostle in the passage before us. It was at this season, as he states, that the motions of sins which were by the law, wrought in the members to bring forth fruit unto death. While the penitent held himself bound, on peril of death, to the spiritual fulfilment of the law, sinful passions, in spite of

* Gal. vi. 1.

† 1 Cor. iii. 1—3.

‡ Gal. iv. 1, &c.

its threatenings, raged and triumphed within him, and "wrought in his members to the bearing of fruit unto death." It was a "*killing letter*;" instead of curbing sin, it gave it power and invincible strength; and in his view, armed death with a sting which nothing could parry.

Now all this is certainly true of man in his unregenerate state, but it is not felt or apprehended; the law, indeed, in that state, has not, ordinarily, influence enough upon the heart to discover the effects here described; so that, with numbers, it abides an *unsuspected secret* till the judgment of the great day shall make it manifest. Accordingly, the Apostle describes himself in that state as "*alive without the law*." It is in consequence of the operation of the Spirit, when new life and light is communicated to the soul, that it becomes sensible of its situation, and, seeking to burst the bands of death, discovers their strength. It is at this period, as we have seen before, that the law makes its "little entrance," in order that sin may abound. For, this effect it does not produce upon the unregenerate, but in the human nature of the spiritually enlightened and regenerate. In consequence of this effect of the law, they are "in bondage through the fear of death," till, by the supply of the Spirit of adoption, they are taught to perceive and exercise the privileges of Christian liberty. Then the believer lifts up his head with joy, and triumphs: not that he can now fulfil the law perfectly, so as to escape the curse; but because he now understands and can take to himself the blessed truth, "that Christ was made a curse for him; and "that he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Ver. 6. "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead, wherein we were held."—Or, according to

the better authenticated reading, " Having died in him, in whom we were held, that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

Such is the nature of our deliverance from the law. We are become dead to it *in the body of Christ*; having died in that, in which we were held. As members of Christ's body we were comprehended in him; on him the law was executed, and exerted all its power; so that over him and his mystical members it has no further authority nor power. Henceforth we may serve God—for we are still the servants of God, though not under the law—" in newness of spirit, not in the oldness of the letter:" that is, not according to the original tenor of the law of works, for fear of death, as threatened to disobedience, and with the view of obtaining life by obedience; but, according to the spiritual influences of the Spirit of grace, supplied from our risen Saviour. The old bond is cancelled; the former marriage dissolved; we enter upon new engagements, and become " married to another." As God had promised afore by his Prophets in the Holy Scriptures: " For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws within their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*."

III. What the Apostle had said respecting the law, as causing sin to abound, might seem to impeach the goodness of the law, and charge it with being the author or promoter of sin. He now, therefore, proceeds, after rejecting the inference in his usual style, to describe more particularly the operation and effect of the law upon the hearts of the regenerate, in order to show that the real

* Jer. xxxi. 31. Heb. viii. 8.

cause of the evil produced by the law is not in that law itself, but in their own depraved natures.

Ver. 7. "What shall we say, then? Is the law sin?"—or, "What, say we then, The law is sin? God forbid! Nay," or, rather, "But*" I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known lust"—or "coveting, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

Is the law favourable to sin?—Far from it! I do not mean to charge God's holy law with being the cause or promoter of sin. But, nevertheless, such is the fact: I had not known sin but by the law; I should not have understood fully its nature, and perceived the extent of the evil, nor have ever put to the proof, and experienced, its tyrannical powers, unless through this spiritual application of the law. The law does not, indeed, create sin, but it discovers it; it strips it of its disguise, and drags it from its hiding-place; so that it even seems to produce it where it was not; nay, it does in reality cause it to abound; for it gives an occasion of its exerting its powers to a degree unknown before.

"For, I should not have known or perceived coveting, unless the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." I should never have discovered or understood the great depravity and corruption of my fleshly heart in its secret desires and affections, unless the law of God had required purity in the hidden parts, and had denounced eternal death against the working of lust or coveting.

No overt act, it seems, in the case of St. Paul, had discovered the secret cast of his soul to his fellow-mortals; and perhaps, no formed intention or design to commit sin, had impressed his natural conscience with a sense of guilt. But the law, as spiritually apprehended by the regenerated soul, is a much more *sensible test* and criterion than human opinion or the natural conscience, deceived often

* "Sed"—*Vulg.* נִשְׁמַע—*Syr.*

through the deceitfulness of sin. This test discovered the existence of deadly sin where it had never been once suspected, either by others or by himself. The consequence with St. Paul was, a conviction of his thorough depravity and helplessness, as he proceeds to show:

Ver. 8. "But sin, taking occasion by,"—or "under the commandment*, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For, without the law sin was dead.

Ver. 9. "For I was alive without the law once†; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

Ver. 10. "And the commandment which (was ordained) to life, I found to be unto death‡.

Ver. 11. "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me"—or, "seduced me, and by it slew me§."

The commandment, applied by the Spirit to the heart, showed plainly the sinful nature of concupiscence, and of all evil desires. The law restricted them by its holy precept; it laid the soul under the most solemn obligations to resist them, as the convinced sinner tendered the favour of Almighty God, the Searcher of hearts. But the law being weak through the flesh, which is enslaved to sin, could not curb the evil. This was the opportunity or occasion, which sin seized: like a proud and cruel tyrant, it raged the more for meeting with resistance, and seemed fond to show its power in perverting that very law, which proposed life and liberty to its slaves, to be the means of rivetting still faster their chains, and of sealing their doom.—"It wrought in me," says St. Paul, "all manner of concupiscence." And the experience of every enlightened Christian will record the same event.

* "Et per hoc mandatum invenit sibi peccatum occasionem."—*Syriac.*

† "Ego autem antea vivebam."—*Syriac.*

‡ "Et repertum est mihi mandatum illud vitæ ad mortem."—*Syriac.*

§ "Seduxit me."—*Vulg.* כִּי־יָצָא *Syriac.*

“ For, without the law sin is dead.” To perceive the meaning of the Apostle, we must bear in mind the particular operation of the law of which he is speaking: *its spiritual application, to the conscience of the child of God, in the view of a covenant of life and death.* In the experience of such a conscience, in these circumstances, a power, before latent and inefficacious, appears on a sudden to have gathered strength, and to stand up in order to oppose and defeat the purposes of the renewed mind. And frequently, when the man first forms his resolutions of holy obedience, he is altogether unconscious of any such malignity within him. It arises, as it were, from the dead. Thus it was with St. Paul: “ I indeed was alive without the law once.”

This declaration well merits attention. Paul, “ a Hebrew of the Hebrews, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel,” who “ had profited in the Jews’ religion above his equals”—who “ according to the strictest sect of their religion, had lived a Pharisee”—and, “ as touching the law,” according to the common estimation, was “ blameless;”—this same zealous and well-informed Israelite says, he was once, nay, during all that time, “ *without the law.*” This can only be true in one sense, and in that sense alone which we are putting upon the Apostle’s words in this passage—he was without the spiritual application of the law to his heart.

What was at that time his experience? He was *alive*. Confident of the divine favour, his hopes of eternal life flourished. Sin in Saul the Pharisee’s heart lay as dead; he could therefore “ go about ” with confidence “ to establish his own righteousness: ” he found not then the law to be “ a killing letter, ” “ working wrath; ” so far from it, he could make his boast of the law, and did actually make it the ground of his rejoicing before God. “ But the commandment coming, sin revived, and I died. ” How

strange an account, in the mouth of Saul of Tarsus, so exceedingly zealous, as he was, for the law, and so thoroughly instructed in all the learning of the Jews! Did he now for the first time hear of such a commandment as, "Thou shalt not covet," when Moses had in every city them that preach him?"—No; but he had never laid it to heart! The self-righteous never do.

But now, under the influence of *His Spirit* who met him on his way to Damascus, the law was for the first time brought home with power to his heart. "Sin revived." It arose, as it were, from the dead, and stood up in its acknowledged character. "The whited wall" was laid bare; "the painted sepulchre" could no longer cover its slain.

The law, considered merely as a rule for regulating the outward actions, which was what the Pharisees thought of it, had not the power to rouse sin, or to discover its vitality: neither have any of those lowered standards of morality or mitigated laws, which the modern Pharisees make use of, in erecting their claim to the character of righteous and to the rewards of virtue.—The deception, therefore, is not discovered. But when the spiritual knowledge of the holy law is conveyed to the soul, this touches sin to the quick, and betrays the fatal secret, that it is not dead indeed:

— For no falsehood can endure
Touch of celestial temper, but returns
Of force to its own likeness,

What was the effect?—" *And I died.*" All his hopes of life and of the divine favour, which were built upon his own righteousness, fell to the ground; the once happy, confident, and zealous Pharisee sees himself "the *chief* of sinners."

"And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death."—Or, perhaps, "And to me the

commandment which was for life, was itself found to be to death." The law held forth the promise of life to its observers: on this ground Paul had sought, and imagined he had obtained, a title to eternal life. But now a commandment of that very law cuts up all his hopes, and makes him conscious that he is, in fact, obnoxious to the curse, which the law threatened to the disobedient—even death eternal.

"For sin, taking occasion under the commandment, seduced me, and by it slew me." As though the Apostle should say, Not that I mean, however, to throw the blame upon the law; its effect was, indeed, to revive sin, that previously had been dead; yet, in strictness of speech, it was only the occasional cause of this revival. Sin, the depraved and corrupted nature of man, spoken of under the notion of a person, lay dormant; because not disturbed by any attempt to counteract it; at least, never brought to such a test as was sufficient to make discovery of its real power: but the occasion being afforded, by the spiritual application of the law, as we have seen above, sin showed what it could do: it put forth its seductive powers in temptation, and perverted the means of life into the means of death. St. James thus describes the course and progress of temptation: "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed: then when lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*."

Ver. 12. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just, and good."

So that, in truth, the law is pure from all blame of being accessory to sin. And this commandment in particular, "Thou shalt not covet," is pure. It is, moreover, just. It is no more than what is right and proper for the Creator to require of his creatures. It is good in itself, of

* James i. 14, 15.

beneficial tendency to man himself, and to the whole creation at large.

Ver. 13. "Was, then, that which is good made death unto me?—God forbid! But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."

This verse, perhaps, may be thus rendered and explained: "The good, then, to me," says the Apostle, putting the question to anticipate an objection, "is—or turns out to be—death." That is, this is all the good I get by it. This conclusion the Apostle rejects: "God forbid! far from it! and he proceeds to distinguish: "Nay, *sin*" is the cause of death—the good I get is, "that it might appear sin, by that which is good to me working death, that sin might become exceedingly a sinner through the commandment*."

The law, and this commandment in particular, which is, so to speak, the sharp edge of the law, by which it penetrates into the secrets of the heart, is not in itself the cause of death. Sin is the cause of death, and had been equally so had there been no spiritual application of the law to discover the secrets of the heart, until the day of judgment: for then, if not before, sin in every heart must be dragged to light; and therefore, the self-righteous, in whom sin is as dead, are but "treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." The good of this commandment, therefore, is, to discover sin: it sets it in action, so that it may be known and felt, that the heart may not be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and, in consequence, the riches of grace be despised and slighted. The commandment itself is salutary, and necessary to my happiness; but by it, neverthe-

* "Ut fiat supra modum peccans peccatum per mandatum."—*Vulg.*

"Quo magis condemnaretur peccatum per mandatum."—*Syriac.*

less, sin works my death, and would have sealed my perdition, had not the discovery been made in time. This, then, is the practical good:—sin becomes by the commandment exceedingly a sinner.

Ver. 14. “For we know,” or, “We perceive that the law is spiritual.”

That is, by this commandment, Thou shalt not covet, we perceive that the law is spiritual in its design and requisitions; that its demand is not satisfied with external works and services, but extends to the desires and affections of the mind and cannot be accommodated to corrupted nature, like some rules of morality on the grounds of which men become righteous in their own sight. It requires purity in the inward part—requires, in short, the service of a spirit to a spirit: “For God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*.”

It is thus that this commandment makes sin to be exceedingly a sinner. It not only makes sin to appear where, though it existed, it was concealed; it does more; it puts an insidious foe to the proof; and, by affording the occasion and opportunity, betrays him, if we may venture to use the expression, into excesses which he had otherwise never discovered. Thus the law causes sin to abound. It does actually *increase it*; and sin, through the commandment becomes in a more eminent degree a sinner. For the guilt of sin, it is obvious, must be increased in proportion as the sinner's conscience is enlightened to know its evil, and by every fresh conviction, which he feels of the anger and displeasure of God against it.—“Have I not told you again and again, not to do it?” is strongly urged by a father against his offending child.

Although, therefore, all have sinned and come short, yet there is not that deep criminality, in the sinful desires and

* John, iv. 24.

affections of an unregenerate mind, as there is in the same motions of sins in the regenerate, whose mind is enlightened by the Spirit of God, and who has so many additional motives to induce him to love, to please, and to submit to God.

So that, under this operation of the law, which we are considering, the object of God's mercy may be truly said to be made worse, before he is made better. Just as in the treatment of certain diseases which affect the human body, a skilful physician would not aim to effect a cure immediately, but to bring the disorder first of all to a crisis. The medicine, perhaps, which he in the first instance prescribes, is intended to increase the symptoms of the disorder, and to make it exhaust its hidden venom; because, the cure which he endeavours to effect, he means should be radical; and his remedies be applied in circumstances where they will not merely palliate, but make whole.

Thus, commonly, deals the great Physician of souls with the patients, whom his grace engages to cure and restore to spiritual health. The law enters, that sin may abound: it increases all its alarming symptoms, so that the seat of the latent malady is discovered; the wound is probed to the bottom; and now, where sin abounds, grace abounds more. For, grace is that balm, which, is specific for the cure of sin, and is, indeed, of sovereign efficacy for the cure of the most inveterate depravity, when it is so discovered and laid open, that the remedy can be applied to it.—“HAPPY IS THE MAN IN WHOSE SPIRIT THERE IS NO GUILF.”

But, if concealed or lying inactive in the mental constitution, so that the extent of the evil be not suspected, it is like a disease or wound of the body too hastily or slightly cured. The conscience thus composed to peace, enjoys but a deceitful appearance of health—but a treacherous calm!

Hence appears the use of the law, in subservience to the gospel of the grace of God; and that, not only in the first coming of the penitent to Christ, when the great and main work of grace is to be accomplished; but in a measure, in all the self-examinations of a Christian,—for the healing of “all his backslidings”—in procuring mercy for every day’s deficiencies—whenever, in short, he is to “judge himself, that he be not judged of the Lord,” and would seek a new *application* of the propitiation of Christ for his sins.

And it is not improbable, that the spiritual health of many Christians is injured, by the *too little* use of law, as well as by the *too great* and indiscriminate use of it; which is, however, it must be acknowledged, the great cause of complaint in the present day—the more frequent error of our practitioners.

LECTURE XV.

FROM THE FOURTEENTH OF THE SEVENTH CHAPTER,
TO THE FIRST VERSE OF THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

“THE word of God,” says the Apostle, “is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature, that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do*.”

This, the enlightened soul knows by experience, and especially, as we have seen in our former Lectures, when the law is applied by the Spirit to the heart; while the God of grace is not as yet enjoyed as a reconciled Father, but apprehended rather in the awful character of the righteous Judge.

“By the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight.” This is true, not only of man in his natural state, but also of them who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. For, of these it is said, even in the view of their actually obtaining justification, “All have sinned and come short.” And how are they justified?—By an infusion of righteousness, to enable them to fulfil the demand of the law? No: by a very different process!—“Freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.” The law is to them still “a killing letter †,”—“the administration of death ‡,”—“working wrath §.” This effect of the law we are now called to contemplate more closely.

* Heb. iv. 12, 13. † 2 Cor. iii. 6. ‡ v. 7. § Rom. iv. 15.

I. The Apostle is proceeding to show, how the law ordained unto life fails of its design, through the weakness of the flesh, and is found to be unto death.

II. But he then leads us to contemplate the deliverance and glorious liberty of the children of God.

Ver. 14. “* But I am carnal, sold under sin.”

He had said, that “the law was spiritual,” extending, in its requisitions, to the secret affections of the soul. This the tenth commandment clearly proved, as we have seen in our last Lecture. It follows, that nothing but a pure and holy being could come up to its standard, or satisfy the Divine Lawgiver. St. Paul feels, that it is far otherwise with him. He owns a corrupt carnal nature—a nature enslaved to sin. It is true, this was not *all* that was within him. There was, besides his fleshly nature, an inward man, “delighting in the law of God,”—“serving it;” sensible, and complaining bitterly, of the wretched captivity he suffered when the flesh prevailed, when it baffled his efforts, or over-ruled his resolutions.

These expressions, we may observe by the way, clearly prove, that St. Paul is speaking of himself in his regenerated state; and, as we have shown before, that operation of the law which the Apostle is here describing, belongs not to the unconverted state of man, but makes its entrance after he is renewed to repentance, and born again of the Spirit. But it is asked, Can the terms “carnal,” “slave to sin,” be applied to a regenerated person? They cannot, certainly, be applied to him, absolutely, but they may be applied to him in respect of his original, depraved nature:—not indeed in respect of “the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;” which, as far as it *prevails*, is spiritual, and renders the believer in Christ, God’s freedman, serving him in newness of spirit: but the terms are strictly applicable to the

* Griesbach begins a new paragraph with these words.

regenerated child of God in respect “of the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*.” For, in every regenerated person, the corrupt human nature, as derived from the first Adam, does yet remain. And human nature, even in the regenerate, is human nature still, and is not subject to the spiritual law of God, neither indeed can be. Accordingly, we shall see, that the Apostle describes himself as a two-fold person, and points, to two distinct natures operating within him; to one of these he gives the appellation of “carnal,”—“slave of sin,” but not to the other.

To dwell a little longer upon this important distinction: It is true that, as human nature was wholly corrupted in Adam, and propagated to all his seed; so was man’s nature perfectly renewed in Christ, and from him conveyed afresh to all his seed. It does not however follow, that the believer is wholly and immediately sanctified in his own person, because of his spiritual birth and union to Christ, as one naturally engendered of Adam is entirely, and from the first moment of his existence, corrupt and sinful; and for this very obvious reason: in our natural generation, we derive the whole of our existence, our complete being, from Adam: we are nothing, and possess nothing, but what is derived from him. But the case is not exactly similar in our spiritual regeneration by implanting into Christ; for here, though a new nature is actually conveyed, and through the strength and sanctifying influence supplied from Christ, must finally prevail: yet it does not extinguish the old nature, nor subvert it, all at once, but they subsist together; though, indeed, in constant hostility.

Now we should be aware, that though the grace of the gospel recognises, such a complex being as is here de-

* Eph. iv. 22, comp. Col. iii. 10.

scribed; nay, avowedly accepts its services, and has, in fact, adapted its precepts and its promises to correspond with such a state of things; yet the law makes no such allowances, it knows nothing of a twofold nature in man; nay, the very supposition of such a fact would be fatal to a man's pretensions to righteousness according to the law. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." And by the tenth commandment, secret concupiscence is sin. If, therefore, righteousness is exacted, and life awarded by this law, "to which of the saints wilt thou turn?" Iniquity will be found in the hearts of all, and they must perish.

How different the cognizance taken under the reign of grace! "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would; but if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law*."—"If we say that we have no sins, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness†."

Let us now proceed with the Apostle's description of himself, as viewed in the glass of the law.

Ver. 15. "For that which I do, I allow not; for, what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."

—For, what I work, I approve not; reflecting upon what I do work out or accomplish [*κατεργάζομαι*]; taking a view of my past obedience and performances, I cannot do so, with approbation of mind‡; for not that, which I like and choose, do I perform and practise, but what I

* Gal. v. 17, 18.

† 1 John i. 8, 9.

‡ *Syriac.* מרדן דסער אנה ניר לא ידע אנה.

"Quod enim operor, non intelligo."—*Vulg.*

hate and dislike, I do. And if the renewed mind itself is not satisfied with its obedience, and disavows much as wrong, much less will the holy law and the heart-searching God be satisfied.

But here we should observe, that the Apostle is not to be understood as referring to outward transgressions of the law; but, according as he has before particularized, of the numberless breaches of the command that forbids evil concupiscence, which carries the demand of the law into the secrets of the soul, which proves the law to be spiritual, forbids not only the perpetrated deed, and the formed intention; but supplies a standard for the affections, and prohibits the wandering desire of the heart. Paul, before his conversion, was, touching the law, blameless; and we can hardly suppose, that after that event his outward conduct was less pure! His righteousness, according to their own rule of judging, exceeded, beyond all doubt, the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees! But the truth is, what is here said, is to be understood chiefly of a mental conflict, and, in respect of "the motions of sins," the sinful propensities of our corrupt hearts. It must be considered, in short, as an inspection taken of that microcosm within.

When, indeed, we recollect, that "the imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually*;" and that, in regeneration, the man is indeed enlightened, to see and to judge this, but in part only renewed and sanctified to withstand it: when we consider that the flesh, with all its properties, still exists, together with this better nature, we shall be constrained to acknowledge, that the case could not well be otherwise than it is here described: that a being so circumstanced, in reviewing his work, would not find it such, upon the whole, as his renewed mind could reflect upon with pleasure or satisfaction; nor could deem

* Gal. vi. 5.

a suitable return to God, as a worthy improvement of grace vouchsafed:—that there would not be that joy, that peace, that love, that goodness, meekness, faith, or temperance, which he most anxiously wished to have, and ought to exercise. He finds, alas! that every grace has been tarnished and debased by sin, mingled with a hated alloy! If preserved from all outward transgression, yet evil concupiscence, the believer will own, has often raged within, in defiance of the Lawgiver, and has broken his holy and good commandment. He therefore will be compelled to acknowledge, that it is not so with him, as he does sincerely wish and desire it should be.

Ver. 16. “If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

Ver. 17. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me;” *i. e.*, “Now, if I do that which I choose not, which I would not do, I agree with the law as being good [*καλός*, agreeably to my choice*]. It is therefore no longer I that do it, but sin, which dwelleth in me.”

The meaning is plain: It is not I, in respect of my new and better part; for if I could act up to my inward desire, I should be perfect. The service of God I count my “perfect freedom;” but I am “tied and bound with the chain of my sin †.” Sin, my old master, has still a party within me: my fleshly nature is yet sold under sin: it is a slave to sin; and hence this lamented disagreement between the choice of my mind and my actual performance!

Ver. 18. “For, I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing,” or “good doth not dwell.” For, to will is present with me ‡; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”

* I bear testimony concerning the law that it is good [*עֵד עַל הַתּוֹרָה* Pulcrum, pulcher visu, placuit.]—*Syriac*.

† Common Prayer Book.

‡ *עֵד עַל הַתּוֹרָה* facillè est.

Ver. 19. "For the good which I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do.

Ver. 20. "Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

Here observe, St. Paul plainly distinguishes his flesh, which is still himself, in one point of view, from his regenerated mind, which is also himself in another point of view. Hence we cannot be at a loss how to apply the expressions formerly considered: "But I am carnal, sold under sin."

The experience which proved this slavery he now records: "For, to will is present with me, but to work the good I find not"—or, "To please and choose indeed lieth near me," or "at hand, is easy;" "but to work out and accomplish that good, I attain not: for I do not the good I like, but the evil which I like not, that I perform. If, therefore, what I like not, I do; it is no more I which work it, but sin, which dwelleth in me."—Renewed in heart, the Apostle found no difficulty in approving and choosing whatever was good and holy, and was conceived to be pleasing to God. And such is the case with every regenerated soul. As to the deliberate choice and most anxious wish of the mind, the children of God are "the pure in heart." But, simply, and steadily, and fully to carry into effect these holy intentions, is what they find infinitely beyond their reach.

In every attempt they miss, more or less, their aim.—They arrive too late at the goal, being "sore let and hindered in running the race set before them." On the one hand, the Apostle intimates, I fail of accomplishing the good which I had willed and premeditated; on the other hand, I do the evil which was very far from being in my thought and intention. This leads him to make the same conclusion as above, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." These deviations and imperfections

were not his own allowed, approved acts, but were the consequence of that slavery to sin, to which his carnal nature was subject.

Ver. 21. "I find then a law"—or, "this law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.

Ver. 22. "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

Ver. 23. "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members."

Law is evidently used in this place for an *operative principle*;—a power communicating an impulse, or producing certain effects according to a fixed and appointed order: as we say, the law of nature, the laws of motion, &c. The Apostle, we shall see, confesses himself the subject of two different laws of this sort. For, when he inclines and purposes "to do good," obeying the law of his mind, which never fails to choose the good, and to refuse the evil;—though his mind has received this impulse, he finds, at the same time, that something has communicated an impulse in a contrary direction. The effect is, his course is unsteady, his track is turned, and bent from its intended mark. "Evil," says he, in other words, "lies at hand: so that I either take it up instead of the good I reached after, or together with it, to its great deterioration and defilement."

In explaining the operation of these two contrary impulses, which he experiences within him, St. Paul denominates his new and spiritual part, "his inward man,"—"his mind:" and his fleshly part he calls "his members." This is spoken, no doubt, in allusion to the soul and body forming one man; not that the Apostle does thereby mean to state, that the mental part was entirely renovated, and that the body only was the seat of corruption. For this is certainly not the fact. We read of the "fleshly

mind :” and some of the fruits of the flesh, mentioned by the Scripture, are entirely mental acts ; so, on the other hand, though we are told that the *flesh* cannot be subject to the law of God, but must be crucified in order to our living to God ; yet, at the same time, part of the service of the redeemed of the Lord is, to “ serve him with their *bodies* which are his*.”

We shall find it of importance, in a future Lecture, to dwell more fully upon this distinction. It is, indeed, a matter of fact, that some engaged in the conflict, have mistaken the body which they were to combat. They have mortified themselves in respect of the comforts and decencies of this temporal life, but have forgotten to abstain from hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness!!

But to proceed. The Apostle having thus designated the two natures, which composed his one person ; according to one of these natures, he tells us, that he delights in the law of God. Now, love is the fulfilling of the law. This principle then is the law of his mind. It is that power, according to the impulse of which, his renewed mind—his inward man, is swayed and regulated. But, in his other nature, he perceives, with unfeigned sorrow and regret, another law—an operative force of a quite opposite tendency, “ warring against the law of his mind.” This is sin ruling over his corrupt nature, where it still lives ; and, if not prevented, will reign, until that nature be entirely extirpated. Now, this law in the members has, at the best of times, a material effect upon the Christian’s course. And, as often happens to the mariner, in the fairest weather, and in the most favourable gales, if he takes not into his account which way the current sets, his reckoning will be wrong, and his *imagined perfection* will be found to be a point lying very wide of the desired haven.

* 1 Cor. vi. 15.

The Apostle further acknowledges, that this contrary impulse was sometimes so strong, that the law of his mind was overpowered and counteracted. So that he was in truth led captive by the law of sin, which was in his members. Still, however, observe, he is not the servant of sin; neither does he yield it hearty obedience. He is a *captive*: he goes whither he would not; like one taken away from his friends and enjoyments, by an artful, or too powerful foe.

It has been asked, Does not the Apostle, by this sort of reasoning, throw off the blame of sin from himself? But, on whom, we may ask again, does he throw the blame? On sin, as ruling in his corrupt nature—"It is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me." But, drop the metaphor, and you will find that this is himself still. For, what does he mean by *sin*, but his own transgression of the law, become an invincible habit; which, in order to elucidate his subject, the Apostle personifies and compares to a master tyrannizing over his slave?

We should be careful, indeed, to observe, that these comparisons of moral influences to natural laws and forces, wherever they occur, must not be so understood as to alter or confound their respective natures. A man enslaved or led captive by one more powerful than himself, or hurried away by a force which his own powers fail in resisting, is guiltless. But the power and influence of sin over mankind, which these allusions are borrowed to illustrate, though alike in respect to the certainty of cause and effect, cannot be regarded as destroying or lessening the criminality of transgressions. Nay, so far from it, that the very contrary is the proper inference. For a habit of sin, a disposition or propensity of nature to any vice or uncleanness, increases the guilt of the deed, and makes every particular action of that sort more difficult to be palliated, and more unmeet to be excused. The more

prevailing the influence—the more abject the moral slave, the more guilty is the sinner.

St. Paul is far from making the statement we have been considering, with a view to lessen his criminality. His intention, on the contrary, is to show that the good and holy law works wrath and death to him, and to every child of God; and hence, to place in a strong point of view the mercies of the reign of grace, and to show the greatness of the blessing, of not being under the law, but under grace.

We must further remark, that the Apostle does not make a confession of this state of things, as if he thought it a light matter; and as if, because the merited punishment would not follow, he could therefore contemplate and recount his sins and deficiencies, without emotion or remorse. It is thus, indeed, that some professors talk of their flesh, and of their old man; plainly discovering that they have no great aversion to it, no kind of shame or horror that thus it should be; pleased with the excuse, openly attesting, in short, to the careful observer, that though they have learned something about the truth, yet an essential part of the Christian character is wanting, “the delighting in the law of God, after the inward man.” But it is far different with the Apostle; he feels it a painful captivity, a hated abode among enemies! Every advantage gained by sin, is regarded as unfavourable and hostile to that interest which he has most at heart, to that which is the source of his greatest enjoyments. And we may observe, that the loyalty and attachment of a soldier to his king and native country is discoverable, no less in the mournful anxiety and grief with which he endures his subjugation to the enemy, than in his active services, when at liberty or in the field of battle.

The Apostle, from a view of what he experiences to be within him, exclaims,

Ver. 24. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

This cry of the Apostle, we should observe, arises not from the present experience of captivity to the law of sin; but from a reflection of his continual danger, and of the necessity of a continual conflict, owing to that carnal nature which he carries about him. This sense of wretchedness, on account of indwelling sin, is a part of Christian experience, which the united voices of all spiritual Christians, in all ages, proclaim. And, where the apprehension has ceased before the conflict has ended, let the believer suspect treachery; or, if his fear and trembling, in attending the issue, is departed, let him suspect *himself*! But deliverance is promised: the Apostle sees it, and is thankful.

Ver. 25. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord*."

This deliverance, which the Apostle with thankfulness sees approaching, and, at the view, takes courage, in the midst of the oppressing conflict, is thus more fully described in the following chapter: "We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, do groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body," or, as it might be rendered, the "deliverance of our body." This deliverance is not any imagined destruction of the very being of sin, while the believer continues here on earth: such Christian perfection the Scripture knows not. The following verse, indeed—especially when compared with the twenty-fourth of the next chapter—entirely precludes all notion of this sort; and renders it evident, that what the Apostle thanks God for is an object of HOPE and not of *actual attainment*.

Ibid.—"So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin†."

* "Gratia Dei per Jesum Christum Dominum."—*Vulg.*

† "Carne autem meâ sum servus legis peccati."—*Syr.*

Such a being am I, at this present hour, though in Jesus Christ rejoicing in hope of deliverance:—still engaged in the conflict, but cheered with the assurance of final triumph. But then, considering this as a statement of what the Christian is, in his present circumstances, it is evident, that if he were under the law of works, he could not live: the law which was unto life, would be found to be unto death, by reason of the sins of the flesh. And, therefore, it is obvious, if a Christian's principles are of a legal nature, and he considers eternal life as, in any measure, pending upon his obedience to the law, his spirit must necessarily be in bondage: he cannot enjoy those blessed privileges detailed in the fifth chapter, as consequent to justification by faith. Hence we perceive the vast importance of the believer's being delivered from the condemning power of the law; without this, indeed, "faith would be vain, and the promise of no effect." And we may add, without a right understanding of this liberty, and of our freedom from the curse of the law, the mind of the believer cannot be really happy, nor can it be visited with the confidence of hope. Ignorance on this important point must also be acknowledged to be one great cause, why so many of the children of God go heavily and depressed, all their days, and appear, in their Father's house, more like *servants* than *sons*.

II. This deliverance and glorious liberty of the children of God, we are next led to consider.

Chap. viii. ver. 1. "There is therefore"—or, "There is truly now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*."

Notwithstanding the acknowledged imperfections of him, who by the Spirit is baptized into Christ Jesus;

* The remaining part of this verse, as it stands in our translation, is expunged from the text by Griesbach; and that without any indication of the least probability of its being genuine. It forms properly, as we shall see, a part of the fourth verse.

though, in his own nature, he is still depraved and sinful, and, according to the letter of the law, is perpetually exposed to condemnation; yet, *in the body of Christ*, of which he is mystically a member, he is become dead to the law. It has no power over him to condemn him. According to the declaration of our blessed Master, "he is passed from death unto life, and shall not come into condemnation."

"There is no condemnation." And is it possible to suppose, which, however, we must do, if we take the interpretation of some commentators, that all intended by this declaration is, that God will not condemn him who is in Christ, unless he deserve it, by something in his future walk and conversation? This would be, indeed, to make the reign of grace not more gracious than the dominion of the law! It would be, in fact, to convert the gospel into a law of works! For condemnation supposes a judge, and a judge supposes a law, as the standard by which he judges transgressors. "But where there is no law, there is no transgression." And we have already seen, that the believer, in respect of his acceptance with God, and as concerns the awarding of his eternal state in life, is delivered from all law, in the body of Christ, of which he is made a member. He is justified freely for *his* righteousness' sake. It is plain, therefore, that no law, and consequently no transgression can affect his final state.—I say his final state; for, as other Scriptures attest, there are both transgressions, which a Christian *may* be guilty of; and there are judgments, with which God visits the sins of his people. But the utmost extent of these judgments is, "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world*." There is therefore no con-

* 1 Cor. xi. 32.

demnation that can *disinherit* the child of God, and affect his eternal hopes. There is, it is true, a discipline in the family of God, so that no one can offend with impunity. “What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not*?” Yet, “the Lord will not cast off for ever.” To the spiritual David and to his seed, the co-partners of his royal state, the words of the Psalmist are no doubt principally applicable; “My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.”—“If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my truth to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips†.” These “sure mercies of David” does the believer in Christ enjoy: “He shall reign in life by Jesus Christ,” as some of David’s children, who otherwise had been set aside, reigned in Jerusalem, for their father David’s sake.

But it will, perhaps, be asked, Is the law then left, with condemning power, over the family of God, as respects temporal judgments? Alas for us, if it were! “Life” and “things present” would not then be “ours‡.”—“The promise of the life that now is,” would be, in that case, “of no effect!” But the law is made great use of in the discipline of God’s children. It is not “made void;” on every eruption of sin it speaks; but it may be silenced and overcome, by repentance and faith in the sacrifice of Christ. In fact, it is to be applied and used, in respect of our daily sins and negligences, which there were reason to fear, would expose us to chastisements, exactly in the same manner, as it was, in the great business of the soul’s salvation. “By the law is the knowledge of sin:” but, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus

* Heb. xii. 7. † Ps. xxxix. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 22.

Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins."—"If we judge ourselves," apply the law to our hearts, and confess and deplore what it discovers, "we shall not be judged."

Hence it is, that, both in the private and public devotions of Christians, there is, or should be, mention made continually of sins. In that most excellent form of prayer, the Communion Service of the Church of England, the law is proclaimed, as it were, afresh from Mount Sinai. Not that the worshippers "once purged have any more conscience of sin," as respects their everlasting interest in Christ; nor that we need a second time to be "brought under bondage;" nor have "come again under condemnation:" but, since "in many things we offend all"—since sometimes there is much "decayed, through the fraud and malice of the devil, and our own carnal will and frailness," we therefore, continually, need a fresh application of Christ's mercy, lest we should be judged of the Lord. And it is in this point of view that St. Peter speaks: "And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear*."

With respect to the negligent Christian, indeed, who omits to judge himself, the law may be said to remain with its condemning power; for he that suffers as a transgressor, is condemned by the law. But even here, the executioners of the law must confess, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death;" "*the sceptre is departed.*"

The personal *sanctification* of the believer, we may further observe, using that term in its most common acceptation among us, cannot be accomplished under the law, any more than his justification. He is not justified by faith, and then sent, under the influence of the common principles of morality, to work out his salvation, and procure a

* 1 Pet. 1. 15.

meetness for the glorious inheritance. It is true, indeed, the holy law of God is the measure of the righteousness of sanctification, as well as of the righteousness of justification; or, rather, in the view of the law they are the same; for, conformity to the holy law is the issue of sanctification, and by this alone can justification be obtained under the law.

Under the gospel, these two righteousnesses, though never entirely separate from each other, become much more distinct, and are communicated to mankind in different ways. In their sources they are united: Jesus Christ is our sanctification, as well as our righteousness of justification. In him is our meetness for glory, as well as the merit which has ascertained our right to that inheritance: the meetness and the merit are *the same* in him. It was *his* conformity to the holy law, who, for the sake of others, met the fate of a transgressor—"was made sin for us," that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," which is, in the sight of God, both our justification and sanctification. But these blessings are in different modes communicated to his members. The righteousness of justification is, as we have seen, "imputed by faith;" "God justifies the ungodly." But, according to the plan of redemption, the ungodly must be sanctified as well as justified. Not only is he to be considered as just and meritorious, when in point of fact not so; but by the communication of a holy nature, he must, in very deed, be made separate from sinners, be devoted to the service of God, and become inhabited by his Holy presence.

This is true holiness—"that holiness without which no man can see the Lord." Now, this blessing is not obtained by our exertions upon legal principles of obedience. It is indeed, as we have intimated, that very thing "which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." For the law proposed to sanctify, in order to

justify, and in that point it failed. Sanctification is a blessing which we receive from Christ; and it is, as entirely and as fully a gift as our justification; it is in fact, the communication of *his* holiness to us. The priest, in the ceremonial law, when he had made an atonement for the sins of the people, mingled the blood with oil, and touched the person who was to be consecrated: so the Christian does not only participate in the atoning blood of Christ, but, together with the imputed benefits of the sacrifice, an unction of the Holy One is conveyed to his soul. As far as this sacred unction prevails, a transforming power is experienced within him; the believer becomes like unto Christ, "holy, undefiled, separate from sinners:" but he has not yet attained *the fulness* of the blessing, nor is he already perfect, so that he needs no longer any further sanctifying from the blood and Spirit of Christ. Far otherwise! "He is compassed with infirmities." If God required sacrifices, and delighted in burnt-offerings, he must bring them repeatedly. But since Christ, "who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself to God, has obtained eternal redemption for us, and, by one offering, has perfected for ever them that are sanctified," we need no further sacrifice. The atonement, the justification is complete, and the sanctifying influences of that one offering will be found efficacious to the last—till all the redeemed of Christ are "cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit:" its virtue shall last until the object, which believers are directed to aim at, shall be fully accomplished, and they have "perfected holiness in the fear of God."

But for the Christian to imagine that he is now completely sanctified in his own person, in regard to the communication of holiness, were the most presumptuous ignorance—For what is the standard of that perfection?—"Be ye perfect as your Father that is in heaven is per-

fect*.” “He purifieth himself as He is pure †!” “He is predestinated to be conformed to the image ‡” of God’s only-begotten Son! Who, then, “can count himself to have apprehended that for which he is apprehended in Christ Jesus§?” If the Christian had indeed obtained his finished salvation in this sense, he would not need the Priest still to stand at the altar, and still to be his intercessor before the mercy-seat. But this is the character and the station which the blessed Jesus now sustains and occupies. This is the representation of the gracious act which he is every hour performing for us. What the High Priest transacted in the *figurative* tabernacle, He, we are assured, is performing in the *true*.

This, also, is one important sense in which Christ is the *sanctification* of his people. He is continually imparting a holiness and a meetness to them and to all their services, which, considered in themselves, they and their works have not. Hence, as the Apostle expresses it, the spiritual Christian “has his fruit *unto holiness* or *sanctification* ||.”—He brings forth fruit to God, not without blemish, if the law be enforced; but it is sanctified by laying it on the altar, and it becomes a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to God, through Jesus Christ, the great High Priest of our profession ¶!

* Matt. v. 48

† 1 John, iii. 3.

‡ Chap. viii.

§ Phil. iii. 12.

|| *Εἰς ἁγιασμόν*.—Chap. vi. 22; comp. 19.

¶ Heb. x. 19, &c.

LECTURE XVI.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.—FROM THE SECOND TO THE NINTH VERSE.

WE have seen, in the last Lecture, in what manner the law, when proposed as the means of life, fails in its design, and is found by the children of God to be unto death. We have seen that one of the great privileges of the Christian state is, that Christ, having redeemed us from the curse of the law, has rescued us from its condemning power. We now proceed to contemplate the believer bringing forth fruit to God, under the new covenant; serving God in newness of spirit; and led “into the holiest of all by a new and living way, which Christ has consecrated for him through the vail, that is to say, *his flesh**.”

Ver. 2. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”

Some variety of opinion occurs in the interpreting of this verse. That interpretation will depend principally on the meaning of the phrases, “Law of the Spirit of life,” and “Law of sin and death.” To the meaning of these phrases, therefore, we must first attend.

In the last verse of the former chapter we meet with the latter phrase, in circumstances where its meaning is clear. And, according to the fairest and safest rules of interpretation, we ought not to suppose a different meaning to the same terms in this verse, without some particular reason. “The law of sin,” which is, in its consequences, “the law of death” also, is, as we have seen, the ruling power of sin over the depraved nature of man—that law in his members, which even the quickened and regenerated child

* See Heb. x. 19, &c.

of God is compelled to own, he serves with his flesh; although with his mind he serves the law of God. This, accordingly, is the interpretation we should admit to the phrase, "the law of sin and death," in this passage.

What, then, is this other "law, of the Spirit of life?" And how does it deliver us from the law of sin and death?

By this law of the Spirit, it is evident, cannot be intended the law of God or the law of works. That were not only to use the term, *law*, in a different sense; but we are, by supposition, to contemplate a law producing an effect which the law of works, as we have seen at length in a former Lecture, is ever baffled in attempting to perform. This consideration will guide us in the interpretation of what is here intended by "the law of the Spirit of life." It signifies, that power and operation of the Holy Ghost, which carries into effect and execution the redemption of Jesus Christ.

The leading distinction of the new covenant was to be, that God would put his Spirit within his people.—"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jer. xxxi. 33.) As Ezekiel expresses it: "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." (Chap. xxxvi. 26.) Hence St. Paul calls believers "an epistle written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God*." He terms himself a "minister of the New Testament or covenant, not of the letter which killeth, but of *the Spirit*

* 2 Cor. iii. 3, &c.

which giveth life." This, in opposition to the law of works, which he terms "the ministration of death," he calls "the ministration of *life.*"

Indeed, if we reflect, "the law of the Spirit of life" can mean nothing else, than the agency and operation of the Holy Ghost. For that takes place of the law and covenant of works in the business of salvation; and, as we shall see, the very effects, which that dispensation could not accomplish, are here attributed to "the law of the Spirit of life." "Now, the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."—Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us *by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost*, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life*."

By the Holy Ghost was the human nature of our Lord conceived. "Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself to God. By the Spirit he was raised from the dead. By the Spirit he acts upon his people." Having spoken of our eating his body and drinking his blood, and thus becoming one with him, and he one with us, our Lord observed, "The flesh profiteth nothing: the words which I speak to you they are *Spirit* and they are *life*†."

Considering, therefore, "the law of the Spirit of life" to be a general term for the vital agency and operation of the Holy Ghost, in carrying into effect the purposes of God's grace, another object of our inquiry is, How is it that it sets us free from "the law of sin and death?" Has it put a stop to the law of sin, so that it can no longer be perceived in the members warring against the law of the mind? Has it altered the state of the two natures, as described above; so that the believer serves with his flesh

* Tit. iii. 5.

† John vi.

the law of God, and not the law of sin? This cannot be the Apostle's meaning. For we shall still find, that the flesh is what it was; that its "mind is enmity against God," impossible to be subjected to his law; that if the renewed child of God were to live after it, he would die; and that his only way to heaven is in mortifying, through the Spirit, the deeds of the flesh. We shall still find, that, though the believer "has the first fruits of the Spirit, he groans within himself, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of his body." It is most evident, then, that the Apostle considers the Christian as carrying, to the very last, that dead body of sins which he has before described; and as still waiting for that deliverance, for the hope of which he thanked God through Jesus Christ*.

What then is the meaning of the text?—"The law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death. This is the manner of dividing the sentence pointed out in Griesbach; and I have no doubt it discovers the meaning of the Apostle: It has made me free *in Christ*, as he describes the important fact in the sixth chapter. "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Our corrupt nature is destroyed in our covenant Head; and in proportion as we communicate with him in spirit, we are enabled to put off the old man, and to put on the new. But that old man, as we noticed before, is still "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." And human nature, in the spiritual Christian, is human nature still. In *proportion*, however, as the Holy Ghost extends his vital influence over us, "the old Adam in us is so buried, that the new man is raised up in us."—"All carnal affections die in us, and all things belonging to the Spirit live and grow in us."—"We have grace and strength

* See verses 6 and 7—13, and 23.

to have the victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh."

Ver. 3. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh:

Ver. 4. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

What the law was made to attempt, in that little entrance, which was permitted to it, as we have seen in a former Lecture, was to give righteousness and life. This it might have accomplished, had it not been for the flesh. The Apostle "delighted in the law of God after the inward man."—"With the mind he served the law of God." And love is the fulfilling of the law. But an impediment arose from his corrupt carnal nature: "The motions of sin, which were by the law, wrought in his members to the bearing of fruit unto death."—"Had there been a law given that could have given life, verily righteousness would have been by the law." The sinful nature of man, however, rendered this impossible. But this *impossibility*, as it proved under the law, has been effected in another way. "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh*:" or, as we may render it, "God sending his own Son, in a similitude of sinful flesh, and on behalf of sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," or "to us," who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Here we find explained, how that thing, which it was *impossible* for the law to accomplish, has been accomplished by means of the incarnation and

* "Misit Deus Filium suum in similitudine carnis peccati, propter peccatum, ut condemnaret peccatum in carne ipsius."—*Syriac*.

death of Christ, *according to the law of the Spirit of life.*

The object, we should be careful to observe, was the fulfilment of the righteousness of the law. The law is still the measure of that righteousness, though it had not power to procure it for man. The Apostle has in view, I conceive, what we generally mean, by the righteousness of sanctification, the actual conformity of the child of God to the law. For, as to any justifying righteousness, distinct from that inherent in us, the law knew nothing; and therefore could not have failed in attempting to procure it. The object of the law was to sanctify, that would have procured justification. And it was here that it failed through the flesh. And how is this same object, we may ask, attained by the law of the Spirit; since it is admitted that the believer is still the same, flesh as well as spirit; and that the flesh neither is, nor can be, subject to the law of God? The answer is plain. Provision has been made for the removal and final destruction of that carnal nature. Christ was found in fashion as a man—in the likeness of sinful flesh; “made like unto his brethren in all things, sin only excepted:”—“in him was no sin:” yet sin was the cause of his humiliation: “he was manifested, to take away our sins,”—not only that, by becoming a victim to be offered in sacrifice for us, he might deliver us from punishment, but his incarnation and death embraced another object; namely, that Christ being made a new covenant Head of his seed, might convey to them a new nature by spiritual communications from himself. Our old nature was crucified with him: “who his own self bare our sins in his own body upon the tree, that we, *being dead to sins, might live unto righteousness*: by whose stripes ye were healed*.” This effect of a spiritual baptism into the

* 1 Pet. ii. 24, 25.

mystical body of Christ, and of our being made to grow into him, we have already seen in the sixth chapter.

According to this system, the righteousness of the law may be said to be fulfilled in the believer. Consider him, indeed, as the law of his original nature considers him, as both flesh and spirit, and the righteousness of the law most certainly is not fulfilled. But as he is contemplated by divine grace, under the influence of the law of the Spirit of life, we perceive the interests of the flesh and of the spirit are made, as it were, separate and distinct from each other :—the flesh is mortified, crucified, consigned to certain destruction, under the management of the Holy Ghost :—the spirit, or new man, is no longer considered as in union with the flesh, or as liable to be condemned to death for its deserts, but as a branch growing out of Christ ; and is by him sanctified, from time to time, from the contaminating touch of the dead body of sins. According to this estimate, while you consider the believer, *in Christ*, as a mystical member of his body, receiving out of his fulness grace for grace ; and not as that complex being which the law finds him, answerable still for every corrupt depravity of his original nature ; in short, if you consider him as being *under grace*, and not *under the law*, the righteousness of the law may be said to be accomplished by him, and fulfilled in him. He is not yet perfect in himself, it is true, if you could sever the branch from the vine, it would wither and die ;—but a stream, an emanation of holiness, flows from Christ to his soul, which, through the forbearance of God, shall never cease, till it has sanctified him wholly, both soul and body ; and till his Redeemer shall present him “ faultless before the presence of his glory.” Under the law, the believer’s endeavours after holiness were vain ; but now, with “ open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is

changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord*.”

“Against such there is no law.” The fruits of the Spirit, as far as they are produced in the believer, are the very righteousness which the law requires; and therefore, on this plan, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

“To walk after the flesh,” and “to walk after the Spirit,” correspond, if I mistake not, to the “being in the flesh,” and “not in the flesh,” as formerly explained. This distinction we shall again be called to notice. To walk after the Spirit expresses not, simply, the difference of the regenerate and unregenerate states, but describes the regenerated child of God as no longer in bondage to corruption, and to the institutions of the former state. He is brought at length to act upon Gospel and spiritual principles: he has received the first fruits of the Spirit of adoption, and serves God “in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” Hence we meet with the exhortation: “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” And when the same people were perverted from the liberty of the gospel to legal views and principles, the rebuke of the Apostle is, Are ye so foolish? Having begun *in the Spirit*, will ye be now made perfect *in the flesh*? “Ye did run well. Who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth†?”

This distinction we should be careful to remark; because, it is not the walking after the flesh in the fulfilling of its grosser sensualities and malicious dispositions, which is the chief danger to which the regenerated servant of God is exposed: to these things he is averse in his renewed mind, and there can be no mistake; but the great thing to be feared is, lest the fleshly wisdom, in pretension of zeal for God, and of regard for the interest of virtue, should

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

† Gal. v. 25.

deceive him, and set him upon the painful endeavour of working out his salvation, by keeping the law as a covenant: "serving in the oldness of the letter," instead of "the newness of the Spirit." Upon this plan, it is to be feared, many, instead of standing fast in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, and bearing fruit to God in the new covenant, are attempting in vain to follow after holiness, as it were by the deeds of the law. In whatever measure this principle lurks in the breast of the Christian, it is not favourable to the growth of personal holiness, as it pretends, and as human wisdom argues on its behalf, but the contrary.

"Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Love,
Thou Maker of new morals to mankind,
The grand morality is love of thee!"

And, indeed, the true art of promoting the practice of the righteousness of the law, and of the keeping of the commandments of God, is to lose sight entirely of the law as a covenant, capable of rewarding or of punishing; and to endeavour to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ: to proceed upon this new system, *to walk after the Spirit*; wherein "Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, glories in the Lord."

The Apostle is still guiding us to view the distinct natures and opposite tendencies of these two principles, *Flesh* and *Spirit*.

Ver. 5. "For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

Those who live and walk after the Spirit, mind [*φρονεσθαι**],

* The Vulgate in this verse uses both the verbs, "sapio" and "sentio." The word also employed by the Syriac translators is as comprehensive as that in the original [*κνϛ*]. Pavit se et alios, voluit, cupivit, gratum habuit, &c. &c.

they “think about, and relish” the things of the Spirit; they make them the objects both of their attention and affection; the mind is set upon them. In a similar manner, those, who are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh; and have no concern, nor taste nor relish for those things in which the spiritual man delights. What St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, well illustrates this statement: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit 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 things with spiritual. But 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. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”

Ver. 6. “For, to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

For this minding and approving the things of the flesh, is death. But the minding and approving the things of the Spirit, is life and peace.

To gratify the sensual, the worldly, or the malicious dispositions of nature, is certainly death in the issue; or, rather, bespeaks a soul destitute of divine life. “If ye live after the flesh ye shall die.”—But this is the subject rather of the 13th verse—The Apostle is here speaking more generally of the two principles, flesh and Spirit, as

they divide the regenerated child of God. For, as one of our Articles observes, "This infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated. Whereby the lust of the flesh (called in Greek, *phronema sarkos**, which some do expound, the wisdom; some, sensuality; some, the affection; some, the desire of the flesh) is not subject to the law of God." We have already seen, that when the believer was under the law, and, in that sense, "in the flesh," and "walking after the flesh †," the motions of sins, which were in his members, wrought to the bearing of fruit *unto death*: we have also seen, how, being taught and influenced by the Spirit of God, the inward man is emancipated from the curse of the law, and from the dominion of sin, and obtains *life and peace*. The subject is still before us, and will be explained more fully in the following verses.

Ver. 7. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Ver. 8. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

This 7th verse points out the reason why death *must* be the consequence of a carnal mind. While we are in the flesh, according to the institutions of that state, life and death hang suspended on the decision of the law. Those who are considered as in the flesh, have no other means of escaping death and of obtaining life, but by the fulfilling of the law. Through the corruption of human nature, however, the mind and will of the flesh is in a state of enmity against God, the lawgiver. It does not choose what God chooses, nor love what He loves.

* It is expounded by the Vulgate in this place, both by "*prudencia carnis*" and "*sapientia carnis*." The Syriac renders it תרעומא *Cogitatio*, mens, intentio, intelligentia, voluntas.

It "is contentious, and obeys not the truth, but obeys unrighteousness." And unless the man has entirely cast off the fear of his Maker, and has "refused to retain God in his knowledge," he has an abiding consciousness of His wrath on account of the breach of his holy law; for he neither is, nor can be subject to that law: those, therefore, who are in this state, cannot please God.

Such is the state and condition of human nature. And this infection of nature doth remain, as we have noticed before, even in the regenerated: so that, considered as in the flesh, and under the dominion of the law, they cannot please God. But the believer, we have been taught, is brought under a new covenant: "By the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, he is made free from the law of sin and death; and being accepted in Christ, he is justified, washed and sanctified:" "his conscience is purified from dead works to serve the living God."

Ver. 9. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; if so be that," or, "since the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in you."

The indwelling of the Spirit, here alluded to, is not merely the new life quickened by the Holy Ghost, for the regeneration of the soul. For that vital spark, which gives being to the new man, may have been kindled in the soul; and yet fleshly principles may for a time predominate, and give a distinctive cast to the character. "Carnal," and "babe in Christ," are equivalent terms, or nearly so, as used by the Apostle in writing to the Corinthians: "I cannot speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ*."

The child of a rational man is born, we know, of a nature different from the brute creation, with capacities and faculties adapted to very different uses: yet, for some time, it differs but little in its state and enjoyments from

* 1 Cor. iii. 1.

the inferior animals. If the question be, What knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is within him? it concerns the child no less than the irrational animal, though from a different cause. So, in a regenerate person, though we discover what belongs not to man in his natural state, and may not doubt, that he is born again and baptized into Christ; yet he may for a time be destitute, in a great measure, of spiritual views and enjoyments; he may be "in bondage to the elements of the world," and the religion of the flesh.

Who can doubt of the spiritual life and true conversion of the disciples during the lifetime of our blessed Lord? "Theirs was the kingdom of heaven:" what flesh and blood could not have revealed, they understood by the teaching of the Father*. Their views, however, on many points essential to the completion of the Christian character, were not spiritual, but carnal. "They SAVOURED † not the things which were of God, but the things which were of men ‡. Yet they had faith, and faith that failed not, when Satan sifted them as wheat. They were those "who received Christ, even those who believed on his name, which are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God §." They had not, however, the Holy Ghost dwelling in them in the manner described in the passage before us. This is plain from John vii. 38, 39: "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they which believe on him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

Accordingly we have seen, in the former chapters of this Epistle, that St. Paul does not use the epithets flesh and spirit, to contrast the state of the unregenerate, with that

† Matt. xvi. 17.

‡ *Ἐφρασα*.

‡ Matt. xvi. 23.

§ John i. 12, 13.

of the mind just renewed to repentance and to a perception of the spiritual application of the law ; but he applies the term carnal, to all that period of the life and experience even of the children of God, when, ignorant of gospel liberty, and in bondage to “ the poor elements of the world,” they seek for righteousness by the works of the law. And it seems, as we have before intimated, that, before the coming of Christ into the flesh, or, rather, previously to the period when his people knew him after the flesh no more, but communicated with him in spirit, as their risen head ;—that, previously to this period, this character, “ carnal,” “ fleshly,” applied generally to the people of God ; so far at least, as to give a general aspect to the state of the church in those times, and a general tincture to the experiences of the saints.

And this statement is not contradicted by some instances, which may be pointed out, in the Prophets and others ; where, by faith and hope, we find them clearly anticipating those “ *better things which God had prepared for us,*” who enjoy the light of the gospel and receive a larger outpouring of the Spirit of grace. As to the general state of things, the observation of the Apostle was doubtless true, “ Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.”

We remarked also, that this bondage to fleshly principles, and ignorance concerning the things of the Spirit, may prevail, and for a time, in their approach to Christ, generally, do prevail, in the minds of Christians under the gospel. But, at the same time, the light of the gospel is designed to expel this darkness ; and, as far as it does shine into the heart, attended with the genial influences of the Holy Ghost, does expel it. And the *spiritual* Christian is taught “ to know the things which are freely given him of God,” and “ rejoices in that liberty wherewith Christ has made him free.”

But where, either false doctrines are prevalent and a mutilated gospel is preached, or the minds of men are become, by any means, prejudiced against the truth,—or where, divisions and heresies have so straitened the minds of the preachers, that “they cannot speak as unto spiritual;” there, this spirit of bondage is still seen to be engendered: persons who give undoubted evidences that they are born of God, are subjected again, in spirit, to the yoke of the law: according to the reflection of the Apostle, “Some that had begun *in the Spirit*, seek to be made perfect *in the flesh*; and this to their very serious injury, as well in the loss of religious joy, as in their failure of obtaining the victory over their corruptions.

Such cases there are at present among us, who are surrounded with so many special advantages for attaining the knowledge of the truth. And times, under the darkness of the Romish church especially, have been, when the doctrine of justification by faith alone was so much obscured, that the religious experience of the real people of God scarcely ever rose to a higher standard. Hence their slavish fear, their abject superstition, their painful endeavours to suppress, by austerities and voluntary humiliation, the motions of the flesh, that they might come up to the demand of the law.

To the *unregenerate*, or spiritually dead, these practices might indeed have afforded some peace and satisfaction, “*something whereof to glory*;” but to the *regenerate*, who understood the law in its spiritual application, only distress and grief could have been the consequence.

But, though in all their publicly attested knowledge of the great doctrine of justification by faith, and the happy experiences which follow, Christians, in these dark ages, appear to us to have been children indeed, and carnal in their views; yet still, as the Spirit is a Spirit of promise to all the seed, there is reason to think they did not die

without "seeing the salvation" of Christ, even where the gospel was most obscured by the corrupt doctrines of men.

And even now, that we boast of better times, what numbers are there, whom in the judgment of charity we believe to be the children of God, who yet, in some very important points, savour not the things of the Spirit, but the things of the flesh! I mean not that the spiritually renewed man savours and walks after the flesh, as to its grosser corruptions, whether of sensuality, ambition, or maliciousness; he "has a delight in the law of God after the inward man;" he sees life pending upon its observance; and he sets himself in earnest to counteract the evil propensities which he finds in his heart: he is a moralist indeed, and it may be, little else than a moralist; but he is distinguished from other moralists, by the different sense which he has of *sin*, and of the spirituality of the law. The consequence is, where others are content with their attainments, and *alive* in confident hope, he is wretched, and his hopes are continually overthrown; he is overwhelmed with confusion. His religion, however, is, in a great measure, the religion of the flesh; and though it suits him not, he knows no better: nay, perhaps, has conceived the highest prejudices against some of the spiritual doctrines of the gospel. In this respect then, like the disciples of our Lord, previously to their receiving the promise of the Father, "he savours not the things which be of God, but the things which be of men."

The question, which meets such a person, when some one shall be found "to expound to him the way of God more perfectly," is this: Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And since it is promised, that that Spirit should dwell in the hearts of all whom he has regenerated, none of them, we believe, have, in the darkest periods, as was before observed, died without some sense of liberty and deliverance from the law; for the doctrine

of the remission of sins, though clouded, was not altogether obscured. And it is less credible still, that the children of God should sit under "the hearing of faith," where they have access to it, without sooner or later receiving this unction of the Holy One, "teaching them to know the things which are freely given them of God:—without "drinking into that Spirit by which they have been baptized into the body of Christ," as St. Paul distinguishes in another place.

Those, indeed, who can suppose, that by the deeds of the law, they have established a title to righteousness and life, are, perhaps of all men the most difficult to be brought over from their corrupted, legalized, or ethical Christianity, to the confession of the truth as it is in Jesus. But these are not the characters of which we speak; they are not under that operation of the law which we have considered. In the Apostle's language, they are "*living without the law.*" They have but a partial view of sin and holiness, and therefore a partial gospel seems to have healed their wound, and they are content.

But in the truly regenerate, even in the days of his flesh, before "the seal" and "earnest of the Spirit" is given to him, there is always a knowledge of the spirituality of the law; and an honest avowal of his short coming, with great contrition of soul in consequence. Sin, in the regenerate, is ever felt to be exceedingly sinful. In *some measure*, no doubt, he already owns a Saviour, and waits for the hope of righteousness by faith, and gladly would he hail the doctrines of grace, in their fullest form, if his honest heart could be satisfied of their truth and of their application to his particular case. But this happy experience can only be attained by the indwelling of the Spirit of adoption. This subject we must resume in our next Lecture.

LECTURE XVII.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.—FROM THE TENTH TO THE SEVENTEENTH VERSE.

It was stated, in the foregoing verses, that man, in his natural state, could not please God; that even the child of God, while corrupted nature prevailed within him, and while he was contemplated as being in the flesh, and subject to its laws and responsibilities, could not please him; but came short of the glory of God. We have read, however, in the ninth verse, “ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwell in you.”

By this indwelling of the Spirit, which gives to the believer the decided character and the powerful energies of the spiritual man, we are not to understand, as was explained in the preceding Lecture, the first exercise of the Spirit's influence, preparing or forming “a new creature,” or “a new creation,” in the heart of man; but the fostering and nourishing of the new man, by the Spirit himself actually residing in the heart. The indwelling Spirit causes that which he had created “to grow in wisdom and in stature:” under his guidance and protection, it can perform all the functions of the new life; can think and act upon spiritual principles. Then it is, that the believer is said to be *spiritual*; “he is no longer carnal;”—“no longer walks as a man;”—or, “is in bondage to those poor elements which made the son to differ nothing from the servant.” This indwelling of the Holy Ghost is a particular privilege of gospel times. It is an emanation from the *risen* Saviour. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a

woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*.”

It follows, “Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” If, by “having the Spirit,” in this verse, we understand our being the objects of his quickening influence, it must be taken in opposition to what is said of his *indwelling*.—On this latter grace depends, indeed, the spirituality and maturity of the Christian; but on the former, his very being as a Christian. Or, taking it in connexion with what has preceded, and understanding this “having of the Spirit” to be the same as the indwelling in the former part of the verse, we may consider it as intimating, that provision is made, that all the children of God should, sooner or later, receive this gift of the Father, which is, therefore, called “the seal” which God stamps upon believers, “the earnest of their future inheritance.”—“In whom after that ye believed ye were sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance†.” This indwelling of the Spirit does not make them Christ’s, it is true. The disciples were his, manifested to be his, when this effusion of the Spirit was yet the subject of promise. But it is a gift prepared for all, and for which, all are directed to pray: it is the means by which they become sensible that they are accepted in the Beloved, and are established in gospel liberty.

We proceed therefore, now, to contemplate the Christian in the full exercise of his privileges; “not in the flesh, but in the Spirit:” “the Spirit of God dwelling in him:” he not only “lives after the Spirit,” but “walks after the Spirit.” And it is of the utmost importance to our spiritual welfare, that we have a just estimate of his attainments, that no one, by false doctrine, may beguile us of

* Gal. iv. 4, 5.

† Eph. i. 13, 14.

our reward; but that, “through faith and patience, we may be partakers with them who inherit the promises.”

Ver. 10. “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Ver. 11. “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by *”—or because of “his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

It is thus the law of the Spirit of life procures the salvation of man. Its operation is to form Christ in the soul; that is, Christ, in a mystic sense. The Spirit propagates his holy nature within us, so that we become members of his body, “one with him, and he one with us.” It is not our old nature reformed, and brought over to God, which forms the Christian; no, “he puts off that old man,” and “puts on a new man, created in righteousness and true holiness:” this, in a heavenly and spiritual acceptation, is *Christ*. “As many as are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ:”—“I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me †.” This implies, indeed, a great deal more than a change of opinion, and the embracing of the doctrines of grace; the spiritual effects of this inward life are, however, so connected with the belief of the truth, that the Apostle, reproving the Galatians for being again entangled in the yoke of bondage, uses these remarkable expressions: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you ‡.”

“If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sins; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” We have already noticed, that the new and old natures, as subsisting in the believer, are distinguished by the terms *body* and *mind*. Not that the mental part is wholly renewed, and the body alone the seat of remaining corruption: but

* *Vulg.* “Propter,” *Syr.* ܩܘܡܐ.

† Gal. ii. 20.

‡ Gal. iv. 19.

partly, in allusion to the reasonable soul and human flesh composing one man; and partly, because, though body and mind do not, if we may so speak, exactly square with the carnal and spiritual natures, yet the affections of the mind appear to be the chief and principal object of the Spirit's influence. It is here, at least, that the heavenly leaven is first hid: and it seems principally through the lusts and infirmities, which are more immediately connected with the body, that the corruption of nature is perceived in the spiritual man to rage and rebel. And, moreover, the entire extinction of this fleshly principle depends upon the separation of soul and body in temporal death, or some equivalent change when the last trump shall sound.

By the body, therefore, we are to understand the unrenewed part of man, "his old man." This, where Christ is formed in the heart, is "dead because of sin," or "through means of sin." Not dead, as some mistake the matter, by its entire extinction within us. Had this been the case, the spiritual man would not still be charged "to mortify the deeds of his body:" nor would he "groan for the redemption of his body," as he is afterwards represented as doing. But his human nature has been put to death, by the law, in the body of Christ: "he is baptized into *his* death, buried with him by baptism into death;" so that one effect of his union with Christ is, death to that nature where sin reigns. Thus, "the prey is taken from the mighty, and the captive of the terrible one delivered."

It is by communicating with Christ in his death, through faith of the operation of the Holy Ghost, according to the terms of the new covenant, and not by legal views and fears, that the flesh can be mortified and crucified. It is not an effort of man, stimulated, either by the fear of punishment or by the hope of reward: it is an influence of the Spirit of grace. "Being planted together in the likeness of Christ's death, we are planted together in the

likeness of his resurrection: that, like as Christ was raised up from death in the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life."—To walk in newness of life is to love God and keep his commandments. This is the life to which the spiritual man is quickened: this is the life of his renewed soul. He "serves God with his spirit in the gospel of his Son." The fleshly part is still indeed the same; but, he being "quickened by the Spirit, and strengthened by his might in the inner man," is enabled to see his privilege as a member of Christ, "not under the law," nor yet "under "the dominion of sin," whose motions he feels. At this his spirit revives within him; it finds release from the deadening fears which formerly oppressed it; and serves God in newness of life.

The renewed mind could not do so, under the law: for, though it had the same disposition towards the service of God, yet, seeing no deliverance from the sinful passions which are in the flesh, the *spirit* was dead because of sin; the attaining of holiness seemed to be impracticable. But now he knows, that, by the law of the Spirit of life, his spirit is divided from his flesh, in point of responsibility, so that there is now no condemnation: he knows in what manner he is sanctified from its defiling touch, by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and the unction of the Holy Ghost: he does not sink, therefore, in discouragement at those many corruptions and deficiencies which his penitent heart bewails at the mercy-seat of God. He is assured also that he shall not fail to receive, by participating in Christ, the power which will prove the destruction of his flesh, will operate to the renewal of the life of the spirit, and to its nourishment in all goodness. Thus he bears fruit as a branch in Christ Jesus; and every branch in him, that beareth fruit, the heavenly Father purgeth, that it may bring forth more fruit*.

* John xv. 2.

A promise too is subjoined, "That He who raised up Christ from the dead, will also quicken our mortal bodies, by, or because of, his Spirit that dwelleth in us." The mortal part of man, into which, from the higher faculties of his mind, if we may adopt the allusion, the fleshly principle is driven by the victories of the Spirit, must, because of this foul inhabitant, be given up to destruction, "be dissolved," and return unto the dust from whence it was taken. The separated spirit, released from this burden, and cut off from its earthly members, shall then go to the place of rest prepared for its reception, until the time appointed, when the dead bodies of the saints shall rise again in righteousness, having been quickened by the Spirit of God. "For he shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself*."

Such is the final hope of the Christian; but while he still bears the image of the earthy, while he still possesses a nature like unto the vile body of fallen Adam, he must not dream of perfection, nor of discharge from the warfare between the flesh and the Spirit. "These" still "are contrary the one to the other, so that he cannot do the things that he would." But, "if he be led by the Spirit, he is not under the law."—"There is therefore no condemnation." He uses not, however, this liberty for an occasion of the flesh; but, by the powerful influence of the Holy Ghost co-operating with his renewed nature, he walks in the Spirit, and does not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

Ver. 12. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh :

Ver. 13. "For, if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

What is the result and practical inference of all that

* Phil. iii. 21.

has been said respecting the believer's state and obligations? Is the moral obligation weakened, as the enemies of the cross of Christ suppose, by the release of the Christian from his amenableness to the pains and penalties of the law? Far from it! He owns an obligation more powerful than the fear of death; the obligation of *love*,—love! supernaturally impressed upon his heart, and the strength of God is with him in the work. He is bound not to the flesh to live after the flesh. Flesh is confessedly within him; but being renewed in heart and affections, and assisted from above, he disowns its dominion, and acknowledges no other obligations but those of God's service. So that we may observe of the spiritual man, as St. Paul observes of himself, when he uses the same term "debtor," respecting the obligations of an Apostle; "I am ready, as much as in me is," to serve God in the gospel of his Son.

Though the believer, "by reason of his frailty, cannot always stand upright," though he feels himself "sore let and hindered in running the race set before him;" yet it is a notorious circumstance, which all men may see, that he has relinquished his old master and his service, and aims at a different object. He can without guile say of God in the language of the Church of England, "whose service is perfect freedom;" or, in the language of St. Paul, "whose I am, and whom I serve*."

An appeal then, may be made to the fact, and the result will be true of all descriptions of persons: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." The words of the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians, will form the best comment on this passage: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of which I

* Acts xxvii. 23.

tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*." He who lives in the allowed practice of these things, or of any of them, stands therefore reprov'd, as having no share in Christ, nor any participation in the hope of eternal life. Whatever be his knowledge, or his fancied experience, he is rejected as a "worker of iniquity,"—as "having not the Spirit of Christ, and therefore being none of his." On the other hand, we read, "If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Here, observe, a nature, disposed in itself to such things as are above specified, is still supposed to be in the regenerate; in the man in whom dwells the Spirit. Observe again, it is not by his own strength that the new man is expected to work out his salvation. The condition of life eternal, practically stated, is, "If through the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." And the question is not as to entire deliverance from the contamination of the flesh, and perfect personal sanctification; but to be in a state of salvation is thus stated: "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh." The Christian is called to a conflict; and his life, at the best, is but a painful watch, over enemies conquered indeed, but whose spirit is unbroken; over enemies, concerning whom we may say, "troubled, but not distressed †; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed ‡."

The expression in the text, *mortify*, is very significant. It seems to imply a power of vitality in the fallen foe, like that of the fabled monster of antiquity; and corrupt nature must, in truth, be lifted up from its mother earth, before its lives can be extinguished, and its revivifying power destroyed. The deeds of the flesh must be mortified—put to death—smothered in their birth; the Chris-

* Gal. v.

† Στενοχωρημένοι.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 8.

tian is therefore perpetually engaged in their destruction : as often as they rise, by the help of the Spirit he mortifies them : he wages a war of extermination against all sinful passions ; and when he gets the mastery, he weakens the sources from whence they spring. “ He crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts.” According to the Apostle’s words, in the ninth of the first of Corinthians, “ Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize ? So run that ye may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown ; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly ; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body*, and bring it under subjection ; lest by any means, when I have preached unto others, I myself should be a cast-away †.” It was not by preaching to others that St. Paul could have made his calling and election sure. It was necessary that he should himself engage in the conflict, and mortify the deeds of the body, that he might live. And the same course all must follow, or certainly “ the things which accompany salvation” are not found within them.

This statement of practical Christianity, however, exhibits a very different character from that of the man who is going about to establish his own righteousness by the works of the law. The law of works requires unsinning obedience, and demands purity in the inward parts. The law of the Spirit of life has, indeed, the same object in view ; it makes not, however, a demand of it ; but, by effecting our union with the Holy One, accomplishes it in us :—in us personally, in part, and to a degree unknown to the strictest Pharisee, by the actual infusion of holiness and righteousness ; and perfectly IN HIM, who has sanctified himself for our sakes, “ that we might be sanctified

* Ἰπποκρίτως.

† 1 Cor. ix. 27.

through the truth * ;” who, “ in bringing many to glory,” was, as “ the Captain of their salvation, made perfect through sufferings,”—“ and being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation to all that obey him † .”

The rule of the Christian's examination in the kingdom of grace, presupposes him a naturally corrupt being ; and does not demand perfect purity from sin, in his present situation ; nor does it deny his claim to be in the faith, if sin, in some, or in many instances, puts forth its odious members. The fact to be ascertained is this : Is the man who names the name of Christ, influenced in his heart to hate sin, and love the service of God ? Is he aided by the Holy Ghost, to resist sin ? Is he engaged in the warfare ? is he running in the race ? Does he, in fact, mortify his members, which are upon earth ? He is then assured that he shall live, that he shall not finally be unsuccessful in the conflict, nor be left to perish through the strength of his corruptions.

It seems indeed to be admitted, that flesh is too powerful for the spirit of man, if left to its own powers and resources. But the Spirit of the Almighty is engaged and pledged to assist the renewed spirit, and to work with it, so that its ends and aims shall neither be inefficient nor overpowered. “ Christ is the Author and the Finisher of our Faith.” “ Looking unto Jesus,” victory attends our steps. “ Bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, the life also of Jesus becomes manifest” “ in our mortal flesh ‡ .” The soldier of Christ is indeed congratulated, on his being enlisted into his service, and is saluted victor, when he goes forth to the contest : “ Because I live, ye shall live also.”

Ver. 14. “ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

A reason is assigned in this verse, why those who are

* John vii. 19.

† Heb. xi. 10 ; and v. 9.

‡ 2 Cor. x. 11.

under the influence of the law of the Spirit of life, and through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh, cannot fail in their object: *viz.*, because the very fact of their being led and influenced by the Spirit of God, is a proof that they are his children, those whom he has adopted as his own, and had long ago determined to save, “through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.” So that the gift of faith, and the possession of the Spirit of promise, discover the intentions of the Heavenly Father, which nothing can frustrate nor prevent; but which are in themselves a pledge and earnest of the future inheritance.

Ver. 15. “For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage, again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*.”

Such was the fact; and the Apostle appeals to the spiritual Christians, that they were sensible of it. The Spirit which they had received was not that which conveyed those convictions of conscience, corresponding with the object of the Sinai covenant; which subjected to fear even the child of promise; a dispensation, which, though in the hands of the Mediator it kept them safe, yet could neither to their own feelings be an earnest, nor could create an hope of future glory. They were, in fact, “all their life long subject to bondage through the fear of death.” Though renewed in the spirit of their minds, they could only do service to God in the spirit and disposition of a servant. “And the servant,” as our Lord observes, “knoweth not what his Lord doeth:” he cannot tell that he “shall continue in the house for ever †.”

But the Apostle reminds the Roman Christians, that they had now been made partakers of another work and

* Non enim accepistis Spiritum servitutis iterum ad timorem; sed accepistis spiritum adoptionis filiorum, per quem clamamus, Pater, Pater noster.—*Syr.*

† John xv. 15; viii. 37.

gift of the Spirit, even of that same spirit of adoption, with those first converts who had been previously shut up under the law, and then, after their Master's glorification, set at liberty by the gift of the Holy Ghost. This gift of the Holy Ghost revealed to them the mind of Christ, and showed to them his covenant; enabled them to know and embrace the things freely given to them of God, and, in consequence, to address him in the beloved character of Father: while he, in his great condescension and love, indulges them with the titles of sons and friends, and assures them of it in their hearts by the witness of his Spirit.

Ver. 16. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit"—or, rather, "beareth testimony to our spirit*, that we are the children of God."

My readers are aware of the different expositions given to this verse; and will perceive from the translation which is here preferred, in what sense I understand the Apostle's language, namely, as asserting *a direct testimony* of the Spirit of God to our minds, assuring us of our acceptance, as his adopted children: a testimony, we should not say, independent of our producing the fruits of holiness, but distinct from it, and superadded to it.

"By their fruits ye shall know them," is certainly a sure mark and evidence; an evidence, with due tenderness to the afflicted and the tempted, never to be dispensed with. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we, that we know him †." "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him ‡."

* "Ipse enim Spiritus testimonium reddit spiritui nostro."—*Vulg. Syr.* וְהוּא יְרֵאָה קְטוּרָא לְרוּחֵן

† 1 John ii. 3. 5.

‡ iii. 18, 19.

As we have seen before, the real Christian, in the midst of the trials and difficulties which he meets with, finds to his great joy, that affliction worketh patience, or constancy; and that constancy exhibits experience or proof; which leads to a more confident expectation of the glory of God: the seed is fallen in the good ground, and bears fruit which comes to maturity. But this is not all: we have, in addition, to corroborate the former proof, and to remove still further from the mind all fear and doubt, a direct testimony of the Holy Ghost, informing and satisfying the mind of the believer, that God doth love him, and that he is his adopted son in Christ. This I conceive to be the plain and undoubted meaning of the verse before us, which the spiritual child of God may know and experience to his comfort; and will experience, if, unspoiled by philosophy and the doctrines of men, he hold the truth once delivered to the saints.

But, say some, this is inexplicable and inconceivable! We can only reply: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear them, and he will show them his covenant*." Of that Spirit which was to bear this testimony, our Lord forewarns us: "Him the world cannot receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he shall be with you, and shall be in you †."

It is objected again: "Such a direct and immediate testimony, as is here argued for, were useless and unnecessary. The fact that I am a fruit-bearing branch in Christ attests all that I want to know: this of itself proves, that I have believed to the saving of my soul. Why suppose an additional proof, where it is not wanted?" But I ask again, are there no delights in love and friendship, except the consciousness of our own faithfulness, and the conviction of the faithfulness of those whom we love? Say, that

* Ps. xxv. 14.

† John, xiv. 17.

in reflecting upon what God has done within you, and what he has enabled you to do for his name sake, you could at all times assure your hearts before him, and have confidence towards God; say that your reliance upon the promise of God, and on his covenant engagements, was always firm and unshaken: would it be no additional comfort and satisfaction to hear him *attest* his love? "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth *!"

And are there not times of sad fear and discouragement, when the mind is ready to despond and sink, at the prospect of what appears the little progress it makes, or in reflecting on the imperfect fruit which it produces? It may not, perhaps, doubt its safety altogether, though tempted strongly to suspect it; yet it may want, and that in critical circumstances, the invigoration of a *lively hope*—that "joy of the Lord," which is "the strength of his people †." Nay, very many situations are there, when the Christian can get no present comfort in reflecting upon the work of God in his heart, or on all that he has himself done. How often is his language, "Why art thou so heavy, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within me? Hope thou still in God; for I will yet trust him who is the health of my countenance, and my God ‡!"

How often, in the course of the life of faith, is the Christian involved in circumstances, in which he may be compared to Peter, who had boldly ventured, indeed, at the bidding of his Master, to walk as he saw *him* walking upon the waves of the sea; but, when he perceived the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and, beginning to sink cried, saying, Lord, save me:—when the hand, which was immediately stretched forth, and caught him, was accompanied with the rebuke, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt §?"

* Song of Solomon.

‡ Psalm xlii.

+ Nehemiah, viii. 10.

§ Matt. xiv. 29.

But what is this direct testimony? I think the Apostle has already described it, where, in the fifth chapter, to assign a reason why the hope of the Christian could not cover him with shame, in consequence of disappointment in attaining that of which he had so confidently boasted, he says, "Because the love of God is poured out into the heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us:" that is, as we have seen, a sense of God's love impressed upon the heart.

Or, we may refer to the Apostle's prayer for the Ephesians: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God*." "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." "He 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 †."

Ver. 17. "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be glorified together:"—or, "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, but conjointly with Christ; since together with him we suffer, and together with him shall we be glorified."

* Eph. iii. 14, &c.

† John, xiv. 20, &c.

What it is, to be an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ, no mortal tongue can tell or describe! "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as He is*."—"To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me upon my throne, as I have overcome, and am set down with my Father upon his throne †."

But how tenderly are the heirs of promise admonished in this passage, that they must be joint-heirs in the cross, as well as in the crown, of their elder Brother! Christ in the days of his flesh, was a "man of sorrows," "acquainted with grief," despised, dishonoured, poor, and destitute; and, in some way or other, every disciple of Christ is called to take up his cross and follow him. He must be content, if it be the will of God, to be despised and afflicted in that world, where his Master was despised and put to grief; to be in want, and deprived of many comforts which the ungodly possess, where "he had not where to lay his head;" "but if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him."

* 1 John, iii. 1, 2.

† Rev. iii. 21.

LECTURE XVIII.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH—FROM THE EIGHTEENTH TO THE TWENTY-SEVENTH VERSE.

WE have attended to the description of the Christian believer, who was represented as sealed by the Spirit of adoption, and full of joy in prospect of that inheritance which is reserved for him in heaven; yet at the same time, we were reminded, that, in this present world, he is a sufferer often, as his Saviour was: and besides, he is compelled to carry about him a sinful nature, a continual burden and very frequent occasion of grief. We are, however, told, in the passage which next claims our attention, that these sufferings are inconsiderable, in the view of that glorious event which the believer is expecting—an event, which all the creation is expecting with him in most anxious anticipation—an event, which shall realize all the Christian's hopes and in the redemption of his body complete his salvation. In the mean time, we are also informed, the Holy Ghost the Comforter revives his drooping spirits, and most successfully patronises his cause.

Ver. 18. "For I reckon"—or, "I conceive, indeed, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

We have here the Apostle's calculation, of what deduction ought to be made, from the former estimate of the Christian's happiness, on account of those present sufferings, which he had just acknowledged to be his frequent portion. And the Apostle made his calculation at a time when the sufferings of Christians were abundant, and himself had also very largely partaken of them: yet, he says, he reckons, that the afflictions of the believer in this pre-

sent world, as well what he endures for Christ in the way of persecution, as those troubles with which it pleases God to visit him, in order to the subjugation of the flesh, and his transformation into the image of Christ, "are not worthy to be compared"—are, comparatively speaking, so small, that they do not deserve to be taken into the account, when we are anticipating in hope the promised scenes of future bliss. No language, indeed, can more forcibly convey this notion, than that used by the Apostle to the Corinthians on the same subject: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Ver. 19. "For the earnest expectation of the creature"—or, rather, "of the creation waiteth for" or, "is directed to the manifestation of the sons of God."

That God has prepared for his children a state of bliss and glory, which will make them rich and ample amends for all their sufferings and humiliation here, the Apostle argues, from what he sees in the creation around him. He beholds universal nature * fixed, as it were, in anxious suspense, and looking in expectation of some great event, which is none other than the "manifestation of the sons of God," the full exhibition and public acknowledgment of the heirs of promise in that character; "in the glory which is to be brought to us at the coming of Christ."

Now the *creation*, it appears, as well as the believer, is much interested in this event; and every thing bespeaks its greatness and its importance, and the superior blessedness of those whom God shall so delight to honour. By *creation* St. Paul means the whole fabric of nature, as formed by the great Creator, in subserviency to man, all of which has been much affected by his apostacy from God, and awaits a glorious restoration, when the work of the Redeemer shall be finished.

Ver. 20. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope.”—Or perhaps: “For the creation (not willingly, but through Him who subjected it) was subjected in hope.”

Ver. 21. “Because the creature itself shall be delivered”—or, “seeing that the creation itself, will be emancipated from the bondage,”—or, “slavery of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

The fabric of nature, so much of it, at least, as is connected with man, and was formed for his habitation and service, is now subjected to vanity. It does not now answer that end and design for which it was created; not agreeably, at least, to the excellency of the plan, devised in the mind of the Creator. In numberless instances, its noblest productions and greatest blessings are lost, or perverted to evil instead of good! The whole scene around him has been affected by the fall of man. *His* aberration from his proper orbit has disordered the course of nature, and all inferior beings have, in a manner, been dragged after him into the same abyss of corruption,—“not willingly.” The Apostle personifies creation, and represents it, as neither, by its own will, becoming subject to vanity, nor willingly enduring the bondage. When the Almighty considered the works of his hands, he pronounced every thing that he had made, to be “very good.” It is from no failure or imperfections of the creation, that what we now see has taken place,—the subjugation of creation to vanity, and the bondage of corruption. It was not its own act; but came to pass through its connexion with man. He has subjected it, or, the great Creator, on his account.

The sentence of God was, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake. Thorns also, and thistles, shall it bring forth to thee.” This is not to be regarded as a particular instance,

but as a general intimation, of the subjugation of the powers of nature to vanity. By thorns and thistles, we may understand, noxious weeds in general; in the production of which, the same powers of nature are employed, as in the most valuable productions; yet, they are useless, and do but mock the cultivator's toil. In the animal world, also, we see many instances of the same subjection of the creature to vanity. Here, how often does nature bring forth for naught! Beasts, and birds, and fishes, let loose upon each other, full of evil dispositions, exhibit, as it were, in the oppressor, and the oppressed, an exact counterpart to the wretchedness of fallen man.

Consider in this view, the disorder in the elements, experienced more or less in every climate. What ruin and devastation! what a continual frustration of purposes and revocations of apparently destined blessings! how short, in a general point of view, of what the powers of nature could, and in some instances do, accomplish!

A promise indeed has been interposed in mercy, "that summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, shall not fail," and man may, therefore, toil in hope of the reward of his labours. But the very circumstance of a promise having been given, implies, that such had been the disorder introduced, such the perversion which the powers of nature, and all secondary causes, had suffered, that, but for *his* staying hand, who in a similar manner, to prevent the entire destruction of the human race, puts a check upon their evil propensities, the regular revolutions of the seasons, upon which the subsistence of man and beast depends, were in danger of being interrupted, and might have failed in their expected returns.

Look again at the actual state of the surface of this globe, as subjected to the dominion of man. He was bid to subdue and replenish it: but see, to this present hour, its fairest parts lying desolate; the most valuable produc-

tions useless and waste; the “rain falling upon the land which no man inhabiteth;” extensive continents, “the habitation of dragons, the joy of wild asses.” See, too, whole races of men pining in want and in squalid misery, appearing scarcely human, where, had but the gifts of nature been applied to their destined end, they might have enjoyed themselves as in a paradise. Think, moreover, of the human intellect uncultivated:—man, created in the image of God, become a prowling savage in the wilds of America and Africa, a ferocious *cannibal* in the islands of the southern ocean!

What is worse, see the good things of nature, where they are enjoyed in the greatest perfection, and where the intellect of man is most cultivated, used to the dishonour of God, and become a snare and an occasion of misery to man. See the fine powers of reason and imagination employed to counteract the mercies of God, and to establish more firmly the empire of sin! Surely this is that part of the subjugation to vanity, of which the creation, if it had a voice, would most loudly complain, and from which it would ask most earnestly for deliverance!

In viewing the state of this lower world, might it not be asked with amazement, Is this the world, which the wisdom of the All-bountiful contrived and pronounced so good?—Yes; so far, reflection will teach us, it is plain; for the very magnificence of the ruin discovers the art of the builder, and still preserves, in its fallen state, an idea of the original design of the structure. When the traveller meets with the solitary fisherman spreading his nets upon the foundations of Tyre: or when viewing the remains of Balbec or Palmyra, he notices, that the neighbouring shepherds have erected their huts out of their curiously-wrought pillars, and have occupied their majestic porticos with their stabled herds; he is in no danger of confounding the uses and appropriations which he sees before him, with the

original intention of the architects, and of the great founders of these stupendous piles. Thus, in contemplating the puny works of the present race of mortals, and the small portion of nature which they have subjected to their sway, it strikes us forcibly—How different must have been the end and design, which the great Author of nature had in view, in the formation of 'all these things! The world, indeed, resembles a magnificent city, which some dire disaster had plunged in ruin. And its present occupants may justly be compared to a degenerate race, occupying, in poverty and meanness, some small portions of noble edifices erected for the grander purposes of a better people.

But then the question returns; How came all this to pass? whence has arisen the destruction, and the pitiable waste, which we witness? Could God be disappointed in his intentions? "Did he create the earth in vain? Did he not form it to be inhabited?" Can it be attributed, then, either to any decay in the powers of nature, or to any imperfections in the workmanship? No; God's work is perfect. The powers which he has given to nature, have always been faithful and certain in their operation. It has come to pass, "not willingly, but by reason of him, on account of whom they were first created."—Because of the sin of man, the creation has been subjugated by the Creator, to vanity.

The abuse, however, is permitted but for a season. The Apostle, still personifying the creation, says, it is "*subjugated in hope:*" it has the expectation, that it shall not always remain in this debased state, but shall one day be delivered from this subjection to the vain purposes of its degenerate masters. It cherishes the hope of better times, of being used to more noble and more suitable ends.

And it is no less extraordinary than true, that, in every age of the world, it has been the constant belief and expectation of mankind, that nature is not, now, in that state

of perfection in which it once was; but, that that primeval state of things, that golden age, will at some distant period be again restored.

In the narrative of the sacred page we perceive the grounds of this tradition. Prophecy announces, that the common expectation of mankind will not be disappointed. Destruction may, indeed, precede the work of perfect restoration; “the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, be burnt up. Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*.”—Thus, as we read in the text, the creation will be emancipated from that bondage to vanity and corruption, which it now bears, as it were, from constraint, and with much impatience; and which it is doomed to bear, till the wished-for time of the “manifestation of the sons of God;” when it will be formed into a habitation, and be regulated for the service of the redeemed in a state of glory and eternal perfection. For, even supposing the passage referred to, is to be understood as altogether figurative, it must have its accomplishment in corresponding realities.

Ver. 22. “For, we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now”—or, “travaileth in pain to this present [hour].”

Still, employing the metaphorical language, which he had adopted, St. Paul represents creation distressed, at its present slavery and abuse, and big with expectation of this great event, as groaning like a woman labouring with child. So that imagination may hear in the jarring elements, in the raging storm, in the bursting volcano, or in the more tremendous earthquake, the convulsive throes, as it were, of an agonizing mother! Thus the fabric of universal nature echoes in loud responses the daily prayer

* 2 Pet. iii. 10—13.

of Christ's church, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Ver. 23. "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body"—Or, "even we ourselves, within ourselves do groan, earnestly desiring the adoption,—the redemption of our body."

Not only the powers of nature, and the various parts of the creation, are anxiously waiting for deliverance; but even the children of God themselves, though in part they participate in the glorious liberty of the sons of God, having received the Spirit of adoption, yet even they do groan within themselves for this same event; because the influence and indwelling of the Spirit which they now feel, though it enables them to rejoice in hope, is but "a first-fruits," "an earnest." The adoption, in its full sense, they possess not yet. It is, at present, a secret, whispered in their heart by the Holy Ghost; but, their manifestation in the characters of the sons of God, is yet an object of hope which is not seen. In secret, the believer rejoices in his high birth; but he waits for this great revolution of nature, before he expects to receive its honours. It is "the grace that is to be brought unto" his people, "at the revelation of Jesus Christ*." "Our life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory†."

As Jesus, though in truth the Son of God, did not appear, in this world, in the glories of that character, but as the Son of man, "despised, rejected of men," "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" so his people, as we have already been called to note, in conformity to their Master, take up their cross, and submit to shame

* 1 Pet. i. 13.

† Col. iii. 4.

and sorrow; but, with the glorious hope, that, as they suffer with him, with him they shall be glorified.

The Apostle asserts, that believers “groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption;” which, as he explains, receives its accomplishment in the redemption of his body. We have seen before, that in the spiritual Christian, though “the Spirit is life, because of righteousness,” yet, at the same time, “the body is dead because of sin: that though, in his inward man, in his renewed nature, he is alive in Christ, yet, still he carries about him “this body of death”—“his old man”—his carnal nature, against which, his spirit is engaged in continual conflict. He is, indeed, as we have seen, under the necessity of using laborious and continual exertions in order to keep it in subjection, that he may prevent sin from reigning in his mortal body, from overpowering the law of the mind and leading him captive.

Now, though “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ;” though *in the body of Christ*, into which the believer is inserted and begins to grow in holiness, there is complete deliverance from the law of sin; yet, as the Christian still bears the image of the earthy, and his flesh is not yet destroyed, he carries through all his pilgrimage, a heavy burden, a fruitful source of trouble. We have already heard the Apostle, in his own behalf, exclaim, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” So, now, on behalf of all these children of God, he declares, “Even we ourselves, within ourselves do groan, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body.”

By *body*, in all the foregoing passages, as we have had occasion to reflect, St. Paul does not mean the material body, as distinguished from the mind; but human nature complete, as received from the first Adam. Body, or flesh, is applied to this nature, to distinguish it from that new

and spiritual nature, which is propagated from the person of the risen Saviour, and is formed and nourished within "his seed" by the agency of the Holy Ghost. The reason of so applying these terms, "flesh and spirit," "body and mind," to distinguish these different natures, we have already considered.

That *body*, in its common acceptation, is not intended in this place, is evident, because its *redemption* is still stated to be unaccomplished; and to remain so, till "the manifestation of the sons of God" in glory; whereas it is the Christian's privilege and duty to serve God with his *body*, no less than with his soul; "his *body*" is to be "presented" "a living sacrifice to God." We also meet with the following express statement: "What, know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price? Therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*."

And, as we have observed before, the works of flesh belong not, exclusively, either to soul or body;—to man, considered only as an intellectual creature; or, to man, considered as a mere animal. Neither is there room to suppose, that the deeds of the body, which the spiritual man, by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, is called to mortify, consist either of the ordinary and proper functions of the body, or of the lusts of sensuality merely, which belong only to the animal; since affections entirely mental and intellectual are enumerated among "the works of the flesh."

By *body* then, in this passage, we must necessarily understand, more generally, corrupt human nature—"the old man," as opposed to the new; "the outward man," as opposed to "the inward man," or, "the hidden man of the heart." For there is, so to speak, in every Chris-

* 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

tian, a spiritual holy Being, dwelling in another Being, carnal, corrupt, and sinful. Thus applied, we understand the words of the Apostle, “ *we ourselves*, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, do groan *within ourselves*, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” The burden which galls the believer is not his possession of animal powers:—with these he serves his God in his day and generation. Nor is it his propensity to animal enjoyments, so far as these are “ sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” But, “ it is his members which are upon earth,” that complete man, subject to thoughts and desires of lasciviousness, pride, and maliciousness; and which cannot relish spiritual enjoyments; which is “ enmity against God, and cannot be subject to his law,” either in the government of the mind or of the body. The language of St. Paul to the Corinthians will, perhaps, illustrate this subject: “ For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not, for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now He that has wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit*.”

In this passage we notice, that Christian believers are said to have received “ the earnest of the Spirit.” This is, doubtless, the first-fruits of the Spirit mentioned in the text; yet they are said still to be groaning in the present tabernacle, inasmuch as it is “ an earthly house,” and partakes of the nature of the “ first man.”—He “ was of the earth, earthy;” and, “ as is the earthy,” depraved and sinful, “ such are they that are earthy.” But the be-

* 2 Cor. v. 1, &c.

lievers earnestly desire a house from heaven,—to “bear the image of the heavenly.” This is, in the words of the text, “to groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption—the redemption of their bodies.”

What St. Paul, in the passage referred to, calls “being clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven;” in allusion, probably, to the pitching of a tent and hanging up of its curtains; he elsewhere speaks of, as “changing our *vile* body, that it may be fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ.” This, then, is the redemption of the body, which is necessary to the full manifestation of adoption.

Redemption, in its proper signification, as we have intimated before, signifies, not only the payment of a captive's ransom; but a man's relatives—his redeemers, are said to redeem him, when they rescue him by force from the hand of the enemy. Now, it belongs to the great Redeemer's undertaking, not only to ransom his people out of the hand of divine justice, by paying the ransom of their souls, but to redeem them with his mighty hand and outstretched arm from the power of the enemy*.

It is under this notion, that death, as reigning by sin, over the mortal natures of the people of Christ, is held forth as “the last enemy that shall be destroyed.” This deliverance, the believer is now waiting for. While he occupies the earthly house of this tabernacle—“dwells in a house of clay;” while flesh and blood remain; while, in short, human nature, as derived from Adam, invests him, he is not fully vindicated into the glorious possession of the children of God. Though he has, indeed, the first-fruits of the Spirit, he groans, being burdened. “His spirit is life, because of righteousness; but his body is dead, because of sin.” “Christ is formed within him; and he re-

* In this view, St. Paul renders the Hebrew *יְהוָה*, in Isaiah, lix. 20, *ὁ ρυομαενος*, the Deliverer.

joices in hope, that He who raised up Jesus from the dead, will also quicken his mortal body, by, or because of his Spirit, that dwelleth in him."

But no language can convey a more magnificent idea of this glorious *metamorphosis*, than the expressions of the Apostle, in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians:—"There is a natural body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

All, indeed, will not die, and return to the dust from whence they were taken; and, therefore, the deliverance here anticipated, is not merely the re-animating the dust with the breath of life. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."—"And then shall death be swallowed up in victory."

Hence we perceive how the full manifestation of adoption receives not its accomplishment, but in the redemption of the body. Even the souls of just men made perfect in heaven, are represented as waiting for this event; not indeed, like men in the flesh, who groan being burdened. "They rest from their labours." The child of God, while in the body—not yet "made perfect," because of the weakness of the fleshly body, in dwelling in it, and in per-

ceiving its unlawful deeds, is vexed in his righteous soul from day to day: therefore, he groans for deliverance. But the disembodied spirit, no longer affected with the corruptions of the body, nor feeling its burden, has not this motive to induce it to long for the approaching time. Yet still that glorious body, which is to complete the conformity of the saints to the image of the Saviour, whom they are day and night beholding, is the hope, and boasted expectation, even of paradise! But to return.

Ver. 24. "For we are saved by"—or "in hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"

Ver. 25. "But if"—or, "Since we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience—with patient continuance wait for it."

Salvation, in its full and complete sense, as comprehending the deliverance of the natural, fleshly body, is not yet actually received. "We are saved in hope:" this is the reason, why the believer groans within himself. It is still a subject of promise, which promise the Christian trusts, and rejoices in hope of its accomplishment. For hope, as we have before explained, is that expectation, which the prospect of a promised good creates in the mind. This explanation agrees well with the Apostle's reasoning in this place. Hope that is seen, is not hope; "for what a man seeth, why does he yet hope for?" The notion is, that the object of hope, is certainly his, when it arrives; it has been made over to him by an infallible promise and covenant. To see it, therefore, is to possess it; which of course, puts an end to all further *expectation* of its coming.

The present condition, therefore, of the Christian is this: he is expecting a salvation, which he sees not as yet: but, with constancy and patient perseverance, he waits for it: "knowing that *He* is faithful, that has promised." As

the Apostle speaks in another place: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that, for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do; forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto the things which are before, I press towards the mark for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*."

Though, therefore, we have seen the Christian conducted to the *highest* attainment of Gospel privileges, we still behold him imperfect and "compassed with infirmities;" praying for deliverance, and groaning beneath a burden, which he has, in addition to those sufferings, which affect him in common with other frail and mortal beings. In this state of imperfection, of danger, and of suffering, he is not, however, left alone and comfortless. The Holy Ghost is his comforter, He revives his drooping courage, and effectually patronises his cause.

Ver. 26. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Ver. 27. "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

The original of these two verses may be thus translated: "And likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. For what we should pray for, as we ought, we know not, but the Spirit itself intercedes"—or, "strongly complaineth for us, with inarticulate groanings. And He, that is, the Spirit, searching the hearts [*Ὁ δὲ ἐρευνῶν τὰς καρδίας*], perceiveth what is the mind and will of the Spirit—that is, of the renovated part of man [*οἶδε τι, τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ*

* Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14.

πνεύματος], when"—or, "that to God he intercedeth"—or complaineth "for the saints."—

The Holy Ghost, as we have before seen, dwelleth in the hearts of all the people of Christ according to his promise, "I will not leave you comfortless"—in the destitute state of orphans: "I will send you another Comforter." The word Comforter, however, we may observe does not give the full meaning of the original word *, which, in the promise, designates the character and office which the Holy Ghost sustains, towards the people of God.

The original word signifies, equally, advocate, patron, monitor, instructor, guide; in short, such a wise and powerful friend, as, taking the charge of us and our interest, will not only comfort us, when we are sorrowful, but also advise us in our difficulties; admonish us when we shall need admonition; and, when occasion shall be, will, by his superior wisdom and influence, advocate and patronise our cause *himself*,

Our Lord terms the Holy Ghost "*another* Comforter;" meaning that HE should supply the place of his own actual presence with his people; and should be to them all that *he* had been, while he was with them in the flesh, and "kept them through his word." Nay, they were to profit by the change of protectors. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for, if I go not away, the Holy Ghost will not come unto you†."

It is the powerful patronage, therefore, of the Holy Spirit, which is the great security of the believer: in himself he is infirm and weak; and, however lifted up with the hope of glory, not sufficient of himself, to do any thing as of himself, "not so much as to think a good thought." But the Spirit helpeth his infirmities; "strengthens him with might in the inner man;" leads him in the paths of righteousness; and assists the "new man" to mortify the

* Ὁ Παράκλητος, the Paraclete.

† John, xvi. 7.

deeds of the flesh, and to keep up that spiritual intercourse with his risen Head, by which he is nourished unto life eternal, sanctified and perfected in holiness.

In prayer especially, the Apostle notices the assistance of the Spirit. According to our translation, and the usual interpretation of this passage, the Holy Ghost assists the believer in the work of prayer; teaches him how to pray as he ought; makes him to feel so strongly his spiritual wants, and so animates his soul with the desire of heavenly things, especially of that promised deliverance from indwelling sin; that he prays with groanings more earnest than language can express; so that, though no voice be heard, God perceiveth, with acceptance, the inspired prayer; because, as coming from his Spirit, it cannot but be agreeable to him. This is true, and the effect actually produced in the Christian, when “the spirit of prayer and supplication” is poured out upon the soul.

But I think something more is intended here. A strict interpretation of the Apostle’s words seems rather to require us to understand by “the interceding,” or “strong complaining,” mentioned in the text, not what we ourselves are by the Spirit, enabled to do; but the act of the Spirit himself, coming in aid of our imperfect conceptions, our confused, ill-ordered, and often ill-timed and mistaken prayers.

In many cases, beyond all doubt, we neither see our danger, nor know the help necessary for our safety; nor perhaps, in our imperfect understandings, are we capable of comprehending the full extent of our want: here a better wisdom offers up the powerful request. How often, again, when the occasion is most urgent for our imploring the speedy help of God, are we lost and wanting to ourselves! Perhaps, we have been surprised by the enemy: perhaps, the flesh has prevailed to shut up the mind to fervent prayer; or it may be, a delusion prevails; so that the mind either suspects no foe, or is embracing, in the

source of its danger, an imaginary blessing ; or, in some dangerous error, an imaginary truth ! How little, for instance, was Peter in a condition to pray for himself, in that lamented night, when he denied his Master ! Whether you consider the state of his mind during the temptation, or in preparing for the occasion, according to the warning given him, How little to the purpose had been Peter's prayer ! But He, who then sustained the office of Paraclete, even the good Shepherd then with his people, and keeping them in his Father's name, saw the enemy coming, and prayed for Peter. What wonder then, if that other " Comforter," who now, unseen, resides in the hearts of the faithful, should, in similar circumstances, in like manner " help our infirmities ?"

He, the indwelling Spirit, in these sad hours of darkness, can yet perceive the desires and wishes of the spiritual, the hidden man of the heart, even when the Christian himself, through the violence of temptation, is deprived of all proper reflections. When he is silent in prayer, and seems to himself destitute of all spiritual feelings ; even then, the Spirit, who searcheth the hearts, can perceive and read the mind and will of the Spirit—the renewed mind [*τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος*]. And this same guardian power, pitying the wretchedness of the helpless believer, himself advocates his cause before God. The tempted Christian has himself, at this time, perhaps, but a faint idea, or no idea at all of the incense that is going up out of his heart to encompass the mercy-seat of God ! " The Spirit itself complains and makes intercession for him to God ;" and the enemy prevails not ; " the Accuser of the brethren is cast down !"

LECTURE XIX.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.—FROM THE TWENTY-EIGHTH VERSE
TO THE END OF THE CHAPTER.

IN our last Lecture, we contemplated the Christian delivered from condemnation; in Christ, safe and happy under the tutelage of the Spirit of grace. It was true, indeed, he was yet burdened with “the body of the sins of the flesh;” and, together with the creation around him, was waiting, with earnest expectation, for the manifestation of the sons of God, when he should receive the redemption of his body.

We saw too, that, while thus kept waiting in hope of what appears not as yet, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, is with him, and helps his infirmities: so that, in his darkest hour, in the season of his greatest perplexity, when his own strength faileth, when, to his own feelings, “he is almost gone, his feet have well nigh slipt;” he is still supported: “underneath are the everlasting arms.” Nor do his interests, in the mean while, suffer before the throne of grace. A powerful Advocate takes up his cause, and crying from within his breast, spreads his sore distress before the heavenly Father. There is one who interprets the desires of his renewed mind, when the afflicted saint is “so troubled that he cannot speak;” or sees not the approaching danger; or, through the violence of temptation, in some unguarded moment, has been taken captive by the enemy. “Though he fall, he shall not be cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his right hand.”

Thus the work of grace, within the souls of the redeemed, is secured from prevailing obstacles or final hindrance. See we, then, the fruits of the Spirit, indicating

a work of God upon the soul; we may congratulate such persons in the language of the Apostle: "being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*." And if provision is made for the believer's safety, in that quarter whence the greatest danger was to be apprehended; where there was most reason to dread a failure, and a frustration of "the purpose of grace;" what need he fear from *without*?—"All things are yours: the world, or life or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's†." So we read, at length, in the passage which now calls for our attention.

Ver. 28. "And we know, that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to (his) purpose,"—or, "And we know, that to them who love God, all things work together for good. Who are called according to a previous design,"—or predetermination.

Ver. 29. "For whom he did foreknow,"—or, "Because whom he afore approved," or "chose," or "fore-ordained‡," he also did predestinate to be conformed to

* Phil. i. 6.

† 1 Cor. iii. 21, &c.

‡ "Προγνωσκα," Campbell observes ^a, "as rendered according to etymology (*foreknow*), labours under a double defect. First, it signifies not to *foreknow*, but to *know before*, προγνωσκοντες με ανωθεν, Acts xxvi. 5. Secondly, γνωσκα takes the sense of γιν to acknowledge, to approve. 'God has not cast off his people whom he heretofore acknowledged,' Rom. xi. 2. Again, γνωσκα often denotes to decree, to ordain, to give sentence as a judge. And therefore, προγνωσκα, to fore-ordain, &c. 'It is in this sense only we can understand προγνωσμενου προκαταβολης κοσμου, which our translators have rightly rendered, 'Fore-ordained before the foundation of the world,' 1 Pet. i. 20. The force and meaning of the Hebrew word, ידע, from whence γνωσκα takes its Hellenistic signification, is well illustrated by Dr. Blaney, in his note on Jeremiah i. 5., 'Before I formed thee in the belly I *knew* thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I

^a Diss. iv.

the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren*.

Ver. 30. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

We remark the distinguishing characteristic of those, concerning whom these things are spoken: "To them that love God." The "love of God," as we have seen in a former chapter, "is spread abroad in the believer's heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him." The sense of God's love towards him is so impressed upon his heart, that all his affections are won. "The love of Christ constraineth him †." This agrees with St. John's account of Christian love: "For herein is love, not that we first loved God, but that he first loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation of our sins. We love him because he first loved us ‡." Hence this love to God becomes the decisive evidence of a true and lively faith.

The reality of this love, we learn, moreover, is put to immediate trial in the person of our brother. "For he that loveth God, loveth his brother also §." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." This love of God is further seen in exercise, in

ordained thee a prophet of the nations.' 'I knew thee;' that is, I 'had thee in my view,' or, 'approved thee as a fit and proper object;' in the same sense as it is said, Acts xv. 18, "Known unto God are all his works, from the foundation of the world;" 'he contemplated the plan of them, and approved it in his mind, before he created and brought them into being.' Agreeably to this predetermined purpose concerning him, God proceeded, at an early period, to set him apart, or separate him from the rest of mankind, to be employed in that peculiar office, to which, now in the fulness of time he appointed him." *Ὁυς προέγνω, quos Deus ab eterno amavit.*—SCHLEUSNER.

* "But we know that to them who love God, *he* in every thing affords help for good, to those whom he has predestined to be called. *He* both previously approved of them, and (*previously*) sealed them," or, "impressed them with the likeness of the image of his Son," &c.—*Syriac.*

* 2 Cor. v. 14.

† 1 John iv.

§ 1 John iv. 21.

the exhibition of that disposition of mind towards all men, which is described by the Apostle, in the thirteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians. The same grace, and loving-kindness, and forbearance, which, on the part of God, impresses and captivates the Christian's heart, is thence reflected, as it were, on his fellow-creatures: this is charity. "We study to be like those we love." It is true, also, as a general observation, "a man is to others, what he feels God to be to him." Love, therefore, must be the characteristic of the believer; "for God is love." And, though, if "truth were laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet," we must make much abatement from a claim to perfection, on account of the remainders of corruption, and on account of the very different law which is working in the members; yet love is the predominant character and its exhibition, the constant aim and intention of the true believer.

"All things work together for good." All events, which the womb of time shall bring forth;—whatever occurrences, the believer, "the friend of God," shall meet with, affecting him, either in mind, body, or estate, are planned and ordered by a particular providence of God, with a view to his final good.

To the eye of sense, there appears "one event unto all, to the just and to the unjust;" "time, and chance" seem to happen alike to all; "so that no one can tell either love, or hatred, by all that is before him*." But the Christian "knows"—his mind is persuaded and satisfied concerning it, that in the midst of this seeming confusion, and apparent reign of chance, a secret, though unerring hand, is guiding and managing all things. The great First Cause gives such an impulse and direction to all secondary causes, that they are made, in the most minute effects that they produce, to harmonize and conspire together for

* Eccl. ix. 2.

the good of the people of the Lord. Even their enemies are but instruments in the hand of God, to do them good; "though they mean not so." It is written, "The wrath of man shall serve thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain*." All their griefs and sorrows, their pains and afflictions, all that human wisdom would enumerate as "the things;" which "are against us" all these are administered by the hand of God. They are ingredients in a cup, which a loving father has mingled for his children; which, if not always the cup of pleasure, is always the cup of health.

We, indeed, are apt to suppose, that our concerns are too small and insignificant, for the omnipotent Ruler of heaven and earth to charge himself with. For, conceiving of his greatness after the manner of human greatness, we seem to feel that, in his mightier concerns, our little matters will be forgotten. But what an idea do the words of Christ give us of that minute inspection, of that particular consideration and care, which the great God has of all his creatures! "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them falls to the ground without your Father!" What fuller assurance can the fearful and trembling soul require, than these declarations? "The very hairs of your head are all numbered†." "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye‡!"

By such gracious sayings as these, which are frequent in scripture, the mind of the believer is released from fears and anxieties; and he is encouraged to cast his care upon that gracious God who careth for him. He can say of God; "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower§!"

* Psalm lxxvi. 10.

+ Matth. x. 29.

‡ Zech. xi. 8.

§ Psalm xviii.

—“ Who are the called according to his purpose,”—or, “ who are called according to a previous design or determination.” That is, those persons, who are brought to the belief of the truth, and have had the love of God spread abroad in their hearts; have been called to this state of salvation, in pursuance of a design and plan, which had been previously settled and ordained in the divine counsels. So that their call and conversion is neither an effect of chance, nor of human wisdom, that it should be indeterminate in its end, and uncertain in its issue. It is the consequence of a divine decree; which decree embraces other objects besides; their call is but one link in a chain of mercies, which God has prepared for them that love him. Their destinies, therefore, are fixed; they can neither be altered nor impeded. Every thing is disposed in subordination to this design of Almighty God; that he may “ accomplish all the good pleasure of his will.” Hence the believer has just grounds for the assurance, that all things shall work together for his good.

What this design and predetermination is, in prosecution of which, the Christian is called, and what events it embraces, we are next led to contemplate: “ For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated, to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he may be the first-born among many brethren.” To *know*, as we have seen, signifies both in the Old and New Testaments, to perceive with approbation, with acknowledgment, as it were. Hence the phrase, “ whom he did foreknow,” will signify,—whom the omniscient Sovereign, in the view of his foreknowledge, approved as the objects of his choice. He contemplated the proposal and plan of bringing each of them, individually, as “ a vessel of mercy” to glory; and approved it in his mind.

The plan and proposal in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, was this: “ those whom he fore-

knew, he pre-ordained and appointed to be conformed to the image of Christ." Christ, as we have seen, was appointed as a second Adam, to be the covenant head of a new race; to be the source and origin of a new being, to all whom God had given him. By the baptism of the Spirit, those who are ordained to eternal life are made to coalesce and grow together with Christ; so that his death becomes their death, and his life their life, and all that Christ has done and suffered, is considered as having happened to them,—to them as members of his mystical body. Further, a new and spiritual nature is conveyed to them, from Christ, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. "The new man is created after the likeness of Him that created him, in righteousness and true holiness." "Christ is formed within them." "They put on Christ." As far as this nature prevails, there is actually a conformation of the elect of God, to the image of Jesus Christ: "as he was, so are they in this world." "Being transformed by the renewing of their minds." And, as we saw in a former Lecture, they are also looking with anxious expectation for an event, which will complete their transformation into the image of Christ; and they will then stand forth confessedly the sons of God. "We know, that when He shall appear, we shall be like him." "He shall change our vile body, that it may be made like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly:" even of "the second man, the Lord from heaven." Thus, all his redeemed being made, both in soul and body, like unto Christ, he will be the first-born among many brethren. "Behold I, and the children which thou hast given me*."

This everlasting love and predestination of God is,

* Heb. ii. 13.

indeed, secret to us, though given to us in Christ, "before the foundations of the world were laid;" but it becomes known to the chosen of God, and is applied to them personally, in their "calling."

"Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called."

We have already distinguished between the general call of the gospel, which invites every child of man to come to Christ, that he may be saved; and that call, which being conveyed by the quickening influence of the Holy Ghost to the soul, is effective of the purpose of Him who calls: effective, as was the voice of Him that called Lazarus to come forth from the tomb; or, as when the Spirit of God "moved" (מרחפת) upon the face of the formless deep, and God said, "Let there be light: let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters;" "let the dry land appear." "He spake the word, and they were created; he commanded, and they stood fast!"

With respect to the former call, it proves not an election of God; for, "many are called, but few are chosen." But in regard to this other calling,—which is termed by divines, with great propriety of expression, "the effectual call"—this clearly proves an election; because, in fact, it begins visibly to put in execution the previous design and determination of God. They are "*the called according to his purpose.*" "Who has saved us, and called us," says the Apostle in another place, "not according to our works, but according to his OWN PURPOSE and GRACE, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*." The purpose was formed, this Scripture acquaints us, before the world began; and, further, that the inducement in the election of the individuals, was not works foreseen; but that it was of grace: "by grace ye are saved." They are "a remnant according to the election of grace."

* 2 Tim. i. 9.

This calling of which we speak, is not effective in an appeal, by way of persuasion to the self-determining powers of man, but in the quickening and regenerating influences of the Spirit of God. Hence, St. James describes it,—“Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures*.” And so, St. Peter, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever †.”

“Moreover, whom he called, them he also justified.” We have already considered at large, the method of a sinner’s justification before God. Here we are told, that this justification becomes the portion of all them who are called, called by the Spirit working in them According to the operation of God they believe. For faith is the gift of God. And this faith receives at the hand of God their perfect righteousness. Their faith is counted to them for righteousness; and now they begin to experience the joyful consequences.

“Moreover, whom he justified, them he also glorified.” St. Paul speaks of their glory as already attained; to denote, according to a style very usual in scripture, the certainty of the event. “The gifts and callings of God are without repentance. The people of God are called, and justified in prosecution of a previous design; which design embraces also their conformity to Christ in his glorified state. Their calling by the Spirit; and their justification by faith, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, are the appointed means of their obtaining this predestined blessing of eternal glory.

When men are effectually called by God, it is with the intention of bringing them to glory; as certainly, therefore, as they are called, do they believe unto righteous-

* Eph. i. 18.

† Eph. i. 23.

ness. And being justified by faith, it follows, as a certain consequence, that they shall finally obtain the inheritance of eternal glory. "It is sure to all the seed." That no one who is justified, can again lose his justification, may be fairly argued therefore from this passage. For, in that case, it would not be invariably true, that "whom he justified, them he also glorified." Neither could it be true that they who are called, are called according to God's purpose. For he can neither be mistaken in the objects of his choice, nor can unforeseen events alter his design or frustrate his intention, which design and intention had in view their being conformed to the image of the Son of God in glory.

Accordingly, we find it to be the universal language of scripture, respecting those who are justified by faith, that they are secure from final apostacy and ruin. "They are passed from death unto life, and shall not come into condemnation." "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ." According to the institutions of God, there *cannot* be. "For, they are not under the law, but under grace;" and, "where no law is, there is no transgression." Hence, as we saw, those who are justified by faith, are described as rejoicing in expectation of the glory of God. We are not taught to consider their attainment of glory as pending either upon any conditions, or on any future conflict, the issue of which is uncertain; but they are described as rejoicing, and making their boast concerning it, and that, without fear of being put to shame; nay, as having an earnest, and a first-fruits of that unspeakable glory already in their hearts! And, in fact, that constraining, that transforming love of Christ, which is poured out into the hearts of all true believers, is an anticipation of future glory; it is heavenly; the beginnings of that life of God in the soul, which forms the

excellency of the state of glory. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*."

So far, therefore, as the believer, his flesh being kept down and mortified, enjoys the sense of God's love in his heart; and his heart reflects the same love and charity around him, upon his fellow-creatures, so far is glory begun within him. "The Spirit of God and of glory rests upon him." And he cannot fail of attaining that full consummation of glory, of which that Spirit is an earnest and a first-fruits. "God has *appointed* him to obtain salvation." With this view he is called and brought to a sense of his justification. "And He that hath begun a good work within him, will perfect it unto the day of Christ." For the purpose of being made perfect in sanctification and glory, he is apprehended of Christ Jesus. It is God's work, and none can let it: "I give unto them 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†."

Having thus led us to a full survey of the privileges of the redeemed of Christ—In contemplation of their greatness, the Apostle exclaims:

Ver. 31. "What shall we say then to these things? if God be for us, who can be against us?"

What more can be said? or, what can be said to invalidate these things? what can call in question the claims and hopes of believers, if God be for us? If he has declared for us, and it is his sovereign will and pleasure to give us the kingdom, Who, or what, can oppose him? If he has singled us out as objects of mercy, predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son, and has concerted the means, and rendered every thing subservient to this design: who can resist God? what enemy can success-

* John iv. 16,

† John x. 28, 29.

fully impede the execution of the predetermined council and foreknowledge of the Almighty?

If, indeed, a change could be produced in the affections of God towards his elect, then it is acknowledged, they might become a prey to sin, and death, and Satan. "But God is not a man, that he should repent." "In him is no variableness nor shadow of turning." And has he not, suppose ye, counted the cost in his undertaking? that, like the vain sons of men, he should desist from his work, because he has not wherewith to finish? Will he find the object of his choice either worse or more wretched than he supposed in his foreknowledge; so that his compassion should fail, the subject prove incorrigible, the perfecting of the work of grace in his case, something too hard for God?

Ver. 32. "He that spared not"—"He, forsooth, that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?"

If such was the greatness of God's love to his chosen people, that he gave his Son to suffer, and to die for them, is there any second gift, of which they may stand in need, in order to the complete redemption of the purchased people, which God can now be supposed to hesitate in bestowing? We are here reminded of what the Apostle had said above: "God commended his own love to us in that, when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; much more then, now being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him; for if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." The Apostle proceeds:—

Ver. 33. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth!"—Or, according to the more generally-approved rendering, "Will God, who justifieth?"

Ver. 34. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died"—Or, "Will Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?"

This is as much as to say, Since the Almighty Sovereign is reconciled to us, and is on our side, what accuser need we fear? since *he* that is appointed to be the Judge of quick and dead, is none other than our Redeemer himself, where is the judge that will pass sentence upon us?

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is he, who is coming to judge the world. The Father has committed all judgment to him. If we may be allowed the comparison, as an earthly judge is commissioned to try and determine all causes, between his sovereign and the prisoners arraigned before him, the king being considered as the guardian and avenger of the laws promulgated in his name; so God will judge all men, at the appointed day, "by that man whom he has ordained." At Christ's tribunal, before which every one must appear, every charge and accusation is of course brought in the name of God, the great Legislator and King; for the violation of whose laws, man is summoned to give an account.

But who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? who will bring any accusation against them? If accusation be brought at all, it should be brought in the name of God, and on his behalf. But God has justified them, and is well pleased for Christ's righteousness' sake; with this, of course, the Judge is well acquainted.

Should one then, uncommissioned, out of malicious envy assume the office of the accuser of the brethren, again the question may be asked: Who is he that condemneth? The appointed Judge is the Redeemer himself. Will Christ condemn his people, for whom he endured the agonies of death? on behalf of whom, as their surety and head,

he was raised from the dead and accepted of the Father ; and, in that same capacity, was placed at the right hand of God, invested with all power in heaven and earth, that he might save his people to the utmost? He, who from the time of his departure from his church on earth, until the day that he was sent to judge the world, was employed continually in interceding for his people, and in sanctifying them in his priestly character ; will he condemn them, “ when he shall be revealed in fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and believe not his Gospel ?” Far different is the prospect of his redeemed. “ He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe *.”

Himself has told them, when the signs and wonders, which betoken the coming of the great Judge, shall begin to come to pass. “ Then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth near.” It is not, therefore, a persuasion that cometh of Him who called us, which represents the believer, as trembling like a culprit, or, at least, like an anxious candidate, waiting, in awful suspense, the decision of his Judge ;—uncertain whether the quota of his good works will be sufficient to entitle him to the character of believer or not ! No alarms, no apprehensions of this sort, ought to be associated in the Christian's mind with the coming of Christ. Nor will they, if he stand out fast in the liberty of the Gospel.

It is in this life, where all the trial is. Here, we are to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith ; here we are told to make our calling and election sure. Here, we receive the seal, and the earnest ; and, in Christ, rejoice without fear of being put to shame in our confident boasting, in expectation of the glory of God. But still, it might be suggested, are there no fears, lest during our

* 2 Thess. i. 10.

probation here on earth, something should occur to interrupt this friendship between God and the souls of his people? This is the rising fear, which the Apostle so often combats. Let us hear his final decision on the point.

Ver. 35. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or sword?"

Ver. 36. "As it is written, For thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

Ver. 37. "Nay, in all things we are more than conquerors, through him that loveth us."

Ver. 38. "For, I am persuaded"—or, "I am, in truth, persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Ver. 39. "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

By "the love of Christ," or, as it is termed in the last verse, "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," is not, I conceive, exclusively, intended, the love of God and Christ to us. For, there could be very little danger or apprehension, after what has been said of the nature of God's love towards his people, that the shame and suffering which they are compelled to endure, perhaps for the sake of their God, could separate them from his *love!* that God, because of the violence of their enemies, and their prevailing power against them, permitted by his providence, could cease to love them! This is too trivial a supposition, for the Apostle to have had in his view, while he is completing this grand climax of the glorious Gospel, in language so magnificent.

Famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, deprive us of God's affection! when sin, which required the gift of his

own Son to heal the rupture could not separate from his love ! it will scarcely bear a thought,

But we remember the statement of the Apostle was, "to them that love God, all things work together for good." Now, the phrase, "the love of Christ," may as properly signify our love to him, as his love to us. The nature of this love, which the renewed soul bears to God in Christ, we have already been called to consider; it is *that affection with which the heart is filled towards God, by a strong impression of his love to us, the sense of which is conveyed to the soul by the Holy Ghost.* This love is essential to the Christian character; an indispensable requisite. Could this love be destroyed, could the believer be totally separated in heart and affection from God; could this love be wrung out of his heart, then it is admitted faith might fail, and the begun assurance of hope not held steadfast to the end. But who can separate us from the love of God; "can affliction, or distress, or famine, or persecution, or peril, or sword?" The Apostle enumerates all the various sufferings to which the Christian could be exposed. These things, indeed, put our love to the trial and proof: and the trial, in the days of the Apostle was a severe one indeed; "as it is written, For thy sake are we killed all the day long," "we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." But do these sufferings separate the believer from the love of God? can they quench the divine principle of love in the hearts of his people? "The noble army of martyrs" can attest the fact!

It has been proved, in numberless instances, that no losses, no dangers, no wants, no tortures which the human body could be made to endure, can overcome the affection of believers to God—*that affection which is occasioned by a sense of God's love to them in Christ, poured out into their hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them.*

“Nay, in all these things,” says the Apostle, “we are more than conquerors, *through Him that loved us.*” In all these trials, in whatever measure it shall please the heavenly Father to suffer us to be tempted, we always come off “completely victorious:” not indeed, observe, by our own strength, nor through the force of human gratitude; but “through Him who loveth us;” who has said, “he is with us in trouble;” and who, in the season of our weakness, causes his strength to rest upon us; giving his people occasion to glory even in their infirmities*. We may reflect, therefore, on the subject of Christian love. Not only, do we love God, because he first loved us; but our love is found invincible in the trying hour, from the same cause—
 “BECAUSE OF HIM WHO LOVETH US.”

Full of confidence from this consideration, the Apostle concludes with a bold challenge, as it were, to all the powers of earth and hell:

“I am persuaded, truly, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

It is thus the Apostle would rouse to confidence the feeble Christian, when he is contemplating the multitude of his enemies, and pondering upon the trying scenes through which he may have to pass:—through the might of Christ, who has loved him, he need not fear. He tells us confidently, and that from the wisdom of inspiration, that neither death, in its most terrifying forms; nor life, with all its cares and all its seducing pleasures; nor combinations of evil spirits, however great in power; no circumstances of trial, which arise from *present* difficulties, seen and felt, nor difficulties which shall be *hereafter*,

* 2 Cor. xii. 10.

though we know not what they shall be: "nor powers"—no power nor authority of man, perverting the ends of justice into the means of persecuting and oppressing the people of God: no heights of prosperity; no depths of adversity; nor any other creature that can be supposed hostile, or be thought to put to the test the believer's love to his God in Christ:—none of these, nor all of them taken together, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And to them that love God, all things are working together for good.

LECTURE XX.

CHAPTER THE NINTH.—FROM THE FIRST TO THE SEVENTEENTH VERSE.

ST. PAUL, in this chapter, adverts again to the state of the visible Jewish church. He had been describing the glorious privileges of the called and chosen of God; but the Jews, by their rejection of Christ, and their hostility to his gospel, had made it appear, that they, as a nation, notwithstanding their outward privileges, were not the objects of this calling, and of the election of grace. It is, evidently, with great concern, that the Apostle returns to this unwelcome subject; and his declarations show, that the insults and injuries which he had received from them, had not extinguished his love for his countrymen: but now that he sees their ruin approaching, all the tender emotions of his heart seem to be called forth—he wishes, were it the will of God, to be the victim which should be immolated for their preservation.

Ver. 1. “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

Ver. 2. “That I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart:

Ver. 3. “For I could wish”—or, “I did wish, indeed, that myself were accursed from Christ”—or, “that myself were made an Anathema by Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

The Apostle begins with a solemn appeal to Christ, and to the Spirit, in attestation of the truth of what he is going to say: an appeal which, we may observe by the way, is, in fact, an oath; and affords an incidental proof

of the deity of the Son and Spirit, since, by the law, men were to swear by the name of God alone*. In this solemn manner Paul attests, that he felt deep concern, that grief incessant preyed upon his mind, on account of his brethren and fellow-countrymen; so much so, that if *his* life could save them, he could wish his Master to devote it to that end. He could wish to be appointed by Christ an Anathema for them: "a term used by old writers for a person who, on occasion of a plague, or some public calamity, devoted himself to an expiatory sacrifice," according to their gross superstitions, "to the infernal gods †."

If such a sacrifice could save his country from the impending ruin, Paul would gladly be the victim. And when we consider the treatment which the Apostle had received from the Jews, what a practical comment have we here on that precept of Christ, "Bless them which curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you ‡!" The passage may, however, be understood to denote, that it was once Paul's wish to have sustained the curse denounced against the opposers of the religion of Christ, in his zeal for his countrymen the Jews. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which things I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them §."

He next proceeds to enumerate their actual privileges; and points out circumstances in their situation which ought ever to render the Jewish nation an object of regard and veneration to the whole Christian world.

Ver. 4. "Who are Israelites; to whom [pertaineth] the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the

* Deut. x. 20.

† Parkhurst.

‡ Matt. v.

§ Acts xxvi. 9, &c.

giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises:

Ver. 5. "Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ [came], who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

These verses may be considered as a more detailed answer to the question started in the first verse of the third chapter: "What advantage, then, hath the Jew? or, what profit is there in circumcision?"

1. They are Israelites:—lineal descendants from that patriarch "to whom the word of God came, saying, Israel shall be thy name;"—of the favoured Jacob, who obtained the birthright and the blessing: so that they had an indisputable right to be considered as members of God's visible church.

2. Theirs was the adoption. They were the sons of God: his family upon earth. Even in respect of their outward privileges, this title belonged to Israel; and our Lord recognises them under this character, even when he is anticipating their rejection: "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out*."

3. "Theirs was the glory." This expression is generally understood of the visible symbol of the divine presence, which, in the first days of the Jewish church, is supposed to have rested on the mercy-seat. But we may understand it more generally, as denoting those several visible appearances of the divine glory, which have, from time to time, been vouchsafed to men: for these manifestations have, indeed, almost exclusively, been the privilege of the Israelitish church. See Deut. iv. 32—40.

4. "Theirs were the covenants." All the solemn engagements, which God had ever condescended to enter into with mankind, were lodged in their hands, and committed to their custody. They had, in the first place, a

* Matt. viii. 12.

national covenant, peculiar to themselves, whereby Jehovah became their King and God. The covenant of grace, also, was externally signed and sealed to them, as the children of Abraham: though, not walking in the steps of Abraham's faith, they obtained not the spiritual blessings.

5. "Theirs, too, was the giving," or, "the appointment of the law." It was the peculiar privilege of this people to have God himself for their legislator. So that, besides a new promulgation of the moral law,—“their schoolmaster to lead them to Christ,” their political institutions were of divine origin; and to them many other nations are indebted for their most excellent laws and regulations.

6. "Theirs was the service of God*." Among them the public worship of the true God was established, while the rest of mankind were sunk in the most abominable idolatries.

7. "Theirs were the promises." The promise of the Messiah was given to them: according to the representation of the Apostle, "The twelve tribes were serving God day and night, in hopes of his appearing." And, though he proved a stone of stumbling and rock of offence when he came, yet have they still a promise, "that the Redeemer shall come to Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob:" with many other promises respecting their restoration to their country, and their unspeakable felicity and greatness in the latter days.

8. "Whose are the fathers." All the fathers, to whom God gave these promises for themselves and their seed after them, were their ancestors. They "are the seed of the blessed of the Lord." And we are told, that, even in their present abject state, "they are beloved for the father's sake."

* ותשמרם and the ministry.

9. And, as their most honourable distinction of all, Christ, according to his human nature, was one of them. His personal ministry, indeed, was confined to the Jews. "He was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." The great Redeemer, be it remembered, was, in his human nature, a Jew:—He, who is over all, God, the object of divine worship and adoration for ever and ever. Amen.

Such were the privileges and honourable distinctions of the Jews. "Much, every way," had they the advantage over the Gentile nations, although, through their unbelief and refractory spirit, they did not avail themselves of their advantages, and, consequently, in view of a final and impartial judgment, were found no "better than they."

Ver. 6. "Not as though the word of God had taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel"—

I do not speak thus, continues the Apostle, respecting these privileges, enjoyed in common by all the descendants of Jacob, and which to them, I admit, in the issue, prove inefficient; as though I thought it possible for the word of God to fall to the ground: or, as the expression strictly signifies, "to founder* in its course;" or, to miss its destined aim. No! the word of God cannot fail! and that word, in particular, which spake of the imputation of righteousness, and promised an eternal inheritance to Abraham and his seed, cannot but receive its full accomplishment.—"It is sure to all the seed."

But it will be objected, The Jews who are rejected for unbelief are the seed of Abraham and of Israel. To all the seed then the promise is not sure! And does not their

* "Εκπεσιν signifies to fall upon a thing, contrary to your expectation, by erring or wandering from your original course or destination." Raphelus in Parkhurst.

unbelief destroy the faithfulness of God: since it is evident, that he has not given to all the seed of Israel that "new heart and new spirit," which, if God really designed to make them partakers of the riches of faith, was, in the present state of human nature, absolutely necessary?

All the difficulty here might indeed be easily obviated, if we admit the religious opinions of some persons; that faith is a condition, to be supplied by man himself, on his part, which these Jews failing to produce, had of course no title to the promise; nor could their rejection in consequence be supposed at all to call in question the veracity of God.

The Apostle, however, meets not the objection under such a notion; but in a manner which tacitly supposes, that faith is a fruit of grace, and not a self-wrought qualification in man. The Apostle's proof that the word of God has not failed, is this: "For they are not all Israel which are of Israel." All who are descendants of Israel, and as such entitled to all the privileges he had been enumerating, were not the Israel to whom the promise of grace was given. God never engaged, nor bound himself to make all the descendants of Jacob the objects of the election of grace and of his spiritual adoption. This the Apostle makes appear in the several transactions of God, when he covenanted with Abraham and Isaac, the progenitors of Jacob, and from Jacob's own case.

Ver. 7. "Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Ver. 8. "That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Ver. 9. "For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son."

From this quotation out of the Old Testament, and the Apostle's comment upon it, it is plain, that the promise

made to Abraham and his seed, was not made to him and to *all* his descendants in general; but to him and to a particular seed, which God Almighty, by a particular operation of his providence, would raise up to him. Thus, in the first instance, all the other children of Abraham are rejected. In Isaac alone, this child of promise, is his seed to be called. Again, in the family of this same Isaac, we are called to observe a still more striking instance of the restrictive mercies of God.

Ver. 10. "And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one"—or "had conceived *twins* by one, even by our father Isaac;

Ver. 11. "(For the children being not yet born"—or, "they verily not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth*;)")

Ver. 12. "It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

Ver. 13. "And as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Consider the case of the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau:—both of the same father, of Isaac, in whom the seed was to be called, and both of the free woman. Yet, before they are born, and consequently, before they had done good or evil, so that a consideration arising from their characters could be supposed to influence the choice of God, it was declared from Jehovah, that the elder should serve the younger. "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger†."

* "Priusquam nati essent filii ejus, neque fecissent bonum aut malum, præcognita fuit electio Dei, ut ipsa permaneret; non per opera, sed per eum qui vocavit."—*Syr.*

† Gen. xxv. 23.

And to lead us to the proper intent and force of these expressions, the Apostle quotes* another declaration of God from the Prophet Malachi: "Jacob I have loved, and Esau I have hated."

The design of God, in thus declaring the destinies of these infants, before they were born, the Apostle acquaints us, was, that the purpose of God with respect to election "might stand"—or, "be clearly demonstrated to be—not of works, but of Him that calleth." Than which statement nothing can more unequivocally assert, that the cause or motive of the election of God's children is not in any thing which is in them. Why one therefore, rather than another, is called by divine grace, and made partaker of the promise, must be resolved together into the good and sovereign pleasure of God.

A difficulty indeed has been started here, which, as it materially affects the Apostle's argument, it may be of use to obviate. It has been observed, that "it is certain the Apostle does not here speak of the eternal state of Jacob and Esau; nor does he, indeed, so much speak of their persons, as of their posterity, since it is, plainly, to that posterity that both the prophecies which he quotes in support of his argument refer †." If so, the force and pertinency of the Apostle's reasonings are lost!

In attending, however, to the Apostle's argument in the passage before us, it will appear plain to every inquirer, who is not biassed by the apprehension of certain consequences, supposed to result from this interpretation, that St. Paul does certainly consider Jacob and Esau to be personally referred to, and concerned in these prophecies, which he quotes: and that with them personally, and not altogether with their respective seeds, has his argument to do.

The Apostle is showing, that the rejection of the natural

* Eph. i. 23.

† Doddridge.

descendants of the patriarchs, does not argue a breach of that word of God, which promises eternal mercies to Abraham and his seed; because, by that seed, was not intended all the seed born to Abraham after the flesh, but a seed of true believers, of whom Abraham, in the view of God, was the constituted father. In the first instance, Ishmael is rejected, and all the other children of Abraham passed over in silence; Isaac remains the only seed to inherit and to entail the promise. Again, as a still more striking proof, that the word of promise discriminated a particular seed, and addressed not the children of the flesh universally, the Apostle instances the cases of Jacob and Esau. The first of these is chosen of God, and invested with the promised blessing; the other is rejected, and that, in circumstances, as he points out to us, which plainly show, that of the descendants of the patriarchs, God, according to his will and pleasure, would make some, and not others, to be counted to Abraham, for "a seed," in a spiritual sense; to be "the children of God."

It is evident therefore, that the Apostle means to assert that Jacob "was counted" for one of "the" spiritual "seed," was "a child of God;" and that Esau, though one of "the children" of Abraham, "according to the flesh," was "not a child of God," nor "counted for the seed;" and moreover, that it was the election of God, and no merit or demerit in the parties, which made this difference between them. It follows, that, whatever these prophecies may refer to *besides*, if we admit that the Apostle understood them, they do refer most certainly to Jacob and Esau personally: nay more, are quoted by the Apostle, with this reference alone. For though in these prophecies, as they stand in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, a doom was certainly pronounced which affected very materially the posterity of Jacob and Esau; and the children of the former were elected to privileges,

from the inheritance of which the children of the latter were excluded; yet the Apostle does not quote the prophecies in this sense. That were in fact to overturn his own argument. Because, if what was prognosticated of the respective posterities of the persons mentioned in the prophecies, were the object in view, it would prove that the children of the flesh, as far at least as the children of Israel were concerned, were counted for the seed. But the Apostle's argument goes to prove that the reverse is the case; that "they are not all Israel who are of Israel."

With respect to the national privileges, and the pre-eminence which was given to Jacob and denied to Esau, as the representatives of their respective seeds, it would not stand true, that they were not all *Israel who were of Israel*. The privileges in question had been enjoyed by the children of the flesh, and have just been enumerated as possessed by those very Israelites, whose rejection from being the children of God, the Apostle is now deploring, while, at the same time, he proves that rejection not contrary to the promises made to the fathers.

We may therefore safely conclude, that the Apostle does not speak so much of the posterity, as of the persons of Jacob and Esau; and that he knew the prophecies, he quotes in support of his argument, not to refer alone to that posterity; and, consequently, that it is certain he does speak of the eternal state of Jacob and Esau; at least, of what, in the present circumstances of human nature, involved their eternal state: since that grace and gift is bestowed on Jacob, and withheld from Esau, as it had been before bestowed on Isaac, and withheld from Ishmael, without which, as well Jacob as Esau, Isaac as Ishmael, would in the just judgment of God perish everlastingly.

The statement, however, given by the author afore

referred to, of the conclusion which in this case must follow, is by no means just and fair: "Appointing the person of Esau to eternal misery by a mere act of sovereignty, without regard to any thing done or to be done by him to deserve it." For the rejection of a person in the view of an election to justification by grace, and to eternal life, as the gift of God, does not, most certainly, imply the condemnation and assignment of that person to eternal misery without respect to his deserts. It implies no more than this, that, with respect to such a person, no extraordinary privilege and supernatural endowment being vouchsafed, justice is permitted to take its course. A being with bad and sinful propensities is, indeed, permitted to exist, and to earn "the wages of sin," and "to eat the fruit of his own doings," which is eternal death. Here is the only difficulty in the interpretation given; and it is a difficulty which attends every other interpretation, if fairly examined.

Not, however, that the opposers of the gospel will be satisfied with this statement. *That* we are not to expect. They will argue, that such a treatment of two infants, not yet born, charges God with injustice and partiality. The Apostle indeed prepares us for such an objection.

Ver. 14. "What shall we say then, is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." "What!" the Apostle supposes an objector to insinuate, "Do you charge God with injustice, that he should make so partial a distinction, in the destinies of these children, yet unborn?" An injustice it appears to the objector. But such an inference the Apostle rejects with abhorrence; "God forbid!" Does he, however, either explain away or qualify the statement he had made, and which appeared to lead to this conclusion? By no means. He appeals to a declaration made by God to Moses, which asserts, in the plainest terms, the same offensive truth: that, in selecting out of mankind the

objects of his mercy, God is guided only by his sovereign will and pleasure.

Ver. 15. "For he saith to Moses*, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Upon the strength of this declaration, accordingly the Apostle hesitates not to draw afresh the obnoxious inference, which, in the mistaken notions of his opponents, seemed to charge God with unrighteousness.

Ver. 16. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."

That is, observe! the privilege of being "an Israelite indeed,"—"a child of God,"—"an heir of the righteousness by faith," and "of the world to come," promised to Abraham. The privilege to which Jacob was elected, and to which Esau was not chosen,—a privilege which is equivalent to God's "mercy," and "grace" spoken of to Moses; this privilege is "not of him that willeth or of him that runneth." It is not the exercise of any choice or self-determining power of man, that lays hold of the benefit. Neither is it a prize, to be contested, by the exertion of any human powers whatever; but its attainment is to be ascribed, wholly, and solely, to the free grace and mercy of God. "Whom he foreknew, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son: moreover, whom he predestinated, them he also called." This is that "purpose of God according to election"—"not of works, but of Him that calleth," which was evidenced in God's treatment of Jacob and Esau. The Apostle proceeds—

Ver. 17. "For the scripture saith to Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."

The connexion of this passage with what goes before,

* "Ecce etiam Mosi dixit."—*Syr.*

though at first sight perhaps somewhat obscure, a little pains will set in a very obvious point of view. The word rendered, “For*,” cannot in this passage be understood in its usual signification, as assigning a cause or reason for what had gone before. For what St. Paul says of Pharaoh is certainly neither reason nor proof, nor has indeed immediate reference to any thing he had previously mentioned. But in St. Paul’s rapid style, *For* sometimes relates to what is understood, and which is to be supplied from the tenour of the discourse†.”

Now, in the passage before us, St. Paul is treating of the supposed injustice implied in what he had said respecting the election of Jacob and rejection of Esau, in regard of those special mercies of which he had been speaking. The tenour of the foregoing discourse will therefore supply something of this sort to be understood as referred to by, *For*, ($\Gamma\alpha\epsilon$): “If you object to the statement of God’s selecting the objects of his grace, without regard to their own merits, what then will you say to God’s selecting monuments of his special vengeance, as well as of his special grace, by a mere act of sovereignty? Such, however, is the fact!” “*For* the Scripture says to Pharaoh. For this very purpose have I raised thee up, to show in thee my power, and that my name might be published in all the world‡”.

* “ $\Gamma\alpha\epsilon$.”

† Parkhurst.

‡ Doddridge gives much the same connexion and sentiment, by rendering “ $\gamma\alpha\epsilon$,” “moreover.” Macknight renders it “besides.” But there are no sufficient authorities for thus rendering the word; and by so doing we quite lose the style of St. Paul. We may observe further, that this unwarranted liberty in translating the Greek particles, every where adopted by the last-mentioned commentator, greatly disturbs the sense of St. Paul! Permit him but to change *illative* into *causal*, and *causal* into *illative*; *causal* into *adversative*, and *adversative* into *causal*; *illative* into *suppositive*, and *suppositive* into *illative*; and any sense whatever may be brought out of his author.

Pharaoh, we are here taught, was raised up to his eminent station in that time and place; and was invested with suitable energies of mind and body, with the special design of his being opposed to God, interposing to protect his people. His unbroken and obstinate spirit had a *hardness* communicated to it, to enable it to stand the brunt of the divine displeasure, miraculously discovered; and to hold out long enough, to afford an opportunity for the invisible Ruler of the universe to display his power. This struggle was to be left on record, as a memorial for all ages and nations: that men⁴, reading of "the marvellous things he did in the sight of their forefathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan," might learn to conceive highly of the power of God, and might mark the effectual assistance which he is able, at all times, to afford to his persecuted and injured people.

Now, it was an *act of sovereignty* which "raised up" Pharaoh to this station, and maintained him there, in circumstances so extraordinary. It was for no particular crime of Pharaoh's, nor for any malignity in his nature beyond that of other men, that he was raised so this dreadful pre-eminence! Had it been the pleasure of God, Pharaoh, with the same natural propensity and moral disposition, might have run his course, comparatively speaking, harmlessly, in the obscurity of private life. Affliction or servitude might either have softened or curbed his proud spirit, so that he had not been conspicuous beyond others in guilt: or he might have reigned, and reigned in Egypt, without meeting with circumstances to have called forth such horrid depravity. Nay, according to the usual constitution of human nature, tyrant as he was, he had been awed into subjection by the power of the Divine Being so visibly displayed against him.

But, "God hardened his heart." By which expression,

we are not to understand, that God instilled wickedness and rebellion into his heart—that were to make God the author of sin : nor ought we to receive that interpretation, which represents God, as so managing his judgments and their intermissions, as to tempt Pharaoh to go on in his sin ; for God tempteth no man. What is evidently meant by the expression of “hardening his heart,” is, that God endowed him with an extraordinary degree of animal courage and strength of mind.

Pharaoh had not, in immediate consequence of his *hardiness* or obduracy, any more sinfulness in his heart than he had previously, but he *dared to do more* : and we see him undismayed amidst the awful signs of the opposed Divinity which he witnessed ; though it is probable, that any one of these prodigies, if but imagined, in ordinary circumstances, would have been sufficient to have affected him with the most superstitious fears. But Pharaoh continues firm in his wicked purpose, and stands forth the avowed antagonist of the Almighty.

The reflection, indeed, cannot but occur to us, that, in respect of mankind in general, the degree of guilt which they contract in life, and with which they will appear before their Judge, depends not on any difference in their measure of participating in the common corruption ; but, on their situation in life, the incitements they meet with, and their endowments of mind and body. There are situations and circumstances, all will acknowledge, which have a visible effect in *hardening* a sinner’s heart, which *steel* him against the feelings of remorse and compunction, which encourage him even to madness in giving vent to the evil propensities of his heart ; so that he sins with a high hand, and seems to trample with defiance upon the laws of God and man.

When we contemplate such a character, we cannot say,

indeed, that other circumstances would have given him a "new heart," and have reversed the state of his affections in the sight of God, "who trieth the reins and the heart." Yet, had it pleased the Sovereign Disposer of all events, that such a person, instead of unbounded affluence and power, had possessed an humbler station; that, instead of health, infirmity had been his portion; that, instead of being a man of great animal courage, self-possession, and confidence in his own abilities, he had been of a fearful, diffident spirit, and of mean and unattractive endowments; that, instead of having passed his youth undisciplined, or fostered in extravagance and lawlessness, he had borne the yoke of discipline in his youth, and bowed his neck to instruction; that his early vices had met with chastisement, instead of impunity; that he had grown up among virtuous and decent connexions, instead of becoming the early prey of the vicious: on these suppositions, it will be readily allowed, he might have been a very different man.

We cannot, I say, affirm that this diversity of circumstances, would either have altered the nature of human depravity, or have done the work of divine grace in the soul; but it would certainly have had a great influence on the degree of the man's actual guilt; and if he must reap the fruit of his own doings, which we are assured he must, on his condition in the eternal world.

In the ordering, however, of these circumstances of life, we are bound to acknowledge the hand of God, and bow to his SOVEREIGNTY. It is by *his* permission that the sinner even exists and acts; on his permission it depends, what measure of iniquity he fills up. It is He "that setteth" the proud and prosperous sinner "in slippery places, and then casteth him down and destroyeth him *."

* Ps. lxxiii. 18.

But to return to the Apostle's argument. From the case of Pharaoh, added to that of Jacob and Esau, he leads us to this twofold conclusion :

Ver. 18. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy ; and whom he will, he hardeneth."

However it might contradict the preconceived notions of mankind, St. Paul permits us to require no other rule of action in the almighty and only Potentate, except "the counsel of his own will;" both in his election of some men to be partakers of his special grace, and in his raising up others, to become signal examples of the divine wrath. Yet in neither case will God, we may be well assured, do any thing inconsistent with justice and equity.

How justice was reconciled—at what *immense cost!* in the gratuitous conveyance of mercy and glory unto the chosen of God, we have already been occupied in considering. With respect to the rejection of an Esau, or, what is more, the raising up and hardening of a Pharaoh, no violation of strictest justice can be alleged. They are but rewarded according to their doings. The permission of evil, which the Almighty hates and punishes, is the only mystery ; and it is a mystery which bewilders the finite understanding of man—for, for *God* to permit, is, to will, to supply the necessary powers to perform. And this mystery remains to be unravelled in accounting for the existence and final misery of every individual sinner, under every system that can be imagined. This subject, however, as far as it is lawful for us to argue upon so deep a matter, we shall resume in our next.

LECTURE XXI.

CHAPTER THE NINTH.—FROM THE NINETEENTH VERSE
TO THE END OF THE CHAPTER.

IN proving that God's promise to Abraham and his seed had not failed, although the multitude of his natural descendants were not predestinated and called, the Apostle had shown that the spiritual intent of the promise and covenant never embraced the "children after the flesh," but only a particular seed according to the election of grace. Thus, in the family of Abraham, Isaac and not Ishmael, is called: in the family of Isaac, a circumstance still more striking is remarked. Of the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau, the former alone is approved to be an inheritor of the blessing and promise; and that, not for any goodness or merit in him above his brother, but merely through the gratuitous election of God, declared indeed before he was born.

These assertions of the Apostle, however, would strike certain objectors, with whose mode of reasoning he was well acquainted, as arguing unrighteousness in God. This insinuation St. Paul repels with abhorrence; but, at the same time, he enforces, from another scripture, the same truth which he had inferred from the case of Isaac and Jacob, namely, that God, in selecting the objects of his mercy and grace, is guided only by his sovereign will; and that the benefit in question was not the recompense of services, but a favour freely bestowed. Nay, what, according to the objector's notions, would appear still more contrary to divine justice, the Apostle showed further, from what is said in Scripture respecting Pharaoh, that in selecting and raising up the objects of his special ven-

geance, as well as of his special grace, there is, what we are obliged to resolve into a mere act of sovereignty on the part of God. The Apostle brought us therefore to this twofold conclusion: "So then he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth." Again St Paul anticipates the objection which would be urged.

Ver. 19. "Thou wilt then say to me, Why does he yet find fault, for who has resisted his will?"

And we find in fact, that the thought will frequently start in the mind of the inquirer: "If divine grace is bestowed on some and withheld from others; especially, if the sins and transgressions of men are so under the direction and control of the Almighty, that they but serve his purposes; how is it, that such blame and censure attaches to the sinner, and that such dreadful judgments are denounced against him?"—"If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say then, is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?"

This, it will be perceived, is no other than the difficulty, so generally felt, in attempting to reconcile, the responsibility of man, as a moral agent, with a preordination of all events, after the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

This preordination the Apostle had asserted, and proved from the Scriptures. From the Scriptures, at the same time, is evinced, the complete responsibility of man as a moral agent:—God's finding fault; his remonstrances with transgressors; the declaration of their amenableness to a just judgment; the manner in which the gospel addresses them, and bewails their hardness and their impenetrable heart, unquestionably, establishes this point. The proud wisdom of rebellious man, indeed, almost dares to charge the oracles of God with inconsistency on this head; or, what is nearly as bad, takes upon itself, either to explain

away, or to invalidate, one part of the Scripture truth, in order to establish the other; and, in apologizing for him before his creatures, to make God consistent with himself!

Such is the wicked presumption of man!—Such, we may lament to add, is the officious folly of some who mean to be the advocates of revelation: and the weak and imprudent defence of a friend is as dishonourable often, as the open accusation of an enemy. In this case, the one as well as the other seems to have implied, that, according to the Scriptural account of man and of the laws of his creation, which states, that he is responsible for all his actions; at the same time, that there is a predestination of God, having a paramount rule over all things, must be evidently wrong, as implicating God in the charge of partiality and injustice.

The answer of the Apostle in the subsequent verses, in the first place, charges upon the controvertists their great impiety, in presuming to arraign the plans of God and take up an argument against their Maker.

Ver. 20. “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?”

As though he should say, What, though it is so, that no one has resisted the will of God, but has in every point accomplished that and only that, which “he determined before to be done:”—and what, if God, notwithstanding, finds fault, and will bring every work into judgment, and punish every transgression of his holy law: will you take upon you to say, that this is wrong; and that it convicts the moral government of God of unfairness and inconsistency? Remember what thou art! how totally unqualified to judge of the proceedings of the Omniscient—“THE ONLY WISE GOD!”—“It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?

The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea *.”

Such cautions should ever be impressed, as we noticed on a former occasion, on certain controversial writers, who presume to reason, *à priori*, from their supposed knowledge of the moral attributes of the Deity, and take upon them to argue against the doctrines of grace and predestination; though these doctrines, rightly understood, are supported by clear warrants of Holy Scripture. For, it is on *this* ground chiefly, that many reject them—their inconsistency with the attributes of God; and, on the assumption of their implicating the almighty Judge in the charge of injustice and tyranny. “Shall mortal man be more just than God?—shall a man be more pure than his Maker?”—“Wo to him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou? Or thy work, he hath no hands?†”

Let these considerations be deeply weighed by all persons, whatever be their learning or ability, who undertake either to speak or to write upon these subjects: lest, in their zeal for what they suppose to be the truth, they should be betrayed into the impiety of taking up an argument against God; and, perhaps, of stigmatizing, with opprobrious terms, measures, which it will be found that God has avowed.

Next, the Apostle seems to meet in his reply, the charge of partiality, or favouritism, as some profanely speak, which appears to lie against the Almighty, in the above-stated doctrines. And we must admit, that in one point of view there is partiality and favour shown by the great Sovereign towards the objects of his election of grace; that to this partiality and favour, are entirely owing, in fact, the distinctions which they possess above others.

* Job xi. 8.

† Isaiah lxxv. 9.

And what is *grace*, but another name for favour? “By grace ye are saved.”—“Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated.” St. Paul does not deny the charge, for what is his reply?

Ver. 21. “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another to dishonour?”

Ver. 22. “What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

Ver. 23. “And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?”

Such power, does the Almighty claim and exercise over his creatures! As a potter, out of the same materials, makes one vessel to an honourable and excellent use, and another to a use esteemed mean and base: so the Divinity, from the same materials, or rather out of nothing, creates one being with the destinies of an angel, and another with qualifications fitted for the lowest capacity, either in the rational or irrational creation. Nay more: since sin is permitted—*who* shall be left to be its voluntary victims—and *who*, established, or rescued by divine power, shall be sanctified in holiness, happens not fortuitously; the will of the sovereign Disposer must be acknowledged, and the manifestation of his glory, in his unsearchable wisdom, must be contemplated as the end of all things.

There is no other first cause, moreover, why, out of the same mass, human nature, an Abraham or a Pharaoh, a Jacob or an Esau, are raised up and appointed for such different purposes. In their original nature they differed not; the whole, therefore, must be referred to the power of God, to do what he will with his own! “What, if God, willing to show his power and make his wrath known, endured with much long suffering, vessels of wrath

fitted," compacted, or prepared "for destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his grace, on vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory!" What, if God has some special purpose to answer, in the present structure of human nature, relating as well to the display of his power, as to the manifestation of his grace! The Almighty has, indeed, in bringing a wicked race into being, and bearing with them, till they have, in their various degrees, filled up the measure of their iniquities, afforded an opportunity for the illustration of his great *power and wrath*. But more especially, in electing, out of the same wicked race, a peculiar people, and in leading them from such depths of sin and misery, through such a series of mercies, as the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ embraces, has he afforded an exhibition, not of his power only, nor of his common love and bounty, which the excellent creatures of his hands, perhaps in millions of worlds, enjoy, but of "THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE." What then, if this earth is chosen, as a scene, for the display of a particular dispensation, both of grace and of vengeance, a display, of which, though you cannot see the propriety, contemplating this world alone, will, nevertheless, form the wonder and admiration of countless worlds, in countless ages?

Shall we, "who are but of yesterday, and know nothing," pretend to judge of the plan? What though we do not approve the plan! hath not God the right to do what he pleases with his own? And may he not be trusted to do all things well, whatever in his proceedings seems to us at present inexplicable?

With respect to the *origin of evil*, no man could ever yet, upon an hypothesis, give a satisfactory account of it. So far is plain, it cannot be of God, as its author; it must arise from the defectibility of the creature. But that there should be place for it, and where it should take

place, cannot be against the will or separate from the designs of the Almighty. It is true, it did not originate here, among the sons of men; and this may be one reason that its origin is beyond the reach of human intellect to fathom. This only we know: God has permitted it to *extend* to us. Sin has entered into our world, to the destruction of thousands of the creatures of God! In our world, too, the remedy, which rescues from its ruinous power—the scheme of redemption, the plan of the riches of grace—is begun to be unfolded. “The Son of God hath appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”—“And to them that look for him, he will appear, a second time, without sin, unto salvation*.” Into what is now passing among us, we are told, “angels desire to look†:” and “that to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, is to be made known, by the church, the *manifold wisdom* of God‡.”

Without desiring, therefore, either to be “wise above what is written,” or to “intrude into those things which we have not seen,” let us simply confine ourselves to the statement, here given, of this mysterious subject. “What if God, willing to show his power and make known his wrath, endured, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his grace on vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared for glory?” Considering this, as a general outline of God’s plan and design in his present dealings with mankind, let us carefully attend to the information it conveys; and give glory to God.

Mankind in its present fallen state is the subject before us. In the first place, we cannot but remark the different language used, respecting “the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,” and, “the vessels of mercy, which God hath afore prepared for glory.” With respect to the vessels of wrath, it is only said, that God, “to show his wrath and

* Heb. ix. 26—28.

† Eph. iii. 10.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 12.

power, endured them, with much long-suffering ;” a language, which—with whatever difficulties the subject may be attended—cannot be construed to mean, that, by an irresistible fatality, God has made men wicked, that he may make them fit objects of punishment.

The language used respecting the vessels of mercy, indeed, is clear, and every expression bespeaks most strongly a salvation not of works nor of human endeavours, but of grace, “ grace freely vouchsafed.” All “ according to the working of his mighty power”—“ the power that worketh in us.” The act of sovereignty, in the former case, is not a doom, that such persons shall be wicked ; but the *sufferance* of God—if you have respect to their *wickedness* merely ; and his will that such should live and move and have their being IN HIM—as creature in the creator—should fill up the measure of their iniquity, and experience the effects of the just indignation of the Deity. The sovereignty, in the latter case, is indeed entire, absolute, and efficient. God had “ afore prepared for glory” those “ vessels of mercy” on whom he is now “ showing the riches of his grace :” the act of the creature does not mingle itself with this : ALL is of God. God is indeed equally the *Maker* of the vessels made to dishonour, as of the vessels made to honour. And it is elsewhere written, “ that the Lord has made all things for himself ; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil *.” But the difference of the expressions, we have noted, in the verse before us,—“ vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,”—“ vessels of mercy whom he had afore prepared for glory,” seems evidently intended to convey the information, that God is, in a different manner, the framer of vessels of wrath, and of vessels of mercy, *as such* ; though both alike owe their being to him as a common Creator : and “ *known unto God* are all his works from the beginning of the world.”

* Prov. xvi. 4.

Let us keep close to the allusion here made use of, of the potter and the clay. We speak, first, in respect of the vessel of wrath. The mass is corrupt, out of which the vessel is formed; when the potter has "compacted it, put it together, and finished it according to his art*," he disapproves of it; it is "a vessel of wrath;"—a vessel with which he is displeasèd; fit only for destruction, or for some mean, dishonourable use. Thus the divine Framer of all things, so long as he is pleasèd to give life and being to the offspring of fallen Adam, bestows his excellent workmanship on corrupt materials. The being produced is a vessel, in whom he can have no pleasure. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me:" yet, doubtless, "God made us in the womb, his hand fashioned us there†." Notwithstanding, however, we are all "by nature children of wrath;" objects of the merited displeasure of a just and holy God; fit only for destruction; certainly, not "meet for the Master's use."

If it be asked, "Why does God find fault," since, it is his sovereign will and pleasure, to bestow his workmanship on such base materials? What necessity to propagate from the tainted stock of Adam?—Why multiply such a race of beings? Here, we must stop. Such is his sovereign will: And who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?

An useful admonition, however, and what perhaps the Apostle had in his view, in the above allusion, is that which the prophet Jeremiah was taught, in the house of the potter, whither he was sent to receive instruction. "Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold he wrought a work on the wheels, and the vessel that he made of clay, was marred in the hand of the potter: so

* Κατηρησιαμενα. "Apta." *Vulg.* נבדן *Syr.*

† Ps. li. 5. Job. xxxi. 15.

he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel*." In accommodating this passage—intended to describe God's providential dealings with *nations*—to illustrate his conduct towards mankind, in their original construction and his subsequent disposal of them, we may remark, that human nature, considered in the abstract, was marred in Adam. Man is not now that vessel at first designed to be formed by the hands of the Creator. "It was marred in his hands! So he has made it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the Creator to make it."

We must all be sensible, indeed, that, strictly speaking, God cannot be disappointed in his aim; nor can his workmanship be spoiled in his hand, by any accident or defect, which he had not foreseen, and which he could not have prevented. The corruption of human nature in Adam must be admitted by all, who have worthy notions of God, to have been foreseen and permitted—foreseen and permitted by Him, who, had he pleased, was all-powerful and all-wise to have prevented it. This, however, as we have, all along, been careful to remark, is the point in these inquiries, where, it becomes us, to stop and to bow to the sovereign will and superior wisdom of the Creator.

But, as we remarked on this same subject before, God himself allows us, in his holy word, to speak of man, as a work, which does not answer the immediate purpose, he had in view in his creation of him; as a work with which the Maker is displeased, and which he abstains from destroying, and bears with, for other special considerations. How strong and impressive is the language of Scripture! "And it repented the Lord that he had made man upon

* Jer. xviii.

the earth, and it grieved him at the heart*!" This declaration, we all understand, cannot be strictly true, literally taken. "God is not man, that he should repent." None but an imperfect being can see cause to *repent* of what he has done.

It is evidently, therefore, a *false position* used in condescension to our defective understandings; but will serve, we need not doubt, to lead us to *approximate* to the truth; as near, perhaps, as our poor, *childish* notions can be brought to comprehend the subject. We may therefore argue upon it, and draw our deductions. They will be sufficiently correct for all practical purposes: and we must be content to own the imperfection of our understanding, "till that" knowledge "which is in part, is done away. and that" knowledge "which is perfect, shall come †."

Such then is man: a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction, with which, for purposes (speaking after the manner of men) foreign to the original design of his formation, God is pleased, with much long-suffering, to bear more or less, as it seemeth good to him. "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil, continually ‡;" and, "when sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil §." According, therefore, to the capacities with which he is formed, and the sphere of action allowed him, he runs that length in sin which Providence permits, and fills up the measure predetermined of God. He perishes, either undistinguished among "the many" who go the broad way to destruction, or pre-eminent in wickedness, as a Pharaoh, a Judas, a murderer of the Lord of Glory, or an apostate doing "despite to the Spirit of Grace!"

The motive which we are permitted to ascribe to the Almighty Sovereign, in his toleration and upholding of

* Gen. vi. 6.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

‡ Gen. vi. 5.

§ Eccle. viii. 11.

human nature in its present condition, and particularly in his long-suffering with hardened sinners, is, that he may discover his power and his wrath. This is the purpose of dishonour to which he applies “the vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction.” It is thus that the wickedness of man is made subservient and conducive to the honour and glory of God. For this destruction is “under his hand.”

Another end which the Almighty has in view, in his present dispensations with mankind, is, we are told, “to make known *the riches of his grace* on the vessels of mercy.” And most certainly, the permission of sin, the fitting up of mankind, so to speak, in their present circumstances, does afford an opportunity for the display not only of the wrath and power of Almighty God, but also of his grace and mercy: such an opportunity, as, in fact, his creation, in a state of purity and perfection of that sort, could not possibly have afforded: for, both wrath and mercy suppose guilt in the subjects on which they are exercised. And there can be no more of *mercy*, strictly speaking, in preparing the chosen vessels for glory, than there would have been of *justice* in their being left to destruction.

We learn indeed, that there are other objects of wrath besides the sinners of mankind, even the “angels who sinned and kept not their first estate;” but, as far as appears from revelation, this world only, in which the eternal Son of God appeared, to serve and suffer, and to die as an expiatory sacrifice, is the stage chosen for the exhibition of the riches of the grace of God. No wonder, then, that angels—“elect angels” desire to look into these things! and that the whole creation is described as big with expectation, earnestly desiring the manifestation of the sons of God!

Does it appear to the human reasoner, that, if only

grace and mercy had been admitted, the scheme had been more perfect, and more worthy of God? It is enough that God has thought otherwise.

With respect to the vessels of mercy more particularly; these are formed by the divine Maker out of the same materials as the vessels of wrath. "They are by nature children of wrath, even as others." Out of the same lump, one vessel is made to honour, and another to dishonour. For, both wrath and grace, as we have just observed, are exercised towards the same description of characters. Treated according to their deserts, indignation and wrath were their portion. But these are "vessels of mercy," selected by the Almighty Sovereign as the objects of his compassion, and "appointed to obtain mercy."

It is mercy, not merit, absolute or comparative, which makes the difference between the vessels formed to honour, and the vessels formed to dishonour. The potter has tempered afresh the clay, he has found means to counteract the impurity of his materials, or, more strictly speaking, to accomplish a transmutation from the baser to the purer; so that, out of the same mass whence the vessels of wrath are fitted and compacted, are prepared also vessels of mercy for glory; "vessels sanctified, and meet for the Master's use;" prepared for every good work: to be finally "partakers of the divine nature."

In what these preparations consist; how mercy rejoices against judgment; how the corruption of human nature is counteracted; and the vessel of mercy, by being transformed and made partaker of the divine holiness, is made meet for glory, has been already unfolded in a former portion of this Epistle. We had a summary of these preparations in the verses which formed the subject of our last Lecture, which I shall here repeat in the words of the seventeenth Article of our church, an article evidently

composed from that passage, and the one now before us: “Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, he has constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he has chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they that be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God’s purpose by his Spirit working in them in due season; they, through grace, obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.”

To proceed now with the remaining verses of this chapter.

The Apostle, we remember, had before shown that all the natural descendants of Abraham or of Jacob were not the true Israelites, and heirs according to the promise; he proceeds now to show, and maintains the fact from the ancient prophets, that not only were not all who were of Israel, Israel; but also, that those who were counted for the seed would not be found *exclusively* among that nation.

Ver. 24. “Even us whom he has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.”

The fact of this extension of the kingdom of God, we know the Apostles themselves, for a long time, admitted with difficulty, and saw with astonishment the first instances of its accomplishment. They exclaim with surprise, “Then, also, has God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name!!” But now the Apostle to the Gentiles is enlightened to point out to the

Jews, from their own scriptures, that such was to be the case: a remnant both of Jew and other nations conjointly was to be made inheritors of the promises given to the fathers.

Ver. 25. "As he says also in Osee, I will call them my people which were not my people; and her beloved which was not beloved.

Ver. 26. "And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God."

The prophecy of Hosea here referred to, clearly foretold the abandonment of the church of Israel, as "a wife of whoredoms," the mother of a spurious breed, whom God had called Lo-ruhamah, "unpitied," and Lo-ammi, "no people of mine." It foretold, at the same time, that there should at that very time be a *reserve* of a part; and at a future period a *resumption* of the whole people. They were yet to be called "Ammi," and "Ruhamah." Finally, the Jewish church, the "woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress," was to be betrothed unto God for ever, in righteousness and in judgment, in loving-kindness and in mercies."

The Jews unwillingly referred to this prophecy in their altercation with our Lord, recorded in the eighth of John: "We are not born in fornication, we have one father, even God." But Jesus rejects the claim with indignation, and pronounces them "the spurious breed." Yet, nevertheless, a remnant were saved, were called by the gospel, and acknowledged for the seed.

The prophet intimates, moreover, that there should be, at that same time, another ingathering of people, distinct from *this* remnant. "And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said to them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the sons of the living God:"

which words we are taught to apply to the calling of the Gentiles into the church of God. This event the Apostle points out still more clearly in the prophecy of Isaiah.

Ver. 27. "Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.

Ver. 28. "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth."

The original promise to Abraham was, "that his seed should be as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea-shore, innumerable." Though this promise would be faithfully accomplished, yet a small remnant only of the natural Israel would be saved: "for God would finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work would the Lord make in the land." This part of the prophecy, though the language of the original is deemed obscure to us at present, has a plain general reference to the just decree of God, which was about to consume the nation of the Jews: "that *severity* of God," as Paul, in the twenty-second verse of the eleventh chapter, bids us remark, "towards them that fell."

The other quotation from the same prophet corroborates this explanation.

Ver. 29. "And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha."

The casting off of the bulk of the Jewish nation is here clearly foretold: yet it appeared from the prophecies,—and this was the mystery which was now unfolded by the calling of the Gentiles,—that, though a very small remnant of the natural descendants of the patriarchs, would, at the season referred to be saved; yet at that very time the children of Israel would be exceedingly numerous. This

could no otherwise happen than by the calling of the Gentiles.

Ver. 30. "What shall we say then? that the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness?"

Ver. 31. "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness."

What say we then? May we venture to draw this conclusion, "that the Gentiles," that is, the called from among the Gentiles, "which did not pursue or endeavour after righteousness;" who, living without God, had no desire to serve him, nor to obtain the reward of his favour; that they, notwithstanding, "have obtained righteousness," and won the prize for which they did not run? This the Apostle means to assert. The righteousness, however, which the Gentiles had obtained, we are to remember, was not of works, but of faith, as explained before. But Israel, who did run for the prize, had failed in the pursuit. Israel, as the Apostle allows more fully in the next chapter, did certainly zealously pursue this object, and did run for the prize of righteousness, but had lost the race; while, as the fact was, others who entered not into the lists at all,—for this, comparatively speaking, was a true description of the religious character of the Gentile nations,—received the prize as a gift of grace. "The Jews attained not the law of righteousness;" that law or direction, which could put them in possession of righteousness.

Ver. 32. "Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works of the law. But they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.

Ver. 33. "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

Why did not Israel obtain what they sought? Because they sought it not as the righteousness of faith, but went about to establish a righteousness of their own by the works of the law. As we have been often called upon to note in the course of the Epistle, this was the fatal error of the Jews: they despised and overlooked the calls to repentance; they considered not the testimony which the law and the prophets bore to the righteousness of faith; and therefore they failed of the end which they sought; and the passages here referred to by the Apostle, Isaiah viii. 14, and xxviii. 16, were to the Jews incontestable evidence, that, with respect to the nation at large, the promised Saviour, on whom men were to believe for righteousness and salvation, would be rejected by the two houses of Israel, to their ruin and destruction. Which event had accordingly come to pass, as we shall read more fully in a following Lecture.

LECTURE XXII.

CHAPTER THE TENTH.—FROM THE FIRST TO THE LAST VERSE.

THE same subject, with which the last chapter closed, still occupies the Apostle in the chapter upon which we are now entering: the fatal error of the Jews in mistaking the design of their law, and in rejecting the end of all their divine institutions—the promised Messiah.

Ver. 1. “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved.”

Though obliged, by his office, to carry the unpleasant tidings to his countrymen, of the call of the Gentiles, and of their own rejection from being the people of God; he again protests his earnest solicitude and prayer for their salvation. He knew, indeed, the awful doom to which they were appointed; nor is it possible to conceive that St. Paul thought he could alter the decree, or change the plans of God. This hindered not however, but that he should pray for them, according to the dictates of a tender and affectionate heart. It is, indeed, important to remark, that the decrees and predetermined counsels of God, even where we have a general intimation concerning them in scripture, are not revealed as a rule of action to us; so that our knowledge of them ought, either to restrain any endeavours to which charity impels; or will warrant, or excuse, any exertions of our powers contrary to the law, and written word of God.

Though we may see reason to conclude from scripture, that the world will perish, as it lies, in wickedness, yet our duty is, as far as in us lies, to save the world, and endeavour to turn many to righteousness, that “at any

rate we may save some." And it savours not of the wisdom which is from above, when the doctrine of God's predestination is so impressed upon the mind, as to shut up the bowels of compassion from perishing sinners, and to render men indifferent in promoting and extending the means of grace. "God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." This is the rule for our exertion, whether in prayer at the throne of grace, or in the employment of whatever talents may have been committed to our trust.

Ver. 2. "For I bear them record"—or, "I bear them witness indeed, that they have a zeal of God;"—or, as the expression may be understood—a very great zeal; "but not according to knowledge."

This testimony to their zeal, though ignorant and mistaken in its object, the Apostle seems to bear, as attesting a circumstance, in some degree, favourable to the Jewish character: and, certainly, the zeal of the superstitious devotee, unprofitable, and often mischievous as it is, is, in itself considered, far less unreasonable, and less to be reprobated, than coldness and indifference in those who pretend to admit sound principles:—far better than the effrontery of those who boldly aver, that they care nothing about religious principles at all!

At the same time, however, we may learn, from the case before us, of how vast importance it is, to have right notions of religion! how little zeal can accomplish, without knowledge! how very far it is, as some would seem to suppose, from being able to atone for unsound doctrine! The merciful Jesus himself was constrained to pronounce concerning some of these characters, that though "they compassed sea and land to make one proselyte," yet they made him "twofold more the child of hell than themselves*."

* Matt. xxiii. 15.

Ver. 3. "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

It was here, that the deficiency of knowledge lay in these "masters of Israel." "God's righteousness," "even the righteousness which is of God by faith," though so sufficiently taught in the law and the prophets, they were unacquainted with. They regarded their religion merely as a system of moral and positive duties, by the observance of which, they would as, the reward of their services, or at least as the promised return for their fulfilment of stipulated conditions, become entitled to the award of righteousness.

The consequences which would ensue from this fatal mistake, are obvious. With these prepossessions and notions of religion, they could be no other than averse from the righteousness of God:—that righteousness as we have seen, consisted in the justification of a penitent through faith in Christ. The law, in its lawful use, intended by its holy precepts to convince of sin, had been evidently a most useful preparatory to the reception of the gospel; but, as they had perverted it—regarding it as a practicable method of justifying themselves in the sight of God, it would of course have a tendency to render them insensible to the necessity of such a righteousness as the gospel revealed. Nay more, as the gospel proclaimed aloud the insufficiency of that righteousness which was *their* pride and glory; they would resist its claims to be of divine authority, with all the rancour of prejudice.

And we may observe, that, through the blindness of the human heart, the more glorious and luminous dispensation of the gospel itself, has been perverted in a similar manner. What, in point of fact, is Christianity, as taught and professed by numbers of nominal Christians, but, in their conceptions, a system of moral duties so accommo-

dated to the present circumstances of man, that he must now exert himself to establish, in the observance of its precepts, a righteousness of his own? Possessed of these sentiments, their very Christianity, if it must retain the name, is an hinderance to their submitting to the righteousness of God. And thus we see every day, that, among professed Christians, the cross of Christ is still "the stumbling-block," and "the rock of offence."

Ver. 4. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

How totally mistaken were the zealous disciples of Moses, respecting the end and design of their law! God, most certainly, did not cause the law to be promulgated, to encourage the notion, that men *could* acquire a righteousness of their own. The end of the law, as we have seen before, was that, by convincing of sin, and showing the necessity of some other method of justification, it might, as a schoolmaster, lead the broken-hearted sinner to Christ, that he might be justified by faith. This end, moreover, was constantly kept in view in all the institutions of the ceremonial law. The ceremonial law, indeed, was devised and intended to shadow and point out the remedy for that evil, which the moral law discovered but could not cure. It prefigured throughout "the sanctification of the Spirit, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." "The law made nothing perfect, but" *was* "the bringing in of a better hope."

The Apostle next adduces even Moses himself, as clearly describing and distinguishing between the two righteousnesses: that which "was by the works of the law;" and that which was "of faith."

Ver. 5. "For Moses describeth" or "Moses, indeed, describeth the righteousness which is of the law," *that the man that doeth those things shall live by them.*

This, as we have repeatedly had occasion to remark, is

the nature of the legal righteousness. This is the language with which every candidate for righteousness, by the works of the law, must be addressed: "This do, and thou shalt live." But Moses, as the Apostle goes on to show, refers also to another righteousness.

Ver. 6. "But the righteousness, which is of faith, speaketh in this wise: *Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven?* that is, to bring Christ down from above:

Ver. 7. "Or, *Who shall descend into the deep?* that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead*.

Ver. 8. "But what saith it? *The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart:* that is, the word of faith, which we preach.

Ver. 9. "That if thou confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Ver. 10. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

St. Paul had just given us Moses' description of the righteousness of the law; he now quotes another passage from the same writer, and observes: This is not the language of the righteousness of the law: This is plainly the language of the righteousness of faith. So that Moses is, himself, one of the prophets, who bears his testimony to this righteousness. Moses, we may observe, was not only sent to promulgate that law, which bears his name, but was himself "a preacher of the righteousness of faith." "If ye believed Moses," says our Lord, "ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me." In the passage here referred to, which we find in the xxxth chapter of Deuteronomy, with the comment of St. Paul to assist us, we

* "Et quis descendit in abyssum inferiorum לְהוֹרֹתָא דְּשִׁיל et eduxit Christum ex mortuis?"—*Syriac*.

discover a plain account of the righteousness of God by faith, without the works of the law,—of that righteousness, which the gospel was more fully to explain.

It appears from the latter part of the xxixth chapter, and from the beginning of the xxxth, that Moses is contemplating a time, when, for the breach of the legal covenant, the children of Israel would be dispersed abroad, and afflicted with all its threatened curses. Yet he foretells, that they would afterwards return in sincere penitence to their God, and would again be received into his favour. But by what means? Not by fulfilling the righteousness of the law they had transgressed; but in the sixth verse, Moses evidently glances upon the blessings of another covenant: “And the Lord will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live,” &c. And this, it appears, is the very same language which is held by subsequent prophets, respecting the accession of the Jews to the church of God in the latter days. It is the very language, in short, in which the covenant of grace is contrasted with the Mosaic covenant throughout the sacred writings.

Now, it was with reference to this event, that Moses uses these expressions, which St. Paul points out as the language not of the righteousness of the law but of the righteousness of faith: “for the commandment which I command thee this day is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say (in thine heart), Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us?” or, “pass for us beyond the sea,” that is, as the opposition to heaven above shows, and, as the Apostle guides us in the interpretation, “down into the abyss—

the invisible abode of spirits in the world beneath* :”
 “that we may hear it and do it. But the word is very
 nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart that thou mayest
 do it.”

The connexion of the passage, therefore, as well as the
 comment of the Apostle, forbids us to think that Moses,
 in this interesting language, is merely expatiating on the
 plainness of his law. The objects of this law, indeed, in
 its most important design, were but obscurely known till
 the time foretold in the former verse was come; this,
 Moses laments: “yet the Lord has not given you an
 heart to perceive, and eyes to see and ears to hear, unto
 this day †.”

The Apostle, also, gives us the same notion, when he
 reflects upon the circumstance of Moses casting a veil over
 his face, while he spake to the people ‡. That veil, he
 tells them, was yet upon the hearts of the people, and was
 removed only in their conversion to Christ. “I have
 written to Ephraim the great things of my law, but they
 were counted as a strange thing §. ” To use the language
 of another Prophet, “Thy judgments are far above out of
 their sight ||.” The language of Moses, therefore, in this
 place, it were fair to argue, must refer to some future dis-
 pensation; even to that period, when, as was foretold,
 “the eyes of the blind should see out of obscurity, and the
 ears of them that heard should not be dead ¶: the season
 when the Spirit should be poured upon them from on
 high, and “*life and immortality should be brought to
 light*” through the gospel.

This language of Moses, the Apostle points out to us,
 agrees exactly with the gospel dispensation. “That is,

* Compare Jonah, ii. 3; Matt. xii. 40; and Acts, ii. 31.

† Deut. xxix. 4. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 16, &c. § Hos. viii. 12.

|| Psalm x. 5.

¶ Isaiah, xxix. 18.

the word of faith which we preach, &c. &c. Did Israel but know the time of their visitation they would find a word nigh them in their mouth and in their hearts: even the preached word of the gospel, rendered the power of God unto salvation, and ingrafted by the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, in the confessor's heart. The words of Moses are, indeed, a lively description of the gospel method of salvation; how, by the preaching of the cross, God is pleased to save them that believe: how faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God: and how, by the hearing of faith, and not by the deeds of the law, the quickening Spirit would be obtained, and the heart filled with the light of life.

Were this gospel received, it would then be no longer a question, "who shall ascend for us into heaven?" that is, who shall bring down our long-expected Messiah, in hopes of whose appearing, "the ten tribes were serving God day and night?" They would have perceived their Saviour already come, and, in confessing the name of Jesus of Nazareth, would have saved their souls alive. It would then have been no longer a question in Israel, "Who shall descend into the deep," and explore for dying mortals, those "untried scenes which lie before them," and "show" to them "the path of life?" In the death of Christ, in his descent into hell, and in his glorious resurrection from the dead, they would have seen the way of life and immortality fully manifested, and have received a pledge which would have delivered them from the fear of death.

The great harvest of the Jewish nation, as we have observed before, the Apostle knew was not to be in that age; but he expected a first-fruits, "a remnant according to the election of grace." He therefore endeavours to show the testimony of Moses, in whom they trusted, to be the righteousness of faith.

"With the heart," the Apostle tells us, "man believes

unto righteousness." This he says in explanation of those words of Moses, "The word is nigh, in thy heart and in thy mouth." As we have seen on a former occasion, in inquiring into the nature of true faith, faith is not the mere credence of a testimony addressed to the outward senses; but an obeying of the call of the Holy Ghost addressed to the heart, whose fostering influence at that same moment cherishes a new being into life, and invests it with suitable powers and energies to receive, and cordially to embrace the truth.

When the word is *thus* sounded in his heart, with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation: "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." To "confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus," is to own the doctrines of his holy religion, and to maintain our allegiance to him, in spite of a gainsaying and persecuting world; not to be "ashamed of him and of his doctrines in the midst of a wicked and adulterous generation." The phrase also farther applies to the exercise of prayer, and to the offering of praise in the name of the Lord Jesus, both in the private devotions of the Christian life, and especially in the public ordinances of his church: for it is thus that the Christian "works out his salvation," renews his strength, and rekindles his heavenly affections, "has his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." In short, we learn from the precept, "Do all things *in the name of the Lord Jesus;*" and from the admonition, that to desert the duties of our station, is "to deny the faith," that every part of practical religion may be generally termed, "confessing the Lord Jesus." But to proceed.

Ver. 11. "For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed."

No one that believeth on him, "that precious cornerstone, which was to be laid in Zion," that same stone, which should prove a stumbling-stone to both houses of

Israel: no one, the scripture assures us, that believeth in him, shall be ashamed, confounded, or disappointed in his trust, and in the hope he has built on him*.

The word "*whosoever*" is to be considered as emphatic here; whosoever, without any restriction. The following verses are the Apostle's comment upon this passage of Isaiah :

Ver. 12†. " For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

Ver. 13. " For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

And, according to a strict and literal rendering of this prophecy of Isaiah, there is an evident prognostication of a *twofold* remnant that should be saved, one of the Jews, and another of the Gentiles. " And it shall come to pass, that every one who calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered:" for in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, there shall be a deliverance‡—" That which shall be delivered," a number which shall depart in safety from the common destruction; and in the residue," or, " and in a remnant whom the Lord shall call," there shall be also§ " that which shall be delivered:" that is, not in Zion and Jerusalem alone shall there be a remnant saved,—but of others also, " even as many as the Lord our God shall call;" these too shall escape from the common ruin of the *Gentile* nations: *they* shall call on the name of the Lord, and shall obtain deliverance. And hence the Apostle proceeds to show the necessity of the preaching of the gospel, both to Jews and Gentiles.

Ver. 14. " How then shall they call on Him, in whom

* In our translation we read, " He shall not make haste;" but the Hebrew וְיָחֵץ will bear the translation here given by the Apostle.

† " Et in hoc distinxit nec Judæos nec Gentiles, unus est enim," &c.

‡ פליטות

§ פליטות

they have not believed? And how shall they believe on Him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

Ver. 15. "And how shall they preach unless they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

A remnant of all nations, and, as it appears, only a remnant, at the *first* coming of the Messiah, the Apostle has shown from prophecy, would call upon the name of the Lord, and be delivered. From their being designated, as "calling upon the name of the Lord," St. Paul argues, that they must of necessity be first brought over to the faith, whether they be Jews or Gentiles; for, how can they call upon Him on whom they have not believed?

We may observe here, that the *Lord*, on whom they call, and in whom they believe, is none other than the promised Messiah; that "precious corner-stone," to be "laid in Zion;" for it was immediately before proved, that whosoever believed on him should not be ashamed, and that thus, by calling upon him in faith, the promised deliverance should be obtained. In this place, therefore, we see a clear evidence of the incommunicable name of the Deity, *JEHOVAH*, being given to Christ: an incontestable proof of his divinity.

And if they believe in him, the Apostle proceeds to argue, they must first hear of him; and for the same reason, the prophecy supposes preachers and messengers, proclaiming and publishing abroad the gospel tidings concerning the Saviour and Deliverer. By consequence, in order to the deliverance of the remnants, preachers would be commissioned and sent, agreeably to the representation of Isaiah, where he says, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

By comparing the passages referred to, it appears, that the Apostle's argument is not merely designed to vindicate the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles; but he means to show, generally, both with respect to Jew and Gentile, that the way in which the scripture spoke of the salvation of the chosen and called remnants, when it described them, as those who would believe and call upon the name of the Lord, and thus obtain deliverance, clearly implied, that a *preached gospel* would be the appointed means: as he had said, in the opening of the Epistle, the power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile."

Commissioned and sent forth with these tidings concerning Jesus Christ, the Apostle and his brethren now appeared in the world; and whosoever believed their report, Jew or Greek, and called upon the name of the Lord, would be saved. The word was nigh to them; they were to believe with the heart unto righteousness, and with the mouth to confess unto salvation.

This scene of things is, evidently, and in the most beautiful language, portrayed in the fifty-second of Isaiah, the prophecy here referred to by the Apostle. Zion, or Jerusalem, represented as a wretched and oppressed captive, is suddenly called upon to arise from her sordid condition, —to put off the marks of her slavery, and prepare for exaltation and liberty. "Put on thy beautiful garment, O Jerusalem;" "shake thyself from the dust, arise and sit down;" "loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion." Wherefore? Because the Lord has prepared for her deliverance (ver. 6). "Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day, that I am he that doth speak: behold it is I." Immediately it follows, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings," &c. The allusion is here to the arrival of wel-

come-messengers, who, standing or running along upon the eminences, proclaim the news of deliverance to the afflicted city.

The tidings to be told to Zion, we read, were, "Thy God reigneth," "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." The watchmen on their appointed station catch the sound: they suddenly break forth into exclamations of joy (ver. 8), which soon spreads itself among the people. "With the voice together shall they sing," &c.

It is to Jerusalem that the prophecy represents these tidings as first brought. But they stop not here; in a following verse we read (ver. 10), "The Lord has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." In perfect agreement with this prophecy, did our gracious Lord explain to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, that, according to the scripture, "the Messiah was to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that repentance and remission of sins would be preached in his name, *among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*.*"

But another most remarkable event, and which had accordingly come to pass, was also foretold by the prophet: the rejection of the Messiah; and the ill success of this preaching, as to the bulk of the nations, in the first instance.

Ver. 16. "But they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?"

It is impossible for any event to be more clearly foretold, than the one here spoken of; and yet an ancient Israelite, we may easily conceive, when he read of the coming of Christ, and of its blessed consequences to all the nations of the earth, would have been much perplexed to understand, how, in the midst of all this glorious triumph, these accounts of his rejection, and of the ill

* Luke xxiv. 47.

success of his mission, could have place. The prophets themselves, St. Peter seems to intimate, wondered what these sufferings of Christ could mean;—the rejection of Him who was “the hope of all the ends of the earth.”

But the event has explained. Before he came in his glorious majesty, to erect that kingdom which is the grand theme of prophecy, the Messiah was first to appear, as a lowly and despised character,—to be rejected of men,—to be made, in short, an offering for sin. Subsequent to *this* coming of Christ, and in connexion with it, the gospel of the kingdom was to be preached, “in Jerusalem, and unto the ends of the world.” But, except that a remnant of all should be saved, this message would be generally despised, and treated with neglect; as is most strikingly described, in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.”

Ver. 17. “So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

As though the Apostle should say, returning to his argument, “However, so far is evident, since the remnants that do escape, are to be saved by faith, as the scripture has foretold; this faith must come by hearing—by hearing tidings:” which supposes the preaching of the word; and that, by messengers sent from God for that purpose.

Ver. 18. “But I say, have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and the words unto the ends of the world.”

And was it not a fact, that such messengers and such tidings had been sent abroad? Yes verily, adopting the language of the Psalmist, when he describes the universal testimony borne by the heavenly orbs, to the Creator’s glory in every clime, and in every tongue; “Their sound is gone out into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.” The date of this Epistle may, with

probability, be fixed about A. D. 57. By this time the glad tidings of the gospel had been far and wide extended over the surface of the habitable globe; and, through the miraculous gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost, "there was no speech or language, where their voice was not heard." If we only consider the journeys of one Apostle, St. Paul, of which alone we have any remaining accounts, and suppose the other Apostles and Evangelists to have shared in any considerable degree his labours, we shall see reason to conclude, that there is not much of hyperbole in the figurative language here used.

Ver, 19. "But I say, did not Israel know"—or, "But, I ask, hath not Israel known? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you,"

At any rate, the Jewish nation could not be ignorant, if they considered at all the signs of the times, that that very state of things, which the *general* preaching of the gospel had now brought about, in the call of the Gentiles, and in the casting off of themselves, had been clearly predicted.

"First, Moses," in that remarkable part of scripture, (Deut. xxxii.), wherein is unfolded the whole future destiny of the Jews, plainly foretells, that, as they should move God to jealousy, by that which was not God, and should provoke him to anger with their vanities, so would God recompense it upon them: they should see with envy and regret, a people, strangers to the covenants of God, called and invested with their forfeited privileges. A people altogether ignorant of God and religion, in respect of whom they considered themselves "teachers of babes," "instructors of the foolish," would, through the dealings of God's providence with them, be the mean of filling them with anger and indignation. "They should see them come from the east and from the west, from the north and

from the south, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, when they themselves would be cast out*.”

Ver. 20. “But Esaias is very bold, and saith”—or, “Esaias also boldly asserts, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.”

Ver. 21. “But to Israel he saith, All the day long have I stretched out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”

The prophet Isaiah, the Apostle bids them remark, speaks out, and boldly declares this same offensive truth, the call of the Gentiles, and the rejection of Israel: “I was found of them that sought me not,” &c. These were evidently the Gentiles, “who followed not after the law of righteousness, and yet had obtained righteousness.” At the same time, the prophet addresses Israel in language, which evidently denounces them as disobedient and contumacious, reprobate concerning faith†.” The curse pronounced in their law upon the contemners of the Messiah, would of course follow.

* Matth. viii. 11. Luke xiii. 29. † Deut. xviii. 18, 19.

LECTURE XXI.

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

SAINT PAUL, as we saw in our last Lecture, had shown, from the prophecies of the Old Testament, that, at the appearing of the Messiah, the bulk of the Jewish nation would prove unbelieving and contumacious; and that, in consequence, a people would be called from among the Gentiles, to be put in possession of their forfeited privileges.

The same subject still occupies the Apostle in the chapter before us. He tells us, however, that this rejection of the natural descendants of the patriarchs was neither to be total nor final; that, at the very period of their abandonment, there would be a *reserve* of a part, and, at some future period, though perhaps under a different dispensation of Messiah's kingdom, a *resumption* of the general body.

In unfolding this plan of God's dispensations towards the Jews, the Apostle is also led to remark, that his plans in respect of the Gentiles are somewhat analogous. Of them, in the first instance, a remnant only escapes, called by the preaching of the gospel; but, at some future period, salvation will be universal: "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*."—"Nations of them that are saved" are to walk in the light of the New Jerusalem†; and the time when all Israel shall be saved will be to the Gentiles "life from the dead."

Ver. 1. "I say, then, hath God cast away," &c. ;—or,

* Isa. x.i 9.

† Rev. xxi. 24.

“ Do I say, then, that God hath cast away his people?— God forbid! for I am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.”

The question evidently is, as to the rejection and total apostacy of the family of Abraham; that a great number of its members would, in that age, be cut off, and that strangers and aliens would be adopted in their room, was a fact beyond dispute: but the whole family was not rejected; there was still a remnant preserved: neither was the nation, as a people, cast off for ever. The contrary supposition the Apostle rejects, with all the patriotic feelings of a Jew zealous for the honour of his nation.—“ I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin!” and he proceeds to explain:

Ver. 2. “ God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew.”

The meaning of the word “ foreknew” we have already considered. That people—that Israel whom God had contemplated in the purposes of his grace—the seed to whom the promises are made—these were not cast off; they either had believed, or would believe in Christ, and be saved out of the general ruin. “ He that is of God,” says our Lord, in his address to this people, “ heareth God’s words. Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God*.” “ All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out†.”

Though, therefore, the Messiah had proved, as was foretold, a stumbling-block to the Jews, no true Israelite had been turned out of the way, or had perished through unbelief, either in this or in any other season of their national apostacies! The words of the prophet ever held good: “ As the teil-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be

* John viii. 47.

† vi. 37.

the substance thereof*." The words of God in Amos are particularly striking: "And I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth†."

That there had always been a remnant—this *holy seed*, even in the worst of times, the Apostle proceeds to illustrate, from the Scripture narrative of the apostacy which Elijah had witnessed and lamented, and which he himself had thought to have been general: "Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God?"—Or, "How he complaineth to God against Israel, saying:

Ver. 3. "Lord, they have killed thy Prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

Ver. 4. "But what saith the answer of God unto him?—I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal."

Unknown to the Prophet, there were in secret, while Baal seemed to carry all before him, seven thousand of faithful Israelites—"The Lord had left unto him," in these sad times, "a very small remnant."—Israel, low as it had fallen, was not "made like unto Sodom."

Ver. 5. "Even so, then"—or, "Even so, in like manner, at this present time, also, there is a remnant, according to the election of grace."

It is said of the seven thousand, in the apostacy under Elijah, that *God had reserved them to himself*: therefore they stood faithful in the midst of general corruption! So, in this present age, divine grace had operated to reserve and to preserve from the contamination of the age—from the leaven both of the Sadducee and of the Pharisee, a chosen few.

Ver. 6. "And if by grace"—or, "But if it be of

* Isaiah vi. 13.

† Amos ix. 9.

grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work."

What is bestowed as a mere favour, as God's election of this remnant of Israel was, with all its beneficial consequences, cannot be bestowed as a reward, nor in consideration of works, either performed or foreseen: for then grace would not be grace: the supposition implies a contradiction. The Apostle has argued this matter at length in a former part of his Epistle; this verse, however, is a very clear evidence of the precise meaning of the word *grace*, as used by St. Paul.

However favourable, in its terms, you may suppose a covenant to be, which is instituted for the salvation of men, yet, if it appoint works—any thing to be performed on our part, as the condition of obtaining the reward, it could not then be strictly said to be "*of grace*:" the nature of the grant would be altered; its *gratuity* would be destroyed; it would not be for *nothing*, but for *something*. You might apply the term *gracious* to the institution as a whole; yet the question of obtaining the reward would not turn on a point of grace, but of duty. It would not be to be determined by an act of grace on the part of God, but by an act of duty on the part of man; which is not the Apostle's notion of being saved "*by grace*."

Ver. 7. "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

This is the sum and conclusion of the whole. However unwilling the Apostle may be to determine against so large a body of his countrymen, yet the truth must be admitted. Israel, as a nation—the general body of the children of Jacob, had not obtained that justification and

salvation which, professedly, they sought. The chosen reserve and remnant, spoken of above, had obtained these blessings; but the rest of the people had been blinded, and had not found the way of truth and salvation. The fact was evident, and the reason has been before pointed out. The Apostle, however, would state the unpalatable truth in the words of their own Scriptures, to the authority of which they must needs bow.

Ver. 8. "According as it is written, God has given them the spirit of slumber; eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day.

Ver. 9. "And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompense unto them.

Ver. 10. "Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway"—or "continually."

These awful denunciations, if we examine the prophecies from whence they are taken, refer clearly to the Jewish nation, in their conduct towards the Messiah. That there was something judicial in this blindness, we cannot doubt, from the tenor of the prophetic language; but, that the judgment of God was just and good, who shall dare to question? While, however, with our Lord, we bow to the sovereign will of God—"I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes: even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight *:" let us learn, also, from him, with what views and with what feelings we are to look upon blind and perishing sinners in general, and upon the descendants of this same deluded people in particular, who still exist among us, labouring under the same curse.—"And when he came

* Matt. xi. 25.

near the city, he wept over it: O hadst thou known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which make for thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes*.”

Ver. 11. “I say then”—or, “I ask, then, have they stumbled that they should fall?”—or, “so as to fall?—God forbid! but, rather, through their fall”—or, “in their failure, salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them unto envy”—or, “to emulation.”

Do I affirm that the family of Abraham and of Israel has so stumbled upon this stumbling-block, in rejecting Jesus of Nazareth for the Messiah, that they have fallen and perished, ceased for ever to be the chosen nation of God? This is clearly the Apostle’s meaning. That the bulk of the nation had stumbled and fallen, was an evident matter of fact; it occasioned the *fall* or *failure* here mentioned: but the question was, Had they, as a people, fallen for ever, so as henceforth to be regarded in no other light than as one of the heathen nations?

This supposition the Apostle rejects with his usual expression of abhorrence, as contrary to the design and declared intention of God. And he argues from the very language used when the Scripture speaks of the rejection of the Jews, and of the call of the Gentiles:—“In their fall salvation is given to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy,”—that some future good was yet intended. For, to provoke to jealousy, in its most merciful acceptation, may be understood to imply a design of exciting in them a regret for forfeited favours, not irrevocably lost. That such was the design of their God is plainly asserted in the song taught them by Moses, from which this prophecy is quoted.

The state of things, which should befall the Jews in their rejection, is also most strikingly represented by the Prophet Hosea, under the character of “a woman beloved

* Luke, xiv. 41.

of her friend, yet an adultress." The adultress woman, it appears, after long service as a purchased slave, was again to be acknowledged as the lawful wife. "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince; without a sacrifice, and without an image; and without an ephod, and without a seraphim." They were to be left destitute both of civil government, and also of the privileges and ordinances of a church; yet, at the same time, would not, according to their constant propensity in former ages, indulge in idolatry.

She who, during her honourable espousals, had proved a faithless adultress, should, in her abject state, be, in a sort, faithful to him who had hired her person.—"Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot; and thou shalt not be for another man." How wonderfully descriptive is this of the religious connexion between the Jews in their dispersion to this present hour, and the God of their fathers! Acknowledged as a church they are not, and yet the Lord keeps them in his providence distinct from other people! Their religion, such as it is, they retain with constancy, and certainly are free from the besetting sin of their forefathers, spiritual adultery, the worship of other gods. What will be the end of this extraordinary connexion between Jehovah and those who were once his people?—We read, in the fifth verse of the third chapter, "Afterwards shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."—Then will they be espoused to God for ever.

Ver. 12. "Now, if the fall of them was"—or, "And if their failure was to be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness"—"how much more *was* their fulness *to be!*"

The Apostle speaks as having the prophecy in his view,

which he had just been quoting. Did the prophecy speak of their failure as an event propitious to the Gentile world? So did it speak of the restoration of the Jews, when their fulness should come in, as being to these same nations a season of still greater good. At the first, the Gentiles, in the abandonment of the Jews, were to be so far favoured as to move Israel to jealousy; but afterwards, when "He should be merciful to his land and to his people," and have avenged their injuries, the Song exclaims, "Rejoice ye Gentiles with his people;" which clearly intimated, that they would be no less sharers in this great and glorious dispensation than the Israelites themselves*.

Ver. 13. "For I speak"—or, "I speak indeed to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office;

Ver. 14. "If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them."

I speak, indeed, to you Gentiles; I address myself to you, and speak of these events, as they bear upon your case; in that view of them in which you are concerned: for, since my Master has particularly appointed me to be an Apostle to the Gentiles, I will glory in my mission and office! Not that I rejoice in the fall of my beloved countrymen, which is the occasion of my being sent to the Gentiles; but hoping that, while I am addressing you in this character, jealousy for the forfeited love of God may be excited in their breasts; that, if the season be not yet come for the restoration of the nation, *some* of them may, nevertheless, be brought over to the faith.

We are well acquainted with the effects which St. Paul's magnifying his office of Apostle to the Gentiles had upon the Jews in every part of the world. Their jealousy was indeed excited, and he felt the consequence most severely,

* See Song of Moses, in the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy.

in their personal rancour and hatred against him. He had nearly obtained his wish of being an anathema for his countrymen; but St. Paul obtained his ends, and "saved some of them."

The Apostle addresses the following verses to the Gentiles.

Ver. 15. "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be?—or what will their resumption* be, but life from the dead?"

This fact, as we have before noticed, is evidently foretold in the prophecies of the Old Testament. A season of far greater and more extensive mercies will be experienced by the world at large, in connexion with the restoration of Israel, than the Gentiles had experienced in consequence of the Jew's rejection of the Gospel.

This event had proved, indeed, the occasion of the reconciling of the world. The distinction of Jew and Greek had ceased: the middle wall of partition had been broken down, and the nations were invited to enjoy the privileges of a church—"Go, disciple all nations." This was the reconciliation of the world spoken of. The churches of the Gentiles now occupied the place which the Jews had hitherto held. Theirs became the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. The true Israelites were henceforth to be sought among them.

But, although such multitudes of *professed* Christians were made, "a remnant" only was saved. In the course of a few years the greater part of the kingdoms of the civilized world embraced the Gospel; and a considerable portion of them have ever since been, nominally, Christian. The world, however, has been very far from beholding the glorious scenes which are described in prophecy. What seems to be foretold, as the immediate issue of the

* Quæ assumptio?—*Vulg.*

Saviour's sufferings, in the twenty-second Psalm, has been fulfilled, and no more: "All they that be fat upon the earth shall eat and worship; all they that go down into the dust shall bow before him; *but their soul did not live.*" "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." There has ever been this holy seed of the regenerated children of God; but the mass have had only a "name to live, and *were* dead." The expression here used, "life from the dead," in connexion with other Scriptures, leads us, however, to frame a vast idea of the spreading of real and vital Christianity in the latter days; if it does not even intimate, as I am persuaded it does, that "the resurrection of the just" is an event nearly connected with the conversion of the Jewish people, and the subsequent dispensation of the kingdom of Christ.

Ver. 16. "For, if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches."

The *first-fruits* of the Jewish nation, as distinguished from the *mass* of the people, were, evidently, the fathers, in whose persons God received and consecrated to himself that nation, to be a peculiar people to himself, separated from all other nations. They all sprang from one root, even Abraham: "God called him alone and blessed and increased him:" "He made him a nation." And though, as we have seen, the spiritual blessing, the *true* holiness, belonged to a portion only of this nation; yet with respect to the right and enjoyment of many privileges, as the church and family of God upon earth, they were all holy. That *separation* which was effected in the persons of Abraham and the fathers, and that *consecration* of them to God, which gave them their sanctity of character, which made them the people of the Lord, and bespoke his presence among them, was not to be *totally* withdrawn from them. It was true, *many* of them were now cast off.—

Ver. 17. "And if some of the branches be broken off,

and thou being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree,

Ver. 18. "Boast not thyself against the branches; but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee."

"Some*," in this place, as in the third verse of the third chapter, is evidently intended to designate not a *few*, but *the greater part*; yet, we are to observe, that, according to the Apostle's representation, whatever be the numbers of those who are cast off, they are not cast off as a people, but as individuals: the branches are broken off, but the stock is left. In the view of St. Paul, the establishment of the Christian church was no dissolution of the Jewish church. It is the same society still, the same body corporate. Some of its rules and regulations, indeed, have been altered; a disfranchisement of many of its old members had taken place, and new ones had been admitted to partake of their forfeited immunities: it is a time of reformation; a new series commences; but the same church, the same chartered company, which existed before the law, and under the law, exists to this present hour under the gospel dispensation. It is still Abraham's family; "he is the father of us all in the view of God." "If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The natural branches are broken off, and "an olive wild by nature"—The called from among the Gentiles, who "were strangers to the covenants and promises," "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," are "grafted among" the remaining branches upon the old stock: they are adopted into the family of Abraham, and made "the sons and daughters of the living God." Hence the impropriety of the Gentiles' glorying over the Jews, the

* Tit. 15.

descendants of that patriarch, in connexion with whom, themselves, the adopted children of the family, obtain their choicest mercies. The remnant of the Jews are not saved by being placed in a new society, called together from among the Gentiles. This is not the scriptural view of the gospel church. But, "the called" from among the Gentiles are saved, by being fixed among the remnant of Israel, on the stock where, by natural descent, they were growing as the children of the patriarchs, being at the same time the children of the promise.

Considering the church as a visible society here on earth, the Jews were members by inheritance, as children born in the family; the Gentile converts were the adoptive children. God's grace had, indeed, "made both one;" but in comparing themselves with the Jews, it became the Gentiles to remember their meaner origin.

Ver. 19. "Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in."

In this language, the body of the Gentile converts might be supposed to argue the special favour of God to them, above the natural descendants of Abraham.

Ver. 20. "Well; because of unbelief they were cast off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear."

Well; be it so. It was an instance of special favour; but then you should remember, "by" or "because of unbelief they were broken off," and thou standest entirely by the exercise of faith. The mode in which it pleases God to bestow his favours upon the objects of his choice, "the law of faith," is of such a nature, as, when properly considered, to exclude all boasting, and all glorying over others. It has no merit; and not only so, it possesses in *itself* no stability. It is "of the operation of God;" and if he withhold his hand, if he continue not to pour the heavenly influx upon the souls of men, like light falling

upon the opaque surface, it is absorbed and evanescent in a moment. Hence, as it is said in another Scripture to the individual, "Work out your own salvation [with fear and trembling;] for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure:" so, in the verse before us, the Gentiles, as being now made a part of God's church, are called upon to remember by whose strength and influence they stand, and enjoy their privileges: "Be not high-minded, but fear."

Ver. 21. "For, if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee."

How necessary this admonition was, the history of all the several churches, taken in these primitive times from among the Gentiles, abundantly shows. They too soon followed the example of the cast-off Jews, and, as parts of the visible church, "*fell after the same example of unbelief:*" their candlesticks were removed*.

Ver. 22. "Behold, therefore, the goodness, or kindness, and severity"—or "strictness of God; upon them which fell, strictness; but towards thee, kindness, if thou continue in his kindness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

Ver. 23. "And they also, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graff them in again."

Ver. 24. "For, if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree?"

The kindness and strictness of God are, indeed, both exemplified in the transaction here considered. After long forbearance, but at length, "with fury poured forth," the Jews are visited. Most severe is their chastisement! and the kingdom of God is taken from them. What an instance of kindness on the other hand, to see the Gentiles,

* Rev. ii. and iii.

who asked not for him, called, and made part of the church of God, formed into congregations and churches!

It is added, "If thou continue in his kindness." To continue in God's kindness, as applied to Christian societies, is a phrase which may be illustrated from the Epistle to the Galatians. The Galatians are said, in ceasing to hold the doctrines of grace, the doctrine of justification by faith in particular, "to have fallen from grace*." For, the knowledge of these doctrines being lost, the *benevolence* of the Christian system is rendered null and void. It is no longer Christianity, the end and design of the gospel is frustrated. And when this apostacy in a church is become *total*, there is reason to believe, that the period of their being deprived of the very form and outward privileges of a church is not far distant.

On the other hand, if they, the cast-off Jews, continue not in unbelief (and that they will not always continue in unbelief, is an event clearly foretold in Scripture), they also will be grafted in again, be restored to the privileges which their fathers enjoyed, and be made members of the church of God. For, beyond all doubt, God can do it; and, it is consistent with his avowed intentions, and pre-ordained scheme, to do so. And, as the Apostle argues, the restoration of the Jews is, in the course of things, far less improbable and unnatural than was the call and adoption of the Gentiles to be the children of Abraham: a language, of which the Jews would feel the force, if we do not. No "wall of partition needs to be broken down," no "hand-writing of ordinances" must first be "taken away." The doors of the church stand wide open for the admission of the Jews; nothing is wanting but their *faith*. On their believing, they will be again taken into the family of their renowned ancestors, and invested with all their former privileges. And though others

* Gal. v. 4.

are now in possession of these privileges, it will not impede their rights, provision having been made in the settlement of the family for their *resumption*. And, though this general resumption of the nation be not yet, what the Apostle here says, clearly proves that the commission of the preachers of the Gospel extends to the Jews of this present day; and when "we recollect the tenor of" that "commission:" "To the Jew first, and also to the Greek;" the claim of the Jews upon the care of the church of Christ, seems to have a priority of right to all other unbelieving nations.

Ver. 25. "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."

A man is said to be wise in his own conceits, when, in the absence of real knowledge and information, he persuades himself that he does understand; and pleased with his discoveries, vaunts his own false conceits in the room of true wisdom.

To prevent this, St. Paul would unfold a mystery. A mystery signifies a hidden truth, some secret in the plan or proceedings of God, which Revelation can alone explain. The mystery was this:—This partial blindness or hardness (for the Apostle admits not that it was universal) was only to last till "the fulness of the Gentiles was come in, and so," or, and then, "all Israel shall be saved." By the word fulness* is intended, I conceive, that remnant which was then begun to be gathered by the preaching of the Gospel. They were a body of people taken to "*fill up*," as it were, the gap or scissure made in Israel by the cutting off of so many of the natural branches: when the number decreed shall be completed, then will the end

* Πλήρωμα, אִלְמָלֵךְ. Complementum, supplementum, plenitudo, expletio, impletio.

come to the present dispensation of Christ's kingdom; which will be succeeded by a more extensive dispensation, to commence with the restoration of the Jews.

Some, by the fulness of the Gentiles, understand their coming in, in a mass, in contradistinction to this gathering of a thinly scattered people; which has hitherto been all the real effect of the preaching of the gospel in the Gentile world. That such an event will take place, may, without doubt, be inferred from prophecy. But then, this is an event plainly described as *subsequent* to the restoration of Israel. But the fulness of the Gentiles* here spoken of, will have come in *previously* to that event. Besides, the use of the word we render *fulness* in the New Testament, for the mass or generality, in opposition to a part of, or small portion of a people, does not seem so frequent as that of "*somewhat put in to fill up*"—The full complement.

The fulness of the Jews, in the twelfth verse of this chapter, may indeed be urged to the contrary; and what is there called the fulness, is certainly the bulk and general body of the Jewish people, at the time of their restoration. But why they are called by this term, is still a question. May it not be, because they are a *complement* to fill their appointed place according to the purpose of God? I am afraid there is reason, also, to conclude from prophecy, that there will be found a dreadful *chasm to fill up* in the visible church of Christ, upon earth, at the eve of that event. St. Paul plainly asserts in another place, "The end shall not come, unless there come a falling away first †."

This apostacy from Christianity among nominally converted Gentiles, we think we have seen; and doubtless we have in part. "The mystery of iniquity," which was to undermine, and in a measure root up Christianity in the

* Πλήρωμα τῶν Ἰθνῶν.

† 2 Thess. ii.

churches of the Gentiles, had begun to work even in the Apostle's days, and long has it raged triumphant, and "worn out the saints of the Most High:" "they have fallen by the sword, and by flame, and by captivity, and by spoil many days;" yet, it may be, we have not seen the apostacy in its height,—in its most avowed shape. It has hitherto claimed the title of *Catholic*, or *Most Christian*, and has persecuted, to maintain its right to that title undisputed. But perhaps the world has yet to witness ANTICHRIST in his proper shape, avowedly and openly Anti-christian,—the very profession of Christ's religion being cast off.

The words of Christ are awfully striking, "When the Son of Man cometh, will he find faith upon the earth*?" And we must all be sensible that there never was a time, since the conversion of the Gentile nations, when the Christian world was more indifferent about retaining the form of that religion, than at this present hour. Its power indeed, at no time, did many experience, even when the world was most zealous for the outward profession of Christianity; when men would fight, and submit to be slaughtered, to maintain it; and would compass sea and land, to assert the honour of the cross. But now, with many nations called Christian, how small the sacrifice, to part with the institutions of religion, and to suffer every form and vestige of a Christian church to be removed!

In our own country, where there is reason to suppose the remnant of true Israelites more numerous than in most other nations; and where many of the servants of Christ are trading with their talents, insomuch, that we still indulge the hope of an exception from the common doom of the apostate nations of the Gentile Christians; yet, even in Great Britain, if the general voice could be collected, at least if the enemy shall prevail a little farther

* Luke xviii. 8.

in the removal of those wholesome prejudices, that bind the thoughtless to the religion of their country; might not a message be sent after the departed Saviour, as the decision of the majority, "We will not have this man to reign over us!"

We have seen, however, that the consequence of the coming in of the fulness of Israel, will be to the nations of the Gentiles, life from the dead. This *fulness*, we learn also, is not to be a remnant only, but to consist of "all Israel," of all the natural descendants of Jacob, as it should seem, which will have been preserved to that period.

Ver. 26. "And so," or, "And then all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, *There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*

Ver. 27. "For"—or, "*And this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*"

The Apostle does not, I think, quote this passage as, in itself, containing the proof of his assertions; but as the first words or first line of the prophecies, where a full account of the prediction will be found. This mode of quotation, which is, to this day, the way in which our lawyers refer to certain statutes and acts of the legislature, was, we are told, very common among the Jews, and also among the primitive Christians.

This accounts, very naturally, for the disagreement we find between the reading of the Apostle and that of the original Hebrew. For, if the Apostle meant merely to refer to the prophecy at large, as designated by its first line, he would of course quote from the translation in common use, however inaccurate: it had become, in fact, the received title of the prophecy.

Now, if we open the book of the prophecies of Isaiah, we shall find that at this place, beginning with the words, "*And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, &c.*" which will be

found towards the last part of the fifty-ninth chapter, as it stands in our translation, there commences a series of predictions, fully expressive of the fact the Apostle had asserted. And we may remember, when he would prove the rejection of the Messiah, he quoted in a similar manner the first words of the fifty-third chapter, where the prophecies of that event commence.

In the following chapter of the prophet Isaiah, for instance, how magnificent a description have we of the prosperity of Zion, and how luminous a prophecy of that greater blessing of which this event should be productive towards the world at large! "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is arisen upon thee: for darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon *thee*, and his glory shall be seen upon thee; and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising, &c. &c." The same subject, indeed, seems to run through the remainder of the book.

This prophecy too, though the explanation augurs sad for the state of religion among the Gentile churches, in the years which are approaching upon us, clearly points out how the *fulness* of Israel will, in a much more eminent degree, be the enriching of the world, than their minishing had been; and how, though the casting of them away had been the occasion of "the reconciling of the world," their *resumption* will be "life from the dead."

It is a fact, however, that notwithstanding this admonition of the Apostle, some of the most admired teachers of the Gentile churches, losing sight of this mystery, which the Apostle here explains, have become "wise in their own conceits:" for, by their analogy, their spiritualizing, the liberty they have taken in accommodating the language of Scripture to their own circumstances, and by the conceit of a perpetual figure, they have contrived

to explain all these prophecies as relating to themselves, or to themselves chiefly; and some indeed will scarcely admit of any other restoration of the Jews than their becoming members of their respective societies!

If, however, we take the language of the Scripture in its most obvious sense, when this prophecy, "WHEN THE REDEEMER SHALL COME TO ZION," shall be accomplished, it appears, that it will be in very different circumstances from what they suppose, that Israel, as a nation, will be brought to acknowledge the Lord of Glory whom they crucified: that, so far will it be from the Gentile teachers converting them, that they—perhaps with the Redeemer personally present among them—will be the means of quickening the dying ember, which the ministers of Christ, the successors in the apostleship to the Gentiles, could scarce keep alive, among a very small remnant in their several churches.

The Apostle proceeds:

Ver. 28. "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but, as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes."

He is speaking evidently of the rejected members of the Jewish nation—the branches which had been broken off from the olive-tree, to make way for the called from among the Gentiles. Under the present dispensation, in respect to the preaching of the gospel, they have classed themselves, and God does evidently consider them, as enemies. And, as has been before shown, the object accomplished by Divine Wisdom in their stumbling on the rock of offence laid in Zion, has been the salvation of the remnant among the Gentiles. It might be said, therefore, to be "for their sakes," or "on their account," for to this end was it overruled and directed.

But, "touching the election," with regard to the elec-

tion, that is, *not* the election of the chosen seed to eternal life; for the Apostle is speaking of those who are *enemies in respect of the gospel*. They are not, therefore, the "election" which "obtained the promise;" but "*the rest, who*" were "blinded." Yet *these*, if we recollect, are the objects of an election of God; God chose them as a nation to himself, to be a peculiar people to him, above all the nations of the earth. This election was made of them in their first fathers: "And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them*." And as touching *this election*, they are still "beloved for the fathers' sake." The Jewish outcasts, whom we can scarcely call a people, are styled, "a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress." Though, therefore, treated as enemies, and individually perishing in their sins, *as a nation*, God has still a favour towards them; and hence it is, that no time nor accident ever could, or ever can confound them with the other nations of the earth, from whom they have been separated.

Ver. 29. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

This may be considered as a general reflection. "What God doeth, it shall be for ever:" "in him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." "He is not a man, that he should repent." What the Apostle has immediately in view is obvious; the distinctions and privileges bestowed on the Jewish nation in their first progenitors,—these, to the extent designed and promised, will never be withdrawn. And though, in the present dispensation, they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor will the true Israel be found exclusively among "the children of the flesh;" yet the language of the scripture always bespeaks a sort of pre-eminence given to the Jews in all the dispen-

* Deut. iv. 37.

sations of God's mercy, as well in that which respects the call of the remnants, as in that which will have respect to the nations of the redeemed. Expressly to this effect were the directions given to the ambassadors of the gospel: "to the Jews first, and also to the Gentiles." Credentials still in force, though those, who claim to be the successors of the Apostles, have strangely forgotten that their commission extended to this unhappy people, that "at any rate some of them might be saved," among the remnant of the nations. The promises, moreover, which remain to be fulfilled, bespeak the same sort of pre-eminence in the call of the Jews, "when the kingdom of God shall fully come." Their restoration to the land of Canaan; their possession of it for an eternal inheritance—till time shall be no more; and all the glorious things which are still spoken of Zion and Israel, as distinct from the nations, which are at length, however, permitted to "rejoice with her:" all these things forbid us to conceive any alteration in the election made of this people, in their first fathers, "*They have not stumbled, that they should perish.*"

The Apostle concludes this important discovery of revelation, by remarking,

Ver. 30. "For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through"—or, "in," "their unbelief:

Ver. 31. "Even so have these also now not believed, that, through your mercy, they also may obtain mercy"—or, "Even so have these also now not believed, in your mercy, that they also may obtain mercy."

The Gentiles, while the Jews were acknowledged as the people of God, in the ages that were past, were destitute of faith, "obeyed not the truth, but obeyed unrighteousness;" yet, after that, the kindness of God the Saviour was manifested to them. After ages of darkness had

overspread the Gentile world, and generation after generation had perished in the just judgment of God, they obtained mercy, on occasion of the redemption of the Messiah by the Jews. "Salvation was given" to them, and God "was found of them that asked not for him." By a similar providence, the outcast nation of the Jews, which in this season of the Gentiles' mercies has proved unbelieving and contumacious, will, after many days be visited, and will obtain mercy, as the Gentiles have done. The rejected Saviour "will come to Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob:" will come, indeed, to an *unbelieving* people; but "*then* shall they look on Him whom they pierced, and mourn because of him:" *then* will they say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Ver. 32. "For God has concluded them all in unbelief"—or "disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all."

As it had happened in respect of the nations of the Gentiles, for refusing to retain God in their knowledge, they had been given up to a reprobate mind, when mercy, notwithstanding, was brought to them by the preaching of the gospel; so these outcasts of Israel, though now given up, and included in the condemnation of them "that believed not, and obey not the truth," shall, in a like unlooked-for manner, obtain mercy.

Thus St. Paul closes the doctrinal part of his Epistle to the Romans, and his account of "the mystery of godliness," as its dispensation affects "the seed which is of the law," and "that which is of the faith of Abraham." And reviewing all that he has said on the plan of redemption, and on the dealings of God with his creatures, he exclaims,—and the passage needs no comment, but the adoring thought of an humble and reflecting mind—

Ver. 33. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom

and of the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Ver. 34. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who has been his counsellor?"

Ver. 35. "And who has first given to him, and it shall be,"—or, "so that it should be recompensed to him again?"

Ver. 36. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever." Amen.

LECTURE XXIV.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.—THROUGHOUT.

THAT part of the Epistle, which contains a development of the Christian scheme, and a detail of its principal doctrines, together with the economy of the covenant of grace, as it respected the Jew and the Gentile, we closed in our last Lecture. The portion of the Epistle which remains to be considered, is, for the most part, of a practical nature; relating either the duties of Christians, or advising concerning the conduct of the several members of the church, in the disputes and difficulties which had arisen, or which might arise, among themselves. These subjects need not long detain us in the explanation. The duties of the Christian, speaking generally, are plain; and the proprieties of conduct, which it behoves him to observe in the church, and in the world, for the most part, of easy deduction; that is, if the Spirit of grace and love reign in his breast, and he feel duly impressed with those mercies of God, from a sense of which Christian obedience is to flow.

The order which the Apostle here observes, in passing from a view of the *Articles of the Christian Faith*, and its mysteries, to the consideration of the *duties of the Christian life*, must, by no means, pass unnoticed by the serious reader. It is the Apostle's practice in the generality of his Epistles. And if the doctrines of the Christian faith are not felt as powerful motives, leading to the practices prescribed to the followers of Jesus, we can pronounce from the highest authority, that the knowledge of these doctrines, however clear and accurate, and whatever persuasion the mind may entertain respecting its interest

therein, has been of no avail or benefit to save the soul. Such faith "*is dead, being alone.*"

Not that faith justifies, by producing good works and holy dispositions, by qualifying us, as it were, to receive the favour freely given us of God; but because the production of holy dispositions within us, and faith's being felt as a powerful stimulus to integrity and charity, are proofs of its genuineness. These are in fact some of its first visible consequences: if here, therefore, it proves, in the sight of all, unsound and lifeless; if it is found, on trial, to be destitute of the essential qualities of true faith; it is a mere deception of the mind to suppose, that we are in possession of that inward principle, which will be effectual to procure the blessings of eternal glory.

The faith, of which the Apostle has spoken such great things in this Epistle, is described in scripture, as "purifying the heart," "working by love," as being, in its effects, "a victory over the world." And if the visible and present effects of faith cannot be shown, where the occasion and opportunity has been afforded for their production; where is the presumption that its unseen and future consequences will be found at their wonted season? He that is a hearer of the word only, and not a doer, deceiveth his own soul*; he is the victim of his own delusions, if he trusts in such an imaginary faith.

But while the necessity of good works, and of attainments in a life of godliness, is maintained, let us be careful to mark the motive upon which the Christian labours. The motive is *love*; the love of gratitude; for such entirely is the Christian's love to God,—"because he first loved us."

"IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS," under the reign of grace, supplies the place of the legal admonitions, "DO THIS, AND THOU SHALT LIVE:" and,

* James i. 23.

“ CURSED IS HE THAT CONTINUETH NOT IN ALL THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW TO DO THEM.”

Hence we see the reason that precepts of obedience are preceded by a statement of the doctrines of grace. The doctrines of grace supply, in fact, the required motive for the observance of these precepts. In the unfolding of this plan of divine mercy, we learn how “ God first loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation of our sins.” And a sense of what God has done for us, together with an humble sense of our unworthiness, as impressed upon the heart by “ the law of the Spirit of life,” is that which prepares and “ furnishes” the children of God “ for every good word and work.”

Agreeably with these observations, we find the Apostle beginning this preceptive part of his Epistle.

I. Ver. 1. “ I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service *.”

These mercies of God, which we have seen displayed in order, in the former part of this Epistle, are now urged as having laid us under particular obligations. And “ if so be we have tasted that the Lord is gracious,” we shall feel and own the solemn bond:—“ the love of Christ constraining us.” “ My sheep hear my voice, they know me, and they follow me.” We may observe farther, that without a persuasion of these tender mercies, as bestowed upon us by God, kindling our love towards him, no exhortations to obedience, however forcibly urged by the voice of man ; no declamations on the odiousness of vice, and the evil of sin ; no panegyrics upon the excellencies of virtue and holiness, will effect the purpose of persuading man to make that surrender of himself to God, and his

* “ Per ministerium rationale.”—*Syr.*

service, which is here demanded of him. No: the sacrifice will be considered as too great, too costly! the requisition too severe, and extensive!

“Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.” According to the ritual of the ancient worship, when the grateful worshipper would acknowledge some special favour, or deliverance, at the hand of his God, the custom was, to bring an offering, either of his flocks, or of his herds, or of the fruits of the earth, and to present it as a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord: “a free-will offering.” The typical design of such services had now ceased; God required no longer such kind of worship to be paid him. But, in allusion to these sacrifices, we are called to offer up our bodies, that is, our services while we abide in the flesh, to glorify God in our day, and generation. This is to be our sacrifice, and our gift, which we are to render unto the Lord. “For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your body, and with your spirit, which are God’s.” We are, in our persons, to be a *living* sacrifice: as St. Paul beautifully expresses it in his Epistle to the Philippians, “That in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ may be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or death*.”

To sacrifice their lives for Christ, literally speaking, some, we know, have been called; but the more general call is, to spend our lives in his service, and in doing good to his creatures: “to show forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all our days.”

“Holy, acceptable to God.” In the separation and dedication of persons and things to God, under the ceremonial law, various rites were used to render them accep-

* Phil. i. 20.

table to God: they were washed with water, they were anointed with oil, they were sprinkled with blood. The moral of this, and how it is to be realized among them who worship the Father in spirit and in truth, is plain. To render our persons and services acceptable to a holy God, we must be washed in "the laver of regeneration;" we must be sanctified by the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. A believing application of his atonement must also accompany all our services: every offering must be tendered, "through Jesus Christ our Lord," and "in the spirit of his grace," or they will be pronounced unclean and unacceptable.

This offering of ourselves is said to be our "reasonable service," or "our rational worship:" a gift, neither from our flocks nor from our herds, but of the devoted services of a rational being; a life spent in acts of devotion, and in deeds of love. "Wherewith shall I come before God, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, and the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy," or "grace, and to walk humbly with thy God*?"

Ver. 2. "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

In dedicating himself to God, the Christian must of necessity renounce the world. He cannot serve two masters. And "whatever is in the world, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, is not of the Father."

* Micah vi. 6, 7, 8.

“ A pilgrim, and a stranger upon earth,” must, therefore, be the character in which the believer appears among mankind. “ Who mind earthly things,” characterizes the “ enemies of the cross of Christ:” but the conversation of the true believer “ is in heaven.”

This change of sentiment and character is pointed out as being effected by a mental renovation—“ by the renewing of your minds:” another Scripture calls it “ the renewing of the Holy Ghost;” and, as we have seen, it is under his agency, the spirit of man is renewed and nourished unto life eternal.

The language of the Apostle, in this place, seems to imply, that this transformation from the world is necessary to our distinguishing, and to our practically adopting, the will of God. And we may remark, that if a man be worldly-minded, there is in him a perpetual cause of stumbling. He will be very liable to make mistakes, and, whatever be his profession, the good he chooses and pursues will not prove “ that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God,” which the heavenly-minded perceive, and follow after. “ The cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things,” where the heart is not transformed from the world, “ will choke the good seed, and no fruit will be brought to perfection.”

II. Ver. 3. “ For I say”—or rather, “ I say verily, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Ver. 4. “ For we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office.

Ver. 5. “ So we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another,” that is, “ individually,” or “ severally, members one among another,” “ with respect to one another.”

The Apostle intimates, that he speaks authoritatively, as invested with the office of their Apostle. He addresses himself to the church at large; and his charge, as appears from the following verses, has particular respect to the conduct of those persons who were endowed with spiritual gifts, and held some office in the church.

The connexion seems to be, I charge you all, in your intercourse with one another, as a church of Christ, not to be conformed to the world. In the exercise of your gifts, of whatever kind they may be, act not in a worldly spirit, with a view to your own personal aggrandizement; as the people of the world are accustomed to display their gifts and talents. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; provoking one another, envying one another*."

That these admonitions were necessary to those persons who, in this first age of the church, had extraordinary and miraculous gifts, is evident from many passages of the Epistles. That they are always necessary to Christians, in the exercise of their respective talents, and to those who are called to the *ordinary* offices of the ministry, every day's experience shows. Self-preference, or an over-rating of our own abilities; or dissatisfaction with the meaner office, in which it has pleased God to place us, has ever been the great bane to unity and order in every society, where men are called to act, not as individuals merely, but as members of the general body.

Of such a nature, St. Paul tells us, is the Christian church; for, as in one body we have many members, and all members have not the same office; so we, "the many, are one body in Christ, and each of us, severally, members one among another." Now, when men act as members of a body, it becomes them to consider and remember their place and station in that body; they must exercise themselves in their "own line of things." For, if they act out

* Gal. v. 16.

of place, and out of order, whatever ability they may show, and whatever praise they may procure as individuals, they obstruct the public good; and in breaking the established discipline, notwithstanding some partial advantages which have been achieved, may have done the greatest injury to the general welfare of the society. And by this error, how often do we see the visible church made to resemble, instead of a well-proportioned body, an ill-disciplined, insubordinate army! Even the spiritually gifted, therefore, were not permitted to act *irregularly*; because “God was not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”

Ver. 6. “Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given unto us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;”—according to that degree and measure which God has bestowed upon us, affecting nothing higher, nor interfering with another’s superior call.

Ver. 7. “Or ministry, let us wait on our ministry; or he that teacheth, on teaching;

Ver. 8. “Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation. He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity”—or, perhaps, “he that distributeth on liberality. He that ruleth,” or, “He that standeth forth to defend the Christian cause [comp. Tit. iii. 8. 14.], with,” or “on diligence. He that showeth mercy, with,” or “on cheerfulness. Let each attend, and wait on the object allotted him, and make that his one great business.”

What were the precise distinctions between the ministry in this place, and the functions which follow; what the particular offices of the teacher; the exhorter; the distributor; the ruler or defender; and the shower of mercy; it is impossible for us now to ascertain. The church was at this time under an extraordinary dispensation, in respect

* 1 Cor. xiv. 32, 33.

of her public functionaries; and these different classes of men are so far from being intended to be a model for the formation of a church and for the regulation of the ministry in ordinary circumstances, that it has not pleased God so much as to inform us what they were.

The meaning and application of the passage to the church in her present circumstances, however, is plain. Whatever be the office assigned to any person therein, be it more or less honourable, on that he is to wait, and not presumptuously to interfere with the duties of others. For the church is still a body composed of many members; as members, therefore, of this body, whatever office we have, and whatever gifts, there, where we are lawfully called to serve the cause of Christ, it is our duty "to spend or be spent for him," subject to the spirit of these regulations, each in his proper place and calling.

III. Precepts of a more general nature, and of more universal obligation, next follow.

Ver. 9. "Let love be without dissimulation: abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."

Let love be real. Love, we should remark, in the connexion in which we find it in this place, mentioned as something distinct from brotherly love, in the same manner as we find it in St. Peter: "Add to brotherly kindness charity," is evidently intended to designate that heavenly disposition of mind described in the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians:—a disposition of mind universal in its object; humble and benevolent alike to friend and foe; and found the same amidst the unkindest treatment and injuries, as amidst the endearments and mutual obligations which engender brotherly kindness, and where brotherly kindness can alone exist.—"It suffereth long and is kind; it envieth not; it vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily pro-

voked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things.”—According to that love, in short, wherewith the Lord has loved us; and according to that meekness, which his incarnate Son exhibited, when he tabernacled upon earth, and endured with such long-suffering the contradiction of sinners!

“Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” This precept forcibly reminds us of the nature of the Christian morality. It is not to be the work of a mercenary, intent only upon avoiding censure, and receiving the reward of his labours. It must be the service of love, and of zeal, and of loyal attachment in the cause of God and virtue. Nor can we possibly, without a hatred of sin and love of holiness, satisfy him who “pondereth the hearts.”

Ver. 10. “Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.”

Is the Christian called to the exercise of universal love, in imitation of Him who maketh “the sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;” “who doeth good to the unthankful.” So also is he called to a particular love of friendship, and of tenderest communion with his fellow-Christians. “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently*.” And St. John makes this the distinguishing mark of conversion: “By this we know, that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren†.”

There is that, we may observe, in every truly spiritual man, which, as universal experience attests, the world hates, because “it is not of its own.” And it is this

* 1 Pet. i. 22.

† 1 Ep. iii. 14.

peculiarity which the Christian cannot but love, because it is of God: "He that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him."

"In honour preferring one another"—"In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than himself*." Instead of vaunting yourself, or demanding honour from others, amiably contend with all in endeavouring to show them the greater respect. This is the conduct our divine Master enforced upon his disciples, when remarking the assuming behaviour of the Pharisees, he told them always to "take the lowest room." And what is that politeness, which gives so amiable a cast to social life, in the truly well-bred circles of every civilized people?—It is nothing more than the *profession* of this principle in all their intercourse, and an attention to it in all their behaviour one towards another.

The insincerity and hypocrisy of this complaisance, as generally exhibited, may, indeed, be deprecated. The genius of Christ's religion, however, bids us not, to substitute in its stead, roughness and selfish vulgarity; honest, perhaps, but uncovering that, over which decency and charity should throw the veil. It requires us rather to add to that polite attention, which good breeding dictates, as proper to be shown to every person, the real humility and benevolence of the Christian character: politeness will not then be, as is too often the case, a beautiful garment worn to conceal the deformity and odious features of a proud and selfish heart.

Ver. 11. "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord,"—or, (as some read,) "serving the time."

Diligence in the discharge of every duty; zeal and earnestness in whatever we are called to execute; and, whe-

* Phil. ii. 3.

ther it be a common duty of life, or a holy exercise of devotion, to act always upon a principle of religion.—“With good will, doing service as to the Lord, and not unto men,” seems to be the precept here inculcated. Many copies, however, read “time,” or “season,” instead of “Lord;” in which case the last clause will signify, prudently suiting your conduct to the times, as far as is consistent with integrity, being always on the watch to seize the passing opportunity of doing good.

Ver. 12. “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.”

The two first of these precepts may be illustrated from the first part of the fifth chapter; as may the last by reading the parable of the importunate widow, Luke xviii. where our Lord is pleased to make the supposed case of a woman who, by mere dint of importunity, and with a view to get rid of her, prevails upon an unjust judge to do her justice, “an example how men ought alway to pray, and not to faint” or desist.

Ver. 13. “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to”—or, “pursuing hospitality.”

St. John very forcibly asks, “Whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him*?” And when we remember that our Saviour has given us to understand, that either the favour or the neglect, when the wants of the poorer brethren are relieved, or when they are suffered to pass unnoticed, is considered as shown to *his own person*†; charity to the poor must be a leading feature in the Christian character.

Hospitality to strangers was, in those days, also, a most useful branch of charity: and, as far as it is wanted,

* 1 John iii. 17.

† Matt. xxv.

is still a duty of the Christian code. "Be careful to entertain strangers." There are two ways, it is easy to reflect, of receiving and conducting ourselves towards persons unknown: either with reserve and coldness, under the idea that, for aught we know, they may be bad men; or with kindness and generosity, remembering, that some "have entertained angels unawares*." We read, again: "Use hospitality one toward another without grudging†." And, as the Wise Man observes, "A man who would have friends must show himself friendly‡."

Ver. 14. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not."

See the precepts of our Lord to this effect, in his sermon on the mount§: and in no one point does the particular genius of the religion of Jesus more discover itself, than in the carriage and behaviour for which this precept calls; in contradiction to those notions of honour, of resentment, and of *proper spirit*, so universal among all ranks and classes of worldly-minded men.

Ver. 15. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice; and weep with them that weep."

Neither morosely refuse to share the joy of them whom God has prospered; nor appear insensible or unaffected at the distresses of others: shun not the house of mourning, like the deceitful friend.

Ver. 16. "Be of the same mind one towards another; mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate: be not wise in your own conceits."

We are here called to union and agreement; to that mutual interest in the concerns and wishes, and to that regard for the persons and opinions of one another, which tends to maintain and cement brotherly love. And what

* Heb. xiii. 2: + 1 Pet. iv. 9. ‡ Prov. xviii. 24.

§ Matt. v. 43, &c.; comp. Luke vi. 27—35.

are common hinderances of unity and friendship, but either ambition, partiality, and improper respect of persons, on account of their present circumstances; or else the being opinionated in an overweening conceit of ourselves, so that the wishes and opinions of others are despised? Against such tempers it is that we are cautioned.

Ver. 17. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

To return evil for evil, our divine Master has forbidden us in a variety of precepts. His own conduct in the midst of the injuries and ill-treatment which he endured from ungrateful men, is so striking an example of this forbearance, that no Christian can easily forget it. Again: as he is a member of society, the Christian must not be satisfied in the approbation of God and of his own conscience; he has a further object—to make men think highly of that religion which he professes among them, that they may be led to glorify God. To this end he must endeavour to save appearances: "Let not your good be evil spoken of." He must seek "to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

Ver. 18. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

As the precept before us seems to intimate, we cannot, indeed, always command peace, either in the family, or in the church, or in the nation; but we can always make it an object.—"Seek the things which make for peace." And we read, also, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

Ver. 19. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Ver. 20. "Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."

“Never to revenge an injury,” all must know to be an invariable maxim with the true disciples of Jesus Christ; for his commands are repeated and most express on this subject. The magistrate, indeed, who is “the avenger of God, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil,” may justly take vengeance: and we may apply, and, in some cases, *ought* to apply for the interference of his power, to requite our wrongs:—It is the ordinance of God, and is, therefore, not only to be submitted to, but supported. But, in our private conduct, as individuals, towards one another, and in all cases where the laws of our country afford us no redress, no return of evil for evil is allowed, supposing we have it in our power.

We are rather to give place to wrath: that is, rather yield ourselves the victims of our peaceful principles. We are not to take justice into our own hands, but wait for the interference of God, who has declared himself “the avenger” of all them that suffer wrong. Nay, more: we are to watch every opportunity of doing a kindness to our enemy—“For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.” According to the most suitable interpretation of these words, the allusion is to the melting of the harder and less fusible metals; which, in order to their being melted, are surrounded and covered with coals: your conduct should be such as is calculated to soothe and win the heart of the most obdurate and inveterate enemy*.

Ver. 21. “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

* The expression, however, “heap coals of fire on his head,” may be proverbial for *putting a person to the blush*.—“I. C. Clodius in Lexico Hebr. selecto confert radicem Arab. transpositam חָלַל (per Cha.), proprie *rubuit*, hinc *erubuit*, *pudore affectus est*: quo respexisse videtur Salomo (Prov. xxv. 22), si ibi per *prunas in capite inimici* cum multis interpretibus, *erubescantiam*, seu *pudorem inimici* intellegamus.”—*Simon in verb.* חָלַל

Such is to be the generous and noble contest between the disciples of Christ and their injurious persecutors. It is to be a trial whether, by persevering in acts of kindness towards them, they cannot overcome the determined and sworn enmity of their enemies to them. And happy is he who shall *suffer*, or who shall *perish*, in such a contest: "Great shall be his reward in heaven!"

LECTURE XXV.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH.—THROUGHOUT.

THE next topic which the Apostle touches upon, in detailing the duties of the christian, is that of his subjection to the civil authority: this he states to be a duty binding all descriptions of persons in the church.

Ver. 1st. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers"—or, to the sovereign power. "For there is no power but of God; the powers that be, are ordained of God."

Now, if at the period when men possessed of the extraordinary inspiration of the Holy Ghost, filled the superior stations of the church, men who were, perhaps, in political wisdom, as well as in religious knowledge, far more excellent than the princes of the earth; if, even then, the rule was absolute, they must all be subject to the sovereign power of the state; most certainly, no time nor situation can be supposed, when either the church as a society, or when any authority exercised therein, can lawfully claim an exemption from the authority of the sovereign; and much less any individual member of the church, acting among men in his private capacity.

The Apostle, too, wrote at a period, when, if ever, political questions might be supposed to distract the conscientious mind. The character of those who then possessed the sovereignty, the means by which it had been attained, and the manner in which it was too generally exercised might all have seemed to render questionable the religious duty of obedience. The Jewish members of the church of Rome, for instance would regard with every

prejudice the conquerors of their country, and the destroyers of their national independence; and, however they might feel obliged, from policy or fear of punishment, to submit; they would be but ill inclined to reverence the authority of the government as that appointment of God, to which they were bound, in conscience, to render obedience. With the Roman citizen, too, this must have been a question of difficulty, since the authority of their Emperor was new; and within the memory of some of them, probably, the long enjoyed and highly boasted liberties of their country had been violated and trampled in the dust. All circumstances then considered, to say nothing of the unworthy and brutal character of the then reigning Emperor, and the tyrannical measures of the government in every department, never was a set of Christians less likely to relish the doctrine of the divine right of sovereigns; nor ever was there a time when they could, with greater plausibility, have argued *theirs* to be an exempted case. Yet in these very circumstances, and on the eve, too, of a period, when, all the powers of the state would be actively employed to persecute the people of God, and to extirpate, if possible, the very name of Jesus of Nazareth; at this very period the Spirit of God commands every soul to be subject to the sovereign power; declaring that there is no power but of God, that the powers that be are ordained of God. And, as we read in the following verse:

Ver. 2. "Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation."

If, in language so strong, so peremptory a command is given respecting the imperial authority of a Nero; if, when men could not but see, in many instances, the very ends for which magistracy is ordained of God, frustrated; and the sovereignty so prostituted in the scandalous excesses

of the inhuman tyrant, that it could scarcely be said to be friendly to human happiness; if, even then, the mysterious providence of the Almighty, "who setteth up kings and putteth down kings," was to be revered, and the power of the sovereign was not to be resisted, on pain of condemnation, as against those who resist the ordinance of God; we may ask, when can a christian suppose resistance to be lawful? can any imagined defects, or any actual misconduct on the part of the sovereign, be a sufficient warrant for the christian to be found either in the plots of the seditious, or in the ranks of the rebellious? If the word of God is to determine the question, we must give an unqualified negative; though we thereby pronounce a judgment upon many characters of no small celebrity among men.

In unsettled and revolutionary times, the line of duty may possibly be perplexed and difficult; at most seasons, however, when faction rages, it is not difficult to point out from scripture where genuine christians will be found. "As sheep accounted for the slaughter," we may expect to behold the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus; but it will hardly be found, that any thoroughly imbued with the Spirit of Christ, will be forward, even in the most trying times, to adopt revolutionary measures.

But, it will be asked, are there no limits to the obedience which a subject owes to his sovereign? If the question be respecting his active obedience,—what he is to do, or to refrain from doing, at the king's commandment; we may answer, the limits of his obedience, in the first place, are the laws of God; and, where they neither command nor restrict, the laws and authorized customs of our country. We may not be the tools of an oppressor, nor his aiders and abettors in the abuse of his authority: neither may we at any time cease to "obey God rather than man."

But, in pursuance of this practice, whatever sufferings

or injuries the christian is called to endure from unjust and wicked sovereigns, he is to submit; and, though he could, by his influence raise a multitude of his fellow-subjects to defend his person or property against the PUBLIC AUTHORITY, he may not do it.—It were “to resist the ordinance of God.” His duty is, quietly to surrender himself, as to the ministers of God, who are accountable to HIM alone for the violation of his rights. It was thus that the blessed Jesus submitted to Pontius Pilate, acting by the authority of the Emperor Tiberius! an authority exercised in that place, by the harshest of all rights, the right of conquest over a subjugated and oppressed people:—“leaving us,” as St. Peter tells us, “an example that we should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously*.”

Pilate acted not as an upright judge in this affair: and those who, by their accusations and insinuations, prevailed upon him, from maxims of state, to pass the cruel sentence, were still more blameable. Setting aside the delegated authority of the governor, they were the instigators of the murder, and he, with some unwillingness, the suborned assassin. But, mark the observation of our divine Master: “Thou couldest have no power over me, except it were given thee from above.” To this power, as to the ordinance of God, Jesus, accordingly, meekly submits.

But will not such principles lead to certain oppression and tyranny on the part of princes? Is the precept clear from Scripture for the Christian’s conduct? We may leave the *consequences* with God! Is he not able to rule and control the spirits of earthly rulers, to stop and depose them when he sees fit? Does he not claim it as his prerogative? And has he not undertaken to do it? “The

* 1 Pet. ii. 22, 23.

king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will*."

Still it will be insinuated, can it be supposed to be the will of God, that his authority should be delegated into the hands of the wicked; and that that power, which was intended "for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well," should be perverted to the directly opposite purposes? Would it not be well pleasing in the sight of God to put down such rulers, and place the sword in the hands of persons "having the fear of God before their eyes?" But, where does God require this at our hands? Is not his providence sufficient for the government of princes? If you admit a providence at all, remember, "By him kings reign." No mortal can either be raised to that office without his permission; or continue in it longer than he pleases.

Remarkable is the language of the Prophet respecting the judgment of Nebuchadnezzar: "This matter is by the decree of the WATCHERS, and the demand by the word of the HOLY ONES: to the intent that the living may know that the MOST HIGH ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men†." With such precepts, and with such an example before him, the duty of the believer cannot, one would think, be doubtful. We know, again, who they are that are described in Scripture, as "promising liberty;" "despising government:" who, "presumptuous, self-willed, are not afraid to speak evil of dignities;" "murmurers, complainers‡."

So far, indeed, is the Apostle from encouraging any thing like discontent or rebellion against the sovereign authority, that, notwithstanding the partial perversion of judgment and justice which he must have seen and felt; yet, in laying down a rule for the conduct of subjects

* Prov. xxi. 1.

† Dan. iv. 17.

‡ Jude, 16.

towards their rulers, he will not suppose that the imperial authority can act otherwise than for the good designed in its appointment.

Ver. 3. "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou, then, not be afraid of the power, do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same :

Ver. 4. "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid ; for he beareth not the sword in vain : for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

The Apostle, as we have observed, will not suppose, that the very reverse of this may be a true description of the civil authority, as far as the personal character of the prince can influence its exercise. He refuses to notice, that such was the actual state of things at that present time. And we may remark with pleasure and exultation, that such a respect for the majesty of the sovereign, extravagant as it may appear to some, is exactly agreeable to the genius of the British constitution. "Besides the attribute of sovereignty, the law also ascribes to the king, in his political capacity, absolute *perfection*. The king can do no wrong ; which ancient and fundamental maxim is not to be understood, as if every thing transacted by the government was of course just and lawful, but means only two things : first, that whatever is exceptionable in the conduct of public affairs, is not to be imputed to the king, nor is he answerable for it personally to his people. And, secondly, it means, that the prerogative of the crown extends not to do any injury ; it is created for the benefit of the people, and therefore cannot be exerted to their prejudice*.

From the words of the text we learn one of the chief

* Blackstone's Commentaries, book i. chap. 7,

ends for which magistrates are instituted. Private revenge, as we have seen before, is in no case permitted; but punishment brought on the injurious by the instrumentality of the magistrate, is not only lawful, but is strictly agreeable to the design and appointment of God. He "to whom vengeance belongeth" has invested the magistrate with "a sword to be a revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

A public prosecution, therefore, in the name of the king, against any person who has wronged or injured us, is perfectly consistent with Christian charity. We do not, in this case, revenge ourselves; we put the matter into *his* hands who is appointed by God to take charge and cognizance of these things; and whom, indeed, we are bound, for that reason, to assist in the exercise of his functions. And it may be much questioned, how far, in criminal cases, the exercise of mercy is lawful to the individual.

But should this minister of God himself be the injurious party; should it be by abuse of the sovereign authority that we suffer wrong; there is in this case no revenger appointed. God is the only judge, and his pleasure must be waited. By the application, therefore, of the general precepts, "Avenge not yourselves"—"Resist not evil," all resistance to the sovereign authority—all attempt to do ourselves justice, is forbidden to us as Christians. "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls unto him, in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator*."

Ver. 5. "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

The aforementioned duties to the civil powers are to be made a matter of conscience, are not to be regarded as a matter of expediency only—because, at our peril, we dare not do otherwise. The spirit of the rule delivered

* 1 Pet. iv. 19.

to the domestic servant in regard of his master, is certainly applicable to the case before us: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, *as to the Lord*, and *not unto man*." This is, indeed, the foundation of true loyalty, and public spirit.

Ver. 6. "For, for this cause pay ye tribute also"—or, "Upon the same principle pay ye taxes also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing."

Whose office it is to collect from individuals this portion of their property, and to expend the same as the necessities and interest of the state may require—Whether the right of taxation ought to be lodged in the executive alone, or in a senate or parliament, the Apostle does not determine. But, speaking of the public authority, as then exercised, and the then custom of taxation, he makes the payment of the same a point of conscience. And, by consequence, all frauds upon the revenue, and all unfair evasions of taxes and customs appointed by the public authority, are equally with any other fraud or robbery, forbidden by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ver. 7. "Render, therefore, to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

Such is the summary of the Christian's duties and obligations, as a member of civil society. According to the laws and customs of that society, he will find taxes and other payments due to certain persons of public right. These he is to make a conscience of paying, be they heavy or be they light; be they partially oppressive, or be they fair and equal;—the judgment of which is not with him as a private person. He will find, again, by the same laws and customs, "respect" or "reverence" due, according to the different offices, ranks, and situations men hold in life. This "fear and honour," like other mem-

bers of society, the Christian is to be careful to observe and render.

And never, surely, was the nature of the spiritual religion of the gospel more misconceived, than when professing Christians, from whatever motives, have made a merit of neglecting, or, at least, have thought themselves discharged from observing the customary civilities of life, and from the paying of those tokens of respect and honour usually paid to superiors in society. "Honour all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honour the king."

The Apostle proceeds:

Ver. 8. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

Pay to all their lawful demands upon you; and lay yourself under *unnecessary* obligation to no one; in order that all your actions may flow from the general principle of Christian love; and that inferior motives may as little as possible interfere and divide your heart in your conduct towards men. A most noble ambition indeed! And this discovers to us the true advantage of independency of station and fortune; "that, being free from all," for the love he bears his fellow-creatures, for Christ's sake, the Christian of exalted rank may make himself the servant of all.

He, indeed, the Apostle observes, who loves his neighbour, fulfils the law.

Ver. 9. "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness; Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Ver. 10. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

The Apostle had said, in a former part of this Epistle,

that a man was justified without the deeds of the law, and yet that the law was not made void by faith; yea, was established thereby. How faith establishes the law, we see in the verse before us: "Faith works by love, and love is a fulfilling of the law; for every commandment is contained in this one, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And when this love is wrought in the believer's heart, it will most unquestionably establish the authority of every precept. Love worketh no ill to one's neighbours. If we truly love them, we cannot injure them either in person or in property; or compass it in our thoughts. If we love our neighbours as ourselves, "we shall do to all men as we would they should do to us."

Similar reflections might be made respecting the love of God and the duties of the first table. This, however, is not the subject of the Apostle in this place. That subject was treated, and treated upon the same principles, in the beginning of the former chapter; "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you present yourselves a living sacrifice," &c.

Thus the *two first grand branches* of morality having been taught—our duty to God and our duty to man, next follows the *third grand branch*—our duty to ourselves; or, more strictly speaking, that self-discipline and proper regulation of our affections, without which we shall not be in a condition to serve as we ought either God or man.

Ver. 11. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to wake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

Ver. 12. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

In addition to what he had said, the Apostle calls upon them to notice the time,—the nearer approach of that blessed day when full "salvation should be brought to

them at the appearing of Christ." The idea seems to be that of the master or parent calling his family to their accustomed duties, bidding them remark the time of day—"The night is far spent, the day is at hand." In the same language the Apostle addresses the Thessalonians: "Ye are all the children of the light and of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness; therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and, for a helmet, the hope of salvation: for God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

As though one part of mankind conceived it to be the setting-in of night, while another had been called to see the day breaking in the east: such is the state of the careless world contrasted with that of the true believers in Christ. In respect of spiritual things, the children of darkness are sunk in a deep sleep; if they wake, they wake for purposes of sin—for deeds that shun the face of the heavenly day: but the children of light rouse from their slumbers, and prepare them to go forth to their work and to their labour. The day which approaches will overtake the world as a thief: "They know not the light, for the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death*." In the day of the Son of Man, we know from scripture, the world will be taken by surprise: "For as a snare shall it come upon all the inhabitants of the earth." But, on the other hand, as when the sun arises upon the shining ranks of a chosen band, which vigilance had prepared and marshalled for some great enterprise against the break of day, so will Christ at his coming find a "people

* Job, xxiv. 16, 17.

made ready and prepared," "waiting for their Lord," "having put away the deeds of darkness, and put upon them the armour of light."

Ver. 13 "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness; not in chambering and wantonness; not in strife and envying.

Ver. 14. "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

Reflecting that the eyes of God and man are upon us, let us walk in an honourable, becoming manner. We are placed in a *conspicuous* situation.

Not in rioting (*καμωσις*). The word signifies, says Parkhurst, "lascivious feastings, with songs and music;" and may, indeed, well apply to many of the profligate and often licentious amusements of the age; which, not improperly, ask the midnight hours for their concealment; and are wont to receive as the signal of their dissolution the appearance of the morning. "Not in drunkenness"—the so frequent solace and dearly purchased happiness of the children of darkness. "Not in chambering or wantonness," in whoredom, or any other sort of pampering of fleshly lusts. "Not in strife or envy." It is not sufficient, let the professor of Christ's holy religion observe, to exchange the vices of the debauchee for those of a devil; a change of character which has sometimes been vaunted as conversion from sin to God! To live in the indulgence of evil, and of contentious and malicious dispositions, even though the concerns of religion are the pretended objects of our strife, is, in the sight of God, not less hateful than the most unclean and abominable vices.

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Seek, through the Spirit, complete conformity to his image; endeavouring to walk in the footsteps of his most holy life. To imitate Christ, and to drink into his spirit, is the summit of all practical holiness. This, therefore, is the

crowning precept of Christian morality—"to put on Christ"—to invest ourselves with his character—to "arm ourselves with the same mind."

A mysterious work and operation of the Spirit upon the soul is, no doubt, the foundation of this precept. Its practical import, however, is, plainly, that we are to copy his example as set before us in the word of God: that, "as he was, so we may be in this world." It is true, indeed, when the original is a work so divinely excellent, perfection, in the copy, is out of the question. Who will compare himself with Jesus Christ? Perfection, then, in holiness and righteousness, is not attainable. The christian still acknowledges, with unfeigned humility, his continual deficiency; and if he knows himself, and is not taken in some subtle device of the enemy, he will not be in danger of making his attainments in grace any part of his boast and confidence before God. The more he contemplates the original which he copies—the more his taste is improved to discern its superior excellencies, the more will he be dissatisfied—nay, even grieved and vexed with his copy. It is true, every line has been imitated, and every feature was intended to be traced, and he is content and ambitious that it should be the great business of his life to make his copy more and more resembling the original, though to equal it be impossible.

The latter clause of the verse, indeed, admonishes us, that we still carry about us "the dead body of sins," that "fleshly nature" which still lusteth against the spirit;" "and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." There is, therefore, still, danger that we should gratify the lusts of the flesh to our hurt and injury. They are, then, not extinct: but still need to be mortified and crucified afresh.

To conclude: *perfection*, and nothing short of perfection, is the christian's aim; but he copies with an *imperfect* hand.

LECTURE XXVI.

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH.—THROUGHOUT.

THE object of the Apostle in the chapter before us, is to lay down certain rules for the regulation of the conduct of believers towards each other, in respect of certain disputes, which had either already arisen, or might hereafter arise among them. It had been, no doubt, easy for the Apostle to have settled at once these questions in dispute: he, in fact, does decide the point, and pronounces the dispute to have been all along on the one side, a weakness in the faith. It is remarkable, however, that St. Paul treats the matter as though it were an incurable evil: the reason of this, doubtless is, that foreseeing, through the wisdom with which he was inspired, that such disagreements would frequently, on a variety of subjects, arise in the church, he would, therefore, leave a general rule how to treat these disputes, when no infallible decision could be had upon the subject.

.How will every lover of peace, and every truly enlightened christian lament, that the spirit of these instructions has been so often forgotten amidst the contending parties in the visible church of Christ; so that for the most trifling differences, strifes, and contentions, bitter zeal without measure, and divisions without number, have been suffered to arise; and the great command, “Love one another,” thereby been *made of no effect*.

Let us, therefore, be careful to remark, that in regard of all those lesser matters of dispute and differences of opinion which may arise among us, in relation to what we deem in others either prejudice or weakness, superstiti-

ous singularities, or a laxity in things which, though not *essential* to the Christian character, we think proper to be conscientiously observed : let us be careful to remark, that in all these circumstances, the chapter before us will afford us an excellent rule of conduct, and acquaint us how we are to please God.

Ver. 1. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations"—or, "not to judge his doubtful thoughts*"—or, "not in order to strifes and disputations †."

The christian believer, who either from prejudice, weakness of understanding, defective instructions, or from whatever other cause, joins many "ignorances" with the profession of the gospel, and cannot avail himself of its glorious liberty ; such an one is not to be despised, and shunned by those who are more happily enlightened. They are to receive their weaker brother in the name of a disciple ; and, in their intercourse with him, are to be careful not to address him in the language of censoriousness, nor to vex him with disputes and bickerings. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you ? Let him show out of a good conversation his works, with *meekness of wisdom.*"

This precept the Apostle applies to certain differences, which at that time were known to subsist among the Roman Christians.

Ver. 2. "For one believeth that he may eat all things : another who is weak, eateth herbs."

This was the dispute : the truly enlightened knew that all descriptions of food were lawful ; but some were so weak in maintaining gospel principles—it is most probable from their prejudices concerning the Jewish distinctions of

* English margin.

† Macknight. Ei autem qui est infirmus in fide, porrigite manum, et ne sitis ambigentes in cogitationibus vestris.—*Syr.*

meats that they abstained from eating this food altogether in heathen countries, where such distinctions could not be ascertained. This is a weakness, it is admitted; but, let it be tolerated; let it not cause disputes among you.

Ver. 3. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not: and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth: for God has received him."

He who knows his liberty in these matters, is not to despise his weaker brother on account of his foolish prejudices: neither, on the other hand, is the brother, who dares not from scruples of conscience indulge in those liberties which some of his fellow Christians freely partake of, to judge them, or to take upon himself to pronounce them offenders. "For God has received them:" though you presume to judge them, God has declared his acceptance of them.

Ver. 4. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand."

We perceive here, from this strong expostulation of the Apostle, that it was the weaker brother, that was in reality more to blame in this dispute, than the less scrupulous Christian. And in subsequent differences, which have arisen in the church, what rancorous judgments and unchristian censures have often been passed by some Christians on their brethren, either because they would not be tied by their narrow rules; or because, strangers to their scruples, they felt themselves at liberty to conform to such things as the weaker brothers conceived to be sinful and abominable!

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? God hath accepted him." In the case under consideration, there was an evidence of this, that could not be controverted. The indifference of meats had been declared by

the authority of the Church and of the Holy Ghost: and in many of the divisions which have arisen in subsequent ages, it has been sufficiently evident, in the event, that those compliances, which at first were so bitterly complained of by scrupulous consciences, and which were, in some instances, so offensively imposed upon them, were not so reprehensible in the sight of God, as they seemed in their prejudiced and zealously-affected imaginations. The Spirit of God did not depart, when they separated themselves; nor have those always been his chosen instruments, whom they have deemed the fittest for the work of restoring the purity of the gospel. "Yea, they shall be holden up, for God is able to make them stand." You stand astonished at their danger, pronounce them to a certainty antichristian, and look with wonder that they do not fall suddenly! But, notwithstanding your confident opinions, all may be right, and the almighty power of God may be engaged to make them stand.

Another disagreement in the Romish church, not dissimilar, the Apostle next touches upon, and applies to it the same principles.

Ver. 5. "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Ver. 6. "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not to the Lord, he eateth not and giveth God thanks."

This dispute probably arose from the same cause as the former: the one part knowing their entire freedom from every part of the Jewish ritual; the other, deeming it their bounden duty to observe the times and seasons prescribed by that law. Each was to follow the dictates of his own conscience, without blaming those who thought

and acted differently. The observance of the day, or its non observance, as also the using and the denying themselves liberty, in respect of food; either practice might be followed in a state of mind, which would render it a conscientious discharge of duty towards God, so as to be acceptable in his sight.

“ Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” This is a precept which has been much abused: that abuse, however, will not warrant us in the disuse of this divine injunction. It has indeed been made to signify, that, provided a man *think* himself right, he is absolved from all laws and regulations, both of the church and of civil society; that he neither need to “ submit himself to them that have the rule over him, who watch for his soul, as they that must give account;” nor yet to “ submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake.” In short, it has been proved, that this one precept, spoken with respect to indifferent things, may be pushed to that extreme as to overturn *all* the laws of God and man. But whence such reasonings come we know, from the effects which they produce, “ confusion and every evil work*.” At the same time let it be remembered, that, considering all the circumstances of the passage before us, the rights of conscience and of private judgment are clearly established by this precept; and ought by every description of persons to be held sacred, and treated with all possible tenderness.

Christ is the only Lord of conscience, and only Lord of faith. Whether therefore we agree with our brethren, or are under the painful necessity of disagreeing with them (for it will be a painful necessity if we are really children of peace), it ought to be under the full persuasion that it is the will of Christ revealed in his holy word; and all our

* James iii. 16.

consequent steps ought to be governed with the utmost exactness by this rule.

This *full persuasion*, however, must not be construed to mean, a confident opinion, *any how* embraced: for in all disputes *they* are wont to be the most confident, who know the least; and have not the humility, the love, or the candour, to consider with deference the opinions of others: but it means, that full assurance of the understanding, which is the fruit of information, humbly and assiduously sought.

If our conformity, therefore, to the established doctrines and rules of the church; or our adoption of the principles of some leader who has lifted up a standard of hostility against the general church, be merely grounded either on the opinions and authority of man, or the influence of connexion; though we followed the truth itself, our principle of obedience would be wrong. The purest church that ever existed, or the most faithful teacher, it is very possible, may have hold on the minds of a great portion of their people, either by prejudice, or by temporal and local circumstances alone; and the church or teacher is not to blame, if they have neither sought to extend their own dominion, nor to preach themselves; but have only asked of their people, "Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ;" yet if, after all, it should appear in the eyes of a heart-searching God, that "their fear of him is taught by the precept of men," as it will be, if the people look not beyond the authority of their church or teacher, they are not the approved people of God.

Ver. 7. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no one dieth to himself.

Ver. 8. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's.

Ver. 9. "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living."

The meaning of the Apostle is plain: the christian is not his own master, neither is he to call any man master, upon earth; one is his master, even Christ. In all things, therefore, he is to set Christ before him, to study His will, and to make a conscience of serving him in all things: his life is to be His; and in submitting himself to the stroke of death, whether it be brought upon him for his profession of the gospel, or in the ordinary visitation of Providence, he is to consider the will, and recognise the hand of his Master, removing him from this, to another state of being, nearer to Himself.

This is the grand principle of christian obedience. And the Lord Christ, in dying and rising again to life, "quickened in the Spirit," has qualified himself according to the will of the Father, to exercise this dominion in his own person, through the Spirit, both among the living, and the dead; among men on earth, and among the spirits in the separate state.

Here on earth, he needs no vicar, to whom that obedience is to be transferred: much less can any man, or body of men, claim any sort of jurisdiction in the unseen world, according to a base and antichristian superstition which has long appeared as "the abomination of desolation" in the visible church of Christ. "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king:" and over the *consciences* of his people there is neither judge nor lawgiver, nor king besides! This is the great fundamental principle of Protestantism; and however those in power may, on some occasions, have attempted to violate it, and however the schismatical and seditious have abused the principle, and prejudiced its cause; this, I am bold to say, is the fundamental principle of the Church of

England, which her soundest members will be found ready to maintain and to act upon.

But when pleading for the rights of Christ, as king in Zion, the only arbiter of conscience, is it necessary to go the lengths of some, and to renounce and execrate all compliance with human ordinances, and the regulations of church rulers and magistrates, be they right, or be they wrong, merely because man, and not Christ, has commanded them? The question may be easily determined.

Christ is king, all parties allow; and vie with each other to do him honour! What then is his sovereign will and pleasure respecting the conduct of his people in these matters? Is it for the exhibition of a self-opinionated, bigoted, stiff, unyielding, refractory, sectarian spirit, that unsullied loyalty to the King of Zion calls? Search and see! for, in the sacred scriptures, we have the mind of Christ; and we have his example too, when himself was a member of a visible church, and a subject of rulers.

What then are his commands? “Likewise, ye *younger*, submit yourselves unto the *elder*; yea, all of you be subject *one to another*, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble*.” “Mark them that cause divisions among you, and avoid them.” “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you†.” “Give none offence, neither to the Jew, nor to the Gentile, nor to the church of God. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved‡.”

What, again, should we expect from one in whose breast the spirit of charity, as above described, prevails, (for this point may be argued from the genius of our holy religion),

* 1 Pet. v. 5.

† Heb. xiii. 17.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 23, 33.

and in which dwells that wisdom which is from above, thus delineated by the Apostle James *; “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy?”

What, again, remark we in the conduct and example of Jesus Christ? He was not backward indeed, for it belonged to his office, as a prophet sent from God, to expose the unsoundness and wickedness of the idle shepherds of the Jewish church; and in similar cases let none fear to bear his testimony: but, we see nothing of that marked opposition to their regulations (for we should remember that the traditions of the Pharisees were not the institutions of the constituted authorities in the church or state, but the hurtful superstitions of a domineering sect, who, as the Jewish historian tells us, regarded neither king nor priest). We see nothing seditious nor rebellious in his conduct towards the rulers of the church, carnal and ignorant as they were: nothing like that contradiction, which some good men have been forward to show, on purpose to vindicate their religious liberty, and in honour, as they supposed, to their king.

There was, among the Jews, an annual festival, for the purpose of celebrating the dedication of their temple: it was purely a human institution; but the blessed Jesus refused not his presence: but what a different temper did he discover, from that of some whose names might be mentioned, when he was called upon for the payment of certain ecclesiastical dues, as recorded, Matt. xvii. 27? He clearly shows to Peter, that he had no right to pay the money demanded, yet he directs him where to go to procure it; meekly assigning for a reason, “*lest we should offend them.*”

* James, iii. 37.

We may then fairly argue, from the commands and from the example of our Saviour, and only Master, Jesus Christ, that we shall best fulfil his royal pleasure by a meek submission to every ordinance of men, invested with public authority in church or state, whether we ourselves should have chosen this measure, or whether we imagine that some others had been more to our own profit and to the good of the church, nay, even when church or civil rulers forget themselves, as Christ expresses himself aware that the stewards of his household would do, and imperiously and wickedly abuse their authority: if no positive law of Christ is infringed, nor practice, by him enjoined, forbidden, the christian precepts bid rather to endure the injury, than harshly and obstinately to maintain even our *undoubted rights*.

And whatever pride and superciliousness, or whatever oppression may be complained of on the part of church rulers to meet the same with refractoriness and an heretical spirit, is at least to return evil for evil, instead of proposing, with the divine assistance, to overcome evil with good. The general commands indeed for unity, peace, and orderly subjection, are so clear and positive, that it ought to be a very plain and necessitous case indeed, when a private christian or a private teacher should feel himself warranted to do what will lead to a breach of unity or peace, or orderly subjection, under the notion of obeying the commandment of Jesus Christ his king.

Yet, notwithstanding, if this be the plea of conscience, however trifling be the pretence, however palpably wrong and dangerous to the deluded soul, its plea must so far be respected by man, that beyond admonition, and that correction unto righteousness which doctrine affords, man may not interfere: that is, if the matter partake not of the nature of a civil injury: for then the church, as well

as an individual, or any other corporate body, may appeal to the sovereign authority for protection in her rights, and for the vindication of her wrongs.

But if it be purely religious, conscience may not be forced! It is an appeal from the constituted authorities in the church, to the chief Shepherd, the King himself. And in this case all control, or punishment on grounds merely religious, is a violation of this christian precept. And if rulers think they can do God service by their interference, they must be answerable for the mistake; and much more a private christian in the exercise of that power or influence he may happen to possess over the offending party.

Ver. 10. "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."

Here then lies the final appeal,—to Christ as coming to take account of his servants. "There is one that judges." "Judge nothing therefore before the time, till the Lord come:" "He will be as the refiner's fire, and as the fuller's soap:" "judgment must begin at the house of God." He has said of the heretical and seditious, that they shall not inherit the kingdom of God *. He has said also of the rulers of his household, "But, and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth †."

Ver. 11. "For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

* Gal. v. 2), 21.

† Matt. xxiv. 48.

“If thou seest,” then, “the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter; for He that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they*.” We may add, from another Scripture, “At any rate, *fret* not thyself because of evil doers†.”

Ver. 12. “So, then, every one of us must give an account of himself to God.”

For this reason, amidst the differences that may arise in the church, none, whatever be either his rank and power, or the strength of his party, should presume to judge another. We are not accountable to one another for our religious sentiments and opinions. The Lord has, indeed, appointed pastors and ministers as “helpers of our faith,” “for the perfecting of the saints‡:” and they who presumptuously neglect these appointed means and despise their authority, will have much to answer for, and will perish, perhaps, in the “gainsaying of Core:” but then it is for God to call them to account, and not for man.

Ver. 13. “Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.”

Since Christ will judge all offences committed in his kingdom, we are prohibited from passing sentence upon each other. And, for the same reason—because we know that offenders must answer for it to God, brotherly love demands that we should use every discretion in our power, not to be either the cause or the occasion of offences being committed by the weaker brethren. Hence the following admonition, which is addressed to the more enlightened christians—to “those that are strong:”

Ver. 14. “I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him

* Eccles. v. 8.

† Psa. xxvii. 1, &c.

‡ Jude.

that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean."

He pronounces them right in not observing the Jewish distinctions of meats and days; but, at the same time, declares that, in respect of the Jewish converts themselves, in their present state of mind, prejudiced as they are, it would be wrong for them to eat.

Ver. 15. "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died."

If by your freedom and indulgence you hurt your brother, either by raising his prejudices against you, or by tempting him, against his conscience, to follow your example, it is uncharitable, and inconsistent with your love to his soul. And in this, how far are you from following the footsteps of Christ! He "laid down his life for the sheep; but you, as far as in you lies, either for the sake of food, or of showing your superior knowledge of the gospel liberty, would hazard the destruction of their souls.

Ver. 16. "Let not, then, your good be evil spoken of."

Though your deed be unquestionably good and lawful, yet abstain from doing it in such circumstances, that it will either appear sinful in the eyes of others, or that any one will be able to say, you have done him harm thereby.

Ver. 17. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Ver. 18. "For he," or, "He truly that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men."

The great privilege of the gospel state is not this liberty from the restriction of food and consecrated days, but, as the Apostle has been showing, in this Epistle, "righteous-

ness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And he who hungers and thirsts after the righteousness which is of God by Christ; who walks so as to maintain peace with God and man; and who, in devotedness of heart, seeks for the communion of the Holy Ghost, that he may enjoy his holy comfort in his own heart, and be the means of spreading the heavenly flame in the hearts of others—this is the character esteemed by God and man; not only by God, "the author of peace and lover of concord," but even by men also. And among all good and sensible men, whose memory is most respected; the memory of those who have spent their labour and time in quarrelling about non-essentials, fomenting by bigoted attachment to indifferent things, and the obstinacy of a party spirit, divisions, which forbearance and love might have healed; or the memory of those who, by their lives, their preaching, or their writings, have been useful to mankind, in teaching the great doctrine of "God's righteousness," the only foundation of a sinner's happiness; who, in describing the way of peace—how it may be obtained, and how endangered; and in leading in prayer and praise, have so spoken and written of spiritual things, that, like the two disciples going to Emmaus, the hearts of their readers and hearers have burnt within them:—whose memory, we ask, is most blessed?

Ver. 19. "Let us, therefore, follow after the things that make for peace; and things whereby one may edify another.

Ver. 20. "For meat destroys not the work of God. All things, indeed, are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

Ver. 21. "It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

The meaning and tendency of these admonitions are

plain ; and, let us remember, they respect not this dispute about meats and holidays alone, but are to be applied to all differences and disputes of an unimportant nature, which may, at any time, arise among Christians. And never, alas ! was there more occasion for their observance than in our day. It will not, perhaps, be an easy task to observe, at all times and places, the conduct here pointed out by the Apostle ; nor even, in the multiplied and divers errors and heresies of the day, to know, in some cases, how to apply the precepts literally : the general spirit of these directions, however, is plain and practicable—“ Endeavour after peace ;” to prevent divisions ; to heal them when created ; or, if that be impossible, to supply every palliative that candour can suggest ; considering that, whether you cause them, or partake in them, *schism* and *heresy* are most hurtful to the interest of Christ, and their guilt pronounced to be great in the sight of God.

Again : abstain from using your liberty in indifferent things, when you are aware that, in your particular situation, it will give offence, and may either hurt the weak, the prejudiced, or the ignorant.

Ver. 22. “ Hast thou faith ? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth.”

Have you strong and more extensive faith, so that you outstrip your neighbours in knowledge and light, and can plainly perceive that many things which they hold to be sacred, and make a conscience either of doing or of not doing, are perfectly indifferent ? In such circumstances, it is not unlikely that vanity may prompt you to despise their weakness ; and you may feel a wish to shame them by an ostentatious display of your light and liberty. Let it not, however, be so. “ Have it to thyself before God.” Rejoice secretly before him in your privileges, but hurt

not the minds of others, by an injudicious exercise of these privileges, should your lot be cast among Christians of lower attainments.

“ Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth.” In doing what you see others do, be fully persuaded in your own mind that it is right and lawful. If there be any misgivings in your mind, abstain; though the example of other Christians bespeak the thing to be lawful.

Ver. 23. “ And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatever is not of faith, is sin.”

The Apostle speaks as to the lawfulness of meat in question; but the application is general. If a man has, upon the whole, doubts in his mind respecting any indulgence to which he is led by the example of others, he is condemned, or liable to the charge of sin, if he partake of the indulgence; because “ he does it not in faith;” that is, believing it to be right. And, however lawful be the act performed, yet, when the man, at the time he performs it, does not believe it to be lawful, he is clearly guilty of sin, even in doing what is right.

LECTURE XXVII.

FROM THE FIRST VERSE OF THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER, TO
THE END OF THE EPISTLE.

IN the beginning of this chapter the Apostle prescribes the conduct which the strong ought to bear towards the weak. These admonitions, in the connexion in which we read them in our common editions of the New Testament, have the appearance of arising out of the precepts delivered in the foregoing chapter, and seem to relate to the indifferent matters of meats and holidays; but the most approved editions read in this place—and that upon very sufficient authority—what in our Bibles are placed as the three last verses of the Epistle. So that, properly speaking, the Epistle closes here with these verses; and the remainder of the 15th and the 16th chapters are to be considered as a kind of *POSTSCRIPT* to the Epistle.

In this connexion, the admonitions respecting the carriage and conduct of the strong towards the weak, which now stand at the beginning of the fifteenth chapter, will be found to have a much more important reference than to meats, and days, and matters of like indifference.

We attend, therefore, in the first place, to the close of the Epistle to the Romans.

Chap. XVI. ver. 25. “Now to Him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.

Ver. 26. “But now is made manifest, and by the Scripture of the Prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God,”—or rather, “and according to the Scripture of the Prophets, by the commandment of the everlasting God,” “made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.

Ver. 27. "To God, the only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen."

On a view of that revelation of the doctrines of grace, contained in this Epistle, which doctrines, comparatively speaking, had been kept secret from the beginning; but were now, by the preaching of St. Paul and of the other Apostles and Evangelists, fully revealed; and that not to Jews only, but also by express command of God, and agreeably to ancient prophecy, to the Gentiles also: contemplating this blessed manifestation of the scheme of mercy, St. Paul concludes by ascribing glory to God the Only Wise: as to him who is alone able to establish his people in the knowledge, belief, and practice of the gospel revelation.

This conclusion affords a very important reflection. It matters little, that the world possesses now a much clearer and fuller revelation of the mysteries of God, unless He, "to whom belongeth wisdom and might," will condescend to be our teacher and helper. Without His establishing of us, we shall profit no more—perhaps far less—in the faith, and in the knowledge of the truth, than our forefathers, who may, notwithstanding, be said to have been, with respect to religious knowledge, in darkness, in comparison of the light which now shineth.

As a matter of fact, how seldom has the gospel been received and understood according to the more full revelation of it which is made in this Epistle; and in the other writings of the Apostles, written after the time when the promised Spirit had been shed upon them from on high! God, the only Wise and only Powerful, must give us eyes to see, and a heart to perceive and embrace these things, or we abide still in darkness, and are at the best, but "babes in understanding." As it is written, "And all thy children shall be taught of me, and great shall be the peace of thy children." Amen.

To proceed next with the POSTSCRIPT.

We may conjecture, that from a reflection in the Apostle's mind, that, notwithstanding this full manifestation of the covenant of Grace, some Christians would yet, from various causes, be weak in faith and in knowledge; while some, by God's blessing, would outstrip their fellows, and become strong in faith, and clear in their views of the truth, he was induced to subjoin a caution respecting the conduct which the strong ought to bear towards the weak, a caution indeed, as all must be sensible, not unnecessary.

Chap. XV. Ver. 1. "We then"—or, "We moreover that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Ver. 2. "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good, to edification."

An admonition, but too much illustrated in its breach by some, who, in our day, pride themselves on their attainments in religious knowledge and experience. Instead of showing a kind condescension to those, whom they deem less enlightened, and less evangelical; and submitting to such exercises of the means of grace, as would please them, and be best calculated to do them good; they will separate themselves to cultivate alone such things as please themselves: like forward children, who conceive it a disgrace to associate with those that are younger than themselves; or, like a new sect of Pharisees, who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others: for, though they differ in their doctrinal views, they bear a strong resemblance, in the contempt of others which they discover.

But is this the good and gentle wisdom which is from above? St. Paul truly writes, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." And he observes again, that though a man have all knowledge, and understand all mysteries, and have not charity, HE IS NOTHING.

Attend we, then, to the precept before us: let us suppose that you are strong, that you have attained a ripeness in knowledge and in experience; so that "the strong meat" of the gospel, its higher doctrines and mysteries, are your delightful and wholesome food. Let us grant, that the first rudiments of the gospel are not so peculiarly adapted to your edification; and that, if you had only to please yourselves, you would make choice of a different mode of preaching, or reading, or conversation. But to do this, you cannot but perceive, would not be so suitable to the multitude even of sincere christians around you. It would not please them: it would not edify them. The question is, shall you bear with the infirmities of the weak, and seek to please them; or shall you leave them to themselves, and seek alone your own pleasure and profit? This question the Apostle decides; and he urges the example of Christ.

Ver. 3. "For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me."

The whole account of the conduct of our divine Master does indeed show, that his sole aim, in his intercourse with men, was the good of others, and not to please himself. He truly bore the infirmities of the weak, and, with great humility, accommodated his instructions and conversation to the capacities and inferior knowledge of those about him; insomuch that in the eyes of some he spared the reproaches cast upon others, because of his too great condescension towards them. Thus, for instance, because he associated with publicans and sinners, and would not keep aloof from them, according to the Pharisees' notion of the sanctity of a Prophet; they not only denied him that character, but said, "Behold a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." And thus, perhaps, it may happen, either to the truly enlightened christian or minister.—

Because of his great condescension to the infirmities of the weaker brethren, and his adapting his instructions and conversation to the wants of the weaker and more ignorant, in the eyes of the proud, he may, perhaps, share their reproach, and be himself pronounced ignorant, weak in the faith, or unenlightened. And happy is he, who is content, after the example of Christ, to bear the reproach, "not seeking his own honour," but "the good of many, that they may be saved.

Ver. 4. "For, whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope."

We should be content to suffer reproach for Christ's sake, even from our brethren, and those of most esteem in the visible church. And we are to encourage ourselves to patient perseverance, and console ourselves by reading in the Scriptures the lives and sufferings of the Prophets of the Lord. They, it appears, were sometimes men disliked by all parties in their day and generation; disavowed and rejected by the people to whom they were sent; and especially by those whose opinions were most respected among men. Such reproach they were content to bear.—St. Paul also speaks of himself, in some circumstances of his ministry, "as a deceiver, and yet true."

Ver. 5. "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded, one towards another, according to Christ Jesus."

May that God, who gave the Prophets patience to discharge their unthankful office, and comforted them in all their tribulations which they endured from false brethren, endow you with respect to each other, with sentiments of reciprocal love and attachment, that, in despite of all contempt and slander which may be cast upon your conduct by the violent and party-spirited, you may seek to please each other for good. This will conduce, above all things,

to preserve unity and concord among you, and prevent those divisions and separations so dishonourable to the christian name.

Ver. 6. "That ye may, with one mind and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The scene, pleasing in the sight of God, we learn from this passage, is not to behold christians disputing about their little peculiarities, nor the strong showing their superiority over the weak; but to see them laying aside their differences, and the strong condescending to the weak, uniting together with one accord in the solemnities of the christian worship.

Ver. 7. "Wherefore, receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."

In receiving others, admitting them to your society and communion, show the same kindness, and forbearance, and tender mercy which Christ showed to you, lost, ignorant, and guilty sinners, in receiving you for the heirs of glory. *Freely and graciously ye have received: freely and graciously give.* Our divine Master invites his disciples, and encourages them by exhibiting himself, "as meek and lowly in spirit." The same disposition ought to mark the conduct of his servants one towards another, and especially of the strong towards the weak.

The Apostle next adverts to another subject.

Ver. 8. "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.

Ver. 9. "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause will I confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

Ver. 10. "And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

Ver. 11. "And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud him, all ye people.

Ver. 12. "And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust."

It is easy to perceive the motive of the Apostle in sub-joining these passages of Scripture in his postscript. He feared the dissensions which would arise between the Jewish and the Gentile converts: he would, therefore, conciliate them towards each other, by observing again to the Gentile, that Christ was a Jew; that his personal ministry had been confined to the Jews, and that, through their instrumentality, the churches of the Gentiles had received all their spiritual blessings. This was a motive to love and unity, and called for forbearance, on the part of the Gentiles, with the national prejudices which some of the Jews might discover. So again, to do away these prejudices which might still lurk in the breasts of the weaker Jews, he quotes these several passages from their Scriptures, which clearly foretell that the Gentiles were to form one church, and one worshipping people, with the Jews.

Ver. 13. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Ver. 14. "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

Ver. 15. "Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you, in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that was given me of God:

Ver. 16. "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost."

To soften some parts of his Epistle, where his instructions might seem to intimate his suspicions of the uncharitableness, or of the ignorance of the Roman church, the

Apostle in *again*, as it were, taking his leave of them, with admirable address and tenderness, assures them of the contrary opinion which he entertained respecting them. One reason, he tells them, of his writing thus boldly to them, was that those, who knew him not personally, might not be ignorant of his apostolical office, which extended unto them, as part of his charge. In describing his office, he compares himself to a priest, preparing an offering to the Lord, even a people from among the Gentiles: and he would endeavour, that, through his ministry, they might abound more in the Holy Ghost. Thus would the sacrifice be consecrated, and rendered acceptable to God.

Ver. 17. "I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ, in those things which pertain to God.

Ver. 18. "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things, which Christ had not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed.

Ver. 19. "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Ver. 20. "Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.

Ver. 21. "But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand."

The Apostle acquaints them with the high honour which God had every where put upon his ministry; the great miracles he had been enabled to perform; how the Spirit of God had borne him testimony, and given effect to his preaching. He glories, that he had filled all the country from Jerusalem to the very borders of Italy, with the knowledge of the gospel of Christ. He explains to us

also his mode of proceeding: his aim was to preach the gospel, where no other preacher had been; and how much must every one admire this delicacy in the conduct of the Apostle, lest he should interfere with the labours of other ministers!

Ver. 22. "For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming unto you.

Ver. 23. "But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you,

Ver. 24. "Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if I first be somewhat filled with your company."

Whether the Apostle ever had an opportunity of fulfilling his intentions of preaching the gospel in these western parts of the world, does not appear from the Scripture narrative; but the tradition of antiquity seems to have preserved the fact, that the personal ministry of the great Apostle to the Gentiles was extended to Spain and Gaul; and even, as some suppose, to Britain. We read, however, in the latter chapters of the Acts, that St. Paul came to Rome in very different circumstances from those he here proposes to himself.

Ver. 25. "But now I go to Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

Ver. 26. "For it has pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

Ver. 27. "It has pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For, if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in carnal things."

We read more of this affair in the Acts of the Apostles, and it is a striking proof of the amiable and charitable

tendency of the gospel. What else could have opened the hearts of the distant people of Macedonia and Greece, to send to relieve the poor of Jerusalem in the time of their sufferings? Let us notice too, how early the practice which at this day so particularly adorns the church of Christ, of making collections for the poor, began to prevail among the primitive Christians. And St. Paul, we should notice further, argues it to be a duty, that those who have been but the occasional instruments of conveying to us spiritual things, should in their necessity partake of our carnal things; that is, evidently, of the good things of this present life which we possess: for *carnal*, as we have before had occasion to argue, is an epithet applying to all that relates to men in their natural state, or as creatures born into this world.

Ver. 28. "When, therefore, I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

Ver. 29. "And I am sure when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."

When he had finished this duty and service, then he proposed to take his intended journey; and he felt confident that he should appear among them with the same spiritual powers for the demonstration of the truth, which he had been enabled to exhibit in other places: yet he was not without apprehension of the consequences of his journey to Jerusalem.

Ver. 30. "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.

Ver. 31. "That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service, which I have for Jerusalem, may be accepted of the saints;

Ver. 32. "That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

Ver. 33. "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

In the most earnest manner, by the remembrance of their common participation in Christ, and by the love kindled in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, the Apostle asks for their prayers. The prayers of the church then, even an Apostle thought of importance to the success of his undertakings! He had, it seems, many fears, as to the treatment he should receive at Jerusalem from the unbelieving Jews; and he had reason to doubt whether, through the prejudices of "those of the circumcision that believed," either his own person, or the present of the Gentiles which he carried, would be acceptable. This is probably the meaning of his expressing a wish in a former verse, to have "the fruit sealed unto them."

That St. Paul's fears were not without reason, the latter chapters of the Acts of the Apostles will explain; and they inform us what was the issue of the event. His prayers, and the prayers of the church, were indeed answered, though not in the way which either he or they had probably framed in their desires. God suffered him to fall into the hands of his enemies; but his providence so over-ruled the event, that it was the means of his being brought to Rome, and of his uninterrupted intercourse with the Roman church for two whole years.

Lastly, The Apostle adds to his Postscript, a commendation of a woman of the name of Phebe, and salutations to his acquaintances at Rome, many of whom he recommends to the church, for their services in the cause of the gospel. He beseeches them to avoid divisions; adds the salutations of those who were with him; and thus concludes. Such is the subject of the last chapter, which requires little by way of exposition.

Chap. XVI., ver. 1. "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant," that is, probably, a deaconness, "of the church which is at Cenchrea.

Ver. 2. "That ye receive her in the Lord as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatever business she hath need of you; for she has been a succourer of many, and of myself also."

Her being termed, *Προστατις*, helper, or patron, as Dr. Macknight observes, bespeaks her a woman of considerable wealth and influence. And we have the testimony of the scripture, that in Greece (Cenchrea was a city of Greece) "there believed in the Lord of honourable women not a few."

Ver. 3. "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers," or fellow-labourers, 'in Christ Jesus;

Ver. 4. "Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom, not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Ver. 5. "Likewise greet the church which is in their house [their house was, probably, a place of assembly for some of the Roman Christians]. Salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ.

Ver. 6. "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour upon us.

Ver. 7. "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the Apostles, who, also, were in Christ before me.

Ver. 8. "Great Amplias my beloved in the Lord.

Ver. 9. "Salute Urbane our helper," or fellow-labourer, "in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.

Ver. 10. "Salute Apelles, approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.

Ver. 11. "Salute Herodian my kinsman. Greet them which be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.

Ver. 12. "Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.

Ver. 13. "Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

Ver. 14. "Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.

Ver. 15. "Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

Ver. 16. "Salute one another with an holy kiss*. The churches salute you.

Ver. 17. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.

Ver. 18th. "For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

Having mentioned their customary pledge of love and unity, the Apostle again deprecates all dissension among them. He bids them mark and avoid the persons that create these dissensions. And almost always, the divisions which have arisen in the Christian church, have been occasioned by the doctrines and conduct of particular persons, "speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Such persons, whatever they may pretend on the score of purity and conscience, serve not the Lord Christ, but an *interest* of their own. Their views are selfish.

* "The Jews," Dr. Macknight observes, "considered the kiss as an expression of friendship. Thus Joab, pretending great friendship to Amasa, took him by the beard to kiss him, when he slew him, 2 Sam. xx. 9. Our Lord says to Simon, Luke vii. 45, 'Thou hast given me no kiss,' meaning he had not expressed such affection to him as the woman had done, who kissed his feet. Judas also kissed our Lord, pretending friendship to him, at the time he betrayed him. This manner of expressing friendship to each other the disciples of Christ adopted and practised in their religious assemblies."

Notoriety and distinction, at least, are their aim. And nothing, most certainly, would be, to such persons, a more effectual cure, than to find themselves neglected and avoided. But too truly, as the Apostle notices, in a ages has it been found, that, "by their good words and fair speeches," persons of this description have deceived many simple people, and have obtained their ends.

Ver. 19. "For your obedience," or, Your obedience truly, "is come abroad unto all men. I am glad, therefore, on your behalf"—or, I rejoice, therefore, on your account; but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

Ver. 20. "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

Again, at this final close of the Epistle, the Apostle seizes an opportunity of praising the Roman Christians. Their obedience to the gospel in general, and to this precept for unity, in particular, was well known, and was everywhere spoken of, so as to be a subject of frequent joy to the Apostle. He gives them these cautions, not as though he suspected any of them, as being sectaries and creators of offences; but, when they considered the subtlety and ever-active hostility of the great ghostly enemy, they had need to be wary and circumspect. Simplicity as to evil was, indeed, an amiable trait in the Christian character; but they needed, besides, prudence and wisdom, in order to avoid the evils which the craft and subtlety of the devil and man would work against them. "Behold," says our Lord, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

But, though the Apostle calls them to vigilance, and to prepare for a contest, he encourages them with the assurance of speedy victory; however the serpent and his seed

might oppose and hinder the cause and kingdom of Christ, the primeval promise must obtain its fulfilment, "THOU SHALT BRUISE HIS HEAD."

The Apostle ends his Epistle by subjoining the salutations of the Christians who were with him, and repeats again the blessing.

Ver. 21. "Timothy my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Socipater, my kinsmen, salute you.

Ver. 22. "I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you.

Ver. 23. "Gaius, mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, saluteth you, and Quartus, a brother.

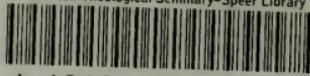
Ver. 24. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

And while my readers, who have indulged me with their attention thus far to the end of my labours,—while they are fighting the good fight, and endeavouring to keep, against all the foes of the church, that faith once delivered to the saints, and to maintain, as one of Christ's special commands, "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" may the grace of Christ, which the Apostle so often implores upon his people, be with them all evermore. Amen.

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