

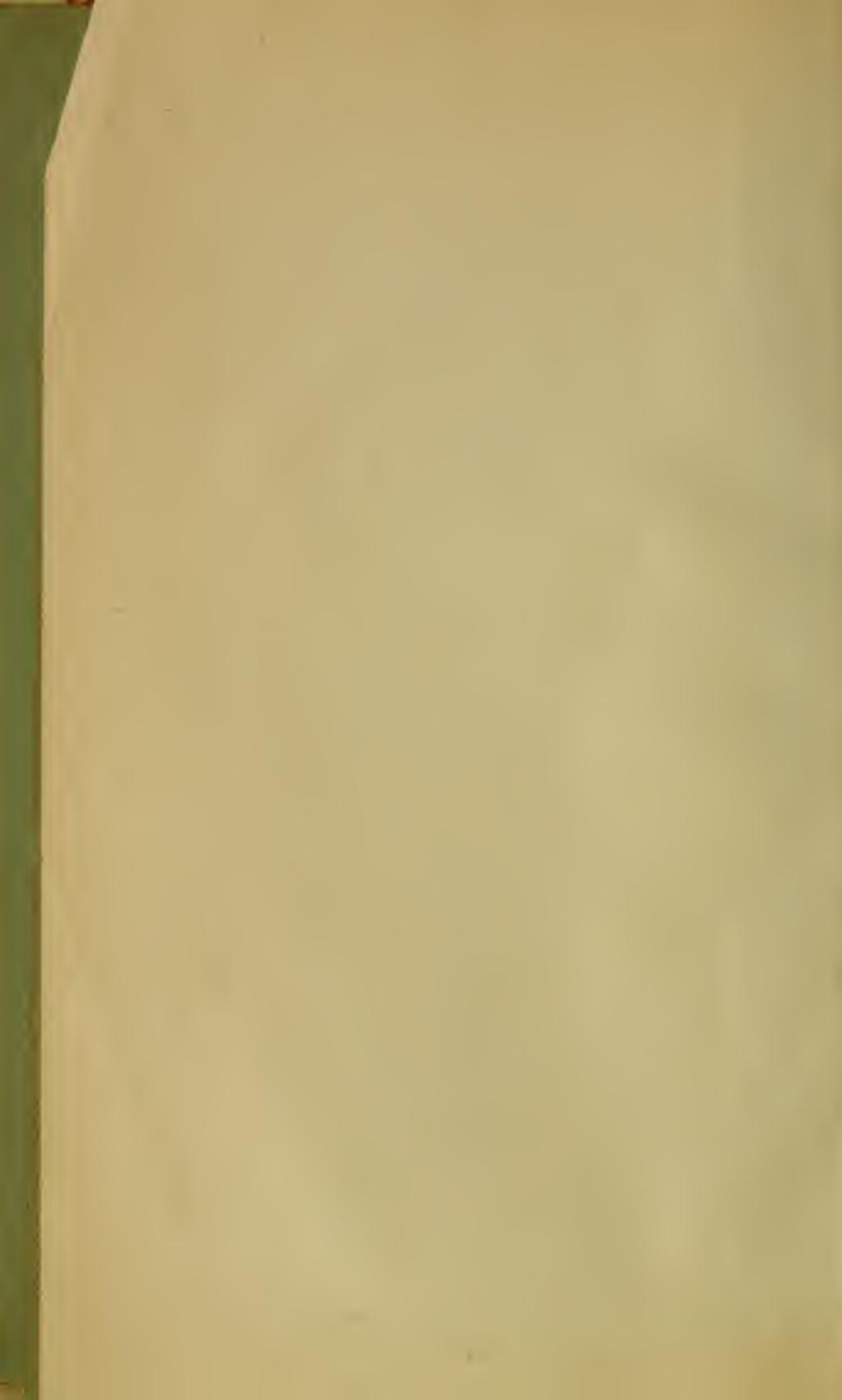
Division BS2605

Section 6438

No. 1843

copy 1





LECTURES

ON THE

EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO THE

ROMANS.

BY

THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D. & LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,
AND CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF FRANCE.

FOURTH THOUSAND.

NEW YORK:

PUBLISHED BY ROBERT CARTER, 58 CANAL STREET.

PITTSBURG:—THOMAS CARTER.

1843.

ADVERTISEMENT.

A SERIES of pulpit discourses on the obvious subject-matter of Scripture, is of a different character from those critical and expository works, the object of which is to fix and ascertain the meaning—even of the more obscure and controverted, as well as of the clearest passages. The following is a record of the Sabbath preparations of many years back—now given without change or improvement to the world; and the appearance of which in their present state is very much owing to the frequently expressed desire of my old hearers, to have the Lectures which I delivered on the Epistle to the Romans, set before them in a more permanent form.

But it may be right to mention that the pulpit lectures which were delivered during my incumbency in the parish of St. John's, Glasgow, from September, 1819, to November, 1823, extend only a little way into the tenth chapter, and that the remaining lectures, with the exception of the one on xiv. 17, have been only prepared now for the completion of this work.

Edinburgh, January, 1842.

LECTURES ON THE ROMANS.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

It is possible to conceive the face of our world overspread with a thick and midnight darkness, and without so much as a particle of light to alleviate it, from any one quarter of the firmament around us. In this case, it were of no avail to the people who live in it, that all of them were in possession of sound and perfect eyes. The organ of sight may be entire, and yet nothing be seen from the total absence of external light among the objects on every side of us. Or in other words, to bring about the perception of that which is without, it is not enough that we have the power of vision among men; but, in addition to this, there must be a visibility in the trees, and the houses, and the mountains, and the living creatures, which are now in the ordinary discernment of men.

But, on the other hand, we may reverse the supposition. We may conceive an entire luminousness to be extended over the face of nature—while the faculty of sight was wanting among all the individuals of our species. In this case, the external light would be of as little avail towards our perception of any object at a distance from us, as the mere possession of the sense of seeing was in the former instance. Both must conspire to the effect of our being rendered conversant with the external world through the medium of the eye. And if the power of vision was not enough, without a visibility on the part of the things which are around us, by God saying let there be light—as little is their visibility enough, without the power of vision stamped as an endowment by the hand of God, on the creatures whom He has formed.

Now we can conceive that both these defects or disabilities, in the way of vision, may exist at the same time,—or that all the world was dark, and that all the people in the world were blind. To emerge out of this condition—there must

be a twofold process begun and carried forward, and at length brought to its full and perfect termination. Light must be poured upon the earth, and the faculty of seeing must be conferred upon its inhabitants. One can imagine, that, instead of the light being made instantaneously to burst upon us in its highest splendour, and, instead of the faculty being immediately bestowed upon us in full vigour to meet and to encounter so strong a tide of effulgency—that both these processes were conducted in a way that was altogether gradual—that the light, for example, had its first weak glimmering; and that the eye, in the feebleness of its infancy, was not overcome by it—that the light advanced with morning step to a clearer brilliancy; and that the eye, rendered able to bear it, multiplied the objects of its sight, and took in a wider range of perception—that the light shone at length unto the perfect day; and that the eye, with the last finish upon its properties and its powers, embraced the whole of that variety which lies within the present compass of human contemplation. We must see that if one of these processes be gradual, the other should be gradual also. By shedding too strong a light upon weak eyes, we may overpower and extinguish them. By granting too weak a light to him who has strong eyes, we make the faculty outstrip the object of its exercise, and thus incur a waste of endowment. By attempering the one process to the other, we maintain, throughout all the stages, that harmony which is so abundantly manifested in the works of Nature and Providence, between man as he actually is, and the circumstances by which man is actually surrounded.

These preliminary statements will we trust be of some use for illustrating the progress, not of natural, but of spiritual light, along that path which forms the suc-

cessive history of our world. Whatever discernment Adam had of the things of God in Paradise, the fall which he experienced was a fall into the very depths of the obscurity of midnight. The faculties he had in a state of innocence, made him able to perceive, that the Creator, who formed him, took pleasure in all that He had formed; and rejoiced over them so long as he saw that they were good. But when they ceased to be good, and became evil—when sin had crept into our world in the shape of a novelty as yet unheard, and as yet unprovided for—when the relation of man to his Maker was not merely altered, but utterly and diametrically reversed—when, from a loyal and affectionate friend, he had become at first a daring, and then a distrustful and affrighted rebel—Adam may, when a sense of integrity made all look bright and smiling and serene around him, have been visited from Heaven with the light of many high communications; nor could he feel at a loss to comprehend, how He, who was the Fountain of moral excellence, should cherish, with a Father's best and kindest regards, all those whom He had filled and beautified and blest with its unsullied emanations: But, after the gold had become dim, how He whose eye was an eye of unspotted holiness could look upon it with complacency—after the sentence had been incurred, how, while truth and unchangeableness were the attributes of God, it ever could be reversed by the lips of Him who pronounced it—after guilt with all its associated terrors had changed to the view of our first parents the aspect of the Divinity, how the light of His countenance should ever beam upon them again with an expression of love or tenderness—these were the mysteries which beset and closed and shrouded in thickest darkness, the understandings of those who had just passed out of innocence into sin. Till God made this first communication, there was no external light, to alleviate that despair and dreariness which followed the first visitation of a feeling so painful and so new as the consciousness of evil. And, if the agitations of the heart have any power to confuse and to unsettle the perceptions of the understanding—if remorse and perplexity and fear, go to disturb the exercise of all our judging and all our discerning faculties—if, under the engrossment of one great and overwhelming apprehension, we can neither see with precision nor contemplate with steadiness—above all, if, under the administration of a righteous God, there be a constant alliance between spiritual darkness and a sense of sin unpardoned or sin unexpiated—then may we be sure that an obscurity of the deep-

est character lay upon the first moments in the history of sinful man; and which required both light from Heaven upon his soul, and a renovation of its vitiated and disordered faculties, ere it could be effectually dissipated.

From this point then, the restoration of spiritual light to our benighted world takes its commencement—when Adam was utterly blind; and the canopy over his head, was palled in impenetrable darkness. To remove the one disability, was in itself to do nothing—to remove the other disability was in itself to do nothing. Both must be removed, ere Adam could again see. Both may have been removed instantaneously; and by one fiat of Omnipotence, such a perfection of spiritual discernment may have been conferred on our first parents, and such a number of spiritual truths have been made by a direct communication from heaven to stand around him, as in a single moment would have ushered him into all the splendours of a full and finished revelation. But this has not been God's method in His dealings with a sinful world. Spiritual light and spiritual discernment, were not called forth to meet each other, in all the plenitude of an unclouded brilliancy, at the bidding of His immediate voice. The outward truth has been dealt out by a gradual process of revelation—and the inward perception of it has been made to maintain a corresponding pace through a process equally gradual. A greater number of spiritual objects has been introduced, from one time to another, into the field of visibility—and the power of spiritual vision has from one age to another been made to vary and to increase along with them.

Those truths, which make up the body of our written revelation, may be regarded as so many objects, on which visibility has been conferred by so many successive communications of light from Heaven. They were at first few in number; and these few were offered to mankind, under the disguise of a rather vague and extended generality. The dawn of this external revelation, was marked by the solitary announcement, given to our outcast progenitors, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. To this, other announcements were added in the progress of ages—and even the great truth, which lay enveloped in the very first of them, had a growing illumination cast upon it in the lapse of generations. The promise given to Adam, brightened into a more cheering and intelligible hope, when renewed to Abraham, in the shape of an assurance, that, through one of his descendants, all the families of the earth were to be blest; and

to Jacob, that Shiloh was to be born, and that to Him the gathering of the people should be; and to Moses, that a great Prophet was to arise like unto himself; and to David, that one of his house was to sit upon his throne for ever; and to Isaiah, that one was to appear, who should be a light unto the Gentiles, and the salvation of all the ends of the earth; and to Daniel, that the Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself, and that through Him reconciliation was to be made for iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness was to be brought in; and to John the Baptist, that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand, and the Prince of that kingdom was immediately to follow in the train of his own ministrations; and to the apostles in the days of our Saviour upon earth, that He with whom they companied was soon to be lifted up for the healing of the nations, and that all who looked to Him should live; and finally, to the apostles after the day of Pentecost, when, fraught with the full and explicit tidings of a world's atonement and a world's regeneration, they went forth with the doctrine of Christianity in its entire copiousness, and have transmitted it to future ages in a book, of which it has been said, that no man shall add thereto, and that no man shall take away from it.

This forms but a faint and a feeble outline of that march, by which God's external revelation hath passed magnificently onwards, from the first days of our world, through the twilight of the patriarchal ages—and the brightening of the Jewish dispensation, aided as it was by the secondary lustre of types and of ceremonies—and the constant accumulation of Prophecy, with its visions every century becoming more distinct, and its veil becoming more transparent—and the personal communications of God manifest in the flesh, who opened His mouth amongst us, but still opened it in parables—insomuch that when He ascended from His disciples, He still left them in wonder and dimness and mystery—till, by the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit from the place which He had gone to occupy, the evidence of inspiration received its last and its mightiest enlargement, which is now open to all for the purpose of perusal, but so shut against every purpose of augmentation, that in this respect it may be said, its words are closed up and sealed to the time of the end.

The Epistle to the Romans, forms one of the most complete and substantial products of this last and greatest illumination. In this document, the visibility of external revelation is poured forth not merely on the greatest variety of Christian doctrine, but on that doctrine so harmoniously

blended with the truths of human experience—so solidly reared from the foundation of Jesus Christ and of Him crucified, into a superstructure at once firm and graceful and stately—so branching forth into all the utilities of moral and practical application—and, at length, from an argument bearing upon one great conclusion, so richly efflorescing into all the virtues and accomplishments which serve both to mark and to adorn the person of regenerated man—Such is the worth and the density and the copiousness of this epistle—that, did our power of vision keep pace at all with the number and the value of those spiritual lessons which abound in it, then indeed should we become the children of light, be rich in a wisdom that the world knoweth not, in a wisdom which is unto salvation.

But the outward light by which an object is rendered visible is one thing—and the power of vision is another. That these two are not only distinct in respect of theoretical conception, but were also experimentally distinct from each other in the actual history of God's communications to the world, will, we trust, be made to appear from several passages of that revealed history in the Bible; and from one single appeal which we shall make to the experience of our hearers.

The first passage is in 1 Peter i. 10—12. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." This passage sets the old prophets before us in a very striking attitude. They positively did not know the meaning of their own prophecies. They were like men of dim and imperfect sight, whose hand was guided by some foreign power to the execution of a picture—and who, after it was finished, vainly attempted, by straining their eyes, to explain and to ascertain the subject of it. They were the transmitters of a light, which, at the same time, did not illuminate themselves. They uttered the word, or they put it down in writing, as it was given to them—and then they searched by their own power, but searched in vain for the signification of it. They enquired diligently what the meaning of the Spirit could be, when it testified of the sufferings of Christ and the glory

of Christ. But till that Spirit gave the power of discernment, as well as set before them the objects of discernment—their attempts were nugatory. And indeed they were sensible of this, and acquiesced in it. It was told them by revelation, that the subject matter of their prophecy was not for themselves, but for others—even for those to whom the gospel should be preached in future days, and who, along with the ministration of the external word, were to receive the ministration of the Holy Ghost—whose office it is to put into the mouths of prophets the things which are to be looked to and believed, and whose office also it is to put into the hearts of others the power of seeing and believing these things. And it serves clearly to mark the distinction between these two offices, that the prophets, alluded to in this passage, presented to the world a set of truths which they themselves did not understand—and that again the private disciples of Peter, who were not so learned as to be made the original and inspired authors of such a communication, were honoured with the far more valuable privilege of being made to understand it.

This we think will appear still more clearly from another passage of the same apostle in 2 Peter i. 19—21. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” No prophecy is of private interpretation. It was not suggested by the natural sense of him who uttered it—and as little is it understood, or can it be explained, by the natural powers of the same person. He was the mere recipient of a higher influence; and he conveyed what he had thus received to the world—speaking not of his own will but just as he was moved by the Holy Ghost—and enabled to discern or to expound the meaning of what he had thus spoken, not of his own power, but just as the same Holy Ghost who gave him the materials of contemplation, gave him also the faculty of a just and true contemplation. The light of which he was barely the organ of transmission, shone in a dark place, so long as it shone upon the blind; and, not till the blind was made to see—not till the eyes of those, who were taking heed to the letter of the prophecy, were opened to perceive the life and meaning and spirit of the prophecy—not till that day which has dawned, and that day-star

which had arisen on the outward page of revelation, had also dawned and arisen upon their own hearts—not, in short, till the great agent of all revelation, even the Holy Spirit who had already furnished the object of perception in the word, had also furnished the organ of perception in the understanding—not till then, were the inquirers after the truth as it is in Jesus effectually introduced, to a full acquaintance with all its parts,—or to the full benefit of all its influence.

We cannot take leave of this passage, without adverting to the importance of that practical injunction which is contained in it. They who are still in darkness are called upon to look, and with earnestness too, to a particular quarter; and that is the word of God—and to do so until the power of vision was granted to them. If a blind man were desirous of beholding a landscape, and had the hope at the same time of having his sight miraculously restored to him, he might, even when blind, go to the right post of observation, and turn his face to the right direction, and thus wait for the recovery of that power which was extinguished. And, in like manner, we are all at the right post, when we are giving heed to our Bibles. We are all going through a right exercise, when, with the strenuous application of our natural powers, we are reading and pondering and comparing and remembering the words of the testimony—and if asked, how long we should persevere in this employment, let us persevere in it with patience and prayer until, as Peter says, the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts.

That John the Baptist should not know himself to have been he who was to come in the spirit and power of Elijah; and hence, in reply to the question Art thou Elias? should say that I am not—whereas our Saviour affirmed of him, that he was the Elias who should come—this ignorance of his may be as much due to the want of outward information about the point, as to any lack in the faculty of discernment. The same thing however can scarcely be said of his ignorance of the true character of the very Messiah whom he himself foretold—inso much, that, though he had baptized him and attested him to be the Lamb of God, and had seen the Spirit descending upon him like a dove—yet he seems afterwards to have been so much startled by the obscurity of his circumstances, and by the style of his companionship which looked unsuitable to the character of a great Prince and Deliverer, that, in perplexity about the matter, he sent his disciples to Jesus to ask whether he was the person who should come or they had to look for another?

He laboured under such a disadvantage, whether of darkness or of blindness about the whole nature of the new dispensation, that though, in respect of light, he was greater than the greatest of the prophets, who had gone before him—yet, in the very same respect, he was less than the least in the kingdom of heaven; or less than the least enlightened of the Christian disciples who should come after him.

The constant misapprehension of our Saviour's own immediate disciples, of which we read so much in the Gospels, was certainly due as much to their being blind as to their being in the dark—to their defect in the power of seeing, as to any defect in the visibility of what was actually set before them.

We read of our Saviour's sayings being hid from them, that they perceived not—and of His dealing out the light of external truth to them, as their eyes were able to bear it—and of His averring, in spite of all he had dealt out in the course of his personal ministrations upon earth, of His averring, at the close of these ministrations, that as yet they knew nothing, though if they had had the power of discernment, they might surely have learned much from what is now before us in the Gospels, and of which they were both the eye and the ear witnesses. We further read, that after the resurrection, when He met two of his disciples, and the eyes of their body were holden that they should not know Him, just as the eyes of their mind were holden that they should not know the things which were said in Moses and the prophets and all the Scriptures concerning Himself, they at length came to recognize His person—not by any additional light thrown upon the external object, but simply by their eyes being opened; and they also came to recognize Him in the Scriptures—not by any change or any addition to the word of their testimony, but simply by their understandings being opened to understand them. We also read of the descent of the Holy Ghost in the day of Pentecost—that event on which our Saviour set such an importance, as to make it more than an equivalent for His own presence in the way of teaching and enlightening the minds of his apostles. “If I go not away, He will not come unto you—but if I depart, then Him who is not yet given, because I am not yet glorified, I will send unto you. And He will guide you into all truth, and take of my things, and show them unto you.” There is no doubt that He showed them new things, which we have in the Epistles; and so made the light of external revelation shine more fully and brightly upon them. But there is as little doubt, that, in His office as a Revealer,

He made them see old things more clearly than before; and that, by a direct work on the power of mental perception, He brought them to their remembrance; and He made them skilful in the discernment of Scripture—a term applied exclusively at that time to the writings of the Old Testament; and He, not only cleared away the external darkness which rested on that part of Christian doctrine that was still unpromulgated, but He strengthened and purified that organ of discernment through which the light both of things new and old finds its way into the heart—insomuch that we know not two states of understanding which stand more decidedly contrasted with each other, than that of the apostles before, and of the same apostles after the resurrection—so that from being timid, irresolute, confused, and altogether doubting and unsatisfied inquirers, they became the brave unshrinking and consistent ministers of a spiritual faith—looking back both on the writings of the Old Testament, and on our Saviour's conversations with other eyes than they had formerly, and enabled so to harmonize them all with their subsequent revelations, as to make them perceive an evangelical spirit and an evangelical meaning even in those earlier communications, which, of themselves, shed so dim and so feeble a lustre over the patriarchal and the prophetic ages.

So that the office of the Holy Ghost with the apostles, was, not merely to show them things new respecting Christ, but to make them see things both new and old. The former of His functions, as we said before, has now ceased—nor have we reason to believe, that, during the whole currency of our present world, there will another article of doctrine or information be given to us, than what is already treasured up in the written and unalterable word of God's communications. But the latter function is still in full exercise. It did not cease with the apostolic age. The external revelation is completed. But, for the power of beholding aright the truths which it sets before us, we are just as dependent on the Holy Ghost as the apostles of old were. His miraculous gifts and His conveyances of additional doctrine are now over. But His whole work in the church of Christ is not nearly over. He has shed all the light that He ever will do over the field of revelation. But He has still to open the eyes of the blind; and, with every individual of the human race, has He to turn him from a natural man who cannot receive the things of the Spirit, to a spiritual man by whom alone these things can be spiritually discerned.

There is with many amongst us, an un-

dervaluing of this part of the Christian dispensation. The office of the Holy Ghost as a revealer is little adverted to, and therefore little proceeded upon in any of our practical movements. We set ourselves forth to the work of reading and understanding the Bible, just as we would any human composition—and this is so far right—for it is only when thus employed that we have any reason to look for the Spirit's agency in our behalf. But surely the fact of His agency being essential, is one, not of speculative but of practical importance—and ought to admonish us, that there is one peculiarity, by which the book of God stands distinguished from the book of a human author, and that is that it is not enough it should be read with the spirit of attention, but with the spirit of dependence and of prayer.

We should like if this important part in the process of man's recovery to God, held a more conspicuous place in your estimation. We should like you to view it as a standing provision for the church of Christ in all ages. It was not set up for a mere temporary purpose, to shed a fleeting brilliancy over an age of gifted and illuminated men that has now rolled by. Such is the value, and such the permanency of this gift of the Holy Ghost, that it almost looks to be the great and ultimate design of Christ's undertaking, to obtain the dispensation of it, as the accomplishment of a promise by His Father. And when Peter explained to the multitude its first and most wondrous exhibition on the day of Pentecost, he did not restrict it to one period or to one country of the world. But the gift of the Holy Ghost is "unto you," he says, "and to your children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call." We think that if we saw Christ in person, and had the explanation of our Bibles from His own mouth, this would infallibly conduct us to the highest eminences of spiritual wisdom. But blessed be they who have not seen, but yet have believed—and Christ hath expressly told us, that it is better He should go away from the world, for "if He did not go away the Spirit would not come—but that if He went away He would send Him." What the mysterious connection is between Christ's entrance into heaven, and the free egress of the Holy Ghost upon earth, it is not for us to enquire. But such is the revealed fact, that we are in better circumstances for being guided unto all truth by having a part and an interest in this promise, than if we had personal access to the Saviour still sojourning and still ministering amongst us. Let us not despise that which has so mighty a place assigned to it in the counsels of God—and if heretofore, a darkness has hung over

the pages of the word of His testimony—let us feel assured that in Him or in His communications there is no darkness at all. It is not because He is dark, but because we are blind that we do not understand Him; and we give you, not a piece of inert orthodoxy, but a piece of information which may be turned to use and to account on your very next perusal of any part of the Bible—when we say that it is the office of the Spirit to open the eye of your mind to the meaning of its intimations, and that God will not refuse His holy Spirit to those who ask Him.

This brings us by a very summary process to the resolution of the question How is it that the Spirit acts as a revealer of truth to the human understanding? To deny Him this office, on the one hand, is, in fact, to set aside what by the fullest testimony of the Bible is held forth as the process, in every distinct and individual case, whereby each man at his conversion is called out of darkness into marvellous light. On the other hand, to deny such a fulness and such a sufficiency of doctrine in the Bible, as if beheld and believed is enough for salvation, is to count it necessary that something should be added to the words of the prophecy of this book, which if any man do, God will add unto him all the plagues that are written therein. There is no difficulty in effecting a reconciliation between these two parties. The Spirit guides unto all truth, and all truth is to be found in the Bible—The Spirit therefore guides us unto the Bible. He gives us that power of discernment, by which we are wisely and intelligently conducted through all its passages. His office is not to brighten into additional splendour the sun of revelation, or even to clear away any clouds that may have gathered over the face of it. His office is to clarify our organs of perception, and to move away that film from the spiritual eye, which, till He begins to operate, adheres with the utmost obstinacy in the case of every individual of our species. The ebbs and the alternations of spiritual light in our world, are not due to any fluctuating movements, in the flame, which issues from that luminary that has been hung out as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths. It is due to the variations which take place, of soundness or disease, in the organs of the beholders. That veil which was at one time on the face of Moses, is now upon the heart of the unconverted Israelites. The blindness is in their minds, and they are in darkness, just because of this veil being yet untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament. When they turn to the Lord, there will be no change made either in the Old Testament or in the

New—but this veil which is now upon their faculties of spiritual discernment, will simply be taken away. The unconverted of our own country, to whom the gospel is hid, do not perceive it, not because there is a want of light in the gospel which would need to be augmented, but because the God of this world hath blinded their own minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them. God hath already commended all the external light of revelation, which he ever purposes to do, in behalf of our world—and that light shines upon all to whom the word of salvation is sent. But though it shines upon all, it does not shine into all. He hath already commanded the light to shine out of darkness—and we now wait for that opening and purifying of the organ of conveyance which is upon our person, that it may shine into our hearts and thence give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. The period of the new dispensation has been a period of light, as much from the increase of vision as from the increase of visibility. The vacillation of this light from one age to another, is not from any periodical changes in the decay or the brightening of the outward luminary. It is from the partial shuttings and openings of a screen of interception. And, in those millennial days, when the gospel, in full and unclouded brilliancy, shall shine upon the world—it will not be because light came down to it from heaven in a tide of more copious supply—but because God will destroy the face of the covering that is cast over all people; and the veil that is spread over all nations.

The light is exceedingly near to every one of us, and we might even now be in the full and satisfactory enjoyment of it—were it not for a something in ourselves. All that is necessary is, that the veil, which hangs over our own senses, be destroyed. The obstacle in the way of spiritual manifestation, does not lie in the dimness of that which is without us—but in the state of our own personal faculties. Let the organ of discernment be only set right; and the thing to be discerned will then appear in its native brightness, and just in the very features and complexion which it has worn from the beginning, and in which it has offered itself to the view of all whose eyes have been opened by the Spirit of God, to behold the wondrous things contained in the book of God's law. His office is not to deal in variable revelations to a people sitting in darkness. It is to lift up the heavy eyelids of a people who are blind, that they may see the characters of a steady unchangeable and

ever-during record. The light is near us, and round about us; and all that remains to be done for its being poured into the innermost recesses of every soul, is the destruction of that little tegument which lies in the channel of communication, between the objects which are visible and him for whose use and whose perception they are intended. To come in contact with spiritual light, we have not to ascend into heaven, and fetch an illuminated torch from its upper sanctuaries—we have not to descend into the deep, and, out of the darkness of its hidden mysteries, bring to the openness of day some secret thing that before was inaccessible. All that we shall ever find is in that word which is nigh unto us, even in our mouth; and which, by the penetrating energies of Him in whose hand it becometh a sword, can find its way through all the dark and obstructed avenues of nature, and reach its convictions and its influences and its lessons to the very thoughts and intents of the heart. If you be longing for a light which you have not yet gotten—it is worth your knowing, that the firmament of a man's spiritual vision is already set round with all its splendours—that not one additional lamp will for your behoof be hung out from the canopy of heaven—that the larger and the lesser lights of revelation are already ordained, and not so much as one twinkling luminary will either be added or expunged from this hemisphere of the soul, till this material earth and these material heavens be made to pass away—and therefore, if still sitting in the region and under the shadow of death, there be any of you who long to be ushered into the manifestations of the gospel, know that this is done, not by any change in that which is without, but by a change in that which is within—by a medicating process upon your own faculties—by the simplicity of a personal operation.

This is something more than the mere didactic affirmation of a speculative or scholastic Theology. It contains within its bosom the rudiments of a most important practical direction, to every reader and every inquirer. If I do not see, not because there is a darkness around me, but because there is a blindness upon me adhering in the shape of a personal attribute—it were a matter of great practical account to ascertain, if this defect do not stand associated with other defects in my character and mind which are also personal. And when we read of the way in which the moral and the intellectual are blended together in the doctrines of the New Testament—how one apostle affirms, that he who hateth his brother is in blindness; and another, that he who lacketh

certain virtues is blind and cannot see afar off; and another, that men who did not, up to what they knew, award the glory and the gratitude to God, had their foolish hearts darkened, so as to have that which they at one time possessed taken away from them; and our Saviour resolving the condemnation of men's unbelief into the principle that they loved the darkness, and therefore wilfully shut their eyes to the truth that was offered—all this goes to demonstrate, that presumptuous sin stands in the way of spiritual discernment; that evil deeds, and the indulgence of evil affections, serve to thicken that film which has settled upon the mental eye, and obscures its every perception of the truths of revelation. And this much at least may be turned into a matter of sure and practical inference from all these elucidations—that the man who is not yet awakened to a sense of his iniquities, and not evincing it by putting forth upon them the hand of a strenuous and determined reform; that the man who stifles the voice of conscience within him, and, the slave of his inveterate habits, never, either in practice or in prayer, makes an honest struggle for his own emancipation; that he who makes not a single effort against the conformities or the associations of worldliness; and, far more, he who still persists in its dishonesties or its grosser dissipations—he may stand all his days on the immediate margin of a brightness that is altogether celestial, and yet, in virtue of an interposed barrier which he is doing all he can to make more opaque and impenetrable, may he, with the Bible before his eyes, be groping in all the darkness and in more than all the guilt of heathenism. These sins infuse a sore and a deadly distemper into his organs of perception, and by every wilful repetition of them is the distemper more fixed and perpetuated—and therefore it is that we call upon those who desire for light, to cherish no hope whatever of its attainment, while they persist in any doings which they know to be wrong. We call upon them to frame their doings in turning to the Lord if they wish the veil to be taken away—and, instead of hesitating about the order of precedency between faith and practice, or about the way in which they each reciprocate upon the other, we call upon them simply and honestly to betake themselves to the apostolical order of “Awake, O sinner, and Christ shall give thee light.”

There is another set of passages which may be quoted as a counterpart to the former, and which go to demonstrate the connection between obedience and spiritual light—even as the others prove a connection between sin and spiritual

darkness. ‘He who is desirous of doing God’s will shall know of Christ’s doctrine that it is of God.’ ‘He whose eye is single shall have the whole body full of light.’ ‘Light is sown unto the upright, and breaketh forth as the morning to those who judge the widow and the fatherless.’ ‘To him who hath, more shall be given’—and ‘he who keepeth my sayings, to him will I manifest myself.’ These are testimonies which clearly bespeak, what ought to be the conduct of him who is in quest of spiritual manifestation. They will serve to guide the seeker in his way to that rest, which all attain who have attained an acquaintance with the unscen Creator. It is a rest which he labours to enter into—and, in despite of freezing speculation, does he turn the call of repentance to the immediate account of urging himself on to all deeds of conformity with the divine will, to all good and holy services.

But more than this. It is the Spirit who opens the understanding; and He is affected by the treatment which He receives from the subject on which He operates. It is true that He has been known at times to magnify the freeness of the grace of God, by arresting the sinner in the full speed and determination of his impetuous career; and turning him, in despite of himself, to the refuge and the righteousness of the gospel. But, speaking generally, He is grieved by resistance, He is quenched by carelessness, He is provoked by the constant baffling of His endeavours, to check and to convince and to admonish. On the other hand He is courted by compliance; He is encouraged by the favourable reception of His influences; He is given in larger measure to those who obey Him; and He follows up your docility under one dictate and one suggestion, by freer and fuller manifestations. In other words, if to thwart your conscience be to thwart Him, and if to act with your conscience be to act with Him—what is this to say, but that every inquirer after the way of salvation, has something to do at the very outset in the furtherance of his object? What is this to say, but that a nascent concern about the soul should instantly be associated with a nascent activity in the prosecution of its interests? What is this to say, but that the man should, plainly and in good earnest, forthwith turn himself to all that is right? If he have been hitherto a drunkard, let him abandon his profligacies. If he have been hitherto a profaner of the Sabbath, let him abandon the habit of taking his own pleasure upon that day. If he have been hitherto a defrauder, let him abandon his deceits and his depredations. And though in that region of spir-

itual light upon which he is entering, he will learn that he never can be at peace with God till he lean on a better righteousness than his own—yet such is the influence of the doctrines of grace on every genuine inquirer, that, from the first dawning of his obscure perception of them, to the splendour of their full and finished manifestation, is there the breaking and the stir and the assiduous effort of a busy and ever-doing reformation—carrying him onwards from the more palpable rectitudes of ordinary and everyday conduct, to the high and sacred and spiritual elevation of a soul ripening for heaven, and following hard after God.

We know that we are now standing on the borders of controversy. But we are far more solicitous for such an impression as will lead you to act, than for any speculative adjustment. And yet how true it is, that, for the purpose of a practical effect, there is not one instrument so powerful and so prevailing as the peculiar doctrine of the gospel. It is the belief that a debt unextinguishable by us has been extinguished by another—it is the knowledge that that God, who can never lay aside either His truth or His righteousness, has found out such a way for the dispensation of mercy as serves to exalt and to illustrate them both—it is the view of that great transaction by which He laid on His own Son the iniquities of us all, and has thus done away an otherwise invincible barrier which lay across the path of acceptance—it is the precious conviction that Christ has died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and thus has turned aside the penalties of a law, and by the very act wherewith He has magnified that law and made it honourable—it is this, which seen, however faintly by the eye of faith, first looses the bond of despair, and gives a hope and an outlet for obedience. The subtle metaphysics of the question, about the order of succession with the two graces of faith and of repentance, may entertain or they may perplex you. But of this you may be very certain, that, where there is no repentance, all the dogmas of a contentious orthodoxy put together will never make out the reality of faith—and, where there is no faith, all the drudgeries of a most literal and laborious adherence to the outward matter of the law will never make out the reality of repentance.

Life is too short for controversy. Charged with all the urgency of a matter on hand, we tell you to turn and flee and make fast work of your preparation for a coming eternity. The sum and substance of the preparation is, that you believe what the Bible tells you, and do what the Bible bids you. Bestir yourselves, for the

last messenger is at the door. There is not time for cold criticisms, or laborious investigations, or splendid oratory, or profound argument—when death has broke loose amongst us, and is spreading his havoc amongst our earthly tabernacles—when he is wresting away from us the delights and the ornaments of our society upon earth—when he is letting us see, by examples the most affecting, of what frail and perishable materials human life is made up—and is dealing out another and another reproof to that accursed delay, which leads man to trifle on the brink of the grave, and to smile and be secure, while the weapons of mortality are flying thick around him. When will we be brought to the beginning of wisdom—to the fear of God—to the desire of doing His will—to the accomplishment of that desire, by our believing in the name of His only-begotten Son, and loving one another even as He has given us commandment? Let us work while it is day—and, set in motion by the encouragements of the gospel, let us instantly become the followers of them who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises.

You occasionally meet in the New Testament, with an express reference to a certain body of writings, which are designated by the term of Scriptures. We now apply this term to the whole Bible. But, in those days, it was restricted to that collection of pieces which makes up the Old Testament. For the new was only in the process of its formation, and was not yet completed; and it was not till some time after the evangelists wrote their narratives, and the apostles their communications, that they were gathered into one volume, or made to stand in equal and co-ordinate rank with the inspired books of the former dispensation.

So that all which is said of the Scriptures in the New Testament, must be regarded as the testimony of its authors to the value and importance of those writings which compose the Old Testament. And it would therefore appear from Paul's epistle to Timothy, that they are able to make us wise unto salvation.

There can be no doubt, however, that one ingredient of this ability is, that they refer us in a way so distinct and so authoritative to the events of the New Dispensation. They give evidence to the commission of our Saviour, and through Him to the commission of all His apostles. The wisdom which they teach, is a wisdom which would guide us forward to the posterior revelations of Christianity. The Old Testament is a region of comparative dimness. But still there is light enough there, for making visible the many in-

dices which abound in it, to the more illuminated region of the New Testament—and, by sending us forward to that region, by pointing our way to Christ and to the apostles, by barely informing us where we are to get the wisdom that we are in quest of—even though it should not convey it to us by its own direct announcements, it may be said to be able to make wise unto salvation.

The quotation taken in all its completeness is in full harmony, with the statement which we have now given. 'From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.'

But there is more in it than this. The same light from heaven by which the doctrine of the New Testament has been made visible, has also made more visible the same doctrine, which in the Old lay disguised under the veil of a still unfinished revelation. In the first blush of morning, there is much of the landscape that we cannot see at all—and much that we do see, but see imperfectly. The same ascending luminary which reveals to us those more distant tracts that were utterly unobserved, causes to start out into greater beauty and distinctness, the fields and the paths and the varied forms of nature or of art that are immediately around us—till we come to perceive an extended impress of the character and the goodness of the Divinity, over the whole range of our mid-day contemplation. It is thus with the Bible. That light, in virtue of which the pages of the New Testament have been disclosed to observation, has shed both a direct and a reflected splendour on the pages of the Old—insomuch that from certain chapters of Isaiah, which lay shrouded in mystery both from the prophet himself and from all his countrymen—as in reading of Him who bore the chastisement of our peace, and by whose stripes we are healed, and who poured out His soul unto the death, and made intercession for transgressors—we now draw all the refreshing comfort that beams upon the heart, from an intelligent view of our Redeemer's work of mediation; and behold plainly standing out, that which lay wrapt, in a kind of hieroglyphic mantle, from the discernment of the wisest and most righteous of men under a former dispensation. This power of illumination reaches upward, beyond the confines of the letter of the New Testament; and throws an evangelical light upon the remotest parts of an economy which has now passed away. The rays of our brightest sun have fallen in a flood of glory over the oldest and most distant of our recorded intimations; and a

Christian can now read the very first promise in the book of Genesis, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent,' which only served to light up a vague and general expectation in the minds of our first parents—he can now read it with the same full intelligence and comfort, wherewith he reads in the book of the Romans that 'the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.'

But there is still more in it than this. If there be any truth in the process whereby the Holy Spirit adds to the power of discernment, as well as to the truths which are to be discerned—then this increased power will enable us to see more—not merely in the later, but also in the earlier truths of revelation, than we would otherwise have done. It is like a blind man, in full and open day, gradually recovering his sight as he stands by the margin of a variegated parterre. Without any augmentation whatever of the external light, is there a progress of revelation to his senses, as to all the beauty and richness and multiplicity of the objects which are before him. What he sees at first, may be no more than a kind of dazzling uniformity, over the whole length and breadth of that space which is inscribed with so many visible glories; and, afterwards, many plants and flowers stand out in their individuality to his notice: and then may the distinctive colours of each come to be recognized; and then may the tints of minuter delicacy call forth his admiration—till all which it is competent for man to perceive, of what has been so profusely lavished by the hand of the great Artist, either in one general blush of loveliness, or in those nicer and more exquisite streaks of beauty which He hath pencilled in more hidden characters, on the specimens of flowers and foliage taken singly, shall all be perceived and all be rapturously enjoyed by the man, whose eyes have just been opened into a full capacity for beholding the wondrous things, which lie a spread and a finished spectacle before him. And it is the same with the Bible. That book which stands before the eye of many an accomplished disciple in this world's literature, as transfused throughout all its extent with one pervading and indiscriminate character of mysticism, gradually opens up to the eye of him who is rescued from the power of the god of this world, and whose office it is to blind the minds of them who believe not; and he beholds one general impress both of wisdom and of moral beauty upon the whole; and he forms a growing and more special intimacy with its individual passages; and feels a weight of significancy in many of them, which he never felt before; and he is touched

with the discernment of a precious adaptation in this one and that other verse to his own wants and his own circumstances; and this more minute and microscopic acquaintance with the truths, and perception of the excellencies of revelation, apply as much to the verses of the Old as it does to the verses of the New Testament—so that if he just grow in spiritual clear-sightedness, he will have as growing a relish and observation for the one part of Scripture as he has for the other: And thus it is, that, unlike to any human composition, an advancing Christian ever reads the Bible and the whole Bible, with a new light upon his understanding, and a new impression upon the affections and the principles of his nature. The books of the former dispensation never stand to him in place of the rudiments of a school-boy, which he may now abandon. But written as they are for our admonition on whom the latter ends of the world have come; and maintaining to this very hour the high functions and authority of a teacher, all whose sayings are given by inspiration from God, and all are profitable; and still instrumental, in the hands of the Spirit for conveying the whole light and power of His demonstrations into the understanding—let us rest assured that the Old Testament is one of the two olive trees planted in the house of God, and which is never to be removed; one of the two golden candlesticks lighted up for the church of Christ upon earth, and which while that church has being, will never be taken away.

It may illustrate this whole matter, if we look to the book of Psalms, and just think of the various degrees of spirituality and enlargement with which the same composition may be regarded by Jewish and by Christian eyes—how in the praise which waiteth for God in Zion—and in the pleasure which His servants took in her stones, so that her very dust to them was dear—and in the preference which they made of one day in His courts to a thousand elsewhere—and in the thirsting of their souls to appear before God—and in their remembrance of that time when they went to His house with the voice of joy and praise, and with the multitude that kept holiday—and when exiles from the holy city, they were cast down in spirit, and cried from the depths of their banishment in the land of Jordan—and when longing for God, in a dry and thirsty land where no water was, they followed hard after the privilege of again seeing His power and His glory in the sanctuary—and in the songs of deliverance with which they celebrated their own restoration, when their bands were looséd, and their feet were set in a sure place, and

they could offer their vows and their thanksgivings in the courts of the Lord's house, and 'in the midst of thee, oh Jerusalem'—in all this, a Jew might express the desires of a fainting and an affectionate heart, after that ceremonial in which he had been trained, and that service of the temple which he loved; and yet in all this, there is enough to sustain the loftiest flights of devotion in the mind of a Christian. There is a weight of expression, altogether commensurate to the feelings and the ardours and the extacies of a soul exercised unto godliness. There is a something to meet the whole varied experience of the spiritual life, in these ages of a later and more refined dispensation. And such is the divine skilfulness of these compositions, that, while so framed as to suit and to satisfy the disciples of a ritual and less enlightened worship, there is not a holy and heavenly disciple of Jesus in our day, who will not perceive in the effusions of the Psalmist, a counterpart to all the alternations of his own religious history—who will not find in his very words, the fittest vehicles for all the wishes and sorrows and agitations to which his own heart is liable—and thus be taught by a writer far less advanced in spirituality than himself, the best utterance of desire for the manifestation of God's countenance, the best utterance of gratitude for the visitations of spiritual joy, the best and most expressive prayers under the distress and darkness of spiritual abandonment.

Let us read over without any comment the whole of the 84th Psalm—and just simply ask you to consider how those very materials which form a most congenial piece of devotion for a Jew, admit of being so impregnated with the life and spirit of a higher economy, that they are able to sustain all the views, and to express all the aspirations of the most spiritual and exercised Christian.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, O Lord, even faintly for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them, who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. O Lord God of Hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Behold, O God our shield, and

look upon the face of thine anointed. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."

We think it necessary to say thus much—lest the Old Testament should ever be degraded below its rightful place in your estimation—lest any of you should turn away from it, as not fitted to augment the faith and the holiness of those, who lie under a better and a brighter dispensation—lest you should abstain from the habit of reading that letter of the Old Testament, which is abundantly capable of being infused with the same evangelical spirit, that gives all its power to the letter of the New Testament. And be assured, that, if you want to catch in all its height and in all its celestial purity the raptures of a sustained and spiritual intercourse with Him who sitteth upon the throne, we know nothing fitter to guide your ascending way, than those psalms and those prophecies, which shone at one time in a dark place; but may now, upon the earnest heed of him who attentively regards them, cause the day to dawn and the day-star to arise in his heart.

In turning now to one of the fullest expositions of Christian doctrine which is to be found in the New Testament; and which was drawn up for the edification of the most interesting of the early churches; and where, in the conduct of his argument, Paul seems to have been fully aware of all those elements both of intolerance and philosophy which were in array against him; and where, as his manner was, he suits and manages his reasoning, with the full consciousness of the kind and metal of resistance that were opposed to him; and where he had to steer his dexterous way through a heterogeneous assemblage of Gentiles on the one hand, enlightened up to the whole literature and theology of the times, and of Jews on the other, most fiercely and proudly tenacious of that sectarianism

which they regarded as their national glory—in such an epistle, written in such circumstances by the accomplished Paul, when we may be sure he would bring up his efforts to the greatness of the occasion, it is natural to look for all the conviction and all the light that such an able and intellectual champion is fitted to throw over the cause which he has undertaken. And yet what would be the result in a discussion of science or politics or law, we will not find to be the result in a discussion of Christianity, without such a preparation and such an accompaniment as are not essential to our progress in this world's scholarship. To be a disciple in the school of Christ, there must be an affectionate embracing of truth with the heart; and there must be a knowledge which puffeth not up, but humbles and edifies; and there must be a teaching of the Spirit of God, distinct from all those unsanctified acquirements, which we labour to win and to defend, in the strife it may be of logical contention. For, let it be observed, that the wisdom of the New Testament is characterized by moral attributes. It is pure and peaceable and gentle, and easy to be entreated, and full of mercy and good fruits, and without partiality and without hypocrisy. Let us not confound the illumination of natural argument, with that which warms the heart as well as informs the understanding—for it is a very truth, that the whole demonstration of orthodoxy may be assented to by him, who is not spiritual but carnal. And while we are yet on the threshold of by far the mightiest and closest of those demonstrations, that ever were offered to the world, 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."

LECTURE II.

ROMANS i, 1—7.

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: by whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name: among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome beloved of God: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

We now enter upon the work of exposition.

People, in reading the Bible, are often not conscious of the extreme listlessness with which they pass along the familiar and oft repeated words of Scripture, without the impression of their meaning being at all present with the thoughts—and how, during the mechanical currency of the verses through their lips, the thinking power is often asleep for whole passages together. And you will therefore allow me, at least at the commencement of this lectureship, first to read over a paragraph; and then to fasten the import of certain of its particular phrases upon your attention, even though these phrases may heretofore have been regarded as so intelligible, that you never thought of bestowing an effort or dwelling one moment upon their signification; and then of reading the passage over again, in such extended or such substituted language, as may give us another chance of the sense of it at least being rivetted on your understandings. We shall generally endeavour to press home upon you, in the way of application, some leading truth or argument which may occur in any such portion of the epistle as we may have been enabled to overtake.

V. 1. "Paul a servant of Jesus Christ called to be an apostle separated unto the gospel of God."

An apostle—one who is sent, one who obtains, not a commission to do, but a commission to go—'Go and preach the gospel unto every creature.' Jesus Christ is an apostle—because sent—and is therefore called not merely the High Priest, but the Apostle of our profession. God sent his Son unto the world. The call of Paul you read of several times in the Acts, both in the direct narrative of that book, and in his own account of it. And it is to be remarked that as he got his commission in a peculiar way, so he evidently feels himself more called upon than the other apostles, to assert and to vindicate its authenticity.

'Separated unto'—set apart to a particular work. You know that holiness, in its original meaning, just signifies separation from the mass. It is thus that the vessels of the temple are holy—it is thus that the terms, common and unclean, are

held, in the language of the ceremonial law, to be synonymous. And it is thus that the devoting, or setting apart of an apostle to his office, is expressed by the consecration of him to it; and even, in one part of the New Testament, by the sanctifying of him to it. This explains a passage that might be otherwise difficult, John xvii, 17—20. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." To sanctify here is not applied to the personal, but the official character. It is not to moralize the heart, but merely to set apart to an employment; and thus bears application to the apostle Christ, as to the apostles whom he was addressing.

'Gospel,' a message of good news.

V. 2. "Which He had promised afore by His prophets in the holy scriptures."

'Which' refers to gospel—which gospel he had promised.

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

This verse gives us the subject of the message, or what the message is about—or, omitting the second verse as a parenthesis, 'separated unto the work of promulgating God's message of good news, about His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.' The phrase 'which was made' might have been rendered 'which became' of the seed of David in respect of His flesh, or His human nature. He took it upon Him. He received from this descent all that other men receive of natural faculty—or, in other words, the term flesh comprehends the human soul as well as the human body of our Redeemer. 'According to,' is, 'in respect of.'

V. 4. "And declared to be the Son of God with power according the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead."

'Declared,' or determinately marked out to be the Son of God and with power. The thing was demonstrated by an evidence, the exhibition of which required a putting forth of power, which Paul in another place represents as a very great and strenuous exertion. "According to the working of His mighty power when He raised Him from the dead." 'The spirit of holiness'—or the Holy Spirit. It was through the operation of the Holy

Spirit, that the divine nature was infused into the human at the birth of Jesus Christ; and the very same agent, it is remarkable, was employed in the work of the resurrection. 'Put to death in the flesh,' says Peter, 'and quickened by the Spirit.' We have only to do with the facts of the case. He was demonstrated to be the Son of God, by the power of the Spirit having been put forth in raising Him from the dead.

V. 5. "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name."

'Grace,' sometimes signifies the kindness which prompts a gift, and sometimes the gift itself. We say that we receive kindness from a man, when, in fact, all that we can personally and bodily lay hold of, is the fruit of his kindness. Here, it signifies the fruit—a spiritual gift—ability, in fact, to discharge the office of an apostleship, or other duties attached to an apostle's commission. He laboured with success at this vocation, because he could strive mightily according to His working that wrought in him mightily. This commission was granted to him for the purpose of producing an obedience unto the faith among all nations, for the purpose of rendering all nations obedient unto the faith—and all this for the further purpose of magnifying His name.

V. 6. "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ."

'Called' externally—if addressing the whole church, of whom it is very possible that some may not have been called effectually. Or if restricted as in the following verse, only the latter—though he might presume to address all in visible communion with the church as beloved of God and as called to be saints.

V. 7. "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Loving kindness to you is manifested in those peculiar influences which the Spirit confers on believers; and either real peace, or a sense of it in your hearts, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So minute an exposition may not be called for afterwards: we may not therefore persevere in it long. We have now gone in detail over the words that seemed to require it, to prepare the way for repeating the whole passage to you, either in extended or in substituted language. But before we do so, we would bid you remark a peculiarity, which we often meet with in the compositions of this apostle. He deals very much in what might be called the excursive style. One word often suggests to him a train of

digression from the main current of his argument; and a single word of that train often suggests to him another; and thus does he accumulate one subsequent clause of an episode upon a foregoing; and branches out in so many successive departures, till, after a period of indulgence in this way of it, he recalls himself and falls in again to the capital stream of his observations. The interval between the first and seventh verses may be looked to, as filled up with a set of parentheses; and they will read therefore very well in succession. 'Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, to all that be in Rome beloved of God called to be saints: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.' In like manner, several of the intermediate verses are capable of being omitted, without breaking the line of continuity. But the occurrence of the term Gospel at the end of the first verse, is followed up in the second by his mention of the antiquity of it, and in the third by his mention of the subject of it; and in this verse the single introduction of our Saviour's name, leads him to assert in this and the following verse His divine and human natures, and to state in the fifth verse that from Him he had received a commission to preach unto all nations, and to instance in the sixth verse the people whom he was addressing as one of these nations. And it is not till after he has completed this circle of deviations, but at the same time enriched the whole of its course with the effusions of a mind stored in the truths of revelation, that he resumes in the seventh that rectilinear track, by which the writer who announced himself in the first verse, sends in the seventh his Christian salutations to the correspondents whom he is addressing.

We conclude with the following paraphrase.

'Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, and set apart to the work of conveying God's message of good tidings—which message He had promised before in His holy scriptures, and which message relates to His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who in respect of His human nature, was descended of David—but was vinned to be descended of God in respect of that divine nature with which the Holy Spirit impregnated His humanity at the first; and which He afterwards, by His power, still associated with His humanity, in raising Him from the dead. By this Jesus Christ have I received the favour to be an apostle, and ability for the office of spreading obedience unto the faith among all nations for the glory of His

name. Among these nations are ye Romans also the called of Jesus Christ, and to all of you in Rome, beloved of God, and called to be saints, do I wish grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

LECTURE III.

ROMANS i, 8—17.

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. 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; making request (I by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God) to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For 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. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

It does not require much in the way of exposition to set forth the meaning of these verses. The spiritual gift, mentioned in the 11th verse, is one of those gifts by the Holy Ghost, which the apostles had it in their power to transmit to their disciples—a power which seems to have signalized them above all the Christians of that period. Many could speak tongues and work miracles; but they could not make others either speak tongues or work miracles. The gifts themselves it was competent for them to have, but not the faculty of communicating them. This seems to have been the peculiar prerogative of apostles—which Simon Magus desired to have, but could not purchase. It was thus, perhaps, that an apostolical visit was necessary for the introduction of these powers into any church or congregation of Christians; and, if so, we would infer that the season of miracles must have passed away with those Christians, who had been in personal contact with, and were the immediate descendants of the apostles of our Lord. They left the gift of miracles behind them—but if they did not leave the power of transmitting this gift behind them, it might have disappeared with the dying away of all those men on whom they had actually laid their hands.

In the 14th verse, the phrase 'I am debtor,' may be turned into the phrase—'I am bound' or 'I am under obligation,' laid upon me by the duties of my office, to preach both to Greeks and Barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise. 'Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel'—a necessity is laid upon me.

The only other phrase that requires explanation, and about which indeed there is a difference of interpretation, is in the 17th verse—'from faith to faith.' There

is one sense assigned to this expression, very consistent certainly with the general truth of the gospel—but which can scarcely be admitted in this place, save by that kind of hurried acquiescence, which is too often rendered on the part of those, who like no better way of disposing of a passage than to get over it easily. The righteousness of God is certainly that, in which He hath appointed us sinners to appear before Him; and which is the only righteousness that He will accept of at our hands, as our meritorious title to His favour and friendship. Now it is very true, that this righteousness becomes ours wholly by faith, that by faith it is received on our part, and by faith it is retained on our part; and that neither works before faith, nor works after it, have any part in our justification—and that, therefore, it is not by passing onwards from faith to works that we further the concern of our justifying righteousness before God; but only by holding fast the beginning of our confidence even unto the end, and not casting it away; and if there be any lack in our faith, perfecting that which is lacking therein—so that it may hold true of us, as it did of the primitive Christians, of whom it was recorded that their faith grewth exceedingly. And with these views in their mind, do some hold, that the righteousness of God being revealed from faith to faith, signifies that as it is made known and discerned at first in the act of our believing, so the revelation of it becomes more distinct and manifest, just as the faith becomes stronger—the things to be discerned being seen in greater brightness and evidence, as the organ of discernment grows in clearness and power—not, say they, from faith unto works, but from faith to faith—marking what is very true, that our righteousness

before God, regarded as the giver of a perfect and incommutable law, is wholly by faith.

2. Notwithstanding however of all the undoubted truth and principle which stand associated with this interpretation, we think that there are others more simple and obvious. Paul had already spoken of a transmission of faith from himself to those whom he was addressing, and of a constant mutual faith between himself and them; and he tells us elsewhere of faith coming by hearing, and asks how can people believe unless preachers be sent; and he announces his determination to preach the gospel to those who are in Rome also; and professes his own faith in the gospel, under the affirmation that he is not ashamed of it; and declares its great subject to be the righteousness of God, revealed, as some are disposed to understand it, from the faith of the preacher to the faith of the hearers. Others would have it to mean that this righteousness is revealed by the faithfulness of God, to the faith of men.

3. But to our mind the best interpretation is obtained by conjoining the term righteousness with the phrase in question. For therein is revealed, the righteousness of God from faith, to faith. We shall thus have revealed in the gospel, *δικαιοσύνη ἐκ τοῦ πίστεως*, which is the righteousness from of or by faith; and the gift of which is *ἐἰς πίστιν* or to faith. This is quite at one with the affirmation of a subsequent passage, that "the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all and upon all that believe;" or the righteousness which is by faith is unto those who have the faith. As it is written, the righteous live, or hold that life which was forfeited under the law and is restored to them under the gospel, by faith.

We now offer the following paraphrase.

*First I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is in the mouths of all. For God whom I serve with my whole heart, in the business that He has committed to me of forwarding His Son's gospel, can testify that I never cease to make mention of you in all my prayers—making request, if it now be possible in any way, that I may at length, after unlooked for delay, have with His will a prosperous journey to you at Rome. For I long to see you, that I may in person and as a sign of my apostleship, impart to you some gift of the Holy Ghost, in order to confirm your minds in the faith of this gospel. Or rather, that I may be comforted, as well as you be confirmed, by the exercises and the sympathies of our mutual faith. Now you must know, brethren, that it has been long my purpose to come to you, but I have hitherto

been prevented, that I might have some effects of my ministry among you also, even as among the other nations where I have laboured. I have not yet visited the seat of philosophy, nor come into contact with its refined and literary people. But I count myself as much bound to declare the gospel to Greeks, or to men of Attic cultivation and acquirement, as to rude and ignorant barbarians—as much to the learned in this world's wisdom, as to the unlearned. So that, as far as it lies with me, I am quite in readiness to preach the gospel even to you who are at Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ—and, in the work of declaring it, am as ready to face the contempt and the self-sufficiency of science, as to go round with it among those more docile and acquiescing tribes of our species, who have less of fancied wisdom in themselves with which to confront it. For it is the power of God unto the salvation of all who believe. It is that, which, however judged and despised as a weak instrument by the men of this world, it is that to which He, by His power, gives effect for the recovery of that life which all men had forfeited and lost by sin—and which can only be restored by a righteousness which will do away the whole effect of this sin. Whosoever believeth in the gospel shall be saved, by having this life rendered back to him, whether he be Jew or Greek. For the gospel makes known the righteousness appointed by God—a righteousness by faith, and which is unto all who have faith—as it is written that the righteous, and those only are so who have that righteousness which God will accept, have it unto spiritual life here and unto eternal life hereafter by faith.'

It will not be our general practice to embarrass you with many interpretations of the same passage; and we do it at present, only for the purpose of ushering in the following observation. There do occur a few ambiguous phrases in Scripture; and this is quite consistent with such a state of revelation there, as that the great and essential truths which are unto salvation shall stand as clearly and as legibly on the face of the evangelical record, as if written with a sun-beam. And whereas there may enter into your minds a feeling of insecurity, when you behold men of scholarship at variance about the meaning of one of those doubtful expressions, we call you to remark how much the controversy between them is, in many instances, restricted merely to what the subject of the expression is, and not to what the doctrine of the Bible is upon that subject. Thus controversialists may all be at one about the scriptural doctrine on every given topic, though they

may not be at one as to the question—what is the topic which in this particular clause is here adverted to. The first class of interpreters, about the meaning of the ambiguous phrase in the 17th verse of this chapter, may think that it relates to the doctrine of our justification being wholly of faith; and that it retains this as its alone footing, throughout the whole course of an advanced Christian, as he makes progress both in faith and in the works of righteousness; and they may not think that it relates to the topic assigned, either by the second or third class of interpreters; and yet they may be entirely at one with both, in the judgment and understanding they have on each of the topics—concurring with the second in the general truth that a frequent and established way for the propagation of faith in the world, is by its passing from him who speaks to him who listens, and who in the act of listening becomes a believer—and concurring also with the third in their general principle, that the righteousness appointed by God for a sinner to appear in His presence, is constituted, not by working but by believing, and that it is transferred as a possession unto all who believe. They, one and all of them, may have the same mind upon the same topics—because shone upon in the same way, by the light of many other express and undoubted testimonies about these topics, which lie up and down in the Bible; and the only question of disputation between them may be, which of these particular topics happens to be the theme of the apostle in the passage before us—a very subordinate question, you will observe, to that more vital and essential one, which relates to the meaning of an article of faith—a question about which there may be varieties of sentiment among men, who are substantially at one in all that relates to the doctrines of Christianity. And we think that it ought to quell your apprehensions, and to reduce the estimate you may have previously made of those controversies among good men, which some would represent as quite endless and inextricable, when you are thus made to understand, that, in a very great number of cases they refer, not to what the whole amount of the Bible testimony is about this one or that other portion of the theological creed—but to what the position is which is specially taken up or adverted to in some of the incidental or subordinate passages. There is nothing to alarm or to unsettle in those lesser diversities which we are now alluding to. Nay it ought rather to establish your confidence, when you see that these diversities are held by the very men who hold the great principles of Christianity in common—

by men who, in thus dissenting from each other on particular passages, evince that to each of them there belongs the habit of independent thinking—and who thus stamp the value of so many distinct and independent testimonies, on those great doctrines which they have received from the light of many passages, and by which they are united in the profession of one Faith and one Lord and one Baptism.

A controversy about the doctrine of a particular passage is one thing. A controversy about the truth of a particular doctrine is another. The one implies a difference of understanding, about the sense of one passage. The other may imply a difference of understanding, about the general voice and testimony of Scripture as made up of many passages.

Let us now pass on from our exposition of the meaning of words, to our application of the matter that is conveyed by them. And here we have only time to advert to the affection and the strenuousness with which the apostolic mind of Paul gave itself up to apostolic business—how he rebukes by his example those who make the work of winning souls to Christ a light and superficial concern—how his whole man seems to have been engrossed by it—making it a matter of gratitude when he heard of its prosperity—making it a matter of prayer when he desired its furtherance—making it a matter of active personal exertion when it required his presence or his labour. To this work he gave himself wholly; and, by adding prayer to the ministry of the word, teaches us how much the effect of this ministry is due to those special influences, which are called down from Heaven by the urgency of special applications sent up from believers in the world. There is one trait of his mind, which frequently breaks out in his communications with his own converts. He is sometimes obliged to affirm his apostolic superiority over them, or to say something which implies it. But it is evident how much he recoils from such an assumption; and how it sets him to the expressions and the expedients of delicacy, with a view to soften the disparity between himself and his disciples; and how he likes to address them in the terms of equal and friendly companionship—dropping upon all possible occasions the character of the teacher in that of the fellow Christian; and never feeling so comfortably in his intercourse with them, as when he places himself on the level of their common hopes and common sympathies and common infirmities. It is altogether, we apprehend, such a movement of humility on the part of Paul, that lies at the transition from the eleventh verse

which signalizes him above the whole church, to the twelfth which brings him down to a participation of the same faith and the same comfort with them all.

We shall not at present, bring forth any remark on a phrase, which occurs frequently in this epistle, 'the righteousness of God'—for we shall have a freer and a fuller opportunity of doing so afterwards. But let us not pass over the intrepidity of Paul, in the open and public avowal of his Christianity. We call it intrepidity, though he speaks not here of having to encounter violence, but only of having to encounter shame. (For, in truth, it is often a higher effort and evidence of intrepidity, to front disgrace, than it is to front danger. There is many a man who would march up to the cannon's mouth for the honour of his country—yet would not face the laugh of his companions for the honour of his Saviour.) We doubt not that there are individuals here present, who if the Turkish armada were wafted on the wings of conquest to our shores, and the ensigns of Mahomet were proudly to wave over the fallen faith of our ancestors, and they were plied with all the devices of eastern cruelty to abjure the name of Christian, and do homage to the false prophet—there are individuals here, whose courage would bear them in triumph through such a scene of persecuting violence; and yet whose courage fails them every day, in the softer scenes of their social and domestic history. The man who under the excitements of a formal and furious persecution, was brave enough to be a dying witness to the truth as it is in Jesus, crouches into all the timidity of silence under the omnipotency of fashion; and ashamed of the Saviour and His words, recoils in daily and familiar conversation from the avowals of a living witness for His name.) There is as much of the truly heroic in not being ashamed of the profession of the gospel, as in not being afraid of it. Paul was neither: and yet when we think of what he once was in literature; and how aware he must have been of the loftiness of its contempt for the doctrine of a crucified Saviour; and that in Rome the whole power and bitterness of its derisions were awaiting him; and that the main weapon with which he had to confront it was such an argument as looked to be foolishness to the wisdom of this world—we doubt not that the disdain inflicted by philosophy, was naturally as formidable to the mind of this apostle, as the death inflicted by the arm of bloody violence. So that even now, and in the age when Christianity has no penalties and no proscriptions to keep her down, still, if all that deserves the name of Christianity be explo-

ded from conversation—if a visible embarrassment run through a company, when its piety or its doctrine is introduced among them—if, among beings rapidly moving towards immortality, any serious allusion to the concerns of immortality stamps an oddity on the character of him who brings it forward—if, through a tacit but firm compact which regulates the intercourse of this world, the gospel is as effectually banished from the ordinary converse of society, as by the edicts of tyranny the profession of it was banished in the days of Claudius from Rome:—then he who would walk in his Christian integrity among the men of this lukewarm and degenerate age—he who would do all and say all in the name of Jesus—he who, in obedience to his Bible, would season with grace and with that which is to the use of edifying the whole tenor of his communications—he, in short, who, rising above that meagre and mitigated Christianity, which is as remote as Paganism from the real Christianity of the New Testament, would, out of the abundance of his heart, without shrinking and without shame, speak of the things which pertain to the kingdom of God—he will find that there are trials still, which, to some temperaments, are as fierce and as fiery as any in the days of martyrdom: and that, however in some select and peculiar walk he may find a few to sympathize with him, yet many are the families and many are the circles of companionship, where the persecution of contempt calls for determination as strenuous, and for firmness as manly, as ever in the most intolerant ages of our church did the persecution of direct and personal violence.)

And let it be remarked too, that, in becoming a Christian now, the same transition is to be made from one style of sentiment to another, which was made by the apostle. It is as much the effort of nature, as it ever was of a corrupt and ignorant Judaism, to seek to establish a righteousness of its own; and, in passing from a state of nature to that of grace, there must still be a renouncing of that righteousness, and a transference of our trust and of our entire dependence to another. Now, in the act of making that passage, there is also the very same encounter with this world's ridicule and observation, which the apostle had to brave; and which, on the strength of right and resolute principle, the apostle overcame. The man who hopes to get to heaven by a good life, and who professes himself to be secure on the strength of his many virtues and his many decencies, and who dislikes both the mystery and the seriousness which stand associated with the doctrine of salvation by faith alone—such a man has no more

Christianity, than what he may easily and familiarly show—and in sporting such sentiments, even among the most giddy and unthinking of this world's generations he will neither disgrace himself by singularity nor be resisted as the author of any invasion whatever on the general style and spirit of this world's companies. But should he pass from this condition, which is neither more nor less than that of a Pharisee in disguise; and, struck by a sense of spiritual nakedness, flee for refuge to another righteousness than his own; and seek for justification by faith, a privilege which is rendered to faith; and profess now, that he hopes to get to heaven by the obedience unto death which has been rendered for him by their great Mediator—such a style of utterance as this, would serve greatly more to peculiarize a man among the conversations of society—these are the words of Christ of which he is greatly apt to be more ashamed. A temptation meets him here, which no doubt met the apostle, when his Christianity first came to be known among those fellow-students who had been trained along with him at the feet of Gamaliel; and it is at that point when, for the Jewish principle of self-righteousness he adopts the evangelical principle of justification by faith—it is then that he becomes more an outcast than before, from the toleration and sympathy of unconverted men:

Let the same consideration uphold such that upheld the mind of the apostle. All that you possibly can do, for the purpose of substantiating a claim upon Heaven, is but the weakness of man, idly straining after a salvation which he will miss. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, however simple the expedient, the power and the promise of God are on the side of your obtaining salvation which will certainly be accomplished. The Syrian was affronted when told to dip himself in Jordan for the cure of his leprosy; and to many in like manner is it a subject of offence, when told to wash out their sins in the blood of the atonement—calling on the name of the Lord. But the same power which gave efficacy to the one expedient, gives efficacy to the other; and in such a way too, as to invest that method of salvation which looks meanness and foolishness to the natural eye—to invest it with the solemn venerable imposing character of God's asserted majesty, of God's proclaimed and vindicated righteousness.

And here let us remark the whole import of the term salvation. The power of God in the achievement of it was put forth in something more than in bowing down the Divinity upon our world, and there causing it to sustain the burden of the world's atonement—in something more than the conflicts of the garden or the agonies of the cross—in something more than the resurrection of the crucified Saviour from His tomb—in something more than the consequent expunging of every believer's name from the book of condemnation, and the inscribing of it in the book of life. There is a power put forth on the person of believers. There is the working of a mighty power to usward who believe. There is the achievement of a spiritual resurrection upon every one of them. By the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, the power of which is applied to every soul that has faith, there is a cleansing of that soul from its moral and spiritual leprosy. And hence a connection between two things, which to the world's eye looks incomprehensible—a connection between faith, which it might be feared would have led to indolent security on the one hand, and a most thorough substantial pervading reformation of heart and conduct on the other. The expedient does not appear a likely one to the eye of nature. But the power of God stamps an efficacy upon it; and He has multiplied in all ages of the church the living examples of marked and illustrious virtue in the person of believers; and has held them forth to the world as trophies of the power of the gospel; and has put to silence the gainsayers; and afforded matter of glory to the friends of the truth; and upheld them in the principle and purpose not to be ashamed of it.

We conclude with that awful denunciation of the Saviour. "He who is ashamed of me before this evil and adulterous generation—of him will I be ashamed before my holy angels."

In the last clause "the just shall live by faith"—we are apt to conceive of justice as a personal and inherent attribute. In the original, the term for just has the same root with the term for righteousness—and this strengthens our impression of the true meaning here, which is, that they who are righteous with the righteousness of God, mentioned in the same verse, and who in virtue of being so have a title and a security for life, hold that life by faith.

LECTURE IV.

ROMANS i, 18—24.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them: for God hath showed it unto them. 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; because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves."

THE word translated here 'to hold,' signifies not merely to hold, but to hold fast. Now this may be done for the purpose of keeping in secure possession that which you wish to retain. And so this is the word in that place where they who receive the word are said to "keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience;"* and where the Corinthians are praised by Paul because they observed "to remember him in all things, and to keep the ordinances which he had delivered them;"† and where he tells them, that they are saved if they "keep in memory, that which he had preached unto them;"‡ and where he bids the Thessalonians "hold fast that which is good;"§ and where he informs the Hebrews, that Christ dwelleth in them, if they "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end;"|| and also that we are made partakers of Christ, if "we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;"¶ and finally, where he encourages them to "hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering,"** It is not in the sense of the word in any of these passages that we are to understand it here. They who hold the truth in unrighteousness, do not hold it for the sake of keeping it in possession, as an article which they value; and therefore were desirous of retaining in safe and cherished custody.

Or one may hold fast for the purpose of confining or keeping down, so as to impede and repress that which is thus confined, from the putting forth of its energies. And accordingly this is the very word which Paul uses, when he says to the Thessalonians, "And now ye know what *withholdeth* that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now *letheth* will let until he be taken out of the way."†† He alludes to something that so confined Antichrist, as to keep him back—so that he came not out into full and immediate manifestation. It is in this second sense that men hold the truth in unright-

eousness. They have the truth—they are in possession of it. But they keep it down. They chain it, as it were, in the prison-hold of their own corruptions. They throw the troublesome adviser into a dungeon—just like a man who has a conscience to inform him of what is right, but who stifles its voice, and brings it under bondage to the domineering ascendancy of passion and selfishness and all the lawless appetites of his nature. Thus it is with men who restrain the truth, or suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

V. 19. "That which is knowable of God, is manifest among them."

V. 20. "For ever since the creation of the world, that great manifestation of God's power and Godhead, these invisible things of Him are clearly seen."

V. 21. "In their reasonings."

The following then is the paraphrase of this passage. 'For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who stifle the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which might be known of God is manifest among them—for God hath shown it to them. For the invisible things respecting Him, even His eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen—being discernible from the things that are made, so as to render them inexcusable. Because when they did know God, they did not do Him glory as to God, neither were they thankful to Him; but departing from the grave and solemn and simple reliance that was due to the Creator, they went into vain reasonings about Him, and so changed the truth into a deceitful imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened. In the profession, and in the prosecution of wisdom, they became fools: And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things.'

'Our first remark on the subject matter of this passage, is founded on the way, in which the revelation of the righteousness of God unto faith, stands as a counterpart to the revelation of the wrath of God unto all ungodliness and unrighteousness of

* Luke viii, 15.

† 1 Cor. xi, 2.

‡ 1 Cor. xv, 2.

§ 1 Thes. v, 21.

|| Heb. iii, 6.

¶ Heb. iii, 14.

** Heb. x, 23.

†† 1 Thess. ii, 6, 7.

men. The wrath is not an element framed or fermented upon earth. It is conceived in Heaven; and thence it cometh down on the unrighteousness of men, as the subject of it. And as with the wrath of God, so it is with the righteousness of God. It too cometh down from Heaven in the shape of a descending ministration. It is no more the righteousness of man in the one case, than it is the wrath of man in the other. It is affirmed here, and most prominently referred to in other parts of the epistle, as the righteousness of God. The wrath has its origin in the breast of the Divinity; and it goeth forth from an upper store-house, from a quarter above our world and foreign to our world; and all that the world furnishes is the reservoir into which it is poured—the unrighteousness and the ungodliness of men, which form the fit subjects for its application. And there is not an individual man who is not a fit subject of it. The wrath is unto all unrighteousness; and there is none who has not fallen into some unrighteousness. All who do these things are worthy of death; and there is not a human creature who has not done one or more of these things.

But there is a way, it would appear, in which they who are thought worthy of death and are under the wrath of God, may nevertheless be made to live. They die by the wrath of God being inflicted on them. They live by the righteousness of God being administered to them. The one is just as much the rendering of a foreign application as the other. In the one case there is a displacency at sin on the part of the Godhead; and this bodies itself into a purpose of vengeance against the sinner; and the infliction of it is sent forth from God's remote and lofty sanctuary, originating there, and coming down from thence upon the unrighteousness of man. And as with the wrath of God ministered unto the world, so it is with the righteousness of God which is ministered unto the world. It has all a separate existence in the upper courts of Heaven. It is no more man's righteousness in the one case, than it is man's wrath in the other. There was a ransom found out by God. There was a surety accepted by God. There was a satisfaction which that surety rendered. There was an obedience undertaken for us by one who inhabited eternity; and with this obedience God was well pleased. There was a righteousness which He could acknowledge. There was a duteous and devoted offering, which to Him was the incense of a sweet-smelling savour. There was a virtue which shone in spotless lustre even to His pure and penetrating eye; and a merit which not only met the demand of His holy law, but

magnified that law and made it honourable. And all this apart from any obedience of ours. All this the produce of a transaction in which we had no share. All this a treasure existing in the repositories of that place, where the Father and the Son hold their ineffable communion—a righteousness not rendered by us, but rendered to us; and which is the only one that God can look unto with complacency. This is the righteousness of God, standing altogether aloof and separable from the righteousness of man; and which He offers to administer to us all, in place of that wrath which, upon our refusal of His better offer, He will administer. And the way in which both the wrath and the righteousness are set before us in this passage, as being each of them a descending ministration—the one of them being as purely a dispensation from Heaven as the other—should prepare us for the still more pointed asseverations of the apostle, when he tells us that the righteousness upon which we are accepted is altogether of God, and borrows not one particle of its worth from the obedience of man; that it comes upon us in the shape of a previous and a prepared grant, which we are simply to lay hold of; that we are not the authors of it, but simply the subjects of it: And much is to be gathered from the information, that, like as the wrath of God is unto man's unrighteousness, so the righteousness of God is unto man's faith.

The question is, Whether that thing on which we are justified is the righteousness of Christ alone accepted by God, and therefore called the righteousness of God, and rendered ours upon our receiving it by faith—or, Whether it be the righteousness of man as alone or in part the plea of man's justification. It will be found in the sequel, how strenuously and how unreservedly the apostle cleaves to the former term of this alternative; and in this opening passage of his Epistle, does he afford us no obscure or unsatisfying glimpse of that doctrine, on which lie suspended the firmest securities of our peace in this world, and the dearest hopes of our eternity.

The next thing to which we direct your attention, is the precise reason that is intimated to us here, of God's provocation with man. There is something in the principle of His anger, which accords with what we experience of the movement of anger in our own bosoms. An infant or an animal may do an action which is materially wrong, without calling forth our resentment. It is the knowing it to be wrong, on the part of the doer, which is indispensable to our anger against him being a rightful emotion; and it is neither the acting nor the thinking erroneously,

on the part of man, which in itself brings down upon them the wrath of God. It is their doing so intelligently. It is their stifling the remonstrances of truth in the work of unrighteousness. It is that they voluntarily bid it into silence; and, bent on the iniquity that they love, do, in the wilful prosecution of it, drown its inward voice—just as they would deafen the friendly warning of any monitor who is standing beside them; and whose advice they guess would be on the side of what is right, and against the side of their own inclinations. Were there no light present to their minds, there would be no culpability. On the other hand, should it shine clearly upon them, this makes them responsible for every act of disobedience to its lessons. But more, should it shine but dimly, and it be a dimness of their own bringing on—should they land in a state of darkness, and that not because any outward luminary has been extinguished; but because, in hatred of its beams and loving the darkness, they have shut their eyes—or should it be a candle within which has waned and withered to the very border of extinction, under their own desirous endeavours to mar the brilliancy of its flame—should there be a law of our nature, in virtue of which every deed of opposition to the conscience causes it to speak more faintly than before, and to shine more feebly than before, and should this be the law which has conducted every human being on the face of our earth to the uttermost depths, both of moral blindness and moral apathy—Still he is what he is because he willed against the light, and wrought against the light. It is this which brings a direct criminality upon his person. It is this which constitutes a clear principle for his condemnation to rest upon; and it is enough to fasten blame-worthiness upon his doings, that they were either done in despite of the convictions which he had, or done in despite of the convictions which but for his own wilful depravity he might have had.

The Bible, in charging any individual with actual sin, always presupposes a knowledge, either presently possessed or unworthily lost or still attainable on his part, of some rightful authority, against which he hath done some act of wilful defiance. The contact of light with the mind of the transgressor, and that too in such sufficiency as, if he had followed it, would have guided him to an action different from the one he has performed, is essential to the sinfulness of that action—insomuch that on the day of reckoning, when the men of all nations and all ages shall stand around the judgment-seat, here is not one who will be pronounced

an outcast of condemnation there, who will not feel an echo in his own conscience to the righteousness of the sentence under which he has fallen; and who, though living in the midst of thickest heathenism, will not remember the visitations of a light which he ought to have followed, and by resisting which he has personally deserved the displeasure of God that shall then be over him, the doom of the eternity that shall then be before him.

In the 19th and following verses, the apostle, aware that to establish the guilt of the world's unrighteousness it was necessary to prove that it was unrighteousness committed in the face of knowledge, affirms what it was that man knew originally, and how it was that the light which was at one time in them became darkness. That which it was competent to know about God, was manifest among men. God himself had showed it unto men. He had either done so by the wisdom that shone in creation, making it plain to man's natural discernment that it was the product of a supreme and eternal intelligence; and this is one way in which we may understand how the invisible properties of the Godhead are clearly seen, even from the impress of them, stamped and evident to the reflecting eye on the face of creation itself. Or He had expressly revealed the fact to man that the world was created, and that He was the Author of it. Instead of leaving them to find this out, He had made it known to them by actual communication. It is not necessary to conceive from these verses, that the doctrines of the existence and perfections of God are the achievements of man's unaided discovery at first. In that age of extraordinary manifestations, when God put forth the arm of a creator, He may also have put forth the voice of a revealer; and simply announced to men that the world they lived in was a piece of workmanship, and that He Himself was the builder and the maker of it. With the simple information that the world made not itself, but had a beginning, they could rise to the perception of Him who had no beginning. They could infer the eternity of that Being who Himself was uncreated. They could infer the magnitude of His power, seeing it to be commensurate to the production of that stupendous mechanism which lay visibly around them. They could infer his Godhead, or in other words His supremacy—the subordination of all that existed to His purpose and will—His right of property in this universe, and in all those manifold riches which fill and which adorn it—and more particularly that He originated all their faculties; that He provided them with all their enjoyments; that every secondary source and

agent of gratification to them, was a mere channel of conveyance for His liberality; that, behind all which was visible, there were a power and a Godhead invisible which had been from eternity, and were now put forth in bright and beautiful development on a created expanse, where everything was that could regale the senses, and be exuberant of delight and blessedness to the living creatures by whom it was occupied.

It is not necessary to enter into a contest about the powers or the limits of the human faculties—though we shall afterwards attempt to make it evident, that, debased and darkened as we are by sin, there is enough of light in the human conscience to render inexcusable human ungodliness. But let us at present confine ourselves to the circumstances adverted to by the apostle, according to the historical truth of them. He is evidently describing the historical progress of human degeneracy; and begins with the state of matters at the commencement of a darkening and deteriorating process, which took place on the character of man. And, without resolving the metaphysical question How far man without a direct communication from Heaven could have found his way to the Being and attributes of the Divinity, let us just take up with the commencement of matters as it actually stood. It was a period of extraordinary manifestations; and God made Himself directly and personally known, as the one Creator of all things; and men had only to look with the eye of their senses to these things, and to conclude how much of power, how much of wisdom, how much of rightful sovereignty and ownership, belonged to Him that framed all and upholds all. We may not be sure, in how far man could, on the strength of his own unborrowed resources, have steered his ascending way to the knowledge of a God. But the communicated fact that God did exist, and that He was the framer and the architect of all, put him on high vantage ground—from which might be clearly seen the eternal power of the Supreme, and His eternal Godhead.

We have only time to advert, shortly, to the way in which the truth respecting God was changed into a lie. The creature became more loved and more depended on, than the Creator. He was not glorified as the giver, and the maker of all created good. But what was sensibly and imme-

diately good, was sought after for itself, was valued on its own account, was enjoyed without any thankful reference to Him who granted all and originated all; and this too in the face of a distinct knowledge, that every thing was held of God—in the face of an authoritative voice, claiming what was due to God—in the face of a conscience powerful at the outset of man's history, however much it may have been darkened and overborne in the subsequent process of his alienation. And thus the tenure of his earthly enjoyments was gradually lost sight of altogether; and the urgencies of sense and of the world got the better of all impressions of the Deity; and man at length felt his portion and his security and his all to be, not in the Author of creation, but in the creation itself with all its gay and goodly and fascinating varieties. His mind lost its hold of a great and subordinating principle, by which he could have assigned its right place, and viewed according to its just relationship, all that was around him. The world in fact, by a mighty deed of usurpation, dethroned the Deity from the ascendancy which belonged to him; and thus the rule of estimation was subverted within him, and his foolish heart was darkened. This disorder in the state of his affections, while it clouded and subverted his discerning faculties, did not at the same time restrain the exercise of them. The first ages of the world, as is evident from the history of Babel, were ages of ambitious speculation; and man, with his love strongly devoted to the things of sense, still dreamed and imagined and theorized about hidden principles; and, with his sense of the one presiding Divinity nearly as good as obliterated, he began to fancy a distinct agency in each distinct element and department of nature; and, to make use of the strong phrases of God giving them up and giving them over, we may infer a law of connection between a distempered state of the heart, and a distempered state of the understanding; and thus their very wisdom was turned into folly; and to their perverted eye, the world was turned into one vast theatre of idolatry; and they personified all that they loved and all that they feared—till by the affections and the judgment acting and reacting, the one upon the other, they sank down into the degrading fooleries of Paganism.

LECTURE V.

ROMANS i, 28.

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.”

BEFORE proceeding to enforce the lesson that may be educed from this text, let us shortly remark, that the not liking to retain God in our knowledge, might have been rendered by the not trying to do so, not exercising our minds on the proof and information that were before them—so as to fix the right belief about God, and to perpetuate the right view and perception of Him. At the same time it is very true that not to try the evidence, and not to prosecute the guidance of the light which we have about any doctrine, argues either a dislike to that doctrine, or an indifference about it—so that any slight amendment which may be made of the English translation upon this score does not affect the truth which it here sets before us, that God gives over to a reprobate mind, those who do not like to retain Him in their knowledge.

But the term ‘reprobate’ too, admits of some little remark in the way of explanation. In its prevailing acceptation, it suggests to our minds a hopeless and abandoned wickedness of character; and so is expressive of a diseased state of the moral principles. In its primary sense it was equivalent to the term undiscerning, or undistinguishing; and so is expressive of a darkened state of the understanding. In your larger Bibles, you will find a reprobate mind rendered on the margin into a mind void of judgment. But still it is judgment, not exercised on any secular or philosophical question, but the judgment of what is moral and spiritual—that kind of judgment where error leads necessarily and immediately to practical unrighteousness; and where therefore the love of the unrighteousness disposes us to prefer the darkness rather than the light. It is thus that the understanding and the affections act and react upon each other; and that we read of men of corrupt minds having no judgment, or being reprobate concerning the faith; and of those who are abominable and disobedient, being also void of judgment about every good work, or unto every good work being reprobate.

In the sad narrative of the apostle in this chapter, he appears to refer not to the history of one individual mind, or of one individual conscience—the defilement of which two provinces in our moral and intellectual nature, goes on contemporaneously, with every human being who is

in a state of progressive corruption. But he rather sketches out to us in this chapter the progress of the world’s degeneracy from one age to another; and we would infer from his account that men, in the first instance, had a far more clear and convinced sense of God; but, not liking to retain it, committed the sin of a perverse disposition against the light which they had, and in part extinguished it—that they of course left their own immediate posterity, in a light more shaded and reduced than that which shone around the outset of their own progress through the world—that these still disliked the remainder of truth which they enjoyed; and, by their wilful resistance to its lessons inflicted upon it a further mutilation, and transmitted it to their descendants with a still deeper hue of obscurity thrown over it—that thus, by every successive step from one generation to another, the light of divine truth went down in this world’s history more tarnished and impaired than ever; but still with such glimpses as, however feeble and however faded, were enough at least to try the affection of man towards it, were enough to stir up a distinct resistance on the part of those who disliked it, were enough to keep up the responsibility of the world, and to retain it in rightful dependence on the judgment of Him who made the world—so as to make it clear on the day of reckoning, that men, even in their state of most sunken alienation from the true God, were never, like the beasts that perish, so helplessly blind, and so destitute of all capacity for discerning between the good and the evil, as to render them the unfit subjects of a moral sentence and a moral examination. With every human creature who shall be pronounced worthy of death on that day, will it be seen that there was either a light which he actually had and liked not to retain, or a light which he might have had and liked not to recover. To whom much is given of him much shall be required; and there will be gradations of punishment in hell; and in that place where the retributions of vengeance are administered, will there be the infliction of many stripes upon some, and of few stripes upon others; and it will be more tolerable for those who lived in a darkness that was not wilfully of their own bringing on, than for

those who stood on the ground of rebellion amid the full blaze and effulgency of light from Heaven. Yet still, there shall not be one unhappy outcast in that abode of eternal condemnation, who will not be convicted of sin knowing it to be so; who, whatever be the age or country of the world which he occupied, has not been plied with admonitions which he resisted, and urged by such an authoritative sense of duty as he trampled upon—and that too, in the spirit of a daring and presumptuous defiance. In short, be his ignorance what it may, there was a wilful depravity which went beyond the limits of his ignorance—Be that region of human affairs over which he roamed in utter darkness as extended as it may, still there was a region of light upon which he made his intrusions with the intelligent purpose, and in the determined spirit of a rebel—Let the moral geography of the place he occupied be as remote as it may, still there was a Law the voice of which at times did reach him, and the sanctions of which must when time is no more at length overtake him—Let the darkening of his foolish heart be as due as it may to the sin of his ancestors, they still left a tribunal there from which went forth upon him the whisper of many an intimation—In the darkest period of this world's abandonment, were there still the vestiges of truth before every eye, and a conscience awake in every bosom,—insomuch that not one trembling culprit will be seen before the judgment-seat, who will not stand self-convicted under the voice of a challenging and inspecting Deity—His own heart will bear witness to the sentence that he has gone forth against him; and the echoing voice of his own memory, will be to him the knell of his righteous and everlasting condemnation.

But we should like to bring the principle of our text more distinctly and individually to bear upon you. That process in general history by which the decline of this world's light respecting God, and the decline of its practical allegiance to His authority, have kept pace, the one with the other, is often realized in the personal history of a single individual. There is a connection by the law of our nature, between his wilful disobedience and his spiritual darkness. You have read perhaps in our old theologians, of what they called a judicial blindness. It is a visitation consequent upon sin. It is a withdrawal of the Spirit of God, when grieved and discouraged and provoked by our resistance to His warnings. It is that Spirit ceasing to strive with the children of men; and coming to this as the final result of the contest he has so long maintained with their obstinacy—

He shall let them alone since they will have it so. It is an extinction of the light which they once had, but refused to be led by; and now perhaps that they have it not, may they do many an evil thing to the evil of which they are profoundly asleep, and against which their conscience, now lulled and stifled into spiritual death, lifts no voice of remonstrance whatever. The guilt of sins committed in this state of dormancy, which is of their own bringing on, is no more done away by their insensibility to the foulness of them, than is the guilt of murder committed in the fury of wilful intoxication. And ye depraved and hackneyed old, at the doors of whose hearts we have so often knocked and knocked in vain, we bid you remember a season of alarm and tenderness which has now passed away—we ask of you to look back on the prayers and the precautions of boyhood, when, the conscience awake and at her post, you at one time trembled to think of that which you can now do without remorse and without fearfulness. Ye men who have become stout-hearted sinners, and just because the moral light which shone upon you once has been extinguished by yourselves, and by yourselves your foolish hearts have been darkened—the scruples and the sensibilities of your earlier days may all have taken their departure, and such may be the lethargy of your souls that neither the thunders of the law nor the entreaties of the gospel can move them. You may now be able to stand your ground against all the spiritual artillery of the pulpit—and, even though death has stalked at large over the entire field of your former companionship and left you a solitary and surviving memorial of friends and of families that have all been swept away, still may you persist in the spirit of an unbroken worldliness, and act the secure and the stout-hearted sinner, who rivets all his desires and all his hopes on a slippery foundation. It is true indeed, that, with a conscience obliterated, and an inner man deaf to every awakening call, and a system of moral feelings like a piece of worn and rusty mechanism that cannot be set agoing, and an overhanging torpor upon all the spiritual faculties, so that every denunciation of an angry God and a coming vengeance is only heard like a sound that whistles by—it is indeed true that he whose soul is in a condition such as this, sits in the region and in the shadow of grossest darkness. But it is not like the transmitted darkness of Paganism, which he can offer to plead in mitigation—or which will make his last sentence more tolerable for him even as it shall be more tolerable for Sodom or Gomorrah. It is a darkness which he

loved, and into which he voluntarily entered. He made his escape to it from the light which he hated; and by his own act did he so outrun his pursuing conscience, as now to be at a distance from her warnings. If the call of 'repent or perish' do not bring him back—it is because he is sealed unto the day of condemnation; it is because God hath given him over to a reprobate mind; it is because he is judicially in a state of blindness; it is because his soul is compassed with a thick and heavy atmosphere of his own gathering. The Heathen sinner will be tried by the light which he had. The Christian sinner will be tried by the light which he fled from. This is his condemnation, that light has come into his part of the world—and he would not come to meet and be enlightened by it. He is on a footing altogether different from that of the idolater—though the darkness in which he is enveloped be irrecoverable. Enough that a light was offered which he refused—or enough that a light was once possessed, and he did not like to retain it.

We have already remarked, that, in the gradual darkening and deterioration of our world from one age to another, each age became successively more ignorant of God than the preceding; and yet with each we believe, even in the veriest wilds of savage and unwrought humanity, is there enough of light and enough of conscience, and enough of God's law in dim but remaining vestiges, to make every individual of our species a fit subject for moral examination, and for a righteous sentence consequent upon a fair and impartial trial. Now we have not practically to do with the destinies of the unconverted Heathen—nor shall we just now enter upon this region of speculation at all. But we have immediately to do with a question which respects the immortality of our own countrymen. What is their light, and what is the degree of their condemnation if they resist it? What is the precise addition which our possession of the Bible has conferred upon our responsibility? What is the knowledge of God to which a conscientious and diligent perusal of this book might conduct us—unless we like not to receive that knowledge which we might obtain? What is the knowledge of God which we throw away from us by throwing this book away from us—and that because we like not to retain the knowledge which we might possess? Only grant, that we are as morally and as rightfully to blame for not acquiring the light which we might receive if we had so willed it, as for not preserving the light which we might attain if we had so willed it; and the question before us is brought within a manageable

compass. Is there at the very outset enough of likelihood that God might be the author of this book, as should resolve us upon a serious examination—then if God actually be the author, we have not acquired the knowledge of Him we might have done; and we shall be condemned accordingly, if we withhold the examination which ought to have been given. Is there enough of the character of the Divinity stamped upon its pages, that, had we only read with earnestness and pondered with earnestness, we would have beheld the traces of Him distinctly there and have been satisfied—then if, instead of so reading, we have wantonly and ignorantly reviled it, God may righteously step forth, and vindicate upon our persons, the truth of His insulted message and the honesty of His insulted messengers. If the suspicion has ever come into any of your hearts, that this ridicule of Scripture may after all be a ridicule of the Almighty; and you, instead of being arrested by the impulse of such a visitation, have, in the mad outcry of a great and growing infatuation, made your strenuous effort to keep down this compunctious feeling, and have prevailed—then have you committed yourselves, and that wilfully, to the hazards of this alternative—that either the Scripture is a fable, or you by the choice of your own hearts and the deed of your own hands have come under all the curses that are written in it. Certain it is, that, to whatever term of whatever alternative the world may commit itself in reference to Christianity, Christianity commits itself to a very distinct alternative in reference to the world—and if this religion indeed be true; and such be the actual influence of the human will upon the human understanding, that he who is willing to do God's will shall know of the doctrine of Christ that it is from God; and if faith in the gospel be at all times the fruit of moral honesty, duly exercised and sincerely in quest of what is right; and if the spirit of direction be given to him who has an upright feeling of desire to do as he ought, and to believe as he ought; and if every man who faithfully follows the light of his conscience, is thereby conducted to a reverence for his Bible and a reliance upon his Bible; and if infidelity be at all times the issuing product of a heart careless about God, and utterly unconcerned either to retain such knowledge of Him as it has, or to acquire such knowledge of Him as it has not—then, it may not be in the power of a fellow-man, under all those guises of candour and frankness and liberality which the unbeliever can put on, so to feel his way through the intricacies of another's spirit, as to catch the

lurking criminality and bring it out in satisfying exposure to the general eye. But let Christianity be true, and mark the fearful alternative to him who spurns it away. The unseen author of it ponders every heart; and, mysterious as its workings are to us, there is nothing in them all that can baffle the scrutiny of Him who formed it; and if there be, as the Bible says there is, an alliance between infidelity and moral evil, He can detect it, and bring it out on the day of reckoning to open manifestation—He can unveil the whole process of this miserable delusion; and at every step of it where pride or ungodliness or selfishness or profligacy did operate its bias upon the understanding, He can make it good, and that to the conviction of the unhappy man, that his judgment was in error just because his affections were in error—that there was a want of belief in his mind, just because there was a want of worth in his character—that he was not a Christian man, just because he was not an upright man—and that the light which was in him was turned into darkness, just because he did not care to retain it; and after it was lost he did not care and did not choose to recover it.

To satisfy you of a real connection between the state of man's moral principles on the one hand, and the state of his intellectual principles on the other, let us have recourse to one simple illustration. For it does require to be explained. There is many an error in judgment which implies no worldliness of character whatever. A man may have a wrong opinion in matters of trade or philosophy or law; and this altogether unconnected with any wrong habit of the life, or any wrong and depraved habit of the affections. And might not he, in like manner, have a wrong opinion on a question of theology, and be so very far in the wrong as to think Christianity a fable, and all this without any moral perversity being the cause of his error? Might it not be a mere mistake of the understanding for which he lies under no responsibility at all, at that bar where nothing is condemned that is not criminal? Where lies the greater fault of an error in a matter of speculation, and that because a man has a bad understanding, than of an error in a matter of sight, and that because a man has bad eyes? How is it that there is any connection between sentiment and sin? And let our belief be as mistaken as it may—explain to us how it comes to be an affair of moral turpitude, and with what justice or upon what principles it can have the retribution of any moral vengeance awarded to it?

If any of you, the victim of helpless po-

verty, were suddenly translated into ease and affluence—and that through a ministration of liberality left at your door by the hand of some unknown benefactor—in reference to him, though utterly in the dark about his person, you may be guilty of the crime of ingratitude. To make no inquiry about him were ungrateful. To riot in the enjoyment of the gift, without one thought of concern or curiosity about the giver, were both selfish and ungrateful. To be better pleased that you did not know and have no repayment of gratitude to make, is the very essence of ingratitude; and that too in reference to an individual whose person perhaps you never saw, and whose name perhaps you never heard. To sit at greater ease without the burden of obligation upon you to any known benefactor, than you would do if he stood revealed to your apprehension, and claimed the due return of affection or of service—this is decisive of a heart tainted with the sin of ingratitude. It is sin which keeps you from enquiring; and if carefully to enquire were certainly to find, it is sin which keeps you from discovering. You want the light, and just because you hate it. You have not the knowledge of the heart that pitied and the hand that aided you, because it is a knowledge you like not to acquire.

And thus it is, that many is the man who is ignorant of God—and yet lies under the full guilt and burden of ungodliness. Many is the man who with the world as his satisfying portion, never lifts one anxious inquiry after Him who made the world; and think you that his defective theology is as free of blame or condemnation, as is the defective philosophy of him who never attempted the toils of scholarship? Tell, if here a want of understanding may not resolve itself into a want of principle. He does not know God. But he does not seek to know him. His mistakes of conception regarding the Deity, or his total want of conception about Him, may be designed as mere errors of judgment, or as a mere blindness of the judgment. But it is the error and the blindness of one who wishes not to see. He grovels in ignorance; but it may be just because he grovels in corruption. He is so engrossed with the creature, that he would like to be quit of a Creator. There may be an utter absence of light, and yet may he realize all the guilt of impiety. He may stand on the verge of atheism, or even be darkling within its limits—and yet his worthlessness have the very same element with the worthlessness of him, before the eye of whose conviction God stands fully manifested, and who places himself in known defiance to his understood and authoritative voice.

But let us recur again to our illustration. The unknown friend may wish to reveal himself to the man he has befriended. He may send a messenger with a letter to his door. He may inscribe such evidences of his authenticity there, as would force conviction if the letter was but read. He may specify the amount, and he may specify the particulars of the ministration which had been rendered; and that in such a way as to prove that he was the author of it. The bearer of the communication may have all the marks of honesty about him—yet this be not enough. He may tell a consistent story—yet this be not enough. There may be companions along with him of complexion as fair and creditable as his own to vouch for the accuracy of his statement—yet this be not enough. The last and most conclusive evidence may still be in reserve—it may lie in the substance of the written communication—and not till he to whom it is addressed has opened it and read it, may he come fully to recognise and verify his benefactor.

And yet to a soul of selfishness and ingratitude, this might be an unwelcome intrusion. He may have no desire to know his benefactor; and have a dread or a dislike towards the revelation of his will; and he may spurn the messenger from his door; and he may refuse to open or to read the letter that has been offered to him; and the best evidence that there was upon the question may never have been before his eyes—not because it did not exist, but because he refused to look at it—Nay he might have read, but read in such a careless and hasty style of perusal, that he did not attain to conviction, and just because he took no pains to be convinced. And who does not see that his want of right understanding resolves into a want of right principle—that there is a taint of moral perversity in the whole

of this proceeding—that the sin of his judgment is the sin of his heart—and that unbelief which many would screen from condemnation, is in his instance unbelief fostered by his own wilful depravity, and an unbelief for which he deserves to be execrated?

And so may it be of Christianity. God may have sent a written communication to the world. And to every careful, and desirous reader, the evidence of His hand may be legibly inscribed upon it; and he who is willing to do His will, may recognise in the doctrine of Christ the traces of the divinity which inspired it; and the man on whose heart a weight of conscientiousness lies, may by the dint of patience and of prayer come to a full and rational assurance of its truth: and just because reading and enquiring and attending the ordinances, and all under the impulse of a sense of duty, may he become a steadfast believer. But if careless about God, he will be equally careless about any revelation that professes to have come from Him. The Bible may often solicit his eye, but still remain unopened and unused by him. That book from whose pages, if explored with honesty and prayer, there might beam a celestial effulgency upon his understanding, may be held in neglect or treated with insult and derision. For aught he knows, it may be the record of the will of Him who ushered him into life, and ministers to him all its enjoyments. And if ever the thought of this possibility visited his heart, and he in the face of it joined in the infidel cry of those who deride and who disown it—then on another day may the remembrance of this visitation rise in judgment against him; and it be made clear to his own conscience, that, in spurning the Bible from his door he braved the hazards of a contest with Omnipotence.

LECTURE VI.

ROMANS ii, 1—12.

“Therefore thou art inexorable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. 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? or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 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; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath: tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good: to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.”

BEFORE proceeding to the exposition | concluding verse in the last chapter, that, of this chapter, it may be remarked of the | with all the blindness which the apostle

charges on the heathen, and with all the dislike of retaining God in their knowledge which he ascribes to them—there was still one particular of this knowledge which they did retain. They still knew as much of God's judgment, as to be conscious that what they were doing, in the sinfulness and reprobacy of their minds, was worthy of death. There was still a remainder of conscience about them, in virtue of which they felt that there were a sin and a condemnation which attached to their own persons. With all the obliteration which had come upon their moral faculties—there were still the traces of a law which they could obscurely read, and of a voice which faintly uttered itself in notes of disapprobation. They were conscious that all was not right about them; and had the impression of a being greater than themselves, to whose account they were responsible; and the idea of a reckoning and of a sentence were not altogether strange to their understanding. For still, in the most sunken ages of our decaying and deteriorating species, did each man carry about with him such a light as, if he did not follow it, would render him a sinner—not against such principles as were altogether hidden, but against such principles as were partly known to him. And such vestiges of a natural sense about the right and the wrong, may not only be gathered from the books of Pagan antiquity; but they may be still more satisfactorily educted, from the converse that we hold in the present day with the living Paganism which still abounds in our world. We know not a more deeply interesting walk of observation, than that which is prosecuted by modern missionaries, when they come into contact and communication with the men of a still unbroken country—when they make their lodgment on one of the remote and yet untravelled wilds of Paganism—when, after the interval of four thousand years from the dispersion of the great family of mankind, they go to one of its most widely diverging branches, and ascertain what of conscience or what of religious light has among them survived the lapse of so many generations—when they thus, as it were, knock at the door of nature left for ages to itself, and try if there yet be slumbering any sense or intelligence there which can at all respond to the message they have brought along with them. Nor do we know an evolution of the human heart which carries in it more of a big and an affecting interest, than that on which philosophy has never cast an enquiring regard—even that among its dark and long unentered recesses, there still subsists an undying voice, which owns the comfort and echoes back the truth of Christianity.

Insomuch that, let missionaries go to the very extremity of our species, and speak of sin and judgment and condemnation, they do not speak in vocables unknown; and sweet to many a soul is the preacher's voice, when he tells that unto them a Saviour is born; and, out of the relics of even this deep and settled degeneracy, can be gotten the materials of a satisfying demonstration; and thus in the very darkest places have converts multiplied, and Christian villages arisen, and the gospel been the savour of life unto life to the some who have embraced it, and been the savour of death unto death to the many who have declined it—all proving that a principle still existed in their bosoms, which if they followed would guide them to salvation, and which if they fled from would try them and find them to be guilty. Nor let us wonder therefore, that the apostle, even when speaking of those who are given over to every abomination, should still affirm of them that they know the judgments of God. Even a remainder of that knowledge which they liked not to retain, still kept its hold upon their conscience and gave them a responsibility which belongs not to the beasts that perish. Man, in short, throughout the whole of this world's peopled territory, has a law by which he may righteously be judged; and still enough of it is known and felt by his own conscience to make it out, that for its violation he should be righteously condemned. So that, dark as our conceptions may be of the present character and future fate of those who live under the shadow of heathenism, we may be sure that a clear and righteous principle of retribution will be applied to them all; and that they who shall be judged worthy of death on that day will be found to have committed such things, as they themselves either knew or might have known to be worthy of it.

There is still another phrase in the verse which may require to be adverted to. It is there said of the people who committed things worthy of death, that they not only did the same, but had pleasure in them that did them. This last marks a higher and a more formed depravity, than the direct commission of that which is evil. To be hurried along by the violence of passion into some deed of licentiousness, may consist with the state of a mind that feels its own degradation, and mourns over the infirmity of its purposes. But to look with connivance and delight on the sin of others—to have pleasure in their companionship—and to spirit them on in the ways of disobedience, after perhaps the urgency which prompted his own career of it has abated—this argues, not the subjection of one faculty to another, but the subjection

of the whole man to sin, viewed as an object of full and formal approbation. This is a reprobacy of the mind, to which the old are sometimes given over, after they have run their course of dissipation. At the outset, even of this lawless history, was there a struggling principle within them, which debated, and, for a time, parried off the question of indulgence; and after they entered on the transgressor's path, did they taste the bitterness of many a compunctious visitation. But under that hardening process, which we have already explained, the conscience at length lost its tenderness, and all its pangs and all its remonstrances were forgotten; and, from one year to another, can the voluptuary, more abandoned than before, lift a louder and a louder defiance to the authority which at one time overawed him. But never, perhaps, does he betray such a fatal symptom of one who is indeed given over, as when age, with all its ailing helplessness, has at length overtaken him; and he can now only smile at the remembrance of joys which he can no longer realize; and the young who assemble at his festive board, are by him cheered forward on that way of destruction, to the end of which he is so fast hastening; and the poison of his own indelicacy spreads its vitiating influence over the unpractised guests who are around him. Depravity so unfeeling as this, which goes to augment its own votaries and its own victims, and to perpetuate a legacy in hell from one rebellious generation to another, was daily and currently exemplified in the manners of an age which has now passed by. And if, in the progress of an external or fashionable reformation, it now be nearly unknown, let the record of it at least serve to mark, how even an individual conscience can wither in its possessor's bosom to the very margin of extinction; and how ere he leaves the world he can bequeath to it an increase of degeneracy, adding his own seductive testimony to all the other engines of corruption which are already at work in it—thus serving to explain, not merely how guilt is ever growing in power and ascendancy over the habits of a single man, but how it deepens and accumulates and rises into magnitude more appalling, along the line of the advancing history of our species.

Before entering upon the exposition of the verses which have now been read in your hearing, let it be remarked, that the special design of the writer of this epistle begins to open into clearer manifestation. The fact is, that it was written to the believers in Rome, before he ever had made a personal appearance in that city. We know from the book of Acts, that, upon his arrival there, it was his first care to

obtain an interview with the people of his own nation; and that, as his practice was in other places, he began his explanation of the gospel in the hearing of the Jews, and then turned himself also unto the Gentiles. Certain it is, that in this written communication, the main purport of the argument, is to conciliate the Jews to the faith of the gospel. It is to make them understand, that, in respect of their need of salvation, they were on a footing just as helpless as that of the Gentiles; that a like sentence of wrath had gone out against both; and a like process of recovery was indispensable to both. For the accomplishment of this object, he makes, we apprehend, a very skilful approach to the Jewish understanding. Throughout the whole of his writings, in fact, do we see that he abounded in wise but honourable devices, for the purpose of giving weight and acceptance to his reasonings. He was all things to all men, not to the extent of surrendering any particle of truth to their prejudices, but to the extent of doing all that might be fairly or innocently done, for the purpose of softening and surprising them out of their prejudices. The picture which he draws in the first chapter, is a picture of the Gentile world; and its most conspicuous lineaments are those of Gentile profligacy; and in laying it before the eye of a Jewish observer, he in fact deals with him even as Nathan did with David, when he offered him a disguised representation of his own character, and turned the indignation which he had previously kindled in the bosom of the monarch upon his own head. For you will observe that though the most prominent features of the apostolic sketch, are drawn from the abominations and the excesses of Heathenism, there are others which are descriptive, not of any special, but of that universal corruption, which may be read and recognised on the person of every member of the human family. The common depravities of our race are made to enter into the enumeration, along with those which are more monstrous and unnatural; and the vices which are chargeable upon all, are mixed up in the same catalogue with the vices which are chargeable upon some; and the Jew, heedless of those traits of the description which may be fastened on himself, is thus caught, as it were, into an indignation which may be retorted back again upon his own character. It is thus that the apostle begins this second chapter, much in the way in which the prophet of the Old Testament prosecuted the advantage that he had won over David, whose resentment he had kindled against an act of oppression, which he himself had both imitated and outdone. "Thou art the

man," is reiterated upon the Jew, throughout the whole of the second and the greater part of the third chapter—it being the main object of our apostle to assail the opposition in that quarter where it looked to be most impregnable—to extend the conviction of sin from the Gentile whom he had laid prostrate before him, to the Jew who still kept a boastful attitude, on the ground of that self-sufficiency which the apostle labours to cut away—to prove, in short, that all were under sin, and all were in need of a Saviour; that all were partakers of the same guilt, and must be partakers of the same grace, ere they could be restored to acceptance with that God whom in common they had all offended.

In order that you feel the force of the apostle's demonstration, there is one principle which is held to be sound in human law, and which in all equity ought to be extended to the law of God. The principle is this—that, however manifold the enactments of the law may be, it is possible, by one act or one kind of disobedience, to incur the guilt of an entire defiance to the authority which framed it; and therefore to bring rightfully down upon the head of the transgressor, the whole weight of the severities which it denounces against the children of iniquity. To be worthy of death, it is not necessary to commit all the things which are included in the sad enumeration of human vices—any more than it is necessary for a criminal, to add depredation to forgery, or murder to both, ere a capital sentence go out against him, from the administrators of the law upon which he has trampled. You may as effectually cut with a friend by one hostile or insolent expression, as if you had employed a thousand; and your disownal of an authority may be as intelligibly announced, by one deed of defiance as by many; and your contempt of Heaven's court be as strongly manifested, by your wilful violation of one of the commandments, as if you had thwarted every requirement of its prescribed and published ceremonial. It is true that there are gradations of punishments; but these are measured, not according to the multiplicity of outward offences, but according to the intensity of the rebellious principle that is within. In virtue of an honourable feeling, you may never steal; and this is the deduction of one external iniquity from the history of the doings of the outer man. But it is not on that account an alleviation of the ungodliness of the inner man. You may have natural affection, and never abandon either a child to the exposure of its infancy, or a parent to the helplessness of his age; and yet your heart be as destitute as that of any of the

inferior animals, of affection for your Father who is in heaven. The man who has thrown off the allegiance of loyalty, may feel no inclination to walk the whole round of disobedience to the laws; and yet upon the temptation of one single opportunity, and by the breaking forth of one single expression, may he bring down the whole vengeance of Government upon his person. The man who has thrown off the allegiance of Religion, may neither have the occasion nor the wish to commit all the offences which it prohibits, or to utter all the blasphemies which may be vented forth in the spirit of defiance against the Almighty's throne. And yet the principle of defiance may have taken full possession of his heart; and irreligion may be the element in which he breathes. And in every instance, when his will comes into competition with the will of God, may the creature lift himself above the Creator; and though, according to the varieties of natural temperament these instances may be more manifold and various with one man than with another—yet that which essentially constitutes the character of moral and spiritual guilt may be of equal strength and inveteracy with both—Making it as true of a reputable member of society in our day, as it was of the formal and observant Pharisee, that he only conformed to the law of God, when, though walking all the while in the counsel of his own heart, conformity is that which he would; and always trampled upon this law, whenever, walking in the same counsel, conformity is a thing which he would not. Ungodliness, in short, is not a thing of tale and measure. It is a thing of weight and of quality. It may be as thoroughly infused through the character of him who is observant of all the civilized decencies of life, as of him whose enormities have rendered him an outcast from all the common regards of society. Heaven's sanctuary is alike scorned and alike neglected by both; and on the head of each, will there be the same descending burden of Heaven's righteous indignation.

Among the varieties both of taste and of habit which obtain with the different individuals of our species, there are modifications of disobedience agreeable to one class and disgusting to another class. The careful and calculating economist may never join in any of the excesses of dissipation; and the man of regardless expenditure may never send an unrelieved petitioner from his door; and the religious formalist may never omit either sermon or sacrament, that is held throughout the year in the place of his attendance; and the honourable merchant may never flinch or falsify, in any one of the transactions

of business. Each has such points of conformity as suits him, and each has such other points of non-conformity as suits him; and thus the one may despise or even execrate the other, for that particular style of disobedience by which he indulges his own partialities; and the things which they respectively do, differ there can be no doubt as to the matter of them—but as to the mind of unconcern about God which all of them express, they are virtually and essentially the same. So that amid the censure and contempt which so currently pass between men of various classes and characters in society, there is one pervading quality of ungodliness which they hold in common; and in virtue of which the condemnation that one pronounces upon another, may righteously be turned upon himself; and it be said of him in the language of the apostle, 'therefore 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.'

Romans ii, 1—12. This passage requires almost nothing in the way of verbal criticism. The term for 'despise' in the 4th verse needed not to have been so rendered as to denote an active contempt—but rather a mere disregard and negligence of the opportunity, which God in His forbearance had afforded to sinners, for returning and making their peace with Him. The term 'patient' again, in the 7th verse, signifies, both here and in other places of Scripture, something more active than the mere patience under suffering. They who bring forth fruits with patience, are they who do so with perseverance. They who run their race with patience, are they who persevere in so running. They who maintain a patient continuance, are they who maintain a persevering continuance in well-doing.

The whole passage is so plain, that it scarcely admits of elucidation even from a paraphrase. But let the following be offered to you.

'Therefore, O man, thou art without excuse, whosoever thou art, that judgest; for, in judging another, thou condemnest thyself—seeing that thou who judgest doest the same things. And we are sure, that God's judgment is according to truth, against those who commit these things. And dost thou think, O man, who judgest them that do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape God's judgment? Or do you despise His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, inadvertent of this, that it is His goodness which affords to you a season of repentance? But, instead of this, do you, after your hard and impenitent heart, treasure

up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and against the day when the righteousness of God's judgments shall be rendered manifest? God will render to every man according to his deeds—to them who by a course of perseverance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them who of contention and obstinacy do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, will be rendered indignation and wrath: tribulation and anguish, upon every son of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God on that day, whatever apparent preference he may make of one man over another, and of one people over another in the present stage of His administrations. He will then judge every man according to the light that was in his mind, according to the law which spake its authority to his conscience, and which he himself recognizes to be of rightful obligation.'

It may be remarked that 'tribulation' simply denotes affliction; and is the same here in the original, as in the passage, 'we are troubled on every side'—and that 'anguish' signifies the affliction from which there is no hope of our being extricated; and is the same in the original, as in the passage, that 'though troubled on every side we are not distressed.'^{*}

At the outset of this chapter, the apostle appeals to a principle which is vigorously at work in every bosom; and, from its felt and conscious existence within us, would he press upon our belief the reality of the same principle, as residing in the Godhead—as applied by him to every creature who is capable of exercising it in his own mind; and leading to a result, that will be verified on the great day of the winding up of this world's administration. By nature we are slow to self-condemnation; and, beset with the engrossments of our passion and our own interest, we see not in ourselves the criminality of the same things which we reprobate in others; and conscience either passes no verdict at all, or in such a faint and gentle whisper that it is not heard, when it takes a rare and a feeble cognizance of our own character. But the self-love, which deafens the voice of conscience in its application to our own case, lays no such barrier in its way when it pronounces on the case of others. And hence the familiar spectacle, of, not merely an adverse judgment, but even of a wrath and an indignation in the mind of one man against the vanity or the dishonesty

^{*} 2 Cor. iv, 8.

or the calumnies of another, to the evil of which he is blind or insensible when exemplified in an equal degree upon his own person.

Now this very judging of others, proves that there is in him a capacity for this exercise. It shows that there is a moral light and a moral sense still residing in his bosom. It proves a sense of the difference between right and wrong; and that when a certain veil is lifted away from the materials of the examination, so as to bring his mind into a more unclouded discernment of them—then, there is in that mind a conscience, which can operate and pronounce aright, upon what is meritorious and what is blameworthy in the character of man. Should that man be himself, and should this circumstance throw a darkening shroud over the field of examination, it surely is no palliation of his sinfulness, nor does it render him less amenable to the judgment of God, if this shroud which hides his own character from his own eyes be drawn over it by his own selfishness. You cannot allege his blindness in mitigation of the sentence that is to go forth against him, if it be a blindness which has no place in reference to the faults of other men; and only gathers again over the organs of his moral discernment, when the hand of his own partiality sets up a screen between the eye of his conscience and the equal or perhaps surpassing faults of his own character. The mere fact that he can and does judge of others, proves that a law of right and wrong is present with him. The fact that he does not so judge of himself, only proves, not that he is without the light of moral truth like the beasts that perish—but that he keeps down that truth by unrighteousness; that when its voice is so stifled as to be unheard, it is he himself who stifles it; that his blindness is not the natural incapacity of an animal, but the wilful and chosen and much-loved blindness of a depraved man. If you see one of our species judging certain things in the conduct of another, infer from this that he knows of a code to which by his own voice he awards a moral authority. If you see him not judging in the same way of the same things in himself, consider this as a wilful suppression of the truth, which does not extenuate, but which in every way heightens his guilt, and turns his moral insensibility, not into a plea, but into an aggravation. And if there be not a country in the world, where this twofold exhibition is not to be witnessed—if, even among the rudest wanderers of the desert, there is the tact of a moral discernment between what is fair and what is injurious in the character of man—if in the fierce contests of savages,

you see them simply capable of being alive to the injustice of others, while in the wild and untamed rapacity of their natures, they experience no check from the sense and conviction of their own—then be assured, that, on the great day of account, will it be found, that there is a law which can reach even unto them; and a retribution of equity which can be rendered unto them; and a vengeance which, in despite of every plea and every palliation that can be offered for these darkest and most degraded of our brethren, can be righteously inflicted—Making it manifest, that a judgment-seat may be set up on the last day of our world; and that around it, from its remotest corners, all the men of all its generations may be assembled; and that not one of them will be found to have lived without the scope and limits of a jurisdiction, on the principles of which he may rightfully be tried—so as that yet the triumph of God's justice shall be signalized upon every individual; nor will there be a single doom pronounced upon any creature, in any one department of the great moral territory, that is not strictly accordant with this song of Revelation—"Even so, Lord God Almighty! true and righteous are thy judgments; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints."

But let us look nearer home. There is not an exercise more familiar to your own hearts, than that by which you feel the demerits of others, and judge of them accordingly. The very movements of anger within you are connected with a sense of right and wrong—such a sense as evinces you to be in possession of a law, which you can bring to bear in examination and condemnation upon the doings of man; and should this law be evaded through the duplicities and the deceits of selfishness, in its application to yourself—then know that a principle so universal among mankind, in reference to their judgments the one of the other, is of unfailing operation in the mind of the Deity, and will be applied by Him to all who by the mere possession of a moral faculty prove themselves to be the fitting subjects of His moral cognizance. If in the whole course of your existence, you ever judged another; this renders you at that one time a right and proper subject of judgment yourself; and if this be your daily and habitual exercise, insomuch that any development of vanity or selfishness or unfairness in another is sure to call out from you a feeling of condemnation, then this proves that you are hourly and habitually the rightful subjects of a moral guardianship and a moral jurisdiction. The faculty you have, is but a secondary impress of that superior

and pervading faculty which belongs to God, as the judge of all and the lawgiver of all. Be assured that there is a presiding justice in His administration; that there is a moral government founded on a righteousness, the lessons of which are more or less known by all, and the sanctions of which will be accordingly fulfilled upon all. Your very power of judging others, proves that its lessons are in some degree known to you. And think not, O man which judgest those who do such and such things, and doest the same, that thou wilt escape the judgment of God.

God, in the day of final account, will find out in the case of every human Being whom He does condemn, the materials of his valid condemnation. These materials may in a great measure be hidden from us now; and yet the palpable fact of each being able morally to judge another, and to pass his moral opinion upon another, however little he may be disposed to scrutinize himself, forms a very palpable disclosure of the fact, that there is in our hearts the sense of a moral law—a monitor who, if we do not follow him as our guide here, will be our accusing witness hereafter. And from every feeling of reprobation, if not from every feeling of resentment towards others of which we are capable, we may gather assurance of the fact, that there does exist within us such a sense of the distinction between right and wrong, as, if not acted on in our own conduct, will be enough to convict us of a latent iniquity, and to call down upon us a rightful sentence of condemnation.

So long as self is the subject of its oversight, the moral sense may be partial or reluctant or altogether negligent of its testimonies. But if it can give those testimonies clearly enough and feelingly enough, when it casts a superintending eye over the conduct of others, this proves that an inward witness could speak also to us, but does not, because we have bribed him into silence. In other words, it will be found on the last day, that we had light enough to conduct us if we would have followed, and to condemn us if we have either refused or wilfully darkened its intimations. So that God will be clear when He speaketh and justified when He judgeth. He will wipe His hands of every outcast on that great and solemn occasion; and make it evident that the guilt of all the iniquities for which he is punished is at his own door—that there is no unrighteousness of severity with God, but that 'His judgment is indeed according to truth when it is against them who commit such things.'

The apostle affirms his own sureness of this, and with a view to make us sure of

it also. The truth is, that a want of belief in God as a Judge, is nearly as prevalent as the want of belief in Christ as a Saviour. Could the one be established within you, it would create an inquiry and a restlessness and an alarm, which might soon issue in the attainment of the other. But the general habit of the world proves, that, in reference to God as a God of judgment, there is a profound and a prevailing sleep among its generations. The children of alienated and degenerate Nature, are no more awake to the law in all the unchangeableness of its present authority, and in all the certainty of its coming terrors—than they are awake to the gospel in the freedom of its offers, and in the sureness of its redemption, and in the exceeding greatness and preciousness of all its promises. There is just as little sense of the disease as there is little of esteem for the remedy. Theologians accordingly tell us of the faith of the law, and of the faith of the gospel. By the one we believe what the law reveals, in regard to its own requirements and its own sanctions. By the other we believe what the gospel reveals, in regard to its own proposals and its own invitations and its own privileges. Faith attaches itself to the law as well as to the gospel; and obedience to the gospel as well as to the law. The apostle here speaks of our not obeying the truth—and the psalmist says—“Lord, I have believed thy commandments.” The truth is, that, among the men of our listless and secure species, there is no realizing sense of their being under the law—or of their being under the haunting control and inspection of a Lawgiver. Their habit is that of walking in the counsel of their own hearts and in the sight of their own eyes—nor do they feel, in the waywardness of their self-originating movements, that they are the servants of another and amenable to the judgment of another. Let a man just attend to the current of his thoughts and purposes and desires, throughout the course of a whole day's business; and he will find how lamentably the impression of a divine superintendence, and the sense of a heavenly and unseen witness, are away from his heart. This will not excuse his habitual ungodliness—due, as we have often affirmed it to be, to the wilful smothering of convictions, which, but for wilful depravity, he might have had. But such being the real insensibility of man to his own condition as a responsible and an amenable creature, it is well that by such strenuous affirmations as those of the apostle, he should be reminded of the sureness wherewith God will appoint a day in righteousness; and institute a judgment over the quick and the dead.

Unbelief is not so much a dissent of the mind from any one particular truth or doctrine of revelation, as a darkness of the mind which intercepts a realizing view of all the truths and all the objects that lie spread over the region of spirituality. The clearing away of this darkness renders these objects visible; and it is a variation in the order of their disclosure which forms one chief cause of the varieties of religious experience. Some catch in the first instance a view of the law, scattering, as if from the mouth of a volcano, its menaces and its terrors on all the children of disobedience; and it is not till after a dreary interval of discomposure and distress, that they behold the mantle lifted away from that stronghold into which all of them flee as an escape and a resting place. Others again catch at the outset a milder and a quieter ray from the light of the Sun of Righteousness; and it is not till they have been conducted within the fold of a most sure and ample mediatorship, and from whence they may look tranquilly and at a safe and protected distance on all around them—it is not till then, that they are made to see the hatefulness of sin, and all the dread and all the dignity of God's fiery denunciations against it. These things follow each other by a different succession with different individuals; but certain it is that the most partial glimpse of the smallest portion of the whole territory of faith, is greatly more to be desired, than the deep and sunken and unalleviated carnality of him, who is wholly given unto things present and things sensible; and even he, to whom the guilt and danger alone have been unfolded, is far more hopefully conditioned, than he, who, alike insensible to the wrath of God the Judge, and to the beseeching voice of God the Saviour, has taken up with time as his portion and his all; and, living as he lists, lives in the enjoyment of a peace, which, if not broken up ere he dies, a few years will demonstrate to have been indeed a fatal and then irrecoverable delusion.

The 4th verse of this chapter has been referred to by Peter in his second epistle—wherein he also explains why it is that God does not cut short the present stage of His administration—why it is, that He tolerates so long the succession of one sinful generation after another—why it is, that He sweeps not away such a moral nuisance as our rebellious world, and so have done with it—why it is, for example, that at this very hour we see not the symptoms of dissolving nature, and hear not the trumpet of preparation for the solemnities of the last day, and feel not the heat of melting elements, or the

shaking of the ground from under us—but, instead of these, why it is that all is going on in its wonted order, and the sun moves as steadily, and the seasons roll as surely, and all the successions of nature follow each other with as undisturbed regularity, as if destined so to abide, and so to persevere even unto eternity.

We know not the theory of ungodly men upon this subject, but their practice speaks most intelligibly what they feel about it. They tread upon this world's surface as firmly, as if the world stood on a secure and everlasting foundation. They prosecute this world's objects as strenuously, as if in the gaining their little portion of it, they gained a value which in exchange would be greater than the value of men's soul's. They toil and calculate and devise for this world's interests, with as intense and undivided earnestness, as if they and the world were never to be separated. In the face of evidence—in the face of experience—in the face of all they know about death, and of all that has been revealed to them about judgment and retribution and the final wreck of the present system of things, do they assign a character of perpetuity to what is seen and sensible around them; nor could they possibly labour more devotedly in the pursuits of time, though they themselves were to continue here for ever, and all things to continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

Such is the practical impression of a natural man about the life that he lives in the world; and all his habits of life and business are founded upon it. But how different from the revelation of its design and purpose as given by the apostles. It is a suspension of the wrath of God against sinners, that space may be allowed for repentance. It is that He, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return, forbears the infliction of His final vengeance till they have got their opportunity. The perverse interpretation which a worldly man puts upon the continuance of the world, is, that the world is worthy of all his affections; and that it is his wisdom to rear upon its basis the fabric of his hopes. He misses the altogether different conclusion which should be drawn from it—that this continuance is due to the goodness of God, lengthening out to him and to us all the season of an offered indemnity, and of a proclaimed pardon, and of an inviting gospel with the whole of its privileges and blessings—and so, not knowing that this goodness, instead of rivetting him more to the world should lead him to forsake the love of it for the love of its Maker, does he misunderstand and misapply the bearing of time upon eternity.

What we have already noticed, about the alternative character of that dispensation under which we sit, is strikingly brought out in the verses before us. Goodness to the innocent, or goodness to the deserving, merely displays this attribute in a state of simplicity; but the goodness which remains unquelled and unexhausted after it has been sinned against—the goodness which persists in multiplying upon the transgressor the chances of his recovery, and that in the midst of affront and opposition—the goodness which, loth to inflict the retaliating blow, still holds out a little longer and a little longer; and, with all the means in its power of avenging the insults of disobedience, still ekes out the season for its return, and plies it with all the encouragements of a free pardon and an offered reconciliation—this is the exuberance of goodness, this is the richness of forbearance and long-suffering; and it is the very display which God is now making in reference to our world. And by every year which rolls over our heads—by every morning in which we find that we have awoke to the light of a new day instead of awakening in torment—by every hour and every minute through which the stroke of death is suspended, and you still continue a breathing man in the land of gospel calls and gospel invitations—is God now justifying His goodness towards you. And earnest as He is for your return, and heedless as you are of all this earnestness, does it call as time moves onward for a higher and a higher exertion of forbearance on the part of the Divinity, to restrain His past and accumulating wrath, from being discharged on the head of those among whom though God entreats yet no man will turn, and though He stretch out His hand yet no man regardeth.

Now if such be the character of God in His relation to man, mark what character it stamps upon man should he remain unsoftened and unimpressed by it. It were offence enough to sin against the authority of a superior; but to sin against his forbearance forms a sore and a fatal aggravation. Thus to turn upon the long-suffering of God and to trample it—thus to pervert the season which He has allotted for repentance, into a season of more secure and presumptuous transgression—thus, upon every delay of vengeance with which He favours us, the more to strengthen ourselves in hard and haughty defiance against Him—this indeed is a highway of guilt, which, if you be not arrested therein, will lead to a sorer judgment and a deadlier consummation. Turn then all of you at the call of repentance, or it is the very highway on which you are treading. It is because He is rich in

goodness, that we have been spared to this present moment of our history; and now hear Him in the very language of His own revelation bid you turn and turn, for why will you die. But if you will not draw from the treasures of His forbearance, there is treasure of another kind that is heaping by every day of your neglected salvation, in a storehouse of vengeance; and which, on the great day when God shall ease Him of all His adversaries, will all be poured forth upon you. And thus it is, that if you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, and suffer not them to lead you to repentance, you will by your hardness and impenitency, treasure up unto yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgments of God.

Let us therefore, in plain urgency, bid you repent; and, untrammelled by system, set before you, as the apostle does, both the coming wrath and the coming glory; and tell you that the one is to him who doeth evil, and that the other is to him who doeth well; and we may be sure that there is nothing in faith, or in any of its mysteries, which will supersede the day of judgment as it is recorded in the passage here before us. The apostle is not only describing what would have happened under the first covenant, but what will happen under the second. For though justified by faith, we shall be judged by works; and let not the one of these articles be so contrasted with the other, as to throw a shade either of neglect or insignificance over it. When rightly understood, they reflect upon each other a mutual lustre, and lend to each other a mutual confirmation. Faith is the high road to repentance. Our acceptance of the righteousness of Christ as our title for an entrance into heaven, is an essential stepping-stone to our own personal righteousness as our preparation for the joys and the exercises of heaven; and if there be a stirring of conscience and an agitation of alarm in any of your hearts, under the sense of your not being what you ought to be—we can do nothing more effectual, than to propose the blood of Christ to your faith, in order that under the transforming and sanctifying influence of such a belief, you both be what you ought and do what you ought.

The great object of the apostle's demonstration is, that men should make their escape from the penalties of the law, to the hiding-place provided for them in the gospel. And though he here intimates the rewards which it holds out to obedience, and the fearful vengeance which it holds out against transgression—yet he does not intimate that any individual ever earned

the one, or ever secured by his own righteousness an exemption from the other. His object is to make known to us the constitution or the economy of God's government, that, should any of its subjects fulfil all its requisitions, they should be rewarded; but without saying that they actually did so—or, that, should any of its subjects fail in those requisitions they would be punished; but without telling us whether any or some or all come under this condemnation. How it was that they actually did conduct themselves under this administration, he tells us afterwards—when he says of all, both Jews and Gentiles, that they were under sin; and that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified, for that all had sinned and come short of the glory of God.

And yet after all there will be a judgment; and this judgment will proceed upon each individual according to the deeds done in his body; and it is upon those who bring forth fruit with patience, or who maintain a patient continuance in well-doing, that these accents of invitation will descend—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" and it is also upon those who are contentious and obey not the truth but obey unrighteousness, that the awful bidding away to the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels will be pronounced, by Him who conducts the solemnities of that great occasion. But then, as we read afterwards, it will be

Jesus Christ to whom this judgment will be committed; and the judgment will be according to 'my gospel,' or the gospel which the apostle proclaims to his hearers. The judgment of condemnation will be upon those who have withstood its overtures; or who, if these overtures had never reached them, have withstood the instigations of their own conscience, which ought to have been a law unto them. And the judgment of acquittal will be upon those who have obeyed the truth, or who have rendered obedience unto the faith—those whose persons and whose works are accepted for the sake of a better righteousness than their own—those who, after they believed, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and were made the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus, and were created anew unto good works. So that, after the first covenant has been superseded by the second—after man has become dead unto the law and made alive unto Christ—after all its demands have been satisfied, and it has no more power to challenge or to condemn him who truly believes in Jesus, Jesus himself takes up the judgment of him, and tries him on the question whether he is actually a believer; and the deeds done in the body are the evidences of this question, and make it manifest on that day that the faith which he professed was no counterfeit, being fruitful in all those works of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God.

LECTURE VII.

ROMANS ii, 12—29.

"For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law, (for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 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; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another,) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? for the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? 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? For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; 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 is not of men, but of God."

V. 12. WITHOUT a written law as the Jews had—they shall perish without being judged by that law. There will be another law to judge them—and, whosoever perishes, it will not be the consequence

of a condemnation brought to bear upon him by a law which he did not know of. They who have sinned in the law, that is in the written law, are they who have sinned under that law—the Jews who will

be judged by it. V. 13. There is a term which we may often have to recur to—and which we therefore shall explain at present. Some would have it that justification in the New Testament means the making of a man personally just. Conceive a thief, for example, to undergo such a transformation of character as that he henceforward is honest in all his transactions—this would be making him a just person in the sense which some choose to assign to the word—it would be justifying him. We believe it may be made out, in almost every place where it occurs, that this is not the real meaning of the term—that it should be taken, not in a personal, but in what may be called a forensic signification—or, that to justify, instead of meaning to make just by a process of operation upon the character, means to pronounce or to declare just by the sentence of a judicial court. This is called the *forensic* sense of the term, because a court of justice was anciently called a forum; and it is evident that, here at least, the word must be understood forensically—for the doers of the law do not need to be made just personally. They are already so; and therefore for them to be justified, is to be declared just by the sentence of him who administers the law. V. 15. There seem here to be two distinct proofs of the Gentiles being a law unto themselves. The first is from the fact of there being a conscience individually at work in each bosom, and deponing either to the merit or the demerit of actions. The second from the fact of their accusing or excusing one another, in the reasonings or disputes which took place between man and man. For what is translated ‘thoughts,’ may be rendered into dialectic reasonings, or disputes which one man has with another, when a question of right or justice is started between them. It proves them to be in possession of a common rule, or standard of judging, or, in other words, that a law is actually among them. So true is it, even in its application to the Gentiles, that there is a light which lighteth every man who cometh into the world. V. 22. To commit sacrilege, or to take to our private use, that which is consecrated to God. This is what might very readily be brought home to a Jewish conscience—it being matter of frequent complaint against the Jews, that they offered what was lame and defective in sacrifice. V. 24. This is written for example, in Ezekiel xxxvi. 20, where it is said that the Heathen in mockery said unto the people of Israel when they were carried away captive—“These are the people of the Lord and are gone forth out of His land.”

This is all that needs to be advanced in the way of exposition—and the following is a paraphrase of this passage,

‘For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish, not by the condemnation of that law, but of another which they had; and as many as have sinned who were under the dispensation of the written law, shall by that law be judged. For, as to the Jews, they are not the hearers of the law who are reckoned just before God: but they are the doers of the law only who shall be justified. And, as to the Gentiles, they having not the law of Mount Sinai, yet, when by nature they do the things contained in that law, these, though without a written code, have a something in its place which to them has all the authority of a law. For they show that the matter of the law is written in their hearts—both from their conscience testifying what is right and wrong in their own conduct, and from their reasonings in which they either accuse or vindicate one another. No man shall be judged by a law known only to others and unknown to himself; but all shall be judged by the light which belonged to them, in that day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, and agreeably to the gospel which I now declare unto you. Behold, thou art called a Jew, and hast a confidence in thy law, and makest a boast of thy peculiar relationship with God, and thou knowest His will, and canst both distinguish and approve the things which are more excellent—being instructed out of thy law. And, with all this superior advantage, thou lookest upon thyself as a guide of the blind, and as a light of them who are in darkness, and as an instructor of the ignorant, and as a teacher of babes—seeing that thou hast the whole summary of knowledge and truth which is in the law. But it is not he who heareth, or he who knoweth, but he who doeth that shall be justified; and dost thou who teachest another, teach effectually thyself!—thou who proclaimest that a man should not steal, dost thou steal?—thou who sayest that a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?—thou who abhorrest idols, dost thou rob God of His temple offerings?—thou who makest thy boast of the law, through the breaking of the law dost thou dishonour God? For we have it upon record, that through you the name of God has been blasphemed. For your circumcision, and other outward observances which form the great visible distinction between you and the Gentiles—these are profitable if you keep the whole law; but if you break the law, the keeping of its external ordinances will not raise you above the level of those who

know them not, and practise them not. But, on the other hand, if these latter do by nature the things which by the light of nature they know to be lawful, and so keep righteousness as far as they are informed of it—though they have not practised the literal and outward ordinances, they shall be dealt with as if they had kept them. And what is more, they will even have such a superiority, as to sit in judgment over you, who, notwithstanding your written law and your ordinances, are in fact transgressors of the law. For he is not a right Jew who is only one outwardly. Neither is that the circumcision that is regarded by God, which is outwardly in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and the genuine circumcision is that of a heart subject to the spirit of the law, and therefore crucified as to its carnal affections, and not that of a mere outward conformity to its visible observations. And the praise of this real circumcision is not of man, who can judge only according to appearances; but of God, who weigheth the secrets of the spirit, and who can alone judge righteously.

Let us now pass onward to a few practical observations, founded on the passage which we have attempted to explain.

You can readily enough perceive, how, both with Jews and Christians, there are materials enough for such an examination, as renders them the fit subjects both of a reckoning and of a sentence on the great day of account. But this is not so immediately seen in regard to rude and uninformed Paganism. To be without the pale of a written revelation, is held by many, as tantamount, to being without the pale of all moral and judicial cognizance. And yet, we have many intimations, that the Heathen will also be brought to the bar of the general judgment—that, though perhaps more gently dealt with, yet they will be dealt with as the responsible subjects of God's moral administration—that there is a principle of judgment which reaches even unto them, and upon which it will be a righteous thing for God to pass upon them a condemnatory sentence. Sodom and Gomorrah, we are informed, being to be sisted before the tribunal of that day; and a punishment awarded them, which will only be more tolerable than the vengeance that awaits those, who have sinned in the face of clearer light, and better opportunities. Inasmuch, that we know not of any age, however far back it may lie removed in the darkness of antiquity; nor do we know of any wandering tribe, however secluded from all the communications of light and knowledge with the rest of the species—the men of which will not be called before the great tribunal of

humanity, and there, on the review of their doings in this world, will have such a place and such a portion assigned to them in the next, as shall be in fullest harmony with the saying that all the ways of God are in truth and in righteousness.

It were repeating over here what we have already more than once and on various occasions endeavoured to argument, did we again enter upon the question, How this can be? The Heathen will not be judged by the written law of Judaism, neither will they be judged out of the things that are written in the Scriptures of Christianity. God will not, in their case, charge them with the guilt of a sin, for that which they were not taught and could not know to be sinful. It is not their helpless ignorance, and it is not the fatality of their birth, and it is not the thick moral envelopment that has settled itself over the face of their country which will condemn them. It will be their sin, and that coupled with the circumstances of their knowing it to be sin, which will condemn them. And we have already remarked in one lecture, that there do exist, even in the remotest tracks of Paganism, such vestiges of light, as, when collected together, form a code or directory of moral conduct—that there are still to be found among them the fragments of a law, which they never follow but with an approving conscience; and never violate but with the check of an opposing remonstrance, that by their own wilfulness and their own obstinacy is overborne—in other words, that they are a law unto themselves, and that their own conscience vests it with an authority, by bearing witness to the rightness and obligation of its requirements—So that, among the secret things which will be brought to light in the great day of revelation, will it be seen, that all the sin for which a Heathen shall be made to suffer, was sin committed in the face of an inward monitor, which warned him through time, and will condemn him at his outset upon eternity.

In another lecture we observed, that what brought the conscience of Paganism palpably out from its hiding place, was the undeniable fact of the charges and the recriminations and the defences, of which the most unenlightened Pagans were capable in their controversies with each other. This capacity of accusing and of excusing proved a sense and a standard of morality to be amongst them. With the feeling of provocation after injury, was there mixed the judgment of a difference between the right and the wrong—and even in the rude outcry of savage resentment and the fierce onset of savage warfare, may we detect their perception

of what is honest and what is unfair in the dealings of man with man. And just grant of any individual amongst them, that he is keenly alive to the injustice of others to himself, while, under the hurrying instigations of selfishness and passion, he works the very same injustice against them; and you make that individual a moral and an accountable being. We grant him to be sensible of what he ought to do, and thus make him the rightful subject of condemnation if he does it not. "For thinkest thou, O man, that judgest them who do these things, and doest them thyself, that thou wilt escape the judgment of God?" Even we therefore, unknowing as we are of the inward machinery of another's heart, can trace as it were an avenue by which the most unlettered barbarian might be approached in the way of judgment and retribution. And much more may we be sure, that God, who judgeth all things, will find a clear and open path to the fulfilment of the process that is here laid before us—summoning all to their account, without exception; and, from the farthest limits of the human territory, calling heathens to His jurisdiction, as well as Christian and Jews, and, under a law appropriate to each, dealing out the distributions of equity among the various families and denominations of the world.

In this passage, the apostle, after the gradual and skilful approaches which he had made for the purpose of finding his way to the Jewish understanding, at length breaks out into the warfare of open and proclaimed argument. He throws out his express challenge, and closes with his adversary—thus entering upon the main business of his Epistle, the great object of which was to bring over his own countrymen to the obedience of the faith. After affirming of the two great classes of mankind, that each was subject to a law of its own acknowledging; and after, upon this principle, having convicted the Gentile world of its being under sin—he addresses himself to the Israelite, and dexterously lays open the egregious folly of his confidence—a confidence resting, it would appear, not on his practice of the law, but barely on his possession of it—a satisfaction with himself, not for following the light, but simply for having the light—an arrogant sense of superiority to others, not in having obeyed the commandment, but just in having had the commandment delivered to him—thus turning into a matter of vanity, that which ought in fact to have aggravated his shame and condemnation; and bearing it proudly over others, who, had they acted up to their more slender advantages, would in

fact have been entitled to sit in judgment and superiority over him.

It is observable, that, in this work of convincing the Jews of sin, the apostle fastens, in the first instance, on the more glaring and visible delinquencies from the law of righteousness—as theft and adultery and sacrilege. He brings forth that which is fitted to strike conviction into the mind of a notorious transgressor; who, just because the evidence of his guilt is more palpable than that of others—just because the materials of his condemnation more immediately meet the eye of his own conscience—is, on that very account, often more easily induced to take the first steps of that process which leads to reconciliation with the offended Lawgiver. And this is the reason, why it is said of publican and profligate persons, that they enter the kingdom of Heaven, before the Scribes and the Pharisees. But the apostle is not satisfied with convincing them only. Before he is done with his demonstration about the law, he enters into the very depths of it—even as the Saviour, in his sermon on the mount, did before him. It is possible to undergo the outward rite of circumcision, and not be circumcised in the spirit of our minds. And it is possible to maintain a conformity with all those requirements which bear on the external conduct, without having a heart touched by the love of God, or in any way animated by the principle of godliness. He does not end his demonstration of sinfulness, till he has completed it; and, while the first attack of his expostulation is directed against those who do the covert acts and wear the visible insignia of rebellion, he sends it with a penetrating force into the recesses of a more plausible and pleasing character—where, with nothing to deform or to shed a disgrace over the outward history, there may be a heart still uncircumcised out of all its affections to the creature, and utterly alive unto the world, and utterly dead unto God.

We conclude with two remarks, in the way of home and personal application, founded on the two senses given to the word letter as contrasted with the word spirit.

The first sense that is given to the word letter, is the outward conformity to the law, which may be rendered apart from the inward principle of reverence or regard for it.

Now it is not merely true that your sabbaths and your sacraments may be as useless to you, as the rite of circumcision ever was to the Jews. It is not merely true that the whole ceremonial of Christianity may be duly and regularly described on your part, without praise or

without acceptance on the part of God. It is not merely true that worship may be held every day in your own houses, and your families be mustered at every recurring opportunity to close and unfailing attendance on the house of God. But it is also true, that all the moral honesties of life may be rendered; and, in the walks of honourable merchandise, there ever be attached to your name, the respect and confidence of all the righteous; and, foremost in the lists of philanthropy, every scheme connected with its cause may draw out from you the largest and most liberal ministrations: and even all this, so far from the mere facing of an outward exhibition, may emanate upon your visible doings, from the internal operation of a native regard for your brethren of the same species, and of a high-minded integrity in all your transactions with them. And yet one thing may be lacking. The circumcision of the heart may be that which you have no part in. All its longings may be towards the affairs and the enjoyments and the interests of mortality. Your taste is not to what is sordid, but to what is splendid in character; but still it is but an earthly and a perishable splendour. Your very virtues are but the virtues of the world. They have not upon them the impress of that saintliness which will bear to be transplanted into heaven. The present and the peopled region of sense on which you expatiate, you deck, it is true, with the lustre of many fine accomplishments; but they have neither the stamp nor the endurance of eternity: And, difficult as it was to convict the Hebrew of sin, robed in the sanctities of a revered and imposing ceremonial, it is at least a task of as great strenuousness to lay the humiliation of the gospel spirit upon him, who lives surrounded by the smiles and the applauses of society—or so to awaken the blindness, and circumscribe the vanity of his heart, as to bring him down a humble supplicant at the footstool of mercy.

What turns the virtues of earth into splendid sins, is that nothing of God is there. It is the want of this animating breath, which impresses upon them all the worthlessness of materialism. It is this which makes all the native loveliness of our moral world of as little account, in the pure and spiritual reckoning of the upper sanctuary, as is a mere efflorescence of beauty on the face of the vegetable creation. It serves to adorn and even to sustain the interests of a fleeting generation. Verily it hath its reward. But not till, under a sense of nothingness and of guilt, man hies him to the cross of expiation—not till, renouncing all righteousness of his own, he flees for shelter

to the righteousness of Christ, as that alone which is commensurate to the demands, and congenial with the holy character of the Lawgiver—not till, in the attitude of one whose breast is humbled out of all its proud complacencies, he receives the atonement of the gospel, and along with it receives a clean heart and a right spirit from the hand of his accepted Mediator—it is not till the period of such a transformation, when he is made the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus, that the true image of moral excellence which was obliterated from our species at the fall, comes to be restored to him, or that he is put in the way of attaining a resemblance to his Maker in righteousness and in true holiness.

We meant to have added another remark founded on another sense of the word letter, which is the word of God as opposed to the Spirit of God. But we have no time to expatiate any further. Let us only observe that the apostle speaks both of the letter and Spirit of the New Testament. And certain it is, that, were we asked to fix on a living counterpart in the present day to the Jew of the passage now under consideration—it would be on him, who, thoroughly versant in all the phrases and dexterous in all the arguments of orthodoxy, is, without one affection of the old man circumscribed and without one sanctified affection to mark him the new man in Christ Jesus our Lord, withal, a zealous and staunch and sturdy controversialist. He too rests in the form of sound words, and is confident that he is a light of the blind, and founds a complacency on knowledge though it be knowledge without love and without regeneration—nor can we think of any delusion more hazardous, and at the same time more humbling, than that by which a literal acquaintance with the gospel, and a literal adherence on the part of the understanding to all its truths and all its articles, may be confounded with the faith which is unto salvation. Faith is an inlet to holy affections. Its primary office is to admit truth into the mind, but it is truth which impresses as well as informs. The kingdom of God is neither in word alone, nor in argument alone—it is also in power; and while we bid you look unto Jesus and be saved, it is such a look as will cause you to mourn and to be in heaviness—it is such a look as will liken you to His image, and import into your own character the graces and the affections which adorn His. It is here that man finds himself at the limits of his helplessness. He cannot summon into his breast that influence which will either circumscribe its old tendencies, or plant new ones in its room. But the doctrine

of Jesus Christ and of him crucified is the grand instrument for such a renovation; and he is at his post, and on the likely way of obtaining the clean heart and the right spirit, when, looking humbly and

desirously to Jesus as all his salvation, he may at length experience the operation of faith working by love and yielding all manner of obedience.

LECTURE VIII.

ROMANS iii, 1, 2.

“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”

OUR reason for stopping at this part of our ordinary course, and coming forward with a dissertation on these verses, is that the subject of them seems to guide us to a decision, in a matter that has been somewhat obscured with the difficulties of a hidden speculation. You are aware that to whom much is given, of them much will be required; and the question then comes to be, whether is it better that that thing shall be given or withheld. The Jew, who sinned against the light of his revelation, will have a severer measure of retribution dealt out to him—than the Gentile who only sinned against the light of his own conscience; and the nations of Christendom who have been plied with the offers of the gospel, and put them needlessly and contemptuously away, will incur a darker doom throughout eternity—than the native of China, whose remoteness, while it shelters him from the light of the New Testament in this world, shelters him from the pain of its fulfilled denunciations in another; and he who sits a hearer under the most pure and faithful ministrations of the word of God, has more to answer for—than he who languishes under the lack either of arousing sermons, or of solemn and impressive ordinances; and neither will a righteous God deal so hardly with the members of a population, where reading is unknown, and the Bible remains an inaccessible rarity among the families—as of a population where schools have been multiplied for the behoof of all, and scholarship has descended and is diffused among the poorest of the commonwealth. And with these considerations, a shade of uncertainty appears to pass over the question—whether the Christianization of a people ought at all to be meddled with. If the gospel of Jesus Christ only serve to exalt the moral and everlasting condition of the few who receive it, because to them it is the savour of life unto life; but serve also to aggravate the condition of those who

reject it, because to them the savour of death unto death—whether should a nation now sitting in the darkness of Paganism, be approached with the overtures of the gospel? This is a doubt which has often been advanced, for the purpose of throwing discouragement and discredit on the enterprise of the missionaries; and though not on exactly the same principle, are there many still, who hesitate on the measure of spreading education among the peasantry. Altogether, it were desirable, in this age of benevolent enterprise, to know whether it is the part of benevolence to move in this matter, or to sit still and let the world remain stationary—leaving it to that milder treatment, and those gentler chastisements, which the guilt of man, when associated with the ignorance of man, will call down on the great day from the hand of Him who both judgeth and administers righteously.

We think it must be obvious, to those whose minds have been at all disciplined into the soberness of wisdom and true philosophy, that, without an authoritative solution of this question from God Himself, we are really not in circumstances to determine it. We have not all the materials of the question before us. We know not how to state with the precision of arithmetic, what the addition is which knowledge confers upon the sufferings of disobedience; or how far an accepted gospel exalts the condition of him, who was before a stranger to it. We cannot balance the one against the other, or render to you any computation of the difference that there is between them. We cannot descend into hell; and there take the dimensions of that fiercer wrath and tribulation and anguish, which are laid on those who have incurred the guilt of a rejected Christianity—and neither can we ascend to heaven; and there calculate the heights of blessedness and joy, to which Christianity has raised the condition of those who have embraced it. It is all a

matter of revelation on which side the difference lies; and he who is satisfied to be wise up to that which is written, and feels no wayward restlessness of ambition after the wisdom that is beyond it, will quietly repose upon the deliverance of Scripture on this subject; and never will the surmises or the speculations of an uninformed world, lay an obstacle on him, as he moves along the path of his plainly bidden obedience: nor will all the hazards and uncertainties, which the human imagination shall conjure up from the brooding abyss of human ignorance, embarrass him in the execution of an obviously prescribed task. So that if in any way Christ must be preached; and if in the face of consequences, known or unknown, the knowledge of Him must be spread abroad to the uttermost; and if he be required, at this employment, to be instant in season and out of season, declaring unto all the way of salvation as he has opportunity—if these be the positive requirements of the Bible, then, whatever be the proportion which the blessings bear to the curses that he is the instrument of scattering on every side of him, enough for him that the authority of Heaven is the warrant of his exertions; and that, in making manifest the savour of the knowledge of the gospel in every place, he is unto God a sweet savour of Christ, both in them that are saved and in them that perish.

“Go and preach the gospel to every creature under heaven,” and “go unto all the world, and teach all nations.” These parting words of our Saviour, ere He ascended to His Father, may not be enough to quell the anxieties of the speculative Christian; but they are quite enough to decide the course and the conduct of the practical Christian. To his mind, it sets the question of missions abroad, and also the question of schools and bibles and christianizing processes at home, most thoroughly at rest. And though the revelation of the New Testament had not advanced one step farther, on that else untrodden field, where all that misery and all that enjoyment which are the attendant results upon a declared gospel in the world might be surveyed and confronted together—yet would he count it his obligation simply to do the bidding of the word, though it had not met the whole of his appetite for information. But in the verses before us, we think it does advance this one step farther. It does appear to us, to enter on the question of profit and loss attendant on the possession of the oracles of God; and to decide, on the part of the former, that the advantage was much every way. And it is not for those individuals alone who reaped the benefit,

that the apostle makes the calculation. He makes an abatement for the unbelief of all the others; and, balancing the difference, does he land us in a computation of clear gain to the whole people. And it bears importantly on this question, when we are thus told of a nation with whom we are historically acquainted, that it was better for them on the whole that they possessed the oracles of God. We may well venture to circulate these precious words among all people, when told of the most stiff-necked and rebellious people on earth, that, with all the abuse they made of their scriptures, these scriptures conferred not merely a glory, but a positive advantage on their nation. And yet what a fearful deduction from this advantage must have been made, by the wickedness that grew and gathered, and was handed down from one generation to another. If it be true of the majority of their kings, that they did evil in the sight of the Lord exceedingly; and if it be true that, with the light of revelation and amongst the warnings of prophecy, they often rioted amongst the abominations of idolatry beyond even all the nations that were around them; and if it be true that the page of Jewish history is far more blackened by the recorded atrocity and guilt of the nation, than ever it is illumed by the memorials of worth or of piety; and if it be true that, throughout the series of many centuries which rolled over the heads of the children of Israel, while they kept the name and existence of a community, there was an almost incessant combat between the anger of an offended God and the perverseness of a stout-hearted and rebellious people—insomuch that, after the varied discipline of famine and invasion and captivity had been tried for ages and found to be fruitless, the whole fabric of the Hebrew commonwealth had by one tremendous discharge of fury to be utterly swept away—It were hard to tell, what is the amount of aggravation upon all this sin, in that it was sin against the light of the oracles of God; but the apostle in the text has told us, that, let the amount be what it may, it was more than counter-vailed by the positive good done through these oracles: and comparatively few as the righteous men were who walked in the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless; and however thinly sown were those worthies of old dispensation, on whom the light that beamed from Heaven shed the exalting influences of faith and godliness; and though the upright of the land were counted but in minorities and in remnants, throughout almost every period of the nation's progress from its beginning to its overthrow—yet it serves to guide our estimate of

comparison between the gain and the loss of God's oracles in the midst of a country, when, with the undoubted fact of the few who had been made holy on the one hand, and the many on whom they fastened a sorer condemnation upon the other, we are still told that the gain did preponderate—that the Jews who had the Scriptures had an advantage over the Gentiles who had them not—that any people are better of having among them the instrument which makes a man a child of light, even though in its operation it should stamp a deeper guilt upon ten men, and make them more the children of hell than before—that all the means therefore, which in their direct and rightful tendency have the effect to save and to enlighten human souls, should be set most strenuously a-going, even though these means should be resisted; and it is impossible but this offence must come, and a deadlier woe will be inflicted on all through whom such an offence cometh. Should the fishers of men rescue a few from the abyss of nature's guilt and nature's wretchedness, it would appear that in the work of doing so, they may be the instruments of sinking many deeper into that abyss than if it had never been disturbed or entered upon with such an operation. We have not the means of instituting a comparison between the quantity of good that is rendered by a small number being entirely extricated from the gulph of perdition, and the quantity of evil that ensues from a large number being more profoundly immersed in it than before. This is a secret which still lies in the womb of eternity; yet we cannot but think that a partial disclosure has been made, and the veil is in part lifted away from it, by the deliverance of our apostle. At all events it clears away the practical difficulties which are attendant on a missionary or christianizing question, when we are here given to understand, that the Jews, with all the aggravations consequent on sin, when it is sin in the face of knowledge, were on the whole better in that they had the oracles of God.

Let us now follow up these introductory views, with a few brief remarks both on the speculative and on the practical part of this question.

First, then, as to the speculative part of it. The Bible, when brought into a new country, may be instrumental in saving the some who submit to its doctrine; and, in so doing, it saves them from an absolute condition of misery in which they were previously involved. It makes good to each of them, the difference that there is, between a state of great positive wretchedness and a state of great positive enjoyment. If along with this advantage to the few who receive it, it aggravates the con-

dition of those who reject it, it is doubtless the instrument of working out for each of them an increment of misery. But it does not change into wretchedness, that which before was enjoyment. It only makes the wretchedness more intense; and the whole amount of the evil that has been rendered, is only to be computed by the difference in degree between the suffering that is laid upon sin with, and sin without the knowledge of the Saviour. We do not know how great the difference of misery is, to those many whose guilt has been aggravated by the neglect of an offered gospel; and we do not know how to compare it arithmetically, with the change from positive misery to positive enjoyment, which is experienced by those few who have embraced the gospel. In the midst of all this uncertainty, there is room and place in our minds for the positive information of Scripture; and if we gather from it that it was better for the Jews, in spite of all the deeper responsibility and deeper consequent guilt which their possession of the Old Testament laid upon the perverse and disobedient of the nation, yet that a nett accession of gain was thus rendered to the whole—then may we infer that any enterprise by which the Bible is more extensively circulated, or more extensively taught, is of positive benefit to every neighbourhood which is the scene of such an operation.

But secondly.—Though in the Jewish history that has already elapsed, they were the few to whom the oracles of God were a blessing, and the many to whom they were an additional condemnation—yet, on the whole, did the good so predominate in its amount over the evil, that it on the whole was for the better and not for the worse that they possessed these oracles. But the argument gathers in strength, as we look onward to futurity—as, aided by the light of prophecy, we take a glimpse, however faint and distant, of millennial days—as we dwell upon the fact of the universal prevalence that the gospel of Jesus Christ is at length to reach to all the countries of the world—when we consider that all our present proportions shall at length be reversed; and that if Christians now be the few to the many, Christians then will be the many to the few. Even in this day of small things, the direct blessing which follows in the train of a circulated Bible and a proclaimed gospel, overbalances the incidental evil; and when we think of the latter-day glory which it ushers in—when we think of that secure and lasting establishment which in all likelihood it will at length arrive at—when we compute the generations of that millennium which is awaiting a peopled and a cultivated world—when we try to

fancy the magnificent results, which a labouring and progressive Christianity will then land in—who would shrink from the work of hastening it forward, because of a spectre conjured up from the abyss of human ignorance? Even did the evil now predominate over the good, still is a missionary enterprise like a magnanimous daring for a great moral and spiritual achievement, which will at length reward the perseverance of its devoted labourers. It is like a triumph for the whole species, purchased at the expense, not of those who shared in the toils of the undertaking, but of those who met with their unconcern or contempt, the benevolence which laboured to convert them. There are collateral evils attendant on the progress of Christianity. At one time it brings a sword instead of peace, and at another it stirs up a variance in families, and at all times does it deepen the guilt of those who resist the overtures which it makes to them. But these are only the perils of a voyage that is richly laden with the moral wealth of many future generations. These are but the hazards of a battle which terminates in the proudest and most productive of all victories—and, if the liberty of a great empire be an adequate return for the loss of the lives of its defenders, then is the glorious liberty of the children of God, which will at length be extended over the face of a still enslaved and alienated world, more than an adequate return for the spiritual loss that is sustained by those, who, instead of fighting for the cause, have resisted and reviled it.

We now conclude with a few practical remarks.

First. It is with argument such as this, that we would meet the anti-missionary spirit, which, though a good deal softened and silenced of late years, still breaks forth occasionally into active opposition; or, when it forbears to be aggressive, still binds up the great body of professing Christians, in a sort of lethargic indifference to one of the worthiest of causes. The time is not far distant from us, when a christianizing enterprise was traduced as a kind of invasion on the safety and innocence of Paganism—when it was the burden of an eloquent and well-told regret, that the simplicity of Hindoo manners should so be violated—when something like the charm of the golden age was associated with these regions of primeval idolatry—and it was affirmed, that, though idolatry is blind, yet it were better not to awaken its worshippers, than to drag them forth by instruction to the hazards and the exposures of a more fearful responsibility. We trust you perceive from our text, that, even though the converts were few and the guilty scorers of

the gospel message were many, yet still, on the principles of the apostolic reckoning, there may even during the first years of a much resisted Christianity, be an overplus of advantage. And why should we be restrained now from the work by a calculation, which did not restrain the missionaries of two thousand years ago—when they made their first entrance on a world of nearly unbroken and unalleviated heathenism? Shall we, with our pigmy reach of anticipation, cast off the authority of precept issued by Him who seeth the end from the beginning; and who can both bless the day of small things with a superiority of the good over the evil, and make it the dawn of such a glory as will far exceed the brightest visions in which a philanthropist can indulge? The direction at all events is imperative, and of standing obligation. It is Go and preach the gospel to every creature, and Go and preach unto all nations; and you want one of the features of Him who standeth perfect and complete in the whole will of God—you are lacking in that complete image of what a Christian ought to be—if, without desire and without effort in behalf of that great process by which the whole world is at length to be called out from the darkness and the repose of its present alienation, you neither assist it with your substance nor remember it in your prayers.

But secondly. If man is to be kept in ignorance because every addition of light brings along with it an addition of responsibility—then ought the species to be arrested at home as well as abroad in its progress towards a more exalted state of humanity; and such evils as may attend the transition to moral and religious knowledge, should deter us from every attempt to rescue our own countrymen from any given amount of darkness by which they may now be encompassed.*

But lastly. However safe it is to commit the oracles of God into the hands of others, yet, considering ourselves in the light of those to whom these oracles are committed, it is a matter of urgent concern, whether, to us personally, the gain or the loss will predominate. It is even of present advantage to the nation at large, that the word of God circulates in such freedom and with such frequency among its numerous families. But this only—because the good rendered to some prevails over the evil of that additional guilt which is incurred by many. And still it resolves itself, with every separate individual, into the question of his secured

* We forbear to expatiate over again upon this particular argument, as we have already brought it forward in the 15th Sermon of our Commercial Discourses—at p. 374, Vol. VI. of the Series.

heaven, or his more aggravated hell—whether he be of the some who turn the message of God into an instrument of conversion; or of the many who, by neglect and unconcern, render it the instrument of their sorer condemnation. It may be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for him in the day of judgment. To have been so approached from Heaven with the overtures of salvation, as every man is who has the Bible within his reach—to have had such invitations at your door as you may have had for the mere reading of them—to have been in the way of such a circular from God to our guilty species, which though expressly addressed to no one individual, yet, by the wide sweep of a “whosoever will,” makes it as pointed a message to all and to any, as if the proprietor of each bible had received it under cover with the inscription of his name and surname from the upper sanctuary—that God should thus pledge Himself to the offer of a free pardon through the blood of Jesus, and profess His readiness to pour out His Spirit upon all who turn to Him that they may live—for Him to have brought Himself so near in the way of entreaty; and to have committed, in the face of many high and heavenly witnesses who are looking on, to have committed His truth to the position, that none who venture themselves on the revealed propitiation of the gospel, and submit to the guidance of Him who is the author of it, shall fail of an entrance into life everlasting—Thus to have placed a blissful eternity within the step of creatures so utterly polluted and undone, is indeed a wondrous approximation. But O how tremendously will it turn the reckoning against us, should it be found that though God thus willed our salvation, yet we would not; and refusing to walk in the way which He with such a mighty cost of expiation had prepared for us, cleaved in preference to the dust of a

world that is soon to pass away; and, living as we list, kept by our guilty indifference to offers so full of tenderness, to prospects of glory so bright and so alluring.

But let us hope better things of you and things that accompany salvation though we thus speak. Let us call upon you to follow in the train of those Old Testament worthies, who, though few in number, so redeemed the loss incurred by the general perverseness of their countrymen, as to make it on the whole for the advantage of their nation that to them were committed the oracles of God. Be followers of them who through faith and patience are now inheriting those promises, which, when in the flesh, they saw afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Declare plainly by your life that you seek another country; that you have no desire for a world where all is changing and breaking up around you—where sin is the native element, and death walking in its train rifles the places of our dearest remembrance, of all those sweets of friendship and society which wont to gladden them. Let the/sad memorial of this world’s frailty, and the cheering revelations of another, shut you up unto the faith—Let them so place the alternative between time and eternity before you, as to resolve for you which of them is far better. And with such a remedy for guilt as the blood of an all-prevailing atonement, defer no longer the work of reconciliation with the God whom you have offended; and receive not His grace in vain; and turn to the study and perusal of those oracles which He hath granted to enlighten you—knowing that they are indeed able to make you wise unto salvation, through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

LECTURE IX.

ROMANS iii, 1—9.

“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid; yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man.) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? 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 is just? 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.”

You will recollect that by the argument after having demonstrated the universality of the foregoing chapter, our apostle, of Gentile guilt in the sight of God, at-

tempts the same demonstration in reference to the Jews. He proves, that, with the possession of all that which distinguished them outwardly from other nations, they might fully participate in that condemnation to which sin has rendered us all liable; and even affirms as much as may lead us to understand, that the privileges which belonged to them, when neglected and abused, were in fact so many circumstances of aggravation. It was very natural, that, at this point of his argument, he should conceive an objection that might arise against it; and, speaking in the person of an adversary, he proposes this objection in the form of a question from him. This question he answers in his own name. And the remonstrance of his imaginary opponent, together with his own reply to it, occupy the first and second verses of the chapter upon which we have entered. Look upon these two verses as the first step and commencement of a dialogue, that is prosecuted onwards to the 9th verse; and you have, in what we have now read, a kind of dramatic interchange of argument, going on between Paul and a hostile reasoner, whom he himself, by an act of imagination, has brought before him. This is a style of argumentation that is quite familiar in controversy. The preacher will sometimes deal with an objection, just in the very terms he would have done, if it were cast in living conversation against him, by one standing before his pulpit; and the writer, when he anticipates a resistance of the same kind to his reasoning will just step forward to encounter it, as he would have done, if an entrance were actually made against him on the lists of authorship. This is the way in which the apostle appears to be engaged in the verses before us; and if you conceive them made up of objections put by an antagonist, and replies to those questions by himself, it will help to clear your understanding of the passage now under our consideration.

You have already heard at length all the elucidation which we mean to offer, on the first question and part of the first answer of this dialogue. After the Jew had been so much assimilated in guilt to the Gentile, as he had been by the apostle in the last chapter, the objection suggests itself, Where then is the advantage of having been a Jew? Where is the mighty blessedness which was spoken of by God to the patriarchs, as that which was to signalize their race above all the other descendants of all other families? The reply given to this in the second verse is, that the chief advantage lay in their having committed to them the oracles of God. You will recollect the inference

that we drew from this answer of the apostle's—even, that though the Scriptures laid a heavier responsibility upon those who had them, than upon those who had them not; and though, in virtue of this, the many among the ancient Hebrews were rendered more criminal than they else would have been, and were therefore sunk on that account more deeply into an abyss of condemnation; and though they were only the few who by faith in these Scriptures attained to the heights of celestial blessedness and glory—yet there must have been a clear preponderance of the good that was rendered over the evil that was incurred, seeing it to be affirmed by the inspired author of this argument that there was a clear advantage upon the whole. We will not repeat the applications which we have already made of this apostolic statement, to the object of vindicating a missionary enterprise, by sending the light and education of Christianity abroad—or of vindicating the efforts of diffusing more extensively than heretofore the same education at home. But be assured, that it were just as wrong to abstain from doing this which is in itself good, lest evil should come—as it were to do that which is in itself evil, that good may come. Nor, however powerfully they may have operated in retarding the best of causes, is there any thing in the objections to which we there adverted, that ought to keep back our direct and immediate entrance upon the bidden field of “Go and teach all nations”—“Go and preach the gospel to every creature under heaven.”

The apostle we conceive to be still speaking in his own person, throughout the third and fourth verses. It is to be remarked that ‘some’ in the original signifies a part of the whole, but not necessarily a small part of it. It may be a very great part and majority of the whole—as in that passage of the book of Hebrews, where it is said ‘some when they heard provoked—howbeit not all that came out of Egypt with Moses.’ The truth is, that, as far as we historically know of it, all did provoke God upon that occasion, save Joshua and Caleb, and those younger of the people who were still incapable of bearing arms. And in Timothy we read that ‘some shall depart from the faith’—though the apostle is there speaking of that overwhelming apostacy of the middle ages, which left so faint and feeble a remainder of light to Christendom for many centuries. And, in like manner, were they the greater number of the Jews, who were only so in the letter, and in the outward circumcision; and were not so in spirit, or in the circumcision of the heart. They were greatly

the more considerable part who did not believe; and yet, in the face of this heavy deduction from the good actually rendered to the Jews, could the apostle still stand up in the vindication of those promises which God held forth to their ancestors; of a blessing upon those who should come after them—letting us know, that, though they were the many who aggravated their own condemnation, and the few who by inheriting the privileges inherited a blessing, yet the truth of God here called the faith of God, was not unfulfilled—that whatever comes in the shape of promise or of prophecy from Him, will have its verification—that whatever be the deceitfulness of man, God will still retain the attribute given to Him by the apostle elsewhere, even that He cannot lie. So that, should it be questioned whether the family of Israel, in consequence of God's dealing with them, had an advantage over all the other families, it will be found in the holy and faithful men of the old dispensation, few as they were; and it will be found on the great day of manifestation, when all the reverses of Jewish history from the first calling forth of Abraham to their last glorious restoration shall have been accomplished—that He will be justified in every utterance He made respecting them, and that He will overcome when He is judged of it.

'God forbid' is in the original simply 'let it not be.'

In the fifth verse the apostle again brings forward his objector, and puts into his mouth an argument. It is our unrighteousness, says he, which hath made room for God's righteousness in its place, which sets off as it were, and renders it so worthy of acceptance; and if this be the case, might it not be said that it is not righteous in God to inflict wrath for that which hath redounded so much to the credit and the manifestation of His own attributes. This objection is brought forward in another form in the 7th verse. If God's truth have been rendered more illustrious by my lie, or by my sin, and so He has been the more glorified in consequence—why does He find fault with me, and punish me for sins which advance eventually His honour? Should we not rather sin that God's righteousness may be exalted, and do the instrumental evil that the ultimate good may come out of it? The apostle gives two distinct answers to these questions, after giving us a passing intimation in the 5th verse, that he is not speaking in his own person as an apostle when he brings forward these objections, but only speaking as a man whom he supposes to set himself against the whole of his argument; and tells us also in the 7th verse that the maxim of doing evil that good may come,

which he here supposes to be pled by an unbelieving Jew, was also charged, but slanderously charged upon Christians. The way in which he sets aside the objection in the 5th verse is, that, if admitted, God would be deprived of His power of judging the world—and the objection in the 7th and 8th verses set aside by the simple affirmation, that if there be any who would do evil that good may come, their condemnation is just.

Before urging these lessons any further let us offer a paraphrase of these verses

'What is the advantage then possessed by the Jew, it will be said, or what benefit is it to him that he is of the circumcision? We answer that the benefit is great many ways—and chiefly that to that people have been committed the revealed scriptures of God. And even though the greater part did not believe, yet still their unbelief puts no disparagement on the veracity of God. Though all men were liars, this would detract nothing from the glory of God's truth; and, however this objection may be pushed, it will be found in the language of the Psalmist that God will be justified in all his sayings and will overcome when He is judged. But to this it may further be said, if God do not suffer in His glory by our guilt—nay if, out of the materials of human sinfulness, He can rear a ministration by which He and all His attributes may be exalted—why should He deal in anger against those, whom He can thus turn into the instruments of His honour? The unrighteousness of man sets off the righteousness of God; and He gets glory to Himself by our doings; and is it therefore a righteous thing in Him to inflict vengeance on account of them? Such is the sophistry of vice, but it cannot be admitted—else the judgment of God over the world is at an end. And it is further said by those who, in the language of a former chapter, have turned God's truth into a lie—that that hath made God's truth to abound the more unto His own glory—that He has so dealt with them as to bring a larger accession of glory to Himself; and where then is the evil of that which finally serves to illustrate and make brighter than before His character? Should I be condemned a sinner, for having done that which glorifies God?—might not I do the instrumental evil, for the sake of the eventual good? Such is the morality that has been charged upon us—but falsely so charged—for it is a morality which ought to be reprobated.'

In this passage the apostle touches, though but slightly and transiently, on a style of scepticism to which he afterwards adverts at a greater length in the 9th chapter of this epistle; and we, in like manner, shall defer the great bulk of our observa-

tions about it, till we have arrived at the things hard to be understood which are found therein. But let us also follow the apostle, in that fainter and more temporary notice which he takes of these things on the present occasion—when before completing his proof that both Jews and Gentiles were under sin, he both affirms that God was glorified upon the former in spite of their unrighteousness; and yet deals with that unrighteousness as if it was an offence to Him—that even out of their disobedience an actual honour accrues to Himself; and yet that the vengeance of His wrath is due to that disobedience—that let the worthlessness of man be what it may, the vindication and the victory will be God's; and yet upon this very element of worthlessness, which serves to illustrate the glories of His character, will He lay the burden of a righteous indignation. There was something in the subtlety of the Jewish doctors of that age, which stood nearly allied with the infidel metaphysics of the present; and which would attempt to darken and to overthrow all moral distinctions, and to dethrone God from that eminence, which, as the moral governor of the world, belongs to Him. And it is well that the apostle gives us a specimen of his treatment of this sophistry, that, when exposed to it ourselves, we may know what is the scriptural way of meeting it, and what are the scriptural grounds on which its influence may be warded away from us.

The truth is, that, in the days of the apostle as well as in our own days, speculative difficulties were made use of to darken and confound the clearest moral principles; and, then as well as now, did the imagination of men travel into a region that was beyond them, whence they fetched conceits and suppositions of their own framing, for the purpose of extinguishing the light that was near and round about them. And some there were who took refuge from the conviction of sin, in the mazes of a sophistry, by which they tried to perplex both themselves and others out of the plainest intimations of conscience and common sense. There is no man of a fair and honest understanding, who, if not carried beyond his depth by the subtleties of a science falsely so called, does not yield his immediate consent, and with all the readiness he would do in a first principle, to the position that God is the rightful judge of His own creatures; and that it is altogether for Him to place the authority of a law over them, and to punish their violations; and that it is an unrighteous thing in us to set our will in opposition to His will, and a righteous thing in Him to avenge Himself of this disobedience. These are what any plain

man will readily take up with, as being among the certainties of the Divine Government; and not till he bewilders himself by attempting to explain the secrecies of the Divine Government, will the impression of these certainties be at all deafened or effaced from the feelings of his moral nature. Now what the apostle appears to be employed about in this passage, is just to defend our moral nature against an invasion upon the authority of its clearest and most powerful suggestions. The antagonists against whom he here sets himself, feel themselves pursued by his allegations of their guilt; and try to make their escape from a reproachful sense of their own sinfulness; and, for this purpose, would they ambitiously lift up the endeavours of their understanding towards the more high and unsearchable counsels of God. It is very true, that, however sinfully men may conduct themselves, He will get a glory to His own attributes from all His dealings with them. It is very true, that, like as the wrath of man shall be made to praise Him, so shall the worthlessness of man be made to redound to the honour of God's truth and of God's righteousness. Should even all men be liars, the veracity of God will be the more illustrated by its contrast with this surrounding evil, and by the fulfilment upon it of all His denunciations. The Holiness of the Divinity will blazen forth as it were into brighter conspicuousness, on the dark ground of human guilt and human turpitude. God manifests the dignity of His character, in His manifested abhorrence against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. In the last day the glory of His power will be made known, when the Judge cometh in flaming fire to take vengeance on those who disobey Him; and even the very retribution which He deals forth on the heads of the rebellious, will be to Him the trophies of an awful and lofty vindication.

Now the objection reiterated in the various questions of this passage is, that if out of the unrighteousness of man, such a revenue as it were of fame and character shall accrue to the Deity—why should He be offended? Why should He inflict so much severity on the sin, which after all serves to illustrate His own sacredness, and to exalt His own majesty? Why should He lay such a weight of guilt on those, who, it would appear, are to be the instruments of His glory? Is not sin, if not a good thing in itself, at least a good thing in its consequences, when it thus serves to swell the pomp of the Eternal, and throw a brighter radiance around His ways? And might not we then do this evil thing that the final and the resulting good may emerge out of it? And might

not that sin, which we have been taught to shun as dishonouring to God, be therefore chosen on the very opposite principle, of doing that which will ultimately bring a reversion of honour to His character, and of credit and triumph to all His administrations?

One would have thought, that the obvious answer to all this sophistry, was, that if you take away from God the prerogative of judging and condemning and inflicting vengeance, you take away from Him all the ultimate glory which He ever can derive, from the sinfulness of His own creatures—that the very way in which the presence of sin sets forth the sacredness of the Deity, is by the abhorrence that He manifests towards it—that the unrighteousness of man commendeth the righteousness of God, only by God dealing with this unrighteousness, in the capacity of a judge and of a lawgiver—that if you strip Him of the power of punishment, you strip Him of the power of rendering such a vindication of His attributes, as will make Him venerable and holy in the eyes of His own subjects—that, in fact, there remains no possibility of God fetching any triumph to Himself, from the rebelliousness of His creatures, if He cannot proceed in the work of moral government against their rebellion. And thus, if God may not find fault, and if His judicial administration of the world is to be overthrown, there will none of that glory come to Him out of human sinfulness, which the gainsayer of our text pleads in mitigation of human sinfulness.

This Paul might have said. But it is instructive to perceive, that, instead of this, he satisfies himself with simply affirming the first principles of the question. He counts it enough barely to state, that if there was anything in the reasoning of his opponent, then God's right of judging the world would be taken away. He holds this to be a full condemnation of the whole sophistry, that, if it were admitted, how then could God judge the world? With the announcement of what is plain to a man of plain understanding, does he silence an argument which can only proceed from a man of subtle understanding. And in reply to the maxim, 'let us do evil that good may come,' he enters into no depths of jurisprudence or moral argumentation upon the subject; but simply affirms that the condemnation of all who should do so were a righteous condemnation.

It is not for us to enter on the philosophy of any subject, upon which Paul does not

enter. But we may at least remark, that this treatment of his adversaries by the apostle is consonant with the soundest maxims of philosophy. We know not a better way of characterizing the spirit of that sound and humble and sober philosophy, which has conducted the human mind to its best acquisitions on the field of natural truth, than simply to say of it, that it ever prefers the certainty of experience, to the visions of a conjectural imagination—that it cautiously keeps within the line which separates the known from the unknown, and would never suffer a suspicion fetched from the latter region, to militate against a plain certainty that stands clearly and obviously before it on the former region. And when it carries its attention from natural to moral science, it never will consent to a principle of sure and authoritative guidance for the heart and conduct of man in the present time, to be subverted by any difficulty drawn from a theme so inaccessible as the unrevealed purposes of God, or from a field of contemplation so remote, as the glories which are eventually to redound to the character of God at the final winding up of His administration.

It is not for man to hold at obedience the prompt decisions of moral sense, till he make out an adjustment between them and such endless fancies as may be conjured up from the gulphs of misty and metaphysical speculation. Both piety and philosophy lend their concurrence to the truth, that secret things belong to God, and revealed things only belong to us and to our children. He has written, not merely on the book of His revealed testimony, but he has written on the book of our own consciences the lesson, that He is rightfully the governor of the world, and that we are rightfully the subjects of that government. There is a monitor within, who, with a still and a small but nevertheless a powerful voice, tells that if we disobey Him we do wrong. There is a voice of the heart which awards to Him the place of sovereign, and to us the place of servants. If He ought not to judge, and may not impose the penalties of disobedience, this relationship is altogether dissolved. And it is too much for man to fetch, either from the aerial region that is above him, or from the dark and hidden futurity that is before him, a principle which shall lay prostrate the authority of conscience, and infuse the baleful elements of darkness and distrust into its clearest intimations.

LECTURE X.

ROMANS iii, 9—19.

"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: as it is written, There is none righteous, no not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. 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, and all the world may become guilty before God."

V. 9. 'BETTER,' in respect of having a righteousness before God. We have before charged Jews and Gentiles with being under sin. We affirmed it to their own conscience. We now prove it to the Jews from their own revelation. The following is the paraphrase of this passage.

'What then! are we Jews better than those Gentiles in respect of our justification by our own obedience? Not at all—for we before charged both Jews and Gentiles with being under sin. And we prove it from God's written revelation, where it is affirmed, that there are none who have a righteousness that He will accept—not even one. There are none who are thus satisfied with themselves, and feel no need of such a justification as we propose, that really understandeth, or truly seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way and have become unprofitable, and there is none of them that doeth what is substantially and religiously good—no, not one. From their mouths there proceedeth every abomination; and they speak deceitfully with their tongues; and the poison of malignity distils from their lips; and their mouth is full of imprecation upon others, and of bitterness against them. And they not only speak mischief, but they do it; for they eagerly run to the shedding of blood; and their way may be tracked, as it were, by the destruction and the wretchedness which mark the progress of it; and they know not and love not the way of peace; and as to the fear of God, He is not looked to or regarded by them. Now all this is charged upon men by the book of the Jewish law. We are only repeating quotations out of their own Scriptures; and as what the law saith is intended for those who are under the law, and not for those who are strangers to it and beyond the reach of its announcements—all these sayings must be applied to Jews; and they prove that it is not the mere possession of a law, but the keeping of it which secures the justification of those over whom it has authority. Their mouths, therefore, must also be stopped; and the whole world, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, must all be brought in as guilty before God.'

We here remark, in the first place, that Paul had already, in the second chapter, affirmed the guilt of the Jews, and condescended upon the instances of it. He can scarcely be said to have proved their guilt; he had only charged them with it; and yet through the conscience of those whom we address, it is very possible that a charge may no sooner be uttered, than a conviction on the part of those against whom we are directing the charge, may come immediately on the back of it. There is often a power in a bare statement, which is not at all bettered but rather impaired by the accompaniment of reasoning. If what you say of a man agree with his own bosom experience that it is really so, there is a weight in your simple affirmation which needs not the enforcing of any argument. It is this which gives such authority to those sermons even still, that recommend themselves to the conscience; and it was this, in fact, which gained more credit and acceptance for the apostles than did all their miracles. They revealed to men the secrets of their own hearts; and what the inspired teacher said they were, they felt themselves to be; and nothing brings so ready and entire an homage to the truth that is spoken, as the agreement of its simple assertions with the finding of a man's own conscience. This manifestation of the truth unto the conscience, which was the grand instrument of discipleship in the first ages of the church, is the grand instrument still; and it is thus that an unlearned hearer, who just knows his own mind, may be touched as effectually to his conviction, by the accordancy between what a preacher says, and what he himself feels, as the most profound and philosophical member of an accomplished congregation. And thus that obstinacy of unbelief, which we vainly attempt to carry by the power of any elaborate or metaphysical demonstration, may give way, both with the untaught and the cultivated, to the bare statement of the preacher—when he simply avers the selfishness of the human heart; and its pride, and its sensuality, and above all its ungodliness.

But Paul is not satisfied with this alone.

He refers the Jews to their own Scriptures. He deals out quotations chiefly taken from the book of Psalms; and, in so doing, he avails himself of what both he and the other apostles felt to be a peculiarly fit and proper instrument of conviction, in their various reasonings with the children of Israel. You meet with this style of argumentation on many distinct occasions, and often ushered in with the phrase 'as it is written.' It was thus that Christ expounded to his disciples what was written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Him; and that these disciples again went forth upon the Jews, armed for their intellectual warfare out of the Old Testament. In almost every interview they had with the Hebrews, you will meet with this as a peculiarity which is not to be observed, when epistles are addressed, or conversations are held, with Gentiles only. Thus Stephen gave a long demonstration to his persecutors out of the Jewish history; and Peter rested his argument for Jesus Christ, on the interpretation that he gave of one of the prophetic psalms; and Paul, in his sermon at Antioch, went back to the story of Egyptian bondage and carried his explanation downwards through David and his family, to the doctrine of the remission of sins by the Saviour, who sprang from him; and, in the Jewish synagogue at Thessalonica, did he reason with them three sabbath days out of the Scriptures; and before the judgment-seat of Felix, did he aver, that his belief in Jesus of Nazareth, was that of one who believed all the things that are written in the law and in the prophets; and in argumenting the cause of Christianity before Agrippa, did he rest his vindication on what Agrippa knew of the promises that were found in the Old Testament; and when he met his countrymen at Rome, it was his employment, from morning to evening, to persuade them concerning Jesus both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets. He who was all things to all men, was a Jew among the Jews. He reasoned with them on their own principles, and no where more frequently than in this Epistle to the Romans—where, though he had previously spoken of their sinfulness to their conscience, he yet adds a number of deponing testimonies to the same effect from their own book of revelation.

It is this agreement between the Bible and a man's own conscience, which stamps upon the book of God one of its most satisfying evidences. It is this perhaps more than any thing else which draws the interest and the notice of men towards it. For after all, there is no way of fixing the attention of man so powerfully as by holding up to him a mirror of himself;

and no wisdom which he more prizes, or to which he bows more profoundly, than that which by its piercing and intelligent glance, can open to him the secretcies of his own heart, and force him to recognize a marvellous accordancy between its positions, and all the varieties of his own intimate and home-felt experience.

The question then before us is—Does the passage now read bear such an accordancy with the real character of man, as that which we are now alluding to? It abounds in affirmations of sweeping universality, and a test of their truth or of their falsehood is to be found in every heart. The apostle has here made a most adventurous commitment of himself—for, however much he may have asserted about matters that lay beyond the limits of human experience without the hazard of being confronted, the matters which he has here touched upon all lie within the familiar and well-known chambers of a man's own consciousness. And the positive announcements that he has made are not of some but of all individuals—so that could a single specimen be discovered of a natural man, who was righteous, and who had the fear of God before his eyes, and who either understood or sought after Him, and who was free of all malignity and cruelty and censoriousness—then would this be a refutation in fact of what the apostle assumes and pronounces in argument; and though it requires a minute and multiform and unexcepted agreement between the book of revelation and the book of experience, to make out an evidence in behalf of the former—yet would one single case of disagreement be enough to overthrow all its pretensions, and to depose the apostles and evangelists of Christianity, from all the credit which they have ever held in the estimation of the world.

You know that the apostle's aim in the whole of this argument, is to secure the reception of his own doctrine; and that, for this purpose, he is addressing himself to those who need to be convinced, and are therefore not yet convinced of it. They who have actually submitted themselves to the truth which he is urging, and have come under its influence, have arrived at the very understanding of God which he is labouring to establish. These are in the way to which he is attempting to recal the whole human race, and must therefore be excepted from the charge of being now out of the way. There are many such under the new dispensation; and there were also some such under the old who must also be regarded as being on the side of the apostle, but of whom the apostle affirms, that ere they came over to that side, as he does of every one else,

that they realized on their own persons, the sad picture which he draws in this place of human degradation. The truth is that there were men even of the Old Testament age, who were within the pale of the gospel; and of whom, in consequence, it cannot be affirmed that they exemplified the description which is here set before us. But though, from the nature of the case, such a withdrawal must be conceded in behalf of those who are under the gospel, we are prepared to assert that the inspired writer has not overcharged the account that he has given of the depravity of those who are under the law—whether it be the law of conscience, or of Moses, or even of the purer morality of Christ—Insomuch that all who refuse the mysteries of His grace, are universally in the wrong: And if they who are believers, still a very little flock, are regarded as constituting the church; and they who are not believers, still a vast and overbearing majority, are regarded as constituting the world—then is it true, that, from one end to the other of it, it lieth in wickedness, and that all the world is guilty before God.

Be assured then, that there is a delusion, in all the complacency that you associate with your own righteousness. It is the want of a godly principle which essentially vitiates the whole: And additional to this, with all the generousities and all the equities which have done so much for your reputation among men, there is a selfishness that lurks in your bosom; or a vanity that swells and inflames it; or a preference of your own object to that of others, which may lead you to acts or words of unfeeling severity; or a regard for some particular gratification, coupled with a regardlessness for every interest which lieth in its way—that may render you, in the estimation of Him who pondereth the heart, as remote a wanderer from rectitude as he on the path of whose visible history there occurred in other times the atrocities of savage cruelty and savage violence. It were barbarous to tell you so—had we no remedy to offer for that moral disease which so taints, and

without exception too, all the families of our species. Life has much to vex and to trouble it; and the heart is sadly plied with the visitations of sorrow; and its very sensibilities, which open up for it the avenues of enjoyment, expose it ere long to the heavier distress; and the friends who in other years gladdened the walk of our daily history, have left us unsupported and alone in the midst of a toilsome pilgrimage. And it were really cruel to add to the pressure of a creature so beset and borne in upon, by telling him of his worthlessness—did we not stand before him charged with the tidings of his possible renovation to the high prospects of a virtuous and holy immortality. Let him therefore cast the burden of his despondence away; and, if there be a novelty in the views that have been offered of his present condition, let it but allure him to further inquiry; and if any conviction have mingled with the exercise, let him betake himself to the great fountainhead of inspiration; and if he have found no rest in all his former unceasing attempts after happiness, let him try the new enterprise of becoming wise unto salvation. Should this Bible be his guide; and prayer his habitual employment; and the great sacrifice, with the intimation of which Paul follows up his humiliating exposure of the wickedness of man, be his firm dependence—with these new elements of thought, and this new region of anticipation before him, he will reach a peace that the world knoweth not; and he will attain in Christ a comfort that he never yet has gotten in any quarter of contemplation to which he has turned himself; and this kind Saviour, touched with a fellow-feeling for his sorrows, both knows and is willing to succour him, so as to replace even in this world all the deductions that he now mourns over, and at length to bear him in triumph to that unfading country where there is no sorrow and no separation.*

* Our more copious illustration of this passage, is to be found in the 15th of the 'Commercial Discourses' already referred to; and which, therefore, we have not repeated in this place.

LECTURE XI.

ROMANS iii, 20—26.

"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. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Christ Jesus unto all and upon all them that believe;—for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;—being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;—to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

THERE is perhaps no single passage in the book of inspiration, which reveals in a way so formal and authoritative as the one before us, the path of transition by which a sinner passes from a state of wrath to a state of acceptance. There is no passage, to which if we would only bring the docility and the compliance of childhood, that is more fitted to guide and to turn an enquiring sinner into the way of peace. Let the light which makes apparent to the soul, only shine upon these verses; and there is laid before the man who questions what it is that he must do to be saved, the great link of communication on which he may be led along from the ground of fearful exposure that nature occupies, to the ground of a secure and lasting reconciliation. Let him lay aside his own wisdom, and submit himself to the word of the testimony that is here presented to his notice; and, taught in the true wisdom of God, he will indeed become wise unto salvation. It is an overture of God's own making, and directly applicable to the question of dispute, that there is between Him and the men who have offended Him. It is* one setting forth of the way in which He would have the difference to be adjusted—nor can we conceive how defenceless creatures, standing on the brink of an eternity for which they have no provision, and which nevertheless all of them must enter and abide upon for ever, ought to have their attention more arrested and their feelings more engrossed and solemnized, than by the communication of the apostle in this verse, and by the unfoldings of that embassy of peace that is here so simply and so truly set before us.

The apostle has by this time well nigh finished his demonstration of human sinfulness; and he makes use of such terms as go to fasten the charge of guilt, not in that way of vague and inapplicable generality from which it is so easy for each man to escape the sense of his own personal danger, and the remorse of his own individual conscience; but as go to fasten the charge on every single member or descendant of the great human family. There is a method of blunting the edge

of conviction, by interpreting, in a kind of corporate and collective way, all that is said by the apostle about the sinfulness of Jews on the one hand and of Gentiles on the other. But let each of us only review his past life, or enter with the light of self-examination into the chambers of his own heart; and he will feel himself to be addressed by the phrase of 'whosoever thou art, O man;' and he will feel that in the clause of 'every mouth being stopped,' his own mouth should be stopped also; and he will consent that he, a native of our world, has a part in the apostle's asseveration about all the world being guilty before God; and he will readily accord with the Bible in that, whereas he is a partaker of flesh and blood, he offers no exception to the averment, that, in the sight of God, and by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified.

It is through want of faith that we are blind to the reality of the gospel; and it is also through want of faith we are blind to the reality of the law. The generality of readers see not any significance in the apostle's words, because they feel not any sense of the things that are expressed by it. They are just as dead to the terrors of the law, as they are to the offers and invitations of the gospel. The sense of God pursuing them with the exactions of an authority that He will not let down, is just as much away from their feelings, as the sense of God in Christ beseeching them to flee for refuge to the hope set before them. The man who is surrounded with an opaque partition, which limits his view to the matters that lie within the region of carnality, and hides from him alike the place of condemnation and the place of deliverance that lie beyond it—he may enjoy a peace that is without disturbance, because, though he have no positive hope from the gospel, he has no positive apprehension from the law. He is alike insensible to both; and not till, through an opening in that screen, which hides from nature the dread and important certainties that are lying in reserve for all her children, he is made to perceive that God's truth and righteousness are out against him—will he appreciate the revelation of

that great mystery, by which it is made known how truth and mercy have met together, and how righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Let us now proceed to the exposition of this passage.

Mark in the 20th verse how this question is treated as one between God and man. It is not that one man may not be justified in the sight of another—may not have fulfilled all that the other has a right to expect; but the question is about justification in the sight of God. It is a judicial proceeding before God.

V. 21. A 'righteousness without the law,' is simply a righteousness which we obtain without having fulfilled that law in our own persons. Paul never loses the advantage of any testimony that is given to the doctrine of Christ out of the Jewish Scriptures; and while he therefore raises against himself the opposition of the great majority of his countrymen, by asserting a righteousness that was arrived at in some other way than through the path of obedience to their law, yet he does not omit the opportunity of trying to disarm this opposition, by avouching that this very righteousness was borne witness to by the law and the prophets. The testimonies of the prophets are various and abundant on this topic; for a view of the testimonies of the law, we refer you to Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews.

V. 22. The righteousness which is proposed by the apostle, as that which alone is valid to the object of justification, is called by him the righteousness of God. It is that the acceptance of which does not dishonour Him. It is that which He Himself has provided, and which He bestows as a grant to all who will. We cannot speak too plainly about an alternative, on which there hinges the whole -; eternity of a sinner. (Conceive the sinner to draw nigh, in the imagination of his own merits—God says to him, 'I cannot receive you upon this footing, but here is a righteousness which I hold out to you, wrought not by yourself but by my Son, and I now ask your consent that you be clothed upon therewith. Come to me, consenting to be so clothed upon, and I take you into full reconciliation.'—'Unto all.') The offer of this righteousness is upon all who believe. Their belief constitutes their acceptance of the thing offered; and what was formerly theirs in offer, becomes by their faith theirs in possession. 'No difference.' There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, in respect of all having sinned; and there is as little difference in respect of the way in which all may be justified.

V. 23. Come short of glorifying God—'When they knew God they glorified him

not as God;' and they therefore are short of having wherewith to glory of before God. Even Abraham had nothing to glory of before God; and of consequence no claim or title to be glorified by God.

V. 24. You understand that the term justify signifies, not to make a man righteous in personal character, but to hold and declare him righteous in point of law. We have already explained that it is to be understood forensically. We here understand that this justification is not wrought for, but given, and given freely. It is not a purchase, but a present. It is given by grace, which is just saying, that it is given gratis. When we say that it is not a purchase, we mean that it is not purchased by ourselves. Still however it was purchased, but by another. To redeem is to recover what is lost, but by rendering an adequate price for it. We had lost righteousness in the sight of God. Jesus Christ redeemed the righteousness that we had lost. He gave the price for it; and we are freely offered that thing which is the fruit of His purchase.

V. 25. 'Set forth.' Exhibited. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Set forth before the eyes. The term propitiation is the same with what in the Old Testament is translated mercy-seat. On the great day of atonement it was sprinkled with the blood of an appointed sacrifice. "And there I will meet thee," says God to Moses, "and will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat." It rather, however, signifies the offering itself, than the place in which the offering was sprinkled. You know what it is to make the Being whom you have offended propitious. The propitiation is the offering by which propitiousness is obtained. Jesus Christ in dying, rendered a propitiation for the sins of the world. And you in particular have the benefit of this propitiation; He becomes your propitiation upon your having faith in His blood. There is a general faith which respects the whole testimony of God, that, if true and not counterfeit, will also respect all the particulars of that testimony. Still however there is a danger in connecting our reconciliation with this general faith; for there may be a delusive vagueness, you will observe, in the matter, and the attention may fail to be exercised on that distinct truth with which reconciliation has most expressly and immediately to do. Let it be well remarked then, that in this verse propitiation is said to be through faith in his blood. There is an appropriateness of this kind kept up in God's dealings with us. Through faith in the blood of Christ, we obtain that redemption which is through this blood, even the forgiveness of sin. It is through faith in

God's promise of the Holy Spirit that we shall upon asking Him receive the Holy Spirit. This latter act of faith brings down upon us the benefit of which it is the object, even the Spirit—as the former act of faith brings down upon us the benefit of which it is the object, even the washing away of our guilt in the blood of the Lamb. As is the faith, so is the fulfilment. Our Saviour did not ask the blind men—Believe ye that I am able to do all things?—but Believe ye that I am able to do this thing? And upon their replying—Yes, He touched their eyes and said, According to your faith so be it done unto you—and their eyes were opened. The man who has faith that he will get the Spirit of Charity, and prays accordingly—though he should get forgiveness on the back of his prayer, is not getting according to that faith. The man who has the faith that Christ's Spirit can sanctify him, and prays for it—though he should get forgiveness on the back of his prayer, is not getting according to that faith. But the man who has the faith that the blood of Christ can wash away guilt, and prays that in this blood his guilt may be washed away, and on the back of his prayer is accepted in the Beloved and for His sake—he is getting precisely according to his faith. And thus it is that there is an accordancy between the benefits of faith, and the particular truths of revelation which faith has respect unto—when it brings down these benefits upon the believer. Faith has been compared by some theologians to the bunch of hyssop, and the blood of Christ is called the blood of sprinkling.

For 'as to' the remission of sins that are past. To declare His righteousness, in the having remitted by his forbearance, the sins of the ages that are past.

V. 26. It is at this time that God hath set Him forth. He now shows what was before hidden from the prophets. In the fulness of time Christ is now manifested. It was a mystery in former ages, how a holy God could pardon. This is now declared; and it is now made manifest that God might be just, while he justifies those who believe in Jesus.

The following is the paraphrase of this passage.

'Therefore no individual shall work out a righteousness that justifies him by his doing of the law—for the law makes his sin manifest. But now, in lack of this righteousness of man, there is manifested a righteousness of God—not consisting of our obedience to the law, though both the law and the prophets bear witness to it. This is that righteousness of God, which is received by our faith in Christ Jesus, which is offered unto all, and actually

conferred on all who believe without distinction. For all have sinned and come short of rendering glory to God; and none are therefore justified in the way of reward, but receive justification as a gift of kindness, out of that which has been purchased for us by Christ Jesus—whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood; and thus to declare the righteousness of God, in His having forbore to punish the sins of those who were forgiven in the former ages of the world—to declare this righteousness to us now, and so make it manifest, that it was not merely a kind and a compassionate, but also a just thing in God, to justify him who believeth in Jesus.

The first lesson that we should like to urge upon you from this passage, is the gospel doctrine of our acceptance with God, in all the strict entireness and purity of its terms. There is nothing which so much darkens the mind of an inquirer, and throws such a cloudiness over the simple announcements that God has made to us, as the tendency of a legal spirit, to mix up the doings of the creature with the free grace and mercy of the Creator. Take up with it as an absolute truth, that the law has condemned you. Be very sure that this is the sentence which is in force, against even the most virtuous and upright of the species. Do not try to mitigate the evils of your condition, or to blunt the edge and application of the law, as having pronounced a destroying sentence upon your person—by alleging any extenuation of your offences, or any number of actual conformities. You have broken the law in one point, have you not? So only has the assassin done, in respect to the law of his country. His execution is the legal consequence of his guilt; and by that you will carry out your guilt to its legal consequence. It will be better for you that you regard yourself, as under the law to be wholly undone. If you do not you will keep out from your mind the whole clearness and comfort of the gospel. If you admit any merit, or any innocence of your own, among the ingredients of your security before God—then all is thrown back again upon a questionable and precarious and uncertain foundation. The controversy between God and man is wakened up anew, by such a proceeding. You are again consigned, as before, among the old elements of doubt and distrust; and the question, what degree of comparative innocence is enough to admit your own righteousness into the plea of justification before God, will, by its ambiguous and unresolvable nature, remove you as far from any solid ground of dependence, as if there was no righteousness of another

in which you might appear, and as if no propitiation had been made for you. If you want peace to your own minds, and a release to yourself from all its perplexities—better that you discard all the items of your own personal merit from the account of your acceptance with God. Go not to obliterate that clear line of demarcation which the apostle has drawn, between salvation by works and salvation by grace, and which he proposes to us as the only two terms of an alternative which cannot be compounded together; but of which, if the one be chosen, the other must be entirely rejected. The foundation of your trust before God, must either be your own righteousness out and out, or the righteousness of Jesus Christ out and out. To attempt a composition of them is to lean on a foundation, of which many of the materials may be solid; but many of them also are brittle, and all of them are frailly cemented together with untempered mortar. If you are to lean upon your own merit, lean upon it wholly—if you are to lean upon Christ, lean upon Him wholly. The two will not amalgamate together; and it is the attempt to do so which keeps many a weary and heavy-laden inquirer at a distance from rest, and at a distance from the truth of the gospel. Maintain a clear and a consistent posture. Stand not before God with one foot upon a rock, and the other upon a treacherous quick-sand. And it is not your humility alone which we want to inspire—it is the stable peace of your hearts that we are consulting, when we tell you that the best use you can make of the law is to shut your mouth when it offers to speak in the language of vindication; and to let its requirements on the one hand, and your rebellion on the other, give you the conviction of sin.

In stepping over from the law as a ground of meritorious acceptance, step over from it wholly. Make no reservations. You are aware of the strenuous-

ness with which Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, warded off the rite of circumcision from the church. He would admit of no compromise between one basis of acceptance and another. This were inserting a flaw and a false principle into the principle of our justification; and to import the element of falsehood were to import the element of feebleness. We call upon you, not to lean so much as the weight of one grain or scruple of your confidence upon your own doings—to leave this ground entirely, and to come over entirely to the ground of a Redeemer's blood and a Redeemer's righteousness. Then you may stand firm and erect on a foundation strong enough and broad enough to bear you. You will feel that your feet are on a sure place; and we know nothing that serves more effectually to clear and disembarass the mind of an inquirer from all its perplexities, than when the provinces of the law and the gospel, instead of mingling and mutually encroaching the one upon the other, come to be seen in all the distinctness of their character and offices. The law ministers condemnation and nothing else. The gospel, by its own unaided self, ministers that righteousness which finds acceptance with God. God has simply set forth Christ to be a propitiation. You have to look upon Him as such, and He becomes your propitiation. Make no doubt of its being an honest exhibition, which God makes of His Son. It is not an exhibition by which He intends to deceive you. And great will be your peace, when thus drawn away from yourself, and drawn towards the Saviour. It will be the commencement of a trust, that will establish the heart in comfort; and, though a mystery which cannot be demonstrated to the world, will it be the experience of every true believer, that it is the commencement of an affection which will establish the heart in the love and in the habit of holiness.

LECTURE XII.

ROMANS iii, 27—31.

“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”

THE term law may often be taken in a more general acceptance, than that of an authoritative rule for the observation of those who are subject to it. It may signify the method of succession, by which one event follows another—either in the moral or the physical world; and it is thus that we speak of a law of nature, or

a law of the human mind, thereby denoting the train or order of certain consecutive facts, which maintain an unvarying dependence among themselves. Both the law of works, and the law of faith, though the judicial character of God is strongly evinced in the establishment of them, may be understood here in this latter sense which we have just now explained. The law of works, is that law by which the event of a man's justification follows, upon the event of his having performed these works. The law of faith is that law, by which the event of a man's justification follows, upon the event of his conceiving faith—just as the law of gravitation is that law upon which every body above the surface of the earth, when its support is taken away, will fall towards its centre. And as the law of refraction is that, upon which every ray of light, when it passes obliquely from air into water, is bent from the direction which it had formerly.

V. 29. It is good, for the purpose of keeping up in your mind the concatenation that obtains between one part of the epistle and the other, to mark every recurrence of similar terms which takes place in the prosecution of its argument. He had in the second chapter, made a pointed address to the Jew—who rested in the law, and made his boast of God. He now excludes his boasting; and in doing so reduces the Jew and the Gentile to the same condition of relationship with God.

V. 30. The term 'one' may either be taken numerically, or refers to the unity and unchangeableness of God's purpose.

By a preceding verse, the works of the law are set aside in the matter of our justification. And it comes in as an appropriate question—Is the law made void through this? What would have been consequent upon obedience to the law, is now made consequent upon faith; and does this nullify the law? No, it will be found that it serves to establish the law, securing all the honour which is due to the Lawgiver; perpetuating the obligation and authority of the law itself; and introducing into the heart of the believer such new principles of operation, as to work conformity between the law of God and the life of man, a conformity that is ever making progress here and will at length be perfected hereafter.

The passage now expounded scarcely requires any paraphrastic elucidation at all—yet agreeable to our practice we shall still offer one.

'Where is boasting then? It is excluded. In what method? By the method of justification through works? No, it is by the method of justification through faith. But if works had any part in our

justification there would still be room for boasting—and we must therefore conclude since boasting is done away that they have no part at all—and that man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is He only the God of the Jews? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also—seeing that He the same God dispenses justification to both in the same way, that is, justifying the circumcision by faith and also the uncircumcision by faith. Do we then make the law void through faith? By no means. We rather establish the law.'

We now proceed as usual to press upon you, any such lessons as may be extracted from the passage of the day.

And first you know it to be a frequent evasion, on the part of those who dislike the utter excluding of works from that righteousness which justifies a sinner before God, that they hold the affirmation of Paul upon the subject to be of the ceremonial and not of the moral law. They are willing enough to discard obedience to the former, but not obedience to the latter, as having any efficacy in justification. And they will further acknowledge, that they have a much higher esteem for the latter than for the former; that they think greatly better of the man who has the rectitudes of morality to signalise his character, than of the man who has only the ritual observations of a punctual and prescribed ceremonial to signalise his character; that all rites, be they Jewish or Christian, have a greatly inferior place in their estimation, to the virtues of social life, or to the affections of an inward and enlightened piety—insomuch that should they stand before them an individual of fidelity incorruptible, and of honour fearless and unspotted, and of humanity ever breathing the desires of kindness and ever busying itself with deeds of kindness in behalf of our species, and of patriotism linking all its energies with the good of his native land, and of gentleness shedding its mild and pleasing lustre over the walks of private companionship, and of affection kindling its still more intense and exquisite charm in the bosom of his home—why there would not be one moment's hesitation with them, whether the homage of their reverential and regardful feelings, were more due to such an individual, even though a stranger to the puritanical regions of the sabbath and of the sacrament; or to him, who, trenched in the outward regularities of worship and of ordinance, had less of the graces and less of the honesties of character to adorn him—and you can well anticipate their reply to the question, Which of the two had the more to boast of—the man of social worth or the man of a saintly exterior?

We are far from disputing the justness of their preference for the former of these two men—but we would direct them to the use that they should make of this preference, when turning to its rightful and consistent application the statement of our apostle, that from the affair of our justification all boasting is excluded. We ask them upon a reference to their own principles and feelings, whether this assertion of the inspired teacher points more to the exclusion of the moral or of the ceremonial law? Is it not the fair and direct answer that it points the more, to that of which men are inclined to boast the more? To set aside the law of works in the matter of our justification is not to exclude boasting at all—if it be only those works that are excluded, which beget no reverence when done by others, and no complacency when done by themselves. The exclusion of boasting might appear to the mind of an old Pharisee, as that which went to sweep away the whole ceremonial in which he gloried. But for the very same reason should it appear to the mind of him who is a tasteful admirer of virtue, to sweep away the moral accomplishments in which he glories. To him, in fact, the ceremonial law, in which he has no disposition to boast whatever, is not so touched by the affirmation of the apostle, as the moral law on which alone he would ground a boastful superiority of himself over others. The thing which is shut out here from the office of justification, is that thing which excites boasting in man. Carry this verse to the Jew who vaunted himself that he gave tithes and fasted twice in the week; and these are the observances, which, as to any power of justifying, are here done away. Carry this verse to the man who stands exalted over his fellows, either by the integrities which direct or by the kind humanities which adorn him; and these are the virtues, which, as to their power of justifying, are just as conclusively done away. Whatever you are most disposed to boast of, it is that upon which the sentence of expulsion most pointedly and most decisively falls; and the ground of a Pharisee's dependence on his conformities to the ceremonial law, is not more expressly cast away by this passage—than is the ground of his dependence, who, in our own more refined and cultivated age, would place his dependence before God on those moralities, which to him are the objects of a far more enlightened admiration, and of a far juster and truer complacency.

It is thus, that the towering pretensions, even of the most moral and enlightened of our sages in modern days, may be utterly overthrown. If there was then a

greater tendency to boast of ceremonial observations, then was the righteousness of the ceremonial law most severely struck at by the apostle, as having no place in our justification. But if there be now a greater tendency to boast of moral observations, now is the righteousness of the moral law most pointedly the object of his attack, as out of propriety and of place in the matter of our justification. In a word, this verse has the same power and force of conclusion still, that it had then. It then reduced the boastful Jew to the same ground of nothingness before God, with the Gentile whom he despised. And it now reduces the eloquent expounder of human virtue to the same ground, with that drivelling slave of rites and punctualities whom he so tastefully, and from the throne of his mental superiority, so thoroughly despises—shutting in fact every mouth, and making the righteousness of all before God, not a claim to be challenged, but a gift to be humbly and thankfully accepted of from His hands.

This is far from the only passage, however, which excludes the moral as well as the ceremonial law from any standing in the province of our justification. In many places it is said, that our justification is not of works in the general, and without any addition of the term law at all, to raise the question whether it be the moral or ceremonial law that is intended. And in the preceding part of the epistle, they are moral violations which are chiefly instanced, for the purpose of making it out, that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified. In the theft and adultery and sacrilege of the second chapter, and in the impiety and deceit and slander and cruelty of the third, we see that it was the moral law, and the offence of a guilty world against it, which the apostle chiefly had in his eye; and when, as the end of all this demonstration, he comes to the conclusion of the world's guilt—why should we restrict the apostle, as if he only meant to exclude the ceremonial from the office of justifying? When he says that by the law is the knowledge of sin, is it the ceremonial law only that is intended—when in fact they were moral sins that he had all along been specifying? Or is it the sole purpose of the apostle, to humble those who made their boast of the ceremonial law—when he instances how the law administered to himself the conviction of his sinfulness, by fastening upon the tenth commandment, and telling us that he had not been criminal, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet? What do you make of the passage where it is said, that we are saved—not by works of righteousness, which we have done?

Does not this include all doings, be they of a moral or be they of a ceremonial character? And in the verses which immediately precede this quotation from Titus, whether think you was the moral or the ceremonial law most in the apostle's head—when, in alleging the worthlessness of all the previous doings of his own converts, he charged them with serving divers lusts and pleasures, and with living in malice and envy—hateful and hating one another? This distinction between the moral and ceremonial, is, in fact, a mere device, for warding off a doctrine, by which alienated nature feels herself to be pained and humbled and revolted, in all ages of the world. It is an opiate, by which she would fain regale the lingering sense that she so fondly retains of her own sufficiency. It is laying hold of a twig, by which she may bear herself up, in her own favourite attitude of independence upon God; and gladly would she secure the reservation of some merit to herself, and of some contributions out of her own treasury, to the achievement of her own justification. But this is a propensity, to which the apostle grants no quarter, and no indulgence whatever. Wherever it appears, he is sure to appear in unsparing hostility against it; and never will your mind and the mind of the inspired teacher be at one, till, reduced to a sense of your own nothingness, and leaning your whole weight on the sufficiency of another—you receive justification as wholly of grace, and feel on this ground that every plea of boasting is overthrown.

We may here notice another shift, by which nature tries to ease herself of a conclusion so mortifying. She will at times allow justification to be of faith wholly; but then she will make a virtue of her faith. All the glorying that she would have associated with her obedience to the law, she would now transfer to her acquiescence in the gospel. The docility, and the attention, and the love of truth, and the preference of light to that darkness which they only choose whose deeds are evil—these confer, in her fond estimation, a merit upon believing; and here therefore would she make a last and a desperate stand, for the credit of a share in her own salvation.

If the verse under consideration be true, there must be an error in this imagination also. It leaves the sinner nothing to boast of at all; and should he continue to associate any glorying with his faith, then is he turning this faith to a purpose directly the reverse of that which the apostle intends by it.

There is no glory, you will allow, to yourself, in seeing with your eyes open

that sun which stands visibly before you—whatever glory may accrue to Him, who arrayed this luminary in his brightness, and endowed you with that wondrous mechanism, which conveys the perception of it. There is no part of the glory of a gift, ascribed to the mendicant, who simply looks to it—whatever praise of generosity may be rendered to Him who is the giver; or still more to Him who hath conferred upon the hand its moving power, and upon the eye its seeing faculty. And even though the beggar should be told to wait another day, and then to walk to some place of assignation, and there to obtain the princely donation that was at length to elevate his family to a state of independence—in awarding the renown that was due upon such a transaction, would it not be the munificence of the dispenser that was held, to be all in all; and who would ever think of lavishing one fraction of acknowledgment, either upon the patience, or upon the exertion, or upon the faith of him who was the subject of all this liberality? And be assured that in every way, there is just as little to boast of on the part of him, who sees the truth of the gospel, or who labours to come within sight of it, or who relies on its promises after he perceives them to be true. His faith, which has been aptly termed the hand of the mind, may apprehend the offered gift and may appropriate it; but there is just as little of moral praise to be rendered on that account, as to the beggar for laying hold of the offered alms. It is with the man whom the gospel has relieved of his debt, as it is with the man whom the gold of a generous benefactor has relieved of his. There is nothing in the shape of glory that is due at all to the receiver; and nothing could ever have conjured up such an imagination, but the delusive feeling that cleaves to nature of her own sufficiency. There is not one particle of honour due to the sinner in this affair; and all the blessing and honour and glory of it must be rendered Him, who, in the face of His manifold provocations, and when He might have illustrated both the power of His anger and the triumphs of His justice, gave way to the movements of a compassion that is infinite; and had with wisdom unsearchable, to find out a channel of conveyance—by which, in consistency with the glory of such attributes and with the principle of such a government as are unchangeable, He might call His strayed children back again to the arms of an offered reconciliation, and lavish on all who come the gifts of a free pardon in time and a full perfection of happiness through eternity.

And to cut away all pretensions to glorying on the score of faith—the faith it-

self is a gift. The gospel is like an offer made to one who has a withered hand; and power must go forth with the offer ere the hand can be extended to take hold of it. The capacity of simply laying hold of the covenant of peace, is as much a grant, as is the covenant itself. The helpless and the weary sinner, who has looked so fruitlessly after the faith which is unto salvation, knows that the faculty of seeing with his mind, is just as necessary to him, as is the truth itself which is addressed to it. He knows that it is not enough for God to present him with an object;

but he must also awaken his eye to the perception of it. And let him who wants the faith cavil as he may, in the vain imagination of a sufficiency that he would still reserve for man in the matter of his redemption—certain it is, that he who has the faith, sees the hand of God both in conferring it at the first, and in keeping it up afterwards. And, thankful both for the splendour of his hopes, and for the faculty of seeing it, his is an unmixed sentiment of humility and gratitude to the being, who has called him out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel.

LECTURE XIII.

ROMANS iv, 1—8.

“What shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward 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. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

PAUL never forgets, in the course of this argument, that he is addressing himself to Jews; and, bred as he was in all their prejudices, he evinces a strong and a ready sense of the antipathies, that he would ever and anon be stirring up in their minds, by the doctrine on which he expatiated. He knew how much they all gloried in Abraham and how natural it was for them therefore to feel that Abraham had something to glory of in himself; and, as he urged that faith which excludes boasting, the case of the patriarch occurred to him; nor could he have selected a better than that of one so eminently the favourite of God as he was, for illustrating the principle upon which God holds out friendship and acceptance to mankind.

Ver. 1. The term flesh does not stand related to the circumstance of Abraham being our father. It does not mean what is it that Abraham, our father by earthly descent, hath found—but what is it that Abraham our father hath found by his natural or external performances. Whatever can be done by the powers of nature, can be done by the flesh. The outward observances of Judaism can be so done; and thus the Mosaic law is termed by Paul the law of a carnal commandment. In the question he puts to the Galatians—“Having begun in the Spirit are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” he is expostulating with those who thought that the rite of circumcision, one of the Jewish

observances, was necessary to perfect their acceptance with God. Paul professes of himself, that he gloried not in the flesh; and, in enumerating the reasons which might have led him so to glory, he refers, not merely to his descent, but to his circumcision, and to his pharisaical zeal, and to his blamelessness in regard to the righteousness of the law. Abraham had rites and performances laid on him, and he was punctual in their observation; and the question is, What did Abraham procure by these services?

Ver. 2. If by these services he was justified, he has whereof to glory, whereof to boast himself. But no! his boasting too must be excluded. He has nothing whereof to glory of before God.

Ver. 3. Genesis, XV., 6. This is said of Abraham, previous, by several years, to the institution of the great Jewish rite of circumcision. He was in favour with God, before this deed of obedience. He was dealt with by God as a righteous person, before this work of righteousness was done by him. God had declared Himself to be his reward; and by his trust in this declaration, did he become entitled to the reward. This conferred on it the character of a gift. Otherwise it would have been the payment of a debt, as of wages rendered for services performed.

Ver. 4. It would not have been regarded as a gratuitous thing, but as a thing due.

Ver. 5. Observe a few things here.

The man who has obtained justification may be looked upon as in possession of a title-deed, which secures to him a right to God's favour. The question is, How comes he into possession of this title-deed? Did he work for it, and thus receive it as a return for his work? No, he did not work for it; and thus it is that justification is to him who worketh not—that is, he did nothing antecedent to his justification to bring this privilege down upon him; and it is a contradiction to allow that it is by doing anything subsequent to justification that he secures this privilege, for it is secured already. He is now in possession of it. He has not to work for the purpose of obtaining what he already has. And neither did he work for it at the time that he had it not. He came to it not by doing but by believing. His is like the case of a man getting in a present the title to an estate. He did not work for it before it was presented, and so get it as a reward. It was a gift. He does not work for it after it is presented, for it is his already. But you must remark here—though it is not in consideration of works done either before or after the grant that the privilege was bestowed—yet that is not to say, but that the person so privileged becomes a busy, diligent, ever-doing, and constantly-working-man. When it is said that the faith of him who worketh not is counted for righteousness—it is meant, that he does not work for the purpose of obtaining a right of acceptance, and that it is not upon the consideration of his works that this rite has been conferred upon him. But it is not meant that such a person works not for any purpose at all. To recur to the case of him who has a gratuitous estate conferred upon him, he neither worked for the estate before he obtained it, nor for it after he has obtained it. But from the very moment of his assured prospect of coming into the possession of it, may he have become most zealously diligent in the business of preparing himself for the enjoyment of all the advantages, and the discharge of all the obligations connected with this property. He may have put himself under the tuition of him who perhaps at one time possessed it, and do it thoroughly, and could instruct him how to make the most of it. He did not work for it; but now that he has got it he has been set most busily a-working, though not for a right to the property, yet all for matters connected with the property. He may forthwith enter on a very busy process of education, to render him meet for the society of those with whom he is now in kindred circumstances. And thus with the Christian, who by faith receives the gift of eternal life. It cannot be put down to the ac-

count of works done, either before or after the deed of conveyance has passed into his hands. But no sooner does he lay hold of the deed, than he begins, and that most strenuously, to qualify himself for the possession—to translate himself into the kindred character of heaven—to wean himself away from the sin and the sordidness of a world, which he no longer regards as his dwelling-place—and, with a foot which touches lightly that earth from which he is to ascend so soon into the fields of eternal glory that are above him, to aspire after the virtues that are current there; and, by an active cultivation of his heart, labour to prepare himself for a station of happiness and honour among the companies of the celestial.

We would further have you to remark, that you must beware of having any such view of faith, as will lead you to annex to it the kind of merit or of claim or of glorying under the gospel, which are annexed to works under the law. This in fact were just animating with a legal spirit, the whole phraseology and doctrine of the gospel. It is God who justifies. He drew up the title-deed, and he bestowed the title-deed. It is ours, simply by laying hold of it. The donor who grants a worldly estate to his friend, counts his friend to have right enough to the property by having received it: God who offers us an inheritance of glory, counts us to have right enough to the possession of it by our relying on the truth and the honesty of the offer. Under the law, obedience would have been that personal thing in us which stood connected with our right to eternal life. Under the gospel, faith is that personal thing in us which stands connected with this right; but just as the act of stretching forth his hand to the offered alms, is that personal doing of the mendicant that stands connected with his possession of the money received by him. Any other view of faith than that which excludes boasting, must be altogether unscriptural; and will mislead the enquirer; and may involve his mind in much darkness, and in very serious difficulties. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of faith. It is of faith that it might be by grace—not that it might be a thing of merit, but a thing of freeness—a present. Ye are saved by grace through faith. Conceive it a question, whether a dwelling-house is enlightened by a candle from within, or by an open window. The answer may justly enough be that it is by the window—and yet the window does not enlighten the house. It is the sun which enlightens it. The window is a mere opening for the transmission of that which is from without. Christ hath wrought out a righteous-

ness for us that is freely offered to us of God. By faith we discern the reality of this offer; and all that it does is to strike out, as it were, an avenue of conveyance, by which the righteousness of another passes to us; and through faith are we saved by this righteousness.

Ver. 6—8. They are Jewish authorities which Paul makes use of, when he wants to school down Jewish antipathies—thus meeting his countrymen on their own ground; and never better pleased than when, on the maxim of all things to all men, he can reconcile them to a doctrine which they hate, by quoting in favour of it a testimony which they revere. Take sin in its most comprehensive sense, as including in it both the sin of omission and the sin of performance; and then the opposite to this, or sinlessness, will imply, not only that there has been no performance of what is wrong, but no omission of what is right. In this sense sinlessness is not a mere negation, but is fully equivalent to righteousness; and not to impute sin, is tantamount to the imputation of righteousness. It is clear that the righteousness thus imputed, which the Psalmist refers to, was a righteousness without works—that is, without such works as could at all pretend to the character, or to any of the claims of righteousness. For what were the works of those who had this righteousness imputed to them? They were iniquities which had been forgiven, and sins which had been covered.

There are certain technical terms in theology which are used so currently, that they fail to impress their own meaning on the thinking principle. The term 'impute' is one of them. It may hold forth a revelation of its plain sense to you—when it is barely mentioned that the term impute in the 6th verse, is the same in the original with what is employed in that verse of Philemon where Paul says, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account? To impute righteousness to a man without works, is simply to put righteousness down to his account—though he has not performed the works of righteousness.

The following is the paraphrase of the passage:

'What shall we make then of our father Abraham; and how shall we estimate the amount of what he procured by those works of obedience which he rendered, and are still required of us by a law that lays such things upon us as we are naturally able to perform? For if Abraham did procure justification to himself by these works, he hath something to glory of—though we have just now affirmed that all glorying is excluded. Our affirmation nevertheless stands good, for

he hath nothing to glory of before God. And what saith the Scripture about this? Not that Abraham obeyed, and his obedience was counted; but Abraham believed God, and his belief was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh and getteth reward for it, reward is not a favour; but the payment of what is due. But it is to him who worketh not for a right to acceptance, but believeth on Him who offereth this acceptance and justifieth the ungodly, that his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of him to whom God reckoneth a righteousness without works—saying, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are so hidden from remembrance, that they are no longer mentioned. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon the guilt of his sin.'

The first lesson we draw from this passage is one which we have often urged in your hearing; but aware of the difference that there is between the work of urging a principle for the moral purpose of influencing the heart, and the work of urging a principle for the purpose of informing and rectifying the judgment—we do not feel it so much a vain repetition to come over and over the same thing, for the one of these purposes, as for the other of them. To say what is thoroughly apprehended already, and that for the purpose of informing the mind, were tiresome and inapplicable; but to say what, when present to the view of the understanding, is fitted to work a spiritual impression, is said for the purpose of stirring up the mind. And this may be done, not in the way of presenting it with novelties; but the mind may be so stirred up in the way of remembrance. And this, by the way, suggests to us a very useful test of distinction, between one set of hearers and another, which may be turned by you all into a matter of self-application. The hearer, whose main relish it is to regale his intellect, will, in his appetite for what is original and argumentative and variegated, nauseate, as tasteless and fatiguing, the constant recurrence of the few but all-impressive simplicities of the gospel. The hearer, whose ruling desire it is to refresh and to edify the spiritual life, will no more feel distaste to the nourishment that he has already taken in for the good of the soul, than to the nourishment that he has already and often taken in for the food of the body. The desire for the sincere milk of the word, is not desire for amusement that he may gratify a thirst for speculation—but a desire for aliment, that he may grow thereby. And thus it is, that what may be felt as unsufferable sameness by him who roams with delight from one

prospect and one eminence to another in the scholarship of Christianity, may in fact be the staple commodity of a daily and most wholesome ministration to him who, seeking like Paul for the practical objects of an acceptance and a righteousness with God, like him counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of the Saviour; and like him is determined to know nothing, but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Let us not therefore be prevented from detaining you a few moments longer, by the doctrine, that, however much the most perfect of the species may have to glory of in the eye of his fellows, he has nothing to glory of before God. The apostle affirms this of Abraham, a patriarch whose virtues had canonized him in the hearts of all his descendants; and who from the heights of a very remote antiquity, still stands forth to the people of this distant age, as the most venerably attired in the worth and piety and all the primitive and sterling virtues of the older dispensation. As to his piety, of this we have no document at all, till after the time when God met him—till after that point in his history, which Paul assigns us the period of his justification by faith—till after he walked in friendship with the God who found him out an alien of nature; and stretching forth to him the hand of acceptance, shed a grace and a glory over the whole of his subsequent pilgrimage in the world. "Now if thou didst receive it, wherefore shouldst thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" It is this question of the apostle, which, among the varied graces and accomplishments of a Christian, perpetuates his humility, as the garb and the accompaniment of them all. "Nevertheless not me, but the grace of God that is in me," is the great principle of explanation, which applies to every virtue that springs and grows and expands into luxuriance and beauty on the character of man, after his conversion; and so keeps him humble amid all the heights of progressive excellence to which he is conducted. Certain it is, that it is not till after this period; that he acquires the right principle, or can make any right advances in the path of godliness; and that, whatever he had antecedently—whether of affection to parents, or of patriotic regard to country, or of mild and winning affability to neighbourhood, or of upright duty in the walks either of public or relative life to society around him, or of all that which calls forth the voice of man to testify in behalf of the virtues that are useful and agreeable to man—certain it is, that with every human being, prior to that great transaction in his history which, in the face of all the ridicule excited by the

term, we denominate his conversion—God is not the being whose moral and judicial authority is practically recognized in any of these virtues, and he has nothing to glory of before God.

It is thus we should like to convince the good man of this world of his wickedness, and to warn him that the plaudits of the world's admiration here may be followed up by shame and everlasting contempt hereafter. In this visible and earthly scene, we are surrounded with human beings, all of whom are satisfied if they see in us of their own likeness; and, should we attain the average character of society, the general and collective voice of society will suffer us to pass. Meanwhile, and till God be pleased to manifest Himself, we see not God; and, not till the revelation of his likeness is made to us, do we see our deficiency from that image of unspotted holiness—to be restored to which is the great purpose of the dispensation we sit under: and thus, in spiritual blindness and spiritual insensibility, do the children of alienated nature spend their days—lifting an unabashed front and bearing a confident pretension in society, even as the patriarch Job challenged the accusation of his friends and protested innocence and kindness and dignity before them; but who, when God Himself met his awakened eye, and brought the overpowering lustre of His attributes to bear upon him, said of Him whom he had only before heard of by the hearing of the ear, that, now he saw Him with the seeing of the eye, he abhorred himself and repented in dust and in ashes.

This is the sore evil under which humanity labours. It is sunk in ungodliness, while blindness hinders the seeing of it. The magnitude of the guilt is unfelt; and therefore does man persist in a most treacherous complacency. The magnitude of the danger is unseen, and therefore does man persist in a security most ruinous. There may be some transient suspicion of a hurt, but a gentle alarm may be hushed by a gentle application; and therefore the hurt, in the language of the prophet, is healed but slightly. Peace when there is no peace forms the fatal lethargy of a world lying in wickedness—a peace which we should like to break up, by setting in prospect before you now the dread realities of a future world; but a peace, which, with the vast majority we fear is never broken up, till these realities have encompassed them by their presence—even the sound of the last trumpet, and the appearance of celestial visitors in the sky, and all the elements in commotion, and an innumerable multitude of new-risen men whose eyes have just opened on a firmament which lowers prematurely

over a world that is going to expire—oh it is sad to think that pulpits should have no power of disturbance, and the voice of those who fill them should die so impotently away from the ears of men who in a few little years will be sealed to this great catastrophe of our species—when tokens so portentous and preparations so solemn as these will mark that day of decision, which closes the epoch of time, and ushers in an irrevocable eternity!

The second lesson which we should like to urge upon you is, that the disease of nature, deadly and virulent as it is, and that beyond the suspicion of those who are touched by it, is not beyond the remedy provided in the gospel. Ungodliness is the radical and pervading ingredient of this disease; and it is here said of God that he justifies the ungodly. The discharge is as ample as the debt; and the grant of pardon in every way as broad and as long, as is the guilt which requires it. The deed of amnesty is equivalent to the offence; and, foul in native and spiritual character as the transgression is, there is a commensurate righteousness which covers the whole deformity, and translates him whom it had made utterly loathsome in the sight of God, into a condition of full favour and acceptance before Him. Had justification been merely brought into contact with some social iniquity, this were not enough to relieve the conscience of him, who feels in himself the workings of a direct and spiritual iniquity against God—who is burdened with a sense of his manifold idolatries against the love of Him, who requires the heart as a willing and universal offering—and perceives of himself that the creature is all his sufficiency; and that, grant him peace and health and abundance in this world, he would be satisfied to quit with God for ever, and to live in some secure and smiling region of atheism. This is the crying sin with every enlightened conscience. It is the iniquity of the heart that survives every outer reformation, and lurks in its profound recesses under the guise and semblance of many outward plausibilities—it is this, for which in the whole compass of nature, no healing water can be found, either to wash away its guilt, or to wash away its pollution. It is a sense of this which festers in the stricken heart of a sinner, and often keeps by him and agonizes him for many a day, like an arrow sticking fast. And it is not enough that justification be brought into contact with the sin of all our social and all our relative violations. It must be made to reach the deadliest element in our controversy with God, and be brought into contact as it is in our text, with the sin of ungodliness.

And, to complete the freeness of the gospel. There are many who keep at a distance from its overtures of mercy, till they think they have felt enough and mourned enough over their need of them. Now we have no such command over our sensibilities; and the most grievous part of our disease is, that we are not sufficiently touched with the impression of its soreness; and we ought not thus to wait the progress of our emotions, while God is standing before us with a deed of justification, held out to the ungodliest of us all. To give us an interest in the saying, that God justifieth the ungodly, it is enough that we count it a faithful saying, and that we count it worthy of all acceptance. It is very true, that we will not count it a faithful saying, unless, from some cause or other, (and no cause more likely than a desire to escape from the consequences of sin) we have been induced to attend to it. And neither will we count it worthy of all acceptance, unless our convictions have led us to feel the need of a righteousness, and the value of an interest therein. But if your concern about your soul has been such, that you have been led to listen and that for your own personal behoof, to the offer of the gospel—that is warrant enough for us to explain to you the terms of it, and to crave your acceptance of them. Whatever your present alienation, whatever the present hardness of your heart under the sense of it, whatever there be within you to make out the charge of ungodliness, and whatever to aggravate that charge in your wretched apathy amid so much guilt and so much danger—here is God with a deed of righteousness, by the possession of which you will be accepted as righteous before Him; and which to obtain the possession of, you are not to work for as a reward, but to accept by a simple act of dependence. It becomes yours by believing; and while it is our office to deal out the doctrine of the gospel, we do it with the assurance, that, wherever the belief of its truth may light, it will not light wrong; but that, if the faith of this gospel be formed in the bosom of any individual who now hears us, it will be followed up by a fulfilment upon him of all its promises.

But thirdly, while the office of a righteousness before God is thus brought down, so to speak, to the depth of human wickedness, and it is an offer by the acceptance of which all the past is forgiven—it is also an offer by the acceptance of which all the future is reformed. When Christ confers sight upon a blind man, he ceases to be in darkness; and when a rich individual confers wealth upon a poor, he ceases to be in poverty—and so, as surely, when justification is conferred upon the

ungodly, his ungodliness is done away. His godliness is not the ground upon which the gift is awarded, any more than the sight of a blind man is the ground upon which it is communicated to him, or than the wealth of a poor man is the ground upon which wealth is bestowed. But just as sight and riches come out of the latter gifts, so godliness comes out of the gift of justification; and while works form in no way the consideration upon which the righteousness that availeth is conferred upon a sinner, yet no sooner is this righteousness granted than it will set

him a-working. So that while we hold it a high privilege, that we can say to the ungodliest of you all, Here is the free and unconditional grant of a justification for you, the validity of which you have simply to rely upon—the privilege rises inconceivably higher in our estimation, that we can also say, how the unfailling fruit of such a reliance will be a personal righteousness emerging out of the faith which worketh by love, and which transforms into a new creature the man who truly entertains it.

LECTURE XIV.

ROMANS iv, 9—15.

* Coraeth this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being 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: and the father of circumcision to them who 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. 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. For if they which are of the law be heir, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. Because the law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression."

IN the passage which stands immediately before Paul had asserted of Abraham, that it was his faith and not his obedience which was counted unto him for righteousness; and that it was through the former medium, and not through the latter that he attained the blessedness of those to whom God did not reckon the guilt of their offences. And from this particular instance, does he proceed, in the verse before us, to a more general conclusion upon the subject.

V. 9, 10. He resolves the question proposed in the 9th verse by adducing the case of Abraham. In what state was he when righteousness was imputed to him? The historical fact is, that he found acceptance with God, several years before the rite of circumcision was imposed upon him. The case of their own Abraham, was the case of one who was justified in uncircumcision. An agreement between him and God had previously been made. A covenant had previously been entered upon. There was a promise by God; and there was a faith by Abraham, which gave him a right to the fulfilment of it—and all this antecedent to his being circumcised. And when it was laid upon him as a binding observation, it was as the token or the memorial of what had passed between them. It was not the making of a new bargain. It was the sealing or the ratifying of an old one. It

was not another deed of conveyance, but an infestment upon the deed that had already been drawn out; and though circumcision should at any time be abolished, and some other form, as that of baptism, be substituted in its place, this no more affected the great principle upon which man acquires a right of property to a place in Heaven, than the great principles of justice upon which an earthly possession is transferred from one man to another, would be affected by a mere change in the forms of an infestment. The promise of God who cannot lie makes it sure; and yet a visible token may be of use in impressing its sureness, by serving the purpose of a more solemn declaration. It is just expressing the same thing symbolically, which had before been expressed by words. By refusing the second expression you draw back from the first; by joining the second expression you only repeat and ratify the first. Thus circumcision is a sign—not a covenant itself, but, in the language of Genesis, the token of a covenant. And thus also it is a seal, marking that more formal consent, (to a thing however that had been before agreed upon) which lays one or both of the parties under a more sure or at least, more solemn obligation.

V. 11. The term sign may be generally defined a mark of indication—as when we speak of the signs of the times, or of the

signs of the weather. A sign becomes a seal, when it is the mark of any deed or any declaration, having actually come forth from him who professes to be the author of it. It authenticates it to be his—so that should it be a promise, it binds him to performance; or should it be an order, it carries along with it all the force of his authority; or should it be an engagement of any sort, it fastens upon him the obligation of discharging it. It may sometimes happen that a seal marks the concurrence of two parties in the matter to which it is affixed—and the sign of circumcision was just such a seal. It was enjoined by God. It was consented to by Abraham. God sealed by it the promise which He had formerly made of a righteousness to Abraham who believed; and Abraham expressed by it that he was a believer. It did not change the footing upon which Abraham obtained the favour that was due to righteousness. It only gave the form and the solemnity of a symbolical expression to that, which was already in full reality and effect, though it had only yet been the subject of a verbal expression. The symbolical expression may afterwards be changed, or it may be dispensed with altogether; and yet the original connection between faith and the imputation of righteousness, subsist as it was at the beginning. Abraham is the primary model of this connection, and remains so after the abolition of that temporary rite which marked the Jewish economy. And now that that economy is dissolved, he is still the father of all them who believe though they be not circumcised—that like as righteousness was imputed to him when uncircumcised, so may it be imputed unto them also.

V. 12. It is not enough that they be of the circumcision, that they may be the children of Abraham, in the sense under which the apostle contemplates this relationship in the passage before us. It is faith which essentially constitutes this relationship. They who have the faith are his children, though they have not the circumcision. They who have the circumcision are not his children, if they have not the faith. The sign without the thing signified will avail them nothing. It is true that circumcision is a seal set to it by the will and authority of God, and guarantees a promise of righteousness on His part. But it is of righteousness unto faith; and when there is no faith, there is no failure of any promise connected with this subject, though it should remain unfulfilled. The way to ascertain the reality of this faith, is not by the simple act of a man submitting to have the seal of circumcision put upon him. It is by his walking in the steps of that faith

which actuated the doings and the history of Abraham; and in virtue of which he obtained a meritorious acceptance with God—even prior to the rite of circumcision being laid upon him.

V. 13. Not heir of the present evil world, but of a better country than this, that is an heavenly—a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God—a new earth, as well as new heavens, wherein dwelleth righteousness—Not to inherit this world, but to be counted worthy of obtaining that world upon which the righteous are made to enter after their resurrection from the dead. The promise of all this was not to those who obey, but to those who believe—not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

V. 14. If it be of the law, then it must be of perfect obedience to that law. It cannot be through the medium of a broken, but through the medium of an observed law; and not till its conditions are fulfilled, can faith have any warrant to lay hold of the promises. This is just as good as nullifying faith altogether; and just as good as rendering the promise quite ineffectual—because in fact there has been no perfect obedience. There have been infractions of the law by all, and all therefore are the children of wrath.

V. 15. To escape from this, there must be some other method of making out a righteousness unto eternal life than through the law; for, admit the arbitrations of the law, and wrath will be wrought out of them. Condemnation will be the sure result of this process. It must and will pronounce the guilt of transgression upon all; and, to get quit of this, there must be some way or other of so disposing of the law, as that it shall not be brought to bear in judgment upon a sinner. It has been so disposed of. It has been magnified and made honourable in the person of our illustrious Redeemer; and so borne away from the persons of those who through faith in Him are made, by the constitution of the economy of the gospel, partakers of His righteousness. The judgment of the law has been shifted away from them; and, with this, the charge of transgression has been lifted away from them.

The following is the paraphrase.

‘Doth the blessing of an imputed righteousness come then upon the circumcision only—or may it also come upon those who are uncircumcised? We have said that it came upon Abraham, and that it was faith which was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now in what circumstances was he at the time when it was so reckoned? Was he in circumcision, or

uncircumcision ! Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And circumcision he received merely as a token or as a seal of the righteousness of that faith which he had when he was uncircumcised—that he might be the great exemplar of all those who after him should believe, though they were not circumcised—that to them also, even as unto him, there might be an imputation of righteousness—and that he might furthermore be the exemplar of those who were circumcised; and were at the same time, more than this, walking in the steps of that faith which their father Abraham had while uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should obtain the inheritance, was not to Abraham or his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they only are to inherit who fulfil the law, then faith is rendered powerless, and the promise can have no fulfilment. Because the law worketh wrath and not favour; and it is only when it is taken out of the way that transgression is removed and righteousness can be imputed.'

The first lesson we shall endeavour to draw from this passage is, that it seems to contain in it the main strength of the scriptural argument for Infant Baptism. It looks a rational system, to make sure of the thing signified ere you impress the sign—to make sure of the belief ere you administer the baptism—if this outward ordinance signify any thing at all, to make sure that what is so signified be a reality. And all this has been applied with great appearance of force and plausibility to this question; and the principle deduced out of it, that, ere this great and initiatory rite of our faith be laid upon any individual, he should make a credible profession of that faith. In confirmation of this, we are often bidden to look to the order in which these two things succeeded one another in the first age of Christianity. We read of this one convert and that other having believed and been baptized; not of any having been baptized and then believing. And so this should be the order with every grown up person who is not yet baptised. Should there be any such person, who, from accidental circumstances, has not had this rite administered to him in his own country—demand the profession of his faith, and be satisfied that it is a credible profession, ere you baptise him.

Let missionaries, these modern apostles, do the same in the pagan countries where they now labour—just as the first apostles did before them—just as was done with Abraham of old, who, agreeably to Paul's argument, first believed and afterwards underwent the rite of circumcision. But mark how it fared with the posterity of

Abraham. He, the first Hebrew, believed and was circumcised; and it was laid down for a statute in Israel, that all his children should be circumcised in infancy. In like manner, the first Christians believed and were baptised; and, though there be no statute laid down upon the subject, yet is there no violation of any contrary statute, when all our children are baptised in infancy. At the origin of the two institutions the order of succession is the same with both. The thing signified took precedence of the sign. Along the stream of descent which issued from the first of them, this order was reversed, and by an express authority too, so as that the sign took precedence of the thing signified: And so has it been the very general practice, with the stream of descent that issued from the second of them; and if the want of express authority be pled against us, we reply that this is the very circumstance which inclines us to walk in the footsteps of the former dispensation. Express authority is needed to warrant a change; but it is not needed to warrant a continuation. It is this very want of express authority, we think, which stamps on the opposite system a character of presumptuous innovation. When once bidden to walk in a straight line, it does not require the successive impulse of new biddings to make us persevere in it. But it would require a new bidding to justify our going off from the line, into a track of deviation. The first Christians believed and were baptised. Abraham believed and was circumcised. He transmitted the practice of circumcision to infants. We transmit the practice of baptism to infants. There is no satisfactory historical evidence of our practice having ever crept in—the innovation of a later period in the history of the church. Had the mode of infant baptism sprung up as a new piece of sectarianism, it would not have escaped the notice of the authorship of the times. But there is no credible written memorial of its ever having entered amongst us as a novelty; and we have therefore the strongest reason for believing, that it has come down in one uncontrolled tide of example and observation from the days of the apostles. And if they have not in the shape of any decree or statutory enactment that can be found in the New Testament, given us any authority for it—they at least, had it been wrong, and when they saw that whole families of discipleship were getting into this style of observation, would have interposed and lifted up the voice of their authority against it. But we read of no such interdict in our Scriptures; and, in these circumstances, we hold the inspired teachers of our faith to have given their testimony in favour of

infant baptism, by giving us the testimony of their silence.

It is vain to allege that the Jewish was a grosser dispensation—not so impregnated with life and rationality and spiritual meaning as ours—with a ceremonial appended to it for the purpose mainly of building up a great outward distinction, between the children of Israel and all the other families that were on the face of the earth; and that this was one great use of circumcision, which, whether affixed during the period of infancy or advanced life, served equally to signalize the people, and so to strengthen that wall of separation, which, in the wisdom of Providence, had been raised for the sake of keeping the whole race apart from the general world, till the ushering in of a more comprehensive and liberal dispensation. The flesh profiteth nothing, says the Saviour, “the words I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life.” But it so happens that in the ordinance of circumcision, there are the very spirit and the very life which lie in the ordinance of baptism. Viewed as a seal, it marks a promissory obligation on the part of God, of the same privileges in both cases; and that is the righteousness of faith. Viewed as a sign, it indicates the same graces. It indicates the existence of faith, and all its accompanying influences on the character of him who has been subjected to it. That is not circumcision which is outward in the flesh, says Paul; but circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter. That is not baptism, says Peter, which merely puts away the filth of the flesh; but baptism is the answer of a good conscience unto God. If the baptism of infants offer any violence to the vital and essential principles of that ordinance—the principles of the ordinance of circumcision are altogether the same. Circumcision is the sign of an inward grace; and upon Abraham, in the previous possession of this grace, the sign was impressed. And, in the face of what might have been alleged, that it was wrong when the sign and the thing signified did not go together—this sign of circumcision was nevertheless perpetuated in the family of Abraham, by being impressed on the infancy of all his descendants. In like manner, when an adult stands before us for baptism, should we be satisfied that he has had the washing of regeneration, then may we put the question—Can any man forbid water, that he should not be baptised who has received the Holy Ghost as well as we? But should any man go further, and forbid water to the infants of his present or his future family, he appears to do so on a principle which God himself did not recognise; and, while he seems to exalt

faith over forms, by waiting for the rise of this inward grace ere he will impose the outward ceremonial, he stamps a reflection on that very procedure that was instituted for him who is called the father of the faithful.

But is it not wrong, when the sign and the thing signified do not go together? Yes, it is very wrong; and let us shortly consider who they generally are that are in the wrong, when such a disjunction at any time occurs. In the case of an adult, the thing signified should precede the sign. When he offers himself for baptism, he asks to be invested with the sign that he is a disciple—and he makes a credible appearance and profession of his being so. Were it not a credible profession, then the administrator is in the fault, for having put the outward stamp of Christianity on one whom he believed to be a counterfeit. Were it a profession rendered credible by the arts of hypocrisy, then the minister is free; and the whole guilt that arises from an unworthy subject, standing arrayed in the insignia of our faith, lies upon him who wears them. But in the case of an infant, the sign precedes the thing signified. The former has been impressed upon him by the will of his parent: and the latter remains to be wrought within him by the care of his parent. If he do not put forth this care, he is in the fault. Better that there had been no sign, if there was to be no substance; and he by whose application it was that the sign was imprinted, but by whose neglect it is that the substance is not infused—he is the author of this mockery upon ordinances. He it is who hath made the symbolical language of Christianity the vehicle of a falsehood. He is like the steward who is entrusted by his superior with the subscription of his name to a space of blank paper, on the understanding that it was to be filled up in a particular way, agreeable to the will of his lord; and, instead of doing so, has filled it up with matter of a different import altogether. The infant, with its mind unfilled and unfurnished, has been put by the God of providence into his hands; and after the baptism which he himself hath craved, it has been again made over to him with the signature of Christian discipleship, and, by his own consent, impressed upon it; and he, by failing to grave the characters of discipleship upon it, hath unworthily betrayed the trust that was reposed in him; and, like the treacherous agent who hath prostituted his master's name to a purpose different from his master's will, he hath so perverted the sign of Heaven's appointment, as to frustrate the end of Heaven's ordination. The worthies of the Old Testament, who, in obedience to the God

whom they served, circumcised their children in infancy, never forgot that they were the children of the circumcision; and the mark of separation they had been enjoined to impose upon them, reminded them of the duty under which they lay, to rear them in all the virtues of a holy and a separate generation; and many a Hebrew parent was solemnised by this observance into the devotedness of Joshua, who said, that whatever others should do, he with all his house should fear the Lord; and this was the testimony of the Searcher of hearts in behalf of one who had laid the great initiatory rite of Judaism upon his offspring, that He knew him, that he would bring up his children after him in all the ways and statutes and ordinances that he had himself been taught; and it was the commandment of God to His servants of old, that they should teach their children diligently, and talk to them as they rose up and sat down, and as they walked by the way-side, of the loyalty and gratitude that should be rendered to the God of Israel. Thus was the matter ordered under the old dispensation. The sign was impressed upon the infant, and it served for a signal of duty and direction to the parent. It pointed out to him the moral destination of his child, and led him to guide it onward accordingly. There ought to be a correspondence between the sign and the thing signified. At the very outset of the child's life, did the parent fix upon its person the one term of this correspondence, as a mark of his determination to fix upon its character the other term of it. It was as good as his promissory declaration to that effect; and if this be enough to rationalize the infant circumcision of the Jews, it is equally enough to rationalize the infant baptism of Christians. The parent of our day, who feels as he ought, will feel himself in conscience to be solemnly charged, that the infant whom he has held up to the baptism of Christianity, he should bring up in the belief of Christianity; and if he fail to do this, it is he who has degraded this simple and impressive ceremonial into a thing of nought—it is he who has dissolved the alliance between the sign and the thing signified—it is he who brings a scandal upon ordinances, by stripping them of all their respect and all their significance. Should the child live and die unchristian, there will be a proper and essential guilt attached to him in consequence; but it will at least not be the guilt of having broken a vow which he was incapable of making. And yet the vow was made by some one. It was made by the parent; and in as far as the ruin of the child may be resolved into the negligence of him to whom he owes his

birth, it is he who moved the baptism and it is he who hath profaned it.

This ordinance lays a responsibility on parents—the sense of which has, we doubt not, given a mighty impulse to the cause of Christian education. It is well that there should be one sacrament in behalf of the grown up disciple, for the solemn avowal of his Christianity before men, and the very participation of which binds more closely about his conscience all the duties and all the consistencies of the gospel. But it is also well that there should be another sacrament, the place of which in his history is, not at the period of his youth or manhood, but at the period of his infancy; and the obligation of which is felt, not by his conscience still in embryo, but by the conscience of him whose business is to develop and to guard and to nurture its yet unawakened sensibilities. This is like removing baptism upward on a higher vantage ground. It is assigning for it a station of command and of custody at the very fountainhead of moral influence; and we repeat it to be well, that Christianity should have here fixed one of its sacraments—that it should have reared such a security around the birth of every immortal—that it should so have constituted baptism, as to render it a guide and a guardian, whose post is by the cradle of the infant spirit; and which, from coming into contact with the first elements of tuition, has, we doubt not, from this presiding eminence, done much to sustain and perpetuate the faith of the gospel from generation to generation.

We have one observation more. Baptism, viewed as a seal, marks the promise of God, to grant the righteousness of faith to him who is impressed by it; but, viewed as a sign, it marks the existence of this faith. But if it be not a true sign, it is not an obligatory seal. He who believes and is baptised shall be saved. But he who is baptised and believes not shall be damned. It is not the circumcision which availeth, but a new creature. It is not the baptism which availeth, but the answer of a good conscience. God hath given a terrible demonstration of the utter worthlessness of a sign that is deceitful, and hath let us know that on that event as a seal it is dissolved. He thus stands emancipated from all His promises, and adds to His direct vengeance upon iniquity, a vengeance for the hypocrisy of its lying ceremonial. When a whole circumcised nation lost the spirit, though they retained the letter of the ordinance, He swept it away. The presence of the letter, we have no doubt, heightened the provocation; and beware, ye parents, who regularly hold up your children to the baptism of water, and make their bap-

tism by the Holy Ghost no part of your concern or of your prayer—lest you thereby swell the judgments of the land, and bring down the sore displeasure of God upon your families.

This affords, we think, something more than a dubious glimpse into the question, that is often put by a distracted mother, when her babe is taken away from her—when all the converse it ever had with the world, amounted to the gaze upon it of a few months or a few opening smiles, which marked the dawn of felt enjoyment; and ere it had reached perhaps the lisp of infancy, it, all unconscious of death, had to wrestle through a period of sickness with its power and at length to be overcome by it. Oh, it little knew, what an interest it had created in that home where it was so passing a visitant—nor, when carried to its early grave, what a tide of emotion it would raise among the few acquaintances it left behind it! On it too baptism was impressed as a seal, and as a sign it was never falsified. There was no positive unbelief in its little bosom—no resistance yet put forth to the truth—no love at all for the darkness rather than the light—nor had it yet fallen into that great condemnation which will attach to all who perish because of unbelief, that their deeds are evil. It is interesting to know that God instituted circumcision for the infant children of Jews, and at least suffered baptism for the infant children of those who profess Christianity. Should the child die in infancy, the use of baptism as a sign has never been thwarted by it; and may we not be permitted to indulge a hope so pleasing, as that the use of baptism as a seal remains in all its entirety—that He who sanctioned the affixing of it to a babe, will fulfil upon it the whole expression of this ordinance: And when we couple with this the known disposition of our great forerunner—the love that He manifested to children on earth—how He suffered them to approach His person—and, lavishing endearment and kindness upon them in the streets of Jerusalem, told His disciples that the presence and company of such as these in heaven formed one ingredient of the joy that was set before Him—Tell us if Christianity do not throw a pleasing radiance around an infant's tomb? and should any parent who hears us, feel softened by the touching remembrance of a light, that twinkled a few short months under his roof, and at the end of its little period expired—we cannot think that we venture too far, when we say that he has only to persevere in the faith and in the following of the gospel, and that very light will again shine upon him in heaven. The blossom which

withered here upon its stalk, has been transplanted there to a place of endurance; and it will then gladden that eye which now weeps out the agony of an affection that has been sorely wounded; and in the name of Him who if on earth would have wept along with them, do we bid all believers present, to sorrow not even as others which have no hope, but to take comfort in the thought of that country where there is no sorrow and no separation.

O, when a mother meets on high
The babe she lost in infancy,
Hath she not then, for pains and fears—
The day of woe, the watchful night—
For all her sorrow, all her tears—
And over-payment of delight?

We have put forth these remarks, not for the purpose of inspiring a very violent distaste towards the practice of others in respect of baptism, but of reconciling you to your own; and of protecting you from any disturbance of mind, on account of their arguments. It forms no peculiarity of the age in which we live, that men differ so much in matters connected with Christianity; but it forms a very pleasing peculiarity, that men can do now what they seldom did before, they can agree to differ. With zeal for the essentials, they can now tolerate each other in the circumstantialities of their faith; and under all the variety which they wear, whether of complexion or of outward observance, can recognize the brotherhood of a common doctrine and of a common spirit, among very many of the modern denominations of Christendom. The line which measures off the ground of vital and evangelical religion, from the general ungodliness of our world, must never be effaced from observation; and the latitudinarianism which would tread it under foot, must be fearfully avoided; and an impregnable sacredness must be thrown around that people, who stand peculiarized by their devotedness and their faith from the great bulk of a species who are of the earth and earthly. There are landmarks between the children of light and the children of darkness, which can never be moved away; and it were well that the habit of professing Christians was more formed on the principle of keeping up that limit of separation, which obtains between the church and the world—so that they who fear God should talk often together; and when they do go forth by any voluntary movement of their own on those who fear Him not, they should do it in the spirit, and with the compassionate purpose of missionaries. But while we hold it necessary to raise and to strengthen the wall by which the fold is surrounded—and that, not for the purpose of intercepting the flow of kindness and of Christian philan-

thropy from within, but for the purpose of intercepting the streams of contamination from without—we should like to see all the lines of partition that have been drawn in the fold itself utterly swept away. This is fair ground for the march of latitudinarianism—and that, not for the object of thereby putting down the signals of distinction between one party of Christians and another, but, allowing each to wear its own, for the object of associating them by all the ties and the recognitions of Christian fellowship. In this way, we apprehend, that there will come at length to be the voluntary surrender of many of our existing distinctions, which will far more readily give way by being tolerated than by being fought against. And this is just the feeling in which we regard the difference, that obtains on the subject of baptism. It may subside into one and the same style of observation, or it may not. It is one of those inner partitions which may at length be overthrown by mutual consent; but, in the mean time, let the portals of a free admittance upon both sides be multiplied as fast as they may along the whole extent of it; and let it no longer be confounded with the outer wall of the great Christian temple, but be instantly recognized as the

slender partition of one of its apartments, and the door of which is opened for the visits of welcome and kind intercourse to all the other members of the Christian family. Let it never be forgotten of the Particular Baptists of England, that they form the denomination of Fuller and Carey and Ryland and Hall and Foster; that they have originated among the greatest of all missionary enterprises; that they have enriched the Christian literature of our country with authorship of the most exalted piety, as well as of the first talent and the first eloquence; that they have waged a very noble and successful war with the hydra of Antinomianism; that perhaps there is not a more intellectual community of ministers in our island, or who have put forth to their number a greater amount of mental power and mental activity in the defence and illustration of our common faith; and, what is better than all the triumphs of genius or understanding, who, by their zeal and fidelity and pastoral labour among the congregations which they have reared, have done more to swell the lists of genuine discipleship in the walks of private society—and thus both to uphold and to extend the living Christianity of our nation.

LECTURE XV.

ROMANS iv, 16—22.

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. (As it is written, I have made thee a 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: who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 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: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God: and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

V. 16. You may here remark, that faith is not a meritorious work in the business of our salvation. It does not stand in the place of obedience, as the term of a new bargain, that has been substituted in room of an old one. It is very natural to conceive, that, as under the old covenant we had salvation for our works—so, under the new, we have salvation for our faith; and that therefore faith is that which wins and purchases the reward. And thus faith is invested, in the imagination of some, with the merit and character of a work; and Heaven's favour is still looked upon as a premium, not a premium for doing, it is true, but a premium for believing: And this, as we have already said, has just the effect of infusing the legal spirit

into the letter and expression of our evangelical system; and thus, not merely of nourishing the pride and the pretensions of its confident votaries, but of prolonging the disquietude of all earnest and humble inquirers. For, instead of looking broadly out on the gospel as an offer, they look as anxiously inward upon themselves for the personal qualification of faith, as they ever did upon the personal qualification of obedience. This transfers their attention from that which is sure, even the promises of God—to that which is unsure, even their own fickle and fugitive emotions. Instead of thinking upon Christ, they are perpetually thinking upon themselves—as if they could discover Him in the muddy recesses of their own heart,

without previously admitting Him by the avenue of a direct and open perception. They ought surely to cast their challenged and their invited regards on Him, who is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever, when He calls them by His word, to look upon Him from all the ends of the earth and be saved. But no! they cast their eyes with downward obstinacy upon their own minds; and there toil for the production of faith in the spirit of bondage; and perhaps, after they are satisfied with the fancied possession of it, rejoice over it as they would over any other meritorious acquirement in the spirit of legality. This is not the way in which the children of Israel looked out upon the serpent that was lifted up in the wilderness. They did not pore upon their wounds to mark the progress of healing there; nor did they reflect upon the power and perfection of their seeing faculties; nor did they even suffer any doubt that still lingered in their imaginations, to restrain them from the simple act of lifting up their eyes: And when they were cured in consequence, they would never think of this as a reward for their looking, but regard it as the fruit of Heaven's gracious appointment. Do in like manner. It will make both against your humility and your peace, that you regard faith in the light of a meritorious qualification; or that you attempt to draw a comfort from the consciousness of faith, which you ought primarily and directly to draw from the contemplation of the Saviour. If salvation be given as a reward for faith, then it is not of grace. But we are told in this verse that it is of faith, expressly that it might be by grace. And therefore be assured, that there is an error in all those conceptions of faith which tend to vitiate or to destroy this character; which make the good things of the gospel come down upon you as a payment, and not as a present; which make the preaching of eternal life through Christ any thing else than simply the offer of a gift, and faith any thing else than simply the discerning of this offer to be true, and receiving it accordingly. In the one way, you can only be as sure of the promise as you are sure of yourself; and what a frail and fluctuating dependence is this, we would ask? In the other way, you are as sure of the promise, as you are sure of God; and thus your confidence has a rock to repose upon; and the more firmly you adhere and are rivetted to this foundation, the less chance is there of your ever being moved away from the hope of the gospel; and though this be established, not on what is within but on what is without you, let us not thereby imagine that all the securities for personal worth and personal excellence are there-

by overthrown—for it is in the very attitude of leaning upon God, that man is upheld not only in hope but in holiness. It is in the very position of standing erect upon the foundation of the promises, that the promised strength as well as the promised righteousness is fulfilled to him. It is in the very act of looking unto Jesus, that the light of all that grace and truth and moral lustre which shine upon him from the countenance of the Saviour is let in upon the soul; and is thence reflected back again in the likeness of this worth and virtue from his own person. We have no fear whatever of a simple dependence on the grace of the gospel, operating as an impediment to the growth of the holiness of the gospel. We believe that it is the alone stay of our deliverance from the power of sin, just as it is the alone stay of our deliverance from the fears of guilt: And, meanwhile, go not to obscure the aspect of this free and generous ministration, by regarding the gospel in any other light, than as an honestly announced present of mercy to all who will; or by regarding the faith of the gospel in any other light, than you would the ear that heard the communication of the present, or than you would the hand that laid hold of it.

But, to return from this digression. V. 16. 17. The inheritance is of faith, that it might be by grace, which can be extended to many nations; and not of the law, which would confine it to one nation. This makes it sure to the whole seed of Abraham, not merely to his seed by natural descent, but to that seed which stands related to him from being believers. It is in this sense that it is written of him—he is the father of many nations. It was his faith which introduced him into a filial relationship with God; and in the eyes of God, on whom he believed, all who believed after him were regarded as his children. It was very unlikely that Abraham should in any sense be blest with an offspring. But God calleth out from nonentity such things as be not—and He also sees such an analogy between natural and spiritual things, that He gives to a spiritual relationship the name of a natural relationship. He did both in the case of Abraham. In the face of a very strong unlikelihood, He conferred a real posterity on Abraham. And He constituted him in a mystical sense the father of a still more extended posterity, by making him the father of all who believed.

V. 18. Abraham, perhaps, had no suspicion, at the utterance of this promise, of any deep or spiritual meaning that lay under it. He certainly apprehended it in its natural sense, and perhaps in this sense alone. Looking forward to it with

the eye of experience, he could have no hope; but looking forward to it with the eye of faith in the divine testimony, he might have a confident expectation. It is this which is meant by 'against hope believing in hope.' The stronger the improbability in nature, the stronger was the faith which overcame the impression of it. He suffered not himself to be staggered out of his reliance on that which was spoken. He thus rendered an homage to the truth of God; and an homage proportional to the unlikelihood of the thing which God testified. It was also an homage to His power as well as to His truth. It proved that He thought Him able to arrest and to turn nature; and if He promised to do so, that what He promised He was able also to perform. And this faith was counted to him for righteousness. God was pleased with the confidence that was placed in Him; and His pleasure in it was enhanced by the trials and difficulties which it had to contend with. It is thus that God's honour, and man's interest are at one. We honour Him by believing. By believing we are saved. The fuller and firmer our persuasion in His truth, the greater is the homage that we render Him, and the more abundant are both the present peace and the future glory which we bring down upon ourselves. To hope against hope—to believe in the midst of violent improbabilities—to realize the future things which are addressed to faith, and are so unlike those present things with which nature surrounds us—to maintain an unshaken confidence because God hath spoken, though the besetting urgencies of sense and experience all tend to thwart and to dislodge it—These are the trials which, if faith overcome, make that faith more precious than gold in the sight of our heavenly witness; and it will be found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

The following is the paraphrase of this passage.

'Therefore the promised inheritance is of faith, that it might be by grace, which can be extended to all—so as to ensure the promise to the whole generation of believers, not only to those who are of the law, but to those who have the faith of Abraham, the father and the forerunner of us all. Agreeably to the scripture, "I have made thee a father of many nations," which he is in the eye and estimation of Him on whom he believed—even God, who, by quickening that which is dead and dormant, both called forth a real posterity to Abraham, and also constituted him the spiritual father of a posterity far more extended than that of which he was the natural progenitor. This looked

most unlikely to the eye of nature and experience; but, in the face of all the improbabilities which would have darkened the hope of other men, did he with confidence hope, that he should become the father of many nations—according to the word that was spoken to him about what his posterity should be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was yet about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at God's promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, thereby giving glory to God's faithfulness. And being fully persuaded, that what He had promised He was able also to perform. And therefore was it reckoned unto him for righteousness.'

The lessons we shall try to enforce from this passage, are all founded on the consideration, that Abraham, in respect of his faith, is set up as a model to us—that, in like manner as he believed in the midst of difficulties and trials, so ought we—that we ought to hold fast our confidence in the midst of apparent impossibilities, even as he did—that with us the eye of faith should look above and beyond all that is seen by the eye of flesh, even as with him—and that we should not only set out on the life of faith after his example, but should also walk in the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham.

The first thing that strikes us in our great pattern, is his tenacious and resolute adherence to the truth of God's testimony. "Let God be true," says the apostle, "and every man a liar"—If God have spoken, said the patriarch by his conduct, let us abide by it—though all nature and all experience should depone to the contrary. Amid all the staggering appearances by which he was surrounded, he kept by his firm persuasion in God's truth; and it was this which inwardly upheld him. His heart was fixed, trusting in God. He knew that it was His voice which first called him forth, and he was fully assured of its faithfulness; and that it was his promise which first allured him from the abode of his fathers, and he held it to be certain that what God had promised He was able to perform; and when all that was visible to sense looked unlikelihood upon his expectations, they were kept in full buoyancy and vigour by his unflinching reliance on the word of Him who is invisible. All the agitations of his varied history, could not unfasten his soul from the anchor of its fixed and unalterable dependence. And it was truly noble in him, who, obedient to the heavenly vision, had torn himself away from the endearments of the place of his nativity; and, at the call of what he deemed a voice of right-

ful authority, went forth he knew not whither, and exchanged the abode of domestic serenity and bliss for the mazes of a toilsome and uncertain pilgrimage; and amid all that was fitted to dismay his heart when travelling in countries that were before unknown, made the will of God the ruling impulse of his history, and the promise of God the presiding star which cheered and conducted him on his way—it was a truly noble triumph of faith in this great patriarch, who, when a stranger in a strange land, looked around him, and beheld nothing in the verge of this lower world that did not lour upon his destinies—yet could rejoice both in the safety that encompassed him, and in the glory that was before him—upheld singly but surely on this one consideration, that God hath said it, and shall he not do it!

It was against hope, believing in hope, for him to sustain with so much confidence the expectation, that to him a son should be born. But the most striking display of his thus hoping against hope, was when told, that unto his son and his seed after him, God should establish an everlasting covenant, and at the same time bidden to offer him up in sacrifice, he proceeded to do what God ordered; and yet retained in his heart the belief of what God said—when he lifted against him the meditated blow of death, knowing, that, even from death, God could revive him—when he simply betook himself to his prescribed task; and kept by a purpose of obedience, with which he not only overcame all the relentings of nature, but threw a darkening shroud over prophecies that stood linked with the life of Isaac in the world. He knew that God would find a way of his own to their accomplishment; and it was this which bore him onward to the full proof and vindication of his faith: And should we be at a loss to comprehend what is meant by against hope believing in hope, we see in this trial that was laid upon Abraham, and in the acquittal he made of himself, the most plain and picturesque exhibition of it.

Now to be strong in faith as he was, to cherish the full persuasion that he did, to believe with him in the midst of obstacles, to make the glory of God's truth carry it over the appearances of nature, so as to stagger not in the face of them, but to hope against hope—this is still the exercise of every Christian mind, and it were well to be guided therein by the example of this venerable patriarch. Such is the way in which the message of the gospel is constructed—such are the terms of that embassy with which its ministers are charged, that the promise of God as a shield, and of God as an exceeding great reward, is as good as laid down at the

door of every individual who hears it. It is true that the promise thus laid down will not be fulfilled upon him, unless he take it up; or, in other words, unless he believe it. Now there is a difficulty in the way of nature believing any such thing. There is a struggle that it must make with its own fears and its own suspicions, ere it can admit the credibility of a holy God thus taking sinners into acceptance. There is an unlikelihood here, which is ever obtruding itself on the apprehensions of the guilty, and which tends to keep the offered peace and pardon and reconciliation of the gospel at an exceedingly hopeless distance away from them. Can it indeed be true that God is at this moment beseeching me to enter into agreement with Him? Can it indeed be true that a way of approach has been devised, open for admittance to myself; and on which, if I am found, I am met by the loving kindness and tender mercies of Him who looks so fearful to my imagination? Can it be true of that lofty and tremendous Being who sits on a throne of majesty; and with whom I have been wont to associate the character of jealousy, and wrath, and a sacredness so remote and inflexible, that none may draw nigh unto it—can it be true that He is now bending compassionately over me, and entreating my return from those paths of alienation in which I have all along wandered? We indeed read of an adjusted ceremonial, by which sinners may be brought within the limits of His august sanctuary; and we read of a Mediator who hath made the rough places plain, and levelled the otherwise impassable mountains of iniquity which stood between us and God: But can it indeed be true, that Christ is wooing and welcoming our approach towards Him, and if we only come with reliance to Him as to the mercy seat, then to us there will be no condemnation? Nature may strongly desire such a consummation; but nature strongly doubts its possibility. And it takes a struggle to surmount her apprehensions; and it is against hope if she believe in hope; and there is a contest here to be gone through, ere our fears of that inflexible truth which has proclaimed in the hearing of our conscience the curses of a violated law, shall be overcome by our faith in that truth, which proclaims in Scripture the blessings of a free and offered gospel. And here then let the example of Abraham be proposed to cheer our way over this barrier of unbelief. Let us stoutly imitate him in the resolute combat he held with the misgivings of nature. Let even the very chief of sinners face the unlikelihood that such as he can be taken into friendship with the

God, before whom his profaneness and profligacy have hitherto risen as a smoke of abomination. Let even him buoy up his expectations, against the whole weight and burden of this despondency. Improbable as it may look to the eye of nature, that an outcast so polluted and so loathsome can be admitted into the honours of righteousness; and that though onward to the point of his present history he be crimsoned over with the guilt of ungodliness, can not only be forgiven, but be justified—yet let him against this hope believe in hope, and the stronger his faith the more abundant to him will be the imputation of righteousness. In that very proportion in which he has heretofore trampled on the glory of God by his disobedience, will he render a glory to His truth by now believing in Him who justifieth the ungodly. Let him consider the faith of Abraham, and let the expressions which the apostle employs to characterize it now crowd upon his observation, and carry all doubt and timidity before them. It is just by standing on the truth of the gospel, and then bearing up under the sense of the guilt that hangs over us—it is just by firmly and determinedly persisting in this attitude of confidence on the word of God, even in the midst of all which without that word should sink us into despair—it is just by so doing, that like Abraham we stagger not because of unbelief; and like him we against hope believe in hope; and like him we are not weak in the faith, but by being strong in it give glory to God; and like him are fully persuaded that what God hath promised, He is able to perform; and like him be assured, the guiltiest of you all, that if such be your faith, held firm and fast even unto the end—like as unto him so will this faith be imputed unto you for righteousness.

There is another great unlikelihood in the matter of Christianity, to call forth the exercise of against hope believing in hope—not merely that God's disposition towards us should be so changed as that He shall regard us with an eye of acceptance, but that our disposition toward God shall be so changed as to make us happy in the fellowship of a common character and of a congenial intercourse with Him. This we are not by nature. Our delighted converse is with the things that are made, and not with the Maker of them. In reference to Him there is the insensibility of spiritual death; and the great transition that we have to undergo ere Heaven can to us be a place of kindred enjoyment, is to be made alive again. For this purpose there must be a revival, which no putting forth of any constitutional energy in man can at all accomplish—a

process of quickening, which nature cannot originate, and nature cannot carry forward—a resurrection of the soul, that is as far beyond the bidding of any human voice, as is the egress of a reanimated body from the grave. The man who knows how steeped all his feelings and all his faculties are in ungodliness, knows the moral and spiritual birth that we are now adverting to, to be against the current of all his former experience, and beyond the achievement of all his present most strenuous exertions. And if against hope he believe in the hope, that such a regeneration shall be begun or perfected in him, it will be on the footing of some such promise as sustained the expectations of the patriarch. This unfolds to us the link which connects our faith with our sanctification. God hath promised the clean heart and the right spirit to all who are in Christ Jesus; and, according to the firmness of our reliance upon this promise, will be the fulness of its accomplishment upon our persons. Believe thou that I am able to do this? says the Saviour to the man who looked to Him for a miraculous cure; and according to his faith so was it done unto him. The apostle Paul looked upon another man under disease, and perceived that he had faith to be healed. Peter affirmed of the cripple whom he restored to the use of his limbs in the temple, that the name of Christ through faith in His name had made this man strong—yea the faith which is by Him, had given him this perfect soundness in the presence of them all. And thus do we recover our spiritual health. And thus are the blindness and the paralysis and the impotency that have so beumbed our moral faculties done away. The full and firm persuasion of the patriarch, that what is impossible with man is possible with God, will bring down this possibility in living demonstration upon our own characters. He who promises also says, that for this I must be enquired after; and the prayer of faith brings down the fulfilment; and the man who asks for what is so consonant to the will of God, as that he shall be made alive unto himself, has only like Abraham to believe Him able to call from the womb of nonentity that power into being, by which he is made a new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord. A creature from the depths of his conscious depravity, thus knocking at the door which he cannot open, but who believes that one is standing there to hear and to answer him—a humble aspirant after the character of Heaven, who prays in faith for the love to God which he has never yet felt, and for the charity to man with which he has vainly tried to animate his own cold and

selfish bosom—the labouring disciple of revelation, whose ear has taken up the promise of our internal inheritance, but who knows that it is only through the medium of a birth in his own heart as preternatural as that of Isaac that he ever can arrive at it—let him imitate the father of the faithful in his confident reliance on the promise of God; and like him let him believe in the power that quickeneth from above; and like him who was not weak in faith, let him consider not the deadness of his own moral and spiritual energies, but give to God the whole glory of the renovation he aspires after—and he will most assuredly experience with all Christians, that when weak then is he strong, and that what God hath promised He is able also to perform.

But the habit of against hope believing in hope, is not restricted to the great and general promises of Christianity. It extends to all the promises of the book of revelation—to those for example, in which God has condescended even on the passing affairs of our pilgrimage in this world; and affirmed that He will not leave us destitute of such things as are needful for the body; and hath admonished us to cast this care upon Him, on the assurance of daily bread to us and our little ones. Amid the reelings of this eventful period,* we doubt not that the aspect of the times has borne upon it a hard and a luring expression towards many a family; and that, standing on the eve of a fearful descent into the abyss of poverty, great has been the distress and great has been the disquietude; and that while the present and the visible dependence was fast melting away, and every successive arrival had for months together tolled to the ear of the mercantile world a still more dismal futurity that was coming—many have been the hearts among you that were failing for fear, and to the eye of nature was it against all hope, that you ever could be borne through the dark spaces of uncertainty that lay before you. And yet even here the Christian has ground against hope to believe in hope. The promise of daily bread is to him and to his children. Let him but have the faith of the patriarch, and he will not be afraid of evil tidings; and while there be others, who, in the rush of a great commercial storm, are melted in their soul because of trouble; and reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end—he believeth and is calm, and at length finds himself in the desired haven. And we appeal to this worst of seasons; we appeal to a period from the crash and the

turbulence and the fearful despondency of which we are yet scarcely emerging—when society has been heaving under the burden of a commerce greater than it can bear, and the surfeited and overladen world has been rolling back upon its authors the produce of their own frenzied speculations—when the proudest of our great trading establishments have toppled to an overthrow, and strewed the face of an ocean that is still labouring with the ruins and the fragments of shipwrecked ambition—We are confident that even in the very midst of such a history as this, there is not a house we can enter, nor a family from which we can obtain the record of all their vicissitudes and all their vexations, where we shall not find a trophy of the faithfulness of God—where up to the extent of His own engagement, which are what things we absolutely stand in need of, and why care we for the rest?—He has not ministered subsistence and safety to all who put their trust in Him—so that here is an ever recurring topic for the exercise of faith; and in behalf of God do we affirm, even in the unlikelyest and most threatening of all periods, that as the faith so will be the fulfilment.

And upon this very theme of our present remarks, does the offering up of Isaac admit of a most powerful and pertinent application. It was through him, that Abraham saw afar off the glory that was promised; and yet was he required by God to sacrifice with his own hands; and, even against hope believing in hope, he proceeded to render an unflinching compliance with the order; and while he made full proof of his obedience on the one hand, did God on the other make full proof of His faithfulness. There is a time when adversity brings a man so low, as to strip him of more than his all; and when it places him before the tribunal of his assembled creditors; and when justice bids a faithful account and a full surrender of all that belongs to him; and when nevertheless, by an act of dexterous and unseen appropriation, he may retain a something with which he links the future revival of his business, or the future subsistence of his family. Now this is his appointed sacrifice. This, in despite of all fond anticipation in behalf of his prospects, and of all relentings on behalf of his children, it is his duty to give up. His business is to discharge himself of every item of God's will, and to embark himself with full reliance on God's promises. This is the trial both of his integrity and of his faith; and on the altar of truth it is his part to deposit an entire article, and to bring forward every secret and untold offering to the light of an open manifestation. This we would call the triumph of

* In 1820—when commercial distress, and political discontent, threatened a violent outbreaking in the manufacturing districts of the West of Scotland.

faith over vision, and of trust in God over the apprehensions of nature; and the unseen witness, who all the while is most intently looking on, can out of the infinity of means which He has at command, again bring sufficiency to his door—can fill him with all that peace of contentment, with which godliness is great gain, and bless with the light of His approving countenance that humbler walk to which he has descended—can throw a sweetness and a shelter around him that perhaps he never felt in the loftier exposures of society; and irradiate his more modest and homely dwelling place, with a hope that beams beyond the grave, and soars above all the changes of this fleeting and uncertain pilgrimage.

There is still another lesson that remains to be drawn and enforced from the example of Abraham, besides the strength of his faith; and that is the practical movement which it imprest upon him. To be the children of him who is called the father of the faithful—it is not enough that we imitate him in the principle of his faith—we must also, according to the language of the apostle, walk in the footsteps of it. It is very true that it was the belief of Abraham which was counted to him for righteousness. He believed what the Lord had spoken; and had there not been another communication to him from Heaven, than simply that he was to have a son through whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed, we can conceive a firm persuasion of the truth of this announcement, resting in the mind of the patriarch, without stimulating him to one deed or to one movement in consequence. It might have found ingress there, and taken up a most inviolable lodgment in his heart, and he be reckoned with as righteous because of it; and yet he may have occupied the very station, and lived the very life that he would have done, though no such message had ever come to his door, and no such promise had ever been address to him. But, instead of this, we find that his faith in the heavenly visitation was instantly followed up by a change in the whole course and habit of his pilgrimage; and a painful abandonment of all that was naturally dear to his heart was the very first fruit of it, and he forthwith put himself under a control which maintained an authoritative guidance over the whole of his future history; and in the full attitude of service and subordination, did he wait the bidding of that master's voice, who prescribed to him the conduct of all his journeyings through the world, and often laid upon him the most arduous tasks of obedience: And nothing can be more completely passive and resigned, than the posture of him who has been styled the father

of all who do believe—in that, when the commandment came forth upon him from God, he never once imagined that there was any thing else for him to act in the affair, but just to render an instantaneous compliance therewith. We have heard belief and obedience contrasted the one with the other, and in such a way as if these two terms stood in practical opposition. In the case of Abraham we see them standing in sure and immediate succession, so that the one emanated from the other; and just in proportion to the strength of his faith, and to the glory which he rendered unto God for His faithfulness, and to the unstaggering reliance that he had upon His assurances, and to the thoroughness of his persuasion that what God had promised He was able also to perform—just in that very proportion, did he commit himself to the authority of God, and amid all the uncertainties incident to one who was going he knew not whither, did he take counsel and direction from Him who was his master in heaven; and nothing can be more evident than that character of devotedness to the whole will of God which stood imprest on the subsequent doings of his life upon earth; and, instead of a mere contemplative persuasion with which he looked forward to the country that was promised to him, did he shape his measures with all the preparation and activity of a man who had been set upon the enterprise of travelling towards it. So that faith, instead of lulling him out of his activity, was the very principle which both set it agoing and kept it agoing. It was the moving force which first tore him away from those scenes and from that society to which nature so adhesively cleaves; and after he had been loosed from all that was dear to him, did the same force act upon him with that continued impulse, which made him just as exemplary for his works of obedience as he was for the strength and determination of his faith. It is most true, as Paul says to the Romans, that by faith Abraham was justified, and not by *obedience*. But it is just as true what he says to the Hebrews, that it was by faith that Abraham *obeyed*—when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance; and he went out not knowing whither he went. By faith, he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. And he walked as a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, and declared plainly that he had gone forth in quest of a country.

The truth is, that God did not confine

His utterance with Abraham to a bare promise, on the truth of which it was his part to rely. The very first utterance that is recorded was a precept, on the authority of which it was his part to proceed. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, into a land that I will show thee." It is very true that ere he would obey there was something to believe. He had to believe that it was God who spake unto him. He must have believed in the land of which he had been told. He must have believed in the truth of the promise, that came immediately on the back of the commandment. He must, in fact, have given an entire and unexcepted glory to the truth of God—and must therefore have had a faith reaching to the whole extent of God's testimony. Had God simply said "I will make of thee a great nation," the belief of such an announcement did not essentially lead to any movement on the part of our patriarch. But when God said—"Get thee out of thy country, and I will make of thee a great nation"—the belief of the announcement, extended in this manner, would lead Abraham to perceive, that the act of his leaving home was just as essential to the fulfilling of it, as the act of his becoming a great nation was essential. And the joy he felt in the latter part of the communication, would just be in proportion to the prompt obedience that he rendered to the former part of it. It was his faith in the first address of God

to him, that led him to the first step of his obedience; and it was his faith in God's future addresses, where precepts and promises are intermingled together, that led him on to future steps of obedience: And it is just by walking in the same path of obedience that he did, that we walk in the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham. An article of belief may lie up in our minds, without any change or any transition; and such a belief can have no footsteps. But when it is a belief that carries movement along with it—when it is a belief in one who both bids and blesses with his voice at the same time—when it is a belief that is conversant with such an utterance as the following—"Arise, walk through the land in the length and in the breadth of it: For I will give it unto thee;" or with such an utterance as the following—"I am the Almighty God: walk before me and be thou perfect, and I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly"—when it is belief in a God who so manages this intercourse with His creatures, as to cheer them by His promises, and guide them by His directions at the same instant—here is a dependence that will issue from such a faith, but there is an obedience also; and the successive parts of that practical history which it originated at the first, and animates throughout afterwards, are the footsteps of the faith.

LECTURE XVI.

ROMANS iv, 23—25.

"Now, it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

THESE things were written for our admonition on whom the latter ends of the world have come. The circumstance of Abraham's faith being proposed as an example to us, should bring up our confidence to the same pitch of boldness and determination which are ascribed to his in the preceding verses. He against hope believed in hope; that is, he trusted in the face of unlikelihood. So ought we, however unlikely it is to the eye of nature, that sinners should be taken into friendship with that God whose holiness is at irreconcilable variance with sin. We just do as Abraham did before us, when we rest and rely upon God's friendship to us in Christ Jesus; and that simply on

the ground that we judge Him to be faithful who has promised. It ought to encourage our faith, when we read of him who was the father of the faithful, staggering not at the promise of God through unbelief, but being strong in faith, and thereby glorifying God by his persuasion that what He had promised He was able also to perform. When we read that it was this very resolute and unflinching reliance on the part of Abraham, which God counted to him for righteousness, and that the same faith upon our part will bring down upon us the benefits of a like imputation—this ought to overrule the fears of guilt. It should rebuke all our doubts and apprehensions away from us.

It should rivet our souls on this sure foundation, that God hath said it, and shall He not perform it? It should clear away the luring imagery of terror and distrust from the sinner's agitated bosom: And if the most characteristic peculiarity in the belief of Abraham was, that it was belief in the midst of staggering and appalling improbabilities—should not this just stimulate to the same belief the spirit of him, who, feeling that by nature he is in the hands of a God in whose sacred breast there exists a jealousy of all that is evil, is apt to view with incredulity the approaches of the same God when He professes reconciliation even to the worst and most worthless offenders; and protests in their hearing, that, if they will only draw nigh in the name of Christ, He will forgive all and forget all?

V. 25. The circumstance that is singled out in this passage as the object of the faith of Christians, is that of God having raised up Jesus from the dead. In other parts of the Bible the resurrection of the Saviour is stated to be the act of God the Father; and, however much the import of this may have escaped the notice of an ordinary reader, it is pregnant with meaning of the weightiest importance. You know that when the prison door is opened to a criminal, and that by the very authority which lodged him there, it evinces that the debt of his transgression has been rendered; and that he now stands acquitted of all its penalties. It was not for His own but for our offences that Jesus was delivered unto the death, and that His body was consigned to the imprisonment of the grave. And when an angel descended from heaven and rolled back the great stone from the door of the sepulchre, this speaks to us that the justice of God is satisfied, that the ransom of our iniquities has been paid, that Christ has rendered a full discharge of all that debt for which He undertook as the great Surety between God and the sinners who believe in Him. And could we only humble you into the conviction that you need the benefit of such a redeeming process—could we only show you to yourselves as the helpless transgressors of a commandment that cannot be trampled on with impunity—could we thoroughly impress you with the principle that God is not to be mocked, and that the sanctions of that moral government which He wields over the universe He has thrown around Him are not to be treated as things of no significance—could we reveal to you your true situation as the subjects of a law, that still pursues you with its exactions, while it demands reparation for all the indignities it has gotten at your hands—Then would the topics which we are now

attempting so feebly to illustrate, and which many regard as the jargon of a scholastic theology that is now exploded, rise in all the characters of reality and truth before the eye of your now enlightened conscience; and gladly would you devolve the burden of your guilt on the head of the accepted sacrifice, that you may be rescued from the condemnation of those offences for which He was delivered, that you may be lightened of all that fearful endurance which He has borne.

'And raised again for our justification.' We are not fond of that repulsive air which has doubtless been thrown around Christianity, by what some would call the barbarous terms and distinctions of schoolmen. But it will, we think, help to illustrate the truth of the matter before us, that we shortly advert to the theological phrases of a negative and positive justification. The former consists of an acquittal from guilt. By the latter a title is conferred to the reward of righteousness. There are two ways in which God may deal with you—either as a criminal in the way of vengeance, or as a loyal and obedient subject in the way of reward. By your negative justification, you simply attain to the midway position of God letting you alone. He does not lay upon you the hand of retribution for your evil deeds; but neither does He lay upon you the hand of retribution for any good deeds. You are kept out of hell, the place of penal suffering for the vicious. But you are not preferred to heaven, the place of awarded glory and happiness for the virtuous. Now the conception is, that the Saviour accomplished our negative justification by bearing upon His own person the chastisement of our sins—He was delivered for our offences unto the death. But that to achieve our positive justification, He did more than suffer, He obeyed. He accumulated as it were a stock of righteousness, out of which He lavishes reward on those whom He had before redeemed from punishment. It was because He finished a great work that God highly exalted Him; and from the place which He now occupies does He shed on His disciples a foretaste of heaven here, as the earnest and the preparation for their inheritance hereafter. He does something more than work out their deliverance from the place of torment, and thus bring them to the neutral and intermediate state of those who are merely forgiven. He pours upon them spiritual blessings; and, by stamping upon them a celestial character, does He usher them even now into celestial joy—so as that, with their affections set upon things above, they may already be said to dwell in heavenly places with

Christ Jesus our Lord: And thus while it was by His death, that He delivered them from the guilt of their offences—it is by His rising again, that He obtained for them the rewards of righteousness, the privileges of a completed justification.

And here we may remark, that by the simple bestowment of holiness upon His people, does He in fact infuse into their spirits the great and essential element of heaven's blessedness. It is a mistake to think, that it is either the splendour or the music of paradise, which makes it a place of rejoicing. It is because righteousness will flourish there, that rapture will be felt there. It is because heaven is the abode of purity, that it is also an abode of peace and pleasantness. It is because every heart thrills with benevolence, that in every heart there is beatitude unspeakable. It is love to God that calls forth halleluiahs of ecstasy which ring eternally in heaven. In a word, it is not an animal but a spiritual festival, which is preparing for us in the mansions above; and in these mansions below, a foretaste is felt by those, who, through patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and immortality and honour. The real disciples of the Saviour on earth, can testify, that if they had holiness enough they would have happiness enough; and a still more affecting testimony to the truth, that the atmosphere of goodness is of itself an atmosphere of gladness and of light, may be seen in the mental wretchedness of those who mourn some deadly overthrow from that purity of heart which at one time guarded and adorned them—who have fallen from peace, and that simply because they have fallen from principle—and feel in their bosoms the agonies of hell, and that without another instrument of vengeance to pursue them than a sense of their own native and inherent worthlessness.

The following is the paraphrase of this short passage.

* Now it was not for the mere sake of Abraham that righteousness was reckoned to him because of his faith—but for us also, to whom it shall be reckoned, if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead—who was delivered up unto the death as an atonement for our offences; and was then raised that He might confer upon us the fruits of His own achievement, the rewards of His own obedience.*

We have little more than time to remark, that the faith of Christians, is as little an inert or merely speculative principle, as the faith of Abraham—that it is followed up by a practical movement just as his was, and has its footsteps just as his had—that if the outset of his was

marked by a violent separation from all the habits and attachments of nature, the outset of ours is marked by a separation from our old tastes and our old tendencies in every way as violent—that if in the progress of his he had to obey the requirement which laid upon the sacrifice of his dearest possessions upon earth, in the progress of ours we may be called upon to cut off a right hand or to pluck out a right eye—that if he was bidden to wander afar from the scenes of his infancy, and to abandon all the endearments of his wonted society; so also we, without having to describe one mile of locomotion, are bidden to enter upon a new spiritual region, and by so doing, to be deserted by the congeniality and approbation of all our ungodly friends and all our worldly companionships. In a word, the faith of Christianity, like the faith of the patriarch, is not a mere metaphysical notion—neither are the blessings of Christianity a reward for the soundness of it. The faith both of the one and of the other is just such a practical sense of the reality of unseen and eternal things, as leads us to go in actual quest of them according to a prescribed course; and, in so doing, to renounce present things whatever be the force and whatever be the urgency of their allurements. The faith that was in the patriarch's heart, originated such doings in the history of his life, as declared plainly that he sought a country. And our faith is nothing, it is but the breath of an empty profession, but the utterance of a worthless orthodoxy, if it be not followed up by such measures and such movements as plainly declare that immortality is the goal to which we are tending—that the world is but the narrow foreground of that perspective which is lying at our feet—and, with the eye stretching forward to the magnificent region beyond it, that we are actually keeping on the strait but single path which conducts to this distant heaven, though set at every footstep with thorns, and hemmed on the right and on the left with difficulties innumerable.

Go forth with this text upon actual society, and make a survey of that mighty throng that move upon our streets, and frequent in thousands our market places—behold every individual in the busy and anxious pursuit of some object which lies in the distance away from him—meet him at any one hour of his history, and ascertain if possible whether the thing on which his heart is lavishing all its desirousness be placed on this or on the other side of death: And if, in every instance, the character of the occupation shall plainly declare that the region of sense which is near engrosses every feeling, and that the

region of spirit which is distant is not in all his thoughts—then, if faith, instead of a barren dogma, be indeed the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen—on this very day might not the question and complaint of our Saviour be preferred, ‘verily, when the Son of man cometh shall He find faith upon the earth?’

It just occurs to us before we are done, that we may gather from the history of Abraham, and that by no very circuitous process of inference, the efficacy of affliction in promoting the conversion of a soul to God. For any thing that appears, he, at the call of Heaven, left a happy home, and a smiling circle of relationship, and a prosperous establishment, and a neighbourhood that esteemed him. This added to the violence of the separation. But conceive that, previous to the call, his family had been wrested from him by death; or that his wealth had gone by misfortune into dissipation; or that that most grievous of all misfortunes had befallen him, he had incurred disgrace by some violent departure from rectitude—then the ties which bound him to the place of his nativity had been broken;

and, instead of a painful banishment, he would have felt it as a refuge and a hiding place to have gone a solitary wanderer from the place of his nativity. And in like manner may affliction loosen even now the bonds that attach us to the world; and that love of it which is opposite to the love of the Father, may receive a death-blow from some great and unlooked-for calamity; and the heart, bereaved of all its wonted objects, may now gladly close with the solicitations of that voice which speaketh from heaven, and would woo us to the abiding glories of eternity; and we may now find it easier to give up our disengaged attachments unto God—seeing that it has pleased Him, by the infliction of His chastening hand, to sever away from them all those objects on which they went so fondly to expatiate; and thus it is, that, from the awful visitations of death or poverty or any other dreadful overthrow from some eminence which at one time was occupied, there may at length, after a dark and brooding period of many agitations, emerge the light of new-born prospects; there may at length spring up the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

LECTURE XVII.

ROMANS v, 1, 2.

“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

To be justified here, is not to be made righteous, but to be counted righteous. To be justified by faith, expresses to us the way in which an imputed righteousness is made ours. Faith is that act of the recipient, by which he lays hold of this privilege. It contributes no more to the merit that is reckoned to us, than the hand of the beggar adds any portion to the alms that are conferred upon him. When we look to the righteousness that is made ours by faith, it is well to go altogether out of ourselves, and not to mix up any one personal ingredient whether of obeying or of believing with it. The imagination of a merit in faith, brings us back to legal ground again, and exposes us to legal distrust and disquietude. In the exercise of faith, the believer's eye looks out on a cheering and a comforting spectacle; and from the object of its external contemplation, does it fetch homeward all the encouragement which it is fitted to convey. In a former verse of

this epistle, we are said to be justified by grace. It was in love to the world, that the whole scheme of another righteousness was devised, and executed, and offered to man as his plea both of acquittal and of reward before the God whom he had offended. In another place of the New Testament, we read of being justified by Christ—even by Him who brought in that righteousness which is unto all, and upon all who believe. One should look out to that which forms the ground and the matter of our justification; and when we read here that we are justified by faith, one should understand that faith is simply the instrument by which we lay hold of this great privilege—not the light itself, but the window through which it passes—the channel of transmission upon our persons, by which there is attached to them the merit of the righteousness which another has wrought, and of the obedience which another has rendered.

‘We have peace with God.’ There are

two senses in which this expression may be understood. It may signify that peace which is brought about by a transition in the mind of the Godhead, and in virtue of which He is appeased towards us. He ceases from that wrath against the sinner, which only abideth on those who believe not; and from an enemy, He, in consideration of a righteousness which He lays to our account after we have accepted it by faith, becometh a friend. Or it may signify that state which is brought about by a transition in our minds; and in virtue of which we cease from our apprehension of God's wrath against us—not, we think, a dissolving of our enmity against Him, but a subsiding of our terrors because of Him—rest from the agitations of conscious guilt, now washed away—rest from the forebodings of anticipated vengeance, now borne by Him on whom the chastisement of our peace was laid. This we conceive to be the true meaning of peace with God in the verse before us. The whole passage, for several verses, looks to be a narrative of the personal experience of believers—of their rejoicing, and of their hoping, and of their glorying. The subject of the peace that is spoken of in this verse is the mind of believers—a peace felt by them, no doubt, because they now judge that God is pacified towards them; but still a peace, the proper residence of which is in their own bosoms, that now have ceased from their fears of the Lawgiver, and are at rest.

Peace in this sense of it then, being the effect of faith, affords a test for the reality of this latter principle. Some perhaps may think that this could be still more directly ascertained, if, instead of looking at the test, we looked immediately to the principle itself. By casting an immediate regard upon one's own bosom, we may learn whether peace is there or not. But by casting the same inward regard, might not we directly learn whether faith is there or not? If it be as competent for the eye of consciousness to discern the faith that is in the mind, as to discern there the peace that is but the effect of faith—might not we, without having recourse to marks or evidences at all, just lay as it were our immediate finding upon the principle that we want to ascertain; and come at once to the assurance that faith is in me, because I am conscious it is in me?

Now let it be remarked, that there are certain states and habitudes of the soul, which are far more palpable than others to the eye of conscience—certain affections, which give a far more powerful intimation of their presence, and can therefore be much more easily and immediately recognized—certain feelings of so fresh and sensible a character, that almost

no power of self-examination is required to ascertain the existence of them. I could much more readily, for example, find an answer to the question, what the emotions of my heart are, if there be any depth or tenderness in them at all, than I could answer the question what the notions of my understanding are; and whether they amount to a belief, or stop short at a mere imagination. A state or a process of the intellect, is far more apt to elude the inward discernment of man, than a state or a process of sensible impression, which announces its own reality to him in spite of himself. And thus it is, that it may be a very difficult thing to find whether faith be in me, by taking a direct look at the state of the understanding—while it may not be difficult to find, whether peace be in me, or love be in me, or a principle of zealous obedience be in me—all of these making themselves known, as it were, by the touch of a distinct and vigorous sensation. And hence the test of the principle may be far more readily come at than the principle itself. The foliage and the blossoms may stand more obviously revealed to the eye of the inner man, than the germ from which they originate; and what our Saviour says of his followers is true of the faith by which they are actuated, that by its fruits ye shall know it.

And as to the peace of our text, which is stated there to be a consequence of faith—it surely cannot be denied, but by those who never felt what the remorse and the restlessness and the other raging elements of a sinner's bosom are, that the consequence is far more obvious than the cause. The mind that has been tost and tempest-driven by the pursuing sense of its own worthlessness, should ever these unhappy agitations sink into a calm, will surely feel the transition and instantly recognise it. When an outward storm has spent its fury, and the last breath of it has died away into silence, the ear cannot be more sensible of the difference—than the inner man is, when the wild war of turbulence and disorder in his own heart, is at length wrought off to its final termination. The man may grope for ever among the dark and brooding imagery of his own spirit, and never once be able to detect there that principle of faith, which may tell him that though he suffers now he will be safe in eternity. But should this unseen visitor actually enter with him, and work the effect that is here ascribed to it, and put an end to that sore vengeance of discipline with which God had exercised him, and again restore the light of that countenance which either looked to him in wrath or was mantled in darkness—should he now feel at peace from those

terrors that so recently had made him afraid; and the God that loured judgment upon his soul, now put on a face of benignity, and bid this unhappy outcast again look up to Him and rejoice—should the guilt which so agonised him be sprinkled over with the blood of atonement, and he again be translated into the sunshine of conscious acceptance with the Being whose chastening hand had well nigh overwhelmed him—We repeat it, that though faith in itself may elude the exploring eye of him, who finds the search that he is making through the recesses of his moral constitution to be not more fatiguing than it is fruitless—yet faith as the harbinger of peace may manifest at once its reality, by an effect so powerful and so precious.

This may serve perhaps to illustrate the right attitude for a penitent in quest of comfort, under the burden of convictions which distress or terrify him. He may at length fetch it from without—but he never will fetch it primarily or directly from within. The children of Israel might have as soon been healed by looking downwardly upon their wounds, rather than upwardly to the brazen serpent, as the conscience-stricken sinner will find relief from any one object that can meet his eye, in that abyss of darkness and distemper to which he has turned his own labouring bosom. He is where he ought to be, when lying low in the depths of humiliation; but never will he attain to rest or to recovery, till led to the psalmist's prayer—'Out of the depths do I cry unto thee, O Lord.' It is not from the trouble that is below, but from the truth that is above, that he will catch the sun-beam which is to gladden and to revive him. It is not by looking to himself, but by looking unto Jesus—and that peace with God which he never can arrive at through the medium of so dark a contemplation as his own character—that peace the tidings of which he never will read, among the lineaments of his own turpitude and deformity—the peace to which no exercise of penitential feeling, though prolonged in sorrow and bitterness to the end of his days, will ever of itself conduct him—the peace with God, which, through himself or through any penance of his own inflicting, he never will secure, can only come in sure and abundant visitation upon his heart, through the channel of our text, when it is peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

'Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved.' 'Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.' God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,

hath shined in the hearts of those who believe, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and they who believe not and are lost, are blinded by the god of this world, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.'

V. 2. The single word *also* may convince us, that the privilege spoken of in the second verse, is distinct from and additional to the privilege spoken of in the first. The grace wherein we stand is something more than peace with God. We understand it to signify God's positive kindness or favour to us. You may have no wrath against a man, whom at the same time you have no feeling of positive goodwill to. You are at peace with him, though not in friendship with him. It is a great deal that God ceases to be offended with us, and is now to inflict upon us no penalty. But it is still more that God should become pleased with us, and is now to pour blessings upon our heads. It is a mighty deliverance to our own feelings, when our apprehensions are quieted; and we have nothing to fear. But it is a still higher condition to be preferred to, when our hopes are awakened; and we rejoice in the sense of God's regard to us now, and in the prospect of His glory hereafter. It is additional to our peace in believing, that we also have joy in believing. There is something here that will remind you of what has been already said of negative and positive justification. It was in dying, that Christ pacified the Lawgiver. It was in rising again, that He obtained, as the reward of His obedience, the favour of God, in behalf of all those for whom He now liveth to make intercession, and from these two verses, the distinction to which we have already adverted receives another illustration.

The following is a paraphrase of these two verses.

'Therefore having righteousness laid to our account because we have faith, we enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also it is that we have obtained admittance through our faith, into that state of favour with God wherein we stand here, and rejoice in the hope of His glory hereafter.'

The only remaining topic that occurs to us from this short but comprehensive passage, is that glory of God which is hereafter to be revealed. The Apostle Peter speaks of believers being begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that passeth not away, and is reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto a salvation,

that is ready to be revealed in the last time. We cannot speak in detail upon a subject that has yet to be revealed. We cannot lift away the veil, from what another apostle tells us is still a mystery, when he says, that it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we may at least carry our observation to the extent of the partial disclosure made to us by the same apostle, when he says, though "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, yet we know, that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him—for we shall see Him as He is."

From this we at least gather, that we shall have a direct perception of God. You know how much it is otherwise now—how, though He is not far from any one of us, He is as hidden from all observation as if removed to the distance of infinity away from us—how, though locally He is in us and around us, yet to every purpose of direct and personal fellowship we are as exiles from His presence—how all that is created, though it bear upon it the impress of the Creator's hand, instead of serving to us as a reflection of the Deity, serves as a screen to intercept our discernment of Him. It is not true, that the visible structure of the universe, leads man at least, to trace the image, and to realize the power and operation of that Divinity who reared it. It is not true, that he is conducted upwards, from the agents and the secondary causes that are on every side of him, to that unseen and primary Cause who framed at first the whole of this wondrous mechanism, and still continues to guide by His unerring wisdom all the movements of it. The world, in fact, is our all; and we do not penetrate beyond it to its animating Spirit; and we do not pierce the canopy that is stretched above it, to the glories of His upper sanctuary. The mind may stir itself up to lay hold of God; but, like a thin and shadowy abstraction, He eludes the grasp of the mind—and the baffled overdone creature is left, without an adequate feeling of that mysterious Being who made and who upholds him. To every unconverted man, creation, instead of illustrating the Deity, has thrown a shroud of obscurity over Him; and even to the eye of a believer, is He seen in dimness and disguise, so that almost all he can do is to long after Him in the world; and, as the heart panteth after the water brooks, so does his soul thirst after the living God. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth, under the sentence of its banishment from Him who gave it birth; and even they who have received the first fruits of the Spirit, do groan within themselves, under the heavy incumbrance that weighs down their souls as they follow hard after the yet un-

seen Father of them. All they can reach in this nether pilgrimage, is but a glimpse and a foretaste of the coming revelation; and as to that glory, which, while in the body, they shall never behold with the eye of vision, they can now only rejoice in the hope of its full and abundant disclosure in the days that are to come.

It were presumptuous, perhaps, to attempt any conception of such a disclosure—when God shall show Himself personally to man—when the mighty barrier of interception, that is now so opaque and impenetrable, shall at length be moved away—when the great and primitive Father of all, shall at length stand revealed to the eye of creatures rejoicing before Him—when all that design and beauty by which this universe is enriched, shall beam in a direct flood of radiance from the original mind that evolved it into being—when the sight of infinite majesty shall be so tempered by the sight of infinite mercy, that the awe which else would overpower will be sweetened by love into a most calm and solemn and confiding reverence—and the whole family of heaven shall find it to be enough of happiness for ever, that the graces of the Divinity are visibly expanded to their view, and they are admitted into the high delights of ecstatic and ineffable communion with the living God. But it will be the glory of His moral perfections, that will minister the most of high rapture and reward to these children of immortality. It will be the holiness that recoils from every taint of impurity. It will be the cloudless lustre of justice unbroken, and truth unchanged and unchangeable. It will be the unspotted worth and virtue of the Godhead—yet all so blended with a compassion that is infinite, and all so directed by a wisdom that is unsearchable, that by a way of access as wondrous as is the Being who devised it, sinners have entered within the threshold of this upper temple; and, without violation to the character of Him who presides there, have been transported from a region of sin to this region of unsullied sacredness. And there, seeing Him as He is, do they become altogether like unto Him; and there are they transformed into a character kindred to His own; and there that assimilating process is perfected, by which every creature who is in Paradise, has the image of glory, that shines upon him from the throne, stamped upon his own person; and there each, according to the measure of his capacity, is filled with the worth and beneficence of the Godhead; and there the distinct reward held forth to the candidates for heaven upon earth, is, that they shall see God, and become like unto God—like Him in His

hatred of all iniquity, like Him in the love and in the possession of all righteousness.

You will be at no loss now to understand, how it is that he who hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as God is pure. It is by progress in holiness, in fact, that he is making ground on that alone way which leads and qualifies for heaven. There is no other heaven truly than a heaven of godliness; and by every wilful sin that is committed, does man lose so much of distance from the promised reward, and puts himself more hopelessly away from it. You will see by this that faith in the gospel and a deliberate following after sin, is a contradiction in terms. The very road to heaven is a road of conformity to the will, and of unceasing approximation to the resemblance of the Godhead. The great object of the dispensation we sit under, is to be restored to His forfeited image, and to be reinstated in all the graces of the character that we have lost. The atonement by Christ is nothing—justification by faith is nothing—the assumption of an orthodox phraseology is nothing—unless they have formed a gate of introduction to that arena, on which the Christian must fight his way to a heavenly character, and so be created anew in righteousness and true holiness. Every sin throws him aback on the ground that he is travelling; and often throws him aback so fearfully, that, if he feels as he ought, he will tremble lest he has been thrown off from the ground altogether—lest the sore retrogression that he has made from all holiness, has made him an outcast from all hope—lest by putting a good conscience away from him, he has made shipwreck of faith: And never will the irreconcilable variance between salvation and sin, come home to his experience in more sure and practical demonstration, than when sin has thrown him adrift from all the securities which held him; and, through a lengthened season of abandonment and distress, he can find no comfort in the word, and catch no smile from the upper sanctuary, and hear no whisper of mercy from God's returning Spirit, and feel no happiness and no hope in the Saviour.

The same doctrine receives a more pleasing illustration from the bright side of the picture. To ascertain the kind of happiness that is in heaven, the best way is to observe the happiness of a good man upon earth. You will find it to consist essentially in those pleasures of the heart, which the love and the service of God bring along with it—in a sense of the divine favour, beaming upon him from above; and in the fresh and perpetual feast of an approving conscience within

—in the possession of a sound and a well-poised mind, prepared for the attack of every temptation, and with all its ready powers at command, on the intimation of every coming danger—in the triumph of those noble and new-born energies by which he can clear the ascending way of a progressive holiness, through all those besetting urgencies that are found to entangle and to discomfit other men—and, above all, in those hours of sweet and solemn rapture, by which he diversifies a walk unspotted in the world, with the lofty devotion of his occasional retirements away from it. Who shall say that righteousness is not the road to a believer's heaven, when it is righteousness, and that alone, which gives its breath and its being to all the ecstasy that abounds in it? Or who shall say that the grace in which he is taught to rejoice, encourages to sin, when it is sin that wrests every foretaste of the coming blessedness from his soul; and darkens, if not to utter and irrecoverable extinction at least for a period of deep and dreadful endurance, all his prospects of enjoying it?

We shall conclude with offering you an actual specimen of heaven upon earth, as enjoyed for a season of devotional contemplation on the word of God; and it may afford you some conception of the kind of happiness that is current there. "And now," says the good bishop Hoſne, after he had finished his commentary on the Psalms, and had held many a precious hour of converse with God and with the things that are above when meditating thereon—"And now, could the author flatter himself, that any one would take half the pleasure in reading the following exposition, which he hath taken in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour. The employment detached him from the bustle and hurry of life, the din of politics and the noise of folly; vanity and vexation, flew away for a season, care and disquietude came not near his dwelling. He arose fresh as the morning to his task; the silence of the night invited him to pursue it; and he can truly say that food and rest were not preferred before it. Every psalm improved infinitely upon his acquaintance with it, and no one gave him uneasiness but the last; for then he grieved that his work was done. Happier hours than those which have been spent in these meditations on the songs of Zion, he never expects to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and moved smoothly and swiftly along; for when thus engaged he counted no time. They are gone, but have left a relish and a fragrance upon the mind, and the remembrance of them is sweet."

May every sabbath you shall spend

upon earth, bring down such a glimpse of heaven's glory and heaven's blessedness upon your habitations. No care; no poverty; no desolation, by the hand of death upon your household; no evil, saving remorse, that the world can oppose, need to keep such precious visitations away from you. But O remember that it

is only to those who keep the sayings of the Saviour, that He has promised thus to manifest Himself; and it is only after a pure and watchful and conscientious week, that you can ever expect its closing sabbath to be a season of rejoicing piety, a day of peace and of pleasantness.

LECTURE XVIII.

ROMANS V, 3—5.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

THE apostle had before said, that we rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and he now says, that we glory in tribulation also. This impresses the idea of the great opposition that obtains, between an appetite for spiritual and an appetite for temporal blessings. To rejoice in hope of the one is a habit of the same bosom, that rejoices and glories in the loss or destruction of the other—not however that the ruin of any present good is desirable on its own account, for all such affliction is not joyous but rather grievous; but still upon the whole should it be matter of gladness, if the short affliction that is but a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; and if afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby.

"Tribulation worketh patience." You will observe that the word translated patience, is of a more active quality in the original than it is according to our customary acceptance of it. We understand it to be a mere virtue of sufferance, the passive property of enduring without complaint and without restlessness. But it really extends to something more than this. The same word has been translated 'patient continuance,' in that verse where the apostle speaks of a patient continuance in well-doing. The word perseverance, in fact, is a much nearer and more faithful rendering of the original than the word patience. "Let us run with patience the race set before us," says the apostle, in our present translation. Let us run with perseverance the race set before us, were an improvement upon the sense of this passage. We wait with patience, or sit still with patience, or simply suffer with patience; but surely we run not with patience but with perseverance. It is well when tribulation is met with uncomplaining acquiescence, or met with pa-

tience—but it is still better when it not only composes to resignation, but stimulates to a right and religious course of activity. "It is good for me to have been afflicted," says the psalmist, "that I might learn thy law." "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." It is very well when affliction is submitted to without a murmur—but better still when it quickens the believer's pace in the divine life, and causes him to emerge on a purer and loftier career of sanctification than before.

We conceive the main explanation of an afflicted process upon the heart to lie in this, that the heart must have an object on which to fasten its hopes or its regards; that if this object be reft from it, a painful void is created in the bosom, the painfulness of which is not done away till the void be replaced; that the soreness of such a visitation therefore, as say the loss of a child, inflicted upon a worldly man, will at length find its relief and its medicine in worldly objects; and that in the succession of company, or in the intense prosecution of business, or in the variety of travelling, or in the relapse of his feelings again to the tone of his ordinary pursuits and ordinary habits, time will at length fill up the vacancy and cause him to forget the anguish of his present tribulation. But if, instead of worldly he be spiritual, he will seek for comfort from another quarter of contemplation—he will try to fill up the desolate place in his heart with other objects—he will turn him to God, and labour after a fuller impression of that enduring light and love and beneficence, which, if they only shone upon him in clearer manifestation, would effectually chase away the darkness of his incumbent melancholy. In such circumstances, and with such feelings, prayer will be his refuge; communion

with God will be the frequent endeavour of his soul; he will try to people the vacancy created in his bosom by the loss of earthly things, with the imagery of heaven; he will heave up, as it were, his affections, now disengaged with that which wont to delight and to occupy them, but is now torn away; he will, in the stirrings of his agitated spirit, attempt to lift them to that serene and holy and beautiful sanctuary, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. And who does not see that he has now more of heart to give to these things, delivered as it is from the engrossment of a fond and favourite affection; and that, as the fruit of these repeated attempts to follow hard after God, he may at length obtain a nearer approximation; and that, on the singleness of his intent and undivided desires, a light may be made to shine, which will disclose to him with far more clear and affecting impression, those great realities which are above and everlasting; and that with his faith so strengthened, and his separation from the world so widened and confirmed, and all the wishes of his heart so transferred from the earth that has deceived him to the inheritance that fadeth not away—Who does not see, that the afflicting process which the man has undergone, has transformed him into a more ethereal being than before; has loosened him from time, and riveted him with greater tenacity and determination than ever to the pursuits of eternity; has forced him as it were to seek his resources from above, and thus brought him to abide by the fountain of living waters; has riven him, as it were, from the world, and left him free to attach his loosened regards to the invisibles which stand at a distance away from him—So that now he can fill up his heart with heaven as his future home, and fill up his time with the service and the occupations of that holiness which is the way that leads to it?

You know that in the parable of the sower, the deceitfulness of riches is a thorn which occupies the room, and overbears the influence upon the heart, of the word of God. But you also know that the cares of life are also thorns. It is therefore a very possible thing, that, by the tribulation of sudden poverty, one set of thorns may just be exchanged for another; and that by the ruminations and the anxieties and the absorbing thoughtfulness which the ruin of fortune brings in its rear, the things of heaven may as effectually be elbowed out of the place which belongs to them, as by all the splendours of affluence and all its fascinations. The only sorrow which such a reverse inflicts upon the bosom of the sufferer, may be the sorrow of this world that worketh

death. Time will show. The experience of the effect on the man's personal character and history, will demonstrate, whether the root of the matter be in him; and if he really be that believer on whom tribulation worketh patience, and patience such an experience of himself as will be a ground of hopefulness and joy to him. Prune away a branch from a tree that is already dead; and it will not be this operation that will revive it. Prune away some rank and excessive luxuriance from a tree that is living; and you will divert the hurtful flow of its vegetable moisture, from the part where it is running too abundantly, and restore the proper tone and healthfulness to its whole circulation. And the same of man. His affections run sideway among the idols of sense and time that are around him. And God, whose husbandry we are, often, by a severe but salutary operation, severs them away; and so diverts our inclinations from objects to which they cannot excessively tend, without guilt or worldliness; and leads them in one ascending direction to Himself; and if this be the love of God that we keep His commandments, a more faithful walk of holiness and a steadier perseverance in the way of new obedience are the fruits of His chastening visitation. And thus may you understand, how accordant with human nature the affirmation of our Saviour is, when He speaks of Himself being the true vine, and His father the husbandman—and then says, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it," or as it should have been, "He pruneth it that it may bring forth more fruit."

But though the patience of our text, by being turned into perseverance, is made rather to signify the impulse and direction which calamities are fitted to give to the active principles of our nature—yet we are not to exclude a meek and unresisting endurance of suffering, as one of its most precious fruits on the character of him who is exercised thereby. There is a certain mellowness which affliction sheds upon the character—a softening that it effects of all the rougher and more repulsive asperities of our nature—a delicacy of temperament, into which it often melts and refines the most ungainly spirit—just as when you visit a man, from whose masculine and overbearing manner you wont to recoil, when, in the full flow and loudness and impetuosity of health, he carried all before him; but whom you find to be vastly more amiable, when, after the hand of disease has for a time been upon him, he still retains the meek hue of convalescence. It is not the pride of aspiring talent that we carry to heaven

with us. It is not the lustre of a superiority which dazzles and commands and overawes, that we bear with us there. It is not the eminence of any public distinction, or the fame of lofty and successful enterprise. And should these give undue confidence to the man, or throw an aspect of conscious and complacent energy over him, he wears not yet the complexion of Paradise; and, should God select him as His own, He will send some special affliction that may chasten him out of all which is uncongenial with the place of blessedness, and at length reduce him to its unmingled love and its adoring humility. Affliction has a kind of physical as well as moral power, in sweetening the character, and in impressing a grace and a gentleness upon it. It is purified by the simple process of passing through the fire. "The fining pot for silver and the furnace for gold," says Solomon; "but the Lord trieth the hearts." "For thou, O God, hast proved us; thou hast tried us as silver." "And when He hath tried me," says Job, "I shall come forth as gold."

But the use of affliction is not merely to better the quality of the soul; it is to prove this quality as it exists—'And patience experience.'—It furnishes him with a proof of God's love, in that he has been enabled to stand this trial with principles exalted by it, or at least unimpaired. And it also furnishes him with a proof of his own sincerity. It causes him to know that there is now that in his heart, which can bear him up under the ills of the present life; and stimulate him in the pursuit of life everlasting. It makes him acquainted with the force and the steadfastness of his own character; and if his conscience can attest, that, amid all the pressure and distress of his earthly sufferings, still the matters of faith had the practical ascendancy of his soul, and made him feel the present affliction to be light, and amply compensated for all its severity—this is to him a satisfying demonstration that his heart was now occupied and governed by principles which nature never originates, and which never do take possession of a human bosom till they are imparted by grace. This to him is a joyful evidence, not of the truth of the gospel, for that stands upon arguments of its own—but that the gospel had taken effect upon himself, and that he had now come personally under the regimen of that doctrine which is unto salvation.

"And experience hope." We beg to call your particular attention to the circumstance, that, at an antecedent point in this train of consequences, hope had already been introduced as one of them.

Peace was made to emanate from faith, and joy also, and hope also. They who believed no sooner did so, than they rejoiced in hope of the glory of God. But in their progress through the world, they meet with tribulations; and it is said of them that they glory in these also—because of the final result of a process that may have been lengthened out for many days, after faith entered their hearts, and peace and hope sprung up as the direct and immediate effects of it. The hope of the fourth verse, is therefore distinct from, and posterior to the hope of the second; and it also appears to be derived from another source. The first hope is, hope in believing—a hope which hangs direct on the testimony of God—such a hope as may be conceived to arise in the mind of Abraham, on the very first communication that God had with him, when He said, I will make of thee a great nation—having no other ground, in fact, than a belief in the veracity of the promiser, and fed and fostered by this sole consideration, that God hath said it and shall He not do it?

Now there is not one here present, to whom the gospel does not hold forth a warrant for so hoping. It declares the remission of sins to all who put faith in the declaration. By its sweeping term 'who-soever,' it makes as pointed an offer of eternal life to each, as if each had gotten a special intimation by an angel sent to him from heaven. If he do not believe, he of course cannot have any feelings that are at all appropriate to the joyful contents of the message which has been rendered to him. But if he do believe, there will be peace and joy and expectation—and these, not suspended on the issue of any experience that is yet to come; but suspended, and that immediately, on a simple faith in the tidings of the gospel. They are called tidings of great joy; and sure we are that they would stand distinguished from all other tidings of this character, if they did not awaken the joy at the precise moment of their being credited. We know of no other tidings which can be called joyful, that do not make one rejoice at the moment of their being told and recognized to be true. You do not wait so many days or weeks till you feel glad, at some good news that have come to your door. You are glad on the moment of their arrival, simply by giving them credit; and the gospel, the strict and etymological meaning of which is simply good news, will in like manner gladden every heart at the moment of its being relied upon as true: And, it being good news of pardon and eternal life to all and every, he, one of the all, will, if he believe, take the whole comfort of the declaration to himself, and have peace

with God through Jesus Christ, and rejoice in the hope of His glory.

Now the second hope is distinct from this first, and is grounded on distinct considerations—not upon what the believer sees to be in the testimony of God, but upon what he finds to be in himself—It is the fruit, not of faith, but of experience; and is gathered, not from the word that is without, but from the feeling of what passes within. One would like to know how the first and the second hopes find their adjustment, and their respective places, in the bosom of a disciple; and what is the precise addition which the latter of these brings to the former of them—whether the want of the second would darken and extinguish the first, by making him ashamed of it.

This matter can be illustrated as before by the case of Abraham. God, in his first communication with him, made him a twofold promise—one of which was to have its fulfilment many ages after, and another of which was to be fulfilled in his own life time. He promised that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed; and He also promised that, upon his leaving his own country, He should meet with him and show him the land that his posterity were to inherit. Abraham simply in virtue of faith would hope for the accomplishment of both promises. He would both see afar off the day of Christ and rejoice; and he would also leave his own country, in the confident expectation of again meeting with God, and having the land of his descendants pointed out to him. Conceive him then to have been disappointed in this expectation—to have wandered in vain without once meeting the promised manifestation—to have had no other message or visitation from the heavens save the first, which, by warranting the hope of another that it did not realise, would give him ground to suspect was a delusive one. Would not Abraham, in this case, have been ashamed of his rash confidence, and of his hasty enterprise, and of the vain and hazardous evils into which he had thrown himself? Would not the fallacy of the promise that he looked for in life, lead him to withdraw all confidence in the promise that was to have its consummation at a period of exceeding distance away from him? And, on the other hand, did not the actual fulfilment of the near, brighten and confirm all his original expectations of the distant fulfilment? Were not all his subsequent meetings with God, to him the pledges and the earnest of the great accomplishment, that still lay in the depths of a very remote futurity? Did not they serve to convince him, that the hope which he conceived at the first, and which had been so

confirmed afterwards, was a hope that maketh not ashamed? And that hope which had nothing at first but the basis of faith to rest upon, did it not obtain a reinforcement of strength and of security when it further rested on the basis of experience?

I make a twofold promise to an acquaintance—the lesser part of which should be fulfilled to-morrow, and the latter on this day twelvemonth. If he believe me to be an honest man, then, simply appended to this belief, will there be a hope of the fulfilment of both; and, for a whole day at least, he may rejoice in this hope. To-morrow comes; and, if to-morrow's promise is not fulfilled, who does not see that the hope which emanated direct from faith is thereby darkened and overthrown, and that the man will be ashamed of his rash and rejoicing expectations? But if, instead of a failure, there is a punctual fulfilment, who does not also see, that the hope he conceived at first obtains a distinct accession from the experience he met with afterwards; and that without shame or without suspicion, he will now look to the coming round of the year with more confident expectation than ever? It is quite true, that there is a hope in believing; but from this plain example you will perceive it to be just as true, that experience worketh hope.

Now it is just so in the gospel. There is a promise address in it, the accomplishment of which is far off; and a promise, the accomplishment of which is near at hand. The fulfilment of the one is the pledge or token of the fulfilment of the other. By faith in God we may rejoice in hope of the coming glory; and it will be the confirmation of our hope, if we find in ourselves a present holiness. He who hath promised to translate us into a new heaven hereafter, has also promised to confer on us a new heart here. Directly appended to our belief in God's testimony, may we hope for both these fulfilments; but should the earlier fulfilment not take place, this ought to convince us, that we are not the subjects of the latter fulfilment. A true faith would ensure to us both; but as the one has not cast up at its proper time, neither will the other cast up at its time—and, having no part nor lot in the present grace, we can have as little in the future inheritance.

Let us therefore not be deceived. You hear people talk of their peace with God, while art and malignity and selfishness are at full work in their unregenerate bosoms—while no one evidence is apparent of any gracious influence at all having been shed abroad in their hearts—while the nearer promise has had no fulfilment upon them, though guaranteed by the

same truth with the more remote and ulterior one, and though the same God who ordains life everlasting also ordains all the heirs of it to be conformed to the image of His son; and no one enters upon the inheritance on the other side of death, without the Spirit being given to him as the earnest of his inheritance on this side of death. By this test then let us examine ourselves; and have done, conclusively done, with that odious and hypocritical slang, into which the terms of orthodoxy and all the phrases of commonplace professorship enter so abundantly—at the very time perhaps when the heart rankles with purposes of mischief; or, in the contest between faith and sense, the latter has gained a wretched ascendancy over him. Should this be the melancholy condition of any professor who now hears us, let him rest assured that he has lost the things that he has wrought, that he has the whole of his original distance from God to recover anew, that he has to lay again the foundation, and has in short to do all over again. The promise of life eternal is still address to him, but the promise of meetness for it in a holy and renewed character goes along with it; and this present world is the place where it must be realized; and it is only by making himself sure of repentance here, and of the clean heart here, and of the right spirit here, that he can make himself sure of his calling and election hereafter. In the language of the apostle then—work out your salvation, and labour with all diligence unto the full assurance of hope unto the end.

We shall be happy, if we have succeeded in impressing a clear distinction

upon your minds between the hope of faith and the hope of experience; and how if the latter is wanting, the former on that account may come to be darkened and extinguished altogether. But remember you are not to wait for the second hope, till you conceive the first. It is the first, in fact, which draws the second in its train. It is the first which originates a purifying influence upon the soul. It is in proportion to the strength and habitual ascendancy of the first over the soul, that such a character is formed as may furnish the second with a solid basis to rest upon. It is the hope of the second verse which germinated the whole of that process, that led at length to the hope of the fourth verse. You cannot be too sure of the truth of God's sayings. You cannot have too much peace and joy in thinking that the remission of sins is preached unto all, and that you are one of them all. There is a hope here which ought to arise, on the instant of belief arising in the mind; and, so far is this from superseding the hope of experience, that it will in fact bring the very feelings and raise the very fruits upon the character of the believer, as will cause the hope of experience to come surely and in succession to the hope of faith. Our best advice for brightening the second hope to the uttermost, is that you keep alive the first hope to the uttermost. Your experience will be bright, just in proportion as your faith is bright, and it is just if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and if ye be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard, that you will at length be presented holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in the sight of God.

LECTURE XIX.

ROMANS v, 5.

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

You are already, we trust, enough familiarised to the distinction that has been offered between the hope of faith and the hope of experience. God promises to all who trust in Him, that He will give them an inheritance on the other side of death; and that He will also give them, in the shape of certain personal graces and endowments, an earnest of the inheritance on this side of it. On the very first moment that you hear these promises, if you believe in the honesty of both, you will hope for the fulfilment of both; and this

is the hope of faith. Should the promise that is of earlier fulfilment come to pass at its proper time, this will be to you a satisfactory confirmation of your first belief, and of the hope that comes out of it; and you will look forward with surer anticipation than ever, to the latter of the two fulfilments. This is the hope of experience—a hope that brightens with the growth of grace on the person of the believer; and with every new finding within himself of the working of that Spirit of holiness, by which he is made meet for

the everlasting abodes of holiness. In this way, there is formed a distinct and subsequent ground of hope, additional to the original one. The original ground was your faith in the honesty of the promiser, that He would fulfil all His engagements. The additional ground is your actual experience of His punctuality, in having liquidated those of His engagements which had become due. It operates like a first instalment, which, when paid with perfect readiness and sufficiency, certainly brightens all the hope of a thorough fulfilment of the various articles of agreement, which you had when it was first entered upon. And thus it is that, though there is a hope in the second verse that is appended immediately to your faith in God—there is also a hope in the fourth verse, that has been wrought in you by experience.

You must also be sensible what the effect would have been, had there been a failure instead of a fulfilment of that promise, which falls to be accomplished first. It would have darkened and overthrown, not merely your hope of the near, but also your hope of all the ulterior good things that you had been led to depend upon. There is nothing which brings the feeling of shame more directly into the mind, than the failure of some confident or too fondly indulged expectation. "They shall be greatly ashamed that trust in graven images." "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me." "And lest," says the apostle, "we should be ashamed in this same confident boasting."

'Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' The love of God may signify either our love to God, as in the passage—'this is the love of God that ye keep His commandments;' or it may signify God's love to us, as in the passage—'In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.' In the verse under consideration, we apprehend that the love of God must be taken according to the latter signification. It is thus that, speaking strictly and literally, one being when kind to another, sheds upon him the fruits of that kindness, rather than the kindness itself. But the use of language has been so far extended, as to admit of the latter expression. It is quite according to established usage to say, 'I have received much kindness from another,' though I have properly received nothing but his money or his attentions or his patronage. And in like manner, do I receive love from God when I receive the Holy Ghost. And as a beneficent proprietor is said to shed abroad of his liberality among the habi-

tations of the poor, when he causes food or raiment or fuel to enter into their houses—so does God shed abroad of His love in our hearts, when He sends the Holy Ghost to take up His residence, and there to rule by His influence.

It is through the Spirit of God, that the spirit of man is borne up in the midst of adversities. It is He who upholds the perseverance of a disciple, when all that is around him lours and looks dismal. It is He who causes a luminousness to rest on those eternal prospects, which are seen afar, through the dark vista of a pilgrimage which is lined on the right hand and on the left, with sorrows innumerable. It is when a bitterness comes upon man which is only known to his own heart, that a secret balm is often infused along with it, with the joy of which a stranger does not intermeddle. There is a history of the soul that is unseen by every eye, but intimately known and felt by its conscientious proprietor; and often can he testify of a tribulation that would have overwhelmed him to the death, had not a powerful influence from on high supported him under it. And when the season of it at length passes over his agitated spirit, and leaves the fruit of a solid peace, and an augmented righteousness behind it—you perceive, how in him the process is exemplified, of tribulation working in him a more strenuous perseverance in all the habits and principles of Christianity; and of perseverance working in him such an experience of himself, as argues his state of discipline and preparation for another world; and of this experience working in him the hope that He who thus fulfils upon him, the guidance in time that He has promised, will finally bestow upon him the glory He has promised in eternity.

He, says the apostle, who hath wrought us for immortality is God, who hath also given to us the earnest of the Spirit, and therefore we are confident.

It is very true, that an early fulfilment is often the satisfying token of some later fulfilment; and that grace imparted to us on this side of death, is a pledge of glory being conferred upon us on the other side of death; and, in particular, that the Holy Ghost, bestowed upon us so as to work a meetness for the inheritance, is symptomatic of our future translation into the inheritance itself, and thus superadds the hope of experience to the hope of faith. But you must remark, that the very hope of faith, the hope which you conceive at the outset of your belief in the gospel, is wrought in you by the same Holy Ghost. It is not of yourself—it is the gift of God. It was by demonstration of the Spirit, that your eyes were opened at the first to perceive the truth of the promises; and by

a fuller demonstration He can make you see this still more clearly, and rejoice in it still more confidently than before. The effect then of an additional and subsequent supply of this divine influence, is, not merely to furnish you with a pledge upon earth of the preferment that awaits you in heaven, and so to furnish you with a new ground of hope upon the subject, even the ground of experience; but it is also to brighten the ground upon which all your hope rested originally, even the ground of faith. It is to give you a more full and satisfying manifestation of the direct truth of God in the gospel than before. The Holy Ghost does not merely put into your hand another and a distinct hold, by giving you in the performance of an earlier promise, a proof of the sureness with which the later promise shall be performed also; but He strengthens the hold which you had by faith upon the promises, prior to all experimental confirmation of them in your own personal history. He does not merely supply that evidence for the truth of the gospel promise which is seen by the eye of experience; but He also casts an additional light on the evidence that you had at the first, and which is only seen by the eye of faith. Never, in the course of the believer's pilgrimage, never does the hope of experience supersede the hope of faith. So far from this, in the very proportion that experience grows in breadth, does faith grow in brightness. And it is this last which still constitutes the sheet-anchor of his soul, and forms the main aliment of its peace and joy and righteousness. It is well, that, on looking inwardly to himself, he sees the growing lineaments of such a grace and such a character forming upon his person, as vouch him to be ripening for eternity. But, along with this process, will he also look outwardly upon God in Christ, and there see, in constantly increasing manifestation, the truth and the mercy and the unchangeableness of his reconciled Father, as by far the firmest and stables guarantee of his future destiny. The same agent, in fact, who brings about the one effect, brings about the other. He causes you not merely to see yourself to be an epistle of the Spirit of God, and to read thereon the marks of your personal interest in the promises; but He also causes you to see these promises as standing in the outward record, invested with a light and an honesty and a freeness, which you did not see at the first revelation of them—so that it is not only the hope of experience which is furnished you anew, as you proceed on the career of actual Christianity; but, in proportion to your advancement on this career, are you also made to abound more

and more in the hope of faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Thus we trust, you perceive, that the good works and the graces of personal religion, not merely supply you with fresh evidences for your hope, but also brighten your original ones. They cast backwards as it were a good reflex influence on the faith from which they emanated. It is said of the Holy Ghost, that He is given to those who obey Him. Follow out the impulse of a conscience which He hath enlightened in every practical business that you have on hand; and you will find, as the result of it, a larger supply of that light which makes clearer than before, all those truths and promises of Christianity, on which a firm dependence may be laid by an act of believing. It is thus too that, if you keep the sayings of Christ, He will manifest Himself; and though works are of no value unless they are wrought in faith, yet the very doing of them is followed up by such larger revelations of the truth and doctrine of God, that by works is your faith made perfect.

Give us a man walking in darkness, and having no light, from whose mind the comfort of the promises is fading away, and whose fits of thought and pensiveness speak him to be on the borders of some deep approaching melancholy. It is sin in all probability that has conducted him onwards to this mental dejection; and that not merely by its having obliterated those traces of personal character, the observation of which, had at one time wrought the hope of experience in his bosom—but by its having grieved and exiled the Holy Spirit for a season, whose office as a revealer and as a remembrancer of all truth, is therefore suspended; and who has therefore left the tenement of his heart desolate and uncheered by that hope of faith, which shone in a beam of gladness on the very outset of his Christianity. For the treatment of such a spiritual patient, we are often bidden tell him of the fulness that there is in Christ; and tell him of the power which lies in His blood, for turning guilt of the most crimson dye into the snow-white of purest innocence; and to tell him of the perfect willingness that there is in God, to hold out to him over the mercy-seat the sceptre of forgiveness, by the touching of which it is, that he enters anew into reconciliation before Him. And it is right, it is indispensably right, to tell him of all this; but we would tell him more. The voice of man, if the visitations of the Spirit do not go along with it, will not force an entrance, even for these welcome accents of mercy, into the heart that He had so recently abandoned. And, to win the return of this gracious and all-powerful

monitor, we would bid him work for it. We would tell him, that it is by toiling and striving and pains-taking, he must recover the distance which he has lost, and call the departed light and departed influence back again. If there be a remaining sense of duty in his heart, we bid him work with all his might to prosecute its suggestions; and never cease to ply his labours of obedience till He, who still it appears is whispering through the organ of conscience what he ought to do, shall be so far satisfied with the probation, as again to shed a sufficient manifestation on the doctrines which he must never cease to contemplate. And this not merely to restore to him the hope of experience, but to revive in him the hope of faith; and, full of penitential labour as well as of penitential meditation, to make his light break forth again on the morning, and his health to spring forth speedily.

This holds out to us another view of the indissoluble alliance, that obtains between the faith of Christianity and the obedience of Christianity. It is not saying all for this, to say that the former originates the latter. It is saying still more to say that the latter strengthens and irradiates the former. The genuine faith of the gospel never can encourage sin; for sin expels that Spirit from our hearts, who perpetuates and keeps alive faith in them. And by every act of disobedience, there is a wound inflicted on the peace and joy, which a belief in the gospel ministers to the soul. It is by practically walking up to the suggestions of this heavenly monitor, that we brighten within us all His influences; and thus, as the result of a strict and holy practice, is there a clearer and fuller light reflected back again, on the very first principles from which it emanated—so that Antinomianism, after all, is very much an affair of theory, and can only be exemplified in the lives of those who either profess the faith, or imagine that they possess it, when they are utter strangers to it. The real faith which is unto salvation, not only originates all the virtues of the gospel; but, should these virtues decay into annihilation, it also would fall back again to non-existence along with them; and, on the other hand, does it uniformly grow with the growth, and strengthen with the strength of a man's practical Christianity.

On two distinct grounds therefore, do we urge on every believer, a most persevering strenuousness, under every temptation and difficulty, in all the ways of

righteousness. The first is, that he may brighten his personal evidences, of being indeed one of those whom God is enriching and beautifying with grace in time; and thus will he strengthen that basis on which the hope of experience rests, when it looks forward to a preferment of glory in eternity. The second is, that he may strengthen that very faith, by which he relied at the first on the promises both of grace here, and of glory hereafter, for, after all, it is by faith he stands; and the whole of his spiritual life will forthwith go into decay, should he only look to the hope reflected from himself, instead of drawing it direct and in chief abundance from the Saviour. An exuberance of fresh and healthy blossom upon a tree, affords a cheering promise of the fruit that may be expected from it. But what should we think of the soundness of that man's anticipations, who should cut across the stem because he thought it independent of the root, which both sent forth this beautiful efflorescence and can alone conduct it to full and finished maturity? And the same of spiritual as of natural husbandry. Were there no foliage, no fruit could be looked for—yet still it is union with the root, which produced the one and will bring on the other. And, in like manner, if there be no foliage of grace in time, there will be no fruit of glory in eternity. But still it is by abiding in Christ, that the whole process is begun, and carried forward, and will at length be perfected. Give up the hope of faith, because you have now the hope of experience; and you imitate precisely the man, whom the leaves had made so sanguine of his drest and supported vine which he had trained along the wall, that he cut asunder the stem and trusted to the abundance of his foliage. And therefore we reiterate in your hearing, that the hold of faith is never to be let go; and that from Christ, who ministers all the nourishment which comes to the branches, you are never to sever yourselves; and that the habit of believing prayer, which is the great and perpetual aliment of all virtuous practice, is never to be given up; and thus it is, that, let the hope of the 4th verse brighten to any conceivable extent upon you, from the light which is reflected by your person—yet still it is the faith by which you are justified, and the hope of the 2d verse directly emanating therefrom, that form the radical elements of your sanctification here, and your meetness for the inheritance hereafter.

LECTURE XX.

ROMANS V, 6—11.

“For when we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while 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, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”

FROM the preceding verses we gather, that a believer at the very outset of his faith, may legitimately hope for the fulfilment of all God's promises. Some of these take effect upon him in time, and form the pledges and the earnest of those further accomplishments, which are to take place in eternity—thus affording a basis on which to rest the hope of experience. It is true that they are the greater things which are to follow. The glory that is hereafter, will greatly exceed all the glimpses and all the tokens of it with which we are favoured here; and it may be thought that because we obtain small things now, it does not follow that we are to look for greater things afterwards. A man may both be able and willing, to advance the small sum which he promises to bestow on me to-morrow; but it does not certainly ensue from this, that he will be either able or willing, to grant me the large sum promised on this day twelve-month. Did the great things come first, we would have less hesitation in expecting the small things that were afterwards to be forth-coming. But when the order is the reverse of this, when the earlier instalments are but minute and insignificant fractions of the entire and final engagement—it may be allowed us perhaps to suspend our confidence, ere we can be sure from the puny samples on hand, of that rich and magnificent sum of blessedness, to which the gospel of Jesus Christ has pointed our expectations.

In the succeeding verses, we have an argument that is eminently fitted to overbear this diffidence; and which both explains to us why we have received our present fulfilments, and why we may rejoice in the assured hope of all our future ones. On our first acceptance of Christ by faith, all that we obtain is peace with God, who ceases to be our enemy; and lifts away from us that hand of threatened vengeance, which has already been laid upon Him who for us hath borne the whole burden of it. It is a great thing, no doubt, thus to be delivered from wrath and hostility. But you can conceive the work of reconciliation to go no farther than this. It might have been nothing more than the reconciliation of the judge

with the prisoner, when he acquits and dismisses him. It may be the simple letting off of a criminal from punishment, or the mere ceasing to be an adversary, without passing onwards to the new character of a benefactor and a patron. But when God in ceasing to be an enemy becomes a friend—when, instead of being dealt with as the objects of His displeasure, we are dealt with as the objects of His love—when we get not only forbearance, but positive favour from His hands—This is something higher than the peace which accrues to us on the outset of our Christianity. There is an advance made in the scale of privilege; and, if to be at peace with God through Jesu Christ our Lord is in itself a great privilege, to receive the Holy Ghost from Him as the evidence of His love is a still greater one. And, looking onward from this to futurity, it is not till we are refined into the consummate holiness, and raised into the pure and perfect happiness of Heaven, that we shall reach the acme of that enjoyment, which God hath prepared for the faithful disciples of His Son.

Now according to this process, the smaller things you will observe come first, and the greater things follow. There is a gradation and an ascent of privilege, as you move forward in history—but then, to get what is less does not so warrant the expectation of getting what is more, as to get what is much, warrants the expectation of getting what is less. Surely the man who has given me the trifle which he promised, will not withhold from me the treasures that he has also promised, is not so sound a conclusion—as surely the man who promised me a magnificent donation, and hath now actually made it good, will not break his word and promise, when they are merely staked on some paltry fulfilment, that is still in reserve for me. If the lesser comes in the order of time before the greater, then the non-performance of the lesser would blast all our expectations of the greater, and make us ashamed of the confidence with which we cherished them. But, on the other hand, the performance of the lesser does not so warrant our expectations of the greater, as if the order of the two ful-

filments had been reversed. We might well be ashamed of our hope in the latter of the two, if disappointed in the earlier of the two. But if the earlier be at the same time the less of the two, we cannot from this comparison alone say with the apostle, as the less has turned out agreeably to our first hopes, how much more will the greater so turn out likewise!

Now it can be conceived, that, though one present be smaller for us to receive than another—yet it may have been given in such circumstances of difficulty or provocation, as to argue a higher degree of generosity or good-will; and be altogether, a greater and more substantial token of the giver's regard, than the larger present will be, which is promised to be conferred on us afterwards. The fellow-captive in some hostile prison, whom I had perhaps insulted and reviled, and who in justice might have dealt with me as an adversary—should he, to save me from the agonies of thirst, make over his scanty allowance of water, and so entail these agonies upon himself, telling me at the same time, that in spite of all the insolence he had gotten from my hands, he could not help feeling an unquenchable love for my person, and a no less unquenchable desire after my interests, and that if ever a happier time should restore us to liberty, and to our native land, he would contribute of his influence and his wealth to the rising interests of my family—who does not see that even a single cup of cold water, given in such circumstances, and with such assurances as these, may well warrant the highest hopes that can be entertained of his kindness? And should I, touched and overpowered by so striking a demonstration of it, and ashamed of all my former perverseness, henceforth bind myself in gratitude and duty to this benefactor—may I not well argue, that surely the man who ministered to me, though in the smaller, and did so at such an expense of suffering to himself, and also in the face of all the injury I had done unto him, will now acquit himself to the full of the larger bounties which he held out in expectation, should I now return with him his devoted friend to the country of his fathers; and he, replaced in the ample sufficiency that belongs to him, should have it in his power, by an easy and a willing sacrifice, to translate me into all the comfort and all the independence which he engaged to render me.

There is a parallel to this in the gospel. Forgiveness is a smaller boon than positive favour; and all the tokens of this favour which are bestowed upon us in time, are smaller than that rich and full and ever-during expression of it which awaits us in eternity. Should the promise of

the smaller not be fulfilled, when it becomes due, this would make us ashamed of all the expectations we had cherished of the larger. And accordingly, the apostle, from having received the Holy Ghost here as a kind of earnest or first fruits, is not ashamed of his hope for the glory of God which is to be revealed hereafter. But though this might save him from being ashamed of his high hopes in futurity it is not enough to warrant the argument of, how much more, that he comes forward with in the following verses. It is not a very conclusive way of reasoning to say—I have got a smaller thing according to promise, how much more then may I expect a greater thing? It would have applied better had the greater thing come first, and then you might have said, How much more, as he has given me the greater boon that he stood engaged to render, may I not hope for his punctuality with regard to the smaller? But, just as in the case of human illustration that we have already quoted, the first act of kindness, though smaller in the matter of it, may have been done in such circumstances of difficulty and provocation, as to be a far more unquestionable evidence of regard than any future act of goodness possibly can be, however great in the matter of it—because done in circumstances of ease and good agreement. And these preparatory remarks will enable us to enter into the spirit and to estimate aright the strength and conclusiveness of the argument which follows.

V. 6. We were not able to extricate ourselves from the prison-house of God's righteous condemnation. We had not strength for that perfect obedience, which a relentless and insurmountable law has laid upon all its subjects; and even though we had, such obedience could only satisfy for itself, and at its own season. It could not cancel the guilt of another season. But the truth is, that we could neither do away the guilt of our past, nor the pollution of our present history. We were in bondage to the power of corruption, as well as to the fears of condemnation—living as totally without God, as without hope—abandoned to the counsel of our own hearts, and taking no counsel and no reproof from Him whose right hand was upholding us continually. It was in these circumstances of provocation, that Christ undertook for us. He stretched out His mediatorial hand, for the purpose of extending the boon of forgiveness—a smaller boon than favour certainly; but remember it was a boon to the ungodly. It was a movement of kindness, forcing its way through an obstacle that might well have stifled and repressed it. It was an expression of love so ar-

dent, that even impiety, in full and open and determined career, could not extinguish it. It was at the time of the world's greatest wickedness, that He descended from on high, not to condemn but to save it. It is true that the first effect of this benevolent undertaking, was simply an acquittal to those who had been guilty; and this was but the prelude of greater things to follow. But this first thing was wrought out in the face of greatest provocation, and at the expense of most painful endurance. It was rendered unto men at the time when men were rioting at large, both against the law of conscience and the law of revelation. It was when every man had turned to his own way, that God laid upon His Son the iniquities of us all. Our time of greatest regardlessness was His time of greatest regard. And estimating the intensity of affection, not by the magnitude of its positive dispensations, but by the magnitude of resistance it must overcome, and of the sufferings it must undergo—it was at the outset of our redemption: it was at that due time when Christ died for the ungodly; it was in the act of making atonement for the sins of the people, out of which act the first though the smallest benefit that emerged was the forgiveness of the people—it was then nevertheless, that the love of God in Christ, bearing all the condemnation of our unthankful species, and pouring out His soul unto the death for them—it was then that this love sent forth its most wondrous and most convincing manifestation.

V. 7. The point insisted on by the apostle here, is that Christ died for us when we were yet enemies in our heart toward Him. But it should also be kept in mind, that His was no ordinary death; that they were not the pangs of a common dissolution which extorted such agonies of fear, and such cries of bitter suffering, and drew out on the person of our Redeemer both in the garden and upon the cross such mysterious symptoms of distress too exquisite for human imagination, of an endurance far deeper than we have any conception of. It is evident from the whole history of the hour and the power of darkness, that, though He had the whole strength of the Divinity to uphold Him, there was a struggle to be made, and a hostility to be baffled, and an awful enterprise of toil and of strenuousness to be gone through, under the severity of which our Saviour had well nigh given way—that ere the victory was His, He had to travel in His strength, and to put forth all the greatness of it; and, warring with principalities and powers, had, in the words of Isaiah, to tread in the wine-press alone, and trample on his enemies with

fury, and to stain His raiment, and to wield the arm of His supernatural might, ere He brought down to the earth the strength that was opposed to Him. It should be recollected, that the death of Christ was not in semblance merely, but in real and substantial amount, an atonement for the sins of the world—that He tasted death not as an individual, but tasted it for every man—that on Him was laid the accumulated weight of all that wrath, which an eternity would not have expended on the millions for which He died—that there was the actual transference of God's avenging hand from the heads of the countless guilty He has redeemed, to the head of this one innocent sufferer—and that from the moment He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, to the moment of his crying, It is finished, and when He gave up the Ghost, there was discharged upon the head of this great Sacrifice all the vials of a wrath which the misery everlasting, and that of a multitude which no man could number, could not have exhausted; there were condensed upon His soul all the agonies which but for Him the vast family of the redeemed would have borne.

But it is not here on the kind of death which our Saviour endured that the apostle founds his argument of God's love to us—It is on the kind of people whom He died for—even sinners. This peculiarizes and exalts the benevolence of Christ above all human benevolence. There is a devotedness of affection here, of which there is no example in the history of our species. For a righteous man, that is a man free from blame or criminality, for a simply innocent man there is scarcely any that would die; for a good man, one who rises above the level of mere innocence, one who is signalized by achievements of positive benevolence or heroic patriotism, some might die—like some disciples of Paul, who for his life would lay down their own necks—or like the members of some gallant band, who would rally in defence of the worth and friendship that they revered—or like the martyrs of Christianity who died for the honours of its founder, but not till He had evinced the highest sublime of goodness by dying for the worst and most worthless of mankind. It is on this that the apostle lays the stress of his argument; and from this he infers, that, even at the outset of our redemption and when we had got nothing more than forgiveness, there was such a demonstration of God's affection for sinners, as warranted the fullest expectation of all the higher blessings that we are to receive from His hand.

For observe, that though favour may be higher in the scale of privilege than for-

giveness, and glory through eternity higher than grace in time—yet it was at the point when forgiveness was secured for the guilty—it was then that the love of God in Christ made its most decisive exhibition—It was then that it triumphed over difficulties which no longer exist—It was then that it leaped over a barrier which is now levelled into an open way of access between earth and heaven—It was then that human sinfulness rose in a smoke of abomination before the throne of God, unaccompanied as yet with that incense of a sweet-smelling savour which the sacrifice of Christ has since infused into it—It was then that the awful death of the atonement, a death never now to be repeated, had still to be endured. All these stood in the way of reconciliation; and though this be the first and the smallest boon that is conferred upon the sinner, yet conferred as it was in the midst of obstacles which no longer exist, and of sins that are now blotted out in the blood of the Lamb, so that God remembers them no more—this smallest boon, viewed as a demonstration of love and a pledge of future kindness, more than overpasses all the subsequent boons that can be rendered in circumstances where there is nothing to struggle with, and no barrier in the way of their accomplishment. So that the apostle is warranted in all his larger expectations after this. Much more then, being justified by His blood, we shall be translated into all the blessings of a positive salvation.

The love of a benefactor is not to be estimated by the magnitude of His gift, but by the exposure and the suffering that he incurred in rendering it. The gifts of God may go on progressively increasing through all eternity; but it was the first gift of reconciliation which had to force its way through the host of impediments, that stood between a holy Lawgiver and a sinful world. After these were removed, the following gifts came spontaneously and without interruption, out of the exuberant wealth and liberality of the Godhead. So that, from the very first, we have the argument in all its entireness, If God spared not His own Son to reconcile a world that had nothing but guilt and depravity to offer to His contemplation—how much more, now that atonement is made, will He bless and enrich all those who have fled to it for refuge, and whom He now beholds in the face of His anointed.

This then is an argument altogether addressed to the hope of faith, and may be seized upon and felt in the whole force of it, ere there is time for the hope of experience. The moment that one looks with a believing eye to the work of redemption, he may gather from it all the materials which make up this argument. He may

there see, that Christ at that time died for the sinful, to bring about their agreement with God; and that, at the present time, Christ has not to die any more, and that in Him the guilt of sinfulness has been done away. 'If when enemies we were reconciled, by His death—how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall all the blessings that He died to purchase be lavished upon us abundantly.' If, when so many difficulties stood betwixt us, He forced His way through them, for the purpose of reaching forgiveness to the condemned—how much more, now that all is open and level and free in the road of communication between earth and heaven, will He, out of the treasury of His fulness, shed upon us all the needful grace here, and translate us into all the promised glory hereafter. True, if the grace did not come, this might well blast and annihilate these fond anticipations. We cannot get to heaven without such a stepping-stone; and when we have reached this length, we can see more clearly and hope more confidently for the promised inheritance than before. But still the main light which rests upon this glorious futurity, radiates upon it, from the great and primary work of Christ's undertaking as He did, and Christ's doing as He did, for the guilty. And the reason why we have obtained the grace, and still the chief reason why we may look for the glory, is that seeing He did so much to reconcile and to justify—how much more, now that the heat and difficulty and strenuousness of the contest are all over, how much more may we not anticipate all the blessings of a positive salvation from His hand.

Finally, let it be observed of the 9th verse, that Paul speaks of himself and others in the character of believers, and as being already justified by the blood of Jesus. The force of the consideration lies in this—that seeing He shed His blood to justify us, at the time that we were unrepentant and unreconciled, and thus to save us from the wrath that abideth on all who believe not—how much more, now that this is done, and that, instead of dying any more, He has only to give, in large and easy liberality, out of His fulness—how much more, by the supplies of His grace and strength, will He save us from the wrath of those who shall finally fall away. The tribulations in which he gloried might not have wrought a more strenuous perseverance in the Christian course; but, like certain hearers in the parable of the sower, he might have been offended when persecution came, and actually fallen away. Instead of patience working such an experience, as made him hopeful that he was indeed a Christian, the defect and overthrow of his constancy, might have

given him the melancholy and convincing experience, that he had indeed no lot or part in the matter. Instead of a thriving process, it might have been a ruinous one; but grace, it appears from the result, was given to uphold him in a course of spiritual prosperity, under all his outward tribulations; and he now hoped more than ever that God had manifested the special love that He bore, by the Holy Ghost that was given to him. And how could it be otherwise, he goes on to argue, than that the Holy Ghost should be given? Would not He who did so much to justify, and at such an expense of suffering to Himself, would not He also sanctify when there was no suffering incurred by the process? Will not He who saved us by His blood then, much more save us by His Spirit now? Will not He who at that time delivered us, by dying, from the wrath due to the impenitent and ungodly—at this time, when we are cleaving to Him in dependence and desire, deliver us by His grace, from the sorer punishment of those who draw back to the perdition of the soul? There may be fatherly chastisements. There may be the infliction of a severe and salutary discipline. Should a professor sin the sin that is unto death, it will then be impossible to renew him again unto repentance. But if, instead of a hollow-hearted and hypocritical dissembler, there was really a sound principle of adherence and honest faith with him who

has been overtaken in a fault—then that man will be saved, yet so perhaps as by fire. He will not escape the hand of chastisement in time, though he will escape the hand of vengeance in eternity. He will be cast down yet not destroyed. God will forgive the iniquity of his sin, but at the same time take vengeance upon him for his inventions. He will make him taste the bitterness of transgression; and give him the experimental demonstration of His own abhorrence to it; and render it manifest as day, that there is an utter and irreversible opposition, between the indulgence of a sinner, and the hope of a believer; and, rather than that he should miss the lesson, He will force it upon him with the authoritative severity of a master, who has determined that He will not let him alone till he learn it; and if one corrective ministration will not serve the purpose, He will come forward with another and another—still ringing this prophetic knell into the ear of him who is under discipline, that “for all this mine anger is not turned away, but my hand is stretched out still.” It is not from such wrath that a disciple is saved—But let it work him into the process of tribulation, and patience, and experience, and hope; and from the wrath of eternity he will be saved—saved as if by fire—and verifying this word in his own person, that it is through manifold tribulation we shall enter into the kingdom of God.

LECTURE XXI.

ROMANS V, 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.”

ST. PAUL, who, by the way, is by far the most argumentative of all the apostles—and who, from being the most successful of them all, proves that argument is both a legitimate and a powerful weapon in the work of making Christians, sometimes undertakes to reason upon one set of premises, and then to demonstrate, how much more valid and irresistible is the conclusion which he tries to establish, when he is in actual possession of another and more favourable set of premises. In this way a great additional strength is made to accrue to his argument—and the ‘how much more’ with which he finishes, causes it to come with greater power and assurance upon his readers—and it is this which gives him the advantage of what is well known, both in law and in logic,

under the phrase of *argumentum a fortiore*, or, an argument which affirms a thing to be true in adverse and unpromising circumstances, and therefore far more worthy of being held true in likelier circumstances. It is quite a familiar mode of reasoning in common discourse. If a neighbour be bound to sympathise with the distresses of an unfortunate family, how much more, when that neighbour is a relative. If I obtained an offer of friendship from a man in difficulties, how much more may I count upon it should he now be translated into a state of sufficiency and ease. If in the very heat of our quarrel, and under the discouragement of all my provoking insolence towards him, my enemy forbear the vengeance which he had the power to inflict, how much

more, should the quarrel be made up, and I have been long in terms of reconciliation with him, may I feel myself secure from the effects of his indignation. Such also is the argument of my text. There is one state of matters in which God sets forth a demonstration of friendship to the world, and this is compared with the present and actual state of matters, more favourable than the former, and from which therefore, the friendship of God may be still more surely inferred, and still more firmly confided in. But it will be further seen, that in this short sentence of the apostle, there lies a compound argument which admits of being separated into distinct parts. There is a reference made to a twofold state of matters, which, by being resolved into its two particulars, brings out two accessions of strength to the conclusion of our apostle, which are independent of each other. He, in fact, holds forth a double claim upon our understanding, and we propose to view successively the two particulars of which it is made up.

There is first then a comparison made between one state of matters, and another state of matters which obtain in our earth—and there is at the same time a comparison made between one state of matters, and another state of matters which obtain in heaven—and from each of these there may be educed an argument for strengthening the assurance of every Christian, in that salvation which the gospel has made known to us.

Let us first look then to the two states upon earth—and this may be done either with a reference to this world's history, or it may be done with a reference to the personal history of every one man who is now a believer.

That point of time in the series of general history at which reconciliation was made, was when our Saviour said that it is finished, and gave up the ghost. God may be said to have then become reconciled to the world, in as far as He was ready to enter into agreement with all who drew nigh in the name of this great propitiation. Now think of the state of matters upon earth, previous to the time when reconciliation in this view was entered upon. Think of the strength of that moving principle in the bosom of the Deity, which so inclined Him towards a world then living in the depths of ungodliness—and from one end to another of it, lifting the cry of rebellion against Him. There was no movement on the part of the world towards God—no returning sense of allegiance towards Him from whom they had revolted so deeply—no abatement of that profligacy which so rioted at large over a wide scene of law-

less and thankless and careless abandonment—no mitigation of that foul and audacious insolence by which the throne of heaven was assailed; and a spectacle so full of offence to the unfallen was held forth, of a whole province in arms against the lawful Monarch of creation. Had the world thrown down its weapons of disobedience—had a contrite and relenting spirit gone previously forth among its generations—had the light which even then glimmered in the veriest wilds of Paganism, just up to the strength and degree of its influence, told aright on the moral sensibilities of the deluded and licentious worshippers—had they, whose conscience was a law unto themselves, just acted and followed on as they might under the guidance of its compunctious visitations—had there been any thing like the forgoing of a general desire, however faint, towards that unknown Being, the sense and impression of whom were never wholly obliterated—then it might have been less decisive of God's will for reconciliation, that He gave way to these returning demonstrations on the part of His alienated creatures, and reared a pathway of communication by which sinners may draw nigh unto God. But for God to have done this very thing, when these sinners were persisting in the full spirit and determination of their unholy warfare—for Him to have done so, when, instead of any returning loyalty rising up to Him like the incense of a sweet-smelling savour, the exhalations of idolatry and vice blackened the whole canopy of heaven, and ascended in a smoke of abomination before Him—for Him to have done so at the very time that all flesh had corrupted its ways, and when, either with or without the law of revelation, God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually—in these circumstances of deep and unalleviated provocation, and when God might have eased Him of His adversaries, by sweeping the whole of this moral nuisance away from the face of the universe which it deformed—for such a time to have been a time of love, when majesty seemed to call for some solemn vindication, but mercy could not let us go—surely, if through such a barrier between God and the guilty, He, in the longings of His desire after them, forced a pathway of reconciliation, He never will turn Himself away from any, who, cheered forward by His own entreaties, are walking upon that path. But if, when enemies He Himself found out an approach by which He might beckon them to enter into peace with Him, how much more, when they are so approach-

ing, will He meet them with the light of His countenance, and bless them with the joys of His salvation.

But this argument may be looked to in another way. Instead of fixing our regards upon that point in the general history of the world, when the avenue was struck out between our species and their offended Lawgiver; and through the rent veil of a Saviour's flesh, a free and consecrated way of access was opened for the guiltiest of them all—let a believer in Christ fix his regards upon that passage in his own personal history at which he was drawn in his desires and in his confidence to this great Mediator, and entered upon the grace wherein he now stands, and gave up his evil heart of unbelief, and made his transition out of darkness to the marvellous light of the gospel. Let him compare what he was, when an alien from God, through wicked works of his own, with what he is when a humble but confiding expectant of God's mercy through the righteousness of another. Who translated him into the condition which he now occupies? Who put into his heart the faith of the gospel? Who awakened him from the dormancy and unconcern of nature? Who stirred up that restless but salutary alarm which at length issued in the secure feeling of reconciliation? There was a time of his past life when the whole doctrine of salvation was an offence to him; when its preaching was foolishness to his ears; when its phraseology tired and disgusted him; when, in light and lawless companionship, he put the warnings of religious counsel, and the urgency of menacing sermons away from his bosom—a time when the world was his all, and when he was wholly given over to the idolatry of its pursuits and pleasures and projects of aggrandisement—a time when his heart was unvisited with any permanent seriousness about God, of whom his conscience sometimes reminded him, but whom he soon dismissed from his earnest contemplation—a time when he may have occasionally heard of a judgment, but without one practical movement of his soul towards the task of preparation—a time when the overtures of peace met him on his way, but which he, in the impetuous prosecution of his own objects, utterly disregarded—a time when death plied him with its ever-recurring mementoes, but which he, overlooking the short and summary arithmetic of the few little years that lay between him and the last messenger, placed so far on the back ground of his anticipation, that this earth, this passing and perishable earth, formed the scene of all his solicitudes.

Is there none here present who remem-

bers such a time of his bygone history, and with such a character of alienation from God and from His Christ, as we have now given to it? And who, we ask, recalled him from this alienation? By whose guidance was he conducted to that demonstration either of the press or of the pulpit, which awakened him? Who sent that afflictive visitation to his door, which weaned his spirit from the world, and wooed it to the deathless friendships, and the ever-during felicities of heaven? Who made known to him the extent of his guilt, with the overpassing extent of the redemption that is provided for it? It was not he himself who originated the process of his own salvation. God might have abandoned him to his own courses; and said of him, as He has done of many others, "I will let him alone, since he will have it so;" and given him up to that judicial blindness, under which the vast majority of the world are now sleeping in profoundest lethargy; and withheld altogether that light of the Spirit, which he had done so much to extinguish. But if, instead of all this, God kept by him in the midst of his thankless provocations—and, while he was yet a regardless enemy, made His designs of grace to bear upon him—and, throughout all the mazes of his checkered history, conducted him to the knowledge of Himself as a reconciling God—and so softened his heart with family bereavements, or so tore it from all its worldly dependencies by the disasters of business, or so shook it with frightful agitation by the terrors of the law, or so shone upon it with the light of His free Spirit, as made it glad to escape from the treachery of nature's joys and nature's promises, into a relying faith on the offers and assurances of the gospel—why, just let him think of the time when God did so much for him—and then think of the impossibility that God will recede from him now; or that He will cease from the prosecution of that work in circumstances of earnest and desirous concurrence on the part of the believer, which He Himself began in the circumstances either of his torpid unconcern, or of his active and haughty defiance. The God who moved towards him in his days of forgetfulness, will not move away from him in his days of hourly and habitual remembrance—and He who intercepted him in his career of rebellion, will not withdraw from him in his career of new obedience—and He who first knocked at the door of his conscience, and that too in a prayerless and thankless and regardless season of his history, will not, now that he prays in the name of Christ, and now that his heart is set upon salvation, and now that the doctrine of grace forms all his joy and all

his dependence ; He who thus found him a distant and exiled rebel, will not abandon him now that his fellowship is with the Father and with the Son. It is thus, that the believer may shield his misgiving heart from all its despondencies. It is thus, that the argument of the text goes to fortify his faith, and to perfect that which is lacking in it. It is thus that the 'how much more' of the apostle should cause him to abound more and more in the peace and the joy of believing—and should encourage every man who has laid hold on the hope set before us, to steady and confirm his hold still more tenaciously than before, so as to keep it fast and sure even unto the end.

With a man who knows himself to be a believer, this argument is quite irresistible; and it will go to establish his faith, and to strengthen it, and to settle it, and to make it perfect. But it is possible for a man really to believe, and yet to be in ignorance for a time whether he does so or not—and it is possible for a man to be in earnest about his soul, and yet not to have received that truth which is unto salvation—and it is possible for him to be actuated by a strong general desire to be right, and yet to be walking among the elements of uncertainty—and it is possible for him to be looking to that quarter whence the truths of the gospel are offered to his contemplation, and yet not to have attained the distinct or satisfying perception of them—thoroughly engaged in the prosecution of his peace with God; determinedly bent on this subject as the highest interest he can possibly aspire after; labouring after a settlement; and, under all the agonies of a fierce internal war, seeking and toiling and praying for his deliverance. It is at the point of time when faith enters the heart, that reconciliation is entered upon—nor can we say of this man, that he is yet a believer, or, that he has passed from the condition of an enemy to that of a friend. And yet upon him the argument of the text should not be without its efficacy. It is such an argument as may be employed not merely to confirm the faith which already exists, but to help on to its formation that faith which is struggling for an establishment in the heart of an inquirer. It falls, no doubt, with fullest and most satisfying light upon the heart of a conscious believer—and yet it may be addressed, and with pertinency too, to men under their first and earliest visitations of seriousness. For give me an acquaintance of whom I know nothing more than that his face is towards Zion—give me one arrested by a sense of guilt and of danger, and merely groping his way to a place of enlargement—give me a soul not in peace, but in

perplexity, and in the midst of all those initial difficulties which beset the awakened sinner, ere Christ shall give him light—give me a labouring and heavy-laden sinner, haunted by the reflection, as if by an arrow sticking fast, that the mighty question of his eternity is yet unresolved. There are many we fear amongst you to whom this tremendous uncertainty gives no concern—but give me one who has newly taken it up, and who, in the minglings of doubt and despondency, has not yet found his way to any consolation—and even with him may it be found, that the same reason which strengthens the hope of an advanced Christian, may well inspire the hope of him who has still his Christianity to find, and thus cast a cheering and a comforting influence on the very infancy of his progress. For if it was in behalf of a careless world that the costly apparatus of redemption was reared—if it was in the full front and audacity of their most determined rebellion that God laid the plan of reconciliation—if it was for the sake of men sunk in the very depths of ungodliness, that He constructed His overtures of peace, and sent forth His Son with them amongst our loathsome and polluted dwelling-places—if, to get at His strayed children, He had thus to find His way through all those elements of impiety and ungodliness, which are most abhorrent to the sanctity of His nature, think you, that the God who made such an advancing movement towards the men whose faces were utterly away from Him—is this a God who will turn His own face away from the man who is moving towards God, and earnestly seeking after Him if haply he may find Him?

This argument obtains great additional force, when we look to the state of matters in heaven at the time that we upon earth were enemies, and compare it with the state of matters in heaven, now that we are actually reconciled, or are beginning to entertain the offers of reconciliation. Before the work of our redemption, Jesus Christ was in primeval glory—and though a place of mystery to us, it was a place of secure and ineffable enjoyment—insomuch, that the fondest prayer He could utter in the depths of His humiliation, was to be taken back again to the Ancient of days, and there to be restored to the glory which He had with Him before the world was. It was from the heights of celestial security and blessedness that He looked with an eye of pity on our sinful habitation—it was from a scene where beings of a holy nature surrounded Him, and the full homage of the Divinity was rendered to Him, and, in the ecstasies of His fellowship with God the Father, all was peace and purity and excellence—it

was from this that He took His voluntary departure, and went out on His errand to seek and to save us. And it was not the parade of an unreal suffering that He had to encounter; but a deep and a dreadful endurance—it was not a triumphant promenade through this lower world, made easy over all its obstacles by the energies of His Godhead; but a conflict of toil and of strenuousness—it was not an egress from heaven on a journey brightened through all its stages by the hope of a smooth and gentle return; but it was such an exile from heaven as made His ascent and His readmittance there the fruit of a hard-won victory. We have nothing but the facts of revelation to guide or to inform us; and yet from these we most assuredly gather, that the Saviour, in stepping down from the elevation of His past eternity, incurred a substantial degradation—that when He wrapped Himself in the humanity of our nature, He put on the whole of its infirmities and its sorrows—that, for the joy which He renounced, He became acquainted with grief, and a grief too commensurate to the whole burden of our world's atonement—that the hidings of His Father's countenance were terrifying to His soul—and when the offended justice of the Godhead was laid upon His person, it required the whole strength of the agonies of the garden? What mean the bitter cries and complainings of abandonment upon the cross? What meaneth the prayer that the cup might pass away from Him; and the struggle of a lofty resolution with the agonies of a mighty and unknown distress, and the evident symptoms of a great and toilsome achievement throughout the whole progress of this undertaking; and angels looking down from their eminencies, as on a field of contest, where a great Captain had to put forth the travelling of His strength, and to spoil principalities and powers, and to make a show of them openly? Was there nothing in all this, do you think, but the mockery of a humiliation that was never felt—the mockery of a pain that was never suffered—the mockery of a battle that was never fought? No, be assured that there was, on that day, a real vindication of God's insulted majesty. On that day there was the real transference of an avenging hand, from the heads of the guilty to the head of the innocent. On that day one man died for the people, and there was an actual laying on of the iniquities of us all. It was a war of strength and of suffering in highest possible aggravation, because the war of elements which were infinite. The wrath which millions should have borne, was all of it discharged. Nor do we estimate

aright what we owe of love and obligation to the Saviour, till we believe, that the whole of that fury, which if poured out upon the world, would have served its guilty generations through eternity—that all of it was poured into the cup of expiation.

A more adequate sense of this might not only serve to awaken the gratitude which slumbers within us, and is dead—it might also, through the aid of the argument in our text, awaken and assure your confidence. If when we were enemies, Christ ventured on an enterprise so painful—if, when loathsome outcasts from the sacred territory of heaven, He left the abode of His Father, and exchanged love, and adoration, and congenial felicity among angels, for the hatred and persecution of men—if, when the agonies of the coming vengeance were still before Him, and the dark and dreary vale of suffering had yet to be entered upon, and He had to pass under the inflictions of that sword which the Eternal God awakened against His fellow, and He had still to give Himself up to a death equivalent in the amount of its soreness to the devouring fire, and the everlasting burnings, which but for him believers would have borne—if, when all this had yet to be travelled through, He nevertheless, in His compassionate longing for the souls of men, went forth upon the errand of winning them to Himself,—let us just look to the state of matters then, and compare it with the state of matters now. Christ has there ascended on the wings of victory—and He is now sitting at God's right hand amid all the purchased triumphs of His obedience—and the toil, and the conflict, and the agony, are now over—and from that throne of mediatorship to which He has been exalted, is it His present office to welcome the approaches of all who come, and to save to the uttermost all who put their trust in Him. And is it possible, we would ask, is it possible that He who died to atone, now that He lives, will not live to make intercession for us? Can the love for men which bore Him through a mighty and a painful sacrifice, not be strong enough to carry Him onwards in peace and in triumph to its final consummation? Will He now abandon that work which His own hands have so laboriously reared?—or leave the cause for which He has already sustained the weight of such an endurance, in the embryo and unfinished state of an abortive undertaking? Will He cast away from Him the spoils of that victory for which He bled; and how can it be imagined for a moment, but by such dark and misgiving hearts as ours, that He whose love for a thankless world carried Him through the heat and

the severity of a contest that is now ended, will ever, with the cold and forbidding glance of an altered countenance, spurn an enquiring world away from Him?

The death of a crucified Saviour, when beheld under such a view, is the firm stepping-stone to confidence in a risen Saviour. You may learn from it, that His desire and your salvation are most thoroughly at one. Of His good-will to have you into heaven, He has given the strongest pledge and demonstration, by consecrating, with His own blood, a way of access, through which sinners may draw nigh. And now that, as our forerunner, He is already there—now that He has gone up again to the place from which He arose—now that, to the very place which He left to die, and that, that the barrier to its entrance from our world may be moved away, He has ascended alive and in glory, without another death to endure, for death has no more the dominion over Him—will ever He do any thing to close the entrance which it has cost Him so much to open? Will He thus throw away the toil and the travail of His own soul, and reduce to impotency that apparatus of reconciliation which He Himself has reared, and at an expense too, equal to the penance of many millions through eternity? What He died to begin, will He not now live to carry forward; and will not the love which could force a way through the grave to its accomplishments—now that it has reached the summit of triumph and of elevation which He at present occupies, burst forth and around the field of that mighty enterprise, which was begun in deepest suffering, and will end in full and finished glory?

This is a good argument in all the stages of a man's Christianity. Whether he has found, or is only seeking—whether he be in a state of faith, or in a state of inquiry—whether a believer, like Paul and many of the disciples that he was addressing, or an earnest and convinced sinner groping the way of deliverance, and labouring to be at rest, there may be made to emanate from the present circumstances of our Saviour, and the position that He now occupies, an argument either to perpetuate the confidence where it is, or to inspire it where it is not. If when an enemy I was reconciled, and that too by His death—if He laid down His life to remove an obstacle in the way of my salvation, how much more, now that He has taken it up, will He not accomplish that salvation? It is just fulfilling His own desire. It is just prospering forward the very cause that His heart is set upon. It is just following out the facilities which He, Himself has opened—and marching onward in glorious procession, to the con-

summation of those triumphs for which He had to struggle His way through a season of difficulties that are now over. It is thus that the believer reasons himself into a steadier assurance than before—and peace may be made to flow through his heart like a mighty river—and, resting on the foundation of Christ, he comes to feel himself in a sure and wealthy place—and the good-will of the Saviour rises into an undoubted axiom—so as to chase away all his distrust, and cause him to delight himself greatly in the riches of his present grace, and in the brightening certainty of his coming salvation.

And this view of the matter is not only fitted to heighten the confidence that is already formed—but also to originate the confidence that needs to be inspired. It places the herald of salvation on a secure and lofty vantage-ground. It seals and authenticates the offer with which he is entrusted—and with which he may go round among the guiltiest of this world's population. It enables him to say, that for guilt even in the season of its most proud and unrepentant defiance, did Christ give Himself up unto the death—and that to guilt even in this state of hardness, Christ in prosecution of His own work has commissioned him to go with the overtures of purchased mercy—and should the guilt which has stood its ground against the threatenings of power, feel softened and arrested by pity's preventing call, may the preacher of forgiveness affirm, in his Master's name, that He, who for the chief of sinners bowed Himself down unto the sacrifice, will not now, that He has arisen a Prince and a Saviour, stamp a nullity upon that contest, the triumph of which is awaiting Him; but the bitterness of which has passed away. He will not turn with indifference and distaste from the very fruit which He Himself has fought for. But if for guilt in its full impenitency, He dyed His garments, and waded through the arena of contest and of blood—then should the most abandoned of her children begin a contrite movement towards Him, it is not He who will either break the prop for which He feels, or quench his infant aspiration. He will look to him as the travail of His own soul, and in him He will be satisfied.

We know not what the measure of the sinfulness is of any who now hear us. But we know, that however foul his depravity, and however deep the crimson dye of his manifold iniquities may be, the measure of the gospel warrant reaches even unto him. It was to make an inroad on the territory of Satan, and reclaim from it a kingdom unto himself, that Christ died—and we speak to the farthest off in

guilt and alienation amongst you—take the overture of peace that is now brought to your door, and you will add to that kingdom which He came to establish, and take away from that kingdom which He came to destroy. The freeness of this gospel has the honour of Him who liveth and was dead for its guarantee. The security of the sinner and the glory of the Saviour are at one. And, with the spirit of a monarch who had to fight his way to the dominion which was rightfully his own, will He hail the returning allegiance of every rebel, as a new accession to His triumphs, as another trophy to the might and the glory of His great undertaking.

But, amid all this latitude of call and of invitation, let me press upon you that alternative character of the gospel, to which we have often adverted. We have tried to make known to you, how its encouragements rise the one above the other to him who moves towards it. But it has its corresponding terrors and severities, which also rise the one above the other to him who moves away from it. If the transgressor will not be recalled by the invitation which we have now made known to him, he will be rivetted thereby into deeper and more hopeless condemnation. If the offer of peace be not entertained by him; then, in the very proportion of its largeness and generosity, will the provocation be of his insulting treatment in having rejected it. Out of the mouth of the Son of man there cometh a two-edged sword. There is pardon free as the light of heaven to all who will. There is wrath, accumulated and irretrievable wrath, to all who will not. "Kiss the Son, therefore, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way: when His wrath is kindled but a little, blessed only are they who put their trust in Him."

It is the most delusive of all calculations to put off the acceptance of the gospel, because of its freeness—and because it is free at all times—and because the present you think may be the time of your unconcern and liberty, and some distant future be the time of your return through that door which will still be open for you. The door of Christ's mediatorship is ever open, till death put its unchangeable seal upon your eternity. But the door of your own heart, if you are not receiving Him, is shut at this moment, and every day is it fixing and fastening more closely—and long ere death summon you away, may it at length settle immovably upon its hinges, and the voice of Him who standeth without and knocketh, may be unheard by the spiritual ear—and, therefore, you are not made to feel too much, though you feel as earnestly as if 'now or never' was the alternative on

which you were suspended. It is not enough, that the word of God, compared to a hammer, be weighty and powerful. The material on which it works must be capable of an impression. It is not enough, that there be a free and forcible application. There must be a willing subject. You are unwilling now, and therefore it is that conversion does not follow. To-morrow, the probability is, that you will be still more unwilling—and therefore, though the application be the same, the conversion is still at a greater distance away from you. And thus, while the application continues the same, the subject hardens, and a good result is ever becoming more and more unlikely—and thus may it go on till you arrive, upon the bed of your last sickness, at the confines of eternity—and what, we would ask, is the kind of willingness that comes upon you then? Willing to escape the pain of hell—this you are now, but yet not willing to be a Christian. Willing that the fire and your bodily sensations be kept at a distance from each other—this you are now, for who of you at present would thrust his hand among the flames? Willing that the frame of your animal sensibilities shall meet with nothing to wound or to torture it—this is willingness of which the lower animals, incapable of religion, are yet as capable as yourself. You will be as willing then for deliverance from material torments as you can be now—but there is a willingness which you want now, and which, in all likelihood will then be still more beyond the reach of your attainment. If the free gospel do not meet with your willingness now to accept and to submit to it, neither may it then. And we know not, my brethren, what has been your experience in death-beds; but sure we are, that both among the agonies of mortal disease, and the terrors of the malfactor's cell, Christ may be offered, and the offer be sadly and sullenly put away. The free proclamation is heard without one accompanying charm—and the man who refused to lay hold of it through life, finds that, in the impotency of his expiring grasp, he cannot apprehend it. And oh, if you but knew how often the word of faith may fall from the minister, and the work of faith be left undone upon the dying man, never would you so postpone the purposes of seriousness, or look forward to the last week of your abode upon earth as to the convenient season for winding up the concerns of a neglected eternity.

If you look attentively to the text, you will find, that there is something more than a shade of difference between being reconciled and being saved. Reconciliation is spoken of as an event that has already happened—salvation as an event that is to

come. The one event may lead to the other; but there is a real distinction between them. It is true, that the salvation instanced in the preceding verse, is salvation from wrath. But it is the wrath which is incurred by those who have sinned wilfully, after they had come to the knowledge of the truth—"when there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Jesus Christ will save us from this by saving us from sin. He who hath reconciled us by His death, will, by His life, accomplish for us this salvation. Reconciliation is not salvation. It is only the portal to it. Justification is not the end of Christ's coming—it is only the means to an ultimate attainment. By His death He pacified the Lawgiver. By His life He purifies the sinner. The one work is finished. The other is not so, but is only going on unto perfection. And this is the secret of that unwillingness which we have already touched upon. There is a willingness that God would lift off from their persons the hand of an avenger. But there is not a willingness that Christ would lay upon their persons the hand of a sanctifier. The motive for Him to apprehend them is to make them holy. But they care not to apprehend that for which

they are apprehended. They see not that the use of the new dispensation, is for them to be restored to the image they have lost, and, for this purpose, to be purged from their old sins. This is the point on which they are in darkness—"and they love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil." They are at all times willing for the reward without the service. But they are not willing for the reward and the service together. The willingness for the one they always have. But the willingness for both they never have. They have it not to-day—and it is not the operation of time that will put it in them to-morrow. Nor will disease put it in. Nor will age put it in. Nor will the tokens of death put it in. Nor will the near and terrific view of eternity put it in. It may call out into a livelier sensation than before, a willingness for the reward. But it will neither inspire a taste nor a willingness for the service. A distaste for God and godliness, as it was the reigning and paramount principle of his life, so it may be the reigning and paramount principle of his death-bed. As it envenomed every breath which he drew, so it may envenom his last—and the spirit going forth to the God who gave it, with all the enmity that it ever had, God will deal with it as an enemy.

LECTURE XXII.

ROMANS v, 11.

"And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

In the whole passage from the commencement of this chapter, we have an account of the new feelings that are introduced by faith into the heart of a believer. The first is a feeling of peace with God, of whom we could never think formerly, if we thought of Him aright, but with the sensations of disquietude and terror. The second is a feeling of exultation in the hope of some glory and enlargement that are yet unrevealed—whereby we shall attain such an enjoyment in His presence, and in the view of His perfections, as we can never reach in this world. The third is a feeling of exultation, even in the very crosses and tribulations of our earthly pilgrimage, from the process which they give rise to in our own characters—a process that manifests a work of grace here, and so serves to confirm all our expectations of a harvest of glory and blessedness hereafter. And indeed how

can it be otherwise, the apostle reasons. He hath already given us His Son, will He not with Him freely give us all things? He hath already evinced His regard by sparing not His well-beloved—but surrendering Him to the death of a sore and heavy atonement for us, at the time that we were adversaries. And now that He has done so much in circumstances so unlikely, will He not carry on the work of deliverance to its final accomplishment when circumstances have changed!—when we who at one time stood afar off have now drawn nigh; and when He, who at one time shuddered with very apprehension at the dark vale of agony before Him, has now burst loose from His imprisonment, and finally escaped from the grief that was put upon His soul—has now a work of grace and of gladness to carry onwards to its full consummation? It is thus that the believer persuades himself

into a still more settled assurance of the love of God to him than before; and whereas, in the second verse he only rejoiced in the hope of the glory of God as it will be revealed to him in future—he, in this eleventh verse, expresses a present rejoicing in this same God—delighting himself even now in the assurance of His present regard; and approaching Him with affectionate confidence even now, under the sense of a present reconciliation.

The apostle in this passage makes use of such terms, as are expressive of a gradation in the feelings of him who has admitted the faith of the gospel into his mind—each rising above the other, and marking an advance and a progress in Christian experience. It is well, in the first instance, to be set at rest from all that turbulence and alarm which conviction stirs up in the sinner's restless bosom—so as that he has "peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." But it is better still, when he can not only look at God as disarmed of all enmity towards him—but draws near unto Him, in the confidence of a positive favour and friendship towards him, which will afterwards appear in some glorious manifestation. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And it argues a still higher strength and steadfastness of feeling, when it can maintain itself under visitations, which, to flesh and blood, would be otherwise overpowering. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also." And lastly, when there is both the positive experience of a gift in hand, even the Holy Ghost shed abroad upon us; and the resistless consideration that He who reconciled sinners by death, will, now surely that they are reconciled, fully and conclusively save them, seeing that He is alive again—does the apostle, upon the strength of these, carry forward the believer to a still higher eminence in the divine life, where he can not only see afar off to the glorious regions of immortality and be glad; but where, in foretaste as it were of the joy of these regions felt by him now, he is glad in a sense of the already possessed friendship of God, glad in the intercourse of love and confidence with a present Deity.

There is much, we think, to be gathered from the consideration, that joy in God forms one of the exercises of a Christian mind—a habit or condition of the soul into which every believer is or ought to be translated—a spiritual eminence that may be gained, even in this world, and where the heart of man may experience a relish, and imbibe a rapture, which the world most assuredly knoweth not. To feel as if you were in the company of

God—to have delight in this feeling—to triumph in God as you would do in a treasure that had come into your possession—to dwell upon Him in fancy and with fondness, just as one friend dwells on the pleasing remembrance of another—to reach the extacies of devotion, and find that the minutes spent in communion with the heavenly and unseen witness, are far the sweetest and the sunniest intervals of your earthly pilgrimage—to have a sense of God all the day long, and that sense of Him in every way so delicious as to make the creature seem vain and tasteless in the comparison—to have His candle shining in your heart, and a secret beatitude in Him of which other men have no comprehension—to bear about with you that cheerful trust in Him, and that cherished regard to Him, which children do to a father whose love they rejoice in, and of whose good-will they are most thoroughly assured—to prize the peaceful sabbaths and the sacred retirements, when your soul can wing its contemplation toward His sanctuary, and there behold the glories of His character, at the very time that you can exult in confidence before Him—thus to be affected towards God, and thus to glory and be glad in Him, is certainly not a common attainment; and yet we do not see how any true saint, any genuine disciple can be altogether a stranger to it. "Rejoice evermore," says the apostle of the New Testament; and "the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice," says the venerable patriarch of the Old. It is easy to walk in the rounds of a mechanical observation. It is easy to compel the hand to obedience, against the grain and inclination of the heart. It is very easy to bear towards God the homage of respect, or fearfulness, or solemn emotion; and to render Him the outward obeisance, and even something of the inward awe of worshippers. It is somewhat natural to feel the dread of His majesty, or to be visited by a sense of His terrors, or to be checked by the thought of His authority and power. And, under the weight of all this impressive seriousness, it is even somewhat natural and easy to pray. But it has been well remarked, that praise is not so natural, nor so common, nor withal so easy as prayer—that delight in God is a rarer and a loftier condition of the soul, than devoutness of feeling to God—that the sigh of repentance may be heard to ascend towards Him in many cases, while the singing of the heart towards Him may only break forth in very few—that to cultivate with God as a matter of duty, is a habit of far greater frequency, than to do it as if by the impulse of a spontaneous feeling—So that to serve Him as a master

to whom you are bound in the way of obligation, is more the tendency of nature, than to serve Him as a friend to whom you are bound by the willing affections of a heart that freely and fully and fearlessly loves Him. Is not the latter the far more enviable habit of the soul, the one to which you would like best to be translated?—to have the spirit of adoption and cry out Abba, Father, rather than to drivel before Him among the restraints and the reluctancies of a slave?—to do His will here upon earth, just as it is in heaven, that is, not as if by the force of a compulsory law, or as if under the stipulation to discharge the articles of a bond, or as if pursued by the unrelenting jealousy of a task-master, who exacts from you work, just as one man exacts from another the square and punctual fulfilment of a bargain? This is the way in which God's will is apt to be done, or attempted to be done, on earth; but it is really not the way in heaven—where He receives a willing homage from beings of a nature congenial with His own—where the doing of His pleasure is not a drudgery for the performance of which they get their meat and their drink, but where their meat and drink itself is to do the will of God—where, instead of a duty from which they would like to stand acquitted, it is their very heart's desire to be thus employed, and that without respite and without termination—above all, where the presence of God ever enlivens them, and their own pleasure is just His pleasure reflected back again. To carry onward the soul, from the cares and the exercises and the manifold observations of an outward godliness, to such an inward and angelic godliness as we now speak of, were to work upon it a greater transformation—than to recall it from abandoned profligacy, to the punctiliousness and the painstaking and all the decencies of a mere external reformation. And we again ask, whether you would not like to break forth upon this scene of spiritual enlargement; and be preferred to this nobler and freer elevation of character; and to walk before God as an attached and rejoicing friend, rather than as the slave of His tyranny and of your own terrors—in a word, to joy in the light of His benignant countenance, rather than to tremble under the apprehension of His frown; and, instead of submissively toiling at what you feel to be a task, to spring forth on the career of obedience with the alacrity of one whose heart is glad in God, and who takes pleasure in all His will and in all His ways?

You all see the one style of godliness to be of a far higher and more celestial pitch than the other; and therefore, of

course, at a greater distance from that state of alienation which you all occupy by nature. The very description of such a godliness may serve to convince us, how wide the disparity is between the moral element of earth, and the moral element of heaven; and this is a lesson which we should like to urge on two classes of hearers—endeavouring to sum up the whole by a practical conclusion, ere we bid a final adieu to a passage on which for so many sabbaths we have detained you.

The first class consists of those who care little about the matters of the soul and of eternity; who have never with any degree of seriousness entertained the question; who have been acting all along, not on the computation of those elements into which sin and salvation and death and immortality enter—but have just lived and are continuing to live, as if the visible theatre which surrounds them were their all; and the platform of mortality whereon they walk, and underneath the surface of which they see acquaintances sinking and disappearing every day, were to hold them up and that firmly and prosperously for ever. We are sure we speak to their experience when we say, that all they mind is earthly things, and that their conversation is not in heaven; that joy in God through Jesus Christ is a feeling which they never had, and of which they have no comprehension; that the extacies of those, who are so inspired and so actuated, are beyond the range of their sympathy and understanding altogether. And give them a warm invitation in time, and stock it well with this world's comforts and accommodations, and surround them with a thriving circle of relations and a merry companionship, and let the animating game of a well-doing business abroad be varied by the flow of kindness and the songs of festivity at home—and they would have no objection, if, thus compassed about and thus upholden, to be done with God and done with eternity for ever. When the preacher tries to demonstrate the utter wofulness and worthlessness of their spiritual condition, we know what the kind of question is with which they are prepared to assail him. We pay our debts; we can lift an open and unabashed visage in society; we follow the occasional impulses of a compassionate feeling towards the necessitous; we love our children; there is nothing monstrous about us, possessed as we are of all the instincts of humanity, and maintaining the full average of its equities and its decencies and its kindnesses. What then is the charge, on which you would stamp a sort of moral hideousness upon our characters; and on which you pronounce

against us the awful doom of an angry God and an undone eternity? The charge is that you joy in the creature, and not at all in the Creator; and, to verify the doom, we have only to read in your hearing, the future history of this world, in as far as it is made known to us by experience and revelation. That scene, on which you have fastened your affections so closely that you cannot tear them away from it, will soon be torn away from you; and this world, on whose fair surface it is that sense and time have spread out their bewitching allurements, and decked them forth in colours of fascination, will soon be broken up; and your hold, as well as that of all our species on the present system of things, with all its pleasures and all its interests, will be everlastingly dissolved. It is then that God will step in between your soul and those creatures after which it has ever longed, but which are now swept away. And had your joy been in Him, then the heaven where He dwells would have been your fit because your joyful habitation. But as the tree falleth so it lies; and you rise from the grave with the taste, and the character, and the feelings which you had when you breathed your last upon your death-bed; and so all that is in your heart, carrying upon it a recoil from Him with whom alone you have to do, will meet with nothing there but that which must give dread and disturbance to your carnal affections; and these affections will wander in vain for the objects which solaced them upon earth. This intermediate place between heaven and hell will no longer be found; and the unhappy exile from the one, will meet with the other alternative as his portion for evermore. It is thus that he who soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. The materials of his gratification will be withheld; and the sordid appetite remain unsated and restless and ever pursuing him throughout all eternity: And whatever the outward inflictions may be which a God of vengeance will lay upon him—there will, in the heats and the passions and the disappointed feelings of his own unregenerate bosom, be element enough to constitute a worm within that cannot die, and a fire within that never can be quenched.

This may perhaps convince the first class of hearers of their exceeding distance from a right habit of soul for death and the eternity beyond it; and give them some understanding of the greatness of that transition which there is from the carnal to the spiritual; and bring even their own experience to testify for this announcement of the Bible, that unless they are born again they shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And it may lead some

such to bestir themselves; and to beat as it were upon the confines of that spiritual region, the occupiers of which have a taste for God, and so a foretaste of heaven in their souls; and many a weary struggle may they make after this regeneration; and perhaps, baffled in all their attempts, have the same distaste for God and godliness as ever. For how can that which is bitter become sweet unto me? How can this religion which is a weariness become a delight? How can I attain a relish and a capacity for its spiritual exercises? or share in a joy which I have never yet felt, and which certainly no method of compulsion can establish within me?

Now this leads us to a second class of hearers, who, instead of being careless, are making the interest of their soul a topic of great care and great cogitation; who have recourse to active measures in the prosecution of this interest; and are all alive, to the great object of being right with God. It is indeed a most natural forth-setting of the whole man on such an occasion, to proceed on the principle of 'work and win;' and thus do they strive to establish a righteousness of their own, and by much labour to lay up a claim for wages on the day of reckoning; and in so labouring, they just feel as an ordinary workman does. It is not his work that gives him pleasure. It is only the receipt of his wages that gives him pleasure. He has no rejoicing in his master or in his service. His only rejoicing is in the reward that he is to get from him, and which is distinct from his service. And in like manner, is there many a seeker after life eternal, toiling with all his might, in the spirit of bondage and of much carefulness, who has no joy in God—satisfied if he can escape hell and reach the undefined blessedness of heaven; but who does not reflect, that it is altogether essential to this blessedness, to have such a taste for the divine character as to be glad in the contemplation of it—to have such a liking for the divine life, as that the life itself, with the necessary pleasure annexed to it, shall be reward enough for him—to have such a delight in the Being who made him, that he counts himself rich in the simple possession of His friendship, and in the breathings of a heart that glows with regard and gratitude to the person of the Divinity. Without this, all he can do is but the bodily exercise that profiteth little; and that, instead of heightening his affection for God, may only exasperate the impatience, and aggravate the weariness and distaste that he feels in His service. And the question recurs—how shall he be translated into this right spiritual temperament? It is not by the laborious-

ness of the service, that he will ever work himself into the habit of rejoicing in that master who appoints the service, and yet without the rejoicing there is no adaptation of the soul for paradise—no kindred quality with the atmosphere of the upper regions—none of that cordial delight in God which gives to heaven all its freeness and all its felicity—and, with all the drudgeries of outward obedience, no growing meetness whatever for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Now what is the sum and practical conclusion of this whole matter? We trust you all perceive how it leaves you no other alternative, than that of just shutting you up unto the faith. There is a high ground of spiritual affection, and of joy in God, and of celestial delight in the sense of His presence and fellowship, to which you would like to be elevated. But you see nothing between you and that lofty region, saving a range of precipice that you cannot scale, and against which you vainly wreak all the native energies that belong to you. Let one door hitherto unobserved be pointed out, open to all who knock at it, and through which an easy and before unseen ascent conducts you to the light and purity and enjoyment of those upper regions after which you aspire; and what other practical effect should all the obstacles and impossibilities you have before encountered have upon you, than just to guide your footsteps to the alone way of access that is at all practicable? And this is just the conclusion you should come to on the matter under consideration. Strive as painfully as you may to work out a righteousness of your own, and you will ever work among stumbling-blocks; and peace be at as great a distance from you as ever; and, so far from joy in God being attained by such a process, it is far the likeliest way of accumulating upon your souls a distaste both for Him and for His service; and, in these circumstances, we know of nothing through which to ensure your translation to this desirable habit of the soul, than just the open door of Christ's mediatorship. It has been objected to the economy of the gospel, that it exacts from its disciples an unnatural and unattainable elevation of character; and this is a most likely objection to proceed from him who looks at this economy with half an eye. The very same people may also, on looking at another side of this dispensation, be heard to object to the freeness of the gospel; to the immediate way in which any sinner may strike, even now, an act of reconciliation with the God whom he has offended; to the method of his justification by faith, and not by the works of the law; and, in a word, to the

whole character of his ministrations, by which it is reduced to a matter of giving upon the one side, and of confident receiving and relying upon the other. Now the two parts which are thus objected to singly, are those which give consistent support and stability to each other. It is just by faith, and in no other possible way, that you enter upon peace and hope and love and joy. It is just through Jesus Christ, not by working for the atonement, but simply by receiving the atonement, that you are translated into this desirable habit of the soul. It is just the freeness of the gospel, which conducts its disciples to all the peculiar affections of the gospel. If you remain on the ground of legality where 'work and win' is the order of the day, you never will win the length of firmly confiding in God as your friend, or of rejoicing in Him as the life and the dearest treasure of your existence. It is only by walking in that open way of access to which you are invited; and proceeding on the words of Christ, that "by Him if any man enter in he shall be saved;" and laying hold of that covenant of peace on which He is desirous, that all of you should lay a full and a sure reliance. It is only thus that the tastes and affections of the heart, will be led freely out to the God who thus calls and thus manifests Himself. Let us therefore sound in your hearing the invitations of the gospel; and make it known to you, that your only chance for being translated into that angelic love of God and joy in Him which obtains in paradise, is simply by believing in their honesty and trusting and triumphing and hoping and rejoicing accordingly. You can never be too sure of God's truth. You can never be too sure of the saving efficacy of the blood of His Son. You can never be too sure of your having received such an abundance of grace, as will exceed the measure of all your abounding iniquities. You can never be too sure of the faithfulness and infinite compassion of your Creator who is in heaven; and, the more you cherish all this sureness, the more will you rejoice in Him, the shield of whose protection is over you, and the arms of whose everlasting love are round about you. This sureness is, in fact, the high road to all that enlargement of sacred and spiritual delight, which in every other way is totally inaccessible. And we are not afraid of spoiling you into indolence by all this proclamation; or of lulling you into a habit of remissness in the exertions of duty by it; or of gendering a deceitful Antinomianism in your hearts; or of turning any one of you into the disgusting spectacle of one who can talk of peace with God, while purity and principle and

real piety are utter strangers to his unregenerated bosom. It is this freeness, and this alone in fact, which will make new creatures of you; which will usher the love of God into your hearts; which will bring down the Holy Ghost upon you from heaven; which will inspire a taste for

spiritual delight that you never before felt; and furnish motive and impulse and affection for bearing you onward in the way of active and persevering duty, on the career of moral and spiritual excellence.

LECTURE XXIII.

ROMANS v, 12—21.

* 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. (For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 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. 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.) Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.²²

ERE we proceed to the detailed explanation of these verses, it may be right to premise a few general remarks, on the way in which sin found entrance into our world; on the precise doctrinal amount of our informations from Scripture relative to this subject; and on the degree in which these informations are met by the experience of man, and the natural sense that is in his bosom, respecting guilt or demerit and condemnation.

We do feel this to be an enterprise of some difficulty and magnitude; and we fear, a little too unwieldy, for its being brought to a satisfying termination within the limits of one address. It seems, however, a suitable introduction to the task of expounding the passage that is now before us; and, however formidable the attempt of grappling with a doctrine so mysterious to some and so repulsive to others, as that of original sin—we do think it right, frankly to state to you all that we think, and all that we know about it.

This doctrine, then, may be regarded in two different aspects—first as it respects the disposition to sin, and secondly as it respects the guilt of it. These two particulars, you will observe, are distinct from one another. To say that a man has a tendency by nature to run into the commission of sin, is to say one thing—to say that by nature he is in a state of guilt or condemnation, is to say another. The act of sin is distinct from the punishment of sin. The disposition to it is a

thing separate and apart from the desert of it. The corruption of human nature, means its tendency to sin. The guilt of them who wear that nature, means their evil desert on account of sin; and for which, when reckoned with, a penal sentence may justly be laid upon them. The one is a matter of fact which may be affirmed in the word of God; but which may also be verified by the experience of man. The other is a matter of principle, which may also be affirmed in Scripture; but which may also be taken cognizance of, by the moral sense that resides and operates in the human bosom.

Now as to the fact of the sinful disposition in the nature of man, it can only be gathered—either from the sinful doings that appear in the history of man; or from the sinful desires, to the existence of which in his own heart, he has access by the light of consciousness, and in the hearts of others by the light of their testimony. Even though we had outward exhibition alone, we often have enough to infer and ascertain the inward tendency. We do not need to dig into a spring to ascertain the quality of its water, but to examine the quality of the stream which flows from it. We have no access, either by our own consciousness or by their communications, to the hearts in the inferior animals; and yet we can pronounce with the utmost confidence, from their doings and their doings alone, on the characteristic disposition which belongs to each of them. And so we talk of the

faithfulness of the dog, and the ferocity of the tiger, and the gentleness of the dove,—ascribing to each a prior tendency of nature, from which there emanates the style of action that stands visibly forth in their outward histories.

Now this may lead us to understand in part, what is meant by the term original, as applied to the doctrine now under consideration. It is quite a current mode of expression, when one says that there is an original ferocity in the tiger. It means that, as the fountain on the hill-side is formed and filled up, before it sends forth the rills which proceed from it—so a ferocious quality of nature exists in the tiger, before it vents itself forth in deeds of ferocity; and it is a quality not induced upon the animal by education; for, however left to itself, all of them evince it. Neither is it the fruit of any harsh or provoking treatment to which it is exposed; for, under every variety of treatment, or with no treatment at all, still is this the unflinching disposition of each individual belonging to the tribe. As little can it be ascribed to climate, or to accident, or to any thing posterior to the formation of the animal itself; for, under all these differences, we still behold the forthputting of that characteristic fierceness that we are now speaking of. It may well be called original; for it would appear, both from the universality of this attribute and from the unconquerable strength of it, that it belongs essentially to the creature; that from the very way in which it is put together at the first, from the very way in which the elements of its constitution are compounded, this fierce and fiery disposition is made to evolve itself. And just as the structure of the stomach necessarily gives rise to sensations of hunger, and hunger impels to deeds of voraciousness—so in the original frame of the animal, may there be an inherent temper of cruelty, which, ere it proceeds to devour its victim, leads it with savage delight to aggravate and prolong its sufferings.

There is no difficulty in understanding here, what is meant by the difference between the original and the actual. Could the cruelties of a tiger be denominated sins, then all the cruelties that were in deed inflicted by it on the various animals which it had seized during the course of its whole life—then would these be the actual sins of its history in the world. It is evident that these might vary in number and in circumstances, with different individuals of the same tribe; and yet both of them have the same strength of native disposition towards cruelty. Each in this case has an original tendency to sinning—a tendency that cometh direct out of the very frame and composition of

the animal—So that if the fountain can be regarded separately from the rivulet—if the kind of tree can be considered as one thing, and the kind of fruit which it bears be considered as another—if a quality of inward temper, be a thing distinct from and antecedent to the ebullitions of it in deed and in performance; and this quality be diffused through a whole species, and as much born with each of its individuals as is the shape or are the members of its body—There may then be a real and philosophical foundation for that distinction between original and actual sin, which has been so much resisted by the disciples of our modern literature, and so much decried as the fiction of a barbarous theology.

It is thus that we verify the doctrine of original sin by experience. Should it be found true of every man, that he is actually a sinner—should this hold unexpectedly true with each individual of the human family—if in every country of the world, and in every age of the world's history, all who had grown old enough to be capable of showing themselves were transgressors against the law of God—and if among all the accidents and varieties of condition to which humanity is liable, each member of humanity still betook himself to his own wayward deviations from the rule of right—Then he sins, not because of the mere perversity of his education—he sins, not solely because of the peculiar excitements to evil that have crossed his path—he sins, not only because of the noxious atmosphere he breathes, or the vitiating example that is on every side of him. But he sins, purely in virtue of his being a man. There is something in the very make and mechanism of his nature, which causes him to be a sinner—a moral virus infused into the first formation of each individual who is now born into our world. The innate and original disposition of man to sin, is just as firmly established by the sinful doings of all and each of the species—as the innate ferocity of the tiger is, by the way in which this quality breaks forth into actual exemplification on each individual of the tribe. If each man is a sinner, this is because of a pervading tendency to sin, that so taints and over-spreads the whole nature, as to be present with every separate portion of it. And to assert the doctrine of original sin in these circumstances, is to do no more than to assert the reigning quality of any species, whether in the animal or vegetable kingdom. It is to do no more than to affirm the ferocious nature of the tiger, or the odorous nature of the rose, or the poisonous nature of the foxglove. It is to reduce that which is true of every single

specimen of our nature, into a general expression that we make applicable to the whole nature. And to talk of the original sin of our species, thereby intending to signify the existence of a prior and universal disposition to sin, is just as warrantable as to affirm the most certain laws, or the soundest classifications in Natural History.

Could another planet offer to our notice another family of rational beings, in form and in features and in faculties like our own—Did we see there the same accommodations which we occupy, and the same scenery that enriches our globe, with only this difference between the two tribes which each peopled its own world—that whereas in every single instance the former were all actually sinners, the latter were all actually righteous—Who would not infer an original difference of constitution, from this universal difference of conduct? Who would not infer a something that distinguished the nature of the one species from the nature of the other—the virulence of an evil principle spread over the whole of that race, in every single member of which you saw the out-breakings of evil; and an exemption from this deleterious principle in that race, in no one member of which you could notice a single deviation from the law of uprightness? Now this evil principle is neither more nor less than original sin, and actual sin is but the produce of it. And we have nothing to do but to ascertain that actual sin is universal, in order to infer the original sin of mankind—or such an unexpected proneness of desire to sin in the human constitution, that no individual who wears that constitution is ever found in deed to abstain from it.

When one sees a delight in cruelty, on the part of every individual among a particular tribe of animals—who would ever hesitate to affirm, that cruelty was the native and universal characteristic of the tribe?—that this entered into the primary composition of that kind of living creature, inasmuch, that it may be safely predicted of every future specimen which shall be brought into the world, that this hateful quality will be found to adhere to it? By ascribing to the whole species an original propensity to cruelty, you are only stating a general fact by a general expression. And you do no more, when you ascribe to our species an original propensity to sin—inferring from the general fact, that all men have sinned, such a constitutional tendency to evil as makes you confidently aver, not merely of the past but also of all the future individuals of our race, that all men will sin. This is the doctrine of original sin, in as far as it affirms the existence of a prior tendency to sin, among all

the members of the great family of mankind—a doctrine affirmed in the Bible; and confirmed by human experience, if the fact is made out, that there is not a man in our world who liveth and sinneth not.

There is not enough, it may be thought, of evidence for this fact, in the record of those more glaring enormities, which give to the general history of the world so broad an aspect of wicked and unprincipled violence. It is all true, that, in the conspicuous movement of nations, justice is often thrown aside, and robbery spreads its cruel excesses over the families of a land, and revenge satiates her thirst in the blood of provinces; so that man, when let loose from the restraints of earthly law, proves how slender a hold the law of God has in his heart, or the law of revelation has upon his conscience. Still the actors in the great national drama of the world are comparatively few; and though satisfied, from the style of their performances, that many more would just feel alike and do alike in the same circumstances—there is yet room for affirming, that, in the unseen privacies of social and domestic life, there may arise many a beautiful specimen of unstained worth and unblemished piety; and that, among the descendants of our arraigned species, some are to be found, who pass a guileless and a perfect life in this world; and in whose characters even the Judge who sitteth above cannot detect a single flaw, upon which to exclude them from the sinless abodes of paradise. It is quite impossible, you will perceive, to meet this affirmation, by successively passing all the individuals of our race before you; and pointing to the eye of your observation, the actual iniquity of the heart or life, which proves their relationship as the corrupt members of a corrupt family. But there is another way of meeting it. You cannot make all men manifest to each man, but you may make each man manifest to himself. You may make an appeal to his own conscience, and put him to his defence, if he is able for it, against the imputation that he too is a sinner. In defect of evidence for this upon his outward history, you may accompany him to that place where the emanating fountain of sin is situated. You may enter along with him into the recesses of his own heart, and there detect the unflinching preference that is given by it to its own will—the constant tendency it has, to impel its possessor to walk in his own way—the slight and rarely occasional hold that the authority of God has over it—its almost utter emptiness of desire towards Him, inasmuch that His law is dethroned from its habitual ascendancy, and the sense of Him is banished from our habitual recollections. He may spurn at injus-

tice, and blush at indelicacy, and recoil from open profanation, and weep at human suffering; and yet, withal, he may forget and disown God. Not one hour of his life, from one end to the other of it, may have been filled with any one business which God had set him to, just as a master sets his servant to a task. He may have been some hours at church; but custom set him to it. Or he may have been officiating as long in the services of a fellow-creature; but native humanity set him to it. Or he may labour all week long for the subsistence of his family; but instinctive affection set him to it. Or he may engage in many a right and useful enterprise; but a feeling of propriety, or a constitutional love of employment, or a tenderness for his own reputation set him to it.

We dispute not, as we have often told you, the power and the reality of many principles in the heart of man, most amiable in their character, most salutary in their operation, but which work at the same time their whole influence upon his conduct—without the reverence, and without the recognition of God. It is this which can be fastened, we affirm, on every son and daughter of Adam. It is, that the Being who made us is unmindeed by us. It is, that the element of human nature is an element of ungodliness. It is, that though the wayward heart of man goes forth by many different ways to the object it is most set upon—yet in no one of them, is its habitual tendency heavenward or Godward. From such a fountain, innumerable are the streams of disobedience which will issue; and though many of them may not be so deeply tinged with the hue of disobedience as others—yet still in the fountain itself there is the principle of independence upon God, of unconcern about God. Put our planet with its rational inhabitants by the side of another, where all felt the same delight in God that angels feel, and in every movement they made caught their impulse from a full sense of God as the bidder of it; and, though each business on which they set out was a task put into their hands, gave their intense prosecution to it, not with the feeling of its being a drudgery, but with a feeling of delight. Let a difference so palpable between the two human generations of the two worlds be exhibited—as that in the one, God is out of the eye and out of the remembrance of His creatures; and in the other, God is ever felt to be present, and the will of all whom He has there made is the will of Him who made them. Are you to say of such a difference that it has no cause? Is it merely a fortuitous thing, that all without exception in the one place should

walk in the counsel of their own ungodly hearts, and in the other should walk as the devoted subjects of a Divine and Almighty Sovereign? Are we to be so unphilosophical as to affirm, that such a distinction as this is but a random contingency, which can be traced to no origin, and is referable to no principle whatever? Must there not be a something in the original make and constitution of the two families, to account for such a total and unexcepted diversity as has been noticed by the eye of observation? Where is the error of saying that there is a prior corrupt tendency in the one world, which does not exist in the other? And so far have we explained what is meant by the original sin that is charged upon mankind, when we affirmed it to be that constitutional proneness to evil in virtue of which all men are sinners.

We are quite aware, that the principle, on which we would convince the whole world of sin, is but faintly recognised, and therefore feebly felt, by many of the most eloquent expounders of human virtue; that, indignant as they are against the vices which bear injuriously upon themselves, they have no sense of the injury done to God by the disregard and the forgetfulness of His own creatures; that they would tolerate all the impiety there is in the world, if there was only force enough in the moral vehemence of their own powerful and pathetic appeals, to school away all its cruelty and selfishness and fraud. And therefore it is, that we hold it indeed a most valid testimony in behalf of our doctrine—when those very men who undertake to tutor the species in virtue apart from godliness, and apart from the methodism of the gospel, are rendered heartless by disappointment; and take revenge upon their disciples by pouring forth the effusions of bitterest misanthropy against them. It would look as if even on their own ground, the tenet of original sin might find enough of argument and countenance to make it respectable. Rousseau was one of those to whom we allude. He may be regarded as having, in effect, abjured Christianity, and betaken himself to the enterprise of humanizing the world on other principles; and from the bower of romance and sensibility, did he send forth the lessons, that were to recal our wandering race to the primitive innocence, from which art and science and society had seduced them; and, year after year, did he ply all Europe with the spells of a most magical and captivating eloquence. Nor were there wanting many admirers who worshipped him while he lived; and who, when he died, went like devotees on a pilgrimage to his tomb. And they too

had the fondness to imagine, that the conceptions of his wondrous mind were the germs of a great moral revolution, that was awaiting our species. But the ill-fated Rousseau himself, lived long enough to mourn over the vanity of his own beauteous speculations; and was neard to curse the very nature he had so long idolized; and, instead of humanity capable of being raised to the elevation of a godlike virtue, did he himself pronounce of humanity, that it was deeply tainted with some sore and irrecoverable disease. And it is indeed a striking attestation from him to the depravity of our race, that, ere he ended his career, he became sick of that very world which he had vainly tried to regenerate—renouncing all brotherhood with his own species, and loudly proclaiming to all his fellows how much he hated and execrated and abjured them.

What Rousseau is in prose, Lord Byron is in poetry. Only he never aimed to better a world, of which he seldom spoke but in the deep and bitter derision of a heart that utterly despised it—not because of its ungodliness, for it is not this which calls forth the vindictiveness of his most appalling abjurations. But it is obviously his feeling of humanity, that its whole heart is sick and its whole head is sore; that some virus of deep and deadly infusion pervades the whole extent of it; and never is he more in his own favourite element, than when giving back to the world from his own pages, the reflected image of that guilt which troubles and deforms it. One should have liked to see a mind so powerful as his, led to that secret of this world's depravity, which is only revealed unto babes, while hid in a veil of apparent mysticism from the wise and the prudent. And yet even as it is, does he, in the wild and frenzied career of his own imagination, catch a passing glimpse of the truth that he had not yet apprehended.

“Our life is a false nature—’tis not in
The harmony of things—this hard decree,
This unradicable taint of sin,
This boundless Upas, this all-blasting tree,
Whose root is earth, whose leaves and branches be
The skies, which rain their plagues on man like dew,
Disease, death, bondage, all the woes we see,
And even the woes we see not, which thro’ through
The immediacable soul, with heart-aches ever new.”

It has turned out as we apprehended. We have said enough for one address; and yet we have not been able to pass away from the first branch of the subject of original sin, even the sinful tendency which exists, as a native and constitutional attribute of our species, and has been denominated the corruption of our species. We cannot at present afford so much as one sentence on the other branch of the subject, which is original sin in

respect of the guilt of it; and under which we may have to advance a few remarks, for elucidating what has been termed the imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity. It is evident that the two topics of the existence of original sin and the guilt of it, are distinct from one another; and they lead to distinct practical consequences. The only one we shall urge upon you just now, is, that, however much poetry and philosophy and eloquence may have failed in their attempts to extirpate the moral disorders of our world,—this is the very enterprise which the gospel of Jesus Christ has embarked upon; and on the success of which, in the case of all who truly submit to its lessons, it has adventured the whole credit of its divinity and its truth. We mistake Christianity, if we think that it only provides an expiation, to do away the guilt of our original depravity. It provides a regenerating influence, to do away its existence. It does something more than demonstrate the evil malady of our nature. It will not be satisfied with any thing short of destroying it. For this purpose it brings a new and a powerful element into living play with the original elements of our constitution; and with these it sustains a combat that may well be denominated a war of extermination. The moralists of our age, whether in lessons from the academic chair, or by the insinuating address of fiction and poetry—while they try to mend and to embellish human life, have never struck one effective blow at that ungodliness of the heart, which is the germ of all the distempers in human society. It is against this that the gospel aims its decisive thrust, as at the very seed and principle of the mischief. It combats the disease in its original elements; and, instead of idly attempting to intercept or turn aside the stream of this sore corruption, its makes head against that fortress where the emanating fountain of the distemper lies. For this purpose, the truths which it reveals, and the weapons which it employs, and the expedients which it puts into operation—nay, the very terms of that vocabulary which it uses, are all most strikingly contrasted both with the conceptions and the phraseology of general literature. There is nothing, there is positively nothing, in that general literature, the profest object of which too is to moralize our species—about the blood of an everlasting covenant; or the path of reconciliation with God, by an offered and appointed mediation; or the provision of a sanctifying Spirit, by which there is infused into our nature, a counteracting virtue to all the sinfulness that abounds in it. We have already had proof for the utter impotency

of all that has issued from the schools of sentiment and philosophy. Should not this shut us up, at least to the experiment of this very peculiar gospel, which offers to guide the world to a consummation that hitherto has been so very hopeless? Let each, at all events, try it for himself. Let each here present, whose conscience has responded to the charge of ungodliness, feel himself drawn to an expedient, by which this most obstinate of all tendencies may at length be overcome. And for your encouragement at the outset, let us announce to you, that this said gospel justifies the ungodly. Even now acceptance is offered to you. Even now reconciliation may be entered on, and that without

waiting till the heart has given up its practical and deep-rooted atheism. The first act to which you are called, is an act of agreement with the God whom you have so totally renounced, in the habit and history of your past life. The blood of Christ, if you will only take heart and believe in it, washes away the guilt of all this sinfulness; and the promise that He gives to those who trust in Him is, that He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob—sealing those who believe with the Holy Spirit; and thus causing them to love and honour and serve the God, from whom they were aforetime so widely and so wretchedly alienated.

LECTURE XXIV.

ROMANS v, 12—21.

“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. (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 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. 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.) Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In our last discourse, we attempted to show in how far the doctrine of the Bible, respecting the existence of a corrupt tendency in our race, met and was at one with human observation. This is clearly a question that may be brought to such a tribunal. Whether a sinful disposition exists and is universal among men, is matter of experience as well as of divine revelation. That this corruption exists in the world, is matter of experience. But how it entered into the world is altogether a matter of testimony. It is an historical fact, which must be exhibited to us in a credible record, ere we can come to the knowledge or belief of it. We cannot confront it with any thing that now passes before our eyes—it being a solitary event of great antiquity, and which has no proper evidence to rest upon save the informants of history.

“By one man,” says our text, “sin entered into the world.” He came out pure and righteous from the hand of God; but Adam, after he had yielded to the temptation of the garden, was a changed man, from Adam in his days of innocence in Paradise. He gathered a different hue in

consequence; and that hue was permanent; and while we are told that God made man at first after His own image, we are further told that the very first person who was born into the world, came to it in the image of his parent—not in the original, but in the transformed image, that is, with the whole of that tendency to sin, which, on the first act of sin, was formed in the character of Adam, and was transmitted through him to all his posterity.

This is the simple statement; and we are not able to give the explanation. The first tree of a particular species, may be conceived to have come from the Creator’s hand, with the property of bearing fruit, of the sweetest taste, and most exquisite flavour. A pestilential gust may have passed over it, and so changed its nature, that all the fruit it was afterwards to bear should be sour and unsavoury. After this change, it may be conceived to have dropt its seeds or its acorns; and such may the virulence of the transformation have been, that all the future trees which are to be propagated from the parent stock, rise not in the original but transformed likeness

of the tree from which they sprung. If this were credibly attested as a fact, we are certainly not prepared to resist it. We have no such acquaintance with the physiology of the vegetable world, as to affirm, in the face of good historical testimony, that this is impossible; and as little are we entitled, from any acquaintance with the law of transmission from father to son, in the department of animal and intelligent nature, to set ourselves in opposition to that bible narrative, by which we are given to understand, that a moral blight came over the character of our great progenitor; and that, when so reduced and deteriorated in his better qualities, a race of descendants proceeded from him, with that very taint of degeneracy that he had taken on; that the evil thus superinduced on the nature of the first man, was transmitted to all the men whom he originated—who, of course, instead of being fruitful in righteousness, yielded in their lives the bitter produce of many actual transgressions, of much visible and abounding iniquity.

There is another fact announced to us in this passage, and that is, the connection between the corruption of our nature, and its mortality. Sin brought death into the world; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. This brings out to view in another way, the distinction that we have endeavoured to impress between actual and original sin. All have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression; and yet death reigneth too over them. All have not sinned by a positive deed of disobedience. Infants have not thus sinned; and yet infants die. The death that they undergo is not the fruit of any actual iniquity of theirs; but the fruit of that moral virus, which has descended from the common fountain of our species, and which taints and vilifies, and transmits the elements of decay and destructibility, among all the members of it. They have never done what is sinful; and yet they have that of sin in them which carries death in its train. And what is this but the corrupt tendency that we have all along insisted on; the original and constitutional aptitude that there is to sinning, in virtue of which we may compute, with all the firmness of certainty, that, when the time of bringing forth cometh, transgression is the fruit that they will bear—a disposition that only yet exists in embryo, but which will come out into deed and development, so soon as powers and opportunities are expanded. The infant tiger has not yet performed one act of ferocity: but we are sure that all the rudiments of ferocity exist in its native constitution; and that the original principle of this quality, long before it has been un-

folded into actual development, lurks in it from its birth, and only waits its growth and its maturity till it come out into exhibition. The tender sapling of the crab-tree, has not yet yielded one sour apple; but we most certainly know, that there is even from the minutest germ of its existence, an organic necessity for its producing this kind of fruit, when time has conducted it onward to this period of its history. And, in like manner, the infant of a week old has not broken one of the commandments; but well may we infer, from the universality of sin in our species, that, should it rise to boyhood, there is that in its disposition now, which will advance and ripen into disobedience then. And should the hand of death arrest it in its career, and by its preventing stroke snatch it away from the possibility of ever committing one action of iniquity; and it be asked, how it is that the connection between sin and the suffering of death is exemplified in the fate of this poor innocent—we would reply, that though the mischief had not exploded in its history, yet the whole elements of the mischief lay slumbering in its heart; and, though it could not be said to die because of actual transgression, yet it shared in the common calamity with the rest of the species, because, with the rest of the species, it had its full share of the original tendency to evil.

One knows not how soon it is, that this tendency breaks forth into open exhibition. One never saw, and hardly can conceive, how a babe of unspotted descent, would have proved from the first day which ushered it into being, that it had no fellowship in that corrupt principle, which taints from very infancy all the families of our earthly generation. In a very few years, the difference would be palpable—even as the Saviour, both in boyhood and in manhood, stood distinguished from all the partakers of that nature, whose sufferings He bore but whose sins He had no share in. We have a full record of His bright example, when He reached the maturity of His human powers; but it must be matter of curiosity, and not of edification, that we have no record of His tone and habit and character in infancy. One would like if he could, to lift the veil which hangs over the experience of Mary; and to learn of her, who had the maternal care and guidance of the holy child Jesus; and to know what was the precise complexion of that moral dawn, which preceded the pure and perfect effulgence that shone forth on the history of His riper years; and to be told how richly all her tenderness was repaid, by smiles more lovely than ever before had played on the infant

countenance—and, in His hours of anguish, by such a calm and unruffled serene as not one cry of impatience, and not one movement of fretfulness or wrath ever broke in upon. But it is vain to pry into the secret of that alone sinless infancy which the world ever saw; and we have only to assure ourselves of all other children, that, helpless as they are in person, and dear to a parent's fondest regards from that very helplessness—the germ of depravity is already in their hearts. And whether or not we should put to the account of this, the boisterous outcry of an infant, and the ever-recurring turmoil wherewith it clamours abroad all its desires and all its disappointments, and the constant exactions it makes of every thing it sees to its own wayward appetite for indulgence, and its spurning impatience of all resistance and control; so as in fact to subordinate the whole household to its caprices, and be the little tyrant to whose brief but most effective authority the entire circle of relationship must bend—whether these be symptomatic or not of that disease wherewith humanity is infected in all its members, still we must admit, that the disease is radically there; and however it may brood for a season, in a sort of ambiguous concealment, among the inscrutable and unrevealed mysteries of an infant's spirit—yet soon do the selfishness and the sensuality and the ungodliness come out at length into such open declaration, as indeed to prove to every calm and philosophic observer of our nature, that one and all of us are born in sin, and all of us are shapen in iniquity.

You will be at no loss then to conceive the distinction between original and actual sin. The one is the tendency to sin in the constitution—the other is the outbreaking of that tendency in the conduct; and if sinful conduct be universal, we infer a sinful constitution to be universal also. And you will be as little at a loss to perceive, how the original sin of every human creature is coeval with the first moment of his existence, and enters as much among the elements of his formation—as the tendency to bear a particular kind of fruit, lies incorporated with the very acorn from which the tree has germinated. We know not whether, upon the introduction of sin, the sentence of mortality was made to pass on the vegetable, as well as on the animal creation; or whether, had we lived in an unfallen world, its plants as well as its people would have been immortal. But such is in fact the organic structure of both, that both are liable to dissolution; and whether they die ere the one has come forth with its fruit of palpable iniquity, and the other with its apple

of discernible flavour—whether nipped in infancy, or withered into final extinction after having passed through all the stages of growth and of decay—we never think of ascribing this sweeping and universal destruction to any other cause, than to a universal something in the original frame of all the individuals that are subject to this sore fatality: And whether it be the grandfather bowed down under the weight of years, or the babe of a week old that breathes its last, it is the same deadly virus that carries off them both—the poison of an accursed nature, that only needs the scope of opportunity for the development of all the plagues and all the perversities which belong to it.

We trust, then, that we may have made it clear to your apprehension, how there exists in the human constitution from the very first, a tendency to sin; and that this tendency has a forthcoming in sinful actions, with every individual of our race, who lives a few years in the world—just as the tendency in the crab-tree to produce sour apples, has its forthcoming in the appearance of this very fruit, after the time of bearing has arrived. The tendency in both has come down, through a long series of intermediate parents; and may be traced in each, to the tendency of one great progenitor, whether of the human or of the vegetable species. Thus far then have we got in our argument—even that original sin, as it respects the inborn depravity of our race, is at one with the actual experience of mankind. And we should further proceed to show, in how far original sin, as it respects not its actual existence in our frames, but as it respects the imputation of guilt to all who are under it, is at one with the moral sense of mankind. And then would we propose to finish all our preliminaries to the exposition of the passage before us, by replying to the invectives which have been founded upon this doctrine against the character of God. But we have already consumed too much of your time for entering at present on topics so unwieldy; and we shall therefore confine the remainder of the address to such practical enforcements, as may be deduced from the explanation that we have already attempted in your hearing.

The first consideration we shall address to you is, what a testimony to God's irreconcilable antipathy against sin, that he has made death to follow invariably in its train—that because there is in these bodies of ours a tendency to moral evil, these bodies must therefore be dissolved—that such is the blasting influence of this sore contagion, as to wither and sicken every individual whom it touches, and be unto him the unailing poison, under

the virulence of which he sooner or later must expire—that though it was by the narrow inlet of one temptation, that sin found entrance into our world at the first, and was thence diffused as if by pestilence throughout the whole extent of our putrescent nature, yet, widely as it has ranged abroad over the entire domain of humanity, and unsparingly as it has attacked every single member of it, yet it goes nowhere, without carrying the course of mortality along with it; and on account of this does each successive generation, but moulder back again into the dust out of which it had arisen. It would look, that, as if to detach this leprosy from our constitution, the old materials of the old frame-work must be beaten into powder, and be made to pass through some purifying ordeal in the sepulchre. And it is indeed an impressive exhibition of the malignity of sin, to think that because of it and of it alone, all nature is suffering violence—when we see death thus making its relentless sweep among all ages; and even before it be possible to evince sin in the conduct, as with the infant of a day old, yet it is enough that there be sin in the constitution, to bring this almost unconscious babe within the operation of a sentence, which grants no reprieve, which knows no exception.

But secondly, this deep view of our disease, however much it may look an inapplicable speculation in the eyes of many, yet, if rightly improved, would lead in fact to a deep view of the remedy that was suited to it. The man who looks upon sin as a mere affair of accident or education, may think, that, by the putting forth a more strenuous determination against it—by bringing the energies of the inward will to bear upon the outward walk—he may suppress the moral evil at least of his own character, and achieve for himself an exemption and a victory. But the man who looks upon this sin as a constitutional taint, fixed upon him from very infancy, and pervading all the recesses of his frame—who recognizes the will itself to be corrupt, and that when it comes to be a question between God and His gifts, it is only to the latter, and not at all to the former that he has any inclination—when he finds that the dark hue of an original and inborn sinfulness adheres to him, just as the spots do to the leopard, and the tawny skin which no superficial operation can do away, does to the Ethiopian—Then, if he have any depth of reflection, he will conclude, that, in such circumstances, he is really not warranted to turn away from that remedy which the gospel proposes, as the grand specific for all our moral and all our spiritual disorders. The whole range of hu-

man power and human experience supplies him with nothing, that can purge away the foul inveteracy wherewith his nature is stained; and he just follows in the legitimate track of a rightly exercised and rightly discerning judgment, when he is shut up unto the faith. More particularly, will such a man hold it to be indeed worthy of all acceptance, when he reads of a new birth being indispensable; nor will he recoil, as many do, with sensitive dislike from the doctrine of regeneration; nor will he look upon it in any other light, than as the prescription of a wise physician, who has probed the patient's disease to its bottom, and finds it to be indeed engrained among the first elements of the constitution of our nature. He will rather do homage to the penetration of this physician when he affirms, that the fruit is corrupt, just because the tree is corrupt; and that an operation must be gone through, far more radical than any which lies within the compass of unaided humanity; that a new creation must issue forth from Him, who holds the creative faculty altogether in His own hands; that ere the fruit can be made good, the tree must be made good. And thus it is, that the man who looks to the fall in all its consequences; and to the transmitted depravity of nature, running throughout all the men of all the generations of our world; and to the utter impossibility of this sore corruption being dislodged by the determining energy of man's will, because the corruption has in fact got hold of the will itself, and determines it only to evil and that continually—such a man no longer marvels with the incredulity of Nicodemus, when he is told that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and that unless he is born again and born of the Spirit, he never can see that kingdom.

Lastly, it may be replied, What is to be done? To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is the thing that is to be done. This is the specific, and that not for guilt merely, but also for corruption. You may think it too simple an affair for landing you in so mighty a consummation. Make it a more strenuous affair, by putting your own puny efforts to the stretch of their uttermost activity, and you never will succeed. The Syrian thought it too simple an affair, when asked to bathe in the waters of Jordan for his leprosy. Nevertheless, he did it and his leprosy left him. You will see God in a new light, if you look to him as reflected from the glass of the offered mediatorship. If we can turn you from the hatred of God to the love of Him, this would be to regenerate you; and we ask you to look unto God as God in Christ reconciling the world, and the

change from hatred to love is accomplished. Those dark clouds which have hitherto loomed upon you from the pavilion of His lofty residence, will forthwith be dissipated. You will then see that all majestic as He is, and awfully as that majesty has been illustrated by the account that has been made for sin—yet there is a mercy too, which shines forth in the midst of His other attributes, and rejoices over them. You will love the God who first loved you; and that unfulfilling promise, that He who gave His own Son, will also freely give us all things, shall so invite the prayers and the dependence of every believing soul, that the Spirit given to those who ask it, will be given unto him; and he, gradually formed after the lost image of the Godhead, will become a new creature—meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; meet for the enjoyment of that Paradise, where sin and sorrow and sufferings are unknown.

We have all along, upon this subject, proceeded on the constitutional tendency that there is to sin in our nature being one thing, and the guilt chargeable upon us for having such a tendency being another. The question, how far a native and original depravity exists among mankind, is one thing. The question, how far mankind are justly liable to be reckoned with, or to be dealt with as responsible and worthy of punishment for having such a tendency, is another. We have already spoken abundantly to the fact of the actual depravity—announced to us most explicitly in the Bible, and confirmed to us most entirely and universally by personal observation. In as far as the doctrine of original sin affirms a native disposition to sin, and a disposition so strong in all as that all are sinners—then is the doctrine at one with experience. But in as far as the doctrine affirms, that there is a blame or a demerit rightly attachable to man for having such a disposition, or that he is to be held a guilty and condemned creature on account of it—this is a question referable not to the experience of man, but to the moral sense of man. The experience of man takes cognizance of the question whether such a thing is; and so is applicable to the question whether a depraved tendency to moral evil is or is not in the human constitution. The moral sense of man takes cognizance of the question, whether such a thing ought to be; and is therefore applicable to the question, whether man ought to be held and dealt with as a criminal on account of a tendency which came unbidden by him into the world—which entered among the first elements of his constitution, without ever consulting him or asking any leave from him upon the subject—which he derived,

not by choice but by inheritance, and over which he had no more control than he had over the properties of the air which he breathed, or the milk which nourished him. We feel that we are touching on the borders of a very profound, and what to most is a very unfathomable speculation—But yet we would not have ventured so far—had we not both conceived it due to scriptural truth, which we think ought to be firmly and fearlessly expounded, up to the full amount of all that is revealed to us; and had we not furthermore conceived the whole exposure of our disease and misery, to have a deciding influence on him who still hesitates about the remedy of the gospel—not very sure perhaps, whether he is altogether welcome to the use of it; not very sure perhaps whether he altogether stands in urgent and indispensable need of it.

To determine the question then, in how far the attaching of demerit to a sinful nature that man has brought with him into the world is agreeable to the moral sense of mankind—we should enquire how much or how little man requires to have within his view, ere his moral sense shall pronounce on the character either of any act or of any disposition that is submitted to his notice. One may see a dagger projected from behind a curtain, and in the firm grasp of a human hand, and directed with sure and deadly aim against the bosom of an unconscious sleeper; and, seeing no more, he would infer of the individual who held this mortal weapon, that he was an assassin, and that he deserved the death of an assassin. Had he seen all, he might have seen that this seeming agent of the murder which had just been perpetrated, was in fact a struggling and overpowered victim, in the hands of others—that he, the friend of the deceased was pitched upon, in the spirit of diabolic cruelty, as the unwilling instrument of the deed which he abhorred—that for this purpose, the fatal knife was clasped or fastened to his hand; and his voice was stifled by violence; and he was borne in deep silence to the spot by the strength of others; and there was he, in most revolting agony of heart, compelled to thrust forward his passive or rather his resisting arm, and immediately to strike the exterminating blow into the bosom of a much-loved companion. Who does not see that the moral sense, when these new circumstances come into view, would instantly amend or rather reverse, and that totally, the former decision which it had passed upon the subject—that he, whom it deemed the murderer and chargeable with all the guilt of so foul an atrocity, it would most readily absolve from all the blame and all the condemnation—that it would transfer

the charge to those who were behind him, and pronounce them to be the murderers—that he who held the dagger and performed the deed was innocent of all its turpitude, because the victim of a necessity which he could not help, and against which he had wrought and wrestled in vain: and thus, ere it passes such a sentence as it feels to be righteous, must it look not merely to the act but to the intention, not merely to the work of the hand but to the will of the heart which prompted it.

Now if we have any right consciousness of our own moral feelings, or any right observation of the moral feelings of others, the mind of man, in order to be made up as to the moral character of any act that is submitted to its notice, needs to know what the intention was that originated the act, but needs no more. It makes no inquiry as to what that was which originated the intention. Give it simply to understand, that such is the intention of a man who is not under derangement, and therefore knows what he is purposing and what he is doing; and then, without looking farther, the moral sense comes at once to its summary estimate of the moral character of that which is under contemplation. Let us see a man who has done a murderous act, in the circumstances which we have just now specified; and we do not look upon him as a criminal, because we find that the act originated in the will of others and against his own will. Let us see a man who has done a murderous act, and was instigated thereto by a murderous disposition, and we cannot help looking upon him as a criminal—finding as we do that the act originated in his own will. An act against the will indicates no demerit on the part of him who performed it. But an act with the will gives us the full impression of demerit. The philosopher may amuse himself with the ulterior query. What was it that originated the will? But the peasant has no metaphysics and no speculation for entertaining such a topic—And yet he has just as fresh and just as enlightened a sense of the demerit of a bad action coming from a bad intention, as the most curious and contemplative inquirer has—whose restless appetite is ever carrying him upward among the remote and hidden principles of the phenomena that are around him. To get a right moral estimate of any given act, we must carry our view up from the act of the hand to the disposition of the heart; but we need to carry it up no farther. The moment that the disposition is seen, the moral sense is correspondingly affected; and rests its whole estimation, whether of merit or of demerit, not on the anterior cause which gave origin to the disposition, but on the

character which it now bears, or the aspect under which it is now seen and contemplated before you.

How the disposition got there is not the question, which the moral sense of man, when he is unvitiated by a taste for speculation, takes any concern in. It is enough for the moral sense, that the disposition is there. One may conceive, with the Manichæans of old, two eternal Beings—one of whom was essentially wicked and malignant and impure, and the other of whom was essentially good and upright and compassionate and holy from everlasting. We could not tell how these opposite dispositions got there, for there they behoved to be from the unfathomable depths of the eternity that is behind us—yet that would not hinder us from regarding the one as an object of moral hatefulness and dislike, and the other as an object of moral esteem and moral approbation. It is enough that the dispositions exist; and it matters not how they originated, or if ever they had an origin at all. And, in like manner, give us two human individuals—one of whom is revengeful and dishonest and profligate and sensual, and the other of whom is kind and generous and honourable and godly—Our moral sense on the simple exhibition of these two characters, leads us to regard the one as blameable and the other as praiseworthy—the one as rightly the object of condemnation and punishment, and the other as rightly the object of approval and reward. And in so doing, it does not look so far back, as to the primary or originating cause of the distinction that obtains between these two characters. It looks as far back, as to reach its contemplation from the act of the outer man to the disposition of the inner man; but there it stops. Give to its view a wrong act originating in a wrong intention; and it asks no more to make up its estimate of the criminality of what has been offered to its notice. It troubles not itself with the metaphysics of prior and originating causes; and, however the deed in question may have originated, let it simply have emanated from a concurring disposition on the part of him who has performed it, and be a deed of wickedness—then does it conclude that the man has done wickedly and that he should be dealt with accordingly.

We know very well what it is, that stumbles so readily the speculative inquirer into this mystery. He thinks that a man born with a sinful disposition, is born with the necessity of sinning; and that to be under such a necessity, exempts him from all blame, and all imputation of guiltiness in having sinned. But so long as he is under this feeling, he is in fact, though not very conscious of the delusion,

he is in fact confounding two things which are distinct the one from the other. He is confounding the necessity that is against the will, with the necessity that is with the will. The man who struggled against the external force, that compelled him to thrust a dagger into the bosom of his friend, was operated upon by a necessity that was against his will; and you exempt him from all charge of criminality in the matter. But the man who does the very same thing at the spontaneous bidding of his own heart—whose will prompted him to the act, and who gave his consent and his choice to this deed of enormity—this is the man whom you irresistibly condemn, and you irresistibly recoil from. With such a disposition as he had, it was perhaps unavoidable; but the very having of such a disposition, makes him in your eye a monster of moral deformity. If there was a kind of necessity here, it was a necessity of an essentially different sort from the one we have just now specified, and ought therefore not to be confounded with it. It is necessity with the will, and not against it; and by the law both of God and man, the act he has committed is a crime and he is treated as a criminal.

The only necessity which excuses a man for doing what is evil, is a necessity that forces him by an external violence to do it, against the bent of his will struggling most honestly and determinedly to resist it. But if it be with the bent of the will, if the necessity he lies under of doing the evil thing consists in this, that his will is strongly and determinedly bent upon the doing of it—then such a necessity as this, so far from extenuating the man's guiltiness, just aggravates it the more, and stamps upon it, in all plain moral estimation, a character of fuller atrocity. For set before us two murderers, and the one of them differing from the other in the keenness and intensity of his thirst for blood. We have already evinced to you, how there is one species of necessity which extinguishes the criminality of the act altogether—even that necessity which operates with violence upon the muscles of the body, and overbears the moral desires and tendency of the mind. But there is another species of necessity, which heightens the criminality of murder—even that necessity, which lies in the taste and tendency of the mind towards this deed of unnatural violence. And if of these two assassins of the cave or of the highway, the one was pointed out to us who felt the most uncontrollable impulse towards so fell a perpetration; and to whom the fears and the cries and the agonies of the trembling victim, ministered the most savage complacency—he of the two, even in spite of the greater inward necessity

that lay upon him, he, in the breast of every plain and unsophisticated man, would raise the sensations of keenest indignancy; and be regarded by all as the one, whom the voice of justice most loudly demanded, as a sacrifice to the peace and the protection of society.

It is enough then that a disposition to moral evil exists; and however it originated, the disposition in itself, with all the evil acts which emanate therefrom, calls forth, by the law of our moral nature, a sentiment of blame or reprobation. It may have been acquired by education? or it may have been infused into us by the force of surrounding example; or it may be the fruit, instead of the principle, of many wilful iniquities of conduct; or, finally, it may, agreeably to the doctrine of original sin, have been as much transmitted in the shape of a constitutional bias from father to son, as is the ferocity of a tiger, or the industry of an ant, or the acidity of an apple, or the odour and loveliness of a rose. When we look to the beauty of a flower, we feel touched and attracted by the mere exhibition of the object—nor is it necessary that we should know when this property sprung into existence. When we taste the sourness of a particular fruit, it matters not to the sensation, whether this unpleasant quality is due to the training of the tree, or to some accident of exposure it has met with, or finally to some inherent universal tendency diffused over the whole species, and derived through seeds and acorns from the trees of former generations. When assailed by the fury of some wild vindictive animal, we meet it with the same resentment, and inflict upon it the same chastisement or revenge—whether the malignant rage by which it is actuated, be the sin of its nature derived to it from inheritance, or the sin of its education derived to it from the perverse influence of the circumstances by which it has been surrounded. And lastly, when moral corruption is offered to our notice in the character of man—when we see a depraved will venting itself forth in deeds of depravity—when, in every individual we meet with, we behold an ungodliness or a selfishness or a deceit or an impurity, which altogether make the moral scenery of earth, so widely different from the moral scenery of heaven—It positively makes no difference to your feeling of loathsomeness and culpability, wherewith we regard it—whether the vitiating taint rises anew on every single specimen of humanity; or whether it has run in one descending current from the progenitor of our race, and thence spread the leprosy of moral evil over all succeeding generations. The doctrine of original sin leaves

the distinction between virtue and vice just where it found it; nor does it affect the sense of moral approbation wherewith we regard the former, or the moral dislike and feeling of demerit in which the latter ought to be regarded.

If it be asked how this can be, we reply that we do not know—that so it is we know, but how it is we do not know. It is not the only instance in which we are compelled to stop short at ultimate facts of which we can offer no other explanation than that simply such is the case; or, rather, it is like in this respect to every other department which nature and experience offer to human contemplation. We can no more account for our physical, than we can account for our moral sensations. When we eat the fruit of the bitter orange-tree we feel the bitterness; but we do not know how this sensation upon our palate, stands connected with a constitutional property in the tree, which has descended to it through a long line of ancestry, from the creation of the world. And when we look to the bitter fruit of transgression on the life and character of any individual of the human species, and feel upon our moral sense a nauseating revolt from the odious spectacle—we do not know how this impression upon the taste of the inner man, stands connected with a natural tendency which is exemplified by all, and has been derived through a series of many centuries from the parent stock of the great human family. But certain it is that the origin of our depravity has nothing to do with the sense and feeling of its loathsomeness, wherewith we regard it. And let that depravity have been transmitted to us from Adam, or be a kind of spontaneous and independent production on each of his children—still we cannot look to it without moral censure and moral condemnation.

There is not a more effectual way of bringing this to the test, than by making one man the object of injustice and of provocation from another man. Let a neighbour inflict upon any of you some moral wrong or moral injury—will not the quick and ready feeling of resentment rise immediately in your hearts? Will you stop to enquire whence your enemy has derived the malice, or the selfishness, under which you suffer? Is it not simply enough that he tramples upon your rights and interests, and does so wilfully—is not this of itself enough to call out the sudden reaction of an angry judgment, and a keen retaliation upon your part? If it be under some necessity which operates against his disposition, this may soften your resentment. But if it be under that kind of necessity, which arises from the strength of his disposition to do you harm

—this, so far from softening, would just whet and stimulate your resentment against him. So far from taking it as an apology, that he is forcibly constrained by the obstinate tendency of his will to injure and oppress you—this would just add to the exasperation of your feelings; and the more hearty a good will you saw he had to hurt or to traduce or to defraud you, the more in fact would you hold him to be the culpable subject of your most just and righteous indignation. And thinkest thou, O man, who judgest another for his returns of unworthiness to you—that thou wilt escape the judgment of God, if thou makest the very same returns of unworthiness to Him? Out of your own mouth you will be condemned; and if, out of the sin of his original nature, your neighbour has ever done that which you felt to be injurious and at which you were offended—then be assured that the plea of your original nature will never shield you from the curse and the condemnation due to the sins, which have emanated from that nature against God.

These remarks may prepare the way for all that man by his moral sense can understand or go along with, in the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity. We confess that we are not able to perceive, how one man is at all responsible for the personal doings of another whom he never saw, and who departed this life many centuries before him. But if the personal doings of a distant ancestor, have in point of fact corrupted his moral nature; and if this corruption has been transmitted to his descendants—then we can see how these become responsible, not for what their forefathers did, but for what they themselves do under the corrupt disposition that they have received from their forefather. And if there be a guilt attachable to evil desires, as well as to evil doings; and if the evil desire which prompted Adam to his first transgression, enter into the nature of all his posterity—then are his posterity the objects of moral blame and moral aversion, not on account of the transgression which Adam committed, but on account of such a wrong principle in their hearts, as would lead every one of them to the very same transgression in the very same circumstances. It is thus that Adam has transmitted a guilt the same with his own, as well as a depravity the same with his own, among all the individuals and families of our species—if not that each of them is liable to a separate reckoning on account of the offence committed in the garden of Eden, at least that each of them is liable to a separate reckoning on account of his own separate and personal depravity—a depravity

which had its rise in the offence that was then and there committed; and a depravity which would lead in every one instance to the same offence in the same circumstances of temptation. According to this explanation, every man still reapeth not what another soweth, but what he soweth himself. Every man eateth the fruit of his own doings. Every man beareth the burden of his own tainted and accursed nature. Every man suffereth for his own guilt and not for Adam's guilt; and if he is said to suffer from Adam's guilt, the meaning is, that, from Adam he inherits a corruption which lands him in a guilt equal to that of Adam.

It were correct enough to say, that the sin of Cataline, that great conspirator against the state, is imputable to an equally great conspirator of the present day—not that he is at all responsible for what Cataline did, but responsible for his own sin that was the same with that of Cataline. And it would strengthen the resemblance, if it was the recorded example of Cataline which filled him with a kindred disposition, and hurried him on to a kindred enterprise. Then as Adam was the efficient cause of our corruption, so Cataline was of his; but each suffers for the guilt of his own sin nevertheless—a guilt the same with us as that of Adam's, and the same with him as that of Cataline's.

Our Saviour cursed a fig tree because of its barrenness. Conceive a fig tree to be cursed because of the bitterness of its fruit. It is for its own bitter fruit, and not for the bitter fruit of its first ancestor, that it is laid under the doom which has been pronounced upon it. But still its first ancestor may have been a tree of sweetly flavoured fruit at its first formation; and a pestilential gust may have passed over and tainted it; and it may, by the laws of physiological succession have sent down its deteriorated nature among all its posterity; and it may be true of each in-

dividual descendant, that, while it is for its own qualities it is so loathed and so condemned, still was it from its great originating parent that it inherited the taint by which it has been vitiated, and the sentence by which it has been accursed.

Many, we are aware, carry the doctrine of imputation farther than this; and make each of us liable to answer at the bar of God's judicature for Adam's individual transgression. We shall only say of this view at present, that, whether it be scriptural or not, we are very sure that we cannot follow it by any sense of morality or rightfulness that is in our own heart. Still, even on this highest imagination of the doctrine, we hold the way of God to man, in all the bearings of this much agitated subject, to be capable of a most full and triumphant vindication; and with our attempt to evince this, we trust we shall be able in one address more, to finish all that is general and preliminary to the passage that is now before us. When we next resume this topic, we shall endeavour to silence the rising murmurs, which we doubt not have been already felt in many a heart, on the hearing of the representation that we have now given—to prove that there is not an individual amongst us, who has a right to complain of the hardness or severity of God's dealing with us—to come forth with that gospel, in the utterance of which God may be said to wipe His hands of the blood of all who come within reach of the hearing of it—and to neutralize all your complaints about the curse and the corruption that have been entailed upon us, by lifting the welcome invitation to every man, of a righteousness overpassing all that we have lost, and of a grace that will restore us to a higher state of innocence and glory than that from which we are now the sentenced and the exiled wanderers.

LECTURE XXV.

ROMANS v, 12—21.

⁴⁴ 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. (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 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. 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.) Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

WE have now disserted at very great length on the tenet of original sin, both as it includes the two great articles of original depravity and original guilt—understanding by the one, that every individual of the human race brings a corrupt nature into the world with him, by which he is so inclined to what is sinful, that in fact all men are sinners; and understanding by the other, that he is justly responsible for sin thus emanated by his evil nature—even though that nature came down by inheritance from his first parents, who, without being corrupt originally, corrupted themselves and sent down their acquired propensities to evil among all their descendants. We are aware that the doctrine of a guilt transmitted by Adam, is commonly carried farther than this—affirming, not merely that all men are to blame for the sins they personally do, under the instigations of an evil nature transmitted by Adam; but that they are also to blame for the proper and individual act of transgression done by Adam himself in the garden of Eden. We have not denied that this may be the doctrine of Scripture. We have only said that our own moral sense is altogether unable to apprehend it; and that while we can perceive how man is justly culpable, for every iniquitous deed of his history, caused by the iniquitous tendency of his heart, however that tendency may have been derived—Yet, we cannot perceive, how it is that he is justly culpable, for an iniquitous deed done, not by himself, but by another who lived nearly six thousand years ago. This, however, may be the real truth of the case—whether we are able or not to comprehend it. The Bible tells us of many things, of which, without its information, we should have been altogether ignorant; and of many things, the reason of which is still a mystery to our understanding—though the reality of them has, by the testimony of God's own mouth been made perfectly good to our convictions: And, therefore, on this point of

imputation too, we would lie open to the informations of the record—fully assured that there is nothing there, either at variance with absolute truth, or at variance with the character of that Being who is all goodness and justice and holiness and truth.

It is to the vindication of this character, that we mean to devote the last of these preliminary addresses, which we have thought fit to deliver, ere we come forward with a detailed exposition of the passage that we have so repeatedly read out to you. We have already attempted to reconcile the doctrine of original sin, as consisting of depravity, with the experience of man; and we have also attempted to show in how far this doctrine, as consisting of guilt and the imputation of guilt, is reconcilable with the moral sense of man. And let us now proceed to meet the charges and complaints that have been uttered because of it, against the dealings of God with His creatures—as if He had carried Himself with unjust and tyrannical severity against them—as if He had laid upon them an inevitable doom of wretchedness, against which all their struggles are unavailing—as if He had brought them into the world, in a state of helpless captivity to the power of corruption, and then left them to perish under a load of necessity, that He Himself had inflicted—as if He had made that to be the fault of man, which in fact was the appointment of God, that no willing and no striving on the part of the creature could possibly overrule: And thus there is a very prevalent feeling of its being indeed a great hardship, that God should so have dealt with the rational species that He has planted in our world—permitting its tainted families to come into being at all; and to put forth their successive generations, in a state under which they behove to suffer, and so very many of them to suffer everlastingly.

We do not want to disguise this objection; but, after having presented it in all

its strength, we want to dispose of it. And in our attempt to vindicate the dealings of God with the species, let us just begin with that portion of the species that are now within reach of our hearing. What is it that any one of you has to complain of? You speak of hardness—how or in what respect is it that you have been hardly dealt with? You say, that, without your consent, a corrupt nature has been given you; and so stuck on, as it were, that it cleaves and adheres and keeps by you wherever you go, and that with its presence so urging and so pursuing you, sin is unavoidable; and yet there is a law which denounces upon this sin the torments of a whole eternity. Well then, is this an honest complaint on your part? Do you really feel your corrupt nature to be a curse and a wretchedness, and are you accordingly most desirous to be rid of it? Would you like a purifying process to take effect upon you which shall at length transform that vitiated nature, that has so annoyed you, and so called forth your animadversions upon God? Do you sincerely feel it to be your provocation and your plague, that such an evil thing has been attached to your constitution—for if so, you would surely like of all things that it were again detached from you? No man really feels that to be a burden, which he does not feel a wish and a weariness to be delivered from; and is this your wish and your weariness respecting the depravity of heart, that has so germinated from very infancy, and so grown through all the successive years of your life in the world, as to have made all your imaginations in the sight of God to be only evil and that continually? Do you complain that God should thus rate you and reckon with you, for a sinfulness which you got by inheritance, and without your consent—instead of getting it, as Adam did before you, by his own deliberate choice, and the voluntary surrender of himself to the power of temptation? Well then this is your complaint against God; and here is the way in which we meet it. God is at this moment holding out to you in offer, the very relief which you now tell us that your heart is set upon. He is in perfect readiness for the administration of an unfailing specific, against that moral disease of which you complain so heavily. If the complaint be just as honest in the feeling of it as severe in the terms of it—then are your desires and God's desires most thoroughly at one; and you are not more willing for being emancipated from the power of corruption, than He is willing to set you at large and translate you into the pure element of holiness. Does not God wipe His hands of the foul charge

that His sinful creatures would prefer against Him, when He says, and says honestly to us all—turn unto me, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you? You are shapen in iniquity, and if in iniquity you descend to the grave, you will arise from it to an unrelenting judgment-seat, and to a then unescapable condemnation. But, ere that happens, God meets you upon your way; and positively offers to make new creatures of you; and in the washing of regeneration ready to be poured forth, if you only want it, is He willing even now to sweep away the whole burden of the fancied injustice, which causes you to murmur. And, so near does He bring Himself to you, that He stands pledged to grant the clean heart and the right spirit, if you will only care so much about them as to enquire for them at His hand; and promises the Holy Ghost to all who ask it. Do you indeed feel it a hardship, that your heart is naturally so sinful? Come with the grievance, and come with an honest desire to be rid of it before God. Say to Him, and say it in good faith, take this heart of mine such as it is, and make it such as it should be; and if this be the honest aspiration of a heart that is really desirous of what it pretends to be—there will be nothing wanting on God's part, to renew, and to purify, and at length to wash most thoroughly away that original taint, over which you appear to mourn, as if it were indeed so much the bane of your existence, that your existence is not worth the having. God bids you only put Him to the proof by your petitions, and then see whether He will not pour out a blessing upon you; and is it the Being who has descended so far, and testified His willingness to grant you a present deliverance from the power of sin, and a future everlasting translation from all its allurements—is it He, we ask, whom you would thus challenge and upbraid for the undoing of your eternity?

That the creature should complain of a corruption which he loves, and wilfully perseveres in—that he should reproach the Creator for it, who is pointing out to him the way by which he can escape, and offers him all strength and aid to accomplish it—that he should lift an accusing voice against God, for having brought him within the limits of so foul a moral domain as the one he occupies; and at the same time turn away from the beseeching voice of the same God, stretching forth His hand for the purpose of taking him out of that domain if he will, and ushering him among the glories of a pure and spiritual region—that he should murmur because of a sinfulness in his nature, which he at the same time wilfully cher-

ishes and retains, and obstinately refuses to let it go—that he should affect either to mourn or to be indignant on account of an inborn depravity, and that too at the moment when he spurns the proposition which God makes to him of an inborn grace, whereby he will cease to be that old creature, of whom he says it is hard that he should have been so formed, and become that new creature, respecting whom he taxes God for injustice, that He had not so made him—Who does not see that every possible objection, which can be raised against the Creator, on account of what man is by nature, is most fully and fairly disarmed by what God offers to man in the gospel? And if he will persist in charging upon God, a depravity that He both asks and enables us to give up, did not we firmly retain it by the wilful grasp of our own inclinations—is it not plain that on the day of reckoning it will be clear to the intelligent morality of all the assembled witnesses, that the complaints of man, because of his corruption, have been those of a hypocrite, who secretly loved the very thing he so openly complained of; and that God who will be justified when He speaketh, and clear when He judgeth, has, by the offer of a Spirit, that would both quell the corruption and quicken man from his death in trespasses and sins unto holiness, has indeed manifested Himself a God both of love and of righteousness, and poured over all His ways to the world in which we live, the lustre of a most full and resistless vindication?

We may conceive a human being to be born upon a territory, over which there is spread a foul and turbid atmosphere—charged with all the elements of discomfort and disease; and at length in a given time, made known to all who breathe it, to be wrapped in some devouring flame which would burn up and destroy every creature that should abide within its vortex. And we may further conceive him to murmur against the God, who thus had placed him within the bounds of such a habitation. But let God point his way to another country, where freshness was in every breeze, and the whole air shed health and fertility and joy over the land that it encompassed—let Him offer all the means and facilities of conveyance, so as to make it turn simply upon the man's will, whether he should continue in the accursed region where he is, or be transported to another region which teems with all the enjoyments that he complains he has not:—And will not the worthless choice to abide rather than to move, acquit God of the severity wherewith He has been charged, and unmask the hypocrisy of all the reproaches which man

has uttered against Him? Will it not lay the blood of the coming destruction upon his own head; and though while he lives it be in disquietude, and when he dies it be in the volcanic whirl of the fierce and fiery element by which he is surrounded—is not the man the author of his own undoing; and can the blame or the execration of it be laid on that Being, who offered to bear him away from the territory of disease and danger, and securely put him down in the midst of a smiling and happy land?

Many may think this speculative; but we trust that there are some here present who feel it most closely and urgently and immediately practical. We stand with the offer of transporting you from the spiritual atmosphere of nature, charged as it is with all that is foul and turbulent and rebellious, and to bear you across the limits of conversion, to an atmosphere of peace and purity and holiness. We declare this gospel unto you. We preach that Jesus who is ready, even now, to bless every one of you by turning you from your iniquities; and through the channel of whose mediatorship it is, that the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost are shed abundantly on all who believe. If you refuse to come, it is because you are not willing to come. God will make this clear on the great day of manifestation; and when He passes the condemnatory sentence on those who reject the Saviour, He will prove to the satisfaction of all assembled, that those who did not pass from darkness to light, abode in the region of darkness, just because they loved the darkness; and persisted in the condition of evil, just because their deeds were evil. It is thus that He will vindicate Himself, and carry the consent of an observing universe along with Him, when He rebukes away from His presence, all of you who have neglected the great salvation. And therefore it is a salvation which we bid your acceptance of at this moment. Open your hearts that Christ may enter in; and, under the power of His grace, their hardness and vileness and depravity will melt away. We do not promise you an immediate transition from the spiritual element of earth, to the spiritual element of heaven. It is gradual. It is by a laborious ascent of fatigue and difficulty and strenuousness, that we at length attain those heights where all is serene and unspotted holiness. The portal of death must be passed, ere we reach the cloudless and ethereal expanse of that eternity, where freed from the last dregs of our vitiated nature, we can serve God without frailty and without a flaw. There is in these vile bodies of ours, some mysterious

necessity for dying—There is an original taint which so imbues the whole of our natural constitution, that the whole fabric must be taken down; and after its materials have been filtered and refined by the putrefaction of the grave, a new fabric will be made out of them; and the believer will then arise in all the first innocence of Adam, and compassed about with a security that shall be everlasting. Yet here the work must be begun, though there and there alone it is consummated. Here we must make head against the prevalence of sin, though there and there alone we shall be delivered from the presence of it. Here the struggle must be made, and the victory be decided—though there and there alone we shall have the triumph and the repose of victory. Here the grace which calls upon you to accept, must enter into contest with the corruption that so burdens and distresses you; but there and there alone grace will reign without a rival, and the principle of corruption that now is only kept in check will there be utterly and conclusively extirpated.

What is true of the original corruption, is also true of the original guilt. Do you complain of that debt, under the weight and oppression of which you came into the world? What ground we ask is there for complaining, when the offer is fairly put within your reach, of a most free and ample discharge—and that not merely for the guilt of original, but also for the whole guilt of your proper and personal sinfulness? It is indeed a very heavy burden that has been entailed upon you by the first Adam; but here we stand with the offer of a deliverance both from it, and from all the additions you have made to it by actual transgression—wrought out and made good for you by the suretyship and the ability of the second Adam. Your rescue from corruption is not instantaneous, but your rescue from guilt is. The offer of a free and full forgiveness is even now unto you all; and why do you murmur at the grievousness of the reckoning which is out against you, when there is out along with it the loudly sounding proclamation of remission to all who will, and acceptance without money or without price to all who will? The relief granted in the gospel, is at least an adequate counterpart to all the wretchedness which nature has entailed upon you; and even now are you invited by union with Christ, to be freed from the whole weight of all the responsibility that may have been incurred by your descent from Adam. What you have lost because of Adam's sin, is more than made up to you by Christ's righteousness; and we repeat it, that if

there be any hardship in your suffering because of a fault which you did not commit—the hardship is greatly atoned for, by your enjoying favour and reward, because of an obedience that you did not render. It is thus again that the gospel vindicates God from all the aspersions which have been cast upon His government; and there is not a man who honestly complains that favour has been lost because of another's demerits, that we cannot silence and even satisfy, by telling him that all this favour may be regained because of another's deservings. We interpose the gospel of Jesus Christ, as the decisive reply to all the murmurs of those who revolt at the apparent severity of the divine administration; and affirm, upon the strength of its blessed overtures, that it depends upon man's own choice whether the discharge is not at least equal to the debt, and the recovery of our nature is not at least equal to the ruin of it.

We now hold ourselves prepared for vindicating the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, even in the farthest extent of it, when it goes beyond the apprehension and acknowledgment of our moral sense altogether. We see how the blame lies upon us, of such personal sins as we commit—even though we have been led to the performance of these by a corrupt tendency of nature inherited from Adam. But we do not see how the blame lies upon us, of that proper and personal sin which rendered Adam an outcast from paradise. It may be so though we see it not; and that it is so, is in beautiful and consenting harmony with what we are explicitly assured to be the effect of our union with the Saviour. From Him we derive, not merely a new nature which inclines us to righteousness and holiness, even as we derived from Adam our old nature which inclines us to all that is wicked and ungodly. But from Him we also derive an imputed righteousness, so as that we are reckoned with by God as if we were positively deserving creatures. The merit of Christ's obedience is transferred to us, as well as His holy and upright nature transferred to us; and from the very circumstance of His being called in Scripture the second Adam, from the very way in which He is there designed as a counterpart to the first Adam, would we be inclined to think that the guilt of Adam's disobedience was transferred to us, even as his corrupt and vitiated nature has also been transferred to us—In other words, that Adam is not merely the corrupt parent of a corrupt offspring, who sin because of the depravity wherewith he has tainted all the families of the earth; but who have sinned in him, to use the language of our old divines, in

their federal head—as the representative of a covenant which God made with him, and through him with all his posterity.

Certain it is, that, to screen a believer from the vengeance of an immutable law, something more is necessary than the atonement of his past offences, and the derivation of a holy nature from the Saviour. Even after the principle of grace has been implanted, there are the out-breakings of sin which serve to humble and to remind him, that never till death has pulverized his body into atoms, and the resurrection has again assembled them into a pure and holy structure—will he be wholly freed from that sore corruption, which so adheres, and so strives to obtain the victory over him. Still, and at any time after his conversion while he lives in the world, were he treated according to his own deservings would he be an out-cast from the favour of that God whose justice is inflexible; and to meet this justice on the ground of acceptance, he must stand before it in another merit than his own, and be clothed upon with another righteousness than his own. Or, to be in favour with God, he stands in need of an imputed as well as of an infused righteousness; and the merit of Christ must be laid to his account, as well as the nature of Christ be laid upon his person. You have no title to cast out with the sin of Adam being imputed to you, if you do not cast out with the righteousness of Christ being imputed to you. The latter screens you from the former, and it screens you also from the guilt of your own positive offences. Without it, even the holiest man upon earth, would stand before a God of perfect holiness, on a basis of utter insecurity; and with it the greatest sinner upon earth stands on a firmer and a higher 'vantage-ground, than even had all the innocence and virtue of Adam been both transmitted and ascribed to him. And I willingly consent to have the guilt of Adam charged upon me, if, along with it, the overpassing righteousness of Christ shall be reckoned to me; and let the severities be what they may which lie upon me under the economy of nature and of the law—I see in the corresponding privileges which are freely offered to me under the economy of the gospel, I see in them the fullest and the noblest compensation.

The question of original sin is allied with that of the origin of evil; and a very deep and unyielding obscurity hangs over it—how in a universe framed and upheld by a Being, of whom we are taught to believe that He has an arm of infinite power and a heart of infinite goodness—how under His administration, such a monster as evil, whether moral or physical, should even be permitted to exist, is

indeed a mystery, seated too far back among the depths of primeval creation and of the eternity behind it, for us the puny insects of a day to explore or to decide upon. One would think of God, that He would, if He could, banish all sin and wretchedness from that system of things, over which we have always been in the habit of thinking that He has the entire and undivided ascendancy; nor can we at all imagine, how with both the will and the ability of Omnipotence leagued against it, sin should ever have found an entrance, or obtained a footing in any of those fair worlds that surround the throne of the universal Father. Yet so it is; and man with all the tone of an indignant sufferer is heard to lift his remonstrances against it—as if he bore the whole weight of an injury, laid upon him at the pleasure of an arbitrary tyrant, who has laid open his dominions to the cruel inroads of a spoiler, who but for Him would have neither had the power nor the liberty of mischief. But without making so much as an attempt to solve the difficulties of a topic so inscrutable, we may at least say, that one thought has occurred, which, more than any other, melts us into acquiescence; and disposes us to look on the rise and continuance of evil, as being indeed some dire though mysterious necessity which overhangs creation—and that is, that, after all, it is not man who bears the whole burden of this dark and awful visitation—Neither is it any other creature beside man. It is the Creator in fact who offers to take upon Himself, the whole burden of it; or at least to relieve our species of it altogether. It is at His cost, and not at ours, unless we so choose it, that sin has invaded the world we tread upon. It is He, the Eternal Son, who went forth to the battle against this Hydra; and who in the soreness of His conflict, bore what millions through eternity could not have borne; and who, though He had all the energies of the Godhead to sustain Him, yet well nigh gave way under the pressure of a deep and dreadful endurance; and who, by His tears and agonies and cries, gave proof to the might of that mysterious adversary over whom He triumphed. Yes we murmur because of the origin of evil. But Christ was the mighty sufferer who hath borne it away from us; and let us hazard what reflections we may on those who die in ignorance, or who die in infancy—yet, in regard to you who are hearing us, every ground of complaint is annihilated. Christ is offered; and you by confidence in Him, and cleaving unto Him, will reach those happy shores of peace and light and joy, where all sin is for ever banished, and all evil is unknown.

LECTURE XXVI.

ROMANS v, 12—14.

"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: (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.)"

AFTER these lengthened preliminary remarks on the doctrine of original sin, we now proceed to the exposition of the verses of this remarkable passage in detail.

V. 12. The death which entered into the world by sin, includes in it a great deal more than that temporal death, to which in common language the term is restricted. It is very true that death, in the ordinary sense of the word, formed part of the punishment laid upon our first parents and their posterity. But there was a sentence of death executed on the very day of the transgression. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"—And yet Adam survived his expulsion from Paradise several hundred years; and the way in which the truth of the threatening was accomplished, was by the infliction of spiritual death. By the fall he lost that, which Christ by his salvation restores to our species. If a title to eternal life hereafter, and spiritual life here, came by Christ—it is because they went away from us by Adam. He on that day lost the light of the divine countenance. A sense of God's favour died away from his heart; and it was this which cheered and sustained him in all the joys of existence. Hope, that sunshine of the soul, took its departure; and left the blackness of desolation behind it. The death in trespasses and sins, began with the commission of the first sin. It was then that trust gave place to terror. It was then that jealousy of God put out from the bosom its wonted joy in God. It was then that the righteousness of the soul expired, because it was left without a principle and without an object—alike unable to recover the acceptance that had been lost; and unwilling for the labours of a service, when all love for the master had been extinguished, among the fears and the suspicions and the chilling alienation of guilt. This was a death which took place long before the dissolution of the body; and when the body falls into dust, this is a death which the soul carries with it into the place of its separate habitation. The literal death is only a stepping-stone to the full accomplishment of that sentence—the operation of which began on Adam, with the very first hour of his history as a sinner. It was then that he became dead unto God; and that his soul was driven into exile,

from all the joys and communications of the divine life—just as surely as in person, he was exiled from the scenes of loveliness and delight that were in the garden of paradise. It is this character of the soul which forms its own punishment in the place of condemnation; and here in every unregenerate bosom, is the germ of that, which ministers to the second death on the other side of the grave all its agony and all its bitterness:

It is a matter of experience, as we have already amply endeavoured to demonstrate, that this death of the soul has passed upon all men, just as surely and as universally as the dissolution of the body. There is one species of life or of vivacity, that remains to us—vivacity to the things of sense, so that they form the world in which we move, and to the objects of which alone it is that we are feelingly alive. There is another species of life or of vivacity that is extinguished—vivacity to the things of faith, so as that God and eternity and the unseen realities of another world have no more power to excite or to interest us, than if we were inanimate beings. It is the reawakening of this vivacity in the soul which is stated in the Bible, as an event equally miraculous with a resurrection from literal death. It takes effect upon us on our truly receiving Christ. He who believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. He who believeth hath passed from death unto life: a death, on the one hand, in which we may be most profoundly immersed, at the very time that we are bustling with eager and intense desire among this world's affairs: and a life, on the other hand, to which we may be raised long before our bodies have dissolved—a life which begins with conversion; which matures and makes progress along the course of our sanctification; which, so far from being arrested by the death of the body, is thereby released into a scene of enlargement, and will at length, by the reunion which takes place on the day of judgment, be brought to that state of final accommodation, in which all its powers and all its sensibilities will be for ever consecrated to the full enjoyment of God.

Think then, ye hearers, whether in this sense of the terms, you are indeed dead or alive. You may surely be sensible, if God be practically seen and recognised by

you; or if, stopping short at the visions of carnality, you only move in a pictured world of atheism. Then know that Christ is knocking at the door of every sleeper's heart, for the purpose of awakening him. He employs the hope and the offer of His gospel as the instruments of reviving you; and, should you close with the proposition of being reconciled through Him unto God, He will cause the breath of another life to animate your powers—and, instead of living as you have done heretofore, without God, you will know what it is, under the light of His countenance and the influences of His Spirit, to live with Him in the world.

This death then, both temporal and spiritual, is the judicial sentence inflicted on all who have incurred it. On whatever subject we see it taking effect, we may infer of him, that he is reckoned a sinner and dealt with accordingly. And if we see that, in point of fact, this death hath passed upon all men, it proves that in the estimation of the Judge all men have sinned.

V. 13. This sentence, it may be remarked, was in full operation anterior to the promulgation of the Mosaic law. The death of the soul in trespasses and sins, was as much the doom and the characteristic of nature in the antediluvian and patriarchal ages, as it is now; and that more visible mortality, which sweeps successive generations from the face of the world, was as relentless and universal in its ravages. The men of that period were treated as men under guilt, and all shared in the very sentence that was passed and fulfilled on our one common progenitor. Death was dealt out to them all, and just because sin was reckoned to them all. And yet sin is not imputed where there is no law. Under what law then was it, that, between the creation and the delivery of the commandments from mount Sinai, men were counted as transgressors? Not the Jewish law which then did not exist; but some prior law which extended over the whole world, and involved all the men of it in one common condemnation.

The truth is, that Paul never lost sight of the main purpose of his argument, which was to reduce Jews and Gentiles to the same footing; and bring the former to a thankful acquiescence in that same salvation, of which he welcomed the latter to an equal participation. The Jews were constantly building a superiority to themselves upon their law. They fancied that they stood out, in point of immunity and favour with God, from all the rest of the species—in virtue of the relationship they held with Abraham as their father. The apostle reasons with them on their prior relationship to Adam as their father—a

relationship through which sin, and death the sentence of sin, found a like way among all the families of the earth; and from which Abraham himself, the immediate founder of their own nation was not exempted. He thus confounds the distinction, on which the children of Israel were disposed to hold out against the gospel of Jesus Christ; and, demonstrating all to be under the virulence of that disease which issued in sin and death from the common fountain-head of our species, he demonstrates all to be in need of the same remedy, and befitting patients for the same healing application.

V. 14. If death reigned from Adam to Moses, it could not be in the shape of a penalty for the violations of the Mosaic law; and yet it was in the shape of a penalty rendered to men for the violation of some law or other. What could that law be? What but either the law of the heart, or the representative law made with Adam, by which he stood to God in the relation of federal head of all his posterity; by which, had he kept it, he would have transmitted the right which he had earned for himself as a privilege won and wrought for by him on behalf of his descendants, but by which, as he broke it, he brought down a forfeiture on his own head, and in which, all who spring from him do share. In Adam all died, because in Adam all are held to have sinned. Such is the economy under which we sit, an economy which we shall not stop any further to explain or vindicate at present, having already endeavoured to acquit God of all alleged severity against you on the score of your guilt and helplessness by nature—and that, by directing your eye to the amplitude of the compensations which are so fully provided and so freely offered to you in the gospel.

Death reigned universally from Adam to Moses; and the term even directs our attention to a class more unlikely than the others to be made partakers of this fatality, and therefore serving still more effectually to mark how far the effect of Adam's sin was carried among the great human family. The death of those who arrived at maturity may have been ascribed to their own wilful transgressions against the law of conscience. Each personally sinned against the light of a known duty. Each transgressed the prohibition of an inward voice, just as effectually as Adam transgressed the prohibition of that voice which was uttered from without. And each therefore may have been conceived to die in the way of retribution for his own personal and particular offences. But to preclude this inference altogether, and to make manifest the law of Adam

incurring the guilt of a sin unto death for himself and for all his posterity, we see that this penalty of death is laid over upon those, who could not sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression—who could not, by any voluntary and deliberate choice, put forth their hand to any actual violation—or, in other words, as it is generally understood—Death reigned even over infants, who were incapable of sinning as Adam did, when appetite prevailed in its contest with the sense of known duty, and with the fear of known and threatened consequences. There is no internal war of the soul in the heart of an unconscious babe; and yet it too may share in that sad penalty of death which was pronounced upon Adam, and falls without exception on his posterity of all classes and all ages.

In our former illustrations we have attempted to show, how the elements of the corrupt nature may all enter into the composition of infancy—how as surely, as the ferocity of the tiger exists as an embryo disposition at the very first breath of the animal, so surely may the unfailling germ of a sinful tendency lie incorporated in the heart of a babe among the other ingredients of its moral nature; and which only needs time for growth, that it may break out into the development of actual and committed sin—that thus, in fact, every child is born in spiritual death; and brings into the world with him that character of the soul, which, if not regenerated and made anew, will be his character through time and his course in eternity—So that though this native sinfulness may not be apparent, till it come forth at a more advanced period in sinful performance—yet it has just as firm and solid an existence in the frame of an infant, as the tendency to bring forth sour fruit in a particular tree, was a tendency which adhered to the sapling many years before the period of bearing, and was even infused into the very seed or acorn from which it has germinated. But should the spiritual death of infants not be palpable, the literal death which forms part of the sentence is exemplified on many of them; and, just as the order to burn thorns and briars would be carried into effect on the youngest as well as on the oldest specimens of a produce so obnoxious, so death goes forth the executioner of an unsparing sentence upon all ages—and the babe of a week old, sinless though he may be in respect of his outward history, yet, with a soul tainted by corruption and a body on which the curse of mortality may at any time be realised, does he share alike with the hoary offender in that sentence, of which, as it respects the infant, no other

account can be given than that, as in Adam he sinned so in Adam he dies.

'Who is the figure of Him that was to come.' Adam is here stated to be the figure of Jesus Christ; and this statement completes our information respecting the whole amount of the mischief entailed upon his posterity. Experience tells us that from him we inherit a depraved tendency to evil. The moral sense tells us, that we justly incur guilt for the sins of our corrupt nature. But neither the one nor the other, do we think, tells us that we are responsible for the sin done by Adam in paradise. The information however, which we cannot get from either of these two sources, we get from Scripture—when it announces to us that Adam is the figure of Christ; and that what of righteousness we derive from the one, we derive of guilt and condemnation from the other. Now we know, that it is not enough to derive from Christ the cancelment of all the debt that we have already incurred—neither is it enough to derive from him a new and a holy nature, under the workings of which, we aspire after a heavenly character, and at length reach it. In the midst of all our aspirings, there is a mingling of sin so long as we are compassed about with these vile bodies; and as God will not look upon us with regard, unless we offer ourselves to Him in a righteousness that is worthy of that regard, we need to have the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to us, just as much as we need His sanctifying grace to be infused into us. And accordingly we are told in express terms, that the merit of Christ's good actions is ascribed to us; and, if Adam be the figure of Christ, this benefit that we obtain from the latter has a counterpart bane that has descended upon us from the former—or, in other words, the demerit of Adam's bad action is ascribed to us. And as, under the second economy, we are held to be rewardable for the obedience of the one—so, to complete the figurative resemblance, we, under the first economy, are held to be responsible for the disobedience of the other.

This part of the doctrine of original sin we hold to be matter of pure revelation—a portion of God's jurisprudence, the whole rationale of which we cannot comprehend; but not, as we have endeavoured to show, in any way at war with tenderness and love to the children of men. For, leaving the two cases of heathenism and infancy to Himself, what have we who are neither heathen nor infants to complain of? Is it that our estate by nature has been left so heavily entailed by our first progenitor—then there is a surety provided, to the benefit of which we are

all most abundantly welcome; and by the acceptance of which, the estate is disburdened, and fully restored to all the value it ever had. I am glad to have been a sharer in all the miseries of Adam's rebellion, as that is the very circumstance which has marked me out as a welcome sharer in all the privileges of Christ's mediation. I am glad to have incurred all the forfeitures which were laid upon Adam and his degenerate offspring, as this is the very thing which has brought me within the scope of a most glorious amnesty and* a most ample restoration. I will not quarrel with the doctrine of original sin, but hold it a kindness to have had it laid before me—as to me it is the very finger-post which points my way of access and of triumph, to that righteousness which is unto all and upon all who believe. It is a singular dealing of God, that He should rate me for another's sin, and evinces His ways to be not as men's ways; but I will not complain of it, as I have a most secure and honourable refuge in another dealing of God's, equally singular, but in which it is my chiefest interest and will at length be my most exalted felicity to acquiesce—even that He should reward me for another's obedience;

and that, instead of looking to me as I am in myself, or looking to me as I am in Adam, He should look unto me as I am in Christ, and lavish upon me all that benignity which He feels towards His only beloved Son in whom he is well pleased.

In the three verses that follow, we have such a parallel drawn between the evil entailed upon us by the first Adam, and the good purchased and procured for us by the second Adam, as to evince that there is something more than compensation—but such an overbalance of blessedness provided to us by the gospel, as may well serve to reconcile us to the whole of this wondrous administration—V. 15—17. “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one, many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift of grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 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. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which received abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ.”

LECTURE XXVII.

ROMANS v, 15—19.

“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 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. 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. Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

WE do feel that there is a considerable difficulty in this short passage; and the following is the only explanation that we are able to give of it. You will observe that in the 14th verse, the effect of Adam's sin in bringing death upon his posterity, is demonstrated by this circumstance that the sentence had full execution, even upon those who had not in their own persons sinned as he did. Death reigned even over them; and it made Adam to be the figure of Christ, that, what the one brought upon mankind by his disobedience, the other by his obedience did away.

But Christ did more than do away the sentence which lay upon mankind, because of the sin of Adam being imputed

to them. This and no other sentence was all that could be inflicted on infants, or those who had not sinned actually. But, in addition to the guilt that we have by inheritance, there is also a guilt which all who live a few years in the world incur by practice. The one offence of Adam landed us in guilt; but the many offences of the heart and life of us all, have woefully accumulated that guilt: And we stand in need, not merely of as much grace as might redeem us from the forfeiture that was passed on the whole human family in consequence of the transgression of their first parent, but also of as much new grace as might redeem us from the curse and the condemnation of our own iniquities—as might redeem us

not merely from the debt that has been entailed upon us, but from the additional debt that has been incurred by us.

And thus it is, that not as the offence so also is the gift. For the gift by Christ compensates for more evil, than the offence by Adam has entailed. Through that one offence the penalty of death passed upon many—even upon all whom Adam represented. But the grace of God, and the gift which emanated therefrom and was won for us by the one man Jesus Christ, greatly exceeds in its amount the recalcitrance of this penalty from the many whom Christ represented. The condemnation we derive from Adam was passed upon us because of his one offence. The free gift of justification we receive from Christ, not merely reverses that condition of guilt in which Adam has placed us, but that still more aggravated condition of guilt in which we have been placed by the multitude of our own offences. We obtain not only justification from the guilt of Adam's one offence, but justification from the guilt of our own many offences. Such was the virulent mischief even of the one offence, that, through it and it alone, even when separated from all actual guilt as in the case of infants, death reigned in the world. There was more grace needed however, than would suffice merely to counteract this virulence—for greatly had it been aggravated by the abundance of actual iniquity among men; and for this there was an abundance, or as it might have been translated, a surplus of grace provided, so that while the effect of Adam's single offence was to make death reign, greatly must the power of the restorative administered by the second Adam, exceed the malignity of the sin that has been transmitted to us by the first Adam—inasmuch as it heals not merely the hereditary, but all the superinduced diseases of our spiritual constitution; and causes those over whom death reigned, solely on account of Adam's guilt, to reign in life, though for their own guilt as well as Adam's they had rightfully to die.

This is all the length at which we can penetrate into this passage. We see affirmed in it the superiority of that good which Christ has done for us, over that evil which Adam has entailed upon us. We see in it enough to stop the mouth of any gainsayer, who complains that he has been made chargeable for the guilt which he never contracted—for we there see announced to us, not merely release from this one charge, but from all the additional charges which by our own wilful disobedience we have brought upon ourselves. The heir of a burdened property who curses the memory of his father and

complains of the weight and hardship of the mortgages he has left behind him, ought in all justice to be appeased—when his father's friend, moved by regard to his family, not only offers to liquidate the debts that were transmitted to him by inheritance, but also the perhaps heavier debts of his own extravagance and folly. From the mouth of a wilful and obstinate sinner, may we often hear the reproach of God for the imputation of Adam's sin to his blameless and unoffending posterity; and were he indeed a blameless individual who was so dealt with, there might be reason for the outcry of felt and fancied injustice. But, seeing that in hardened impiety or at least in careless indifference he spends his days, living without God in the world and accumulating voluntarily upon his own head the very guilt against which he protests so loudly when laid upon him by the misconduct of another—this ought at least to mitigate a little the severity of his invective; and it ought wholly to disarm and to turn it, when a covering so ample is stretched forth, if he will only have it, both for the guilt at which he murmurs and for the guilt of his own misdoings. Nor has he any right to protest against the share that has been assigned to him in the doom of Adam's disobedience, when, wilfully as he has aggravated that doom upon himself, there is a grace held out to him, and a gift by grace, which so nobly overpasses all the misery of man's unregenerate nature, and all its condemnation.

Perhaps there is a great deal more in this passage than we have been able to bring out of it. It is likely enough that the apostle may have had in his mind, the state of the redeemed when they are made to reign in life by Jesus Christ—as contrasted with what the state of man would have been had Adam persisted in innocency, and bequeathed all the privileges of innocence to a pure and untainted posterity. In this latter case, our species would have kept their place in God's unfallen creation, and maintained that position in the scale of order and dignity which was at first assigned to them; and, though lower than the angels, would at least have shone with an unpolluted though a humbler glory, and have either remained upon earth, or perhaps have been transplanted to heaven, with the insignia of all those virtues which they had kept untainted and entire upon their own characters. Now certain it is, that the redeemed in heaven will be made to recover all that personal worth and accomplishment which was lost by the fall, and, in point of moral lustre, will shine forth at least with all that original brightness in which humanity was formed; and, in

the songs of their joyful eternity, will there be ingredients of transport and of grateful emotion, which, but for a Redeemer to wash them from their sins in his blood, could never have been felt; and, what perhaps is more than all, they are invested with an order of merit which no prowess of archangel could ever win—they are clothed with a righteousness, purer than those heavens which are not clean in the sight of infinite and unspotted holiness—they are seen in the face of Him who takes precedency over all that is created; and, besides being admitted into the honour of that more special and intimate relationship which subsists between the divine Messiah, and those who are the fruit and travail of his soul, it is indeed a wondrous distinction, that the Son of God, by descending to the fellowship of our nature, has ennobled and brought up the nature of man to a pre-eminence so singularly glorious.

Verses 18, 19. "Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

The three last verses state the disparity between the two Adams, in respect of the amount of good and evil conveyed by them. The two before us state the similarity between them, in respect of the mode of conveyance of this good and this evil. They contain in fact the strength of the argument for the imputation of Adam's sin. As the condemnation of Adam comes to us, even so does the justification by Christ come to us. Now we know that the merit of the Saviour is ascribed to us—else no atonement for the past, and no renovation of heart or of life that is ever exemplified in this world for the future, will suffice for our acceptance with God. Even so then must the demerit of Adam have been ascribed to us. The analogy affirmed in these verses leads irresistibly to this conclusion. The judgment that we are guilty, is transferred to us from the actual guilt of the one representative—even as the judgment that we are righteous, is transferred to us from the actual righteousness of the other representative. We are sinners in virtue of one man's disobedience, independently of our own personal sins; and we are righteous in virtue of another's obedience, independently of our own personal qualifications. We do not say but that through Adam we become personally sinful—inheriting as we do his corrupt nature. Neither do we say but that through Christ we become personally holy—deriving out

of His fulness, the very graces which adorned His own character. But, as it is at best a tainted holiness that we have on this side of death, we must have something more than it in which to appear before God; and the righteousness of Christ reckoned unto us and rewarded in us, is that something. The something which corresponds to this in Adam, is his guilt reckoned unto us and punished in us—so that, to complete the analogy, as from him we get the infusion of his depravity, so from him also do we get the imputation of his demerit.

One may suppose from the 18th verse, that the number who are justified in Christ is equal to the number who are condemned in Adam; and that this comprehends the whole human race. But by the term 'all,' we are merely to understand, all on the one hand who are in that relation to Adam, which infers the descent of his guilt upon them—and that is certainly the whole family of mankind; and thus 'all' on the other hand, who are in that relation to Christ which infers the descent of His righteousness upon them—and that is only the family of believers. As in Adam, it is said, all die—even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But the all does not refer to the same body of people. The first who die in Adam, evidently refer to the whole human race. But the second who live in Christ are restricted by the apostle to those who are Christ's, and will be made alive by Him at His coming. All men have not faith, and all men therefore will not reign in life by Christ Jesus.

For any thing we know, the mediation of Christ may have affected, in a most essential way, the general state of humanity; and, by some mode unexplained and inexplicable, may it have bettered the condition of those who die in infancy, or who die in unreachd heathenism; and aggravated the condition of none, but those who bring upon themselves the curse and the severity of a rejected gospel. But the matter which concerns you is, that, unless you receive Christ in time, you will never reign with Him in eternity. You will not be admitted into the number of those all, who, though they comprehend the entire family of believers, do not comprehend any that obey not the gospel; and it is at your peril, if, when the offer of an interest in the righteousness of Christ is placed within your reach, you turn in indifference away from it.

And it is of vital importance for you to know, that the free gift, though it comes not upon you all in the way of absolute conveyance, it at least comes upon you all in the way of offer. It is yours if you will. The offer is unto all

and upon all who now hear us—though the thing offered is only unto all and upon all who believe. We ask each individual among you to isolate himself from the rest of the species—to conceive for a moment that he is the only sinner upon the face of the earth, that none but he stands in need of an atoning sacrifice, and none but he of an everlasting righteousness brought in by another and that might avail for his justification before God. Let him imagine, that for him the one and solitary offender, Christ came on the express errand to seek and to save—that for him He poured out His soul unto the death—that for him the costly apparatus of redemption was raised—that for him and for him alone, the Bible was written; and a messenger from heaven sent to entreat that he will enter into reconciliation with God, through that way of mediatorship which God in His love had devised, for the express accommodation of this single wanderer, who had strayed, an outcast and an alien from the habitations of the unfallen: And that it now turns upon his own choice, whether he will abide among the paths of destruction, or be readmitted to all the honours and felicities of the place from which he had departed. There is nothing surely wanting to complete the warrant of such an individual, for entering into hope and happiness; and yet, ye hearers, it is positively not more complete than the warrant which each and which all of you have at this moment. To you, individually to you, God is holding out this gift for your acceptance—you is He beseeching to come again into friendship with Him. With you is He expostulating the cause of your life and your death; and bidding you choose between the welcome offer of the one, and the sure alternative of the other if the offer is rejected. He is now parleying the matter with every hearer; and just as effectually, as if that hearer were the only creature in the world, to whom the errand of redemption was at all applicable. There is nothing in the multitude of hearers by whom you are surrounded, that should at all deaden the point of its sure and specific application to yourself.

The message of the gospel does not suffer, in respect of its appropriateness to you, by the ranging abroad of its calls and its entreaties over the face of the whole congregation. The commission is to preach the gospel to *every*; and surely that is the same with preaching the gospel to *each*. It does not become less pointedly personal in its invitation, by its being made more widely diffusive. The dispersion of the gospel embassy over the face of the whole world, does not abate,

by one single iota, either the loudness or the urgency of the knock which it is making at your door. This is a property which no extension of the message can ever dissipate. It cannot be shipped off, either in whole or in part, by the missionary vessel which carries the news and the offers of salvation to other lands. Your minister speaks with no less authority though thousands and thousands more are preaching at the same moment along with him. Your Bible carries no less emphatic intimation to you, though Bibles are circulating by millions over the mighty amplitudes of population that are on every side of you. God, through the medium of these conveyances, is holding out as distinct an overture to you, and pledging Himself to as distinct a fulfilment, as if you were the only sinner He had to deal with; and whether He beseeches you to be reconciled, or bids you come unto Christ on the faith that you will not be cast out, or invites you weary and heavy laden to cast your burden upon Him and He will sustain it, or sets forth to you a propitiation and tells you that your reliance upon its efficacy is all that is needed to make it effectual to you—be very sure that all this is address as especially to yourself, as if you heard it face to face by the lips of a special messenger from heaven—that God is bringing Himself as near, as if He named you by a voice from the skies—So that if you, arrested by all this power and closeness of application, shall venture your case on the calls and the promises of the gospel, there is not one call that will not be followed up, nor one promise that will not be fully and perfectly accomplished.

The thing offered in this passage is, that you shall be instated in the righteousness of Christ. Let me crave your attention to the substantial meaning and effect of such an overture. The technicals of theology are so familiar to the ear, that they fail to arouse the understanding; and the thinking principle often lies in complete dormancy, while there is a kind of indolent satisfaction felt by the mind, at the utterance and the cadency of sounds to which it has been long accustomed. The proposal that Christ's righteousness shall become your righteousness in such a way, as that you will be honoured and rewarded and loved and dealt with by God, just as you would have been, had this righteousness been yielded in your own person and by your own performances—this, ye hearers, is the very jet and essence of the gospel; and could we only prevail on you to entertain the wondrous proposal and to close with it, like a man translated from beggary to some exalted order of merit that had been won for him by another,

might you instantly be clothed in the glories of a high and splendid investiture—recognised by God Himself, and by all the subject ranks of His administration, as the occupiers of a dignity and a constitutional standing, to which all the homage due to worth and excellence and lofty prospects may rightfully be paid. You would become kings and priests unto God; and, like many of those sublimities of nature where the noblest efforts often spring from the simplest of causes, is this princely elevation of guilty and degraded man brought about by the simple credence which he renders to the testimony of God respecting His Son—on which it is that he passes from death unto life, and according to his faith so is it done unto him.

This is the way of being translated into a condition of righteousness with God, and there is no other. We are aware of the tendency of nature to try another; and that, in the obstinate spirit of legality, it is her constant forth-putting to establish a righteousness of her own—an object, in the prosecution of which, she is ever sure, either to dissipate her strength in a fatigue that is unavailing, or at length to sink down into the repose of a formality that is altogether lifeless and unfruitful. This positively is not the way. The way is to lay your confident hold on the merit of Christ as your plea of acceptance with God. It is to take your determined stand on the basis of His obedience, all the re-

wards and all the reckonings of which, are held out to you in the gospel. It is to go at once to the justification that Christ hath wrought out for all who believe in Him; and, entering upon that region which is lighted up by the Sun of righteousness, there to offer yourself to the notice of the Divinity, not in that tiny lustre which is created by the feeble sparks of your own kindling, but in that full irradiation which is caught from the beams of a luminary so glorious. God, to see you with complacency, must see you not as shining in any native splendour of your own; but as shone upon by the splendour of Him who is full of grace and truth. It is only when surrounded with this element, that a holy God can regard you with complacency; and, to complete the triumphs of the gospel administration, it is only when breathing in this atmosphere, that you inhale the delights of an affectionate and confiding piety—that the soul breaks forth in the full triumph of her own emancipated powers, on the career of devoted and aspiring obedience—that life and happiness shed the very air of heaven around a believer's heart—and make the service of God, before a drudgery, its most congenial employment—Evinced, that, as to be in Christ is to have no condemnation, so to be in Christ is to become a new creature with whom all old things are done away, and all things have become new.

LECTURE XXVIII.

ROMANS V, 20, 21.

"Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

It is good to mark, how, at certain intervals in the course of the apostle's argument, there is often the recurrence of some particular term, by which there may not only be evinced some reigning principle, which it is good for the reader to seize upon, but by which he may obtain a more connected view of the whole demonstration. In some former verses, the apostle insists on the mischief that was entailed upon our species, by the one offence of one individual—a mischief which fell even upon the heads of those who in their own persons violated no express commandment, as did Adam; and he now intimates to us the effect which an authoritative law, subsequently imposed upon mankind, had in

turning the one offence into many offences, or in making the offence to abound—so that the power which restores us, must not only be of force enough to counteract the guilt of Adam's transgression, but be of force to counteract the guilt of all those innumerable actual transgressions, which are committed by those who sin against the known enactments of a rightfully proclaimed authority.

It sounds harsh to say of God, that He brought in a law, for the direct purpose of adding to the quantity of sin in the world; and it would soften this harshness, could we make it out to be the meaning of the apostle, not that there was any such design on the part of God—but simply that

such was the effect of the law having been introduced among men. Moreover, the law entered, not with the intention by the Lawgiver of causing sin to abound, but with the consequence certainly among its subjects that sin did more abound. The law entered, and so sin became more abundant. In the Gospels we often read of a particular thing having been done, that it might be fulfilled what was spoken by some old prophet. It looks strange for the Saviour, to have gone out of His way, on purpose to bring about an adjustment of this kind, between the prophet in the Old Testament and the historian in the New, and therefore some translate the phrase thus—such a thing was done, and so was fulfilled what had been said by one of the prophets. In like manner, and to save the conclusion that God is the wilful author of sin, we would so render the passage before us—as that the law was brought in, not with the previous view of making sin abound, but only with this as the subsequent effect—“Moreover the law entered and thus sin did abound.”

But it has also been alleged respecting the sense of this passage, that the law has made sin to abound, not by acting as a stimulant to sin, but merely as the revealer of sin—not that it has made sin more abundantly to exist, but that it has made it more abundantly manifest. It has served as a mirror to set forth the deformity of sin. Paul was covetous, before he obtained such an apprehension of God's law as to make him feel that it was sinful to be so; but when the law came, sin revived, not that the law made Paul covetous, but made him sensible that, in consequence of being so, he was indeed a sinner. It is not the tendency, say some, to make a man sinful, but to show him to be sinful. It discovers the tinge of guiltiness where no such tinge was seen or suspected before. The effect of the commandment is not to create sin, but to convince of sin; and to make it evident to the conscience, that it is indeed exceedingly sinful. And we have no doubt, that this is one great purpose which has been served by the entering in of the law. It has shed a much stronger light on that contrast or diversity, which obtains between the character of God and the character of man. It has given a more plentiful demonstration of human guilt and human godliness. It has brought home with greater effect upon the conscience that great initiatory lesson—the learning of which is of such importance in Christianity, that the law which furnishes this lesson has been called a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. And this is certainly a most valuable purpose that is accomplished by the law. The application of

an even rule to any line or surface, may not create the inequalities; but it will make known the inequalities. And, in like manner, whether or not the law is in any way the cause of those crooked deviations from the even rule of rectitude which so abound in the character of man, it certainly is the discoverer of those deviations; and makes known to those, who are acquainted with the exceeding length and breadth and constancy of its obligations, how much more iniquities abound in the world, than men of unenlightened conscience and no moral delicacy are at all sensible of.

At the same time, we do think that the law has done more than reveal sin to the conscience. It has positively added to the amount and the aggravation of sin upon the character. It has laid a heavier responsibility on those to whom it made known its enactments; and, on the principle of “to whom much is given of them shall much be required,” has a deeper guilt been incurred by those transgressors who do sin in the face of clear and impressive remonstrances from a distinct law, than by those who do it ignorantly and in unbelief. “Father forgive them,” says the Saviour, “for they know not what they do.” The man who lives under the light of a proclaimed commandment, has no benefit from such an intercession. They sin with their eyes open; and after having fought a pitched, and a determined, and perhaps a long sustained battle, with a conscience well informed. They may do the very same things and no more, than he who has nothing but the feeble guidance of nature to regulate his footsteps; and yet their sin may abound a hundred-fold, and that just because the law has entered with its precepts and its requisitions among them. And beside all this, we do further think, that the law may cause sin actually to abound in the world—not merely by investing forbidden crimes with a deeper hue of sinfulness than they would otherwise have had, but by positively and substantially deepening the atrocity of these crimes, and adding to the frequency and the amount of them. This is perhaps an effect unknown, or not easily conceived by those, who possess no tenderness of conscience; and are not feelingly alive to the guilt which attaches, even to the slighter violations of principle and propriety. But give us a man, into whose heart there has entered such a sense of the law, as to feel the discomfort even of a minutest aberration—whose force, or whose delicacy of conscience, are such, that what would bring no compunction into the hearts of other men, is sure to overwhelm his with a conviction of guilt in its darkest imagery, and its most brood-

ing and fearful anticipations—who figures himself to have fallen, and perhaps irrecoverably fallen; and that by a slip, which, giving no concern to the feelings of ordinary mortals, would still leave them in possession of all the complacency and all the conscious uprightness that they ever had, or that they ever care for—We say of such a man, that, if without help and comfort from the gospel, the law, in all the strictness he sees to be in it, is all he has to deal with—he is positively in greater danger from the lesser delinquency into which he has fallen, than the other is from his transgression of tenfold enormity. For to him so sensitive of guilt, it has been a more grievous surrender of principle; and to him so tender of character, has there been the infliction of a sorer and more mortifying wound; and to him so conversant in the sanctions and obligations of righteousness, does it look a more desperate overthrow, that he ever came to have forgotten them; and to him so unhackneyed in the ways of transgression, will one distinct instance of it, however venial it may have looked to others, look to him as a vile and virulent apostacy. And thus, till the blood of Christ be felt in its cleansing and its peace-speaking power, may the man, from his very scrupulosity, be in hazard of abandoning himself, in utter regardlessness, to the habit of living forthwith without God, even as he now lives without hope in the world. The very exquisiteness of his moral sense, furnishes sin with more frequent opportunities for inflicting upon him the humiliation of a defeat; and, in the agony of that humiliation, may he the more readily be led to give up the contest in despondency; and thus, such is the sad fatality of our condition under the law, that, failing as we are sure to do of a perfect obedience to its requisitions, the more tremblingly alive we are to a sense of its obligations, the greater may be the advantage that sin has for plunging us into total and irretrievable discomfiture—thus turning the law into a provocative of sin, and, through the weakness of our flesh, causing that to abound against which it has passed its most solemn and severe denunciations.

And even after the gospel has come in with its hopes and its assistances—this is a fact in our moral nature which may be turned to most important account, in the great work of our sanctification. There can be no doubt, that, as that work prospers and makes progress, the soul will become more delicately alive to the evil of sin; and so more liable to the paralyzing influences of humiliation and discouragement, when sin in however slight a degree has obtained some advantage

over it. Nothing will save it from apostacy, unless, with the growing delicacy of its principles there be also a growing strength of performance—a growing watchfulness among the temptations which beset and may baffle it—a growing jealousy of itself, under the well-founded conviction, that without Christ it can do nothing—a growing habit of dependence upon Him, that He, meeting its faith by a stream of influences and spiritual nourishment out of His fulness, may indeed enable it to do all things. It is when the delicacy of moral and sacred feeling outstrips the efficacy of these practical expedients, that a foundation is laid for distress inconceivable, and perhaps the backslidings of a final and irretrievable apostacy; and hence it is, that, instead of walking in presumptuous security, it is the part of every honest and aspiring Christian, who thinketh that he standeth, to take heed lest he fall; and never ought he, even to the last half-hour of his life, while it is his part to be ever on the alert in working out his salvation—never ought he to work it out in any other way than with fear and trembling.

While therefore we cannot evade the fact, that the promulgation of a law has added to the world's guilt, and so afforded place for this reflection against God, that by a thing of His doing, even the delivery of this law, sin has been aggravated in the character and increased in the amount of it—Yet how completely, we ask you to attend, is the imputed severity of this proceeding, in as far as you at least are concerned, done away, by the express affirmation of the verse before us—that where sin abounded grace did much more abound. The antidote is an overmatch for the bane; and, virulent as the disease may be, there is a remedy provided, which, is not merely competent for its utter extirpation; but, by the applying of which there is obtained all the security of friendship with God, and all the joy of moral and spiritual healthfulness. It is indeed a sore tyranny of evil; under which we lie oppressed. Sin is held forth as reigning—as seated on a throne—as fulfilling the will of a sovereign, in accomplishing the work of destruction; for he reigneth unto death, and this is the final effect of his administration. What a wide and what a paramount authority then is he invested with—seeing that the individuals of each generation, and all the generations of the world, are the trophies of his power. One would think that the bodies which we wear might be borne up, even as they are, into heaven; and there have immortality stamped upon them. But no—Sin has gotten an ascendancy over them; and the certainty while, under this, of

their sinning, brings along with it the necessity of their dying. There is no other way, it would appear, in which this soul leprosy can be detached from that material constitution, under which we lie cumbered and heavy-laden; and so the law of sin and of death is irreversible. There may from another quarter a good and gracious principle descend upon us, by the operation of which, the sin that dwelleth in these bodies is kept in check, and not suffered to have the dominion. But in the bodies themselves, there is nought but corruption. 'In me that is in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing.' Its natural tendencies are all away from God and from goodness. Sin may not reign over the whole man, if there has been the accession to him by grace of that influence, under which he is regenerated; but, in that ingredient of the old man which is denominated Flesh—in all that he is by nature, or in all that mere nature ever can make of him, there is unmixed sinfulness: And therefore it is, that, while the great object of contest on earth is to keep nature under subordination to the higher and the better principle that we receive by union with Christ Jesus, the repose of heaven will consist in our having got rid of this enemy by his utter dissolution—in our having been emancipated from that old framework, which so encompassed us about with evil desires and evil tendencies—in our being conclusively delivered of a system, on which Death had to lay his hand and resolve it into dust, ere the soul, translated into a glorious body, could, without impediment and without a struggle, expatiate in the full enlargement of its new and its holy nature.

Meanwhile Death reigns, and reigns universally. It has both a first and a second portion in all who obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ; and even with those who do obey, the body is all its own. So that in respect of that more visible and immediate sovereignty, which addresses itself to the eye of the senses, it revels in all the glories of an undivided monarchy. And if Death be the mandate of Sin—if he be the executioner of this despot's will; and, wherever he is seen to enter, it is upon an errand of subserviency to one in whose hands the power of death is—Then what a universal lordship has he gotten, that not one family on earth is to be found, but has to weep under the bondage of this sore oppressor; and not a man who breathes on the face of our world, however firm his step and proud his attitude, who will not fall in prostrate helplessness under a doom from which there is no escaping. What a voucher for the holiness of God, and for the malig-

nity of that sin which He hateth, that, wherever it exists, Death and Destruction go along with it—that on those men over whom sin prevails, death both temporal and eternal is laid as a penalty; and that to those men with whom sin is present in their vile bodies though it has not the dominion, death comes to release them from the plague—to strip them of their bodies, as they would do of a garment spotted with infection, and cause them to undergo a cleansing process in their sepulchre: And it is indeed a striking testimony to the regal power and state of Sin, that he carries this sore fatality over the whole length and breadth of our species; and, sitting enthroned over the destinies of man, makes universal spoil of our dying nature, and holds it forth as the trophy of his greatness.

The honour of a king is concerned in upholding the integrity of his dominions, and in the keeping up of an unbroken authority over them; and hence may we conclude, from the expression of sin *reigning*, that, if this imply regal power vested in a conscious and intelligent being, there is indeed a busy and an active interest at work against our species. And taking the Bible for our guide, there is such a being, who is said to have the power of death; and who is styled from the high ascendancy to which he has arisen, the god of this world; and whom we recognise to be him whom we read of as the prince of the power of the air, and as the prince of the power of darkness; and who, seated as he is upon a throne, must feel that his glory is at stake on the perpetuity of that peculiar empire over which he is exalted: And hence the undoubted truth, that the might and the strenuousness and the ambitious desires of one most daring in enterprise, and most subtle in design, and most formidable in power and in resources, are all embarked on the object of our subjugation. The instrument of our overthrow is sin; and the result of it is, that second and everlasting death, the reign of which forms the domain of his rule and monarchy—and, from the very expression of sin reigning, may we infer that a thirst for power, and the dread or the shame of a fallen majesty, are all at work in the heart of one who is busy in the plying of his devices, and most assiduous in the prosecution of them for the purpose of destroying us.

This looks abundantly menacing towards our helpless and degenerate race—but by the side of the expression that sin reigneth unto death, let us point your regards to the counterpart expression of grace reigning unto eternal life. And this, as in the former case, implies something more than a mere personification.

It implies a living monarch—one who sits upon a rival throne—and who is intent upon an object, directly and diametrically the reverse of that of his antagonist. In other words, if there be a kingly ambition which is against us, there is a kingly ambition that is also upon our side. If it be the pride of one monarch to enslave our race, it is the dignity of another monarch to deliver us; and the desire of mighty potentates is thus embarked on a contest, the issues of which are death or life to our species. We read of Jesus Christ as a King in Zion, and of His having come to destroy the works of the devil—even of him who has the power of death; and the glory of His character is surely linked with the success of His undertaking; and thus is our lower world the arena, as it were, of a contest, which involves in it, not merely, the future condition of those who live in it—but the renown of mighty combatants, who, arrayed in hostility against each other, are striving for the renown of victory.

Now it is not for the purpose of regaling your imaginations that we thus speak, but for the purpose of assuring and strengthening your faith. We want you to see, how the majesty is as much concerned as the mercy of God, in the work of your Redemption. We want you to feel how manifold the guarantees of your deliverance are, if you will only flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel. We want you to perceive how your safety and the honour of the great Mediator are most thoroughly at one. Do you think, that, warring as He does with the great adversary of human souls, He will ever permit him the triumph of a final victory over those, who, cheered forward by His own invitation, are now trusting to His grace, and looking onward to the accomplishment of His promises. He hath graven upon an open and indelible record these memorable words, that whosoever believeth in Him shall be saved. Can you figure it then, that, on the great day of the winding up of the gospel economy—Satan will have it in his power to revile either the truth or ability of the Saviour; or to fasten upon an individual who believed in the Son of God, and yet whom the Son of God hath not rescued from the grasp of this destroyer? Jesus Christ hath embarked His own credit upon your salvation. Should any have faith in Him, and yet not be saved, He will not only fail in that which His heart is most assuredly set upon; but He will be foiled in His own enterprise, and that too by a most hateful and hated antagonist. The destruction of one who has faith, were the degradation of Him who is the author and the finisher of faith; and hence an argument for your

security in believing—for the perfect repose of that acquiescence, wherewith you may lie down among the promises of the gospel—for keeping firm and fast, that confidence in which you have begun—Seeing that grace has not only set out on a warfare against sin,—but that grace is seated on a throne, and the salvation of those who have been obedient to Heaven's call is essential to the truth of Heaven's voice and the triumph of Heaven's monarchy.

And a similar argument may be drawn from the clause of grace reigning *through righteousness*. It is this which forms the leading peculiarity of the evangelical dispensation. It is a dispensation of mercy no doubt, but not of simple and unaccompanied mercy. It has more upon its aspect and character than the one expression of tenderness. There was compassion in the movement which then took place from Heaven to Earth; but this does not complete the history of the movement. It was compassion towards sinners; and God's righteous abhorrence of sin, was mixed up with the forthgoings of His benevolent desire towards those who had been guilty of it. The boon of reconciliation descended upon the world; but it found its way through a peculiar medium, and that was a medium of righteousness—and, to meet on our part this manifestation of the Godhead, it is not enough that we regard it in the light of mercy and nothing else—it will not be accepted that we rely on the general kindness and goodwill of the Deity; but it is altogether indispensable to our safety, that, while we rejoice in His grace, we should receive it as a grace which has come to us through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord.

So that the sinner on entering into peace with God, does reverence to the purity of God. And when he draws upon the compassion of the divine nature, he renders homage to the holiness of the divine nature. Did he hold singly upon His compassion—then the truth which stood committed to the fulfilment of its denunciations, and the justice that had been offended by sin, would have been left without provision and without a safeguard. But the great Sacrifice has resolved all these difficulties; and you by depending, not on the general attribute of mercy, but on the redemption that is through the blood of Jesus Christ, can, consistently with all the honours of the Divinity, obtain the forgiveness of all your trespasses. Out of the way of this consecrated mediatorship, you will never meet the mercy of the Godhead—and in this way you will never miss it.

But such an economy is not only essential to the dignity of the Lawgiver. It

serves to complete the security of the sinner. It makes known to him, how God can be just while the justifier of those who believe in Jesus. It enables him to meet without dismay the whole aspect and character of God, in the full expression of all the attributes which belong to Him. It harmonises the sterner with the gentler perfections of that Being, with whom we have to do; and the sinner can now delight himself in the abundance of his peace—when he thinks that the very equity and unchangeableness of the Godhead are now upon his side. It does add to his confidence in the grace of the gospel, when he views it as seated on a throne; and thus, in all its manifestations, holding forth the sovereignty of the Supreme Being. But it adds still more to his confidence, when he views it as grace through righteousness; and thus holding forth the sacredness of the Supreme Being. He then sees no obstruction in the way of its reaching even unto him. The terrors of his guilty conscience give way, when he perceives that the very attributes, which, without an atonement, would have stood leagued in hostility against him—with an atonement, form the best guarantees of his hope and safety. God now is not only merciful to forgive—He is faithful and just to forgive. He will not draw upon the surety, and upon the debtor both. He will have a full reckoning with guilt; but He will not have more than a full reckoning by exacting both a penalty and a propitiation: And the man who trusts to the propitiation, may be very sure that the penalty will never reach him. The destroying angel, on finding him marked with the blood of Christ, will pass him by; and the agitated sinner who sought in vain for rest to the sole of his foot, so long as the great peace-offering stood unrevealed to his conscience, and the tidings of an accepted sacrifice fell upon his ear without conviction and without efficacy, may, on the moment of his believing in the word of the testimony, feel how firm the transition is which he maketh from death unto life—when, through Him who died the just for the unjust, he now draws near unto God.

It finishes our exposition of this passage, when we point your eye to the great agent in the work of mediation. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by *Jesus Christ our Lord*. He by his

death bore the punishment that you should have borne. He by his obedience won a righteousness, the reckoning and the reward of which are transferred unto you; and you, by giving credit to the good news, are deemed by God as having accepted of all these benefits and will be dealt with accordingly. You cannot trust too simply to the Saviour. You cannot place too strong a reliance on His death as your discharge. You are making the very use of Him that was intended, and do Him that honour wherewith He is most pleased, when you venture your all upon Him both for time and for eternity. We do not bid you earn a place in heaven. We do not bid you work for your forgiveness. We bid you receive it. We bid you hope for it. And eternal life will be the sure result of your thus receiving and thus hoping. Could we get you truly to rely, we are not afraid of licentiousness. Many see a lurking anti-nomianism in the doctrine of faith. But where there is a true faith there is no anti-nomianism. It has its fruit unto holiness here, and then everlasting life hereafter. But do try, ere you embark on that course of new obedience which leadeth to the final abode of holy and happy creatures—do try to have peace in your conscience with God. Do dwell on the simple affirmation which you meet with in the New Testament, of a Saviour who welcomes all sinners, and of a blood which cleanseth from all sin. Do let the terrors and the suspicion of guilt take their departure from your labouring bosom; and then emptied of all that kept God at a distance from you, will there be room for those feelings and those principles which form the rudiments of the new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord. Love will cast out fear. Delight in God will take the place of dismay. The heart emancipated from bondage, will rise freely and gratefully to Him, in all the buoyancy of its new-felt enlargement. It will be found that the legal spirit, with its accompanying sensations of jealousy and disquietude and distrust, that this in fact is the mighty drag which keeps back the only obedience that is at all acceptable—the obedience of good will. And the faith which we now urge upon you in all its strength and in all its simplicity, is not more the harbinger of peace to a sinner's heart, than it is the sure and unfailing germ of his progressive holiness.

LECTURE XXIX.

ROMANS vi, 1, 2.

“What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

WE have ever been in the habit of regarding this chapter as the passage of greatest interest in the Bible—as that in which the greatest quantity of scriptural light is thrown on what to the eye of the general world is a depth and a mystery—even on that path of transition which leads from the imputed righteousness that is by faith, to the personal righteousness that is by new and spiritual obedience. We know not a single theme in the whole compass of Christianity, on which there rests to the natural discernment a cloud of thicker obscurity, than that which relates to the origin and growth of a believer’s holiness—nor is it seen how, after an immunity so ample for sin has been provided by an atonement of which the power is infinite as the Divinity Himself, there remaineth any inducement to obedience so distinct and palpable and certain of operation, as that which is offered by the law of ‘Do this and live’—a law that we are given to understand is now superseded by the gospel terms of ‘Believe and ye shall be saved.’ It is of importance to know surely what were the first suggestions which arose in the apostolical mind, when met by what appears to be a most plausible and pertinent objection taken to the doctrine of grace, as if it led to licentiousness; or to the doctrine of a free and full remission of sin, as if it encouraged the disciple to a secure and wanton perseverance in all its practices. In the apostle’s reply to this, we might expect those ligaments to be made bare to our view, by which justification and sanctification are bound together in constant and inseparable alliance; and in virtue of which it is, that a sinner both feels himself secure from the penalty of sin, and keeps himself most strenuously and fearfully aloof from the performance of it.

We have already said that it was of use to mark the recurrence of similar phrases in the train of the apostle’s reasoning, as it may serve to mark the connection of its distant parts, and thus to afford a more commanding view of his whole argument. We have no doubt that the question of this verse “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”—was prompted by a recently written sentence in the preceding chapter, the very cadence of which seemed to be still alive in the apostle’s memory—“Where sin

abounded grace did much more abound.”—It is well to trace the continuity of Scripture, broken and disjointed as it is by the artificial division that has been made of it into chapters and verses—to read the letter of an inspired writer, as you would read the letter of an ordinary acquaintance, not in sheets, but as an entire composition, through which there possibly runs the drift of one prevailing conception which he aims to establish; and thus it is that we think to have profited, by the perusal of those editions of the Bible, which vary from the one that is current, by the simple device of omitting the verses, and casting it like any ordinary book into sections and paragraphs. But the possession of the Bible in such a form is by no means indispensable. In reading the bibles that you have, be aware of the concatenation that we now speak of; and let it not be frittered away on your minds, by those mechanical breaks through which, to a listless peruser of Holy Writ, the sense is often interrupted. In guarding against the disadvantage which has just been specified, you will be led to the habit of comparing scripture with scripture—a habit, which, if accompanied by that divine illumination without which even the Bible itself is made up of bare and barren literalities, will be altogether tantamount to that habit of the apostle, through which he became a proficient in the wisdom that the Holy Ghost teacheth—even the habit of comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

V. 2. “God forbid”—Let us here bid you remark the prompt decisive and unhesitating reply of the apostle, to the question wherewith he introduces this chapter. Paul has by way of eminence been called the apostle of justification. By no other has the doctrine of pardon as held out in free dispensation on the one hand, and as received by simple trust upon the other, been more fully and zealously vindicated. Heaven, instead of coming to the sinner through the medium of wages and work, is made to come to him through the medium of a gift and an acceptance. One would think from his representation of the matter, that salvation was brought to the door of a sinner’s bosom, nay even pressing against it for admittance; and that you have simply to open the door, and by an act of suffer-

ance to allow its ingress, and thus to feed upon it and rejoice. God, the offended party, beseeches the transgressor to be reconciled; and it is when the transgressor pleases consent and compliance with this entreaty, that the act of reconciliation is struck, and an agreement is entered upon. All this is implied in the preceding argument of the apostle, and in the terms of constant recurrence that he employs during the prosecution of it. The tenure upon which eternal life is given, and upon which it is held under the economy of the gospel—is made abundantly manifest by such phrases as ‘grace,’ and ‘free grace,’ and ‘justification of faith and not of works,’ and the ‘gift of righteousness’ on the one hand, and the ‘receiving of the atonement’ on the other. And yet the apostle, warm from the delivery of these intimations, and just discharged of the tidings of a sinner’s impunity if he will, and within a single breath of having uttered that where there was abundance of guilt there was a superabundance of grace in store for it—when met by the question of ‘What then? shall we do more of this sin, that we may draw more of this grace?’ is ready at the warning of a single moment, with a most clear and emphatic negative. And he gives his affirmation, before he gives his argument upon the subject. On his simple authority as a messenger from God, he enters his solemn caveat against the continuance of sin—so that should you understand not his reasoning, you may at least be fully assured of the truth, that, lavish and liberal as the gospel is of its forgiveness for the past, it has no toleration either for the purposes or for the practices of sin in future.

Couple this verse with the one that we have recently alluded to; and you make out, from the simple change of tense, as you pass from the one to the other, two of the most important lessons of Christianity. By the first verse we are told that where sin abounded grace did much more abound. By the second we are resolved as to the question. “Shall I continue in sin that grace may abound?” with the decisive and unqualified answer of, No most assuredly. With the first of these verses we feel ourselves warranted, to offer the fullest indemnity to the worst and most worthless among you, for all the offences, however many and however aggravated of your past history. We know not what the measure of your iniquity may have been. We are not privy to the scenes of profligacy and lawless abandonment, through which you may have passed. We are not in the secret of any of those foul atrocities, wherewith the perhaps now agonised memory of some hearer is charg-

ing him. We cannot take the dimensions of the crime and the carelessness and the ungodliness, of those years that have now rolled over you—But whatever these dimensions may be, we are entitled to proclaim an element of surpassing magnitude, that will pluck the sting out of this sore moral distemper, and most effectually neutralise it. Your sin has abounded, and if you feel aright your conscience will re-echo our affirmation; but the grace of God has much more abounded. Be assured every one who is now present, that there is no sin into which he has ever fallen, that is beyond the reach of the great gospel atonement—no guilt of so deep and inveterate a die, that the blood of a crucified Saviour cannot wash away. It is thus that we would cheer and brighten the retrospect of every sinner’s contemplations. It is thus that we would cast the offer and assurance of pardon over the whole extent of the life that has passed away; and, arresting you at this point of your personal history, at which we are pouring forth our present utterance in your hearing—I would say, “Come now and let us reason together, though your sins were as scarlet they shall become as wool, though they were as crimson they shall be made white as snow.”

But the sinner, from the station that he at this moment occupies, has not merely to look back—he should also look forward, and hold up the light of the gospel, not merely to the region of memory which he has already travelled, but also to the region of anticipation on which he is entering. And let it never be forgotten by you, ye men who are now in earnestness and thoughtful inquiry, and for aught we know may be at the very turning point of your eternal salvation—forget not we say that the same gospel which sheds an oblivion over all the sinfulness of your past lives, enters upon a war of extermination against all your future sinfulness. You have not yet come under its economy at all, if you have not embarked on the struggle of all your powers and all your purposes with the power of iniquity over you—nor would we say of you on the one hand that grace has abounded unto the forgiveness of sin, unless we saw of you on the other an honest and determined habit of exertion against the continuance of sin. We may not be able to follow the apostle in his argument; but we may at least take up his affirmation. Whether or not we shall see the intermediate steps of that process, through which a sinner is conducted from the sense of his reconciliation with God to the strenuousness of a conflict that is unremitting against all iniquity—yet may we be very sure, from the averment before us, that such actually

is the process; and that such, in the case of every real believer, is the personal and the practical result of it. And—not more surely does the gospel cast a veil over the transgressions by which the retrospect of your history is deformed, than, in some way or other, it sends forth a sanative influence by which to restrain transgression throughout the remainder of your pilgrimage in the world.

V. 2. Yet we should like to know the intervening steps by which a sinner is led onwards from his justification to his sanctification; and more especially when we find that curiosity in this matter, is warranted by the apostle himself leading the way, in a train of argumentation which he presents throughout the whole line of the chapter before us. To follow the apostle with a view thoroughly to understand his reasoning upon this subject, is not surely any attempt on our part to be wise above that which is written, but rather the altogether fair and legitimate attempt to be wise up to that which is written. And we repeat that we know of no track in the field of Christianity more hidden from the general eye, and yet of more big and eventful importance in the history of every believer, than that by which he is carried onward from the remission of his sin to the renewal of his soul—and so is made to exemplify the walk of one, who feels himself to be secure against the punishment of sin, and yet sets himself in the attitude of determined and unsparing warfare against its power.

It is altogether essential to our understanding the sense of the apostle's argument, that we find the import of the phrase "dead unto sin;" and it so happens that it admits of a twofold interpretation, which might serve to bewilder us, did not each of them suggest an argument against our continuance in sin, that is in every way accordant with some of the plainest and most unambiguous passages in the New Testament.

The term 'dead,' in the phrase 'dead unto sin,' may be understood forensically—in which case it is not meant that we are dead in fact, but dead in law; or it may be understood personally, in which case the being dead unto sin will mean that we are dead thereunto in our affections for it—that we are no longer alive to the power of its allurements; but that, in virtue of the appetites of our sensitive frame being mortified to the pleasures which are but for a season, we sin not as we wont, just because the incitements to sin have not the power they wont to seduce us unto the ways of disobedience.

It may be remarked ere we proceed farther, that many commentators under-

stand this phrase according to the latter explanation—yet the former we think ought not to be overlooked, as it involves a principle most true and important in itself, and brings out an argument against our continuance in sin, which is in most striking harmony with one of the most explicit and memorable quotations that can be educed from the whole compass of the sacred volume.

To understand forensically the phrase that we are dead unto sin, is to understand that for sin we are dead in law. The doom of death was upon us on account of sin; and we were in the condition of malefactors, on whom capital sentence had been pronounced, and who were now in that place of imprisonment from whence they were shortly to be led forth to execution. Conceive that the whole amount of the punishment for sin was the simple annihilation of the sinner—that, just as under a civil government a criminal is often put to death for the vindication of its authority and for the removal of a nuisance from society, so, let it be imagined, that, under the jurisprudence of Heaven, an utter extinction of being was laid upon the sinner, both for the purpose of maintaining, in respect and authority, Heaven's law, and also for the purpose of removing a nuisance and a contamination from the great spiritual family. Let us further imagine, not merely that the sentence is pronounced, but that the sentence is executed; that the life of the transgressor is taken away; and that, by an act of extermination reaching to the soul as well as to the body, the whole light of consciousness is put out, and he is expunged altogether from the face of God's animated creation. There could be no misunderstanding of the phrase, if when, in speaking of this individual after all this had befallen him, you were to say that he was dead unto or dead for sin; and such an announcement regarding him were just as distinctly intelligible, as when you tell of one who has undergone the capital sentence of the law, that he was one who for his crimes had suffered execution.

It is conceivable after such a catastrophe, that God may have devised a way, by which, in consistency with His own character and with all the purposes of His government, He might remake and reanimate the creature who had undergone this infliction—might assemble the particles of his now dissipated materialism into the same body as before, and might infuse into it a spirit, on which He shall stamp the very same identical consciousness as before, and thus introduce it once again within that universe of life where it wont to expatiate. The phrase we are

dead unto sin, might still adhere to him, though now alive from the dead. It had been still our rightful sentence, and we would still have been lying under it—had not some expedient been fallen upon, or some equivalent been rendered, in virtue of which it is that we have been recalled from the chambers of dark nonentity, and been made to break forth again upon a peopled scene of sense and intelligence and feeling. And in these circumstances, is it for us to continue in sin—we who for sin were consigned to annihilation, and have only by the kindness of a Saviour been rescued from it—is it for us to repeat that thing, of whose malignity we have had in our own persons such a dreadful experience? Is it for us, on whom the blow of God's insulted and provoked authority has so tremendously fallen, and who under its force would still, but for a Redeemer's interference, have been profoundly asleep in the womb of nothingness—is it for us again to brave the displeasure of that God whose hatred of sin is as unchangeable as his sacredness is unchangeable!—Above all is it for us, who have had such recent demonstration of the antipathies that subsist between sin and holiness—is it for us, who experimentally know that under the government of the one there for the other can be no harbour and no toleration—is it for us, who have learned from our own history, that sin is not permitted so much as to breathe within the limits of God's beloved family, and that to keep it clear of a scandal so foul and so enormous He roots up every plant and specimen that is stained by it—is it for us who, have thus once been rooted up and once been swept away, but, by the stretching forth of a mediatorial hand, have again been summoned to the being and the birthright we formerly had in the inheritance of children—is it for us to repeat that abomination which is as uncongenial to the whole tone and spirit of the Divinity now as ever; and will remain as offensive to His eye, and as utterly irreconcilable to His nature through all eternity?

Now the argument retains its entireness, though the Mediator should interfere with His equivalent, ere the penalty of death has been inflicted—though instead of drawing them out of the pit of destruction, He by ransom should deliver them from going down into that pit—though, instead of suffering them to die for their sins and then reviving them from their state of annihilation, He should himself die for them: and they, freed from the execution of the sentence, should be continued in that life of which they had incurred the forfeiture. Still they were dead in law. To die was their rightful doom,

though this doom was borne by another, and so borne away from them. Had they actually died for sin, and by the services of a mediator been brought alive again—the argument would have been, How shall we who died for sin, now that we live, continue in that which is so incompatible with the divine government, that, wherever it exists, it behoves by death to be swept away? And the argument is just as strong though the services of the Mediator are applied sooner, and are of effect to prevent the death instead of recovering it. Such is the malignity of sin, that, under its operation, we would have been blotted out from the living universe—such is the sacredness of God that sin cannot exist within the precincts of His loving-kindness; and so we, who lay under its condemnation, would, but for a Redeemer's services, have been deposed from our standing in creation. We were as good as dead, for the sentence had gone forth, and was coming in sure aim and fatality on our devoted persons, when Christ stepped between, and, suffering it to light upon Himself, carried it away. And shall we, who, because of sin, were then on the point of extermination from a scene for which sin had unfitted us—shall we continue in sin, after an escape has been thus made good for us? Shall we do that thing, the doing of which would have been our death, had it not been for a redeeming process whereby life was preserved to us; and is it at all conceivable, that this redemption would have been wrought, and that for the very purpose of upholding us in the very sin which made our redemption necessary?

To use the term dead in a forensic meaning, is not a gratuitous or unauthorised interpretation on our part. We have the example of Paul himself for it, in that memorable passage of first Corinthians, where he says, that "we thus judge, that as Christ died for all, then were all dead"—not personally dead—not dead in regard of affection for what was sinful; but dead in law—dead in respect of that sure condemnation, which, but for Christ, would have been fulfilled upon all—not executed but on the eve of execution: and whether the Saviour prevent the accomplishment of the sentence, or revive and restore them after it, the argument of the apostle is the same. Christ by dying, and that to preserve them from dying, did as much for them, as if He had brought them back again from the chambers of death—as if He had put life into them anew, after it was utterly extinguished—as if He had placed them once again within the limits of God's family; and given them a second standing on the platform of life, from which sin had be-

fore swept them off. It is making Christ the author of our life, which He is as effectually by preventing its extermination, as He would have been by infusing it anew into us after it was destroyed; and the practical lesson comes out as impressively in the one case as in the other—even that we should give up the life to Him who thus has kept or who thus has recalled it, or that we should live no longer to ourselves but to Him who died for us and who rose again.

We trust you may now perceive, how impressive the consideration is on which we are required to give up sin under the economy of the gospel. For sin we were all under sentence of death. Had the sentence taken effect, we would all have been outcasts from God's family. Sin is that scandal which must be rooted out, from that great spiritual household over which the Divinity rejoices—so that on its very first appearance, an edict of expulsion went forth; and men became exiles from the domain of Almighty favour, just because they were sinners. It is conceivable that the sentence might be arrested, or that it might be recalled; but it were strange indeed, if, after being doomed to exile because they had been sinners, they should cease to be exiles and be sinners still. Strange administration indeed for sin to be so hateful to God, as to lay all who had incurred it under death; and yet when readmitted into life, that sin should be permitted, and what was before the object of destroying vengeance should now become the object of an upheld and protected toleration. Every thing done and arranged by God—bears upon it the impress of His character. And it was indeed fell demonstration of His antipathy to sin, under the first arrangement of matters between Him and the species, that, when it entered our world, the doom of extermination from all favour and fellowship with God should instantly go forth against it. And now that the doom is taken off—think you it possible, that the unchangeable God has so given up His antipathy to sin, as that man, ruined and

redeemed man, may now perseveringly indulge, under the new arrangement, in that which under the old arrangement destroyed him? Does not the God who loved righteousness and hated iniquity six thousand years ago, bear the same love to righteousness and the same hatred to iniquity still? And well may not the sinner say—if on my own person such a dreadful memorial of God's hatred to sin was on the eve of being inflicted, as that of everlasting destruction from His presence—if the awfulness of such a vindictive manifestation was about to be realised on me individually, when a great Mediator interposed; and, standing between me and God, bare in his own body the whole brunt of His coming vengeance—if when thus kept from the destruction which sin drew upon me and so as good as if rescued from that abyss of destruction into which sin had thrown me, I now breathe the air of loving-kindness from Heaven, and can walk before God in peace and graciousness—Shall I again attempt the incompatible alliance of two principles so adverse, as that of an approving God and a persevering sinner; or again try the Spirit of that Being, who, in the whole process of my condemnation and my rescue has given such proof of most sensitive and unspotted holiness?

There shall be nothing, says God, to hurt or to offend in all my holy mountain. It is in conformity to this, that death is inflicted upon the sinner; and this death is neither more nor less than his expulsion from the family of holiness. Through Jesus Christ, we come again unto mount Zion, which is the heavenly Jerusalem; and it is as fresh as ever in the verdure of a perpetual holiness. How shall we who were found unfit for residence in this place because of sin, continue in sin after our readmittance therein? How shall we, recovered from so awful a catastrophe, continue that which first involved us in it? or again take on that disease which has already evinced itself to be of such virulence, as to be a disease unto death.

LECTURE XXX.

ROMANS VI, 3—7.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 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. For he that is dead is freed from sin."

V. 3, 4. THE original meaning of the word baptism is immersion, and though we regard it as a point of indifference, whether the ordinance so named be performed in this way or by sprinkling—yet we doubt not, that the prevalent style of the administration in the apostle's days, was by an actual submerging of the whole body under water. We advert to this, for the purpose of throwing light on the analogy that is instituted in these verses. Jesus Christ by death underwent this sort of baptism—even immersion under the surface of the ground, whence He soon emerged again by His resurrection. We by being baptized into His death, are conceived to have made a similar translation. In the act of descending under the water of baptism to have resigned an old life, and in the act of ascending to emerge into a second or a new life—along the course of which it is our part to maintain a strenuous avoidance of that sin, which as good as expunged the being that we had formerly; and a strenuous prosecution of that holiness, which should begin with the first moment that we were ushered into our present being, and be perpetuated and make progress toward the perfection of full and ripened immortality.

"Baptized into His death"—or regarding ourselves as if like Him we had actually been slain and buried, and like Him brought forth anew and made alive again, before that God who for our sins had swept us beyond the circle of His favoured creation. This would have been had not Christ died; and though He by pouring out His soul for us, has kept us in the favour that else would have been forfeited and that for ever—yet the argument is the same, if prevented from going down into the pit, as if after being cast headlong into it for our sins we had again been extricated therefrom. How shall we whom sin had at that time blotted out from the family of life, now that we are readmitted, again indulge in it! How shall we run counter to those holy antipathies of the divine nature, of the strength and irreconcilableness of which we already in our own persons have had so fell a manifestation! How shall we, rescued from destruction, again welcome to our embraces the destroyer!

—or, living anew under the eye of that God who could not endure the presence of sin and so consigned it to the exile of death everlasting, shall we live again in that very course which made our former existence so offensive to Him and so incompatible with the whole spirit and design of His government? Has He changed His taste or His character? or makes it any difference to the argument, that a mediator interposed and took upon Himself the whole weight of that avenging arm, which was lifted up for our extermination? Is not the exhibition of God's hatred and hostility to sin just as impressive, that the stroke of jealousy fell upon the head of His own Son, as it would have been, had it fallen on the guilty millions, whom this mighty Captain shielded from the vindictive discharge that else would have overwhelmed us? And whether these billows of wrath have all been broken on the Rock of our Salvation; or first made to pass over us, we had again been summoned from the depth and caused to emerge anew into the sunshine of God's reconciled countenance—does it not equally prove that He, the everlasting enemy of sin, will, in any new economy that He may institute, still evince it to be that hateful thing for which He has no taste, and can have no toleration?

So much for the application of the phrase "dead unto sin," when understood forensically. We trust that however imperfectly we may have illustrated this part of the argument, you have been made to perceive that there is in it the force and the power of a most impressive consideration; and, whether you have seized upon it or not, be at least very sure of this—that, such is the fact of the matter, there is no indulgence for sin under the dispensation of the gospel. It is a restorative dispensation, by which you are alike kept from the penalty of sin and cured of its polluting virulence. It restores you to the favour of God, but it restores you not to the liberty of sinning; and the argument wherewith we would arm and fortify the principles of all who now feel themselves alive in Christ Jesus is—shall we continue in that hateful thing which would have brought me to the death, had not my

Saviour, for my deliverance and preservation, bowed down His head unto the sacrifice?

We have already tried to set forth in your hearing the forensic interpretation, that might be given of the phrase "*dead unto sin*"—dead for sin—not that the sentence was inflicted, but that the sentence was pronounced; and the argument why they should not continue in sin, is as strongly applicable to those who are delivered from a doom that was impending, as to those who are recalled from a doom that was actually executed. There were a most direct force in the consideration—should a revived criminal press it upon his moral feelings—how can I recur to that which is so odious in the sight of my country's government, that I had to suffer a death for it, from which I, by a miracle perhaps of mercy, have been restored? And it ought to be as powerful a consideration with a reprieved criminal, whose sentence has been suspended, and perhaps by the intercession of a Mediator been finally withdrawn. The recurrence to that which brought down the sentence, were just as monstrous a violence done to the whole spirit and object of the administration under which I live, in the one case as in the other; and be assured that there were the very same violence done to the spirit of Heaven's administration—should those who are redeemed from death under the economy of the gospel, live in that which had sunk them under so fearful a condemnation. For sin we were ready to die. For sin we would have died had not Christ interposed, and undergone in His own person that shedding of blood without which remission is impossible. The demonstration given of God's antipathies to the power and existence of sin in His kingdom, is as strong by the falling of the deadly blow upon the head of a Mediator, as if it had fallen direct on the head of those He died for. And shall we from whom the stroke of vengeance has been averted—shall we who are still in life but virtually in a life from the dead—shall we who in Christ may so read what but for Him would have happened to ourselves, as to be baptized into His death and to be planted together in the likeness of it—shall we, kept from falling into the abyss of condemnation, and therefore as good as if summoned again from its depths on the platform of God's favoured and rejoicing family—continue in that hateful thing, which but for Christ would have destroyed us, and of God's abhorrence to which the atoning death of Christ gives so awful and impressive a manifestation?

But while we have thus insisted on the forensic interpretation of the phrase

"dead unto sin"—yet let us not forbear to urge the personal sense of it, as implying such a deadness of affection to sin, such an extinction of the old sensibility to its allurements and its pleasures, as that it has ceased from its wonted power of ascendancy over the heart and character of him who was formerly its slave. We think that this sense too was in the mind of the apostle; and that he speedily takes it up in the prosecution of his argument. But we are rather induced to believe, that he starts his argument with the phrase understood forensically—that out of the premises already established he gathers an immediate and very powerful dissuasive against the continuance of the believer in sin—that, without assuming as yet any revolution of desire on his part, he plies him with a question which ought by its moral influence to work such a revolution, and a question too that emanates direct from the truth about which the apostle had just been previously employed, even that Christ died for us; or, in other words, that we, under a rightful sentence of death, had yet been suffered to live by the transference of the doom upon the person of another. And shall we in these circumstances, persist in doing the very thing that had brought that doom upon us?—a very pertinent question most assuredly at this stage of his reasoning; and a question, which, did it tell with the impression it ought on the heart of a disciple, would lead him to abjure sin; and so from the thought that he was dead unto it forensically, would it conduct him to the reality of being dead unto it actually and habitually and personally.

But you will surely perceive that, to bring about this effect, something more is necessary than merely to address to the corrupt mind of man some new moral suasion that had never been brought to bear upon it. We are not aware that it lies within the influence of any argument to deaden the appetites of nature for that which is sinful. It is true, that, in consequence of what Christ hath done, a new topic and a new suggestion can be offered to the sinner, which had Christ not done, no such topic could have at all been urged upon him. But we fear that it is not enough to bring argument however powerful from without, whereby to assail the feelings and propensities of the human heart—that additional to the great outward transaction of Christ's atoning death, from which we have endeavoured to fetch a persuasive for turning from all iniquity—there must be also an inward operation upon every disciple, ere the persuasive can be so listened to as to be practically effectual: or, in other words,—as, through what Christ hath done for us we are fo-

rensicly dead unto sin, so, that we may be regarded as having already undergone the curse in Him—so, there must also be a something done in us, a personal change wrought, a deadening process undergone whereby sin is no longer of power over us.

Now though this be the work of the Spirit—yet the Spirit accommodates His work to the nature of the subject upon which He is employed. He treats man as a rational and intelligent being. It is not by the resistlessness of a blind impulse, that He carries any given effect on the desires of the heart—but by making man see what is desirable, and then choose it, and then labour after it with all the strenuousness of a willing and purposing and acting creature. He does not become personally dead unto sin, or personally alive unto righteousness, but by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Yet this operation is not a simple fiat, by which the transition is brought about without the steps of such a process—as marks the judgment, and the feeling, and the conscience, and the various other mental faculties of him who is made to undergo this great regeneration. Agreeably to the language of our Shorter Catechism, though this be the work of God's Spirit—yet it is a work whereby He convinces and He enlightens the mind, and He renews the will, and He persuades to that which is right, and He enables for the performance of it. Let us endeavour, if possible, to trace the succession of those moral influences, by which man under the gospel is conducted from the natural state of being alive to sin and to the world, to the state of being dead unto these things and alive unto God.

V. 5. 6.—We are planted together in the likeness of His death—by His death He bore the curse of a violated law and now it has no further charge against Him. He acquitted Himself to the full of all its penalties; and now He is for ever exempted against any future reckoning with a creditor whom He has conclusively set aside; and just because He has completely satisfied him. He is now that immortal Vine, who stands forever secure and beyond the reach of any devouring blight from the now appeased enemy; and we who by faith are united with Him as so many branches, share in this blessed exemption along with Him. We have as good as had the sentence of death discharged upon us already. In Christ our propitiation we have rendered the executor all his dues. In Him our surety we have paid a debt, for which we can no longer be craved or reckoned with. And here we are like unto Christ in that we are secure from the visitation of

the great penalty, as if we had borne it ourselves—in that as with Him the hour and the power of darkness have now passed away, and never again to go over Him; so we, just as if we had undergone the same trial and the same baptism, come forth acquitted of all our trespasses and the hand of the avenging adversary shall never reach us.

And as we thus share in His death, so shall we also share in His resurrection. From the humiliation of the grave, He arose to the heights of sublimest glory. By what He hath borne in our stead, we now stand as exempted from punishment as if we had borne it ourselves. By what He hath done of positive obedience in our stead, He hath not only been highly exalted in His own person; but He hath made us the partakers of His exaltation, to the rewards of which we shall be promoted as if we had rendered the obedience ourselves. And it is thus that we understand the being planted together with Him in the likeness of His death, and the being planted together with Him in the likeness of His resurrection.

The sixth verse we think ushers in the transition from the forensic to the personal. By being dead unto sin we understand that we are spoken of as in the condition of having already undergone the penalty of death, and so being acquitted of this great penal consequence of sin. We get into this condition, not by actually suffering the death; but, as it is expressed in the third verse, by being baptized unto the death of Christ, and so as in the fourth verse by being buried with Him in this baptism, and in the fifth verse planted together with Him in the likeness of His death—All indicative of our being forensically dealt with on account of Christ's death, just as if we ourselves had undergone the suffering which for us He hath endured. And we would even carry this style of interpretation to the first clause of the sixth verse; and understand by the old man being crucified with Him, that the sinner is now to be reckoned with, just as if, in his own person, he had sustained the adequate punishment of that guilt, for which Christ rendered the adequate expiation. And all this however for a posterior end—all this for a purpose specified in the remaining part of the verse now under consideration—all this for the achievement of such a personal change upon the believer, as that in him the body of sin might at length be altogether destroyed; and that henceforth, or from the moment of his becoming a believer, he might not serve sin.

This tallies with another part of the Bible, where it is said that Christ gave

himself up for us—suffered in our stead—died the death that legally impended over us, so that the sentence is as much over and away from us, as if it had been inflicted on our own persons—This He did for an end even posterior to that of our deliverance from condemnation—for an end analogous to the one stated in the verse before us—even that the body of sin might be destroyed, and that we should not serve sin; or, as we have it in the passage now referred to, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify us unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

Now where it may be asked is the connection? How comes it that because we are partakers in the crucifixion of Christ, so that the law has no further severity to discharge upon us—how comes it that this should have any effect in destroying the body of sin, or in emancipating us from the service of sin? Whence is it that exoneration from the penalty, should lead to emancipation from the power? What is the hidden tie that conducts the believer from being forensically dead unto sin, to his being personally dead unto sin also? How is it that the fact of his being acquitted leads to the fact of his being sanctified? and what is the precise nature of that step which conducts from the pardon of a reconciled, to the purity of a regenerated creature?

There can be no doubt that the Spirit of God both originates and carries forward the whole of this process. He gives the faith which makes Christ's death as available for our deliverance from guilt, as if we had suffered the death in our own persons; and He causes the faith to germinate all those moral and spiritual influences, which bring about the personal transformation that we are enquiring of. But these He does, in a way that is agreeable to the principles of our rational nature; so that His agency does not supersede the question—how is it that a belief on our part, that we are so far partakers of the death of Christ as to partake in the deliverance which it hath wrought from the guilt of sin—how is it that this belief destroys the being of sin upon our persons, and releases us from that slavery in which Nature is held to its allurements and its charms?

We apprehend one way of it, to be through the expulsive power of a new affection to dispossess an old one from the heart. You cannot destroy your love of sin, by a simple act of extermination. You cannot thus bid away from your bosom, one of its dearest and oldest favourites. Our moral nature abhors the vacuum that would be formed, by an old affection taking its departure from the

chambers of the inner man, without any new affection to succeed it. The former favourite will retain his place and his ascendancy there, till he is supplanted by a new one, ready to take up his room, and to give the sensation of full and well-liked company—so as not to leave the heart in a state of dreary and woful abandonment. It is thus that the man who feels his only portion to be on earth, and that heaven is hopelessly beyond his reach, resigns himself to the full and undivided sway of earthly affections. He cannot bid them away from him. They cleave to him with a tenacity and a power of adherence, that nothing but the mastery of a new affection can possibly overcome; and whence, if heaven is impregnably shut against him, whence can he fetch the instrument that will drive out the legion of earthly feelings and earthly desires and earthly idolatries, which now lord it over him, and have established the empire and tyranny of sin within the confines of his moral and spiritual nature? Let it be his feeling that heaven is unattainable; and this will chill and discourage within him all longing for the enjoyments that are there—so that his love of the enjoyments which are here, will keep undisturbed possession of his soul and give the character and the colour of atheism to all its movements. He will live without God in the world; and never till the favour of God be made accessible to him—never till the joys of the upper Paradise are placed within his reach—never till the barrier be thrown down, which defends his approaches to the happy world that lies in the distant futurity away from him—never till then will the powers of the world that is to come carry it over the pleasures of the world that is present, and by which he is immediately surrounded. The old affections will cleave and keep their obstinate and undisputed hold, just because the proper engine is not brought into contact with the heart, and which can alone avail for the dispossession of them. They will not give way at a simple mandate from the chair of reason or philosophy; and nothing can expel them from the bosom—but the powerful and victorious rivalship of new affections sent into the heart, from new objects placed within the grasp either of certain or of possible attainment.

Now the death of Christ is the breaking down of the else insuperable barrier. It has fetched other objects from afar, and placed them within the attainment of sinful man, and presented them to his free choice, and brought the delights of eternity to his very door—so that, if he just have faith to perceive them, he is brought into the very condition, that, by the bias

of his moral and sentient nature, is most favourable to the extinction of old appetites, and that just by the intruding and dispossessing power of a new one. The things that are above now lie at his door for acceptance, and are urgently soliciting admittance within the repositories of his heart, and we may now bid him set his whole affection on the things that are above—which if he does, like the rod of Aaron, it will swallow up all his subordinate and earthly desires; and he will henceforth cease to set his affections upon the things that are beneath. Let him just by faith look upon himself as crucified with Christ; and then he will have got over that wall of separation, which stood between him and a joyful immortality. That spiritual and everlasting death, which is the natural doom of every sinner, is now as good as traversed, and got over by him—for, in the person of his dying Saviour with whom he stands associated in the whole power and effect of His atonement, he has already borne the whole weight of this condemnation; and there is now nothing between him and that heaven, all the facilities and glories of which have now entered into competition with the world and its evanescent gratifications—And it is thus that the world is disarmed of its power of sinful temptation. It is thus that the cross of Christ crucifies the world unto you, and you unto the world. It is thus that sin receives its death-blow, by its old mastery over the heart being dethroned and done away, through the still more commanding mastery of other affections, which is now competent for man to have, because the objects of them are now placed within the reach of its attainment. It is thus that the cross of Christ, by the same mighty and decisive stroke wherewith it has moved the curse of sin away from us, also moves away the power and the love of sin from over us. And we no longer mind earthly things, just because better things are now within our offer, and our conversation is in heaven—whence we also look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this is in perfect analogy with other and most familiar exhibitions of our nature, in the scenes of business and ordinary affairs. Let us just conceive a man embarked, with full and earnest ambition, on some humble walk of retail merchandise—whose mind is wholly taken up through the year, with the petty fluctuations that are taking place in prices and profits and customers; but who nevertheless is regaled by the annual examination of particulars at the end of it, with the view of some snug addition to his old accumulations. You can figure

how the heart of such a man may be engrossed with the play of all those anxieties and feelings and mental appetites, which are incidental to such a condition—how wedded he is to his own little concern—how watchful of the turns and movements that may affect its prosperity—and, withal, how complacently he cherishes the anticipation of that decent competency, which forms the all he has learned to aspire after. You must see how impossible it were to detach the affections of this individual from the objects and the interests of this his favourite course, by a simple demonstration of their vanity; and with what moral tenacity he would cleave to the pursuits of his present gainfulness; and what a mighty and peculiar force were necessary, to disengage him from the operations of that counter over which there was unceasingly kept up the most agreeable play that was within the reach of his ever arriving at. But just suppose, that, in some way or other, this reach were greatly extended; and, either some splendid property, or some sublime walk of high and hopeful adventure, were placed within his attainment: and the visions of a far more glorious affluence were to pour a light into his mind, which greatly overpassed and so eclipsed all the fairness of those homelier prospects that he wont to indulge in—Is it not clear to all your discernments that the old affection which he could never get rid of by simple annihilation, will come to be annihilated, and that simply by giving place to the new one—that the field of employment from which no force could have torn him, he now willingly abandons, and that just for the more alluring field on which he has been invited to enter—that the meaner ambition has now disappeared from his bosom, and just because the loftier ambition has overborne it—that the game in which he aspired after hundreds is now given over, and just because a likelier game of many thousands has enticed him away from it—that the worship he formerly rendered to an ido of brass is now renounced, and just because seduced from it by the superior fascination of that worship which he is now rendering to an idol of gold? Do not you see from this, how it is that the higher idolatry has superseded the lower; and also how it is, that both idolatries are to be extinguished—how it is that if we had only faith to realise the magnificence of eternity, and to believe that through the death of Christ the portal was now opened to its blessedness and its glory, that this would deaden all our worldliness together—Not merely laying one species of earthly ambition, by the lighting up of another; but disposing of all by the para-

mount importance of an object, that greatly surpassed all, and so absorbed all? Does not this throw explanation on the mystery of sin being slain in its influences, simply by a believing view on our part of sin slain in its curse and condemnation; and how, after all, the mighty instrument for achieving our deliverance from the power of things seen and sensible, is our confidence in the efficacy of that death which has opened up for us access to things eternal—so as to make this the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

And this illustration, by the way, may help to show how the gospel can do what the law cannot do. Were the humble trafficker asked to purchase for himself some place of occupancy and lucrative partnership on that higher course, where merchants are called princes, and are held to be the honourable of the earth—it is likely that the consciousness of utter inability for the enterprise, would check all his ambitious tendencies within the sphere that he already moved in, and lead him to lavish as before every energy and affection that belonged to him on the scene of his present hopes and present anxieties. But, instead of the place being sold, were the place given to him—were he freely and gratuitously offered admission to it with all the flattery of its thriving channels and splendid anticipations—there were then a moving power to disenchant him from all his present affections, in the things held forth to him as a present, which it never had when held forth to him in the shape of a bargain, to the terms of which his means were totally and hopelessly inadequate. And, in like manner, should any child of this world that is amongst us, have heaven set forth to him as the reward of that obedience on which heaven could look with complacency—there were a sense of incompetency for the task, which would lead him to place this spiritual region at an impracticable distance away from him; and, with the feeling that earth was his alone portion, would he still grovel as before among the pursuits and the pleasures of that scene of carnality, on which he all along had been wont to expatiate. But let heaven, instead of being exposed as the purchase of his merit, be set before him as a present to his necessities—instead of the law bidding him acquire it by his doings, let the gospel bid him receive it as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord—in a word, instead of holding it forth to him for a price to be paid by himself, let it be held forth to him as the fruit of that price which the Saviour hath already rendered, by a death in the whole power and value of which he is

freely invited to partake—then will it be seen, that, the firmer his trust, the faster will be the practical hold that the unseen world takes of his heart, and the more powerful its controlling influence over the whole of his habits and his history. The faith in a free pardon, which some might apprehend would rivet him to sin, has just the effect of disenchanting him from that territory of sense where its wiles and its entanglements are laid. The stronger the faith is, in the nearness and certainty of the coming heaven—the fuller is the access into the believer's soul, of a taste for heaven's joys, and an impulse towards heaven's services. It is the very thing which reaches that exterminating blow, whereby the body of sin or the being of sin is destroyed; and the man is dispossessed of the tyranny wherewith it had lorded over him, and now ceases to be its slave—just because the death of Christ has opened for him the gates of everlasting blessedness, and his heart transformed from the present evil world is conformed to the delights and the doings of the upper paradise.

We are far from having touched on all the principles, which come into living and actual play within the believer's heart; and by which he is conducted from the state of being crucified with Christ forensically, to the state of being crucified with him personally—so that he dies unto the power of sin; and, through the Spirit, mortifies the deeds done in his body; and finally crucifies the flesh with its affections and lusts. But let it here be remarked, that, in the bringing of this about, there is a strong likeness, in point of moral history and example, between Christ and His faithful disciple. There is a real analogy between the death for sin undergone by the former, and the mortification unto the power of sin that is undergone by the latter. There is a similarity between the spiritual exercise, which conducted the Saviour to that victory which He achieved over the world in dying for its salvation; and that spiritual exercise, which conducts the believer to the victory which he achieves over the world, in dying unto the sinfulness of its earthly affections. The one for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross; and the other for the same joy, now set freely and gratuitously before him, endures the cross that is laid by the gospel on nature's inclinations. The one made a voluntary renunciation of all that was in the world, on leaving it; and the other makes the same voluntary renunciation, in transferring his love to that God, the love of whom is opposed to the love of the world. We mistake the nature of Christ's work upon earth, if we think not that He

had to struggle with the fascinations of this world's pleasures, and the seducing influence of this world's glories—for the God of this world hath power to try Him though not to prevail over Him; and in all respects was He tempted like as we are. From His infancy to His death, was there a contest of strenuousness and suffering and self-denial; and all, that He might win the victory over a world that plied Him with countless idolatries. And as was the Master so is the servant. We have to follow Him in the steps of this holy warfare. The cross is little counted upon in these days of soft and silken professorship; and smooth indeed is that pilgrimage, through which many are looking forward to the triumphs of a coming eternity. But let us not deceive ourselves. There is a process of crucifixion that must be gone through, not upon the flesh as with the Saviour, but upon the affections of the flesh. There must be a striving against sin, if not unto the death of the body, at least unto the death of its dearest and most darling appetites. There must be a winding up of the purposes and energies of the spiritual power, to that pitch of resistance against the sinfulness of nature, which wound up the soul of our Redeemer to the resolute giving up of Himself unto the sacrifice. And though the death unto sin, and the baptism unto that death, and the being planted with Christ in the likeness of it, and the being planted with Him, have been here understood and reasoned upon forensically—yet our faith in this understanding of it, has not wrought its genuine effect upon us, unless we are dying unto the power of sin in our affections; and are purifying ourselves in the waters of spiritual baptism; and are daily likening unto Christ, in that superiority over the world which led Him to surrender it; and are inflicting the violence of crucifixion on all that is sinful in the propensities of nature—So as that we are not merely judicially dealt with as if in our own persons we had suffered and died—but really and historically, in these persons, do we share with Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings and in a conformity to His death.

V. 7. Here again I would understand a forensic death—the death we are counted to have suffered in Christ as a penalty for sin, the death which releases us from all further charge and reckoning because of sin—the death which as effectually shields us from the further inflictions of severity from the unrelenting exactor, as the dying of the slave secures his escape from the cruelties of that tyrant, beyond whose reach he is now situated. The connection between the master and the servant ceases with the payment of wages; and

when death the wages of sin is rendered to the sinner, the final settlement is made, and they become free the one from the other. Now it is true that these bitter wages of sin were inflicted not upon us but upon Christ; but for us He sustained them, and we are in as exempt a condition from any further reckoning on account of sin, as if the adjustment had been made with us the principals, instead of being made with Christ the surety—or as if we had borne the whole punishment—or as if death, which is the fruit of sin, had been actually laid upon us.

Now it is very clear how this should rightfully free us from the punishment; but how should it also free us from the power? We have already unfolded one way, in which deliverance from the former leads to deliverance from the latter; and the text suggests another way of it. Sin is here represented in the light of a tyrant, and the sinner as his slave. But let it be remembered, that there is a personal and a living tyrant, from whose cruel and malignant breast the whole mischief of sin has emanated upon our world—one with whom the extension of sin is a matter of power and of policy—one whose dearest ambition is concerned in the warfare, that is now going forward between the principles of light and of darkness—one whose heart is set upon the object of bringing men under the dominion of sin, and who finds his full and final gratification in the execution of the curse which it afterwards entails upon them. The errand upon which the Saviour came, was to destroy the works of the devil; and you all perceive how, by his death upon the cross, He lifted the curse and the punishment of sin at least away from all who believe on Him, and how they who by faith are dead in Him are freed at least from condemnation. They have been extricated from the tyrant's grasp, in as far as death and the power of death are concerned. He has no further claim upon them, as the subjects of that infernal kingdom, where he is to hold the reign of terror and of vengeance throughout all eternity: and where, in addition to the penal torments wherewith he shall exercise his unhappy victims, the agency of their own sinful passions will lay a heavy burden on the misery that overweighs them. It is not enough adverted to—how much sin is its own punishment—how much, by the very mechanism of our sentient nature, wretchedness and wickedness are allied the one with the other—how inherently and how essentially suffering and moral evil are ever found in company—that there is an essential bitterness in sin itself, independently of any arbitrary infliction which in the shape of

fire or of any material chastisement may be laid upon it in hell—and that this is just as true of sin under the gospel as under the law. The new economy under which we live has not so altered the character or the constitution of things, as that goodness shall not of itself be a matter of enjoyment, and as that sin shall not of itself be matter of anguish and tribulation. The gospel has not changed the bitter into a sweet. It has not given a new set of properties to the affections of our moral nature. It has not infused the feeling of solemn and sacred delight into the affection of ungodliness. It has not given the character of a sweet and tranquil emotion to the affection of anger. It has not associated the transports of angelic love, with the affection of malignity. Though you should be delivered by the death of Christ from the penal sufferings, that attached to these evil principles in the heart—yet there are other sufferings, that spring immediately and necessarily from the very exercise of the principles themselves; and from which you cannot be delivered, but by the utter extirpation of the principles. In other words, you are not freed from the tyrant who lords it over sinners by a mere release from the penalty of disobedience. He is not disarmed of all his power to make you wretched, by your legal deliverance from imprisonment in the future hell. If he is still permitted to reign in your heart, he can establish a hell there, that were enough to embitter your whole eternity. And, in order that the death of Christ and your participation in that death shall give you complete freedom from the great tyrant and adversary of our species, he must be dethroned from his power over your present desires, as well as from his power over your future destiny. Sinful affections will always be painful affections. And your deliverance is wrought, not by changing the quality of these affections, not by turning the painful into the pleasurable, but by ridding you of the affections altogether. And we repeat, that, if by being dead in Christ we are freed from Satan, this cannot be fully accomplished but by our being in the language of the text freed from sin—from sin, not merely disarmed of its curse, but from sin disarmed of its power and finally destroyed in its existence.

This unfolds to us another way, in which the death of Christ, and our fellowship therewith, may be brought to bear on the practical object of so withstanding the assaults of temptation, as that sin shall not have the dominion over us. It is not a matter of fancy, but a matter of most distinct scriptural revelation, that these assaults are conducted by a living

and personal and withal most actively vicious and vindictive adversary, who is altogether intent on the object of retaining as entire and unbroken a moral ascendancy as he can possibly achieve over our species. You know how it is, that, by death Christ hath destroyed him who has the power of death, that is the devil—how He stood to have all wreaked upon Himself, which could be rightfully inflicted upon us because of our disobedience—how, after this, we, who partake in the benefits of His death, may challenge an exemption from the cruel mastery of him who wont to maintain a resistless and unquestioned sway over the propensities of our fallen nature—how, in the very moment of conflict with his enticements and his wiles, this challenge may be made; and he, giving way to the force of it, will desist from his unholy enterprise of seducing us away from the new obedience of the gospel. Upon every occasion of exposure to the fascinations of moral evil, may we go through the spiritual exercise of asserting our freedom from the power of him, who arms these fascinations with all their influence; and, strongly confident in the plea, that, by the death of Christ and our death in Him, Satan has virtually done his worst upon us, and already expended that power wherewith he wont to hold us in bondage—why it is no vain imagination, that such a plea, if faithfully pressed against him in the hour of spiritual conflict, will surely prevail over him; and he, retiring a vanquished foe from the field of warfare, will leave us freed from the power of sin as we are freed from its curse and condemnation.

It has been rightly said that we think not enough of those higher agencies which are concerned in the doings and the difficulties and the whole discipline of our preparation for eternity. We are apt to look on the conflict in which we are involved, as a mere contest with flesh and blood—when in fact it is a contest with principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. We should know the might of our adversaries that we may go rightly armed to the battle. And be assured that the death of Christ, is not a more effectual shield against the power that would drag you to the place of condemnation; than it is against the power, that would now so lord it over the affections of your heart, as to perpetuate the reign of sin within you, and make you as effectually the slaves as before of those evil desires and principles which war against the soul. Christ hath spoiled the great adversary of all his power. He hath left him no claim of ascendancy whatever over those who be-

lieve in Him. It is true, that, in the mysterious struggle which took place between Him and the prince of darkness, there was a sting put forth which pierced Him even unto the death; but, in the very act of being so pierced, the sting was plucked away, and Satan is now bereft of all his power to hurt those who are buried with Christ in baptism, and have been planted together with Him in His likeness. He did not merely disarm him of his power to scourge you, and leave untouched his power to seduce you. It was an entire dethronement that He effected of the God of this world; and what you have distinctly to do, my brethren, in the heat and urgency of your besetting temptations, is to set up your death unto sin in Christ, as your defence against the further authority of sin over you—is to interpose the plea of His atonement between you and the attempts of the great adversary—is to affirm, in opposition to all his devices, that he can no more compel your services than a tyrant or task-master can compel service from a dead slave. It is not possible, my brethren, that Satan, thus withstood and thus striven against, shall prevail over you. The man who, rivetting all his confidence in the death of Christ, has become partaker of all his immunities and of all its holy influences, will not only find peace from the guilt of sin, but protection from its tyranny. This faith

will not only be to him a barrier from the abyss of its coming vengeance; but it will be to him a panoply of defence against its present ascendancy over his soul. The sure way to put Satan to flight, is to resist him steadfast in this faith, which will be to him who exercises it, a shield to quench all the fiery darts of the adversary.

We are aware of the charges of strange and mystical imaginary, to which this representation, however scriptural it may be, exposes us. But we ask on the one hand, those who have often been defeated by the power of temptation—whether they ever recollect in a single instance, that the death of Christ believed and regarded and made use of in the way now explained, was a weapon put forth in the contest with sin; and we ask, on the other hand, those who did make use of this weapon—whether it ever failed them in their honest and faithful attempts to resist the instigations of evil? We apprehend that the testimonies of both, will stamp an experimental, as well as a scriptural soundness, upon the affirmation of my text, that he who by faith in the death of Christ is freed from the condemnation of sin, has also an instrument in his possession, which has only to be plied and kept in habitual exercise, that he may habitually be free from its power.

LECTURE XXXI.

ROMANS vi, 8—10.

“Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.”

By the death of Christ a full penalty was rendered for sin, insomuch that He could no more be reckoned with on account of it. He undertook to be surety for all who should believe; and having finished His undertaking, the matter was closed, and the creditor now ceased from putting in any further claim, or preferring any further challenge against Him. For us to be dead with Christ, is just to share in this very exoneration. It was for us that the account was settled; and, just as much as if by death the appointed penalty we had settled it ourselves, do we now stand acquitted of all further count and reckoning because of sin. In the covenanting of ordinary trade, a deficiency from our engagements brings us into

debt; but should an able cautioner liquidate the whole, we, in him, may be said to have sustained the prosecution, and borne the damage, and are now clear of the weight of conscious debt—because in him we have made full and satisfactory payment. In our covenant with the Lawgiver of heaven and earth, a deficiency from our engagements brings us into guilt; but should a competent mediator take upon his own person the whole burden of its imputation and its penalty, we, in him, may be said to have been pursued even unto death which was its sentence, and should now feel clear of the weight of conscious guilt—because in him we have rendered a full atonement. And we live beneath our privilege, we fail in making

the required use of the great propitiation, we are deficient of the homage that its due to its completeness and its power—if we cast not the burden of legal condemnation away from our spirits. It is detracting from the richness and the efficacy of Heaven's boon, for us to cherish the haunting imagination of a debt, that the revealed Surety has done away or, changing the terms, to cherish the haunting imagination of a guilt, for which the High Priest whom God Himself has set forth, has made a sacrifice wherewith God Himself has declared that He is well pleased. So that it is your positive duty to take the comfort of this, and to feel the deliverance of this. In as far as you do not, in so far you nullify the work of redemption, and cast a dimness and a disparagement over the most illustrious exhibition of Heaven's grace—dignified as it is with the full expression of Heaven's righteousness. Be dead with Christ then; and, this you are by putting faith in the atoning efficacy of that death. He who so believes is as free from condemnation, as if the cup of it had been put into his own hands, and he had already exhausted it to its last dregs—as if in his own person, he had walked the whole length of the valley and shadow of that death which every sinner has rightfully incurred—as if what was only possible for the Godhead to have borne within a given compass of time, He Himself had borne, the sufferings of that eternity which is in reserve for all the guilt that is unexpiated. Be dead with Christ, by giving credit to the gospel testimony about the death of Christ; and the whole of this tremendous retribution for sin with you is as good as over—and it is your own comfort, as well as God's commandment, that you henceforth, with the assurance of being set at liberty from sin, walk before him relieved from the bondage both of its conscious guilt and of its anticipated vengeance.

But in order to be fully conformed to the death of Christ, we must advert to what is said in the 9th and 10th verses, about the full and conclusive efficacy of it—so conclusive, that it had not again to be repeated, for He had to die only once, and death had no other dominion over Him. There was power enough for the whole purpose of our deliverance from guilt in the *one* offering—a truth of sufficient worth, it would appear, to be urged by the apostle in other places of the New Testament; when he says, that Christ did not offer Himself often; for then must He have often suffered since the foundation of the world—but now *once*, hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself: And Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many: And it is through

the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once* for all, that we are cleansed from guilt: And, finally, laying upon this point the stress of a frequent reiteration does the apostle say that it is by *one* offering that we are for ever perfected. There is surely a real practical importance in a matter so much insisted on; and accordingly, we infer from another passage, that it was to save the believer from the constant recurrence and revival, in his heart, of a sense of guilt—it was that, once purged, he should have no more conscience of sins—it was that he should look on the controversy between him and God as now fully adjusted, and at an end—it was that in the contemplation of that one act, even the decease which Christ accomplished at Jerusalem, he should feel as conclusively relieved from the imagination of guilt, as the son, in whose behalf the father has interposed and given ample satisfaction to all his creditors, feels himself relieved from the imagination of debt—it was that we should no longer conjure into life again, those fearful misgivings, which the one death of Christ and our death with Him should hush into everlasting oblivion—So that, if it be our duty to rejoice in the comfort of our full acquittance, through the satisfaction rendered by Him who poured out His soul for us—it goes to enhance the comfort still more, that there is an amount and a value in this same satisfaction, for meeting all the exigencies of our future history in the world—thus ministering the very antidote to our fears, which the apostle John urges upon his disciples, that if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, even Him who is the propitiation for our sins, Jesus Christ the righteous.

If we be dead with Christ, and death have no more dominion over Him—this is tantamount to guilt being no longer chargeable upon us. And ought not this to be felt as a precious enhancement of the blessing—setting an irrevocable seal as it were upon our reconciliation with God—placing it securely beyond the reach, not merely of the impediments which sin already contracted had thrown in the way; but also beyond the reach of all those future accidents, that the sin, into which we shall be surprised or into which we shall stumble, may afterwards involve us. We set not the remedy at its full worth, if we use it not to quiet the alarms of the guilt that is before us, as well as of the guilt that is behind us—if, like the children of Israel, we think that some great purifying ceremonial must be set up anew to wash away the outstanding defilements of the current year, under which they are meanwhile in a state of distance and displeasure from God—if we

regard not the fulness that is in Christ as a perennial fountain, which is at all times accessible; and is a very present cure to the conscience, under the many inroads and solicitations of that sinful nature which never ceases to beset us with its urgency—Thus overbearing the sense of guilt with the sense of that healing virtue which lies in the blood of the one sacrifice; and upholding the spirit of the believer, even while opprest with the infirmities of his earthly tabernacle, in the clear and confident feeling of his acceptance with God.

But is not this, it may be said, equivalent to the holding forth of a Popish indulgence for all sins, past, present, and to come? And, is not this a signal for antinomianism? And will not the feeling of our death to the guilt of sin, make us all alive to the charm of its many allurements—now heightened by a sense of impunity? And will not the peace that we are thus called upon to maintain, even while sin has its residence in our hearts, lull us still further into a peace that will not be broken; even though sin should reign over our habits and our history? We have sometimes thought so, my brethren, and, under the suggestion of such a fear, have qualified the freeness, and laid our clauses and our exceptions and our drawbacks on the fulness of the gospel; and, solicitous for the purity of the human character, have lifted a timid and a hesitating voice when proclaiming the overtures of pardon for human guilt. But we are now thoroughly persuaded, that the effective way of turning men from sin to righteousness, is to throw, wide and open before them, the door of reconciliation; and that a real trust in God for acceptance, is ever accompanied with a real movement of the heart towards godliness; and that to mix or darken the communications of good will to the world through Him who died for it, is not more adverse to the rest of the sinner, than it is adverse to the holiness of the sinner; and that, after all, the true way of keeping up love in the heart, is to keep up peace in the conscience—thus making your freedom from the guilt of sin, the best guarantee for your deliverance from its power; and that, as we have already affirmed, if you can interpose the death of Christ in arrest of condemnation, when Satan for the purposes of disturbance would inject the fears of unbelief into your bosom, he the great adversary of souls were paralyzed at the very sight of such a barrier in all his measures of hostility against you, and would retire a baffled enemy from that contest, in which, for the purposes of a sinful dominion over you, he tried to assail and to conquer by the force of his temptations.

But the certainty of that connection, which obtains between a death unto the guilt of sin, and a death unto its power, will be more manifest afterwards: And, meanwhile, after having said so much on the clause of being dead with Christ, it may now be time for offering our remarks on the clause that we shall live with Him.

Yet before we proceed to the elucidation of this latter clause, we may remark a sanctifying influence in the former one. We are looked upon by the Lawgiver as dead with Christ—that is, as having in Him borne the penalty of our sins, and therefore as no longer the subjects of a curse that has already been discharged, of a condemnatory sentence that is already executed. Now though we share alike with Christ, in this privilege of a final acquittance from that death which has no more dominion over Him, and is for ever averted from us—yet it was at His expense alone, and not at ours, that the acquittance was obtained. It would have cost us an eternity of suffering in hell, to have traversed the whole of that vengeance that was denounced upon iniquity; and it was therefore so condensed upon the person of the Saviour, who had the infinity of the Godhead to sustain it, that on Him, during the limited period of His sufferings on earth, all the vials of the Almighty's wrath were poured forth and so were expended. By our fellowship with Him in His death, we have been borne across a gulf, which to ourselves would have been utterly interminable; and have been landed on a safe and peaceful shore, over which no angry cloud whatever is suspended; and have been conclusively placed beyond the reach of those devouring billows, into which the despisers of the gospel salvation shall be absorbed, and have for ever their fiery habitation. But it is just because Christ has, in the greatness of His love, for us travelled through the depths of all this endurance—just because, in the agonies of the garden and the sufferings of the cross, were concentrated the torments of millions through eternity—just because, in that mysterious passion which for us He underwent, He with tears and cries and anguish unutterable, forced the way of reconciliation—And we who are dead with Christ, partake in all the triumphs of this sore purchase, but not in the pains of it; and have now our feet established on a quiet landing-place. And the sanctifying influence to which we now advert, and which no real believer can withstand, is gratitude to Him, who hath wrought out for us so mighty a deliverance. It is the responsiveness of love from our hearts, to that love which burnt so unquenchably in His, and bore Him up under the burden

of a world's atonement. It is the rightful sentiment, that now we are not our own, but the ransomed and redeemed property of another. This touches, and touches irresistibly, upon him who rightly appreciates all the horrors of that everlasting captivity from which we have been brought, and all the expense of that dreadful equivalent which Christ had to render—And he thus judges, that, as Christ died for all, then were all dead; and He died, that those who live might live no longer to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again.

“We believe that we shall also live with Him.” To explain the phrase of our being dead with Christ, we had to ascertain how it was that Christ was dead; and we find by the following verse that He died unto sin, and we in like manner are dead unto sin; or, in other words, the wages of sin being paid to Christ, there is no further reckoning between them—and, as this transaction was for us and in our stead, it is just as if death the wages of sin had been rendered unto us; and sin can now hold no further count, and prefer no further charge against us. This sense of dying unto sin on the part of Christ, will conduct us to the sense of his living unto God. The life that he now lives with Him, has been conferred upon Him in the shape of wages. In other words, it is a reward consequent upon what He has done for us, and in our stead—even as the death that He bore was a punishment, consequent upon His having become accountable for us, and in our stead. This will recall to you, my brethren, a distinction to which we have already had occasion to advert; and for which there seemeth a real warrant in the book of revelation—the distinction that there is, in point of effect, between the passive and the active obedience of Christ—the one satisfying for sin and making an end of its curse and punishment—So that to be dead with Christ and dead unto sin, is to live in the condition of those, on whom the curse and the punishment have already been expended; and who have therefore nothing now to fear from its charges—whereas to live with Christ or to be alive unto God, is to share with Him that positive favour which Christ hath merited from God by His positive righteousness. It is something more than simply to cease from being the children of wrath, and the heirs of damnation—it is to become the objects of a positive good will, and the heirs or the expectants of a positive reward.

The single term *also*, indicates that the privilege of sharing with Him in His life, is distinct from and additional to the privilege of sharing in His death. By the one

we only escape the curse—by the other we obtain the blessing. By the one, we are lightened of the debt which He hath discharged through His sufferings—by the other, we share in the property which He hath acquired through His services. The one shuts against us the gate of hell. The other opens for us the gate of heaven. Did we only share with Him in His death, we would be found midway between the region of pain and the region of positive enjoyment; but by also sharing with Him in His life, we are elevated to the higher region, and partake in those very glories and felicities to which the Saviour has been exalted. Had the alone work of the Saviour been an expiation for sin, there would have been a death, and such a death as would have exempted us from its endurance; but there would have been no resurrection. But in the words of the prophet Daniel, our Saviour did more than finish transgression and make an end of sin—He also brought in an everlasting righteousness; and so reaped for Himself and those who believe in Him a positive reward, the first fruits of which were His own resurrection to blessedness, and the consummation of which will be a similar resurrection to all His followers. It was the atonement which laid Him in His grave. It was His righteousness that lifted Him forth again, and bore Him up to paradise. Had there been an atonement and nothing more, like prisoners dismissed from the bar we would have been simply let alone. But He brought in a righteousness also—so that we not only are relieved of all fear; but, inspired with joyful hope, we, in addition to being dead with Him, believe that we shall also live with Him. And thus it is, that, while He was delivered up unto the death for our offences, that the guilt of them may be absolved in the atonement which He made—He was raised again for our justification, or that we may share in that merit for which He Himself was exalted, and on account of which we too believe that we shall be exalted also.

You will see then, that as we understand the phrase of our dying with Christ forensically—so we understand the phrase of our living with Christ forensically. It is our living through His righteousness, in that favour which is better than life—the sense of which favour will keep our spirits tranquil and happy here; and will often, even among the turmoils of our earthly pilgrimage, brighten into such a gleam of comfort and elevation, as shall be the foretaste to us of the coming ecstasy—when, on our entrance into the habitation of God's unclouded and immediate presence, we shall share with our Redeemer, now on high in His full enjoyment of the divine

glory; and, beheld as we shall be in the face of Christ, of that love wherewith the Father hath loved Him.

But just as a believing sense on our part, of our being dead with Christ unto sin in the forensic sense of the phrase, leads, as we have already affirmed, to our being dead unto sin in the personal sense of the phrase, so as that we become dead in our regard for sin—in like manner, my brethren, a believing sense of our living with Christ in the forensic sense of the phrase, will lead to a living with Him in the personal sense of the phrase also. So as that the style and character of our life shall resemble His—loving what He loves, sharing with Him in His tastes and in His powers as well as in His privileges, walking along with Him in the very same track of happiness and glory—For which purpose it is altogether essential, that we be endued with a heart which delights in the very same pursuits, and feels the working and aspiration of the very same properties. Or, in other words, admitted as we are to rejoice with Him in that favour of God which He hath purchased by His obedience, we shall not have the conviction and the feeling of this, without also rejoicing with Him, even as He does now in beholding the character of God—in gazing with delight on the aspect of His pure and unspotted holiness—in copying upon our own spirits all those graces and virtues which we admire in His. So that to live with Christ in the fellowship of those privileges which by His merit He has won, will bring in its train our living with Him in the fellowship of all that kindred excellence by which His person is adorned—being alive unto God, not merely in regard to our right through Christ to His friendship; but alive unto Him, in the restoration of a nature that is now attracted by the charm of His moral attributes, and finds both its delight and its dignity to live in the imitation of them.

There is a sure transition between our being justified by faith, and our being sanctified by faith. There is a provision made for this, in the mechanism of the moral nature of man below; and there is a provision made for it, in that celestial mechanism which has been set up in heaven—and from which there come down those holy influences, that serve to regenerate our world. Faith makes known to us the love of God, and upon this gratitude calls forth the love of the heart to Him back again. Faith reveals to us that exquisite union, which is held out in the gospel, between the awful and the lovely attributes of His nature; and the fear that hath torment being now allayed, and the consciousness of personal security being now established, we can, without

dread and without disturbance, take an entire view of the Divinity, and add to the homage of our thanksgiving, the homage of a reverence that is free from terror, to such a full and finished glory. Faith opens to our sight the real character of heaven, in the sacredness of its angelic delights and its holy services—so that to rejoice in the hope of our living there, it is indispensable that we should rejoice in the devices and the doings of saintliness here. Neither can we cherish the belief that we shall live with Christ, unless the kind of life that is held through eternity along with Him, be dear and congenial to our bosoms—so that grant the faith through which we obtain an interest in His righteousness to reside and operate within us, there are securities in the very constitution of the inner man, that we shall aspire after and at last attain unto holiness.

Yet however suited the mechanism of our hearts is, to this purifying operation of faith—it will not move, neither will it persevere in the movement, without a continued impulse from above; and, to secure this, there has been raised, if I may use the expression, a mechanism in heaven—by the working of which, a stream of living water is made to descend upon the moral nature of man, so as to attune all its emotions and desires to those of the spiritual nature of the upper paradise. In other words, there is a true sanctuary there, whereof Christ Himself is the minister, and it is His office, not merely to carry up the prayers of His people to Him who sitteth upon the throne, mixed with the acceptable odour of His own merits—but also to send down from the Holiest of Holies upon our world, that regenerating influence by which man is awakened to a new moral existence, and upheld in all the affections and in all the exercises of godliness. He is the prevailing Advocate, through whom our ascending supplications rise with acceptance to God. But He, the Lord from heaven, is also the quickening Spirit, through whom the light and the heat of the sanctuary are made to descend upon us. It is thus that faith is deposited at the first; and it is thus that faith is upheld ever afterwards, in power to work within us all the feelings and all the fruits of righteousness. The Holy Ghost, that blessing so precious and so preeminent, as to be styled the promise of the Father—it was by His power and agency express, that Christ was revived, and His resurrection from the grave was accomplished; and, as if to fulfil and illustrate the saying of our Saviour that because I live ye shall live also, this very power has been committed to His mediatorial hand; and it is just by its working that He quickens us,

who by nature are dead in trespasses and sins, into a spiritual resurrection. Thus are we made spiritually alive unto God, and walk in newness of life before Him. And if it be asked, how shall this virtue be brought to bear upon us, we answer that the prayer of faith will bring it down at any time—that with it the door of heaven's sanctuary is opened; and the required blessing passes with sure conveyance into that believer's heart, the door of which is open to receive it: And, such is the established accordancy between the doings of the upper sanctuary and the doings of the church upon earth, that every member thereof, who lives in the favour of God because of the righteousness of Christ imputed unto him, will live also in the love and likeness of God because of the holiness of the Spirit infused into him.

The only practical inference I shall at present insist upon, is founded on the connection that we have so abundantly adverted to, between the faith of a sinner and his sanctification. The next verse will give us room for enlarging upon this all-important topic. But meanwhile be assured, that you may, with as much safety, confide the cause of your holiness upon earth to the exercise of believing, as you confide the cause of your happiness in heaven to this exercise. The primary sense of believing that we shall live with Christ, is, that, through His righteousness, we shall be admitted to that place of glory which He now occupies—there to spend with Him a blissful eternity; and according to this belief, if real, so shall it be done unto us. But in like manner also, let us just believe that we shall live with Him here, by entering even now upon the fellowship of those virtues which adorn His character, and of that Spirit which actuated the whole of His conduct; and according to this belief, if real, so shall it be done unto us. It is indeed to the eye of nature a most unlikely transformation, that creatures so prone as we are to sense and to ungodliness; and beset with the infirmities of our earthly tabernacle, and weighed down under that load of corruption wherewith these vile bodies are ever encumbering us, that we should break forth, even here into an atmosphere of sacredness, and inhale that spiritual life by which we become assimilated to the saints and the angels that now surround the throne of God. But the more unlikely this is to the eye of nature, so much the more glorious will be the victory of our

faith, that it triumphs over the strength of an improbability so grievous. And if, like Abraham of old, we against hope believe in hope; and stagger not at the promise because of unbelief, but are strong in faith giving glory to God—then, barren as we constitutionally are of all that is spiritually excellent, still, such is the influence of our faith over our sanctification, that, if there be truth in the promises of God, we shall be made to abound in the fruits of righteousness.

The best practical receipt I can give you, my brethren, for becoming holy is to be steadfast in the faith. Believe that Christ's righteousness is your righteousness; and His graces will become your graces. Believe that you are a pardoned creature; and this will issue in your becoming a purified creature. Take hold of the offered gift of Heaven; and you will not only enter, after death, on the future reversion of heaven's triumphs and heaven's joys—but before death, nay even now, will you enter upon the participation of heaven's feelings, and the practice of heaven's moralities. Go in prayer with the plea of Christ's atonement and His merits; and state, in connection with this plea, that what you want, is that you be adorned with Christ's likeness, and that you be assisted in putting on the virtues which signalized Him. And you will find the plea to be omnipotent; and the continued habit of such prayer, applied to all exigencies of your condition, will enable you to substantiate the example of your Saviour, throughout all the varieties of providence and of history. In a word, faith is the instrument of sanctification.

And when you have learned the use of this instrument, you have learned the way to become holy upon earth now, as well as the way to become eternally happy in heaven hereafter. The believing prayer that God will aid you in this difficulty; and counsel you in this perplexity; and enable you to overcome in this trial of charity and patience; and keep up in your heart the principle of godliness, amid the urgency of all those seducing influences by which you are surrounded—this you will find, my brethren, to be the sure stepping-stone, to a right acquittal of yourself, in all the given circumstances of your condition in the world. And let the repeated experience of your constant failures, when you had nothing but the power and the energies of nature to trust to, shut you up unto the faith.

LECTURE XXXII.

ROMANS vi, 11.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

WE regard this verse as proof in itself, of the forensic meaning, which we have all along ascribed to the phrases of our being dead unto sin and alive unto God. The great object of this chapter, is to establish the alliance that there is, between a sinner's acceptance through Christ and a sinner's holiness. And in the verse before us, there is a practical direction given for carrying this alliance into effect. We are called upon to reckon of ourselves that we are dead unto sin, and alive unto God; and this is a step towards our becoming holy. Now what are we to reckon ourselves? why, if these phrases be taken in the personal sense of them—it would be that we are mortified to the pleasures and temptations of sin; and alive to nothing but the excellencies of God's character, and a sense of the obligations we are under to love and to honour Him: Or, in other words, we are to reckon ourselves holy in order that we may become holy. It were a strange receipt for curing a man of his dishonesty, to bid him reckon of himself that he is an honest man. One really does not see the charm and the operation of this expedient at all. One does not see, how, by the simple act of counting myself what I really am not, that I am to be transferred from that which I am to that which I choose to imagine of myself. And a still more radical objection is, that it is bidding me reckon that to be true which I know to be false. It is bidding me cherish the belief of a thing that is not. It is calling, not upon my faith in a matter for which there is no evidence, but upon my imagination of a matter that is directly opposite to a reality of which I am conscious. To lay hold of a sinner and bid him reckon of himself that he is a saint, is to bid him admit into credit that which he knows to be untrue—and all for the purpose too of turning him from the creature that he feels he is, to the creature that he fancies he is. We have heard much of the power of imagination; but this is giving it an empire and an ascendancy that exceeds all which was before known or observed of our nature—besides the very obvious moral impropriety that there would be in an apostle telling, either an unconverted man to conceive of himself that which is most glaringly and notoriously untrue; or, if you will restrict the

injunction of my text to disciples and believers, telling them to think what no humble Christian can possibly think of himself—that he is crucified unto the love of sin, and that all his felt and living desires are towards God and godliness.

Now you free the passage of all these difficulties, by taking these phrases according to the forensic interpretation that we have given them. To be dead unto sin, is to be in the condition of one on whom death the sentence of sin has already been inflicted—if not in his own person at least in that of his representative; so that the execution for the transgression of the law is a matter that is now past and over. To be alive unto God is to live in the favour of God—a favour to which we have been admitted through the services of a Mediator, or, in the language of the text, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To reckon that Christ died for the one purpose, and to reckon that he brought in an everlasting righteousness for the other purpose—is to reckon, not on a matter of fancy, but on a matter proposed, and that too on the evidence of God's own testimony to faith. It is not to cherish a delusive belief of what we are in ourselves, and that in the face of our own consciousness—it is to cherish a most solid and warrantable belief of what God has done for us, and that on the credit we place in His own intimation. Ere we can in our own minds bolster up the reckoning, that we are personally dead unto sin and personally alive unto God—there must be many misgivings; and sad failures and fluctuations of confidence, on the constant detections that we must be ever making of our own ungodliness. And at best it is a very precarious security indeed for holiness, if the way to become holy is to reckon that we are so. But when, instead of looking downwardly on the dark and ambiguous tablet of our own character, we look upwardly to that Saviour who now sitteth in exaltation, after having rendered the penalty of our disobedience and won for us the reward of life everlasting—We hold by a thing of historical fact, and not by a thing of deceitful imagination; we rest on the completeness of a finished expiation and perfect obedience; and transfer our reckoning from a ground where conscience meets us and gives us the lie, to a ground occupied by the stable

and enduring realities of Scripture—where God who cannot lie meets us with the assurances of His truth; and the voice of His kindness welcomes us to the deliverance of those who are dead with Christ, to the high and heavenly anticipations of those who are alive with Him.

When a sinner is bidden to reckon himself dead unto sin, and this phrase is understood personally, he is bidden to reckon himself a saint—to reckon what is not true; and surely this is not the way of causing him to be a saint. But when he is bidden to reckon himself dead unto sin, and this phrase is understood forensically, he is bidden look upon himself as a partaker with Christ in all the privileges and immunities of Him, on whom the sentence is already discharged and gone by; and to whom therefore there is no more condemnation. But it may be said, might not this be an untruth also? Do I read anywhere in the Bible, of Christ dying for me in particular? The apostle is speaking to his converts when he says, "Reckon yourselves dead unto sin." But is it competent to address any one individual at random, to reckon himself in this blessed condition of freedom from a penalty, that Christ hath intercepted and absorbed in behalf of all who believe on Him? Might not he in so reckoning be as effectually working himself up into the belief of a delusive imagination, as if he reckoned that he was a new creature—while all the habits and tendencies of the old man still remained with him, in full and unabated operation?

Why, my brethren, it is no where said in the Bible that Christ so died for me in particular, as that by His simple dying the benefits of His atonement are mine in possession. But it is everywhere said in the Bible, that He so died for me in particular, as that by His simple dying, the benefits of His atonement are mine in offer. They are mine if I will. Such terms as *whosoever*, and *all*, and *any*, and *ho every one*, bring the gospel redemption specifically to my door; and there it stands for acceptance as mine in offer, and ready to become mine in possession on my giving credit to the word of the testimony. The terms of the gospel message are so constructed, that I have just as good a warrant for reckoning myself dead unto sin, as if, instead of the announcement that God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation for the sins of the world through faith in His blood, I had been the only sinner in the world; or I had been singled out by name and by surname, and it was stated that God had set forth Christ a propitiation for the sins of me individually; through faith in His blood. The act of reckoning myself dead unto sin

through Christ, is just the act of receiving the truth of Christ's declaration,—according to the terms of the declaration. It is not reckoning on the truth of a falsehood. Were it a personal phrase, no doubt, it were reckoning that to be in the house, which is no where to be found within its limits. But it being a forensic phrase, it is just opening the door of the house; and suffering that to enter in which is pressing upon it for admittance. Bid the sinner reckon in the former way; and you bid him feel that to be a reality within him, which has no existence. Bid him reckon in the latter way; and you bid him fetch from the abiding realities which are without, a conviction that will carry light and peace and comfort into his bosom—you bid him close with the overtures of the gospel—you bid him appropriate to himself what is said of the power of Christ's blood, and the purpose and effect of His sacrifice. But it is not an appropriation which carries him beyond the exercise of a legitimate faith—because not an appropriation beyond the real meaning and application of the terms, that I have just adverted to. By reckoning himself personally dead unto sin, and personally alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, he would outrun the reckoning of his own conscience. But by reckoning himself forensically dead unto sin, and forensically alive unto God, he does not outrun the reckoning of the Bible. He gathers no more out of the field of revelation, than what he finds to be lying upon its surface; and laid there too, just that he may fall in with it and take it home. Without the terms 'whosoever,' and 'all,' and 'any,' and 'ho, every one,' it might not have been so; but, with these terms, he may reckon of himself that forensically he is dead with Christ—and yet believe no further, than the terms in question give him the fullest warrant for.

And what is more. You will not acquire a virtuous character, by barely imagining that you have it when you have it not. But there is another way, in which it is conceivable that a virtuous character may be acquired. Not by any false reckoning about your actual character; but by a true reckoning about your actual condition. A mistaken sense as to the principle that inspires your heart, will never be the mean of bringing a right principle there. But a correct and habitual sense as to the place you occupy, may, by its moral influence on the feelings, have the effect both of introducing and of nourishing the right principle. It is not by imagining I am a saint, that I will become so; but by reflecting on the condemnation due to me as a sinner—on the way in which it has been averted from

my person—on the passage by which, without suffering to myself, I have been borne across the region of vindictive justice, and conclusively placed on the fair and favoured shore of acceptance with God—The sense and the reckoning of all this, may transform me from the sinner that I am, into the saint that I am not. The executed criminal, who has been galvanized into life again, may be sent forth upon society; and there exposed to the temptation of all his old opportunities. It is not by reckoning of himself, that he is now altogether dead to the power of these temptations—it is not by reckoning himself to be an honest man, that he will become so. It is not by reckoning falsely of his character, that he will change it into something different; but by reckoning truly of his condition, he may bring a moral consideration to bear upon his heart, that will transform his character. How shall I who for theft have passed through the hands of the executioner, recur to the very practice that destroyed me? And how, in like manner, says the believer, shall I who have virtually undergone this sentence of the law, that the soul which sinneth it shall die—how shall I, now that I have been made alive again, continue in that hateful thing, of whose malignant tendencies in itself, and of whose utter irreconcilableness to the will and character of God, I have, in the death of my representative and my surety, obtained so striking a demonstration? It is not the sense or reckoning that you are a sanctified man—it is not thus that the work of sanctification is done. It is the sense or reckoning that you are a justified man—it is this which has the sanctifying influence—it is this which does the work, or is the instrument of doing it.

Mark then, my brethren, the apostle's receipt for holiness. It is not that you reckon yourself already pure; but it is that you reckon yourself already pardoned. It is not that you feel as if the fetters of corruption have as yet been struck off; but that you feel as if altogether lightened and released from the fetters of condemnation, and that you may go forth in the peace and joy of a reconciled creature. And somehow or other, this, it would appear, is the way of arriving at the new spirit and the new life of a regenerated creature. And how it should fall with the efficacy of a charm on a sinner's ear, when told, that the first stepping stone towards that character of heaven after which he has been so hopelessly labouring, is to assure himself that all the guilt of his past ungodliness is now done away—that the ransom of iniquity is paid—and that by a death the pains of

which were never felt, the penalties of that law he so oft has broken shall never reach him. It is indeed levelling the mountains, and making the crooked paths straight, when such a high way of access is thrown across the gulph of separation, that is between sin and sacredness; and never, my brethren, will this transition be made good,—never will the sinner know what it is to taste of spiritual joys, or to breathe with kindred delight in a spiritual atmosphere, till, buried in another's death, and raised in another's righteousness than his own, he can walk with the confident peace of one who knows that he is safe, under the secure and ample canopy of the offered Mediatorship.

So that the apostle tells us here, and in the imperative mood, to reckon that our death by sin is over and gone by; and this too, you will observe, for the purpose of bringing about our sanctification. What a powerful and practical outset does he afford to this career! He dreads no Antinomianism. He fearlessly bids the people to count, that one man has died for them all; and he bids them habitually reckon upon this, recur to it, keep it in memory, always be acting and holding fast the confidence that they begun with, and not cast it away. The man who is called upon to reckon that he was dead unto sin personally, would often feel as if out of his reckoning; and many a misgiving would visit him; and he might thus spend his life in the tossings of anxiety. But the man who is called upon to reckon that he is dead unto sin forensically, is presented with a solid foundation in that which Christ hath done for him; is simply bidden count upon that as a settled point, which has indeed been settled fast; and, when like to be abandoned by hope, he has only to feel for the solidity of his ground, and, in so doing, will find that it is a rock of strength which he has got to stand upon. And all this as the first step to a life of new obedience. All this as a primary command, among those which the apostle afterwards delivers, for the purpose of securing our transition from sin unto holiness. All this as a staff to support us on the narrow way of discipline and duty, as provision for our journey to the land of uprightness. And what I bid you remark in the first place, is the very peculiar instrument which the apostle puts into the hands of his his disciples, for the purpose of making them regenerated creatures,—even a trusty reckoning, on their part, that they are already reconciled creatures; and what an evidence here of God's desire that you should feel at peace from the apprehension of His wrath, when it is this very peace that He

proposes as the means of making you the partakers of the worth and purity of His nature!

But, in the second place, will the means be really effectual? It was so with Paul. He gloried not in himself—not in his crucifixion to sin—not in his resurrection to holiness; he gloried in the cross of Christ, and the crucifixion to sin came out of this glorying. Thereby the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world. The personal result came out of the forensic reckoning; and not a believer after him, who will not experience the same result out of the same reckoning. Your business is to count of yourselves, that in Christ your condemnation is discharged; that in Him your acceptance is granted. And the more steadfastly and constantly you keep by this business, the more certainly will you find to your blessed experience, that a new heart and a new history emerge from the doing of it. The hourly habit of reflecting upon the new condition in which Christ has placed you, will sustain an hourly influence, by which there shall germinate and grow the new character that Christ proposes should arise in you. You have laboured long perhaps, after the life of God and of heaven in the soul; but this is just because you have been labouring long in the wrong track, or with wrong instruments. Turn you now unto that doctrine, which is as much the power of God unto sanctification here as unto salvation hereafter; and know, from this time forward, that the way of reaching the life of holiness you aspire after, is to live a life of faith in the Son of God.

I have already adverted to some of the moral influences, wherewith the consideration of our having been as good as dead for sin, is so abundantly pregnant; and even with a reiteration that might have fatigued, and over satiated some of you, did I, in remarking on the second verse, expatiate at great length on what struck me as the first of these influences. It is the same with that which may be addressed to a man, who has been put to death for a crime, and then made alive again. A most impressive lesson to him, of the genius and character of that government under which he lives; of its hostility to the wickedness for which he suffered; of its intolerance for a transgression, into which if he again fall, there may be no mercy and no readmittance from the sentence that will be surely in reserve for him. And, in like manner, the sinner, who, through Christ, has been restored from condemnation, learns, both in the sentence that was incurred, and in the atonement that was rendered, what a repulsion there is between sin and sacred-

ness; and how, if the character of God be the same that it ever was, he, in sinning wilfully, dares over again the still unquelled antipathies of the Godhead—and, that if he gives himself up to the old service, which reduced him at first from the one rightful authority, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary. God forbid, that we should continue in sin, that grace may abound—or, because we have been brought back again within the limits of God's beloved family, we should fetch along with us that which before had banished us forth of a domain—from which sin, of all other things, must be rooted out, because sin of all other things is that which most sorely and most grievously offendeth.

But he does not know all, if he only know of that inheritance to which he has been readmitted, that no sin is suffered to have occupancy there. This is only knowing the quality of that which is exiled from heaven's family; but it is not knowing the quality of that, which is welcomed and cherished, and carried to uttermost perfection there. It is only giving me to understand the character of the outcast; but it is not giving me to understand the character of the guest. By being dead with Christ, the door of entry is again opened for me into the great household of the blest; and it is well to be solemnized into the impression, that I must shun the hateful thing which banished me therefrom. But I should also be led to aspire, and with all my earnestness, after that estimable thing, which stamps the character and constitutes the honour and the delight of this rejoicing family. The disgraced felon, whose frauds had expelled him from society, when again introduced within its limits, is furnished by all his recollections with a strong and actuating motive, to put all the atrocities of his former life away from him; but not only so,—by his strenuous cultivation of the opposite virtues—by the scrupulous integrity of his dealings—by the high-minded disdain, in which he would hold even the slightest deviations from the path of honour—by the sensitive nicety of an uprightness, on which no discernible flaw can be detected—he might regain a distinguished place in that living circle, the esteem and happiness of which he had before forfeited; and reach a status of positive credit and enjoyment, in room of that ignominy which before had covered him. And the same of heaven on the other side of death, and also of the road which leads to heaven on this side of death. The same of the habit and condition of paradise hereafter; and the same most

assuredly of the habit of preparation for paradise here. He who is dead with Christ, and so freed from condemnation, is not ushered at once into the celestial regions: but he is forthwith set on the journey which leads to them. And, with his eye full on the moral and spiritual glories of the place that is above, he will learn that sinlessness is not enough—that he must be strenuous in the pursuit of positive goodness—that, to lay up treasure in heaven, he must become rich in all those graces that adorn and dignify the wearer—that, to be received and welcomed as a member of the upper family, he must acquire the family likeness; or gather upon his inner man all those features of piety and love, and humbleness and temperance and purity, which go to make up a portrait of affirmative excellence, and to stamp on every desire and on every doing the expression of holiness unto the Lord.

The starting-post at which this race of virtue begins, and from which this noble career of progressive and aspiring excellence is entered on, is your freedom from condemnation, through the death of Christ. It is your reckoning by faith upon this, which cuts asunder that load, by which the compressed and heavy-laden energies of the soul are restrained from bursting forth on a path of hopeful activity; and it is thus, that, with emancipated powers now awakened to life and to liberty, you press onward to that summit of perfection that is yet seen by you from afar, but to which you have bent your determined course, and are ever running, as for the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus our Lord. But to our progress on this great moral and spiritual journey, the reckoning of the text is indispensable. Without this reckoning, you are chained to the sluggishness of despair. With this reckoning the chain is broken; and the sluggishness is dissipated; and the faculties of the mind are not only freed, but they are urged and stimulated in a holy and a heavenward direction. For, among the thousand other guarantees for the faith of the gospel being indeed a purifying and an inspiring faith, mark it, my brethren, that a sense of pardon will never enter believably into the sinner's heart, without its being followed up by a sense of obligation; and gratitude to Him who first loved you, will incite you to all that you know to be gladdening or acceptable to His bosom: And when you read, that He wants to rear all those creatures who are the travail of his soul, into so many illustrious specimens of that power with which He is invested—to adorn and to sanctify those whom He has saved—how can you refuse to be a fellow-worker with

Him, in striving, by all the aids of His grace, to apprehend that holiness, for the sake of producing which in your spirit, you have been apprehended? How can you refuse to gratify in your own person and performance, the taste of Him who ever rejoices to behold the verdure and the beauty that sit on the landscapes of materialism; and will much more rejoice to behold in the church of the redeemed, on which He is ever shedding the water of life from above, the unspotted loveliness of a new moral creation, that now teems and rises towards that full accomplishment, when it shall be holy and without blemish before Him?

Thus it is that the desire of Christ, and your desire, meet together in the one object of your sanctification. Let the sinner's desire for this vent itself in prayer; and let the desire of the Saviour for this go forth upon the prayer, and hand it up perfumed with the incense of His own merits to Him who sitteth on the throne; and the descending of the Spirit on the believer's heart, will make sure that regenerating process, whereby he who is saved from the punishment of sin, will also most certainly be saved from its power. The man, who, in the faith of God's testimony, reckons himself a partaker of Christ's death and resurrection, is not reckoning beyond his warrant. But he who so reckons upon Christ hath received Christ; and the mighty vantage ground upon which he stands is, that he can now plead the declaration of God Himself, that as He hath given His own Son He will also with Him freely give all things; and the most precious of these, are the heart and the power to serve Him. It is thus that, through the door of reconciliation, you enter on the path of new obedience; and still we come back again to this, that the very reckoning of my text, is the thing which gives its first prosperous outset to the work of sanctification. It is this which brings home to the believer's heart, the malignity of sin—it is this which opens to him the gate of heaven; and disclosing to his view the glories of that upper region, teaches him that it is indeed a land of sacredness—it is this which inclines his footsteps along the path to immortality, which the death of Christ and it alone has rendered accessible—it is this which conforms his character to that of the celestial spirits who are there before Him—For the will of Christ, whom he now loves, is, that he should be like unto Him; and the grateful wish and the grateful endeavour of the disciple, draw forth from his labouring bosom that prayer of faith, which is sure to rise with acceptance, and is sure to be answered with power.

To conclude, I shall be pleased, if, as the fruit of all these explanations, I have succeeded in making palpable to any understanding, the great secret of what that is which constitutes the principle of evangelical obedience. The constant aim and tendency of nature is towards a legal obedience; and, in the prosecution of this, it is sure to land either in a spiritless formality, or in a state of fatigue and dissatisfaction and despondency, which, without the faith of the gospel is utterly interminable. To believe in Christ, is the way to be holy here, as well as the way to be happy hereafter. A sense of peace with God through Him, when it enters the bosom, is the sure harbinger of purity there; and what you have plainly to do, that you may attain to the character of heaven, is to take up the reckoning of my text—even that the death by sin is conclusively gone through; and that, the life by God being promised through Jesus Christ, the gate of heaven now stands open for you approaches through the way of holiness which leads to it. You have perhaps been practising at the work of reformation by other methods; and this is a method that may have been still untried by you. Try it now; and what can be more inviting, than to begin an enterprise with such an encouragement of friendship and of patronage upon your side? The man who sets out on the tract of legalism, proposes

to win this friendship by his obedience, and to secure this patronage. But the man who sets out evangelically, counts on the friendship and the patronage, and avails himself of all the aids and facilities that are abundantly offered to him. Make the experiment, my brethren. Take it up as a settled point, that in Christ your condemnation is done away—that in Him your right to everlasting life is purchased and secured for you—that all the signals of honest and welcome invitation are now lifted up; and, floating in the eye even of the worst of sinners, are cheering him forward to the land of uprightness—and that every influence is provided, to help his movement from the character of that earth whence he is so soon to make an everlasting departure, to the character of that now open and accessible heaven whither he is asked to bend his footsteps. Enter upon this undertaking on the footing that your reconciliation is secured, and not on the footing that your reconciliation is yet to win. On the one footing you will fight all your days, at a distance from hope, and at an utterly impracticable distance from that heaven after which you are toiling so fruitlessly. Just make the attempt then on the other footing; and see whether all old things will not be done away, and all things will not become new.

LECTURE XXXIII.

ROMANS vi, 12.

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

SOME would substitute here, in place of mortal, which signifies liable to death, the idea of our bodies being already dead in Christ; or in Him being already put to death for sin—which would just be urging us to strive against sin, and on the consideration too that I have in your hearing so repeatedly insisted upon. Let not that hateful enemy again reign over us, who already brought us to the borders of execution. And here, I may revert for a moment to the thought, that sin, by the death of Christ in our stead, hath been plucked of its sting—that our Saviour received it in His own body, and there is no more power in our cruel adversary to inflict its mortal poison upon us—and that he is not only disarmed of his right to condemn us, but furthermore disarmed of all right and ability to tyrannize over us.

In virtue of the defeat that he has gotten, he will not obtain the dominion over our hearts and wills unless we let him. If we let him not, we shall find that our resistance, backed as it is by the plea of a Saviour already crucified, and by the power of a Saviour now exalted, is greatly too much for him. We who have been baptized into Christ, are somewhat in the same circumstances with regard to our old oppressor sin—that the children of Israel after being baptized into Moses in the Red sea, were, in reference to the power and tyranny of Egypt. Their enemy was engulfed in that abyss, over which they found an open and a shielded way; and, placed conclusively beyond the reach of his dominion, it was now their part to exchange the mastery of Pharaoh for the mastery of God; and those who did not

acquit themselves of this their part, but rebelled against Heaven, and sighed in their hearts after the flesh-pots of Egypt, were cut off in the wilderness. And these things are recorded for our admonition, on whom the latter ends of the world have come. If truly baptized into Christ, we have, with Him our Deliverer, passed athwart that mighty chasm which had been else impassable; and it was in the act of opening up and traversing this deep, that he who had the power of death was overthrown; and we, now placed beyond the reach of his inflictions, are to exchange the tyranny of sin for the rightful command and mastery of Him, who hath borne us across from the confines of the enemy; and unless we let him, he is stript of all power of ascendancy over us—being no more able to subjugate our hearts to the influence of moral evil, than he is able to subjugate our persons to its penalty. Now, if he offer to reign, let us but resist, and he will flee from us—whereas, if with so many aids and securities around us, and standing on the vantage ground of a safety that has thus been obtained and thus been guaranteed, we shall still find our inclinations towards this malignant destroyer, we shall share in the fate of the rebellious Hebrews, we shall fall short on our way to the heavenly Canaan, we shall be likened to those who fell in the wilderness.

And this analogy, which has been instituted by Paul himself in another part of his writings, does not fail us—though we should take the term mortal in the customary, which I am also inclined to think is here the correct signification of it. While in these mortal bodies, we are only on a road through the wilderness of earth, to the secure and everlasting blessedness of heaven. It is true that all who are really partakers with Christ in His death, have got over a mighty barrier, that lay between this terrestrial Egypt and the Jerusalem that is above. They have been carried through the strait gate of acceptance, and have now to travel along the narrow way of duty and of discipline. It is most true of all who are actually through the one, that they will be borne in safety and in triumph along the other. But one may think that he is in Christ, when he is not—and therefore let him who thus thinketh that he standeth, take heed lest he fall. If in Christ, it is true, that to him there will be no condemnation. But if in Christ, it is just in every way as true, that he will walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Let us therefore make sure of our condition by so walking. Let us give all our diligence to ascertain and establish it. If we really are at a distance from the land of sin's condemnation, we

are at an equal distance from the land of sin's thralldom and oppressive tyranny. Let us count it our business then to make head against that tyranny. Let not sin reign over us, on the passage that we have yet to describe, ere we shall be translated to our place of secure and eternal refuge from all its entanglements. Let us stifle every rising inclination for the pleasures and the carnalities of Egypt, and come not under the power of those lusts which war against the soul, till we reach the spiritual Canaan, where every inclination to evil that we have withstood here, shall cease to exist and so cease to annoy us.

We hold it of prime importance, in the business of practical Christianity that we understand well the kind of work which is put into our hands, both that we may go rightly about it, and also that we may have the comfort of judging whether it is actually making progress under our exertions. A mistake on this point may lead us perhaps to waste our efforts on that which is impracticable; and when these efforts of course turn out to be fruitless, may lead us to abandon our spirits to utter despondency; and thus, to use the language of the apostle Paul—running as uncertainly, and fighting as one that beatech the air, we may spend our days, alike strangers to peace, and to progressive holiness.

Now to save us from this hurtful mistake it were well that we weighed the vast import of certain terms in the verse before us which are altogether big with significance. "Let not sin," says the apostle, "reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Here we cannot fail to perceive how widely diverse the injunction of the apostle would have been, if instead of saying, "Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies," he had said, Let sin be rooted out of your mortal bodies; or if, instead of saying, Obey not its lusts, he had bid us eradicate them. It were surely a far more enviable state to have no inclination to evil at all, than to be oppressed with the constant forth-putting of such an inclination, and barely to keep it in check, under the power of some opposing principle. Could we attain the higher state, on this side of time, we would become on earth, what angels are in heaven, whose every desire runs in the pure current of love and loyalty to a God of holiness. But if doomed to the lower state, during all the days of our abode in the world, then are we given to understand, that the life of a Christian is a life of vigilant and unremitting warfare—that it consists in the struggle of two adverse elements, and the habitual prevalence of one of them—that in us, and

closely around us, there is a besetting enemy who will not quit his hold of us, till death paralyse his grasp, and so let us go—and that, from this sore conflict of the Spirit lusting against the flesh, and the flesh against the Spirit, we shall not be conclusively delivered, till our present tainted materialism shall be utterly taken down; and that the emancipated soul shall not have free and unconfined scope for its heavenly affections, until it has burst its way from the prison-hold of its earthly tabernacle.

Now, this view of the matter gives us a different conception of our appointed task from what may often be imagined. Sin, it would appear, is not to be exterminated from our mortal bodies; it is only to be kept at bay. It is not to be destroyed, in respect of its presence, but it is to be repressed in its prevalency and in its power. It will ever dwell, it would appear, in our present framework; but though it dwell, it may not have the dominion. Let us try then to banish it; and defeated in this effort, we may give up in heartless despair, the cause of our sanctification, thus throwing away at once both our peace and our holiness. But let us try to dethrone it, though we cannot cast it out; and succeeding in this effort, while we mourn its hateful company, we may both keep it under the control of strictest guardianship, and calmly look onward to the hour of death, as the hour of release from a burden that will at least adhere to us all our days, though it may not overwhelm us.

We see then the difference between a saint in heaven, and a saint upon earth. The former may abandon himself to such feelings and such movements as come at pleasure; for he has no other pleasure than to do the will of God, and to rejoice in the contemplation of His unspotted glory. The latter cannot with safety so abandon himself. It is true, that there is an ingredient in his nature, now under an advancing process of regeneration, which is altogether on the side of godliness; and were this left unresisted by any opposing influence, he might be spared all the agonies of dissolution, and set him down at once among the choirs and the companies of paradise. But there is another ingredient of his nature, still under an unfinished process of regeneration, and which is altogether on the side of ungodliness; and were this left without the control of his new and better principle, sin would catch the defenceless moment, and regain the ascendancy from which she had been dispossessed. Now it is death which comes in as the deliverer. It is death which frees away the incumbrance. It is death which overthrows and grinds

to powder that corrupt fabric on the walls of which were inscribed the foul marks of leprosy; and the inmost materials of which were pervaded with an infection, that nothing, it seems, but the sepulchral process of a resolution into dust, and a resurrection into another and glorified body, can clear completely and conclusively away. It is death that conducts us from the state of a saint on earth, to the state of a saint in heaven: but not till we are so conducted, are we safe to abandon ourselves for a single instant to the spontaneity of our own inclinations; and we utterly mistake our real circumstances in the world—we judge not aright of what we have to do, and of the attitude in which we ought to stand—we lay ourselves open to the assaults of a near and lurking enemy, and are exposed to most humiliating overthrows, and most oppressive visitations of remorse and wretchedness, if, such being our actual condition upon earth, we go to sleep, or to play among its besetting dangers; if we ever think of the post that we occupy being any other than the post of armour and of watchfulness; or, falsely imagining that there is but one spiritual ingredient in our nature, altogether on the side of holiness, instead of two, whereof the other is still alive, and on the side of sin, we ever let down the guardianship, and the jealousy, and the lowliness of mind, and the prayers for succour from on high, which such a state of things so urgently and so imperiously demands.

We think it of very capital importance for us to know that the body wherewith we are burdened, and must carry about with us, is a vile body; that the nature which we received at the first, and from which we shall not be delivered on this side of the grave, is a corrupt nature; that all which is in us, and about us, and that is apart from the new spirit infused through the belief of the gospel, is in a state of aversion to the will of God; that what may be denoted by the single word *carnality*, is of perpetual residence with us while upon earth; and that our distinct concern is, while it resides with us, that it shall not reign over us. It is ever present with its suggestions; and this we cannot help: but it should not prevail with its suggestions; and this, by the aids and expedients provided for the regeneration of a polluted world, we may help. We shall feel with our latest breath, the motions of the flesh; and these motions, if not sins, are at least sinful tendencies, which, if yielded to, would terminate in sins. Now our business is not to extirpate the tendencies, but to make our stand against them—not to root out those elements of moral evil which the body of

a good man before death has, and after its resurrection has not—but to stifle, and to keep them down by that force wherewith the new creature in Jesus Christ is armed for the great battle, on the issue of which hangs his eternity. We cannot obtain such a victory as that we shall never feel the motions of the flesh; but we may obtain such a victory, as that we shall not walk after the flesh. The enemy is not so skilled as that we are delivered from his presence; but by an unremitting strenuousness on our part, we may keep him so chained as that we shall be delivered from his power. Such is the contest, and such is the result of the contest, if it be a successful one. But we ought to be told, that it is a vain hope, while we live in the world, to look for the extermination of the sinful principle. It ever stirs and actuates within us; and there is not one hour of the day, in which it does not give token that it is still alive, and though cast down from its ascendancy, not destroyed in its existence. Forewarned, forearmed, and it is right to be informed, that near us, and within us, there is at all times an insidious foe, against whom we cannot guard too vigilantly, and against whom we cannot pray too fervently and too unremittingly.

The time is coming, when, without the felt counteraction of any adverse and opposing tendency, we shall expatiate in freedom over the realms of ethereal purity and love—just as the time is coming, when the chrysalis shall burst with unfettered wing from the prison in which it is now held; and where, we doubt not, that it is aspiring and growing into a meekness for traversing at large the field of light and air that is above it. The Christian on earth so aspires and so grows; but Christian though he be, there is on him the heaviness of a gross and tainted materialism, which must be broken down ere his spiritual tendencies can expand into their full and final development. Meanwhile, there is the compression upon him of downward, and earthward, and carnal tendencies, which will never be removed till he die; but which he must resist, so as that they shall not reign over him. There are lusts which he cannot eradicate, but which he must not obey; and, while he deplores, in humility and shame, the conscious symptoms within him of a nature so degraded, it is his business, by the energies and resources of the new nature, so to starve, and weaken, and mortify the old, as that it may linger into decay while he lives, and when he dies may receive the stroke of its full annihilation.

This representation of a believer's state upon earth is in accordancy with Scrip-

ture. We find the apostle stating, that the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and in such a way too, as that the man cannot do what he would. He would serve God more perfectly. He would render him an offering untinged by the frailty of his fallen nature. He would rise to the seraphic love of the upper paradise, and fain be able to consecrate to the Eternal, the homage of a heart so pure that no earthly feculence shall be felt adhering to it. But all this he cannot—and why? Because of a drag that keeps him, with all his soaring aspirations, among the dust of a perishable world. There is a counterpoise of secularity within, that at least damps and represses the sacredness; and it is well that it do not predominate over it. This secularity belongs to the old nature, being so very corrupt that Paul says of it—"In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." There is a law, then, which warreth against the law of our mind, even while that mind is delighting inwardly in the law of God. The conflict is so exceedingly severe, that even they who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly, while waiting for the redemption of the body, and for a translation into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Burdened with the mass of a rebellious nature, the apostle exclaims, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Even grace, it would appear, does not deliver from the residence of sin; for Paul complains most emphatically of his vile body, and, we have no doubt, would so have stigmatized it to the last half hour of his existence in the world. But grace still does something. It delivers from the reign of sin, so as that we do not obey its motions, though vexed and annoyed with the feeling of them. And accordingly, from the exclamation of, "O wretched man!" does he pass in a moment to the grateful exclamation of, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," in whom it is that we walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

From such a representation as is given by the apostle of Indwelling Sin, we may deduce some distinct practical lessons, which may be of use to the believer.

First, we think it conducive to the peace of a believer, that he is made aware of what he has to expect of the presence of corruption during his stay in this the land of immature virtue; and where the holiness of the new-born creature has to struggle its way through all those adverse elements, which nought but death will utterly remove from him. It must serve to allay the disturbance of his spirit, when

pierced and humbled under the consciousness of an evil desire and wicked principle still lurking within him, and announcing themselves to be yet alive, by the instigations which they are ever prompting, and the thoughts which they are ever suggesting to the inner man. It is his business to resist the instigations, and to turn away from the thoughts; and thus the old nature may be kept in practical check, though as to its being, it is not exterminated. Yet the very occurrence of a sinful desire, or an impure feeling, harasses a delicate conscience; for no such occurrence happens to an angel, or to the spirit of a just man made perfect, in heaven; and he may be led to suspect his interest in the promises of Christ, when he is made to perceive that there is in him still so much of what is uncongenial to godliness. It may therefore quiet him to be told, that he is neither an angel nor a glorified saint; and that there is a distinction between the saint who is struggling at his appointed warfare below, and the saint who is resting and rejoicing in the full triumph of his victory above; and the distinction announces itself just by the very intimations which so perplex and so grieve him—just by the felt nearness of that corrupt propensity which is the plague of his heart, which it is his bounden duty to keep his guard against, and which, with his new-born sensibilities, on the side of holiness, he will detest and mourn over—but not to be overwhelmed in despair, on account of, as if some strange thing had happened to him, or as if any temptation had come in his way which was not common to all his brethren who are in the world.

But, secondly, this view of the matter not only serves to uphold the peace of a believer, but conduces also to his progress in holiness; for it leads to a most wholesome distrust of himself, under the consciousness that there is still a part about him most alive to sin; and which, if not watched and guarded and kept under severe and painful restraint, would be wholly given over to it. And here there is a striking accordancy between the theoretical view which the Bible gives of our nature, and the practical habit it labours to impress upon all who partake of it. An angel, perhaps, does not need to be warned against the exposure of himself to temptation; for there may be no ingredient in his constitution that can be at all affected by it: but not so with man, compounded as he is, and made up as his constitution is here, of two great departments, one of which is prone to evil, and that continually; and in the other of which lie all those principles and powers whose office

it is, if not utterly to extinguish this proneness, at least to repress its outbreaks. In these circumstances, it is positively not for man to thrust himself into a scene of temptation; and when the alternative is at his own will, whether he shall shun the encounter, or shall dare it, his business is to shun, and the whole of Scripture is on the side of cautiousness, rather than of confidence in this matter; and we may be assured, that it is our part, in every case, to expose nothing; and to hazard nothing, unless there be a call of duty, which is tantamount to a call of Providence. When the trial is of our own bringing on, we have no warrant to hope for a successful issue. God will grant succour and support against the onsets which temptation maketh upon us, but He does not engage Himself to stand by us in the presumptuous onsets which we make upon temptation. We better consult the mediocrity of our powers, and better suit our habits to the real condition of our ruined and adulterated nature, when we keep as far as in us lies our determined distance from every allurements—when with all our might we restrain our tendencies to evil within, from coming into contact with the excitements to evil that are without—when we make a covenant with our eyes to turn them away from the sight of vanity—and whether the provocation be to anger, or evil speaking, or intemperance, or any wayward and vicious indulgence whatever, let us be assured, that we cannot be too prompt in our alarms, or too early in our measures, whether of prevention or resistance; and that in every one instance where we have it in our power, and no dereliction of duty is implied by it, it is our wise and salutary part, not most resolutely to face the provocative, but most resolutely to flee from it.

But, thirdly, this view of the matter not only leads us to withdraw the vicious and wrong part of our constitution from every encounter with temptation that can possibly be shunned—it also leads us to such measures as may recruit and strengthen the gracious or good part of our constitution for every such encounter as cannot be shunned. For we must, in spite of all our prudence, have many such encounters in the world. Temptation will come to our door, though we should never move a single unguarded footstep towards temptation; and then, What, we would ask, is the armour of resistance?—what the best method of upholding the predominance of the good principle over the evil one? We would say, a fresh commitment of ourselves in faith and in prayer to Him who first put the good principle into our hearts—another act of recurrence

to the fulness that is in Christ Jesus—a new application for strength from the Lord our Sanctifier, to meet this new occasion for strength which He Himself has permitted to come in our way, and to cross the path of our history in the world. The humility which leads us to flee whenever we can, and to pray when flight is impossible—this is the very habit of the soul, which removes it from the first set of temptations, and will most effectually strengthen it against the second. To the proud man, who reckons upon his own capabilities, God refuses grace. To the humble man, who in himself has no other feeling than that of utter emptiness, God gives grace in abundant measure for all his necessities : and thus it is, that by proceeding as he ought, on the consideration that there is a part of his nature belonging properly and originally to himself, which he must keep at an assiduous distance from every excitement to evil ; and then proceeding as he ought, on the consideration that there is a part of his nature derived by grace from heaven, and nourished by constant supplies from the same quarter,—thus it is, we say, that his knowledge of his own constitution, such as we have endeavoured to unfold it, has a direct tendency both to deepen the humility of the believer, and to exalt and perfect his holiness.

It is this state of composition, in every one who has been born of the Spirit, between the old man and the new creature, which explains the mystery of a Christian being more humble, just as he becomes more holy—of his growing at one and the same time in dissatisfaction with himself, and in those deeds of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ—of his being both more feelingly alive to the corruption that is in him from one part of his nature, and more fruitfully abundant in all those virtues which have their soil and their nutriment from the other part of his nature, so as to hold out the palpable exhibition of one evidently rising in positive excellence, and yet as evidently sinking into a profounder self-abasement than before ; as if it required a so much deeper foundation to uphold the ascending superstructure. The truth is, that wherever there is any real growth of morality, there must be a growth of moral sensibility along with it ; and in proportion to this sensibility will there be the annoyance that is felt, and the touching grief and humility wherewith the heart is visited on every fresh evolution of that depraved nature, which is only subordinated, but not yet extinguished and done away. And hence the want of sympathy, and the want of understanding be-

tween the children of this world, and the children of light ; and the misinterpretation that is sometimes given to the pains and perplexities and mental disquietudes which the latter do experience ; and the puzzling appearance of inconsistency which is held out by the emotions and the exercises of a real Christian, who is troubled on every side, yet not distressed—perplexed, but not in despair—persecuted, but not forsaken—cast down, but not destroyed—Bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in his body—dying unto earthly honours and earthly gratifications, while the life of Jesus is becoming manifest in his mortal flesh.

To conclude then, let sin reside as it may, he must not be permitted to reign. He may be put up with as a most offensive and unpleasant inmate in the house—but let him be curbed and guarded, and not one item of authority be conceded to him. It is enough that one has to bear his hateful presence, but his tyranny is not to be tolerated. Against this there is ever to be upheld a manful, and strenuous, and persevering resistance. He may distress, but he is not to influence us. There will be a constant prompting on his part to that which is evil ; but the evil thing is not to be done, and the desire which incites to that thing is not to be obeyed. This is the strong and visible line of demarcation between the wilful sinner and the aspiring saint. Both of them have vile bodies charged with the elements of corruption, and impregnated with a moral virus, the working of which is towards sin and ungodliness. Both have one and the same constitutional tendency. But the one follows that tendency, the other resists it ; and as the fruit of that resistance, though not freed from its detested presence, he is at least emancipated from its domineering power. It lives in the house, but it is not master of the house ; and is there so starved and buffeted, and subjected to such perpetual thwarting and mortification of every sort, that it gradually languishes and becomes weaker, and at length, with the life of the natural body, it utterly expires. The soul which acquiesced in its dominion has been sowing all along to the flesh, and of the flesh it shall reap corruption. The soul that struggled against its dominion, and refused compliance therewith, has through the Spirit, mortified the deeds of the body, and shall live,—has all along been sowing to the Spirit, and of the Spirit shall reap life everlasting.

LECTURE XXXIV.

ROMANS vi, 13, 14.

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

You will observe in the term ‘yield’ of the present verse, a counterpart to the term ‘reign’ of the last verse. We have not been enjoined to root out sin as to its presence; but we have been enjoined so to resist, as that it shall not reign over us in power. And in like manner we are not called upon to excise from our members their evil tendency to unrighteousness; but we are called upon not to yield them up as instruments of unrighteousness. Could Paul have excised from his members their inclination to sin, he would have done it; and then, he would not have had to complain afterwards in the bitterness of his soul, that he found a law in these members, warring against the law of his mind—neither would he have said that in him, that is in his flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. But the truth is, that, after conversion, the organs of the body stand in the same relation as before to the objects that are suited to them—the natural influence of the one upon the other is just what it was—there is a power of temptation in the one, and a disposition to coalesce therewith in the other, neither of which is extricated by grace, either from the constitution of the man, or from the constitution of outward nature. But what grace does, is, to stir up a resolve in the mind against submitting to this influence, against yielding to this temptation. And so there comes to be a law in the mind, warring against the law that is in the members—a new will that aspires, if not to such a sovereignty as can carry into effect a sentence of expulsion against the evil desires that are in the members, at least to such a sovereignty as shall lay upon these desires an effectual negative—So that if they cannot be got quit of while we are in the body, as so many troublesome companions, they may at least be deposed from the practical ascendancy they want to wield over us, as so many tyrannical lords and oppressors. Like the whole of a wilful and stubborn team that have a perverse tendency to deviation, would they run into disorder on the reins being yielded to them; but, in virtue of the strength and determination of the governor, the reins are not given up; and so, though with much tension and fatigue and watchfulness, are they kept on the proper course. The difference between

such a management, and another where all the animals under command go smoothly and vigorously along in the very path of service that you desire, is another mode of exemplifying the difference that there is between the work of a saint on earth, and the work of a saint in heaven. On earth you have to maintain the guiding and governing power of the mind, over not willing but reluctant subjects, who, if permitted to take their own way, would run off to the by-paths of unrighteousness—and whom you are required by my text, not to yield up as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.

There is a love of gossip in our nature, partly due to its malignity, and partly due to its taste for the ridiculous; and in virtue of which, there may be an urgent tendency, in the midst of an easy circle of companionship, to come forth with some of those more exquisite traits of a neighbour’s folly, the recital of which would impart a zest to the conversation. To make use of a very familiar phrase indeed, you have sometimes a minor calumny of this sort on your tongue’s end; and certain it is of such an inclination, that it will not only survive the passage of the soul from a state of nature to a state of grace—but it is an inclination, we know, often give way to, in many a brotherhood and many a sisterhood of commonplace professorship. Well then, suppose that on the eve of its escape, a sudden remembrance of the verse which interdicts, not certain of the more flagrant and aggravated, but which interdicts *all* evil speakings together, should come into the mind; and the will, that power which sits in the chair of authority, should of consequence interpose, and lay its arrest on the offending member, and bind it over to a peace which it feels strongly nevertheless tempted to violate—it is quite compatible with the man’s Christianity, that he should have about him still, a part of a constitution to which the utterance of a thoughtless story were a pleasurable indulgence—it is quite compatible with his Christianity, that this is a temptation, and he should feel it to be so; but it is not worthy of his vocation, while sensible of its force, that he should actually and indeed submit to the force: And his part is resolutely to put forth his hand on the

reign of management, and not yield his member as an instrument of unrighteousness unto sin.

‘But yield yourselves unto God.’ Amid the clamour and besetting impurity of the various affections of our nature, there is the will, whose consent must be obtained and whose authority must be given, ere any one of the affections shall be gratified. It is true that the will may be the slave of unworthy passions—just as a monarch may be the slave of unworthy favourites. But still it is from the monarch, that the order is issued. And he must set his seal to it ere it can be carried into effect. It may be a base compliance in him, to grant what he does to the urgency of his profligate and parasitical minions. But still his grant is indispensable; and the same of the will among all the other feelings and faculties of the human constitution. It may be in actual abject subordination to the appetites; and through it the whole man may be lorded over, by a set of most ignoble though most oppressive taskmasters. Yet the moment that the will shall determine to cast off this ascendancy, like as when a monarch dismisses his favourites, their power is at an end; and should the will resolve for God, this were tantamount to our yielding up of the whole man to the will and authority of God. It may do so by one act; and yet that act be the transition of the whole man into another habit, and the passing of the soul under another regimen, than before. Though one step only, it is indeed a big and a decisive one. It is the great introductory movement to a new life—nor can we figure a mightier crisis, or a more pregnant turning point in your personal history, than is that resolve of the mind, by which it resolves effectually for God, by which it yields itself up unto Him with full purpose of heart and endeavour after new obedience.

And this one act, brooding as it does with consequences of such moment, both in time and in eternity—we are called upon in the clause now under consideration to perform. The man who enlists himself into soldiery, may do it in a single instant; and that fixes him down for life to the obedience of a new master. What I want to gain is your resolution of entrance into the perpetual service of God—that you purpose now to give no more of your time to the lusts of the flesh, but to His will—that the posture now of readiness for His commands, and determination to obey them, be at this moment assumed by you—that you now give the consent of your will, that great master faculty of the inner man, to your being henceforth the subjects of God’s authority whatever may be its requirements—that

listening, as it long has, to sin and to sense and to selfishness, you make it now your deliberate and steadfast aim to resist all the suggestions of these troublesome and treacherous advisers; and in their place you throne the great principle of, ‘Lord, what wilt thou me to do?’—All these are just so many other ways of expressing that greatest of all practical movements, by which a man yields himself up unto God—a movement, which, if not taken, leaves you still in the broad way among the children of disobedience, and either marks you to be still an utter stranger to the doctrine of Christ; or, if you be acquainted with that doctrine, marks and inost decisively, that it is a doctrine which has come to you in word only and not in power.

Be assured, my brethren, that, in proportion to the strength and the simplicity of your determination for God, will be the clearness of your Christianity, and the comfort attendant on all its hopes and all its promises. It is the man whose eye is single, whose whole body shall be full of light. You complain of darkness, do you? See that there be not a want of perfect oneness and willingness and sincerity, as to the total yielding of yourself unto God. The entanglement of one wrong and worldly affection, may mar your purposes. The influence of one forbidden conformity, may do it. To the right following of Christ, there must be the forsaking of all. He must be chosen as the alone master; nor will He accept of a partial yielding up of yourselves. It must be an entire and unexpected yielding. Nor is there any thing so likely as the doublings of a wavering and undecided purpose, to wrap the gospel in obscurity, and throw a darkening shroud over all that truth which ministers peace and joy to the believer’s soul.

And I trust that you are now prepared to meet a difficulty, which is sometimes suggested, when the Christian disciple is urged on to perfection. You are now aware of the utter hopelessness that there is in the attempt to extirpate the presence of sin; but this, so far from discouraging, ought the rather to excite you to uttermost strenuousness in the work of making head against its power. In such a state of matters, there may at least be a pure and perfect and honest-hearted aim—though there will not be so perfect an accomplishment, as if all the sinful appetites were eradicated, instead of all these appetites being only kept in order. The purpose of the mind may be sound—the full set of the inner man which delights in the law of God, may be towards obedience to that law—And thus there may be a perfect surrendering yourselves up

unto the service of God, though not so perfect an execution of the service itself as if you had no vile body of sin and of death to contend against. The charioteer whose horses have a strong sideway direction, may be as thoroughly intent on the object of keeping his vehicle on the road—as he whose horses would of themselves and without even the guidance of the reins, keep an unflinching direction in the right path. And he may also succeed in keeping them on, though they neither move so easily, or smoothly, or quickly. The perfection of aim is the same in both—though the one must put forth a more painful and not so successful an endeavour as the other. And it is just in this way, that I call on you, with the full set of all your purposes and energies, steadfastly to keep and carefully to describe the career of new obedience. God, who knoweth your constitution, knoweth how to distinguish between a failing in the purpose and a failing in the performance. He calls for singleness and perfectness and godly sincerity in the one. He is aware of your frame, and is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and knows when He consistently with the rules of His unerring government may pass by the shortcomings of the other. And thus while encouraged to confess and pray over the remembrance of certain sins in the hope that they may be forgiven—we are also taught, that there is a sin which will not be forgiven, there is a sin unto death.

See that in yielding yourselves unto God, it be a perfect surrender that you make. See that you give yourself wholly over to His service. I am not asking at present how much you can do; but go to the service with the feeling that your all is due, and with the honest intention and desire that all shall be done. Let there be no vitiating compromise between sin and duty in the principle of your actions—whatever the degree of soil or of shortness in the actions themselves. Enter upon your new allegiance to God, with a full desire to acquit yourselves of all its obligations; and thus it is, that, without reservation, you may take Him to be your liege Sovereign—and that, without reservation, you may yield yourselves up unto God.

Then follows a very important clause—‘as those who are alive from the dead.’ It cuts up legalism by the roots. To work legally is to work for life—to work evangelically is to work from life. When you set forth on the work of obedience in the one way, you do it to attain a life that you have not. When you set forth on the work of obedience in the other way, you do it in the exercise and from the energies

of a life that you already have. Which is the way of the text is perfectly obvious. You are not here called upon to enter the service of God, as those who have life to win; but to enter the service of God, as those who are already alive—as those who can count upon heaven as their own and with a sense of God’s loving favour in their hearts and a prospect of glory eternal in their eye, put themselves under the authority of that gracious Parent, who guides and cheers and smiles upon them along the path of preparation.

In this single expression, there are three distinct things suggested, to our attention; and all of them standing connected with that new gospel service upon which we enter, at the moment of our release from the sentence and the state of death.

There is first the hopefulness of such a service. The same work, that, out of Christ, would have been vain for all the purposes of acceptance—is no longer vain in the Lord. The same labour that would have been fruitless, when, toiling in our yet unredeemed state of condemnation, we would have toiled as if in the very fire and found nothing—may now be fruitful of such spiritual sacrifices, as are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The same offerings, which would have been rejected as an equivalent for the wages of a servant, may now be rejoiced over and minister complacency to the spirit of our heavenly Father—when rendered as the attentions of one, whom He has admitted into the number of His recalled and reconciled children. Yield yourselves up unto God then, not as one who has to earn life, but as one who has already gotten life from His hands; and your obedience, divested of all legal jealousies and fears, will be free and spontaneous on the part of the creature—and, on the part of the Creator, will be sustained as worthy of Himself to receive, for the sake of that great High Priest, whose merits and whose intercession and whose death have poured a consecration over the services of all who believe on Him.

There is secondly in this expression the principle of such a service—even gratitude to Him who has received us. It puts us in mind of these precious scriptures. “We are not our own, we are bought with a price—let us therefore glorify the Lord with our body and our spirit, which are the Lord’s.” And “if Christ died for all, then were all dead; and He died, that they who live might live no longer to themselves, but to Him who died for them, and who rose again.” It is just yielding up to Him in service, that which He has conferred upon us by

donation. It is turning to its bidden use the instrument He has put into our hands. It is giving Him His own; and you, in yielding yourselves up unto God as those who are alive from the dead, are just yielding the appropriate return of gratitude for the life that has thus been bestowed upon you.

And lastly, in this expression there is implied the power for the service. The faith which receives Christ, receives power along with Him to become one of God's children. It of itself argues a spiritual perception, of which nought but spiritual life can make us capable. The instant of our believing is the instant of our new birth. The same faith which reconciles, is also the faith which regenerates; and you, in yielding yourselves up unto the service of God, will be nobly upheld among all its fatigues and all its difficulties, by the influences which descend on the prayer of faith from the upper sanctuary.

'And your members as the instruments of righteousness unto God.' You see how readily and how naturally, the apostle descends from the high principle to the plain work of obedience. To yield yourselves unto God, is a brief expression of that act, by which you submit your person and bind over all your performances to His will. To yield your members as the instruments of righteousness unto God, is, in the language of lawyers, like an extension of the brief. It is implementing the great and initiatory deed of your dedication to His service. It is going forth on the business to which you have come engaged; and actually doing in the detail, what you before solemnly and honestly purposed to do in the general. Did you at one time put forth your hand to depredation or violence—now let it be the instrument of service to your neighbour, and honest labour for your families. Or did your feet carry you to the haunts of profligacy—now let them carry you to the house of prayer, and of holy companionship. Or did your tongue utter forth the evil speakings, whether of calumny or carelessness or profanation—let it now be the organ of charity and peace, and let the salt of grace season its various communications. Or did your eyes go abroad in quest of foolishness—let the steadfast covenant now be made with them; that, with shrinking and sensitive purity, they may be turned away from every obtruding evil. Or did you give your ears to the corrupting jest, and what perhaps is most corrupting of all, to the refined converse that is impregnated with taste and intellect and literature and every charm but that of Christianity—let them now be given up in obedience to

the lessons of eternal wisdom, and to the accents which fall from those who fear the Lord and talk often together of His name. In this way you turn your members into so many instruments of righteousness. You give up your bodies as well as your spirits a living sacrifice unto God. The holiness that has been germinated in the heart, is sent forth to the visible walk, and inscribed in characters upon the history that may be read and seen of all men. By yielding yourselves unto God you enlist in His service. By yielding your members as instruments of righteousness unto God, you go about the service. You carry out into deed and into development, what before existed only in design. By yielding yourselves you subscribe the indenture. By yielding your members you act upon this indenture. By the one you undertake in all things for the glory of God. By the other you do all things to His glory. The one shows me that the will, that sovereign among the faculties, is for obedience. The other demonstrates that the will has made good her sovereignty, by showing me the person on the way of obedience.

Be assured that you have not yielded up yourselves, if you have not yielded up your members; or that the heart is not right, if the history is not right. And, on the other hand, be assured that the honesty, and the frugality, and the temperance, and the scrupulous abstinence from all evil communications, and all the other every-day duties of every-day life, have a high place in religion; that when done unto God, they reflect an influence on the source from which they emanate—adding to the light and spirituality of the believer; and, though only the doings of his outer, yet serving to build up his inner man in faith and in holiness.

V. 14. Compare the promise that sin shall not reign over you, with the precept of two verses ago—'let not sin reign over you;' and it will throw light on a very interesting connection, even on the way in which the precepts of the gospel and the promises of the gospel stand related the one with the other. The promise does not supersede the precept. "I will give you a new heart and a new spirit," He says in one place—"Make you a new heart and a new spirit," He says in another. "God worketh in you both to will and to do," in one place—"work out your own salvation," in another. It is precisely in the same way, that He bids the man of withered hand stretch it forth. The man could not unless power had been given; but he made the attempt, and he found the power. The attempt, or an act of obedience on the part of the man, was indispensable. The power, or

an act of bestowment on the part of God, was also indispensable. They both met; and the performance of the hidden movement was the result of it. Had the man made the attempt without the power, there would have been no stretching forth; or had the man got the power and not made the attempt, there would have been as little of stretching forth. It was the concurrence of the one with the other at the instant, that gave rise to the doing of the thing which was required of him. And so of all gospel obedience. 'Let not sin reign,' 'for sin shall not reign'—is in perfect accordancy with "work out your own salvation," for it is "God that worketh in you." It is God's part to lodge the gift, but it is your part to stir it up. Stir up the gift that is in you, says Paul. If no gift be there, nothing will follow. If the gift be there—your exertion turns it to its right use, and works out the right and proper effect of it. It is thus that divine grace and human activity are in perfect co-operation. The one as sovereign as if man had nothing to do. The other as indispensable as if it had been left to man to do all. The grace so far from superseding the activity, gives it all its encouragement—for without the grace the activity were powerless, and you would soon cease from it in all the heartlessness of despair; and thus it is that the precepts of 'Let not sin reign over you,' finds a stimulous instead of a soporific in the promise that 'sin shall not reign over you.'

And the reason alleged for sin not reigning over you, is, that you are not under the law but under grace. The law is the creditor of all who are under it, and sin is the debt which presses you down with a force which you cannot cast off; and you may conceive the debt to be of magnitude so overwhelming, that you not only are unable for the slightest liquidation of its principal, but that, unable for its constantly accumulating interest, you cannot live without every day adding to the burden of it. And thus it is with sin—a most fearful reckoning of past guilt against you,—and an hourly augmenting guilt, by which the law is arming every day with a greater strength of rightful severity, that it may wreak on the culprits who have offended it. It has you in its power, even as the creditor has his victims, who can only be rescued from his grasp by the interposition of an able and an adequate surety. And for us sinners, there has been precisely such an interposition. The law has been treated with, by one who has rendered it ample satisfaction—in that He both magnified it and made it honourable. He has rescued us from the challenge, that, because of sin,

the law would have preferred against us; and sin ceases to have the dominion, in regard to the power of laying on the penalty being now done away. But this is not all. The grace of the gospel, under which you now are, has done more than sweep away the condemnation of sin. It has struck an effectual blow at its practical ascendancy over you. It has provided a spirit that puts into you another taste, and other inclinations than those you had formerly. The law had power over your person, but not over your will—so that it combined the tormentor with the tyrant, in that it was ever thwarting your desires, whose rebelliousness on the other hand was ever aggravating your guilt. But grace has delivered your person from the law; and, most delightful of all masteries, it has softened and subdued your wills—and so, causing you to love the way of holiness, has turned your duty into an enjoyment. It has done more than the surety who only liquidates the debt, but perhaps leaves you as thrifless and idle and improvident as before, for new debts and new difficulties. But it has acted like the surety, who not only pays all for you, but supplies you with the means of future independence; and teaches you the management for turning them to the best account; and watches over your proceedings with the assiduity and advices of a friend, whose presence ever delights instead of offending you; and charms you by his own example into the sobriety and industry and good conduct, which form the best guarantees for your prosperity in this world. Thus, we say, does the grace of the gospel not only disenthral the soul of man from the bondage of guilt; but, enriching it with other desires and other faculties than before, causes it to prosper and to be in health—and to abound in those fruits of the Spirit against which there is no law.

Let me just urge then in conclusion, that you proceed on the inseparable alliance which the gospel has established, between your deliverance from the penalty of sin and your deliverance from its power—that you evidence the interest you have in the first of these privileges, by a life graced and exalted by the second of them—that you now break forth as emancipated creatures whose bonds have been loosed, and from whom the fetters of corruption have been struck off along with the fetters of condemnation. You may say, that it is preaching to the dead, to bid you move and bestir yourselves towards the path of holiness—but not if faith accompany the utterance, for in that case power and life go along with it. Like the withered hand you will perform the gesture that is required of you at the

hearing of our voice—if the Spirit of all grace lend His efficacy to the word that is spoken; and actuate you with that belief in the gospel record, which strengthens as well as saves, and which sanctifies as well as justifies.

LECTURE XXXV.

ROMANS vi, 15—18.

“What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”

You will perceive that in the 15th verse, the apostle reiterates the objection that was made at the outset of the chapter, where it is said—‘What! shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?’—the same objection, but grounded on a distinct consideration, or on a consideration differently expressed at least in the 15th verse, where it is said, ‘What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?’ It strikes me that the apostle, when treating this question as put at the first, has in his eye the grace that pardons; and, in his reply, he urges the inconsistency of creatures, who for sin had been adjudged to die, but through the death of another had been recalled to life again, ever recurring in the habit of their practice to that which brought upon them so sore a condemnation. By the time he arrives at that point in the progress of his argument where we now are, he had asked them to resist the power of sin, and to give themselves up unto the service of God; and was encouraging them with the prospect of success in this new plan of life, on the assurance that this power of sin was not unconquerable, but that, instead of its prevailing over them, they should be enabled to prevail over it—because, instead of being now under the law, they were now under grace. And we have no doubt that there was here a reference, not to grace as it pardons, but to grace as it purifies. There is another passage in his writings, where he tells us what that circumstance is which denotes a man to be not under the law. “But if ye be led by the Spirit ye are not under the law.” To be taken under the leading of the Spirit is to be taken under grace—even that grace which paid the debt of our souls and is now upholding them in spiritual subsistence. What is the consequence of the Spirit’s leading, or what is the fruit of it?—why that we are led to the preference and the practice of all those virtues which enter into the compo-

sition of true moral excellence, of which the apostle gives us the enumeration by such specific terms as love and peace and joy and gentleness and goodness and long-suffering and faith and meekness and temperance, against which, says he, there is no law. The grace which delivered us from the reckoning of the law because of our past delinquencies, delivers us also from the future reckonings of the law, by introducing us to such a character and such a conduct as even the law has nothing to allege against; and so the circumstance of being under grace, so far from leading us to sin, leads us just in the opposite direction—leads us to that domain of righteousness which is not under the law, and that because there the law finds no occasion on which it might put forth its authority to condemn; and there its authority to issue orders is not called for, because it is in fact anticipated by the heaven-born affection which does not wait for its commands, by the heaven-born taste which delights in the doing of them.

V. 16. There may appear a sort of unmeaning and uncalled-for tautology in this verse—a something not very close or consequential, and which it is difficult to seize upon. The apostle had already asked them not to yield themselves unto the obedience of sin, but to yield themselves unto the obedience of God. If it were a real and effectual yielding of themselves to the obedience of God, an actual course of obedience to God would emerge from it. If it were but the semblance of thus yielding, or the putting forth of a warm but unsteadfast purpose which was not adhered to and not followed up—then would they still continue in the obedience of sin. Now, says the apostle, you are the servants of him whom you indeed obey—not the servants of him whom you only profess to obey. You may have engaged yourselves to one master—you may have gone through the form of yielding

yourselves up unto him—you may perhaps have deluded yourselves into the imagination, that you have made good your surrender unto his will and unto his authority; but still, if, in the fact and in the real history, you obey another—you prove by this that you are indeed the servants of that other. He who sins is the servant of sin; and the effect of that service is death. He who obeys is the servant of obedience; and the effect of that service is personal righteousness, or personal meetness for the realms of life everlasting. You may have made a dedication of yourselves unto one of these masters; but you are the servants of the other master, if him you actually serve. And perhaps the best way of seizing on the sense of the apostle in this verse, is just to substitute whomsoever for whom in the first clause of it, when the whole would run thus: 'Know ye not that to whomsoever ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye do actually obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness.' I have already told you of your release from condemnation by the death of Christ; and I have told you how monstrously out of all proper character it were, that, after re-admittance into the bosom of that accepted family from which sin and sin alone had exiled you, you should again recur to the service of sin; and, under the impression of this sentiment, I have bidden you yield yourselves up unto the service of God. And, to encourage you the more, I have proclaimed in your hearing the helps and the facilities which grace hath provided, for speeding you onward in the accomplishment of this service; and when, after all this, you ask me shall I sin then because of this grace—I answer, No. If you do so, it will prove that the yielding not unto sin but unto God, to which I have just enjoined you, has in fact been no yielding at all—that you have made perhaps a form of dedication; but it is by your after doings, and by these alone, that we are to estimate the truth and the power of it. The grace which you allege, as the plea of exemption from God's service, is the very argument on which I found my expectation, that the path of His service is the very place on which I shall now be sure to meet you—for it is this grace which gives the power. There would be no wanting of it to substantiate your dedication, if the dedication itself were a heartily sound and sincere one. For a man to say, shall I sin because I am under grace!—is in every way as preposterous, as it were for a sick servant that had long been disabled from work but was now recovered, to say, shall I spend my time in idleness or mischief,

now that I have gotten health for the labours of my employment? Such a use of his newly-gotten health, would prove that he had not honestly engaged for the interests of that master, whose servant he professes himself to be; and just so of the application to which it is proposed that grace, that mighty restorer of health to the soul, shall be turned—if you are not actually in the service of God but of sin, it proves that you have not honestly yielded yourselves unto God.

V. 17, 18. Thus the question, Whose servants are ye, resolves itself into a matter of fact; and is decided, not by the circumstance of your having made a dedication of yourselves unto God, but by the way in which this is followed up by the doings of obedience. Whosoever he may be to whom you profess that you are servants, you are the real servants of him whom you obey; and the apostle, on looking to his disciples, pronounces them by this test to have become the servants of righteousness. He knows what they were in time past, and he compares it with what they are now. They were the servants of sin—they are now the servants of righteousness. They not only made a show of yielding themselves up in obedience unto this new master; but they make him to be indeed their master, by their in deed and in truth obeying him. And he not only affirms this change of service on the part of his disciples; but he assigns the cause of it. They obeyed from the heart. There might have been an apparent surrender, but which the inner man did not go along with. There might have been the form of an yielding; but some secret reservations, some tacit compromise of which perhaps the man was scarcely if at all conscious, some latent duplicity, that marred the deed, and brought a flaw unto it by which it was invalidated. There may have been something like a prostration of the soul, to the new principle that now claims an ascendancy over it; but there must have been a failing or draw-back somewhere. All had not been sound at the core—some want of perfect cordiality about it, that explains why there should have been the semblance of a yielding unto one master, but the actual service of another. Now God be thanked, says the apostle, this is not the way with you. I look at your fruit, and I find it the fruit of holiness. I look at your life, and I find it to be the life of the servants of God. I compare you now with what I know you to have been formerly; and I find such a practical change as convinces me, that, whereas sin was formerly your master, righteousness is now your master in deed and in truth. And the account he gives of this

is, that the yielding which they made of themselves was a sincere and honest yielding. The great master act of obedience, which they rendered at that time, was obedience from the heart; and thus it turned out, that what was truly and singly transacted there, sent forth an impulse of power upon their habits and their history.

But what is it that they are said here to obey from the heart? It is called in our translation the form of doctrine. Now we know that the term doctrine in the original may signify the thing taught, or it may signify the process of teaching. In the last sense it is synonymous with instruction; and instruction, or a process of it, may embrace many items, and may consist of several distinct parts, and be variegated with lessons of diverse sort—to obey which from the heart, is just to take them all in with the simplicity and good faith, in which a child reads, and believingly reads, the exercise of its task-book. And this view of the matter is very much confirmed, by the import of the Greek word corresponding to *form* in our English translation. It is the same with a mould, that impresses its own precise shape however formed, and conveys its own precise devices however multiplied, to the soft and yielding substance whereunto it is applied. And it is further remarkable, that it would be still more accordant with the original—if, instead of its being said that they obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which had been delivered to them, it had been rendered, that they obeyed from the heart the mould or model of doctrine, into which they had been delivered. The image seems taken from the practice of casting liquified metal into a mould; and whereby the cast and the mould are made the accurate counterparts of each other. Christian truth, in its various parts and various prominences, is likened unto a mould—into which the heart or soul of man is cast, that it may come out a precise transcript of that which has been applied to it. Did the melted lead only touch the mould at one point, it would not receive the shape that was designed to be impressed upon it—or if the surface of the one adhered to the surface of the other only throughout a certain extent, and not at all the parts, neither yet would there be an accurate similitude between the copy and the model. It is by the closeness and the contact of the two all over, and by the yielding of the one softened throughout for the whole impression of the other, that the one takes on the very shape and the very lineaments which it is the purpose of the other to convey.

And such ought to be the impression,

which the heart of man receives from the word of God. It should be obedient to every touch, and yield itself to every character that is graven thereupon. It should feel the impression, not from one of its truths only, but from all of them—else, like the cast which is in contact with the mould but at a single point, it will shake and fluctuate, and be altogether wanting in settled conformity to that with the likeness of which it ought to be everywhere encompassed. You know how difficult it is to poise one body upon another when it has only got one narrow place to stand upon; and that even another will not afford a sufficient basis on which to rest; and that, to secure a position of stability, there must at least be three points of support provided—else the danger is that it may topple to an overthrow. We think we have seen something akin to this ere the mind of an inquirer was rightly grounded and settled on the basis of God's revealed testimony—how it veers and fluctuates, when holding only by one article and regardless of all the others—how tossed about it is apt to be by every wind when it fails of a sufficiently extended grasp on the truths of Christianity—how those who talk for example of the bare act of faith, vacillate and give way in the hour of temptation, and that just because they have not stuck to the testimony of the Bible about the whole duty and discipline of holiness—how those who admit both the righteousness of Christ as their plea, and the regeneration of their own characters as their preparation for heaven to be alike indispensable, have nevertheless been brought to shipwreck; and that just because, though adhering in words to these two generalities, they have never spread them abroad over their whole history in the living applications of prayer and watchfulness. They need the filling up of their lives and hearts with the whole transcript of revelation. One doctrine does not suffice for this—for God in His wisdom, has thought fit that there shall be a form or scheme of doctrine. The obedience of the heart unto the faith, is obedience unto all that God proposes, for the belief and acceptance of those who have entered on the scholarship of eternity; and for this purpose, there must be not a mere subscription or assent of the understanding to any given number of points and articles—there must be a broad coalescence of the mind, with the whole expanse and magnitude of the book of God's testimony.

A scheme of doctrine, you will observe, implies more truths than one; and St. Paul had actually gone beyond the announcement of his one individual item by the time that he reached the verse which is

now submitted to you. He was very full on Christ as the propitiation for sin, and on the righteousness of Christ as the plea of acceptance and reward for sinners—and then when he came to the question, shall they who are partakers of this benefit continue in sin that they may get still more of the benefit, he is very strenuous in pronouncing a negative thereupon. Here there was not one doctrine but a form of doctrine, not one truth but a compound of truths—a mould graven on both sides of it with certain various characters; and the softened metal that is poured therein, yields to it all round, and takes the varied impression from it. And so of him, who obeys from the heart the form of doctrine into which he is delivered. He does not yield to one article, and present a side of hardness and of resistance to another article. He is thoroughly softened and humbled under a sense of sinfulness, and most willingly takes the salvation of the gospel on the terms of the gospel. He does not like the sturdy controversialist, or the eager champion of system and of argument, call out from the word his own favourite position, with the light of which he would overbear and eclipse the whole remaining expanse of the law and of the testimony; but, like the little child, he follows on to know the Lord—just as the revealed things offer themselves to his docility and notice, on that inscribed tablet which the Lord hath placed before him. This was the way in which the disciples of Paul seemed to have learned their lessons at his hand; and this way of it, it would appear, brings forth the testimony from their apostle, that they had obeyed from the heart the form of his doctrine. Their obeying of it from the heart marks their obeying of it truly and in the inward parts; and their obeying a form of doctrine marks, not their exclusive adherence to one doctrine, but their broad and entire coalescence in his summary of doctrine. A most important step this, for it forms the very modus of concatenation, between what the apostle says they once were and what he says they now are. They were the servants of sin; They are the servants of righteousness, and why;—what was it that took place at the interesting moment of transition, or rather what was it that gave rise to it? They obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine into which they were moulded or cast; and then it was that they were made free from sin—then was it that, loosed from its power as well as from its condemnation, they gave their emancipated faculties to the service of righteousness.

I therefore know not a more pertinent and more efficacious advice, that I can give for those who are desirous of being

made free from sin, and so of being translated into the service of another master besides him who heretofore has domineered over them, than that they should spread open their whole mind to the whole testimony—than that they should render that obedience of their hearts unto the faith, which consists, not in the confinement either of their attention or belief to one of its articles, but in the freeness of their walking survey over the whole platform of revelation, and in their ready approbation of all the truths which lie extended thereupon. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved,” is a quotation from Scripture; and indeed one of the most precious and memorable of its sayings—but “repent and believe the gospel,” is the complex announcement of Jesus Christ Himself; and you must treasure up the saying that “unless ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.” There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, is a weighty and well-laid doctrine—but another is subjoined; and out of the two we have this scheme or form of doctrine, that “there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

The belief of the truth as it is in Jesus, will be the salvation of one and all who embrace it; but mark how this one announcement has another added to it, which is hinged to it as it were, and may be made to close into a mould for impressing the heart of God’s elect children—“God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” To have the blood of Christ sprinkled upon you, is indeed to be furnished with a sure defence against the angel of wrath—when he cometh forth in his avenging mission against the children of iniquity; but within the compass of a single clause, does the apostle Peter tack obedience to the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. And then, to use his expressions, do you “obey the truth,” and are indeed “obedient children not fashioning yourselves” according to the errors and the ignorance of former days, when you submit to both the articles of this clause, and proceed upon them both. Paul went about preaching everywhere faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; but this forms only one part of his summary, according to his own description of it—and so he tells us of his “testifying, both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.” In one place he could say of himself and of his disciples, that, “being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and in another place he says to

his disciples "that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." And he told them that such they once were, but they had made it seems the very transition spoken of in our text; and he could now say, "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." And the way for you, my brethren, to make good the same transition—is to have the same obedience of heart—for the pressure thereupon of all the characters that are graven on the tablet of revelation—it is to incorporate in your creed the necessity of a holy life, in imitation and at the will of the Lord Jesus, along with a humble reliance on His merits as your alone meritorious plea for acceptance with the Father—it is to give up the narrow, intolerant, and restrictive system of theology, which, by vesting a right of monopoly in a few of its favourite positions, acts like the corresponding system of trade, in impeding the full circulation of its truths and of its treasure, through that world within itself, which is made up of the powers and affections and faculties that reside in a human bosom. But do you, my brethren, obey the whole form of Christian doctrine, as well as each and sundry of its articles—be your faith as broad and as long, as is the record of all those communications, that are addressed to it—and be very sure that it is only when you yield yourselves up in submission to all its truths, that you can be made free from sin by sharing in the fulfilment of all its promises.

You often read in Christian authors of the power of the truth; and by which they mean its power, not merely to pacify the sinner's fears, but its power to sanctify his character. It is a just and expressive phrase, and is adverted to in the passage before us, where it is said that the being made free from sin, and becoming servants unto righteousness, turns on the obedience of the heart to doctrine. But it is not one doctrine only, but the entire form of doctrine, to which the heart is obedient; and so this power of the truth, is the power of the whole truth. Mutilate the truth and you cripple it. Pare it down and you paralyse its energies. The Spirit is grieved with the duplicity and the disingenuousness of men, when they offer to divide that testimony, which, if they would but treat it fairly, He would turn into the mighty engine of their conversion, and so pass them over with the strength of His own right hand, from the service of sin to the service of righteousness. The obedience must be sincere, or it is not obedience from the heart; and it must not be partial, or it is not obedience to the

whole form of doctrine that is delivered. And at the sight of this flaw, the Spirit takes His flight from the heart that is deformed by it; and leaves the owner thereof in the thralldom of nature's corruption and nature's carnality. And thus, my brethren, as you hope to be rescued from the tyranny of sin by the power of Christian truth, you must fan and foster the whole of it. There must be the submission of a whole faith to a whole testimony. Divide and you darken. The whole of that light, which one truth or one portion of the record reflects upon another, is extinguished—when the inquirer, instead of looking fearlessly abroad over the rich and varied landscape of revelation, fastens his intent regards on one narrow portion of the territory, and shuts out the rest from the eye of his contemplation. The Spirit will not lend Himself to such a man—one who does not choose to see afar off; and is sure to forget some capital truth or other, in that finished scheme of doctrine which the gospel has made known to us. And of all the things which he is apt to forget—perhaps the most frequent is, that every true Christian is purged from his old sins; and thus, in the language of Peter, the person who is thus blind, lacketh righteousness, and is both barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The reason why you remain in the fetters of sin is, that you refuse your consent to some part or other in the scheme of truth. You would fain have orthodoxy, and perhaps think that you are in the actual possession of it, when, without power and without spiritual discernment, you only strain at a few of the literalities of Christian doctrine, and sit down in the unmoved lethargy of nature, with the word upon your lips that there is salvation by faith, and forgiveness through the blood of a satisfying atonement. Could we only get you to admit the necessity of a personal surrender, in all holy obedience unto God—could we prevail upon you to believe that Christ came, not merely to redeem you from guilt, but to redeem you from the vain conversation of the world—could we, under the power of this incipient conviction, only persuade you to make a beginning, and to move a single footstep in the way of transition from sin unto righteousness—could you understand, that, even as the remission of sins must be had, so repentance must be accomplished, ere you be admitted into heaven, and the honesty of this your understanding approved itself by your forthwith acting upon it—could we only get you thus to set forth on this measure of incipient light, the light would grow with

the incipient obedience; and, ever brightening as you advanced, would the principle of forsaking all for Christ become more decided; and your decision for Christ would grow with the growth, and strengthen with the strength of your dependence upon Him. The justification and the sanctification, these two mighty terms in Christianity, would be alike clearly apprehended as essential to the completion of the scheme of that doctrine, by the obedience of the heart unto which it is that you are saved. And I again repeat it, my brethren, take in the whole of gospel truth—lay hold of its offered pardon, and enter even now upon its prescribed course of purification. The Spirit will not look indifferently on your day of small things; but if you, casting yourself into the mould of the whole truth, shall labour to realise it and seek to be renewed as well as to be forgiven—He will come down with the might of His creative energies upon you, and, breaking asunder the chains of your captivity to sin, will cause you henceforward to be the servants of righteousness.

This practical change, stands connected with the obedience of your heart to the form or scheme of Christian doctrine—for it is upon this being rendered, that you are made free from sin and become the servants of righteousness. Yet let us not think therefore, that we, of our own proper energy, supply as it were the first condition on which our deliverance from sin is made to turn; and that then the Spirit comes down and gives full and finished accomplishment to it. The truth

is, that He presides over the initial, as well as over all the successive movements of this great transformation; and accordingly, in the 17th verse, the primary circumstance of your obeying from the heart the form of doctrine, is made matter of thanksgiving to God. It is through grace, in fact, that you are made to embrace the whole form of doctrine. If any of you feel so disposed in consequence of our imperfect explanations—the glory of this is due to grace, which has revealed to you the necessity of holiness as well as pardon—which has touched and softened your hearts under the impression of this truth—which has moved you to an aspiring obedience thereto—which will lead you, I trust, to carry out the principle into practice and daily conversation—which will vent itself upward to the sanctuary in prayer, and bring down that returning force, which can unchain you from the bondage of corruption, and give you impulse and strength for all the services of righteousness. It is grace that begins the good work, and it is grace that perfects it—and to sin because we are under this grace, carries in it just the same contradiction, as to be in darkness because the sun has arisen; or to be in despair because an able friend has come forward to support us; or to be in disease because an infallible physician has taken us in his charge, and is now plying us with a regimen which never misgives, and with medicines the operation of which never disappointed him.

LECTURE XXXVI.

ROMANS vi, 19—21.

“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. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed; for the end of those things is death?”

THE first clause of the nineteenth verse reminds us somewhat of another passage in the apostle's writings, when he says to his disciples, I speak unto you not as unto spiritual but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. The transition from the rude and raw conceptions of nature, to the heights of spiritual wisdom and discernment, is not an immediate but a successive one; and so it follows, that the illustrations of Christian doctrine, must be varied according to the progress of him whom you are labouring to convince and to satisfy; and we have to speak more in

the manner of men, more in the way that is suited to the comprehension of unenlightened and unrenewed humanity, to those who are still in the infancy of their education for heaven—whereas, in the language of Paul, to those who are perfect, to those who by reason of use have had their senses well exercised, we speak what he calls hidden wisdom, even the wisdom of God in a mystery. From the clause before us, we infer that the same topic may be variously illustrated, and that according to the degree of maturity which our hearers have attained in Chris-

tian experience. And, agreeably to this, we find, that, whereas in the first instance, the apostle, in expounding the personal change from sin to holiness which takes place on every believer, borrows a similitude that may be understood by men at the very outset of their Christian discipleship—he passes on to another consideration, the force of which could only be felt and acquiesced in by those, who had in some degree been familiarised to the fruits and the feelings and the delights of new obedience.

This by the way may account for the various tastes that there are for various styles and manners of elucidation; and all it may be of substantially the same doctrine. It justifies fully the very peculiar appetite, that a hearer is often found to express for that which he feels to be most suited to him. Nay it goes to explain the change that may have taken place in his preference for the ministrations of another expounder, whose mode of putting or illustrating the truths of Christianity, is the best adapted to that state of progress whereunto he has now attained. And all that remains for him is to bear in mind, that there are other hearts and other understandings in the world beside his own—that, as there is a diversity of subjects, so there is and so there ought to be a diversity of applications; and, accordingly, a diversity of gifts is provided by that Spirit, who divideth to every man severally as He will. This consideration should serve to abate a little of the intolerance, wherewith a hearer is apt to regard the ministrations of all, who do not lie within the boundary of his own very limited and exclusive favouritism. It should expand into a wider latitude that estimation of utility and worth, which he is too apt to confine to those select few among the preachers, who work most effectually upon the peculiar tablet of his own understanding. More particularly, when he sees how Paul accommodated his illustrations to the capacity and progress of his disciples—how, on the principle of being all things to all men, he made use of carnal or human comparisons, to those who were but just emerging into spiritual light from the mere light and discernment of nature—how this gifted apostle, that could have dealt out the profounder mysteries to the older and more accomplished converts, condescended to men of low attainment; and for their sakes came forth with explanations, the need or the pertinency of which might not have been felt by those who had reached a higher maturity of experience in the gospel—Then might he patiently wait what to him perhaps are the insipid or inapplicable reasonings of

his minister, in the hope that others of the congregation require the very argument which falls powerlessly on his own heart, and are profiting by the very considerations which to him are superfluous or un-called for.

And it is well to notice what the precise illustration is, which Paul seems, while he is using it, to have felt of so puerile and elementary a character, or so adapted to the mere infancy of the Christian understanding—that he says I speak as a man or as a mere child of nature, who had not been initiated into the mysteries of the gospel, and that because of the infirmity of your flesh. The thing he was attempting to make plain to them, was the transition of a believer from the service of sin to the service of righteousness. The service of sin might not be a very palpable conception to us, it being the service of a mere abstraction, so long as you restrict your attention to the general term. But when embodied, as it was to the imagination of a heathen convert, in the person of a heathen deity; and familiar as he must have been, with those impure and frantic orgies which were held in honour of a god who both exemplified and patronised the worst vices of our nature—he would instantly connect with the service of sin, the service of a living master, who issued a voice of authority and exacted deeds of iniquity from his worshippers, as the most acceptable homage that could be rendered to him. In turning from that service to the service of righteousness, he could thus easily comprehend it, as a similar transition to that of passing from under the authority of one living commander to another—even from the god or gods to whom he aforesaid rendered the offering of acceptable impurity or acceptable cruelty, to the true God of heaven and of earth whom he could only serve acceptably by walking in holiness and righteousness before Him. And these Romans—accustomed as they were to the transference of bond slaves from one master to another, to the way in which they were ransomed from their old servitude and placed under a new subjection to him who had purchased or redeemed them—would the more easily catch the similitude from the mouth of the apostle—when he told them of the power and effect of the ransom by Christ; and how, in virtue of it, they were rescued from the grasp of their old tyrant, who could no longer wield that vengeance against them for sin which he else had been permitted to exercise—and no longer, if they chose to betake themselves to the grace and privileges of the gospel, could have that ascendancy over them, by which their af-

fections were entangled and they were kept under the oppressive influence of moral evil. From this they were all released and extricated, by the new master who had laid down his life for them as the price of their captivity; and whom, now that He had taken it up again, they were bound to serve in the way of all His commandments.

And this illustration of it, was not only well adapted to the understanding of those Pagans who had turned them from dumb idols to serve the living and the true God. It may still, in many instances, be the most effectual that can be employed, for making clear to the convert of modern days, either at the moment of his turning or recently after he has done so—how he enters on the new habit of a sanctified disciple, at the time that rescued from condemnation he cherishes the new hope of a redeemed disciple. He need be at no loss either for a living and substantial personification, when told of the service of sin. There is a real monarch to whom the iniquities of every sinner are so many acceptable offerings—a superhuman being who sits on a throne, the authority of which extends over a wide domain of the moral world—an actual and living Moloch, who is surrounded by innumerable slaves whom he has the power of tyrannizing over in time and of tormenting through all eternity: And the express mission of the Son of God was to combat and overthrow him. He came to destroy the works of the devil; and to make good the deliverance of all, who put themselves under Himself as the captain of their salvation, and are willing to be rescued from the grasp of the adversary. And that power to punish us in hell, wherewith Satan was invested, Christ has as it were exhausted by stepping forward and absorbing its whole discharge in His own body on the tree. And that power to fascinate and enthrall us upon earth, wherewith the God of this world holds his votaries in subjection to sin, the Redeemer hath also overcome by the Spirit poured forth on the hearts of His followers, from that throne of mediatorship to which He has been exalted. And the believer, strong and shielded and secure in the privileges that have thus been obtained for him, is effectually set at large from the power of his old master—either to confine him in the prison-house of guilt, or to control him in any of his actions now that he walketh at liberty. But still, like the bond servant who has been translated to a humane from a hard-hearted superior, he is not his own—he is bought with a price—and his business is now to devote, to the new and the pleasing service of Him who loveth righteousness and who

hateth iniquity, that soul and spirit and body which are not his own but his Lord's.

But the chief cause, perhaps, why an illustration of this sort is more readily seized upon at the outset of our Christianity than many others, is that it falls more in with the natural legality of the human heart. We know not how obstinately it is that the conception of work and wages adheres to us, long after we profess to have given in to the doctrine of justification by faith alone; and this leaven of carnality may remain, to taint the pure and the free and evangelical spirit, even for many months after the germ of gospel truth has been deposited, and ere by its growth it overbear the feelings and tendencies of the old man. It is remarkable that Paul should think it right to adjust his expositions, to the state of immature and yet unformed Christianity; and that the sturdy and unbending advocate of salvation by grace, and by grace exclusively, should, for the purpose of helping forward the cause of Christian holiness, avail himself of the legal admixture that still infuses itself into the thoughts at the earlier stages of the Christian discipleship. But so it is; and, on the principle of all things to all men, he suits his argument to the infirmity of their flesh; and, disposed as they are under the economy of nature to regard themselves as servants, who by the fulfilment of an allotted task make out a title to payment from their master—he still, under the economy of the gospel, employs at least the relationship of servant and master to express the relationship that there is between them and God. He comes upon the very borders of legality, in order that he might fetch from thence a something that he might suitably address to the babes in Christ, for the purpose of urging them on to the new life that becomes the new creature; and while none more careful than he to check in his disciples the spirit that would challenge reward from God, even as the servant might prosecute the master for his rightful wages—yet none more solicitous than he, that every Christian should be steadfast and abundant in all the works of righteousness. And therefore, did he gladly avail himself of a similitude, that the very legalism of the heart would dispose it the more readily to apprehend; and by which he would make it plain to his disciples, that they must now give themselves up to the service of another master—that they must now yield themselves unto God.

It may only be further necessary in this verse to explain its reiterations. In their former state they had made their

members servants to iniquity unto iniquity—that is, iniquity, or he in whom moral evil may be conceived as personified or embodied, was their master. They were servants to, or the servants of iniquity; and it is added ‘unto iniquity’—That is to say, unto the corruption or iniquity of their own character. The effect of making iniquity their master, was to stamp the character of iniquity upon their souls. They were the slaves of the tyrant iniquity; and the effect of this was to make themselves iniquitous. And in like manner, are we to explain the counterpart clause of their yielding their members servants to righteousness unto holiness—that is, by entering into the service of this new master, they become partakers of his character and of his taste in their own persons. They could not become the servants of righteousness, without themselves becoming holy. In yielding up their members unto righteousness, they look to righteousness as vested with an authority to rule over their actions; and the effect of their doing so is, that righteousness becomes an accomplishment to adorn and exalt their nature. So that this last clause may be thus paraphrased—‘As aforetime you have yielded your members servants unto uncleanness and to iniquity, unto the utter ruin and corruption of your whole character—even so now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto the recovery and transformation of your character, that it may stand out anew in all the charms of holiness, and be graced as it was originally with the features and the lineaments of that divine resemblance wherein it was created.’

And I may here advert to the influence which action has upon principle. When you do what is right at the bidding of another, there may, in the first instance, be no very willing concurrence of the heart with the obedience that has been prescribed to you. You may yield yourself up unto God, under an overpowering sense of His authority; and, from that impulse alone, do many things, which the spontaneous tastes and feelings of the inner man do not very cordially go along with. But no matter—you have entered upon His service; and the effect of your strenuous and faithful perseverance in the course of it, will be to reconcile the inner man to that whereunto you have restrained the outer man. This is a result which it appears you must work your way to. The effect of your going through the services of righteousness, is that you will at length attain the spirit of holiness. You must labour at the work of obedience; and, like unto the effect of practice in many other parts of human experience,

you will at length come to love the ways of obedience. We doubt not that a certain degree of desire and of cordial regard towards what is right, enters into the very first moving principle that sets you agoing on the career of your sanctification. But you are not to wait till your taste and affections be spiritualized to a sufficient pitch, ere you embark on this career. But now, whether with or against the grain, do whatever your hand findeth to do which you know to be obviously right. Do it under a sense of allegiance to God, in defect meanwhile of the more generous and angelic principle that you like the doing of it; and the transition pointed out in the text seems to be, that, as the fruit of your being subordinated to God’s authority, will you come at length to be assimilated to Him in holiness.

V. 20. This twentieth verse seems an argument for our entire dedication to the new master, into whose service we have entered ourselves. It is somewhat like the consideration of making the past time of our life suffice, for having done the will of the flesh; and that it is now high time to spend the remainder of our life in doing the will of God. Aforetime you were wholly given over to the service of sin, and righteousness as emanating from the divine sovereignty had no dominion. You were free from righteousness, or wholly unrestrained by its obligations and its precepts. Now then be free from sin, resist the mandates of the old tyrant, and give yourself wholly up to the will of the new master—Let your obedience to Him now be as complete, as was your disregard of Him then; and an argument of mighty influence why the old service should be altogether given up and the new service be altogether followed, is urged upon them in the following verse, by the appeal which the apostle makes to their own memory, of what it was they gained in the employment of their first master.

V. 21. The apostle now proceeds to an argument, that could be better seized upon by those who had to a certain degree moved onwards in Christianity—who could now speak to the superiority of the new service over the old; and that, not from the higher authority which had prescribed it, but from the more refined character and enjoyment of the service itself—by those whose moral taste had undergone a renovation, and could now look back with loathing upon the profligacies of their former career, while they cherished a love and a heartfelt preference for those beauties of holiness which adorned the new path whereon they had entered. You will see that, to appreciate such a comparison, marked a higher state of

spiritual cultivation, than merely, at the bidding of God, to enter upon the task, which at the outset of their gospel profession He as their new master had put into their hand. The musical scholar, who, at the bidding of a parent or a preceptor, practises every day at the required hours upon an instrument, is not so ripe for a festival of harmony, as he, who, under the impulse of an ear all awake to its charms, revels as in his most kindred element, when spontaneously he sets him down to the performance—not as a task, but as an entertainment. And neither is that spiritual scholar so ripe for heaven, who, because of the infirmity of his flesh, needs to have his distaste for holiness overcome by the argument of God's authority—as he, who, in his love for holiness, now confirmed by the experience he has had of its pleasant and peaceful ways, nauseates with his whole heart the opposite vice and the opposite impurity. It is right to lift the voice of an imperative requirement on the side of new obedience, at the commencement of every man's Christianity—just as it is right to exact from the musical scholar, a regular attendance on lessons which at the outset he may find to be wearisome. But as in the one case what is felt to be a weariness, often merges, with the cultivation of the taste and of the ear, into a willing and much-loved gratification—so, in the other case, what, from the strength of remaining carnality was laboured at as a bondage and called for the direct incitement of God's authoritative command to make head against the sluggishness of nature, yet, as the fruit of perseverance in the walk of holiness, does the will itself at length become holy; and there is a growth of affection for all its exercises and all its ways; and the doing of the allotted task by the outer man, calls forth and confirms a suitable taste of accordancy in the inner man; and, in proportion to the strength of the regard for what is sacred, must be the strength of the recoil from what is sinful and what is sensual. So that while Paul, in illustrating the transition of a gospel convert from sin unto righteousness, did, at the moment of that transition and because of the infirmity of his flesh, urge in terms as direct as if the legal economy were still in force, the obligation under which he lay, to exchange the service of one master for the service of another—yet, with the disciple who long had practised and long had persevered at the bidden employment, could he use an argument of a higher and nobler and more generous character; and, triumphantly appealing to his own recollection, asked him to compare the villainess and wretchedness of his former days,

with the preciousness of that heavenly charm which he now felt to be in all the works and all the ways of new obedience.

The apostle tells us here of the fruit of sin in time, and of its fruit in eternity. For its fruit in time he refers his disciples to their own experience; and, whether we advert to the licentious or the malignant passions of our nature, we shall find that even on this side of the grave it is a fruit of exceeding bitterness. That heart, which is either tossed with the agitations of unhallowed desire, or which is preyed upon by the remorse and shame and guilty terror that are attendant on its gratification—that once serene bosom, from which its wonted peace, because its wonted sense of purity has departed—that chamber of the thoughts which is no longer calm, because stormed out of all tranquillity and self-command by the power of a wild imagination—The unhappy owner of all this turbulence, who has given up the reins of government, and now maddens in the pursuit of his tumultuous joys along the career of lawless dissipation—let him speak for himself to the fruit of those things, of which he may well be ashamed. O does he not feel, though still at a distance from the materialism of hell, that a hell of restlessness and agony has already taken up its inmost dwelling-place in his own soul; that there the whip of a secret tormentor has begun its inflictions; and, even now, the undying worm is consciously active and never ceases to corrode him! Or, if he be a stranger still to the fiercer tortures of the last art, will he not at least admit, that, as the fruit of guilty indulgence, a hell of darkness if not a hell of agony, has taken possession of it—that, at least, the whole of that beautiful morning light which gladdened his pure and peaceful childhood is utterly extinguished—that all the vernal springs of approved and placid satisfaction are now dried up—and that, in the whole rapture and riot of his noisy companionship, there is nought that can so cheer his desolate spirit as in the happy years of his boyhood—nought that shines so sweetly upon him, as did the lustre of his pious and his early home.

Or, if, from the wretchedness of him who is the victim of his base and sordid propensities, you proceed to examine the wretchedness of him whom deceit is ever instigating against another's rights, or cruelty has steeled against all that is exquisite and all that is prolonged in another's sufferings—you will find that here too, the heart which is the place of wickedness is also the place of woe; and that, whatever the amount of unhappiness may be of which he is the instrument to others, it may not equal the unhappiness which

his own moral perversities have fermented in his own bosom. The man of deep and inscrutable design, who is an utter stranger to the simplicity and godly sincerity of the gospel—the man of thought and mystery and silence, and into the hiding-place of whose inaccessible heart the light of day never enters—the man who ever ruminates and ponders and resolves, and has a secret chamber of plot and artifice in his own bosom which admits of no partnership with a single brother of the species—Such a one, it may be thought, diabolical though he be, will, in the triumphs of his wary and well-laid policy, have his own sources of diabolical satisfaction. But ere he reach his place in eternity, he too in time may have the foretaste of the misery that awaits him. There is already a hell in his own heart, that is replete with the worst sufferings of the hell of condemnation; and if through the deep disguises in which he lies entrenched from the eye of his fellow-men, we could see all the fears and all the forebodings that fluctuate within him, we should say of him, what is true of every son of wickedness, that, like the troubled sea, he cannot rest.

It seems inseparable from the constitution of every sentient creature, and who is at the same time endowed with moral faculties, that he cannot become wrong without at the same time becoming wretched. And what is the death that is the end of these things, but their natural and their full-grown consummation? The fruit of sin in time, when arrived at full and finished maturity, is just the fruit of sin through eternity. There may be fire—there may be a material lake of vengeance—there may be the shootings of physical agony inflicted on the material frames of the damned by material instruments: But we believe that the chief elements of the torture there, will be moral elements—that fierce and unhallowed desire—that contempt and jealousy and hatred unquenchable—that rancour in every heart, and disdain in every countenance—that the glare of fiendish malignity, and the outcry of mutual revilings, and the oaths of daring blasphemy, and the keen agony of conscious and convicted worthlessness—We believe that these will form the ingredients of that living lake, where the spirits of the accursed will be for ever inhaling the atmosphere of spiritual bitterness. And such is the natural course and consummation of iniquity upon earth. It is merely the sinner reaping what he has sown; and suffering the misery that is essentially entailed upon the character; and passing onwards, by a kind of necessary transition, from the growth and in-

dulgence of vice here, to the constitutional result of it in wretchedness both here and hereafter. It makes no violent or desultory step, from sin in time to hell in eternity. The one emerges from the other, as does the fruit from the flower. It is simply that the sinner be filled with his own ways, and that he eat the fruit of his own devices. All that is necessary to constitute a hell, is to congregate the disobedient together, where, in the language of the Psalmist, they are merely given up by God to their own hearts' lusts, and where they walk in their own counsels.

To conclude—there are some we trust here present, who feel the force of the comparison between their past and their present habits; and who all open to the charms of the vast superiority which lies in holiness, would, from the impulse of spiritual taste alone, make a most quick and disgustful recoil from all iniquity. But there may be others, who, instead of having accomplished the transition from darkness to light, are only at the turning point—or are yet but meditating the transition, instead of having made it. They have not yet acquired that loathing for sin, and that love of sacredness, which would make them appreciate the contrast, which the apostle makes between the service of the old and the service of the new master. Then let us revert to them with the argument of the apostle who spoke to his young converts as a man, and because of the infirmity of their flesh. If they are not yet in a condition for being roused to the performance of the latter service by the finer argument of taste, let us attempt to rouse them by the grosser argument of authority. The scholar is compelled to his hours of attendance for a musical task, and thus does he work himself into a musical taste. And know, ye men, who are still only at the place of breaking forth on the career of new obedience, that it is a career which must be entered on—that though it shall for the present be against every taste and tendency of the inner man, your business is to constrain the outer man to a conformity with all the requirements of the gospel—that the life of a Christian is not utterly and throughout like a piece of well-tuned harmony, moving in soft and flowing accordance with a well-poised and smoothly-going mechanism. But there is a conflict, and a strenuousness, and a painful opposition between the delights of nature and the demands of the gospel, and a positive striving to enter in at the strait gate, and a violence in seizing upon the kingdom of heaven which is taken by force.

LECTURE XXXVII.

ROMANS vi, 22, 23.

“But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

THE apostle, in contrasting the nature and enjoyment of the two services, passes from that of sin which is indeed a service of bitterness, to that of righteousness which is a service of delight here and of enduring bliss and glory hereafter. It is remarkable that he speaks of holiness as the fruit, and not as the principle of our service to God—as the effect which that service has upon the character, and not as the impelling moral power which led to the service. And this accords with the observations that we made on the various clauses of the nineteenth verse—where they who had yielded their members servants to iniquity, are represented as having thereby reaped fruit unto iniquity—or, in other words, as having, by their own sinful work, aggravated and confirmed the sinfulness of their own characters. And, on the other hand, they who had yielded their members servants to righteousness, are represented as having reaped thereby fruit unto holiness—or, in other words, they, by doing, and that on a direct feeling of obligation or at the bidding of a direct authority, that which was right, they, by giving an obedient hand to the work of righteousness, rectified their own moral frames; restored to themselves that image of holiness in which they were originally formed; became saints in taste and principle, from being at the first rather only saints of performance. The obedience of the hand reached a sanctifying influence upon their hearts; and a perseverance in holy conduct made them at length to be holy creatures. This is the very process laid down in the verse before us. In virtue of having become servants to God, they had their fruit unto holiness. We have no doubt that there is a germ of holiness, at the very outset of the new life of the new creature in Christ Jesus. But still a coarser principle of it, if I may be allowed the expression, may predominate at the first; and the finer principles of it may grow into establishment afterwards. The good things may be done, somewhat doggedly as it were, at the will of another; but the assiduous doing of the hand may at length carry along with it the delight of the heart, and the same good things be done at our own will. It may become at length a more spontaneous and pleasurable service; and this certainly marks a stage of higher and

more saintly advancement in personal Christianity. It evinces a growing assimilation to God—who does what is right, not in force of another's authority; but who does what is right, in force of the free and original propensities of his own nature to all that is excellent. And in like manner does it forward our resemblance to Him—when, on our first becoming subject to His imperative control, we at length like the service which we aforesaid laboured in—when that way, to which at His word of command we have betaken ourselves, becomes a way of pleasantness—when that path, to which we constrained our footsteps because He had prescribed it, is felt by us to be a path of peace. By such a blessed progress of sanctification as this, do we at length cease to be servants and become sons; the Spirit of adoption is shed upon us; and we feel, even here, somewhat of the glorious liberty of God's own children. A thing of labour is transformed into a thing of love. Our duty becomes our inclination. And, by the heart and spirit being enlisted thereinto, what was before of constraint is now of congeniality and most willing accord. The feeling of bondage wears away; and that which might once have been felt as a burden, is now felt as the very beatitude of the soul. It is thus that the process of the text is realised; and when the transition is so made that the work of servitude becomes a work of felicity and freedom—then is it that man becomes like unto God, and holy even as He is holy.

One most important use to be drawn from this argument is, that you are not to suspend the work of literal obedience, till you are prepared by the renewal that has taken effect on the inner man, for rendering unto God a thoroughly spiritual obedience. There are some who are positively afraid of putting forth their hand on the work of the commandments at all, till they are qualified for the service of God on sound and evangelical principles. Now, in every case, it is right to be always doing what is agreeable to the will of God. There may be a mixture at first of the spirit of bondage—there may be a remainder and taint of the leaven of legalism—there may be so much of nature's corrupt ingredient in it at the outset, that the apostle would say of these

babes in Christ who had just set forth on their new career, 'I speak unto you not as unto spiritual but as unto carnal.' Yet still it is good to give yourselves over, amid all the crude and embryo and infant conceptions of a young disciple, to the direct service of God. Break loose from your iniquities at this moment. Turn you to all that is palpably on the side of God's law. Struggle your way to the performance of what is virtuous, through all those elements of obscurity and disorder which may fluctuate long in the bosom of a convert. Do plainly what God bids, and on the direct impulse too of God's authority; and the fruit of your thus entering upon His service, will be the perfecting at length of your own holiness—such a holiness as shall be without spot and wrinkle—purified from the flaw of legal bondage, or of mercenary selfishness—a holiness that finds its enjoyment in the service itself, and not in any remuneration that is distinct from or subsequent to the service—a holiness that is upheld, not by the future hope of the great reward which is to come after the keeping of the commandments; but a holiness upheld by the present experience, that in the keeping of the commandments there is a great reward.

Yet mark it well, my brethren, that not till you are made free from sin, can you enter even upon the first rudiments of a fruitful and acceptable obedience—not till you are delivered from him, who, like the executioner for a debt, could at any time seize upon all your gains, and thus render all care and effort and industry on your part of no avail. The analogy holds between him who has the power of pursuing you with diligence, because of what you owe; and him who has the power of inflicting death as the condemnatory sentence upon you, because of what you have incurred as a transgressor of the law. The man who has not gotten his discharge, is bereft of every motive to economy or to labour—because the creditor is on his watch, to lay hold of the entire proceeds; and, by every movement he makes towards him, he can add to the expense of the business, and so plunge him into more hopeless and irretrievable circumstances than before. And so it is of the great adversary of human souls—invested with power as the grim executioner of the sentence; and invested also with the power of aggravating that sentence, by the corrupt sway that he has over the affections of his enslaved votaries, by the command which belongs to him as the god of this world over all the elements of temptation, by his ill-gotten empire in the hearts of the fallen posterity of a fallen ancestor. To be freed from

this hateful tyranny, there must be recourse to Christ as your surety—so that this arch-bailiff shall no longer have the right to pursue you, for the heavy arrears of all the negligence and all the misconduct that are past; and there must also be recourse upon Christ as your strength and sanctifier—so that this arch-betrayer, shall be as little able to subjugate you to the power of sin as to exact from you its punishment. So that faith, and justification by faith, and our interest in that promise of the Spirit which is given to faith—this after all forms the great introductory step to a life of hearty, because to a life of hopeful obedience. A more literal obedience at the first, may be the stepping-stone to a more spiritual obedience afterwards—but faith is the essential stepping-stone to all obedience. Without faith, the sense of a debt, from which you are not yet free, will ever continue to haunt and to paralyse you. Without faith, God remains the object, not of love, but of dread; and thus an immovable interdiction is laid upon the service of the affections. Without faith; all the helps and facilities of obedience are withheld from the soul; and the weary unproductive struggle of him who is not yet freed from the law which is the strength of sin, terminates, either in a deceitful formality, or in the abandonment of a task now felt to be impracticable, or finally in the utter wretchedness of despair. Faith opens a gate of conveyance through all these obstructions. It cancels the bond that was before felt as a dead weight on all the energies of an aspiring reformation. It gives the feeling that now obedience is not in vain; and that the labour of serving God, instead of having all its acquisitions wrested away as by the hand of an unrelenting creditor on the moment that they are made, is now productive of a fruit that is realised in time and that endures through eternity. Like the discharged bankrupt, can the believer who is freed from sin, now count upon the gains of his diligence, and may therefore set himself anew to save and to strive for treasure that he is permitted to enjoy. Faith is the starting-post of obedience; but what I want is that you start immediately—that you wait not for more light to spiritualize your obedience; but that you work for more light, by yielding a present obedience up to the present light which you possess—that you stir up all the gift which is now in you; and this is the way to have the gift enlarged—that whatever your hand findeth to do in the way of service to God, you now do it with all your might: And the very fruit of doing it because of His authority, is that you will at length do it because of your

own renovated taste. As you persevere in the labours of His service, you will grow in the likeness of His character. The graces of holiness will both brighten and multiply upon you. These will be your treasures, and treasures for heaven too,—the delights of which mainly consist in the affections, and feelings, and congenial employments of the new creature.

We gather from the text, what is the great and practical business of a Christian in the world. It is to perfect his holiness. The promises he lays hold of by faith. The future blessedness and the present sanctification are both held out to him as a gift, at the very moment of his first contact with the overtures of the gospel. There is a free pardon—there is an all-perfect righteousness for his valid claim upon God's favour—there is a renewing and a strengthening spirit—All these are gratuitously stretched forth to him for his acceptance; and his business, and the business of you all, is now, even now, to put on the investiture of these various privileges. And mark how the apostle lays down the career of activity for a disciple, as a thing subsequent to all this, and emanating out of all this—“*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the Spirit, perfecting our holiness in the fear of God.*” And it is of importance to advert here, to the place that the fear of God has in this process of your advancing sanctification—as harmonising with the text, that, by becoming the servants of God ye have your fruit unto holiness. You begin the new obedience of the gospel, more at first in the spirit and with the fearfulness of servants—more under the impulse of God's rightful authority over you—more perhaps at His bidding than at your inclination—more from a sense of duty to Him, than from the love you as yet bear to the work that He has given you to do. But no matter—be diligent with such principles as you have, with such performances as God hath prescribed to you; and your diligence in the service will at length work out a delight in the service. The labour you render to Him as your Master, will forward and mature your family likeness to Him as your Father. From servants you will become sons; and my object in urging this law and order of progression upon you, is, if possible, to set you aworking with such humble degrees of light and spirituality as you have—and this is the way of attaining to more light and to more spirituality. It is to cause you to break forth from the ground of inactive speculation; and to put into your hands the employment of an instant

task, to which you may perhaps feel prompted at the outset by something even of a legal fear towards God. But no matter—should it be the task that goes to perfect your holiness, it will perfect also your love; and then will you be conclusively delivered from the spirit of all legalism or bondage or carnality, and have that affection in your bosom which casteth out fear.

And I should like you to know the precise import of the term holiness. It has been defined to be all moral and spiritual excellence. But this does not just exhaust the meaning of the term. It is not just virtue, even in the most comprehensive sense of the word, as including in it all that one absolutely ought to be, both in reference to God and to all the creatures of God. To turn virtue into holiness, a reference must be had to the opposite of virtue—even sin; and then does virtue become holiness, when, in addition to its own positive qualities, we behold with what sudden and sensitive aversion it recoils from the contamination of its opposite. Thus it is, my brethren, that had there been no sin there would have been no sacredness. There might have been love and rectitude and truth, exalted to all that infinity which they have in the Godhead; and filling too, according to the measure of his capacity, every one being that had sprung from the creative hand of the Divinity. But, in order that the Divinity or any subordinate creature shall make an exhibition of sacredness—it must be seen how it is that he stands affected by the contemplation of sin; or by the approach of sin to his presence. And then it is that we witness the characteristic display of God in the holiness, or of God in the sacredness that belongs to Him—when we read of the eyes which are so pure that they cannot look upon iniquity—when we read of a sanctuary so remote from all fellowship with evil, that it is there impossible for evil to dwell—when we read of God in the awful jealousies, and of God in the unconquerable repugnance of His nature to sin; of the grief and the hostility and the indignation wherewith it is regarded by the Spirit of the Deity—So that should it offer to draw nigh, all Heaven would shrink at its coming; or fire would go forth from the place where His Honour dwelleth, to burn up and to destroy.

Holiness is virtue, regarded in the one aspect of its separation from all that is opposite to virtue. It is thus that the attributes of clean and pure and untainted are given to it—free from all spot, because free from all mixture or vicinity with sinfulness. The vessels of the temple were holy, because, set apart from common use,

they were consecrated, and that exclusively, to the solemn and separate services of a divine ritual. But the most striking of all the historical demonstrations that we have, of the deep and determined recoil that there is between a holy God and a sinful world, is, when He gave it in charge to set bounds about mount Sinai and to sanctify it—through which neither the priests nor the people were to pass, lest the Lord should break forth upon them.

From this explanation, you will see how the fruit of holiness arises out of the cleansing of yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit. The deeds of impurity must be given up at God's bidding, even though the urgency of His command should carry you beyond what you would have been carried to, by your own detestation of impurity. You, at the outset of your new course, make a wider departure from iniquity than your own dislike to iniquity would prompt you to. But then, this reformation of the outer man will tell upon the inner man. As you keep your fearful distance from evil, your dread and your delicacy against it will augment upon you; and it is just by this reflex influence of the habit upon the heart that its holiness is perfected. And this view of holiness, as consisting of virtue or moral excellence in its quality of uncompromising and unappeasable enmity to sin, harmonises with the character that is held out of heaven—as being a place so inviolably sacred that nothing unclean or unrighteous can enter therein. O how it ought to chase away from our spirit all the delusions of antinomianism—when told, as we are, what is the atmosphere of that place whither the disciples of Jesus are going; and how it is not possible for sin so much as to breathe in it! What a spur to diligence in the great work of purifying ourselves even as that upper paradise is pure, in which we hope to spend an eternity; and how busy might we be at all the branches of our spiritual education, when we think that we shall be found unmeet for admittance into the great spiritual family, unless we are found without spot and blameless in the day of Jesus Christ! It is thus that in our text, holiness here is the essential stepping-stone, or the indispensable path of conveyance to heaven hereafter. And as surely as the end of sin is death, so surely the end of holiness is life everlasting.

We have already adverted to the spiritual character of hell; and have affirmed that the wretchedness thereof, was mainly composed of spiritual elements. And, in like manner may we advert to the spiritual character of heaven; and as surely affirm of it, that the happiness which is felt and circulated there, is mainly composed of

spiritual elements. It lies in the play and exercise of pleasurable affections—in the possession of a heart now thoroughly emancipated from all its idolatries, and attuned to the love of that which is most worthy of love—in the well-poised and well-constituted mechanism of the soul, that now moves in duteous and delighted conformity to the will of that mighty Being on whom all is suspended—in the conscious enjoyment of His favour, sensibly expressed by such indications of benignity and regard, as will pour into the bosom unutterable extacy—in the raptured contemplation of all the glory and all the gracefulness, that are spread out before the mental eye on the character of the Divinity—in the willing accordancy of honor and blessing and praise, not merely to Him who sitteth supreme on a throne of majesty, but to him who paved for sinners a way of access into heaven, and consecrated it by his blood. And songs of eternal gratitude and gladness will ever and anon be lifted there; and it will be the spiritual jubilee of beatified spirits that is held there; and the clear ethereal element of holiness will be all that is breathed there; and, altogether, it will not be a sensual, but a moral paradise—where righteousness will be the alone recreation, and the service of God be the very cordial and nutriment of the soul. And how is it possible, we again ask, that there can be any other way to such a habitation there, than the way here of aspiring and progressive holiness? What other education can fit us for such an eternity as this—but the education of virtuous discipline, and guarded purity, and determined watchfulness against that sin wherewith the sacredness of the upper regions can have no fellowship? If heaven above would recoil from all contact with the pollutions of the world that is below, then surely, we who are aspiring toward that heaven, should keep our assiduous distance from them. The way of the disciple here, should be as distinct and as distinguishable from that of a child of this world, as the places are in which they will spend their eternity; and if it be through the way of sin that the one reaches his abode of death and condemnation, so surely must the other keep on the way of holiness, ere he can reach the abode of life everlasting.

V. 23. It is of importance here to remark the contrast which the apostle expresses in this verse, as to the manner of these two successions—how it is, on the one hand, that death follows in the train of sin; and how it is that everlasting life follows in the train of holiness. He had before likened the transition from the one state to the other, to a transition from the

service of one master to the service of another master. And he before told us that he had done so, on a principle of accommodation to the yet remaining carnality of their feelings and conceptions upon the whole subject. They were still infected with the spirit of legalism. They were still most familiar with the illustration of work and wages; and, accustomed as they were to the transition of a bond slave from one master to another, they could readily seize on that comparison—by which Paul urged upon them their emancipation from the authority of sin regarded as their old tyrant, and their allegiance to righteousness regarded as their new and lawful superior. But he now adverts to a difference between the two services, which it is of importance for as all to apprehend. The death that comes after sin comes as the wages of sin. Everlasting life, coming though it must do after holiness, comes not as the wages of holiness. It is a gift. On this footing must it be received at the last; and on this footing must it now be looked forward to by the expectants of immortality.

As to the first of these successions, namely sin and death as the wages of sin,—the very term wages, is expressive of the one, as being the fit remuneration of the other. We are thereby informed of death being rightfully the punishment of sin, or being due to it in the way of desert. I have already endeavoured to show,—that there is nothing in the tyranny of sin over the affections, that can at all exempt us its helpless slaves, from the condemnation to which sinners are liable—that the very strength of our inclinations to that which is evil just makes us the more atrocious, and therefore the more punishable—that had the necessity in question been a necessity against the will to do wickedly, there might have been cause shown why sentence of death should not be passed against us; but when that necessity just lies in the very bent and determination of the will towards wickedness, then is it a circumstance of aggravation, instead of an apology, for our transgressions against the law of God. Let no man say because of the depravity of his own heart, and the unresisted ascendancy of sin over it, that he is tempted of God. The fact is that he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed; and the death, which is laid upon him as a penalty, is as much the natural as it is the penal effect of his own conduct. In being enveloped with the atmosphere of hell on the other side of the grave, because of his character on this side of it, he is simply filled with the fruit of his own ways—he is just reaping that which he has sown. And as neces-

sarily as anger disquiets, and envy corrodes, and avarice chills, and inordinate desire shakes the spirit into phrensy—as necessarily as the fierce or malignant passions of our nature, like so many tormentors' whips, serve to scourge or to agonise—so necessarily, as well as meritoriously, does their entrance into hell hereafter, follow in the train of all the iniquity that is unrepented of and unturned from.

And as hell is just the place suited naturally for sin, so heaven is just the place that is naturally suited for holiness. But while hell is both naturally and meritoriously the place for sin—heaven is naturally only and not meritoriously the place for holiness. Heaven is not so earned by man. It is given to him. And you should advert to the distinction so palpably here held out by the apostle—that whereas death is rendered to the sinner on the footing of wages that are due to him, eternal life is rendered to the believer on the footing of a gift that is simply and freely bestowed upon him.

But mark in the first place—that the circumstance of heaven being a gift, does not supersede the necessity that there is for holiness going before it. It may take away from the merit of holiness; but it does not take away from the need of holiness. The man who comes to the marriage-feast must have on the marriage-garment; though it is not the simple act of putting on that garment, which entitles him to a seat among the guests. His title there is simply the invitation that he has gotten; and yet it is quite indispensable that he comes suitably arrayed. He may not be able even to purchase the requisite vestments; and should these too have to be provided for him—should even the very dress in which he comes have to be given to him, as well as the entertainment that is set before him after he does come—It may both be true, that without the dress he could not have been admitted; and also, that, poor and defenceless out-cast as he was, he owes nothing whatever to himself—that all had to be given; and he, ere he could partake of that feast by which heaven is represented in the New Testament, had to be clothed by another's wealth as well as regaled by another's bounty.

Now this is just the way in which the everlasting life, that none can obtain without being holy, is nevertheless a gift. It is of grace and not at all of works. It is all of grace from the first to the last—for the very holiness is given; and while of all sin it may be said that it is our own, because drawn away to it of our own lusts and enticed—of holiness it may be

said that it is not of ourselves, but that good and perfect gift which cometh down from above.

And as eternal life being a gift, does not supersede the need of holiness—so holiness being a gift, does not supersede the need that there is for your own stirring, and your own painstaking, and all the diligence both of your performances and your prayers. Still the progress is just as has already been set forth to you, from such small doings as you are able for at the first, to your growth in grace and in holiness afterward. And yet, even for the small doings, an influence from on high must have been made to rest upon you. It is by power from heaven that the work is begun; and it is by power from the same quarter that the work is carried forward, even unto perfection. In other words you cannot pray too early. Turn me and I shall be turned, may be a most pertinent and a most availing cry even at the outset of your conversion. You cannot too soon mix up dependence upon more grace, with diligence in the

use of all the grace that has already been imparted. When you do whatever your hand findeth to do, you are only stirring up the gift that is in you; and if faithful in turning to account all that you do have, and watchful and prayerful for more, it is thus, that, from the more rude and literal services which you are enabled to render at the outset of your new obedience, you are conducted to the higher attainments of the spiritual character, and have your fruit unto an ever-advancing holiness. And Christ is all in all throughout this entire process. He purchased the inheritance, and He makes you meet for it. He has gone to prepare a place for you there, and He prepares you here for the place. It is through Him that the Spirit is given in answer to your prayers; and while nothing more true than that you must have the fruit of holiness ere you can have eternal life, it is just as true that eternal life, both in its preparations and in its rewards, is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

ROMANS vii, 1—4.

“Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband 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. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by 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.”

THE apostle, in these verses, bethinks him of other illustration, on the subject of the new and the holy life that is incumbent on a believer—and one more addressed to his Jewish, even as the former was to his Gentile disciples. In the verses that we have already tried to expound in your hearing, he illustrates the transference that takes place at conversion, from the service of sin to the service of righteousness—by the transference of a bondslave now made free from his old master, but whose services are still due to the present and the lawful superior under whom he now stands enrolled. The apostle then, at the commencement of this chapter, turns him to those who know the law, and deduces from the obligations which attach to marriage, the same result which he had done before from the obligations which attach to servitude—that is, an abandonment on the part of the believer of those doings which have their fruit unto death, and a new service which

has its fruit unto holiness; or, as it is termed in this passage, its ‘fruit unto God.’

The attentive reader will perceive, that there is a certain cast of obscurity over the whole of this passage; and arising from the apparent want of an entire and sustained analogy, between the illustration and the thing to be illustrated. It is true that the obligations of marriage are annulled by the death of either of the parties; but then he only supposes the death of one of the parties, and that is the husband. Now the case to be elucidated by this supposition, is that of the now dissolved relationship which there is between the law and him who was the subject of the law. The law is evidently the husband in this relationship, and the subject is as evidently the wife. So that, to make good the resemblance—the law should be conceived dead, and the subject alive, and at liberty for being transferred into another relationship than that which

he formerly occupied. Yet, in reading the first verse, one would suppose—that it was on the expiry of life by the subject, and not on the expiry of life by the law, that the connection between them was to be broken up and dissolved. It is true that the translation might have run thus, ‘How that the law hath dominion over a man so long as *it* liveth; and many, for the sake of preserving a more lucid and consistent analogy, have adopted this translation. But then this does not just suit so well with the fourth verse—where, instead of the law having become dead unto us, we are represented as having become dead unto the law; so that a certain degree of that sort of confusion, which arises from a mixed or traverse analogy appears unavoidable. It so happens too, that either supposition, of the law being dead or of the subject being dead, stands linked with very important and unquestionable truth—so that by admitting both, you may exhibit this passage as the envelope of two meanings or two lessons, both of which are incontrovertibly sound and practically of very great consequence. This of course, would add very much to the draught that we make upon your attention; and altogether we fear that, unless there is a very pointed and strenuous forth-putting of your own intelligence on these verses, we shall fail to render any explanation of them to you, which you will feel to be at all very vivid or very interesting.

It is in the first place true, that the law may be regarded as dead; and that he our former husband, now taken out of the way, has left us free to enter upon that alliance with Christ considered as our new husband, which in many other parts of the New Testament is likened unto a marriage. And it is true also, that the death of the law, which gave rise to the dissolution of its authority over us, took place at the death of Christ. It was then, that, in the language addressed to the Colossians, it was then that our Saviour blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross. It was then that the law lost its power to reckon with us, and its right as an offended lord to take vengeance of our trespasses against him. You have read of certain venomous animals which expire, on the moment that they have deposited their sting and its mortal poison, in the body of their victim. And thus there ensues a double death—the death of the sufferer, and the death also of the assailant. And certain it is, that on the cross of our Saviour, there was just such a catastrophe. Then did our Saviour pour out His soul, under the weight and

agony of those inflictions that were laid upon Him by the law; but then also did the law expend all its power as a judge and an avenger, over those who believe in the Saviour.

There is something in the consideration of the law alive and of the law dead, that should bear practically home upon the fears and the feelings of every inquirer. Without Christ the law is in living force against us; and were we rightly aware both of its claims and of our provocations—then should we feel as if in the hands of an enraged husband, who had us most thoroughly in his power; and who, incensed with jealousy and burning with the spirit of revenge, because of the way in which we had aggrieved and degraded him,—held us in the daily terror of a resentment, which no penitence could appease, and which he was ready to discharge upon us by some awful and overwhelming visitation. It is some such appalling imagination as this, that gives rise to what is familiarly known by a phrase which often occurs in our older authors—a law-work. It is a work which passes through the heart of him, who is conscience-stricken under the conviction of sin, and terror-stricken under the anticipation of a coming vengeance. The experience and degree of this state of emotion are exceedingly various; but at all times it is the state of one who feels himself still under the law; and liable to be reckoned with by him as an unrelenting creditor, who can allege such an amount of debt as never can be paid, and of deficiency that in his own person can never be atoned for. Some are pursued with this thought, as if by an arrow sticking fast. Others, without such intense agony, are at least haunted by a restlessness, and a discomfort, and a general uneasy sensation that all is not right, which leads them to cast about for the peace and deliverance of some place of refuge, in which they fain would take shelter and hide themselves. All are in the state of the apostle who says of himself, that, when the law came, sin revived and he died—or that, when a sense of the law and of its mighty demands visited his heart, there revived within him a sense of his own fearful deficiencies along with it; and he gave himself over to the despair of one, who had rightfully to suffer and rightfully to die. Men under earnestness, and who at the same time have not yet found their way to Christ, are in dealings with the law alive—stand related to him as the wife does to an outraged husband, breathing purposes of vindictiveness and resolute on the accomplishment of them—A state of appalling danger and darkness from which there is

no relief, but in the death of that husband ; and a state exemplifying perhaps the spiritual condition of some who now hear me, who know themselves to be sinners, and know the law wherewith they have to do as the unbending and implacable enemy of all who have offended him—who feel that with him there is no reprieve and no reconciliation—who have long perhaps wearied themselves in vain to find some door of escape, from this severe and stern and uncompromising exactor—and, as the bitter result of all their fatiguing but unfruitful endeavours, are now sitting down in heartless and hopeless despondency.

And perhaps the illustration of our text, may open up for them a way of access to the relief which they aspire after. It is just such a relief as would be afforded by the death of the first tyrannical husband, who, at the same time, had a right to wreak the full weight of his displeasure upon you ; and by the substitution of another in his place, who had cast the veil of a deep and never-to-be-disturbed oblivion over the whole of your past history, and with whom you were admitted to no other fellowship than that of love and peace and confidence. It is thus, my brethren, that Christ would divorce you, as it were, from your old alliance with the law ; and welcome you, instead, to a new and friendly alliance with Himself. He invites you to treat, in trust and in kindly fellowship with Him, as the alone party with whom you need to have to do ; and as to the law, with whom you so long have carried on the distressful fellowship of accusation on the one side and of conscious guilt and fear upon the other, He bids you cease from the fellowship altogether—by having no other regard unto the law, than as unto a husband who is now dead and may be forgotten. And to deliver this contemplation from any image so revolting, as that of our rejoicing in the death of a former husband ; and finding all the relief of heaven in the more kindred and affectionate society of another—You have to remember, that the law has become dead, so as to be divested of all power of reckoning with you—not by an act which has vilified the law or done it violence, but by an act which has magnified the law and made it honourable—not by a measure which has robbed the law of its due vindication, but by a measure which sets it forth to the world's eye in the full pomp and emblazonment of its vindicated honours—not by the new husband having with assassin blow relieved you of the old, but by the one having done full homage to the rights and authority of the other ; and rendered to him such a proud and precious satisfaction, as

exalts him more than he could have been by all the fidelities of your most unbroken allegiance. It is thus that Christ has negotiated the matter with the law ; and now invites you to lay upon Him, the whole burden of its unsettled accounts, and of its fearful reckonings, and of its unappeased resentments—now invites you to break loose from the disquietudes of your old relationship, to emancipate yourselves from that heavy yoke under which you have become weary and heavy laden, to come unto Him and take His yoke upon you ; and you shall have rest to your souls.

It is thus that the law which is alive, and fiercely alive to all who are under it, becomes dead to the believer—now no longer under the law but under grace. To him the law is taken out of the way. It is the hand-writing of ordinances that was at one time against him, and contrary to him ; but its hostility has become powerless, ever since it has been nailed to the cross of Christ. It was then, that it put forth all the right and power of condemnation which belonged to it ; and therefore it was then, that its authority as a judge may be said to have expired. The law had power over every man, so long as it was alive ; and its power went to the infliction of a grievous curse upon all, for all had broken it. But after it got its death-blow on the cross, this power ceased ; and we became free from it—just as the woman is free from all the terror and all the tyranny of that deceased husband, who went to lord it, and perhaps with justice too, most oppressively over her. And thus ought we to hold ourselves as free, from the whole might and menacing of that law, which has now spent its whole force as an executioner, on that body by which the whole chastisement of our peace has been borne. And we actually live beneath our offered privileges—we shut our hearts against that blessed tranquillity, to which by the whole style and tenor of the gospel we are made most abundantly welcome—If we cast not away the terror from our spirits, of an enemy who is now exhausted of all his strength ; and resign not ourselves to the full charm of so great and precious a deliverance.

When a sense of the law brings remorse or fearfulness into your heart—transfer your thoughts from it as your now dead, to Christ as your now living husband. Make your escape from all the rueful apprehension which the one would excite, to the rest and the comfort and the able protection which are held out by the other. Instead of having to do as formerly with the law, have to do with Christ now standing in its place. Thus will you flee to Him, in whom you will find strong consolation.

Nor will you throw yourselves loose from the guidance of all rule and of all rectitude, by having thus swept the law entirely away from the field of your vision, and made an entire substitution of Christ in its place—for He is revealed not merely as a witness unto the people, but as a leader and a commander unto the people.

But there is another way than through the death of the husband, by which the relationship of marriage may be dissolved; and that is by the death of the wife. And there is another way in which the relationship between the law and the subject may be dissolved, than by the death of the law; and that is by the death of the subject. The law has no more power over its dead subject, than the husband has over his dead wife, or than the tyrant has over his dead slave. And it is in this way, that the assertion of all power or authority over us, on the part of the law, seems to be represented in the fourth verse—when we are said to have become dead unto the law, and it is added by the body of Christ. This brings us back to the conception that has been already so abundantly insisted on, that in Christ we all died—that we were dead in law; and, though Christ alone and in His own body died for our sins, yet that was tantamount to the legal infliction of the sentence of death upon ourselves—so that the law can have no further reckoning with us, having already had that reckoning with us to the full in the person of Him who was our surety and our representative: And just as the criminal law has done its utmost upon him whom it has brought to execution, and can do no more—so the law can do no more in the way of vengeance with us, having already done all with Him who was smitten for our iniquities, and who poured out His soul unto the death for us.

After our old relationship with the law is thus put an end to, the vacancy is supplied, and in a way that is very interesting, by Him, who, after having removed the law through His death out of the station it had before occupied, then rose again and now stands in its place. And we utterly mistake the matter, if we think, that, because emancipated from the relation in which we formerly stood to the law—we are therefore emancipated from all service. The wife owes a duty to her second husband, as well as her first. The one has his claims upon her obedience and her dutiful regards, as well as the other. It is true, that, with the former, the predominant feeling which prompted her services may have been that of obligation—mixed with great fearfulness, because of the deficiencies into which she was perpetually falling; and that, with

the latter, the predominant feeling which prompts her services may be sweet and spontaneous affection to one, from whom she is ever sure to obtain the kindest indulgence. But still it is evident, that under the second economy of matters, there will be service, possibly much greater in amount and certainly far worthier in principle, than all that was ever rendered under the first. And thus it is with the law on the one hand, and with Christ on the other. Under the law we were bidden to do and live; and the fear of a forfeiture, or the consciousness of having incurred a forfeiture, already infused the spirit of bondage into all our services. Under Christ, we are bidden to live and do. We are put into the secure possession of that which we before had to strive for; and the happy rejoicing creature comes forth at will, with the services of gratitude and of new obedience. Instead of life being given as a return for the work that we render, our work is given as a return for the life that we receive. And it will further be seen, that, whereas a slavish and creeping and jealous selfishness was the principle of all our diligence under the law, it is a free and affectionate generosity which forms the principle of all our diligence under the gospel. In working to the law, it is all for ourselves—even that we may earn a wage or a reward. In working to Christ it is all the free-will offering of love and thankfulness—not in the mercenary spirit of a hireling, but with the buoyant alacrity of an eternally-obliged and devoted friend—because we thus judge, that, as Christ died for all, then were all dead; and He died, that they who live should live no longer to themselves, but unto Him who died for them and who rose again!

And to the eye of the attentive reader, this may throw light on the difficult verse, which comes immediately after the quotation that we have now given.* Christ upon earth so lived and so died in our stead, that we may be said to have been held in the body of Christ. He was made subject to the law, in taking upon Him of our nature; and when he was in the world, we may be conceived with Him to have served the law, and with Him to have suffered under it. But the law hath dominion over a man only so long as he liveth; and thus, at the death of Christ, and our death along with Him, this dominion terminated. And now it is not with the law that we have to do, even as Christ had to do with it in the days of His mortal flesh. It is with Christ in His immortal and glorified body that we hold all our conversation; and thus, perhaps,

* 2 Cor. v, 16.

will the more profoundly spiritual of our hearers feel a meaning in these words of the apostle, who, after he had said of Christians 'that they should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them and rose again'—said further, that, "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 have become new."

We shall not have time for the exposition of any more verses at present; and shall therefore take up the remainder of this lecture with the enforcement of such practical lessons, as may be suggested from the passage that we already have endeavoured to illustrate.

It must be quite distinct to you, in the first place, that, though released from the old relationship between you and the law on your becoming a disciple of Christ, you are not thereby thrown adrift from all restraint and from all regulation. The second husband has his claims as well as the first; and the wife is as much the subject of obligations to the one as to the other. The transition from nature to grace is here represented, by the dissolving of one marriage and the contracting of another. Had there been no second marriage after the breaking up of the first, then may it have been inferred, that the faith of the gospel led to a state of lawless and reckless abandonment. But there is such a marriage, which of course carries its duties and its obligations and its services along with it; and, accordingly, there is a very remarkable clause in the apostle's writings that is commonly included in a parenthesis—when speaking of himself as without law he says—"Being not without law to God but under the law to Christ." 1 Cor. ix, 21.

Now this leads us in the second place to consider, what it is of the law that we have parted with by the death of the first husband; and what it is of the law that is retained, by our new alliance with the second. And perhaps this cannot be done better, than in the language of our older divines, who tell us on the one hand, that the law is abolished as a covenant. We have ceased from the economy of 'Do this and live.' Our obedience to the law is no longer the purchase-money by which heaven is bought—no longer the righteousness by which the rewards of eternity are earned—no longer the title-deed on which we can knock at the gate of paradise, and, presenting it there, can demand our admission among its felicities and its glories. If you choose to abide in the relationship of the first marriage, the law will be unto

you a rigorous exactor—insisting on every article of the bond, and looking with an air of jealous and pointed stipulation to your every fulfilment; and, what is more, he will be unto you an offended Lord, urging to performances which can never be reached, and reminding of deficiencies which under him never can be pardoned. If you will persist in looking upon heaven as the bargain of your services, then will you be dealt with according to the whole spirit of a bargain's demands and of a bargain's punctualities. Now it is in this respect that the law has ceased from his wonted capacity. The believer is rid of him, and of all his commandments, viewed in the light of so many terms, on the rendering of which eternal life is yours of challenged reward—yours of rightful and meritorious acquirement. All of you I trust are convinced, that on this footing eternal life were placed at an impracticable distance away from you. This was the old footing with the old husband; but, now that he is dead, it is a footing on which, to the great relief of a sinful and sinning species, it no longer stands; and it is thus that we view the matter, when we say of the law that it is abolished as a covenant.

But on the other hand say our divines,—while abolished as a covenant, it is not abolished as a rule of life. Though not under the economy of do and live, still you are under the economy of live and do. Your obedience to the law is no longer the purchase-money, by which heaven is bought; but still your obedience to the law is the preparation by which you are beautified and arrayed for heaven. It is no longer the righteousness, by which the rewards of eternity are earned; but still it is the righteousness, which fits us to enjoy the sacred rest, and the hallowed recreations of eternity. It is no longer that, by which you obtain such a title as qualifies you to challenge the glories and the felicities of paradise for your due; but still it is that, by which you obtain such a taste, as qualifies for partaking in the glories and felicities of paradise for your best-loved enjoyment. To walk by a rule is to walk by a particular and assigned way. And still under the gospel as under the law, the way to heaven is the highway of holiness. Still it is as true in the present as in the former dispensation, that without holiness no man shall see God; and if it be no longer the gold by which you buy the inheritance, still it is the garment that you must put on ere you are permitted to enter on the possession of it.

The proprieties of the marriage state are substantially the same with the second husband, as they were with the first.

But while the one would chide you, the other would charm you into the performance of them; and we may add, that, while the stern and authoritative precepts of the one never could have forced your compliance, because the will is not a subject for the treatment of force—the mild persuasions of the other, by his possession of this faculty, carry in them a power that is irresistible. And it is thus that Christ, who loved the church and gave Himself for it, “sanctifies and cleanses it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

Thus it was the will of the first husband, that you should keep the law, and still it is the will of the second also that you should keep the law. There is no distinction in the matter of it, between the commandment of the one and the commandment of the other. What you ought to have done under the first economy, you still ought to do under the second. It were strange had it been otherwise. He who loveth righteousness presented man with a draught of it on the tablet of the written law; and told him that, on his obedience thereto, He would reward him with a joyful immortality. This reward has been forfeited by sinners, but redeemed by the Saviour of sinners; and still God, unchangeable as He is in His love of righteousness, and who had before pictured it forth in that perfect code of morality which by man has been violated—will now have it to be pictured forth on the character of man: And, for this purpose, does He put the law in his heart and write it out upon his mind—and that virtue, which the first husband failed to enforce, does the second succeed in establishing—by engaging the gratitude, and goodwill, and affection of His disciples, on the side of it. That spiritual excellence which man could not find of himself, wherewith to purchase heaven—the Saviour finds for him, and spreads it out in goodly adornment upon his person, so as to prepare him for heaven. What the first husband would have exacted as a price, the other lays on as a preparation; and the very duties that were required by the unrelenting taskmaster, but not rendered to him—are also required by the kind and friendly benefactor, who at the same time gives both a hand of strength and a heart of alacrity for all His services.

The difference between the two cases, is somewhat like that which obtains be-

tween a family establishment, and an establishment of hirelings. Every workman in the one is under a law of sobriety and good conduct, which, if he violate, he will forfeit his situation. But, if instead of a servant he is a son, it is not on any bargain of that kind, that he is understood to retain the place of security and maintenance, that he enjoys under the roof of his father. Yet, though sobriety and good conduct are not laid upon him in the way of legalism—who does not see, that the whole drift and policy of the patriarchal government under which he sits, are on the side of all that is virtuous and amiable, and praiseworthy on the part of its members? Who does not see, that the desire of a father may still, without any legal economy of do and live, be most earnestly set on all that is good and all that is graceful in the morality of his children? And while the thought never enters his bosom of any thing else, than that he should aid and sustain and advance them to the uttermost—yet, next to the desire that they should live, is it the most earnest desire of his heart that they should live and do—do all that can purify or embellish their own character, do all that is honourable to the name they wear. And thus are we under Christ as our second husband, or under the new family government of heaven—no longer servants but relatives—admitted to all the privileges of life, under the paternal and protecting roof of Him, whose children we are in Christ Jesus. Still the conduct that as servants would not have been tolerated, as sons we are warned and chastised against; and the conduct that as servants would have been legally rewarded, as sons is most lovingly recommended to our strenuous and unceasing observation. And our heavenly Father loveth righteousness in us, and hateth iniquity in us; and that very law which He before enforced on the penalty of our eternal exclusion from His presence, He now engages us to choose and to follow as the eternal characteristic of all His family: And our business now is to put ourselves in training for the joys and the exercises of this great spiritual household; and for this purpose to cleave unto Christ as the Lord our Sanctifier—to betake ourselves to the aids of His grace, and resign our whole wills to the influence of that gratitude, which should lead us to love and to imitate and to obey Him. Thus shall we bring forth fruit unto God—even those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto His praise and unto His glory

LECTURE XXXIX.

ROMANS vii, 5, 6.

"For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held: that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

THERE is a twofold change which takes place, at the moment of a believer's transition into the peace and privileges of the gospel. He in the first place passes into a new condition, as it respects his legal relationship with God; and he in the second place passes into a new character, as it respects the feelings and principles by which he comes to be actuated. You know what his relationship to God is, under the first economy in which he is situated. The moral Governor of our world ordained a law of rectitude, and authoritatively bound it on the observation of our species. That law has in every individual case been violated; and it were giving up the very conception of a moral government, for us to delude ourselves with the imagination, that a certain penalty shall not follow in the train of an offence, or that condemnation shall not follow in the train of disobedience. This in fact were stripping the jurisprudence of Heaven of its sanctions, and so reducing the divine administration to a nullity; and this is the perpetual tendency of those who have not yet been arrested by the awful realities of the question. They hurry themselves away from the contemplation of God's inviolable majesty, and uncompromising truth; and, in the pleasing dream of His tenderness for the infirmities of His erring children, would they lull themselves into a sweet oblivion of the alone elements, on which hinges the fate of their eternity. It is indeed most true, that God has all of the love and the compassion and the amiable kindness wherewith they have invested Him; and the gospel of Jesus Christ is the very development of these attributes—the very expression of a longing and affectionate Father after His strayed children, for the purpose of recalling them; but at the same time of recalling them in that one way, that shall illustrate the entire character and perfection of the Godhead. It is a dispensation of mercy free to all—only of mercy through the medium of righteousness—not of a mercy which dethrones the law, but of a mercy which magnifies that law and makes it honourable—not of such an indulgence as would pour contempt on the face of the Divinity, but such an indulgence as pours a deep and awful consecration over it. We sit

under the economy of grace, but of grace in conjunction with holiness; and the overtures of reconciliation—coming to us as they do through the channel of a mysterious atonement, and an unchangeable priesthood, and a mediatorship sealed with the blood of an everlasting covenant—come to us, if I may so express it, through such an intervening ceremonial, as serves to guard and to dignify the Sovereign, even in the freest exercise of His clemency to the sinful—So that they cannot by this path of access enter into peace with the Deity, without beholding Him in the awfulness of His purity, without feeling for Him the profoundest reverence.

From this rapid sketch of the great moral characteristics that sit on the economy of the gospel, you may come to understand how it is that the believer, on being translated into a new condition is also moulded and transformed into a new character. It is easy to profess the faith, and a mere profession will induce no radical change on the habits or the history; but if a man actually have the faith, then he has that which never fails to be the instrument of a great spiritual renovation. It is upon this principle, that he is prompted to comply with the overtures of the gospel; and, in so doing, he is made to feel what Nature never feels, and that is a calm and confident sense of his own reconciliation with God. The man who has never experienced this sensation, will not adequately conceive of its delights and its influences; yet still may he have some distant imagination of the new feelings and the new impulses, to which it is the harbinger. On this single event in the history of a believer's mind—that, whereas formerly there was in it a distrust or a jealousy of God, there is now in it the assured conviction that the Almighty is his Friend—on this single event, there is made to turn an entire revolution of its desires and its principles. In the language of the Psalmist, its bonds are indeed loosed; and, in place of that terror or that hopelessness which froze the soul into downright inactivity, is there now the freeness of a grateful and confiding spirit—the alacrity of a willing obedience. "I will run in the way of thy commandments" says David "when thou hast enlarged my heart." It is just this en

largement that is opened up to the disciple, on his accepting of Christ, and so being delivered from the fears and the fetters of legality. The mountain of a before inextinguishable debt is now liquidated; and a discharge is given by which, from a peculiar skilfulness in the method of our salvation, the very justice of God, as well as His mercy, is guaranteed to the acceptance of the sinner; and he now has a comfort and an expectation in the service of that Being, before whom he had hitherto stood paralyzed, as if in the hands of an unappeased and unappeasable creditor; and the holiness, which formerly he would have attempted in vain as his price or his purchase-money for that heaven the gate of which was shut against all his exertions, he now most cheerfully renders as his free-will offering and his preparation for that heaven whose gate is now open to receive him; nor can he look to the whole process and principle of his recal to the favour of God, without seeing depicted therein the love which that God bears to righteousness, and the hatred which He bears to iniquity. The very contemplation from which he gathers peace to his breast, brings down upon it a purifying influence also. The same spectacle of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, that charms from the believer's heart the fears of guilt, tells him in most impressive terms of the evil of it: And that deed of amnesty, on which are inscribed the characters of good-will to the sinner, is so emblazoned with the vestiges of God's detestation for sin, and so ratified by a solemn expiation because of it—that the intelligent disciple cannot miss the conclusion, nor will he fail to proceed upon it, that this is the will of God even his sanctification.

I trust that even those of you who have no experience of this transition at all, and to whom I still speak as in a mystery, will at least admit, that, when a man comes practically and powerfully under the operation of these influences, he must feel another moral pulse, and breathe another moral atmosphere from before. It is the doctrine of the Bible, that without supernatural aid the transition cannot be effected—that, even for the establishment of that faith which is the primary and presiding element of this great renewing process, an agency must descend upon us from on high which nevertheless it is our duty to watch and to pray for; and that unless from the first to the last we feel our dependence upon the Spirit of God, we shall not be upheld in those habits and affections of sacredness, which constitute our meetness for the inheritance that is above. But my purpose in introducing this remark, is to demonstrate how

wide is the dissimilarity in the whole form and forthgoings of a man's mind, after the accession of this influence from what they were before it—how certainly a new character, as well as a new condition, emerges from it: and, when you connect the change with that which the Bible reveals to us of the power from the upper sanctuary by which it has been effected, you will be at no loss to perceive on the one hand, why converts to the faith of the gospel, as born of the Spirit are said to be in the Spirit; and, on the other, you will be at as little loss to perceive the meaning of the apostle's phrase, 'when we were in the flesh'—when we were what nature originally made us; and before that transition by believing, which introduced another relationship with God, and introduced us to another habit and another disposition in regard to Him.

The apostle tells us what took place both with him and with his disciples, at the time when they were in the flesh. Then did the motions of sins, which were by the law, work in their members to bring forth fruit unto death. We should like here to know in the first instance, what is meant by the phrase of 'sins which were by the law?' Some understand such things as were declared by the law to be sinful—as if the apostle had said, 'then did certain affections which by the law were pronounced sins, work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.' Others assign a still greater force to the law in this passage, as if the law had not only declared the affections in question to be sinful, but as if it was the law that had made them to be sinful. And indeed there is nothing hyperbolic in ascribing this function to the law—and that, on the principle that where there is no law there is no transgression. If a man break no rule he is no sinner—and if there was positively no rule to break, then sin were an impossibility. It is the law that characterizes sin as sinful; that makes the affection to be sin which but for it would have been no sin at all, and that purely by forbidding it. So that it is quite fair to understand the motions of sins which were by the law, to be not merely such motions or desires as the law had declared to be sinful, but also such motions and desires as the law had actually constituted sinful.

But admitting both these explanations as quite consistent the one with the other, and as alike applicable to the passage before us, there are others, who, additional to these, would ascribe to the law an influence of a still more active and efficient quality—as if it not only rendered certain affections sinful which but for it could not have obtained any such character, but as

if it called forth into being the very affections themselves. They would make the law, not merely a discoverer and an assertor of sin, but they would make it a provocative to sin; or an instrument for calling it into existence, as well as an instrument for detecting and exposing it. They think themselves warranted in this explanation by the text, "that the law entered that the offence might abound;" and still more by the text, that "the law wrought in me all manner of concupiscence"—so that these last interpreters, in explaining the phrase of the motions of sin which were by the law, would not object to the idea of the law having actually excited these motions, and being thus the efficient originator of the sins that proceeded from them.

Nor is this view of the matter so much at war with the real experience of our nature, as may at first be supposed. The law may irritate and inflame the evil propensities of the heart to greater violence. The yoke, which it lays on human corruption, may cause that corruption to fester and tumultuate the more. The perverse inclination is just fretted to a stouter and more daring assertion of itself, by the thwarting resistance which it meets with; and you surely can conceive, nay, some of you may have found—how legal prohibitions, and remorseful visitations, and all the scruples of a remaining conscience and sense of rectitude in the bosom, which lie in the way of some vicious indulgence on which the appetite is set, may give the keener impulse to its demands, and make it more ungovernable than had there been no law. And when once all the barriers of principle are levelled, you may well imagine—how, on the pressure and the prohibition being removed, the depraved tendency will burst out into freer and larger excesses; and the harder the struggle was ere the victory over a feeling of duty had been obtained, the prouder will be the rebel's subsequent defiance to all its suggestions, and the more fierce and lawless will be his abandonment.

Nay, I can figure how the existence and felt obligation of a law may, on the minds of a more delicate cast, have somewhat of the same operation. It is not too subtle a remark, for there is substantial and experimental truth in it—that, if the imputation of guilt lie hard upon a man, and he overwhelmed therewith sink into shame and into despondency—in addition to losing the sense of character, he may lose the character itself. He will come down in reality to the level of the surrounding estimation; and you have only to envelope him in an atmosphere of disgrace, in order to impart a corresponding tinge of moral deterioration, to the living prin-

ciples by which he is actuated. This proves of what importance it is, for upholding the tone of character in society—that we should all be predisposed to turn to our fellows with kindness and confidence and respect; and there is no saying how much the opposite habits of suspicion and detraction, and fiendish delight in the contemplation of human ignominy, may contribute to lower the real worth and dignity of our species. But our present aim is to show, that, by the very establishment of a law, we become exposed to the sense of its violations; and this degrading sense works a regardlessness of character, and lays us open to other and larger violations: And thus the law may become not only declaratory of sin, but creative of sin; and that both by constituting certain actions to be sinful and multiplying these actions—And in all these ways may we understand the phrase of our apostle, even the motions of sins which are by the law.

The remaining clause of this verse, brings into view the distinction that there is, between feeling the motions or tendencies of sin and the actual following of these tendencies. We have before abundantly insisted on the presence of sinful inclinations, even in the regenerated Christian; but that he differs from him who is still in the flesh, in that while the one obeys the inclinations, the other utterly refuses to indulge or gratify them. Paul himself was not exempted from the motions of sins; and this is what he feelingly laments in the subsequent verses of this chapter. But then he did not suffer these motions so to work in him, as to bring forth fruit unto death. It is of importance for the believer to understand that, so long as he abides in his present framework, he occupies an infected tenement—he bears about with him a vile body charged with a moral virus, from the presence of which death alone can deliver him; and against the power of which, it is his appointed warfare so to struggle, as that it shall not have the practical ascendancy over him. This is the inward constitution even of a saint upon earth—a constant urgency to evil. But what distinguishes him from the wretched sinner is, that he so resists this urgency that it does not prevail. There is no conflict with the one for he walks altogether in the counsel of his own heart, and altogether in the sight of his own eyes. With the other there is the conflict of two opposite principles—of the Spirit lusting against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit; but so as that the Spirit has the habitual predominance and by the Spirit he is practically led. They who are in the flesh have no such

principle of counteraction within them to their evil tendencies—so that the motions of sins which are in them work in their members so as to bring forth fruit unto death.

Paul now under the power of the gospel, and in the full career of his sanctification, speaks of his being in the flesh as a thing of remembrance. He could now look back upon that state, with the full advantage of a tender and enlightened conscience, that recognized as sinful what he before had never charged himself with, as incurring the guilt of any violation that should infer death. He was even then free from the grosser profligacies of human wickedness; and lived in the deceitful security of one, who thought that all his duties were adequate to all his obligations. But he now could discern, that, unblemished as he was in respect of all outward enormities, he was then wholly given over to the idolatry of his own will; and then when tried by a law which questioned him of his godliness—of his preference for the Creator above the creature—of his obedience to the commandment, that he should covet and desire no earthly good, so much as the favor of that Being at whose bidding he ought to have subordinated all the affections of his heart—When thus tried, he could now plainly perceive, that, at that time, he was altogether carnal; and not the less so that at that time too, he with self was altogether satisfied. But the difficulty is to make that which was a thing of remembrance to Paul after he was converted, to make it a thing of present consciousness to those who are not yet converted. It is true, it was on the eve of his becoming a christian that the conviction of sin first seized him—nay, this very conviction might have been the instrument of turning him to the gospel. And therefore it is the more desirable, to reach the same conviction to the hearts of those who are still in the flesh and now hearing me—to make them understand, how wholly it is that they are in the flesh—how unreservedly they give themselves up to the impulse of all those constitutional tendencies, which result from the existing mechanism of their soul and body and spirit, without any control upon it from the accession of a principle of godliness—how much they live and talk and feel, just as they would have done though the idea of a God were never present to them—So, in fact, as to be as far as possible from the habit of glorifying the Lord with their soul and body and spirit, which are the Lord's.

For the purpose of awakening this conviction, the thing wanted is both a more tender and a more lofty conception of the divine law. Where there is glaring

deceit, or fell malignity, or abandoned licentiousness in the action—there may be less of difficulty in tracing it to the operation of such propensities, as in truth work those palpable deeds of disobedience, which obviously and undeniably have their fruit unto death. But when the actions are those of industry for example in a lawful calling, or of light-heartedness in a gay and harmless amusement, or of courteousness in a circle of decent and estimable companionship—Surely they are such actions as a christian may perform; and in what circumstances, it may be asked, do they indicate the performer of them to be still in the flesh, and under the dominion of such appetites as bring forth fruit unto death? Whatever difficulty we may feel in answering the question, it can be replied to, and on a clear and intelligent principle too, by that law which is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. You are still in the flesh, if what you habitually do is not done unto God. However more amiable and more refined your species of worldliness may be than that of another, yet still, if you are not walking with God, you are walking after the flesh, and you move in a pictured world of atheism. Such may be your dark and obtuse apprehensions of the spiritual morality of the law—that the general drift of your affections being away from God and set upon earthly things, may not appear to the eye of your contemplation as being very deeply tinged with the hue and character of criminality. But by the law itself this is declared to be a state and habit of the soul, that is exceeding sinful; and all that is devised and all that is done under that dominant and unquelled spirit of secularity, which is the universal spirit of unrenewed and unregenerated nature, is done by those who are still in the flesh, and all the desires of whose heart bring forth fruit unto death.

To quicken you from this state—to transform secularity into sacredness—to make those who are dead in trespasses and sins alive unto God—to usher you into other feelings and other principles, than those which unchristianized humanity ever can exemplify—This in fact is the great and ultimate design of the gospel, which, after translating you into another condition, also transforms you into another character.

V. 6. 'That being dead wherein we were held' might be rendered 'having died in Him in whom we were held.' The law has wreaked the whole force of its vindication on the head of our great sacrifice; and this is tantamount to our having borne the penalty ourselves; and so, by our death in Christ, being delivered from

an infliction that has now gone by. The law has no further reckoning with us, on the old principle of do this and live. We are not now under what the apostle in another place calls the ministry of condemnation, or under the authority of what he in the same place calls the letter that killeth. The commandment no longer frowns upon us, from the place which it before occupied when written on tables of stone; but it is now felt in persuasive influence within us, because written now on the fleshly tablets of our heart. It no longer acts as a master, who drives his reluctant slaves into a forced compliance with his bidding; or keeps them in perpetual terror, under the consciousness of a displeasure which no act or strength of theirs can allay. It is now their hearts' desire, instead of their constrained drudgery, to fulfil the requisitions of the law. The honest struggle in which they are embarked, is to make head against all that corruption of nature, which would incline them to disobedience; and now in the hands of an approving friend who deals out to them supplies of grace and strength for the warfare, they serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

So that whatever the change be, which takes place on this transition from nature to the gospel, it is not such a change as carries an exonerating from service along with it. It may be service in another spirit, and under a different stimulus from before; but still it is service. There is nothing in the true faith of Christianity, which exempts its disciples from the active performance of virtue; or from the most assiduous cultivation of all moral and of all spiritual excellence. So that there must in some way, be a misapprehension of the matter, when it is thought of the New Testament or of the evangelical system that is contained in it—as if it annulled every motive to righteousness; or substituted the contemplation and the quietism of a mystic theology, in place of those moralities by which human life is adorned, and which send a powerful and practical impulse to the conduct on the busy walks of human society.

It may be difficult on this subject, to reach the understanding of those who have not the experimental feeling of it; but still perhaps they may be able to apprehend, what the leading characteristics are of that service which is rendered in the oldness of the letter. Under this economy, heaven is held out to man as the reward of his obedience—an inheritance for which he must pay value; and that never will be his without the purchase-money of certain specified merits, and certain prescribed services. There

is something in this state of matters that is powerfully calculated to set man aging; and more particularly when he understands it to be the alternative, that, should he lose heaven, he will have his part through eternity among the unquenchable torments and ever-during agonies of hell. And so without any love to virtue in itself, but from the single principle of regard to his own safety—without any native hatred of sin, but from the terror of that awful and intolerable vengeance which he conceives to be attached to it—may he be set on a most laborious course of dutiful and diligent and painstaking obedience. Now only suppose him to have a just imagination of the law, of its high demands, and of his countless deficiencies therefrom; and do you not perceive, that, after all, they are the jealousies of distrust, and the scrupulosities of fearfulness, and the mercenary feelings of a bargain, and the extorted homage of sordid and slavish devoteship, and in a word the desires or the dreads of selfishness—that these form the main constituents of that old legal service, which it is the purpose of the gospel to supersede? But the most blasting circumstance of the whole is, that the primary influence by which this course of obedience has been originated, and by which it continues to be sustained—is not the love of rectitude at all, but of a something in the shape of reward that is distinct from rectitude; and not a spontaneous aversion of the heart to sin, but the recoil of animal or physical nature from that suffering which follows in the train of sin. There are no great moral characteristics, to stamp or to signalize the activities of such a service; and to view man plodding and drivelling in this career, is to view him the mere creature of his own personal interests, the degraded bondsman of his own fears.

From this view of what it is to serve God in the oldness of the letter, let us proceed to the view of what it is to serve Him in the newness of the spirit. Under this economy the door of heaven is thrown open to a sinful world; and the signals of invitation are hung out from all its portals; and, instead of being proposed as the unattainable reward of an obedience utterly beyond the power of humanity, it is held forth in the character of an accessible gift by God through Jesus Christ our Lord. But then it is not a heaven of sensuality: It is a heaven of sacredness. It is not a place for the recreation of animal nature: It is a place for the high recreation of the moral and spiritual faculties. It is described as the land of uprightness; and its main delight as lying in the play of holy affections, regaled by holy exercises. No man can

purchase heaven by his virtue; yet no man can be happy in heaven without virtue—for virtue is the element of heaven; and without the preparation of a virtuous heart and a virtuous character, all the appropriate extacies of that pure and lofty region you would be incapable of sharing in. On this single change in the relation between virtue and heaven, do you pass from service in the oldness of the letter to service in the newness of the Spirit. Your virtue is not the price of heaven; for then all the jealousies of a bargain, and the freezing apprehensions of legality, would degrade it from a thing of spontaneous love to a thing of selfishness. But virtue is your indispensable preparation for heaven, to which you are freely beckoned in the gospel by all the tokens of welcome and good-will; and the man who has this believingly in his eye, forthwith enters with a new-born alacrity and delight on the career of holiness. He loves it, not for any distinct or separate reward, but he loves it for itself; and gratitude to Him, who poured out His soul as an expiation for his sins, engages his affection to it the more; and the soul, disengaged from all anxieties about a debt which Christ hath extinguished and a condemnation which Christ hath done away, is now at leisure and at liberty for the prosecution of all moral excellence; and the law, put into his heart by the Spirit of God, is now his heart-felt delight, instead of being as before his hopeless and unavailing drudgery. He has become a new creature. The taste and the affection of holy angels have been given to him; and we refer to you all—on comparing the service that is prompted by a love for the reward of the law, with the service that is prompted by a love to the righteousness of the law—which of the two presents you with virtue in its most generous style of exhibition, and which of them it is that

forms the highest and the noblest offering.

It might perhaps help to clear this matter, did we think that the great object of the economy under which we sit is to become like unto God. Now, it is not for reward that God is righteous; but the love of righteousness for itself is the original property of His nature. Neither is it under the dread of punishment, that He shuns iniquity; but it is because He hates iniquity. There is nought of legalism in the morality of the Godhead; but it is a morality which springs from the primitive and emanating fountains of His own character, and spreads out in free and spontaneous efflorescence over all His ways. It is not with a prospective regard to some future heaven, that is to be adjudged to Him from a tribunal which is loftier than Himself—it is not under an influence like this, that God is so observant of truth, and so strict in justice, and of such unwearied beneficence. These in fact have constituted His heaven from eternity; and it is just this spiritual heaven, the delight of which lies in its love and in its holiness—it is this, and no other, that awaits those who are here admitted to the number of His children through the faith which is in Christ, and have the family likeness imparted to them. Then it is that you pass from the oldness of the letter to the newness of the Spirit—when, instead of toiling at the observations of virtue for a sordid reward distinct and separate from virtue itself, you are prompted to the observations of virtue by the spontaneous love which you bear to it. This alone is true moral excellence, purified of all that taint of selfishness by which it were otherwise debased and vitiated; and it is only when transformed into this, that you are formed again after the image of God in righteousness and in true holiness.

LECTURE XL.

ROMANS vii, 7—13.

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. 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.”

THE apostle had before affirmed as much, as that it was the law which constituted that to be sinful, that without the law could have had no such character ascrib-

ed to it—nay perhaps, that even the law called forth into living energy and operation, certain sinful affections, which, but for it acting as a provocative, might have

lain within us in a state of latent and of unobserved dormancy. And he seems to feel in this verse, as if this might, in the apprehension of his readers, attach the same sort of odiousness to the law that is attached to sin itself. This charge against the law, he repels with the utmost vehemence and decision, and that sort of readiness which carries somewhat the expression of indignancy along with it. And the first consideration that he calls to his aid is, that the law acted as a discoverer of sin. He had not known sin but by the law; and he had not known lust, or as some would understand this clause, he had not known the sinfulness of lust, or he had not known lust to be sinful, except the law had said 'thou shalt not covet.' It is no impeachment against the evenness of a ruler, that, by the application of it to any material surface, you can discover all that is crooked or unequal thereupon. On the contrary its very power of doing so proves how straight and unerring it is in itself; and the more minute the deviations are which it can manifest to the eye of the observer, the greater is the evidence that is afforded to the perfection of the instrument that you are using. The light of day may reveal a place of impurity, or a soil in the colouring of the object that you contemplate, which could not be recognised under the shade of midnight—nor yet in the duskiess of approaching even. Yet who would ever think on that account, of ascribing to the beautiful element of light, any of that pollution or deformity, which the light has brought forth to observation? The character of one thing may come more impressively home to our discernment, by its contrast with the character of another thing; and the stronger the contrast is between the two, the more intense may our perception become of the distinct and appropriate character of each of them. But it were indeed very strange, if the dissimilarity of these two things, should be the circumstance that led us to confound them; or if when because placed beside each other, the one became more palpably an object of disgust than if viewed separately—the other should not on that very account, become more palpably and more powerfully the object of our admiration. When one man stands before you in the full lustre and loveliness of moral worth, and another loathsome in all the impurities of vice and wickedness—the very presence of the first, may generate in the heart of the observer, a keener sensation of repugnancy towards the second; and this not surely because they have any thing in common, but because they have every thing in wide and glaring opposition. It were indeed a most perverse inference to draw, from the fact

of virtue having shed an aspect of greater hatefulness on the vice that is contiguous to it—that therefore it must gather upon itself, the same hue and the same hatefulness which it has imparted to the other. This were altogether reversing the property of a foil, which is certainly not to obscure but to heighten the opposite excellence. And the same of sin and of the law. The law is the ruler which marks and exposes the crookedness of sin—not because crooked itself, but because precisely and purely rectilinear. And it is the light which reveals the blackness and the darkness of sin—not because these are its own properties, but because of its clear and lucid transparency. And it is the bright exemplar of virtue, which rebukes and vilifies all the wickedness that it looks upon,—not surely because of any vileness imputable to it; but because of the force wherewith it causes this imputation to descend, from the elevation of its own unclouded purity, on the dross and the degradation and the tarnish by which it is surrounded. So that to the question, 'Is the law therefore sin because it makes sin known,'—the answer is No. It makes sin known, not because of any participation at all in its character, but because of its strong and total dissimilarity.

V. 8. But from the first clause of this verse it would appear, that the law does more than make the deformity more noticeable and more odious than before. It is even the occasion of aggravating that deformity, by making sin more actively rebellious, and causing it to be the more foul and more abundant in its deeds of atrocity. There can be no doubt of the fact, that the law of God does not cure what the apostle here calls the concupiscence of men, or in other words the desire of man's heart towards any forbidden indulgence; and this desire not being cured by the law, is just thereby heated and exasperated the more. The very remorse that follows in the train of any violation, is of itself a constant feeder of the mind with such suggestions and images, as serve to renew the temptation to what is evil. It is ever bringing the thoughts into contact with such objects as before overcame the purposes of the inner man, and may again overcome them—and the very consciousness of having broken a law, by perpetually adhering to the heart and pervading it with the conviction of sin, is just as perpetually operating on the heart with the excitements of sin. The man who does what is morally wrong, and thinks no more of it, may never repeat transgression till its outward influences have again come about him, after it may be, the interval of many days or months, and prevailed over him as before. But

the man who is conscious-stricken because of his iniquity, and who is ever brooding under a sense of guilt and degradation, and who ever and anon recurs to it as the ceaseless topic of his many cogitations and many cares—Such a man has the image of allurements present to his thoughts, and that too during the whole extent of those frequent and lengthened intervals of time, when they are not present to his senses. And thus does the law turn out an occasional cause, why with him there should be both a more intense and a more abiding fermentation of all the sinful appetites of our nature,—than with another, who, reckless of law and undisturbed by its accusing voice, just lives at random and more under the impulse of outward events than of his own inward propensities and inward processes. And, what adds to the helplessness of this whole calamity is, that, while the law thus scourges the unhappy victim of remorse, it gives him no strength and no encouragement for the warfare. It gives a new assailing force to his enemies, but no force of resistance to himself,—because depriving him of the inspiring energy that is in hope, it gives him in its place the dread and the desperation of an outlaw. It tells how by its unrelenting power and its irrevocable curse, that he is undone; and he, by a process that in fact is oft exemplified in the sad history of many an apostate, may, just because of his sensibilities at one time to the law of God, have now become the more sunken in all profligacy, the more daring and determined in all wickedness.

And yet the law here is not in fault. It is sin which is in fault. The law is not the proper and primary fountain of all this mischief. It is sin which took occasion by the law—which, at sight of the law, strengthened itself the more in its own character; and felt a more decided impulse than ever, to the emission of all those influences on the heart of man, by which all manner of concupiscence is wrought therein. Which of the two parties then, whether is it sin or the law, that deserves the blame and the odiousness? It is conceivable of the worthless reprobate, that he may be brought into the presence of him who stands high and pure and undoubted in all moral estimation; and that he sickens, either with envy or in despair, at the contemplation of an excellence which he cannot reach; and that the reaction which descends upon him from the elevation of another's virtue he is now looking to, may but fortify him with greater spite and tenaciousness than ever in all his purposes of evil. Though such be practically the result of such an interview, will not the

sainted holiness and integrity of the good man, still shine out in the same cloudless and unimpeached lustre as before? and will not all the hardening and all the resoluteness of depravity which his presence has created in the bosom of another, just serve to bring down upon that other a still feller and heavier imputation? And it is just so with the two parties, whose merits the apostle is employed in adjusting in the passage before us. It is not the commandment which works all manner of concupiscence. But it is sin which taketh occasion by the commandment; and it all goes to aggravate the moral hideousness of our nature, that, on the approach of so pure and righteous a visitor as the law of God, it is thereby prompted to break forth into more audacious rebellion, and to give itself up to the excesses of a more loose and lawless abandonment.

And it is in this sense, and in this sense only, that the law is the occasion of death to those who have disobeyed it. This sore infliction is primarily and properly due to sin, which taketh occasion by the law. It is conceivable, as we have already said, that the very company of a man of righteousness, might so distance and so degrade in his own eyes a man of iniquity—as that, with the desperate feeling of an outcast from all honourable estimation, he might henceforth give himself over to the full riot and extravagance of villany. He might even under this process of depravation have become a murderer; and so entailed upon himself a death of vengeance, for the death of violence that he inflicted upon another. But who would ever think of laying either his own blood, or the blood of his victim, to the door of him whose excellence had only called out into more open decision and display the hatefulness of his own character? Even though this man of righteousness had been his judge, and had passed upon him the sentence of execution for his crimes—yet who does not see, that his crimes are all his own; and that even though provoked into being by the view of another's worth, or by the galling prohibitions of the righteous example or of the righteous authority that had been brought to bear upon him—that still this only served to blazon and to enhance his own turpitude, without transferring one particle either of its guilt or of its foulness to the pure and honourable arbiter of his destiny? And so again of the parties—even sin and the law. The law is the exemplar of perfect virtue, and it is the expounder of perfect virtue; and she may further be regarded as the executioner of virtuous wrath on all who have disowned and have defied her. And if so be, that

they have been excited to a prouder and more tumultuous defiance, by the very restraints which the presence of the law has imposed upon them—this just makes their sin more exceeding sinful; both bringing it out to more glaring exhibition, and stamping a deeper atrocity upon its character.

Thus much for the first clause of this 8th verse—and, as we want not to repeat more than enough, we would make these illustrations serve for the 10th, 11th, and 13th verses, which we now read out in your hearing—only adding one observation about sin taking occasion by the commandment to *deceive* in order to destroy. It slays its victim by a process of deception, of which deception the law is made the instrument. It may do this in various ways and by various wiles. As the man's remorse is continually leading him to brood over the transgression—so sin may take advantage of this employment, and follow it up by leading the man to dwell as constantly on the temptation which led to it. Or it may represent the man to himself as the doomed and irrecoverable victim of a law, that can never be appeased by any subsequent obedience—and thus, through means of this law again, may it drive him onward to the profligate excesses of a ruthless desperado. Or, changing its device and its policy, may it soothe him in a favourite though forbidden indulgence, by setting forth to his remembrance the many offerings which he hath already rendered to this same law; and the many conformities of Honesty, or Temperance, or Compassion, or Courteousness, by which he still continues to do it honour. And lastly, it may even turn his very compunction into a matter of complacency; and persuade the man, that, in defect of the homage of his obedience to the law, it is at least well that he gives it the homage of his regret for his many violations—and so with a feeling of very tolerable security, may he spend his life in a constant alternation of sinning and sorrowing; of first offending his conscience by the freedoms of his life, and then of quieting it again by the feelings of a bosom, where all sense of the commandment and of its obligations has not yet decayed into utter annihilation. And in these various ways, may a process of depravation be going on, under the guise of much solemn and reverential acknowledgment; and the man be betrayed into peace where there is no peace; and sin be ripening into full ascendancy, even where its triumphs are mingled with the terrors and the sighs of penitency; and at length, through the medium of many legal formalities and legal feelings, acquiring a supreme authority in that

heart which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

We now direct your attention to the last clause of the eighth verse. "For without the law sin was dead"—dead in respect of all power to condemn you, had there been actually no law, or had its authority been really extinguished; and dead in respect of its inability to stir up the alarms of condemnation in your heart, had the sense or feeling of its authority been extinguished: and, in both cases, dead as to its power of seducing or enslaving you, by means of a remorse that were thus obliterated, or of terrors that would thus never agitate the bosom. All this, on the supposition of being without the law, or without any sense in your heart either of its high requisitions, or of the high and unalterable sanctions which enforced the observation of them. And in the next verse Paul is visited with the remembrance of his own state, in a former period of his history—when ignorant as he was of the exceeding breadth of God's commandment; when unaware of the reach which it took, into the very secrecy of his affections and desires; when, not adverting to its character as a searching and a spiritual law, he looked forward to a life of favour here and of blessedness hereafter, on the strength of his many outward compliances and his many literal observations. He was thus alive without the law once; and it was not till the commandment came—not till it revealed to him the whole extent of its authority and its cognizance—not till he was made to see what its lofty demands were, and what his wretched and irrecoverable deficiencies therefrom—Not till then was it, that sin revived in him; that its terrors and its convictions awoke upon his soul; that it stirred him up to such restless and unavailing struggles, as shortened not his distance from perfection: And perhaps while it whetted his remorse, gave a darker and more desperate character to his rebellion; or at all events deposited him from the proud security of his old imaginations; and made him see, that, instead of a victorious claimant for the rewards of the law, he was the trembling victim of its menaces and its penalties.

V. 9. The state that Paul here describes as being at one time his own, is in fact the prevalent state of the world. The men of it live in tolerable comfort and security all their days; and that, just because blind to those awful and besetting realities by which they are encompassed—and dead to the tender invitations of the gospel, only because dead to the terrifying menaces of the law. They are without all adequate sense of its obligations, or of the power and certainty of His wrath who

established it; and who will see to it that its authority shall be maintained, and its many threats and many proclamations shall one and all of them be verified. It is because the sinner is without the law, or without any strong and affective conviction of all the places in his heart and in his history to which its government extends—that he sees not the danger of the condition which he occupies, nor reflects upon himself as a transgressor, whose condemnation even unto spiritual and everlasting death is altogether due to its violated honours. Not till the law came, did Paul look upon himself as a doomed and devoted malefactor, thankful for the offered pardon of the gospel, and humbly acquiescing in its proposals and its ways for his acceptance with God. And thus it is that we count it so highly important, when the Spirit lends His efficacy to our demonstrations of the might and majesty of the divine law—when He thereby arouses the careless sinner out of his lethargies, and causes him to see that there is a coming wrath from which there is no escaping but by an offered gospel—when by the terrors of the Lord, He persuades the man to flee for refuge to the hope set before him there—when He opens his eyes to the dread exhibition of his own guilt, and of the fiery vengeance that out of Christ and away from his cross is sure to overtake it—when He thus pursues him as with an arrow sticking fast, and lets him not alone, till, an awed and a humbled penitent, he is glad to stretch forth his hand to the propitiation which God hath set forth unto the world, and so to wash out his sins in the blood of the Lamb.

V. 12. The apostle had already delivered the law from all charge of odiousness, because of the death which it inflicted; and because of the sin which it exposed, and even excited with greater fierceness and power in a sinner's heart. And now does he render it the positive homage of all that acknowledgment, which was due to its real character—as the tablet or the representation of all moral excellence—bodied forth from the conceptions of the Divinity Himself, into an authoritative model of perfection—and (had man taken upon his soul the fair and the full impression of it) conveying from Him who is the fountain-head of virtue, the lovely impress of its accomplishments and its graces to the creatures whom He had formed. If the law be the occasion of death, or of more fell and frightful depravity, to its subjects—it is not because of any evil that is in its character; but because of the evil of that sin which is in their nature. Such an effect may demonstrate the malignity of sin,

or show more strikingly than before the exceeding sinfulness thereof. But it can in no way be construed into an impeachment against the law—which stands exonerated of all the mischief, that ought properly and primarily to be referred to the corruption of our own hearts. That vice should gather itself into an attitude of more stout and shameless defiance, at the sight or at the bidding of virtue—is indeed a fell aggravation of all the enormities, wherewith it is chargeable; but still virtue shines forth with untarnished lustre, or rather enhanced in all fair and righteous estimation, when thus placed by the side of this contiguous worthlessness: Or the law by which virtue is portrayed, and virtue is enacted, still retains her primitive and endearing characters of being wise and holy and just and good.

This may lead to the solution of a question, by which the legal heart of man often feels itself embarrassed and exercised—a question which we have often attempted to treat and to resolve in your hearing; and by which we may have succeeded in laying for a season the obstinate legalism of nature. But it recurs again with its unquelled difficulties, and its unappeased longings after a reward and a righteousness of its own; and, with its eye open to the palpable truth, that God still urges upon us that very law, by which our justification is impossible—that, under the economy of the gospel, works are still in imperative demand, even after grace has been proclaimed to us as the only way of salvation—the perplexity from which it wants to be unrid-dled is, Why should the law that is now deposed from the office to which it was at one time ordained of being a minister unto life; and has now become a minister unto death—why should it still be kept up in authority and importance, and obedience to it be as strenuously required, and a conformity of character to it be held as indispensable, under our present dispensation as under the old one?

In order that God should will our obedience to the law, it is not necessary to give to obedience the legal importance and efficacy that it had under the old dispensation. All that is necessary to make God delight in the morality of His creatures, and that He should please their observation of it, is that this morality be to Him in itself a gladdening object of contemplation. There was a material chaos at the outset of our present system—out of which the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters, educed the loveliest forms of hill and dale and mighty ocean and waving forests, and all that richness of bloom and verdure and vegetable beauty which serves to dress and to

diversify the landscape of nature. And it is said that God saw every thing to be good, and rejoiced over the works of His creative hand. Now there was no legality whatever in this most obvious and intelligible process. The ornaments of a flower, or the gracefulness of a tree, or the soft magnificence of a whole extended and outspread scenery—these are not and cannot be the offerings of inanimate matter, by which it purchases the smile and the regards of the Divinity. And yet it is with the smiles of complacency, that the Divinity does regard them. The Almighty Artist loves to behold the fair composition that He Himself has made; and wills each of His works to be perfect in its kind; and dwells with satisfaction and joy on the panorama of visible excellence, that He has spread before His throne; and rather would He look to the freshness of its many decorations, than to a universal blight of nature, when every flower should sicken upon its stalk, and all those pencilled hues by which the surface of our earth is adorned should be swept away by the pestilence of a tainted atmosphere above it. So that in a case to which legality is quite inapplicable, does God prefer His creatures to be of one form and comeliness rather than another—does He love beauty rather than deformity, and harmony rather than confusion; and when He did put forth on the dark and chaotic mass of warring elements the power of His transforming hand, it was to spread out a scene of loveliness before Him, and to lavish upon it the gayest and the goodliest adornments.

And the same of the moral taste of the Godhead. He loves what is wise and holy and just and good in the world of mind; and with a far higher affection too, than He loves what is fair and graceful and comely in the world of matter. He has a pleasure in beholding what may be styled a moral comeliness of character; and the office of His Spirit at this moment, is to evolve this beauteous exhibition out of the chaos of ruined and rebellious humanity. And to forward this process, it is not necessary that a man be stimulated to exertion by the motives of legalism. All that is necessary is, that man be submitted to the transforming operations of the divine Spirit; and that he shall willingly follow His impulses, at the will of that God who requires it of him. And must God, we ask, ere He can gratify His relish for the higher beauties of morality and of mind, first have to make a bargain about it with His creatures? Is not His creative hand as free to follow the impulses of His taste for the beauties of moral, as for the beauties of material landscape? Out of the corporeal

chaos did He, in obedience to His love of order and gracefulness in our visible world, educe all that symmetry and splendour and perfect organization by which we are surrounded, and rejoices over them. This was His will of matter, even its harmonization. And in like manner does He now operate on a spiritual chaos; and out of the malice and impurity and rebellious deviation from God, and all the jarring influences by which it is agitated and deformed, does He educe love and peace and beauteous accordancy with the perfect law of heaven. This is His will of mind, even its sanctification. He does not need to truckle or negotiate with us upon the subject, or to enter into any such legal understanding on the matter, as in fact to lay the burden of an impossibility on the whole process—for, in truth, man has forfeited every legal reward; and incurred every legal penalty—So that the whole of this economy must be set aside, and man be approached by some new power, and be plied with some new expedients, ere he can be restored to the holiness and the excellence in which he was created. Meanwhile it is the will of God that he should be restored; and just as He rejoiced at every step in that process, whereby the chaos of matter was evolved into a fair and orderly system—so does He rejoice in that process by which we grow unto the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus; and He looks with intent eye on the church that He is now forming out of the world and on every member of it—So that, released though you all be from the old legal enforcements of that commandment which is contained in ordinances, still is it the thing which His heart is set upon, and still do you testify your love to God and your desire to comply with His will, that you keep his commandments.

It is thus, and on this principle, that God wills you to be holy and just and good; but these are the very attributes which the text gives to the law, or to the commandment—so that though the old relationship between you and the law is dissolved, still it is this very law with the requirements of which you are to busy yourselves, during the whole of your abode in the world; and with the graces and accomplishments of which you must appear invested before Christ at the judgment-seat. It was written first on tables of stone, and the process was then that you should fulfil its requisitions as your task, and be paid with heaven as a reward. It is now written by the Holy Ghost on the tablets of your heart; and the process is now that you are made to delight in the law after the inward man—and when released, as you will be by

death, from the corruptions of the outward man, heaven will be open for your admission as the only place that is fitted to harbour and to regale you. You know of gold that it has two functions. With gold you may purchase a privilege, or with gold you may adorn your person. You may not be able to purchase the king's favour with gold; but he may grant you his favour, and when he requires your appearance before him, it is still in gold he may require you to be invested. And thus of the law. It is not by your own righteous conformity thereto that you purchase God's favour; for

this has been already purchased by the pure gold of the Saviour's righteousness, and is presented to all who believe on Him. But still it is with your own personal righteousness, that you must be gilded and adorned. It is not the price wherewith you have bought heaven, but it is the attire in which you must enter it; and thus do we answer the question, why it is that the law is still kept up in authority and importance, and obedience to it is as strenuously required, and a conformity of character to it is held as indispensable, under the new dispensation as under the old one.

LECTURE XLI.

ROMANS vii, 14—25.

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 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. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

ERE I enter into detail upon these verses, let me come forth with a preliminary argument upon that which appears to be the subject of them.

There is one thing which the common experience of all, whether they be in the faith of the gospel or not, must have made perfectly familiar to them; and that is the exceeding difference which they have often felt, between the whole tone and temper of their mind at one time from what it is at another time. There are many of you who can recollect, that in church, and when under the influence of a powerful demonstration from the pulpit—you caught something like the elevation and purity of heaven upon your souls; and that then when you passed into another atmosphere, whether at home in the midst of your family, or abroad among the collisions of society and business, the whole of this ethereal temperament went into utter dissipation; and you became a peevish and sensual and earthly creature. Some of you may have marked it well how differently it fares with you in the hour of your devotional retirement, and in the season of your exposure to the manifold urgencies of the world—how the heart seems to have passed as entirely into another mood by the transition, as if it had been transformed into another heart altogether—that in the one state you can

rise on the wings of divine contemplation, and breathe of the air of the upper sanctuary; and in the other you sink down to the common-place of tame and ordinary life, and become as other men. We think that this may have been the finding of many who are not, in the spiritual and substantial sense of the term, Christians at all; but who in the mere fervency of natural emotion, can be put into something like a glow of sacredness, whether by a certain power of sympathy with the preacher, or in the musings and meditative exercises of their own solitude. It will not surprise them when they are told of two principles in our moral constitution—which, by the ascendancy of the one or the other of them for the time being, may cause the same man to appear in two characters that are not only different but are in total and diametric opposition. Of this their own piety, meagre and capricious and merely sentimental though it be, may have given them a very strong experimental illustration: And so have convinced them how possible it is, that, in one and the same individual of our species, there may be one set of tendencies, which if followed out, would liken him to the seraph who revels among the choirs and extacies of Paradise; and also another set of tendencies, which, if followed out, would liken him to the

veriest grub-worm that moils for lucre upon earth, or finds all his satisfaction in the basest and most sordid gratifications.

But we further conceive that the same thing may be rendered palpable to those, who are so far alienated in worldliness, as to be totally unobservant of piety—whether in its private or in its public observations; and who, apart from every experience of their own frame either at church or in the closet, may still have been sensible to other exhibitions of themselves, which might reconcile them to the doctrine which we shall forthwith labour to establish. Even they have often been admitted to such a view of human nature upon their own personal character and history, as might prove how strangely compounded it is of diverse and opposite inclinations. So extensive in our day is the class of novel-readers,—that we may have the chance of bearing home upon not a few who are here present, when we appeal to a very common experience among those who are most enamoured of this species of literature—how readily their hearts have conformed, to all that was bright or beautiful in the moral scenery of fiction—how they could kindle into its heroism; and melt into its tenderness; and weep with very delight over its representations of worth, or generosity, or devoted attachment; and appear for a season, and while under the power of that master-hand which pictures out virtue with such force and exquisiteness, to be assimilated themselves to that which they so vehemently admire. And yet all goeth to flight, when again ushered as before into the scenes of familiar existence; and the mind of the reader is speedily vulgarized again, to the level of all that is tame and ordinary around it—Insomuch, that he, who, from one part of his nature, could rise to lofty enthusiasm while engaged in the contemplation of rare and romantic excellence—could, from another part of his nature, pass in less than half an hour to the very plainest characteristics of plain and every-day humanity; and either fret, or scold, or laugh, or give full indulgence to every one of those very ordinary passions, which come out of the feelings and the fellowship of very ordinary men.

There is one principle of our constitution, that tends as it were to sublime the heart up to the poetry of human life; and there is another principle, that, operating as a drag, weighs the heart as if helplessly down to the prose of it. There is not a man who mixes literature with business, as many do who are now before me, that might not be conscious in themselves of two warring elements, which, if they were to change places, so that the one which

went to be the superior shall become the subject—it would make a new creature of him. There are two rival appetites, in being at least, though only one may so domineer as to have all the power and practical ascendancy over the character. But in point of fact, were the other to rebel and to rise into a gathering strength, that should dethrone the old tyrant and establish its own supremacy—then would the spirit of the mind undergo an entire renovation; and the phrase of his ‘being born again’ were not too strong a one, to express the transition of heart and of habit that should take effect upon him. But meanwhile it will suffice that you be aware of certain moving forces, that do exist at the same time in your moral economy; and which act in directions that are contradictory the one to the other—and according to the prevalence of which it is, that you may appear either in one light to the eye of an observer, or in another that is altogether opposite.

We have heard of a great lady proprietor in one of our slave plantations, who never could read a fictitious tale of suffering but with tenderness and tears—yet could enforce the severest punishments on her wretched and overdriven negroes; and could look unrelentingly on, while she beheld the rigid execution of them. This may be an extreme case; but it is no anomaly in the character of our species. It is but one of a kindred and very extensive class of phenomena; and which all go to prove such to be the nature of man, that while under one sort of influence he may be so operated upon as to exhibit all that is graceful in sensibility, he, under another sort of influence, may be so operated upon as to act the monster of savage cruelty among the ill-fated victims who are under him. The individual of whom we have now reported to you, might, of all others, have been well prepared to admit the truth of that doctrine, by which it is affirmed, that, under a certain influence, the current of right feeling may flow smoothly and spontaneously through the heart; while, if that influence be withdrawn and the heart be abandoned in consequence to itself, it may evince, by the abundant product of its own natural atrocities, how deceitful it is above all things and how desperately wicked.

A very conspicuous instance of the same thing is the susceptibility of the heart to the power of music. You have seen how the song that breathed through every line of it the ardour of disinterested friendship, and a generous contempt of all selfishness—you have seen how it blended into one tide of emotion, the approving sympathies of a whole circle of companionship. One would think, on looking along

this festive board, that, with the harmony of sounds, there was a harmony of kindness and confidence and mutual goodwill in every bosom; and that each, awakened as it were to a fresh moral existence, had been suddenly formed as by enchantment, into one devoted phalanx of sworn and trusty brotherhood. It is hard to imagine that on the morrow, the competitions and the concealments and the jealousies of rival interest will be as busily active as before; and will obliterate every trace of the present enthusiasm. And yet there is in it no hypocrisy whatever. It is not a thing put on of artifice; but a *thing* that genuinely and honestly hath come, out of the living excitement that is now in operation. The heart is actually attuned to the very cordiality which the music has inspired; and while the notes still vibrate on the ear, the play of high and honourable feelings is upheld in the bosom—till the last echoes have died away from the remembrance, and the man again lapses into the same cold and creeping and selfish creature that he ever was.

But the finest recorded example of this fascination, is that of the harp of David on the dark and turbulent spirit of Saul—nor was there ever a more striking exhibition of the power of melody, than when the native outrageousness of this monarch's temper was thereby overborne. During the performance of the son of Jesse, all the internal fires and furies by which his bosom was agitated, seem to have been lulled into peacefulness. The tyrant was disarmed; and, as if the cunningly played instrument had conveyed of its own sweetness into his heart, he became meek and manageable as a child. We are glad that out of Scripture history, we can draw such a case of illustration; and we now proceed to unfold the uses of it, in the argument that lies before us.

First then, it is said of Saul that he was refreshed and became well, under the operation of this music. In which case, it was his duty to recur to it in every hour of necessity—to call in the harp, on the very first approaches of the threatening visitation upon his spirit; and if he could not, in the native gentleness of his own heart, maintain a serenity of feeling and conduct to all around him, it was his business ever and anon to ply that artificial expedient, by which alone it seems that the perennial kindness and tranquillity of his feelings could at all be upholden.

And secondly, you may further conceive of Saul that he succeeded in this great moral achievement upon his own spirit—that, on the strength of the foreign application ever at hand and never neg-

lected by him, he actually won the conquest over the rebellious tendencies of his inner man, and steadily maintained it; and, as the effect of this habitual recurrence to the soothing air by which all the tumults of his soul were pacified, that there was benevolence in every look, and such a placid softening of tone and manner, as made all his domestics happy and him beloved by them all.

Now, thirdly, I would have you all to consider how Saul should have felt as well as acted, under the consciousness of what he natively and originally was. He in very deed, and because of the power that lay in the musical instrument, may have both imported into his own heart all the feelings, and diffused among those around him all the fruits of that benignity which had thus been awakened. But although he should in this way perpetuate the mastery of a good and gracious principle in his soul—should he not still have been base in his own eyes, when he bethought him of the quarter from which it behoved to come!—that, to sustain his moral being, he had to live on supplies from abroad, because in himself there was the foul spirit of a maniac and a murderer; and it would have become this very monarch, even at the time when he most felt the play of kindness in his own heart, and he most brightened the hearts of others by the courtesy and the condescension that he shed over them—even then, was it most his part, to mourn the delinquencies of his inner man; and to loathe the savage propensities which fain would tumultuate there, in dust and in ashes.

But lastly, do you not perceive, that, in this state of matters, there were really no mystery at all, though the actual serenity of Saul's temper and his own self-abhorrence because of its native fierceness and asperity had kept pace the one with the other; and that in the very proportion of that fearfulness and aversion wherewith he looked to himself, because of his inherent vices, would he become fruitful in all the virtues that were opposed to them? It were just the humility of his downward regards upon his own soul, that would be the instrument of raising it to the highest perfection of which it was capable; and because he had no trust in the unborrowed energies within, that he would fetch aliment from without, for the preservation and the growth of all those moralities whereof he was most destitute. The harp would be his perpetual companion, or never beyond the reach of his calling for it. That sense of depravity, which prompted the self-abasement of his spirit, would prompt an increasing recurrence to that by which its outbreaks were repressed; and so the more intense his

detestation of his own character, would be the vigour and the efficacy of that alone practical expedient, by which his character was converted and transformed.

And thus, in all its parts, does it hold of a Christian. He knows that in his own proper nature dwelleth no good thing. He is aware of his native ungodliness; and the experience of every day brings fresh and more humiliating discoveries of it to his conscience. He feels that in himself he is like Saul without the harp—not perhaps so violent and vindictive as he was among his fellows; but sharing with the whole human race in the virulence of their antipathies against a God of holiness. The streams of his disobedience may not be of the same tinge and impregnation as that of the Hebrew king; but they emanate like his from a temple of idolatry in the heart, that would constantly issue forth of its own produce on the outward history. The Christian feels that in that part of his constitution which is properly and inherently his own, there is a deeply-seated corruption, the sense of which never fails to abash and to humble him; and thus, Christian though he be, he never ceases to exclaim—‘Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this law of sin, from this abiding and impetuous tendency to evil?’

What then, it may be asked, is it, which serves to mark him as a Christian? Not most assuredly that he is free of a carnal nature, tainted all over with foulest leprosy—but that he has access to an influence without, by which a healing virtue is mingled with it, and all its rebellious tendencies are thereby overborne. The only distinction between the disciple and the unbeliever is, that the one uses the harp, and the other has neither faith in its efficacy nor desire for the effect of its operation. The Christian hath learned whither to flee in every hour of temptation; and thus it is that a purifying influence descends upon his soul. It cometh not through the medium of the ear, and upon the vehicle of sounds; but it cometh through the medium of the understanding, and upon the vehicle of thoughts. It is not by calling the music that he loves into his presence; but by calling the truth that he believes into his memory—it is thus that he harmonises the else disorderly affections of his heart; and while he feels that all within is corruption, he at the same time knows of an agency without by which the mutiny of its sinful appetites is staid.

There was a personal agent called in by Saul, when he had to be calmed out of his wild perturbations—even the son of Jesse; and this he did by evolving a certain harmony of sounds on the ear of the

Jewish monarch. And so He is a living and a personal agent, who overrules the sinful and the wayward propensities of a believer's heart; but this He does by evolving certain truths on the believer's understanding. In the former case, the power to soothe lay materially and directly in the music—though, to bring it into contact with the organ of hearing, there needed one to perform it. In the latter case, the power to sanctify lies materially and directly in the doctrine—though, to bring it into contact with the organ of mental perception, there needeth one to present it—even the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to bring all things to our remembrance. And so, my brethren, when assailed by temptation from without, or like to be overborne by the tyranny of your own evil inclinations, is it your part to summon gospel truth into the presence of your mind; and, depending on the Holy Ghost, to go forth and meet His manifestations, as He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto your soul; and, precious fruit of your believing meditation on the realities of our most holy faith, will you be sure to find, as you look forward with hope to that mercy which is unto eternal life, that the heart will be purified thereby. It will be kept in the love of God; and this will attune it out of all discord and disorder. But never, throughout the whole of this process, will it be led to count on the worth or the power of its own internal energies. The sense of its depravity will ever be present to the conscience; and hanging on an influence that is foreign to itself, will it feel as helplessly dependent on a medicine from without, as did Saul when he summoned to his apartment that melody which charmed all the heat and vindictiveness of his spirit away from him. It is thus that the believer while he looks upon himself as nothing, or rather loathes himself as a diseased sinner, is ever labouring to medicate his soul from those springs of moral and spiritual health which are without him and above him—looking to that outward mercy which has been provided for his worthlessness, and praying for that refreshment and revelation by the Holy Ghost which are so richly provided for all who ask in faith.

We think that there must be many here present, who might be made to recognise, and we trust some who have actually proved in their own persons, the efficacy of this expedient—how the truths of the gospel can attemper the soul into a unison with its spirit—And more especially in that one truth which is the first that the apostle bids us keep at all times in our memory, even that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures—how in

this precious saying, when reckoned upon as faithful and regarded as worthy of all acceptance, there is a power to still and overawe the heart out of its rebellious tendencies—So that when a trusted Saviour is present to the thoughts, the sin of our nature is by a moral necessity disarmed of its practical ascendancy over us. We trust that with some who hear us, it has been found to hold experimentally—how a sense of the mercy of God in Christ annihilates the whole space of separation that there was between God and the soul, and so dissipates all its ungodliness—how walking before Him in the light and peace of conscious forgiveness, the spirit of bondage has fled away, and there have come in its place the love and the trust and the joy of reconciled children—how whenever he bethinks him of God having passed over the magnitude of his own provocations, he finds that achievement easy, which to nature is difficult, of maintaining the gentleness of his spirit under the sorest provocations of his fellow-men—how in dwelling on the agony of that endurance that was laid upon Christ for sinners, he too can learn to suffer and to grow in all those graces which are best taught in the school of tribulation—how it is when beholding the cross of our atonement, that he is most solemnized into a reverence for the sacredness of the Godhead, and is most awed into a fearfulness of the sin that was expiated there—Above all, when he looks onward to the glories of that inheritance which Christ hath purchased by His blood, and the gates of which He has unbarred for the welcome access of the guiltiest of us all—how it is that the powers of the coming world win the mastery in his spirit, over the powers of the present one; that he sits loose to the vanities and the interests of a scene which passeth speedily away; and, now feeling eternity to be his destined home and the virtues of eternity to be his incumbent preparation, he holds a perpetual warfare with those passions that war against the soul, and bears on every footstep of his pilgrimage on earth the impress of that heaven for which he hopes and of that holiness to which he is aspiring.

We would conclude these preliminary remarks with three distinct observations.

And *first*, it is hoped that some of you may be led to perceive from them—how it is, that, by means of a power external to the mind of man yet brought from without to bear upon it, he may be so transformed as to become a new creature. If the eloquence of a Christian minister can for a time lift the soul, as it were, above itself—or if a pleasing and pathetic novelist can transport the imagination of his

reader, and so assort his feelings to them as that, while the allusion lasts, he shall be refined and removed above the level of our ordinary world—or if poetry can bear him upward to a purer moral element, than he can breathe among his fellow-mortals—or, lastly, if music, that so charmed the spirit of the Hebrew king out of all its ferocity, is still found, so long as it plays upon the ear, to attune the heart to nobler and better feelings than those by which it is habitually occupied—Shall we wonder, that, upon faith realising the promises and the prospects of the gospel, the heart shall be translated into a new state, when thus visited as it were by the sense and the impression of its new circumstances? What music can be sweeter to the soul, than when peace is whispered to it from on high; or what lovelier vision can be offered to its contemplation, than that of heaven's Lord and of heaven's family; or what more fitted to lay the coarse and boisterous agitations of a present world, than the light which has pierced across the grave and revealed the peaceful world that is beyond it? Simply grant that the veil has been lifted from the eyes of guilty man; and that he now sees what he never wont to see—the love of God in Christ Jesus, and the remission of sins, and an open path to the bliss of eternity, and the glories of a purchased inheritance there, and here all the graces of our required preparation—let him see that these, which before stood at an impracticable distance, are now brought nigh unto him and have become all his own—Is it at all to be marvelled at—when the romance of music and eloquence and imagination and poetry, addressed to the heart of man, can so subliminate its affections for a period above all the passions and vulgarities of familiar life—with this fact of the human constitution so plainly before our eyes—are we to listen with incredulity, if told, that when the truths of Christianity burst forth upon the believer in all the magnificence of their lofty bearing and in all the might of their now apprehended reality, they so refine his every affection and so elevate the whole tone of his character, that all old things are henceforth done away and all things become new?

Now, *secondly*, it is the office of God's Spirit thus to picture forth to the eye of the believer these truths of the gospel, in all the reality and power of application which belong to them. It is He who takes of the things of Christ; and, showing them unto the soul, causes the imagery of faith to overbear the impressions of sight. And the man who is thus acted upon, looketh beyond what is seen and temporal to what is unseen and eternal. It is from a source

which is out of himself, that he fetches an influence which never fails to soothe and to sanctify the corrupt and distempered spirit; and, as it was the duty of Saul on the threatening of every dark visitation to require the music of that harp which he could at all times summon by the word of command into his presence, so it is the duty of every sinner in every time of need or of temptation, to invoke that Spirit, who never is withheld from the prayers of those who sincerely ask Him. When like to be assailed by the power of sin to an overthrow, this is the instrument of aid and of defence that will never fail you; and let the storms whether of the furious or of the wayward passions of our nature be what they may, this is the agent, at the bidding of whose still but omnipotent voice, an influence of peace and purity descendeth upon the heart, and it becometh a great calm.

But *lastly*, the way in which all this bears upon the passage before us, is by helping us to the determination of a controversy—whether the soliloquy whereof it consists, be that of Paul in his own proper person, or of Paul in the person of an unconverted man? How, it may be thought, could this holy apostle take to himself, the blame of so much vileness and exceeding turpitude, as are made to characterize him who is supposed to utter this effusion? How could it be said of him who fought the good fight, that he was sold under sin; and that there dwelt no good thing in his flesh; and that there was a law in him, which would have led him in captivity to the law of sin and of death; and that, wretched under a mass of corruption from which he could not deliver himself, he had to cry out, under the extremity of anxious helplessness, lest it should have wholly overwhelmed him? Can all this be true of the man, in whom Christianity beheld the very noblest of her specimens; who ere he died could claim the victory as his own; and who, to obtain it, was throughout the whole of his discipleship the most unwearied in vigilance and the most strenuous in warfare?

Yes, there was a fight and it turned out to be ultimately a successful one. But who were the parties in it? They were the grace of God on the one hand, and on

the other the inherent corruption of man; and the very reason why Paul plied so laboriously and at length prevailed with the former, was because he felt such loathing and such self-abomination for the latter. This is a mystery of the Christian life which the world apprehendeth not; nor are they able to discern why the same individual should become every day more profound in humility, and yet more graceful in positive holiness—why he should be ever mourning more heavily than before under a sense of his worthlessness, and that at the very time when the real worth of his character is maturing and building up unto eternity.

It is not understood, how the strugglings of the inner man bring every Christian who feels them into a more familiar acquaintance than before with the adverse elements in the conflict; and that as the spirit lusteth against the flesh and the flesh against the spirit, just in proportion to the felt preciousness of the one, is the felt burden and odiousness of the other. It is because he loathes so much the earthliness of what is naturally and originally his own, that he longs so much for the visitation of a heavenly influence from above. The sense of poverty is the very impulse that sends him to the fountain of abundance; and the detestation he feels of the sin that dwells in him, is the best guarantee that this sin shall not have the dominion over him. With these principles do we feel ourselves prepared for entering into more full elucidation of the passage before us; nor will you, I trust, be any more perplexed when you read of him who delighted in the law of God after that was evil, and who had the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him—how at the same time he mourned his vile body, and groaned being burdened under a sense of that sore moral leprosy by which it was pervaded. He had no confidence in himself; but he rejoiced in the Lord Jesus. He was in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling; but when he was weak then was he strong—for when he spake of his infirmities, the power of Christ was made to rest upon him. “I will make my grace sufficient for thee. I will perfect my strength in thy weakness.”

LECTURE XLII.

ROMANS vii, 14, 15.

“For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that I do.”

THE first thing to be remarked here, is the transition which the apostle makes at this verse into another tense. It looks as if from the 7th verse to the 14th, he, using the past tense, was describing the state of matters antecedent to his conversion, and showing what his case was under the law; but that now, sliding into the use of the present tense, he is describing his experience as a believer: And this is one argument for Paul speaking here in his own person, and not in that of an unregenerate man.

‘The law is spiritual.’ It has authority over the desires of the inner man. It holds a sinful wish to be criminal, as well as a sinful performance. It finds matter for condemnation in the state of the will, as well as in the deeds of the outward history. It demands punishment, for example, not merely on the action by which I wrest another’s property; but on the affection by which I covet it. Paul once thought himself free of all offences, in regard to a neighbour’s rights, because he had never put forth the hand of violence, or plied any device of fraudulency against them. But when he looked to the spiritual nature of the commandment, in that it interdicted him even from the longings of a secret appetite for that which was not rightfully his own—then, conscious that with all the abstinence of his outer man from the acts of dishonesty there was still a secret propensity in his heart towards the gains or the fruits, he felt himself, when standing at the bar of this purer and loftier jurisprudence, to be indeed a transgressor. And so, in the general, there may be no disobedience on the part of the outer man to any of God’s commandments; and yet there may be, all the while, an utter distaste for them on the part of the inner man—and this is what the law takes cognizance of, in virtue of its spiritual character, and pronounces to be sinful. To do what is bidden with the hand, is not enough to satisfy such a law—if the struggling inclination of the heart be against it. And above all will it charge the deepest guilt on a man—because of his disaffection towards God—because of a love for the creature, that has deposed from its rightful ascendancy over him the love of the Creator—because of that moral anarchy and misrule in the constitution of his spirit, whereby, with its relish for the

gifts of Providence, it has a disrelish and disregard for the Giver of them; and because while it may yield many compliances with the law of God at the impulse of dread or of danger or of habit, it yields not to God Himself the offering of a spontaneous devotion, the tribute of an intelligent or of a willing reverence.

Perhaps my best recommendation to you, for the purpose of acquiring a more thorough discernment of God’s law in the spirituality of its character, is that you peruse with faithful application to your own heart the fifth chapter of Matthew—where, article by article, you have the comparison between a spiritual and what may be called a carnal commandment; and from which you will at once perceive, how possible it is, that, with a most rigid and undeviating faithfulness in regard to the latter, there may be an utter deficiency from the former in all its requirements—and how truly the same individual may say of himself, that, when in the flesh, he, touching the righteousness that is of the law, was blameless; and yet, when advanced and elevated above this state and now in the spirit, he may say, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the law of sin in my members! You see how, in proportion to his high sense of the law, he may have a low sense of himself; and that, just as one advances in the discernment of its purity and in the delicacy of his recoil at the slightest deviations therefrom, which surely mark his progressive sanctification—the more readily will he break forth into exclamations of shame and self-abhorrence: Or the loftier his positive ascent on the heights of sacredness, the more fearful will he be of all those drags and downward tendencies by which he still is encompassed; and which, if not felt to be most hazardous as well as most humbling, may not only cause to slip the footsteps of the heavenward traveller; but may precipitate him from the eminence that he has gotten, into the lowest depths of wretched and hopeless apostasy.

‘I am carnal’—It is on the principles just now uttered, that Paul may have made this affirmation of himself. The same man who could say of all the good that was done—“nevertheless not me but the grace of God that is in me”—Surely

this man, who thus knew what he should refer to God's grace and what he should refer to his own separate and unaided self, might, even after this grace had become the habitual visitant or inmate of his heart, still look to his own soul; and, conceiving of it as apart or disjoined from the fountain out of which he draws the supplies of its nourishment, might well say that 'I am carnal.' Suppose for a moment that the branch of a tree were endowed with a separate consciousness of its own—then, however lovely in blossom or richly-laden with fruit, it may feel of the whole efflorescence which adorns it, that it was both derived and is upholden, by the flow of a succulence from the stem; and it may know, that, if severed therefrom, it would forthwith wither into decay, and that all the goodly honours wherewith it was invested would drop away from it. The twofold consciousness of what it would be in itself, and of what it is in the tree, might force the very utterance that was emitted by a Christian disciple when he said, "I am dead nevertheless I live." "Yet not I" adds the apostle "but Christ liveth in me." I apart from Him without whom I can do nothing—I disjoined from the Saviour who compares Himself to a tree and us to the branches—I who in Christ am a new creature—out of Christ am dead and out of Him am carnal.

The Scripture phrase "to be in the flesh" when descriptive of character is applied in sacred writ only to the unregenerate. "They who are in the flesh cannot please God." "You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." But the Scripture term carnal is sometimes applied to a man after his conversion. A man when newly born again is a babe; yet to such did Paul apply this epithet, "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. For ye are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?" Only think of a Christian as made up of two ingredients, the one consisting of all that he inherits by nature, the other consisting of all that is superinduced on him by grace. Think of his inward and experimental life as consisting of a struggle between these ingredients, in which the one does habitually and will at length ultimately and completely prevail. But the wrong principle belonging properly and primitively to the man himself, and the right principle being derived from without through the channel of believing prayer, or the exercise of faith in Christ Jesus—how natural is it in these circumstances, for every

Christian to regard the one as the home article, and the other as a foreign article for which he stands indebted to a fountain that is abroad—and wherunto it is his business to resort perpetually. He is like Saul operated upon by the harp of the son of Jesse; and as the one might well have said, even in the kindest and gentlest mood to which the warblings of the instrument had brought him, that in myself I am a firebrand of rage and vindictiveness—so the other, conscious that disjoined from the grace and truth which come by Jesus Christ he is an ungodly and an unheavenly creature, might as well say that in myself I am an alienated rebel—in myself I am altogether carnal.

Let me separate by ever so little from Christ, then is this corrupt nature ever in readiness to put forth its propensities—Or even let me always abide in Him—let me in no one instance lose my hold of Him—conceive me to be placed on the very height of Christian perfection, and that just because I at all times am steadfastly and solidly established on the deepest basis of Christian dependence—Yet still with the assurance in my mind, that, should I let the dependence go, self would recover the ascendancy and that the ascendancy of self would be the ascendancy of sin, it is not too strong an inference that self is carnal; or even that self is sold under sin, as being, apart from the Saviour, its helpless and irrecoverable slave. It is said of Ahab that there was none like unto him; for he did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord. In him you have a character, where corruption was the dominant and the entire and the unresisted principle of his constitution. He was the old man all over—who loved his state of captivity, instead of lamenting it; and of whom it never could be said, that he felt the sin of his nature to be a burden, or that he longed to be delivered from it, or that he delighted in the law of God after the inner man, and sighed after the subjugation or rather the extirpation of every tumultuous and adverse element of evil that was in his outer man. His mind went wholly along with the wicked and wayward inclinations that nature had given him; and here lay the difference between him and Paul, that, with the latter, there was gotten up a new creature all whose energies and desires were in a state of warfare with those of the old man; and in this passage we have the cries and the agonies of the battle, till it closes with the final shout of victory, "I thank God through Jesus my Lord." Still, viewing the old man as properly his own, and the new creature as a present or a production from above—well might the

apostle say, not in the character of what he was by derivation from the Lord his sanctifier, but in the character of what he originally and essentially was in himself, that I am carnal and I am sold under sin.

V. 15. To understand this verse, and to see that it is the utterance not of a wilful sinner but of an honest and aspiring disciple—remember that it is the soliloquy of one, who had just recognised the spiritual character of the law of God, and who was exercising and judging and confessing himself according to the standard of that law. There is at least one moral property, that must, in the midst of all his recorded deficiencies, be ascribed to him. He willed the conformity of himself to God's holy commandment. The prescription that lies upon him and upon all is "be ye perfect" and if perfection was not his achievement, it was at least his aim. His prevailing wish was to be altogether as he ought; and if he did not succeed in being so—he at least aspired at being so. The habitual longing of his heart was, without reserve and without hypocrisy, towards the law of God. There was a pure and a lofty ambition which actuated his soul; and the object of that ambition was that he might serve God without a flaw, and reach an unspotted holiness. He may have been thwarted in the ambition—he may have been so crossed and impeded in his movements as to have come greatly short of it—yet still the ambition did exist, and evinced at once its strength and its perpetuity, both by the bitterness wherewith he mourned over his own failures, and by the fresh and repeated efforts wherewith he laboured to redeem them. In a word there was one principle of this man's constitution, that was all active and awake on the side of holiness—that bore a genuine love to virtue, and made constant efforts to realize it—that could not rest while its own portrait was one of unfinished excellence; and just like the accomplished artist, in proportion to his nice and delicate sense of beauty, were his grief and his intolerance at the blemishes wherewith his performance was stained. It is he who sets before him the loftiest standard of worth, and who is most jealous and unremitting in the pains that he takes to equalize it—it is he who most droops and is dejected under a sense of his deficiency therefrom. It is from him that we may look for most frequent humblings of spirit, and for the deepest visitations upon his heart of a sense of sin and shortcoming; and that, not because he is beneath other men in his powers of execution, but because he is beyond them in his powers of conception, and in the largeness of his desires

after the supremacy of all grace and all goodness.

That the soliloquist of the passage had this generous and aspiring tendency is evident. If faults he had, he had no toleration for them; but rather the fellest antipathy—"that which I do I allow not,—what I hate that do I." If he fell short of moral and spiritual greatness, still he honestly aspired and habitually pressed towards it. "What I would that I do not," and "to will is present with me," and "I would do good," and that good is the law which has the consent of my approbation, and "in this law I delight after the inward man"—so that "with my mind I serve it." Now could you apply any one of these affirmations to such a man as Ahab? If they hold true of one character and do not hold true of another, is there not the utmost of a real and practical difference between the characters? Could Ahab have said that it is no more I who do it but sin that dwelleth in me? Does it not impress you with a most wide and palpable distinction, when you see one man solacing himself in full complacency with a sinful indulgence, and another man struggling with all his might against the sinful tendency which leads to it? The former comes willingly under the power of sin in his constitution—the other detests and mourns over the presence of it there. They are alike in both of them having a corrupt nature. They are unlike in that one has been furnished with a new and holy nature, which does not immediately extinguish the former, but takes place beside it until death, and bears a principle of unsparing and unquenchable hostility towards it. A man conscious to himself of this state of composition, takes the side of his new nature, and can say of the rebellious movements of the old man, "it is not I who do them but sin that dwelleth in me." Ahab could not have said so, but Paul could. In the former, sin and self were on terms of perfect agreement—so that his heart was fully set in him to do that which was evil. In the latter, the original self was set aside, and kept under, and loathed because of its abominations, and striven against as the worst of enemies, and loaded with epithets of abuse, and charged with the designs and the dispositions of perpetual mischief. And so, throughout the whole of this soliloquy, is it reproached with being carnal and sold under sin, with doing that which is unallowable and undesirable and evil and hateful—with omitting to do what is good, and being without the skill and the power to perform it—with being utterly destitute of any good thing—with keeping up its execrated residence, even in the bosom of the Christian who loathed it; and, ever

present there, warring against the suggestions of a better principle; and bent on taking captive the whole man to the law of that sin which was in his members—So as that the flesh was wholly enlisted on the side of this hateful service; and such a conflict upheld among the belligerent powers and principles that were in a believer's frame, as burdened him with a sense of wretchedness, and made him cry out for deliverance therefrom.

Take this along with you, and you will be able to appreciate what the confessions are that Paul makes of his own sinfulness. He first mourns over the guilt of his omissions, "what I would that I do not"—"how to perform that which is good I find not"—"the good that I would I do not." Ere you estimate the flagrancy of his omissions, think of this, that they consist in having fallen short of his desires—not that his work fell short of that of other men, but that it fell greatly short of his own willingness—not that he neglected any one duty which could obtain for him credit in society, but that he failed in bringing his graces and his exercises up to the balance of the sanctuary. That he should in any one instance through the day, have lost the frame of his affectionate dependence towards God, or have let a sense of his obligations to Christ depart from his mind, or have slackened his diligence in the way of labouring for the souls of his fellow-creatures, or have cooled in his charity towards those who were around him, or have failed in any acts and expressions of courteousness—these were enough most tenderly to affect such a heart of moral tenderness as he had, and to prompt every confession and every utterance of shame or humiliation or remorse that is here recorded. What some might mistake as the evidence of a spiritual decline on the part of the apostle, was in fact the evidence of his growth. It is the effusion of a more quick and cultured sensibility than fell to the lot of ordinary men; and like the mortification of him, who, because the most consummate of all artists, is therefore the most feelingly alive to every deformity and every deviation. The inference were altogether erroneous, that because Paul went beyond other men in his confessions, he therefore went beyond them in his crimes. The point in which he went beyond them was, not in crime, but in conscience; and the conclusion is—not that he who uttered these things was a reprobate, against whom the world could allege some monstrous or unnatural defect from any of the social or relative proprieties of life—but that, on the other hand, he was a busy and earnest and

progressive disciple of the Lord Jesus, urged on by a sense of his distance from the perfection that lay before him, and charging his own heart with a wide and woful defect from the sanctities that it felt to be due to his God.

And the same holds true in regard to his confessions of positive sinfulness. "What I hate that I do." "I do that which I would not." "The evil which I would not that I do"—Not that any doings of his were such as would be hateful to him of an ordinary conscience, not that the world could detect in them a flaw of odiousness. It was at the tribunal of his own conscience, that they were deemed to be reprehensible. It was in the eye of one now enlightened in the law of God and made alive to it, that the sins of his own heart bore upon them an aspect of such exceeding sinfulness. It was because of that quicker sensibility that he now had, as he moved forward in his spiritual education, that he now felt more of tenderness and alarm, about the secret workings of pride and selfishness and anger and carnality in his inner man; and such an effusion as that before us, which has been so strangely ascribed to a personified out-cast from all grace and from all godliness, is one that only could have proceeded from the mouth of an experienced Christian, and is the best evidence of his progress. No unchristianised man could have felt that delight in God's law, and that love for its precepts, and that active zeal on the side of obedience, which are all profest in the soliloquy that is now under consideration; and they would insure, as they do with every Christian, a real and habitual progress in the virtues and accomplishments of the new creature. But just in proportion as the desire after spiritual excellence is nourished into greater force and intensity in the one department of his now complex nature—so must be the detestation that is felt for every degree or remainder of evil, that exists in the other department of it. And not till the union of the two is terminated by death—not till that tabernacle is broken up, which festers throughout with the moral virus, that entered at the sin of our first parent, and was transmitted to all his posterity—not till these bodies have mouldered in the grave, and are raised anew in incorruption and in honour—not till then shall the desire and the doing, the principle and the performance be fully adequate the one unto the other; and then, emancipated from the drag and the oppression that here encumber us, we shall be translated into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

LECTURE XLIII.

ROMANS vii, 16, 17.

"If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

It might save a world of illustration in the business of interpreting this passage, were we sure of addressing ourselves to the experience of all our hearers. But we fear of some of you, that you have no internal conflict in the work of your sanctification at all—that you are under the dominion of but one ruler, even of self, that ever lends a willing ear, and yields a ready obedience to its own humours and appetites and interests; and that, living just as you list, you feel no struggle between your principles and your propensities—even because you live without God in the world. And furthermore we fear of others of you, that you have taken up your rest among the forms of an external religion, or among the terms of an inert orthodoxy, which play around the ear, without having reached a practical impulse to the heart; and which lead you to solace yourselves with the privileges of an imaginary belief, instead of landing you in the prosecution of a real and ever-doing business—which is to cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and to perfect your holiness in the fear of God. It is only the man who has embarked upon this work in good earnest—it is only he whose conscience will thoroughly respond to the narrative which the apostle here gives, of the broils and the tumults that take place among the adverse powers which are in the bosom of every true Christian. For Christian though he be, he is not yet a just man made perfect; but a just man fighting his way onward unto perfection, through the downward tendencies of a corruption that is present with him, and cleaves to him even till death shall set him free. And again, a fallen and depraved mortal though he be, he is not now of the wholly carnal and corrupt nature that he once was; but a spirit has been infused into him, wherewith to make head against his rebellious affections which still continue to solicit, though not permitted to seduce him, to that degrading slavery, against which he has now entered into a war of resistance, that will at length conduct him to freedom and to victory. The passage now before us is taken up with the history of this war. It is a narrative of that battle which arises from the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh—a process

of unintelligible mystery, we doubt not, to those who have not personally shared in it; but coming intimately home to the experience of those, who have learned to strive and to run and to endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Yet, as we have said before, it were well if by any means we could give a plausible though distant conception to those who are without, of a matter wherewith every established and well-exercised Christian is quite familiar. It looks, I have no doubt, an apparent puzzle to the understandings of many, that a man should do what is wrong while he wills what is right; and, more especially, that he all the while should be honestly grieving because of the one, and as honestly aspiring and pressing forwards, nay making real practical advances, in the direction of the other. And yet you can surely figure to yourself the artist, who, whether in painting or in poetry or in music, labours, yet labours in vain, to do full justice to that model of high excellence which his imagination dwells upon. He does not the things that he would, and he does the things that he would not. There is a lofty standard to which he is constantly aspiring and even constantly approximating—yet along the whole of this path of genius, there is a perpetual sense of failure; and a humbling comparison of what has been already attained with what is yet seen in the distance before it; and a vivid acknowledgment of the great deficiency that there is between the execution of the hand, and those unreached creations of the fancy that are still floating in the head: And thus an agony and a disappointment and a self-reproval, because of indolence and carelessness and aversion to the fatigues of watchful and intense study—all mixed up you will observe with a towering ambition, nay with a rapid and successful march along this walk of scholarship. How often may it be said of him that he does the things which he would not, when one slovenly line or one careless touch of the pencil has escaped from him; and when he falls short of those pains and that sustained labour, by which he hopes to rear a work for immortality. Yet is he making steady and sensible advances all the while. This lofty esteem of all that is great and gigantic in art, is the very step in his

mind to a lowly estimation of all that he has yet done for it; and both these together are the urgent forces, by which he is carried upwards to a station among the men of renown and admirable genius who have gone before him. Now what is true of the scholarship of art, is just as true of the scholarship of religion. There is a model of unattained perfection in the eye of its faithful devotees, even the pure and right and absolutely beautiful and holy law of God; and this they constantly labour to realize in their lives, and so to build up, each in his own person, a befitting inhabitant for the realms of eternity. But while they love this law, they are loaded with a weight of indolence and carnality and earthly affections, which cumber their ascent thitherward; and just in proportion to the delight which they take in the contemplation of its heaven-born excellence, are the despondency and the shame wherewith they regard their own mean and meagre imitations of it. Yet who does not see, that, out of the believer's will pitching so high, and the believer's work lagging so miserably after it, there cometh that very activity which guides and guarantees his progress towards Zion—that therefore it is, that he is led to ply with greater diligence the armour which at length wins him the victory—that the babe in Christ is cradled, as it were, in the agitation of these warring elements—that his spiritual ambition is just the more whetted and fostered into strength, by the obstacles through which it has to fight its way—and rising from every fall with a fresh onset of help from the sanctuary, does he proceed from step to step, till he have finished the faith, till he have reached the prize of his high calling.

Paul, ere he was a Christian, was blameless in the whole righteousness of the law—so far as he then knew or then understood of its requirements. His conduct was up to the level of his conscience; and what he did was adequate to the sense that was in him of what he ought to do. But on his becoming a Christian, he got a spiritual insight of the holy law of God, and then began the warfare of the text—for then it was that his conscience outran his conduct; and that he could not overtake by his doings, what his now enlightened morality told him were his duties. There was nothing in this change actually to degrade the life and character of Paul; but there was much in it to degrade them in his own eyes. He formerly walked on what he felt to be an even platform of righteousness; but now the platform was as lifted above him, and he was left to toil his upward way on a steep ascent that had been raised for conducting him there-

to. Then all he did was as he would; and the work and the will were on terms of even fellowship with each other. But what he now did was as he would not; for he was aiming and stretching toward a height that he had not gained, and till he arrived at which he could not be satisfied. The view that he had now gotten of the law did not make him shorter of it than before; but it made him feel that he was shorter. He was still the same blameless and respectable man of society that he had ever been; nor do we think that even in his days of darkness, any deed of intemperance or profligacy or fraud could at all be imputed to him. The confessions which are recorded here, are not those of a degraded criminal; but those of a struggling and heavenly-minded Christian, who was now forcing his way among the sins and the sanctities of the inner man, and, far above the level of our ordinary world, was soaring amid the spiritual alternations of cloud and of sunshine up to the heights of angelic sacredness.

Figure then a man to be under the aspirings of such a will on the one hand, but these often deadened and brought down by the weight of a perverse constitutional bias upon the other; and there are a thousand ways in which he is exposed to the doing of that which he would not. Should he wander in prayer—should the crosses of this world ever cast him down from the buoyancy of his confidence in God—should he, on being overtaken with a fault, detect upon his spirit a keener edge of sensibility to the disgrace that he had incurred among his fellows upon earth, than to the rebuke that he has brought upon himself from the Law-giver in heaven—should the provocations of dishonesty, or the hostile devices of malicious and successful cunning, or the unexpected evolutions of ingratitude, or even the teasing and troublesome annoyances of interruption—should any of these temptations, wherewith society is constantly exercising its own members, ever transport him away from meekness and patience and charity and unwearied kindness—Then on that high walk of principle upon which he is labouring to uphold himself, will he have to mourn that he doeth the things which he would not; and ever as he proceeds, will he still find that there are conquests and achievements of greater difficulty in reserve for him. It argues a very exalted Christianity, when the glory of God is the habitual and paramount impulse, that gives movement to the footsteps of our history in the world. But, think you, that, when a man's heart comes to be visited by this ambition, that then it is he makes his escape from the complaint of doing what he would not? It only thick-

ens the contest, and multiplies the chances of mortification, and furnishes new topics of humility to the disciple—and in the very proportion too that he urges and ascends and strikes loftier aims along the course of his progressive holiness. And so it follows, that he who is highest in acquirement is sure to be deepest in lowly and contrite tenderness—for just as the desires of his spirit mount higher, will the damp and the deadness and the obstructions of the flesh be more felt as a grief and an encumbrance to him. So that while in the body, this soliloquy of the apostle will be all his own; and so far from conceiving of it as the appropriate utterance for a natural and unconverted man—it is just as we are the more saintly, that we shall feel our readiness to coalesce with it as the fittest vehicle of hearts smitten with the love of purest excellence, yet burdened under a sense of distance and deficiency therefrom. And thus it is, that the toil-worn veteran has been known to weep upon his death-bed; and to long for an escape from this sore conflict, between the elements of his compound nature; and to be in exceeding weariness for his emancipation from that vile body, which brings a soil and a taint and a tarnish upon all his offerings; and to feel how greatly better it were that he should be with Christ, and expatiate at large among those unclouded eminences where the spirits of the perfect dwell, and are admitted among the glories of that unspotted holiness which now is inaccessible. For here, the accursed nature is still present, and galling with its offensive solicitations the regenerated spirit—so that when weighed down by indolence; or frozen into apathy; or betrayed into uncharitable thoughts and uncharitable wishes; or led to seek the desires of its own selfishness more than God's honour, to rejoice in its exemption from punishment more than to aspire after its exemption from sin, to be more vehement for the object of being safe than for the object of being sanctified—The consciousness of these, which give no disturbance either to the unchristian man or to the Christian in his infancy, is still in reserve to humble and keep down even the most accomplished believer; to assure him still of the many things that he does which he would not; to keep him at the post of dependence, where he may join with the apostle in mourning over his own wretchedness, and with the psalmist in exclaiming "Who can understand his errors, cleanse thou me from secret faults: Search me O God and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

In the case of an unconverted man, the flesh is weak and the spirit is *not* willing; and so there is no conflict—nothing that can force those outcries of shame and remorse and bitter lamentation, that we have in the passage before us. With a Christian, the flesh is weak too but the spirit is willing; and under its influence there must from the necessary connection that there is between the human faculties, there must from the desires of his heart be such a plenteous efflux of doings upon his history, as shall make his life distinguishable in the world, and most distinguishable on the day of judgment, from the life of an unbeliever. But still his desires will outstrip his doings, and the will that he conceives shoot greatly ahead of the work that he performs—and thus, will he not only leave undone much of what he would, but, even in the language of our present verse, do many things that he would not. But I call you particularly to notice that the will must be there—that he is not regenerated at all unless the will, honestly and genuinely and without the hypocrisy of all mental reservation, be there. If he have any interest in Christ, any part in the promises or the influences of His new economy, the inclination which prompts to a resolute and unsparing warfare with all iniquity must be there. The man who uses the degeneracy of his nature as a plea for sinful indulgence—the man who makes a cloak of his corruption wherewith to shelter its deceits and deformities, instead of hating the spotted garment with his utmost soul and labouring to unwind himself from all its entanglements—the man who loves the play of orthodoxy in his head, and stickles for his own depravity as the most favourite of its articles, while he continues to cherish it in his heart or to roll it under his tongue as a sweet morsel—That man is going to the grave with a lie in his right hand; and the piercing eye of his Judge, who now discerns his latent worthlessness, will at length drag it forth to open day, and expose it to shame and to everlasting contempt. That the will be on the side of virtue is indispensable to Christian uprightness. Wanting this, you want the primary and essential element of regeneration—You are not born again—you shall not enter the kingdom of God

God knows how to distinguish the man of Christian uprightness, even amid all his imperfections, from another who, not very visibly dissimilar in outward history, is nevertheless destitute of an honest, habitual, and heart-felt desirousness after the doing of His will. Let me suppose two yoked and harnessed vehicles, both upon a road of ruggedness and difficulty, and where at last each was brought to a dead

stand. They are alike in the one palpable circumstance of making no progress; and, were this the only ground upon which a judgment could be formed, it might be concluded of the drivers that they were alike remiss, or of the animals under them that they were alike spiritless and indolent. And yet on a narrower comparison of the two, it may be observed from the loose traces of the one, that all exertion had been given up—while with the other there was the full tension of a resolute and sustained energy, pressing at the instant against the obstructions of the road, and perhaps with the perseverance of a few minutes carrying it over them. Both, for the time being, are stationary; and yet the one is as distinct as possible from the other, in respect of the push and the struggle to get forward, and the forth-putting of strenuous inclination on the part of all the living agents who are concerned. And so, my brethren, of the Christian course. It is not altogether by the sensible motion, nor yet altogether by the place of advancement at which you have arrived, that you are to estimate the genuineness of the Christian character. Man may not see all the springs and traces of this moral mechanism, but God sees them; and he knows whether all is slack and careless within you, or whether there be the full stretch of a single and honest determination on the side of obedience. Think not that He is in want of materials for judging and deciding upon this question. Think not that He, of whom it is said that He weigheth the spirits of all those whose ways are clean in their own eyes, and that He pondereth the hearts as well as the goings of His creatures, and that from His throne in heaven His eyes behold and His eye-lids try the children of men—think not that He will lose His discernment of the inward principle, amid all the drags and corruptions and obstacles wherewith a believer is encompassed upon his path. He knoweth how to separate the chaff from the wheat, and how to set His appropriate mark on the upright and on the hypocrite. You know in what direction you should move, even towards that which is good and away from that which is evil. God knows if you are intently and sincerely prosecuting this career; for under all the mistiness of the human understanding, nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, “the Lord knoweth them that are His—And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

And so, amid all the besetting infirmities of a nature tainted with evil, which Paul had as well as others, he had what unconverted sinners have not, a desire

and a conatus after all holy obedience. He consented unto the law that it was good, not assented but consented—did not simply approve of the things that are more excellent as the Jews with whom he reasoned, but had a liking to the things that are more excellent. His will was on the side of the law that he loved; and not on the side of that transgression which he hated, at the very time perhaps that he had been surprised into it. He consented unto the law that it was good, and his delight was in the law after the inward man, and with his mind he served the law of God. And God has a judging and a discerning eye upon all these tendencies. He knows most clearly the difference between him who has them, and him who has them not. There is a real and substantial distinction between the two characters, which is quite palpable to our heavenly Judge, and will guide Him to an unerring decision on the day of reckoning. If not so palpable to yourselves, it should just make you the more earnest in labouring to work out your assurance; and to watch against the deceitful and unknown hypocrisy, that may be lurking under the plausibilities of an orthodox profession; and to be altogether on the alert and on the alarm against all those treacherous inclinations, that, if not rooted out, must at least be most vigilantly guarded, and on every appearance which they do put forth must be vigorously overborne. The adherence of the mind must be to the law of God. The affectionate consent of the heart must be towards it. All the feelings and faculties of the inward man must be on the side of obedience; and if such be indeed our spiritual mechanism, we shall be impelled forward, through the many impediments of a perverse and wofully deranged nature, on the path of new obedience—rising, as the upright ever do, from the falls which they experience; and urging our laborious and oft-interrupted way to that land, where the soul that has holy desires shall meet with a body that has been delivered of its moral leprosy, we shall pass from strength to strength till we appear perfect before God in Zion.

V. 17. There is a peculiarity here that is worth adverting to. St. Paul, throughout the whole of this passage, utters the consciousness that is in him, of the two opposite principles which resided and which rivalled, the one with the other, for dominion over his now compound because now regenerated nature. And it is remarkable how he sometimes identifies himself with the first of these ingredients, and sometimes with the second of them. In speaking of the movements of the flesh, he sometimes says that it is I who put

forth these movements. "I am carnal and sold under sin." "I do that which I hate." "I do that which I would not." "In me—that is in my flesh, but still you will perceive so identifying for a time the flesh with himself as to say of this flesh that it is me—in me dwelleth no good thing." And lastly, "I do the evil that I would not" and "I find not how to perform that which is good."

Now here you will perceive, that, in all these quotations, he charges on his own proper and personal self, the corrupt feelings and instigations that the flesh gives rise to. And it is true that these all do emanate from the original part of his nature; and the other or the gracious part of it, came by a subsequent accession to him. It is a thing superinduced at conversion, and may be regarded more in the light of an element imported from abroad, which no doubt it was his part to cherish to the uttermost; but which still was a sort of foreigner in his constitution that did not primarily and essentially belong to it.

Yet notwithstanding this, I would have you to notice, how he shifts the application of the pronoun I; and transfers it from the corrupt to the spiritual ingredient of his nature. It is I who would do that which is good. It is I who hate that which is evil. It is I who consent unto the law; and finally it is I who delight in the law of God after the inner man. Thus it is, if I may so speak, that Paul interchanges himself between the two conflicting elements that were within him—at one time regarding the better of the two elements as a visitant from without whom he longed to detain, and charging upon his own person all the baseness and misery of its antagonist—at another bitterly complaining of the worse element as a burden wherefrom he longed to be delivered, and actually vindicating himself from its corrupt movements by expressly saying that it was not I. And, to fetch an example from another part of his writings, we hold it to be truly remarkable that, while in the passage before us he says of that which is evil in him 'it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me'—there is a different passage where he says of that which is good in him 'nevertheless not me, but the grace of God that is in me.'

We thus bring together these affirmations of the apostle, hoping that it may have the effect of making more manifest to you—that state of composition in which every Christian is, who hath been visited with spiritual life from on high, and yet is compassed about with the infirmities of an earthly tabernacle. In virtue of the

original ingredient of this composition, he does well to be humbled under a sense of his own innate and inherent worthlessness. And yet it is true, that in virtue of the second or posterior ingredient—his taste, and his understanding, and his deliberate choice, and the higher powers and faculties of his moral system, are now all on the side of new obedience. Nevertheless it is well for him to look often unto the rock whence he was hewn; and, thinking of the quarter whence he derives all his heaven-born virtues, to say of them that they had not their origin in me—and it is also well for him, while he regards the duties of the Christian life and the graces of the Christian character, to say that these are what I love to perform, and these are what I hope to realise.

And the apostle, at the end of this chapter, lays before us the distinction between the two parts of the Christian nature—when he says, that with the mind I myself serve the law of God, and with the flesh the law of sin. But ever remember, that it is the part of the former to keep the latter under the power of its presiding authority. The latter, on this side of time, is ever present with us; but for all that, it may not prevail over us. It may often be felt in its hateful instigations; but it must not on that account be followed in the waywardness of its devious and unlawful movements. Were there no counteracting force I would serve it; but, with that force in operation over me and because I am under grace, sin may have a dwelling-place but it shall not have the dominion.

When the matter is taken up as a matter of humiliation, then it cannot be too strongly insisted upon, that it is I who am the sinner; that to myself, properly and primarily, belongeth all that is vile and worthless in my constitution; that, even at the very time I am brightening into the character of heaven, I am ever reminded by the conscience within me of an inherent depravity that be all my own: and, even though this corruption is fast dying towards its final and complete disappearance, yet that it is under the power of an influence that cometh all from another. He who can say that by the grace of God I am what I am, may in fact have reached a lofty eminence of that ascent which reacheth unto perfection; and yet with truth may think and feel, that, in himself, he is altogether void of godliness. The shame of his original nature still adheres to him; and, although it be fast giving way to the ascendant power of another and a nobler nature, yet, knowing whence it is that he hath derived both its being and its growth, the graces

and the ornaments of the spiritual life are but to him a matter of gratitude, and not at all of glorying.

On the other hand, when, instead of being taken up as a topic of humiliation it is taken up as a topic of aspiring earnestness, it cannot be too strongly urged on every Christian, that he should be able honestly and heartily to say of himself, I desire after holiness—in very sincerity and truth it is the fondest aim of my existence, to be what I ought and to do what I ought—for the furtherance of the same would I pray and watch and keep my unceasing post both of vigilance and exertion—I take the side of all that is good and gracious in my constitution; and against whatever still adheres to me of the unrenewed and the carnal, do I feel an utter and irreconcilable enmity. His mind is with the law of God; and though the tendencies of his flesh be with the law of sin, yet, sustained by aid from the sanctuary, does he both will and is enabled to strive against these tendencies and to overcome them.

It is under such a feeling of what he was in himself on the one hand, and such an earnestness to be released from the miseries of this his natural condition upon the other, that Paul cries out in the agonies of his internal conflict—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" And I would have you to mark how instantaneous the transition is, from the cry of distress to the gratitude of his felt and immediate deliverance—"I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." This we hold to be the exercise of every true Christian in the world. Evil is present with him; and he blames none but himself for its hateful and degrading instigations. But grace is in readiness, not to sweep away this evil as to its existence, but to subdue it as to its prevalence and power; and while he blames none but himself for all that is

corrupt, he thanks none but God in Christ for all that is gracious and good in him. To use an old but expressive phrase, his soul is ever travelling between his own emptiness and Christ's fullness; and like the apostle before him when urged with any temptation, he recurs to the expedient of beseeching the Lord earnestly that it might depart from him. And the answer to this petition is remarkable. It does not appear that the temptation was made to depart from him; but it was deprived of its wonted force of ascendancy over him. It was not by the extirpation of the evil, but by the counteracting strength of an opposite good, that the apostle was kept upright as to his walk, in the midst of all the adverse and corrupt tendencies of his will. "I will make my grace sufficient for thee," was the Lord's answer to him. It was not that he did not still feel how in himself he was weak. The weakness of nature remained; but in that weakness I will perfect my strength, says the Saviour. And so it is we believe to the end of our days. There is a felt distinction between the weakness that is in ourselves, and the strength that cometh upon us from the upper sanctuary. Even Paul was doomed to the consciousness that he had both a flesh and a mind—the one of which would have inclined him wholly to the love and to the law of sin; and with the other of which he kept the corrupt tendency that still abode with him in check, and so maintained a conduct agreeable to the law of God. Like him, my brethren, let us have no confidence in the flesh, and like him let us rejoice in the Lord Jesus; and so shall we be enabled to serve God in the Spirit—realising that comprehensive description which he gives of a Christian when he says, "We are of the circumcision, who serve God in the Spirit, and rejoice in the Lord Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

LECTURE XLIV.

ROMANS viii, 1.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

THE term 'now,' may be understood in two senses—one of them a more general, and the other a more special. It may be understood as it respects the present economy of the gospel. Now, since that economy has been instituted—now, since the

first covenant has passed away, and the second has been substituted in its place—now, that Christ hath born the vengeance of the law upon his own person, and, having thus disposed of its threatenings against the guilty, can now address the

guilty with the overtures of a free pardon and a finished and entire reconciliation—Now is it competent for sinners to embrace these overtures; and there is now no condemnation to those, who, having so complied with them, are in Christ Jesus. It is thus that the term now may be made to respect the current period in the history of God's administration—the reign of grace under which we at present are, in contradistinction to the former regimen of the law which has been superseded.

Or it may be understood more specially, as referring to the present moment in the history of an individual believer. He is now freed from condemnation—not as if the sentence of acquittal were still in dependence, but as if that sentence had already passed—not as if he had to look, perhaps doubtfully, and ambiguously forward to some future day, when a verdict of exculpation shall be pronounced upon him; but as if he stood exculpated before God even now, and even now might rejoice in the forgiveness of all his trespasses.

We think that, in the clause before us, the term now reaches the full extent of this signification. When a sinner closes with Christ, God takes him on the instant into reconciliation; and from that time are his sins washed out in the blood of the Lamb. I will remember them no more. I will make no more mention of them; and they are among the things that are behind, and which ought to be forgotten. The believer should feel his conscience to be relieved from the guilt and from the dread of them; and, instead of being any longer burdened with them as so many debts subject to a count and reckoning on some future day, he has a most legitimate warrant for looking on the account as closed, and that there is a full settlement and discharge because of them between him and God. We have heard that it is wrong in a believer to live beneath his privileges, and we fully agree in so thinking. We know not how the spirit of bondage is ever to be done away, or the joy of the gospel ever made to spring up in the heart, if, still beset with the entanglement of his scruples and of his fears, he shall suspend the remission of his sins on any thing else than on the blood of Jesus. Now all that is told of that blood should assure him of a present justification; and this should send an instant peace into his bosom; and like the jailor of old, should he on hearing of the power and property thereof forthwith and from that moment rejoice. Be translated then into the sense of God being at peace with you. Receive the forgiveness of your sins, through Him whom God hath set forth as a propitiation. Look unto Christ lifted up for the offences of the

world; and be encouraged in the thought, that the whole weight of your offences has indeed been born away from yourself, and indeed been laid upon another. It is on the strength of this simple exhibition, that I should like to assure you of pardon; nor would I embarrass the matter with any conditions, or hang it on any dark and uncertain futurities that may lie before you. Christ hath made atonement, and with it God is satisfied; and if so, well may you be satisfied—delighting yourselves greatly in the abundance of peace, and going forth even now in the light and the liberty of your present enlargement.

But the verse further proceeds to inform us, who they are that have this inestimable privilege; and the first circumstance of description which it brings forward respecting them, is, that they are in Christ. There are some, who actuated by the distaste of nature towards gospel truth in all its depth and all its peculiarity, understand this phrase in a way that is but vaguely and feebly expressive of its real meaning. They have no tolerance for the doctrine of a vital and mystical union between Christ as the head, and Christians as the members who receive from Him both their guidance and their nourishment; and they fear lest fanaticism should betray them into some of her illusions, by carrying too far the analogy between a vine and its branches; and so they get over the phrase of being in Christ, and get quit of all that special intimacy of alliance with the Saviour which it is fitted to convey, by the very general interpretation that to be in Christ is just tantamount to being a Christian. And so it is, if you understand a Christian in the full sense and significance of that high denomination: But then we must not shut our eyes against the closeness of that personal and substantial attachment, which we every where read of, as subsisting between the Redeemer and those who are the fruit of the travail of His own soul; nor are we jealously to exclude from our minds the impression of that very near relationship, which is suggested by the following passages—"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." "The dead in Christ shall rise first." "We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." "He that abideth in me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit." "And be found in Him not having my own righteousness."

But lest we should wander into a region of mist and of obscurity, let us not forget,

that, for the purpose of being admitted into this state of community with the Saviour, the one distinct and intelligible thing which you have to do is to believe in Him. There is nothing mystical in the act by which you award to Him credit for His declarations; and this is the act by which you are grafted in the Saviour. Whatever this matter of your union with Christ be, it all hinges upon your faith in Him—which faith is the great tie of relationship betwixt you. As you hold fast the beginning of your confidence, and persevere therein, the tie will be strengthened—the relationship will become more intimate—the communications of mutual regard will become more frequent, and more familiar to your experience—every day you live might bring you into more intense acquaintanceship with the Saviour, and that on the strength of your faithful applications to Him, and of His sure and faithful responses unto you—And thus, by certain exercises and feelings which certainly are not recondite in themselves might you arrive at a state of fellowship with Christ; which fellowship, in the description of it, might be very recondite both to those who stand without, and even to those who have got no farther than to the threshold of Christian experience. By the simple expedients of believing prayer; and the habitual commitment of yourself to the Lord your Saviour, in circumstances of trial or difficulty; and the encouragement of your heart's regard and gratitude, because of all the favours that you have gotten at His hand; and the strenuous maintainance within you of that peace which He hath purchased by His blood, and of that purity by which His will is complied with and His doctrine is adorned—by these you may so over-shoot the experience of other men, as to have attained a sense and a discernment of incorporation with the Saviour, wherewith they are not yet prepared to sympathise. All this, though not yet realized by many of you, is surely conceivable by many of you; but meanwhile, and lest ye should think of some remote and inaccessible mystery which it were utterly hopeless for you to aspire after, I would have you all to remark, that, though the territory of Christian experience may not be plain to you, yet the way is plain by which you arrive at it—that, more particularly, you you are conducted to the state of being in Christ simply by believing in him: And so, there ought to be nothing more unintelligible in the verse, 'that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,' than in the verse, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, be-

cause he hath not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God."

But there is another circumstance of description that attaches to those unto whom there is no condemnation. This is the privilege of those who are in Christ Jesus; and further, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

Now here I must come forth with a special demand upon your attention. We are not fond of those less manageable topics in theology, that call either for an elaborate exposition on the part of the minister, or for a very strenuous and sustained effort of attention on the part of the hearers; and nothing else can reconcile us to them, than their practical bearing upon the comfort or the holiness of Christians. For it is at the same time most true, that a thing may at once be both profound and important. It may lie deep; and yet, like the precious metals, be of use in the familiar currency of the business of religion. The work of godliness presses all the faculties into its service; and lays a tax on the understanding of man, as well as upon his heart and his conscience. Insomuch that we are bidden to give earnest heed, and to hearken diligently, and to search for sacred wisdom as for hidden treasure, and to meditate on these things, and to give ourselves wholly thereunto, and to study and strive and stir ourselves up that we may lay hold of them. And we do think that such passages as these, might mitigate somewhat the prejudice of many against the scholastic air of certain of our theological disquisitions—as leading us to suspect that perhaps in some instances, and more especially in the work of rightly dividing the word of truth, the thing is unavoidable.

You will therefore suffer me I trust, when I say, that, of the two circumstances in the description of those who are free from condemnation which are presented to our notice in the verse before us, one of them is the cause of our being so freed; and the other is not the cause but the consequence. Both of these invariably meet on the person of him, who hath been admitted to the pardon and acceptance of the gospel. Every one who is so admitted, is in Christ Jesus; and every one who is so admitted, walketh not after the flesh but after the Spirit. But it is of real practical importance for you to be made aware, that one of these circumstances goes before your deliverance from guilt, and the other comes after it. Your release from condemnation is suspended on the first circumstance of your being in Christ Jesus. But it is not so suspended on the second circumstance, of your walking not

after the flesh but after the Spirit. The first is the origin of your justification—the second is the fruit of it. You secure your hold of the one, by keeping hold of Christ; and you make progress in the other, by walking securely before Him in the light of His friendly countenance, and with the willingness of a grateful and devoted heart that He has emancipated from all its fears. The order of succession which I now announce to you, will not interest those who take no interest in their souls. But it may resolve the difficulty of an anxious inquirer; and be the instrument to him, both of his translation into peace, and of his translation into progressive holiness.

For mark the embarrassment of that disciple, who, instead of entering upon forgiveness even now by a league of faith and fellowship with Christ; and so bringing his person under the first of these two circumstances,—postpones his enjoyment of this privilege until he has accomplished the second of them, and is satisfied with himself that he walketh not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Look, I pray you, to the heavy disadvantage under which he toils and travails at the work of new obedience; and how the spirit of bondage is sure to be perpetuated within him, so long as he persists in his wrong imagination; and how still the conditions of an impracticable law must continue to oppress his conscience, and to goad him onward in a service, where he labours in the very fire and wears himself for very vanity; and how working, as he in fact must do, for his justification before God, he cannot advance a single footstep without a despairing eye on some new and unscaled heights of virtue, the very aspect of which takes all heart and all energy away from him. And thus, with the burden upon his inner man of all the fears and disquietudes which attach to the old legal economy, will he either spend his days in a grievous servitude which fatigues but never satisfies; or be driven from very weariness to a compromise between his conscience and his conduct, between the law of God and his own garbled conformity thereunto—bringing down the high requisitions of heaven to the corrupt standard of earth; and offering, in the sight of men and of angels, a polluted obedience as a rightful equivalent for the rewards and the honours of eternity. He must either do this, or be haunted and pursued to the end of life, by all the perplexities of a yet unsettled question between him and God; and the sense of his manifold deficiencies will never cease either to pain or to paralyse him; and still much of the drudgery of obedience may reluctantly be borne, but nought of the delight of obedience will be

there—there may be the outward compliance of a slave, but none of the inward graces or aspirations of a saint. The truth is, that if this immunity from condemnation, instead of being a thing given to us because we are in Christ, is a thing purchased by us because of our walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit—then will conscience ever be suggesting to us that, the purchase has not been made good; and all the jealousies of a bargain will ever and anon rise up between the parties; and a cold or mercenary feeling will put to flight the good will, and the confidence, and the spontaneous regard, which are the alone worthy ingredients of all acceptable godliness; and, after all the offerings that may have been rendered by the hand, the sterling tribute of the heart will be withholden. God will be feared, or He will be distrusted; but He cannot be loved under such an economy; so that, throughout the whole of this strenuous and sustained exertion after a righteousness which is by the law, the law is dishonoured at every breath in the first and greatest of her commandments.

There is a better way of ordering this matter; and it is a way laid down by Him, who is the wisdom of God unto salvation. The gospel carries in it a full and immediate tender of pardon unto sinners. Deliverance from condemnation is not the goal, but the starting-post of the Christian race; and, instead of labouring to make good the remote and inaccessible station where forgiveness shall be awarded to him, he is sent forth with the inspiration of one who knows himself forgiven on the way of all the commandments. All are invited to come unto Christ, and to be in Christ; and from that moment the believer's guilt is washed away; and a full deed of amnesty is put into his hand; and, lightened of all his fears, he goes forth upon his course rejoicing. The tenure of his discipleship, is, not that with him there is some future chance of pardon, but unto him that now there is no condemnation; and this, like the loosing of a bond, sets him free for all the services of new obedience. It opens an ingress to his heart for affections, which never else could have found company there; and the creature knowing himself to be safe, and delivered from the engrossment of his before slavish apprehensions, can now with new-born liberty walk after the Spirit on the path of a progressive holiness. It is because he knows the truth that the truth has now made him free. It is not a regeneration originating with himself, that has reconciled him unto God—but it is a sense of his reconciliation, it is this which has regenerated him. His new walk is not the cause of his agreement with God.

It is the consequence which has emanated therefrom.

It is the free grace of the gospel, which awakens every man who receives it, to the charm of new moral existence. Faith is the quickening touch, whereby the before dormant energies of our nature are put into motion. It is faith which ushers love into the heart, and love gives impulse to the inert and sluggish mechanism of the human faculties. With the despairing sense in his bosom of a good wholly unattainable, the man feels himself weighed down to inaction and to apathy. But when the good is offered to him freely and he by faith lays hold of it—then, delivered at once from the cold and creeping spirit of bondage, does he break forth in the full vigour of his emancipated powers. What before was a matter of anxious uncertainty, and without either hope or affection to animate, becomes a matter of confidence and alacrity and good will. And this is the great secret of that promptitude and that power wherewith the gospel urges on its disciples to the cultivation of its heaven-born virtues, to the faithfulness and the activity of its bidden services.

Make the transition, my brethren, from death unto life, by simply laying hold on the gospel offer of reconciliation. After placing your full reliance upon this, then run with all your might on that heavenward path of righteousness and purity and love which leadeth unto the upper paradise. First trust in the Lord, and then be doing good. A workman to whom a tool is indispensable—you would never bid him work for the tool, but you would put the tool into his hand and bid him work by it. Faith is the alone spiritual tool, by which you can accomplish any right spiritual preparation. How can I love God—how can I maintain the gentleness of my spirit, under provocations the most artful and the most galling—how can I keep up the serenity of the inner man, while the voice of calumny is abroad; or a visible alienation sits upon every countenance; or plans misgive and prospects lour and look dreary on every side of me; or, forsaken by all that is sweet and soothing in human companionship, I have nought to lean upon but God as the friend whom I have chosen, and Heaven as the home of my fondest expectations? The answer of the new Testament is—"Only believe—all things are possible to him that believeth." This is the tool for all the high moral achievements of Christianity; and thus it is that your being now in Christ, with a present freeness from condemnation, forms an essential stepping-stone to your walking no more after the flesh but after the Spirit.

But—mark it well, my brethren. This

distinction between the consequence and the cause, though it gives to the obedience of a believer its proper place, does not make that obedience less sure. What the worldly or hypocritical professor thinks to be faith, is nought but fancy or something worse, if it be not followed by the walk of godliness. It is just as true as if your virtue were the price of your salvation—that there will be no salvation for you, if you have no virtue. There will be a personal distinction between those in the last day who stand on the right, and those who stand on the left of the judgment-seat; and the distinction will be, that, whereas the one abounded in good, so the other abounded in evil deeds done in their body. All that we have said was not with a view to supersede the moralities of practical righteousness, but to set you on the proper way by which to arrive at them. The ultimate design of the gospel economy is to make those who sit under it zealous of good works; and the reason why we should like the sense of your deliverance from guilt to be introduced even now by faith into your bosoms, is, that we esteem it the only instrument for reviving within you the love of God, or for causing to break forth upon your visible conduct the efflorescence of all that is virtuous and pure and praiseworthy.

To conclude my remarks upon this verse which has detained us so long, I would have you to be aware of this most important consideration—that the same believer who is represented here as walking not after the flesh, is the very individual who would take up the soliloquy of the last chapter; and have full share and full sympathy, with the toil, and the conflict, and all the inward bitterness because of sin, that are represented therein. The same man who feels the motions of the flesh, walks not after the flesh. The same man who is harassed with the instigations of sin, resists and refuses to follow them. He who was burdened, even to a sense of wretchedness, with the hateful presence of his wayward and licentious desires, would not submit to their tyranny; and while kept in a state of constant vigilance and alarm because of the warring elements in his bosom, yet does he so fight as that the evil which is in his heart shall not have the mastery over his conduct—So that, amid the opposing tendencies and inclinations which beset his will, still his walk is the walk of new obedience—not being after the flesh but after the Spirit. "Every man is tempted," says the apostle James, "when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." The believer is

often so tempted, and even to his own sad grief and humiliation may he have described the previous steps of this process; but never is the process so finished as to terminate in death. He struggles against sin, and he prevails over it. There may be a sore and a desperate contest in the inner man; and the result of it is a body kept under subjection, whose hands are made the instruments of righteousness, and whose feet are found in the way of all God's commandments. Take my brethren the patent and accessible way that lies so openly and so invitingly before you. Wash out your sins even now in the blood of God's everlasting covenant. Come and taste of the sure mercies of David. Receive the forgiveness of your sins; and, when delivered

from the weight and oppression of your guilt—that sore spiritual palsy, then arise and walk. Tidings of great joy should make you joyful; and the tidings wherewith I am fraught are of that remission from sin which I now preach unto you, and which may be preached to every creature under heaven. The effect it had on believers of old was an instantaneous joy; and so should be the effect on all now who believe the same gospel. And joy my brethren carries a vigour and an inspiration along with it. There is a might of practical energy in the impulse which it communicates; and it is when the heart is enlarged thereby, that the feet run with alacrity in the way of all the commandments.

LECTURE XLV.

ROMANS viii, 2.

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

It is of great importance for the understanding of this verse, that you be made acquainted with the two different senses that belong to the word law. At one time it signifies an authoritative code, framed by a master for the regulation and obedience of those who are subject to him. And so we understand it when we speak of the law of God, whether by this we mean His universal moral law or any system of local and temporary enactments—such as those which were embodied for the special government of the Jews, and have obtained the general denomination of the Mosaic law or the ceremonial law. According to this meaning of it, it stands related to jurisprudence—established by one party who have the right or the power of command, and submitted to by another party on whom lies the duty or the necessity of obedience. The laws of the Medes and Persians—the laws of any country—and, in a word, any rule put forth by authority and enforced by sanctions, whether it has issued from the Divine Governor, or from those who have the reins of civil or political authority upon earth—All are expressed by the same term and in the same sense of the term. But there is still another and very frequent meaning of this word, apart altogether from jurisprudence—a meaning applicable in cases where there is no obedience of living and accountable creatures at all; and a meaning in which it

might be used and understood even by the Atheist, who denied the being or the power of a living Sovereign who presided over nature, and established the various successions that go on with such order and regularity around us. It is quite consistent with the use of language, to speak of the laws of nature—denoting thereby the process by which events follow each other, in a train of certain and unvarying accompaniment—Such for example as the law of falling bodies—the law of reflexion from polished surfaces—the laws of the vegetable kingdom; and even in this sense may we speak of the laws of the human mind, as altogether distinct from that law of God to which it is morally and rightfully subject in the way of jurisprudence. By one of these laws its thoughts follow each other in a certain order that might almost be predicted—so that if one thought be present to it, it is sure to suggest another thought; and this is called the law of association. And so in proportion as we make an intimate study of ourselves, shall we find certain methods of procedure, in the order of which the feelings and the faculties and the habits of man are found to go forward; and all these may be announced by metaphysicians and moralists as the laws of human nature. The law which willing and accountable creatures are bound to obey is one thing. The law, in virtue of which creatures whether

animate or inanimate are found at all times to make the same exhibition in the same circumstances, is another.

At the same time it is not difficult to perceive, how one and the same term came to be applied to things so distinct in themselves. For you will observe that law, according to the first sense of it, is not applicable to a single command that may have issued from me at one time, and perhaps may never be repeated. It is true that this one commandment, like all the others, is obeyed, because of that general law by which the servant is bound to fulfil the will of his master. Yet you would not say of the special commandment itself that it was a law; nor does it attain the rank of such a denomination, unless the thing enjoined by it be a habit or a practice of invariable observation. Thus the order that the door of each apartment shall be shut in the act of leaving it—or that none of the family shall be missing after a particular hour in the evening—or that Sabbath shall be spent by all the domestics either in church or in the exercises of household piety—These may be characterised as the laws of the family—not the random and fortuitous orders of the current day, but orders of standing force and obligation for all the days of the year; and in virtue of which you may be sure to find the same uniform conduct on the part of those who are subject to the law, in the same certain circumstances that the law hath specified.

Now it is this common circumstance of uniformity which hath so extended the application of the term law, as to present it to us in the second sense which I have endeavoured to explain. Should you drop a piece of heavy matter from your hand, nothing more certain nor more constant than the descent which it will make to the ground—just as if constrained so to do by the authority of a universal enactment on the subject, and hence the law of gravitation. Or if space be allowed for its downward movement, nothing more certain or uniform than the way in which it quickens its descent—just as if bidden to make greater speed, and hence the law of acceleration in falling bodies. Or if light be made to fall by a certain path on a smooth and polished surface, nothing more mathematically sure than the path by which it will be given back again to the eye of him who looks to the image that has thus been formed, and hence in optics the law of reflexion. Or if a substance float upon the water, nothing more rigidly and invariably accurate than that the quantity of fluid displaced is equal in weight to that of the body which is supported; and all this from a

law in hydrostatics. Now there is a like constancy running throughout the whole of nature, and any of her uniform processes is referred to the operation of a law—just as if she sat with the authority of a mistress over her mute and unconscious subjects, and as if they by the regularity of their movements did willing and reverential homage to the authority of her regulations. But you will perceive wherein it is that the difference lies. The one kind of law is framed by a living master for the obedience of living subjects, and may be called juridical law. The other is framed by a living master also, for amid the diversity of operations it is God who worketh all in all; but it is not by a compliance of the will that an obedience is rendered thereunto—it is by the force of those natural principles wherewith the things in question are endowed, and in virtue of which they move and act and operate in that one way which is agreeable to their nature. This kind of law would by philosophers be called physical law. The one is a preceptive rule for the government of willing and accountable creatures. The other is an operative principle residing in every creature, be it animate or be it inanimate; and determining it by its own force to certain uniform processes.

Now the question comes to be, in which of these two senses shall we understand this term law in the text before us. We think that though it occurs twice, both of these must be understood in the same sense; and both indeed appear to be determined to the same sense by the relation in which they stand as rivals or as opposites. When the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and of death, it is either by the authority of one master prevailing over the authority of another master; or by the force of one influencing principle within us prevailing over the force of another such principle. To determine which of these two it is, we shall begin with the consideration of the law of sin and death, which though it comes last in the verse, is first in the order of ascendancy over the human mind; and from the nature of the thralldom under which it brings us, may lead us to think aright of the nature of our deliverance therefrom.

It must be quite obvious then to you all, that the law of sin and death is not a law that is enacted in the way of jurisprudence; but, like every other law of nature, it is an operative principle that worketh certain effects and emanates certain processes in the subject where it resides. It is neither more nor less in fact than the sinful tendency of our con-

stitution; and is quite the same with what in the preceding chapter is termed the law of sin that is in our members. It is called a law, because, like the laws of gravitation or magnetism or electricity, it impels those upon whom it acts in a certain given direction; and has indeed the power and the property of a moving force expressly ascribed to it, when it is said to war against the law of the mind, and to be incessantly aiming after the establishment of its own mastery over those whom it tries to lead captive and to enslave. And to keep up this conception of a law in the second sense of it, let it be remembered that death is as much the natural consequence of sin, as it is the penalty of sin—that it forms the termination of an historical process by a law that regulates the succession of events, as well as the termination of a juridical process under the power and authority of a lawgiver—that regarded in its true character as the extinction of the life of godliness in the soul; as the death of all spiritual joy; as the darkness and the misery of a heart, where vice and selfishness and carnality are the alone occupiers; as that moral hell, the rudiments of which every unconverted man carries about with him here, and the settled maturity of which he will bear with him to the place of condemnation hereafter; as that state of distance and disruption from God, which may now be supportable so long as earth spreads its interests and gratifications before us, but which so soon as earth passeth away will leave the soul in desolation and terror and without a satisfying portion throughout eternity—Such a death as this, comes as regularly and as surely in the train of our captivity to sin, and by the operation of a law, in the moral or spiritual department of nature—as the fruit of any tree, or the produce of any husbandry, does by the laws of the vegetable kingdom. The sinful tendency that worketh in man bringeth forth fruit unto death; just as the vegetative tendency that is in the foxglove bringeth forth poison. In both it is a fruit of bitterness; and in both the effect of an established law,—apart from the awards and the retributions of a Lawgiver.

Now the way in which this tendency is counteracted, is just by an opposite tendency that is implanted in the mind, for the purpose of making head against it, and of at length prevailing over it. The law of the Spirit of life, just expresses the tendency and the result of an operative principle in the mind, that has force enough to arrest the operation of the law of sin and death, and at length to emancipate us therefrom. It is deposited within as the germ of a new character; and

in virtue of which there are evolved the desire, and the purpose, and the activities, and at length all the conquests and all the achievements of a life of holiness. The affection of the old man meets with a new affection to combat and to overmatch it. If the originating principle of sin might be reduced to one brief expression, and so be shortly designed the love of the creature—the originating principle of the spiritual life might also be briefly and summarily designed the love of the Creator. These two appetites are in a state of unceasing hostility. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. The law of sin and of death warreth against the law of the mind; and this law of the mind in the preceding context, is just the law of the Spirit of life in the verse that is now before us.

Let me now come forth in succession with a few distinct remarks upon this verse, with a view to complete our understanding of it.

First, You are already aware how it is the Spirit of God that infuses this principle into the mind, and sets agoing the law of its operation. Hence it may properly be denominated the law of the Spirit—even as the opposite process against which it has to struggle and at length to vanquish, is called the law of sin—a new tendency imparted to the soul for the purpose of arresting the old tendency and at length of extinguishing it; and called the law of the Spirit, just because referable to the Holy Ghost, by whose agency it is that the new affection has been inspired, that the new moral force has been made to actuate the soul and give another direction than before to the whole history.

But secondly—why is it called the law of the Spirit of life? Just because he in whom this law is set agoing is spiritually minded; and as to be carnally minded is death, so to be spiritually minded is life. It is the law of the Spirit, because of the agent who sets this law agoing in the soul. It is the law of the Spirit of life, because of the new state into which it ushers the soul. It is like the awakening of man to a new moral existence, when he is awakened to the love of that God whom before he was glad to forget; and of whom he never thought but as a Being shrouded in unapproachable majesty, and compassed about with the jealousies of a law that had been violated. It is like a resurrection from the grave, when, quickened and aroused from the deep oblivion of nature, man enters into living fellowship with his God; and He, who ere now had been regarded with terror or utterly disregarded, hath at length reclaimed unto Himself all our trust and all our tenderness. It is the introduction of a before earthly creature

into a region of other prospects and other manifestations, when now he can eye eternity with hope, and look up with confidence to the Lord and Disposer of his eternity. It is like imparting to him another breath, and enduing him as it were with another vitality, when, for the animal and the earthly desires which once monopolised all his affections, there spring up in his bosom the desire of spiritual excellence, and a love that reacheth unto all, and the new moral ambition that the image of the Godhead be again implanted upon his character. There is now a satisfaction and a harmony within, a rightly going mechanism of the soul that is in unison with the great purposes of his being, a refreshing sense of that native enjoyment which goodness and righteousness and truth are ever sure to bring along with them, the sunshine of a heart at peace and of a heart inhaling the purity of holy and celestial aspirations—all which make him feel as if he had entered on a life that was new; and in comparison with which the whole of his former existence appears corrupt to him as a sepulchre, and worthless as nonentity itself. It is only now that he has begun to live, because now hath the law of the Spirit of life begun to operate in his bosom; and only now hath that well of water been struck out in his heart, which to him, even in the life that now is, is precious as the elixir of immortality and springeth up unto life everlasting.

And thirdly, when is it that this visitation of the Spirit descendeth upon the soul? When is it that this new law is set up within it; and so a power or a tendency is established there, that arrests and at length subjugates the old one? We think that the answer is to be gathered from the single expression of the law of the Spirit of life in *Christ Jesus*. Whatever the import of the phrase in *Christ Jesus* may be, it is when so in Him that this law taketh effect upon us. As surely as when you enter a garden of sweets, one of your senses becomes awakened to the perfumes wherewith its air is impregnated—as surely as when emerging from the darkness of a close apartment to the glories of an unclouded day, another of your senses is awakened to the light and beauty of all that is visible—So surely when you enter within the fold of Christ's mediatorship, and are so united with Him as to be in Him according to the bible signification of this phrase, then is it that there is an awakening of the inner man to the beauties of holiness. We refer to a law of nature, the impression of every scene, in which he is situated, on the senses of the observer; and it is also by the operation of such a law, that, if in

Christ Jesus, we become subject to a quickening and a reviving touch that raises us to spiritual life, and maketh us susceptible of all its joys and all its aspirations. We have the immutability of nature's laws, or rather the immutability of Him who presideth over the constancy of nature's processes, as our guarantee for an ordination which can never fail—that he who is in *Christ Jesus* is a new creature, that he who is in *Christ Jesus* walketh not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

But fourthly—what have we to do that we may attain the condition of being in *Christ Jesus*? I know of no other answer than that you have to believe in Him. I know of no other instrument by which the disciple is grafted in *Christ Jesus*, even as the branches are in the vine, than faith. And certain it is that a connection is often directly affirmed in the Bible, between the act of believing and the descent of a quickening and sanctifying influence from above. The Holy Ghost is given to those who believe. The promise of the Spirit is unto faith. In whom after that ye believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard. Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. *Jesus* is the Light of the world, and the Light is the life of men—All pointing to a law of connection between our belief of the truth as it is in *Jesus*, and our being set at liberty by a divine power for a life of new and holy obedience.

And again, to recur to the term law as having the same sense in this verse that physical law or a law of nature has. What a security does it hold out for the sanctification of every believer! If we believe we are in *Christ Jesus*—if we are in *Christ Jesus* the Spirit will put forth such an energy as shall overmatch the corrupt principle that is within us, and set us free from its tyranny—And all this in virtue of an ordination so certain and so unailing, as to rank with those laws which have stamped an unalterable constancy on all the processes that are going on around us. There is nought that so arrests the admiration of philosophers as the inflexibility of nature—the certainty wherewith the observations of the past may be turned into prophecies for the future—the sure evolution of the same phenomena in the same circumstances; and how, without one hair-breadth of deviation, the same trains and the same successions will be repeated over again till the end of the world. It is thus that the seasons roll in their unchanging courses; and that the mighty orbs of the firmament maintain their periods of invariable constancy; and that astronomers, presuming

on the uniformity of nature in all her processes, can, to within a second of deviation, compute the positions and the distances and the eclipses of these heavenly bodies for thousands of the years that are to come—And not only so; but, throughout all the departments of nature to which the eye of man hath had access upon earth, do we witness a uniformity rigid as fate, and that without a miracle is never violated—inasmuch that some are the philosophers who have made a divinity of Nature; and who, conceiving that had there been a God there would have been more of freedom and of fluctuation in the appearances of things, have affirmed this universe, instead of a creation, to be the product of some mysterious and eternal necessity, under which all things move onward without change and without deviation. But the Christian knows better how to explain the generality and the certainty of nature's laws, and that is not because Nature is unchangeable, but because God is unchangeable. What has been once done has been best done, and cannot be amended; and so in the same circumstances will it again and again and again be repeated. It is the perfect and unerring wisdom of nature's God, which has banished all caprice, and stamped such a reigning consistency on the whole of nature's processes: And when we find that each of these processes is denominated a law; and that this very term, in this very sense of it, is employed to express the union that there is between belief in Christ and the putting forth of a renewing and a sanctifying influence on the believer—I fear not lest the obedience of the gospel should lead to Antinomianism; but grant me only a true faith in the mind of an aspirant after heaven, and there will I confidently look for virtue and for holiness.

Both the certainty of Nature and the certainty of God's word are very finely expressed together in the book of Psalms. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness unto all generations; thou hast established the earth and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances, for all thy servants."

And therefore would I have you to be ever dwelling upon that truth, the belief of which it is that brings down the Spirit of God upon your souls; and the very presence of which to the mind, bears a charm and a moral energy along with it. It is a thing of mystery to the general world; but to the Christian indeed, it is a thing of experience and not of mystery. Never does the way of new obedience lie more invitingly clear and open before him, than when he finds the guilt and the

reckoning of his past iniquities, whereby its entrance was formerly beset, all done away through the power of the great gospel sacrifice. And never does he move with such alacrity at the bidding of the Saviour, as when under a sense of the purchased reconciliation, he feels the debt of obligation to Him for all his peace in time, and all his hopes in eternity. And never does the vigorous inspiration of light and love and freedom come so copiously upon him from the upper sanctuary, as when praying with confidence in the name of Christ, he obtains from Him the presence of the witness and the comforter. The powers and principles of the new creature, are all alimented by these various exercises of faith; and so the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes him free from the law of sin and death.

But to conclude. This freedom will be perfect in heaven, but on earth it is not so. Here it is not that freedom by which you are rid of the presence of sin. It is only that freedom by which you are rid of its tyranny. While you are in the body, you will be vexed with its solicitations; and surprised perhaps into an occasional overthrow; and at all events be so annoyed by its near and besetting artifices, that you must never let down the vigilance of a prepared and determined warrior. The process by which sin leadeth unto death, consists of various steps, from the lust which conceiveth and bringeth forth—and at length, if not arrested, will finish in deeds and habits of sinfulness, which land the unhappy apostate in destruction. By the law of the Spirit of life, you will be kept free of this awful catastrophe; but not without many a weary struggle against sin in its incipient tendencies, that these tendencies may be kept in check—against sin in its restless appetites, that these appetites may be denied and at length starved into utter mortification—against sin in its tempting thoughts and tempting imaginations, that the desires of the spirit as well as the deeds of the body may be chastened into obedience, and thus your holiness be perfected. It will be freedom, no doubt; but the freedom of a country that has taken up arms against its tyrants or its invaders—of a country that has refused submission, but must fight to maintain its independence—of a country from whose gates the battle has not yet been turned away, but where the enemy is still in force, and the watchfulness of all is kept alive by the perpetual alarm of hostile designs and hostile movements. "But ye are of God little children and shall overcome, because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith."

LECTURE XLVI.

ROMANS viii, 3, 4.

“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; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

We have already explained the distinction between a physical law, whereby is established that order of succession, in which one event follows another; and a juridical law, or a law of authority, for the government of rational and responsible creatures. In the verse immediately preceding, the word occurs twice; but at each time with such an annexed specification, as points to the former rather than to the latter meaning of the term. There is first the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which marks, we think, that established order in the Divine administration of grace, whereby, all who are in Christ Jesus have a reviving and a sanctifying influence put forth upon them. There is then the law of sin and of death, which marks another of those constant successions, that obtain either between two events, or two states in the history of any individual—even that by which sin is followed up with an extinction of the spiritual life, with an utter incapacity for sacred employments or sacred delights; and when superadded to the negation of all those sensibilities that enter into the happiness of heaven, you have as the natural consequences of sin, the agony of self-reproach, the undying worm of a conscience that never ceases to haunt and to upbraid you.

But you will observe that the term law in the verse before us, is used generally and without any accompaniments. We are not aware of any passage in the Bible, where, if so introduced, it does not signify that law which God hath instituted for the moral government of his creatures; and there can be no doubt, that it is to be understood in this juridical sense on the present occasion. ‘For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.’

But what is it that the law could not do! The answer to this is, we think, to be gathered from the next verse. It could not accomplish that end for the bringing about of which, God sent His Son into the world, and executed upon Him the condemnation that we had incurred; and this He did, it is said, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. This then is what the law failed to achieve. It

could not fulfil in us its own righteousness. It could not cause us to exemplify that which itself had enacted. It could not fashion us, the children of men, according to its own pure and beautiful model; and, all perfect in excellence as its light was, it could not obtain the unsullied reflection of it, from the living history of any of our species. As to any efficiency upon us, it was a dead letter; and did as little for the morality of the world, as if struck with impotency itself, it had been bereft of all dignity and been reduced to a dishonoured thing, without the means or the right of vindication. The law issued forth, and with much of circumstance too, its precepts and its promulgations. But it is quite palpable that man did not obey; and, whether we look to the wickedness which stalketh abroad and at large over the face of the earth, or rest the question on each individual who breathes upon it—that the righteousness thereof, instead of being fulfilled, has been utterly and universally fallen from.

But the apostle introduces a caution here, that he might not appear to derogate from the law, by ascribing to it any proper or inherent impotency. And, for this purpose, he lets us know, what the precise quarter was in which the failure originated—not then that the law was weak in itself, but in that it was weak through the flesh. To the law, there belong a native power and efficiency, in all its lessons and all its enforcements, which is admirably fitted to work out a righteousness on the character of those to whom it is addrest. For this purpose, there is no want of force or of fitness in the agent; but there may be a want of fitness in the subject upon which it operates. It is no reflection on the penmanship of a beautiful writer, that he can give no adequate specimen of his art, on the coarse or absorbent paper, which will take on no fair impression of the character that he traces upon its surface. Nor is it any reflection on the power of an accomplished artist, that he can raise no monument thereof, from the stone which crumbles at every touch, and so is incapable of being moulded into the exquisite form of his own faultless and finished idea. And so of the law, when it attempts to realize a portrait of moral excellence on the ground-

work of our nature. It is because of the groundwork, and not of the law, that the attempt has failed; and so when he tells us of what the law could not do, lest we should be left to imagine that this was from any want of force or capacity in the law, he adds 'in that it was weak through the flesh.'

And it is to be observed, that the fulfilment of the righteousness of the law in us, was a thing to be desired—not merely that in us a beautiful moral spectacle might be reared, and so the universe become richer as it were than before in worth and in virtue; but that our righteousness should be of such a kind as would satisfy the law, as would render to the law its due, as would secure all the homage that rightfully belongs to it. This you will perceive is a distinct object from the former. That the law should impress the worth and the loveliness of its own virtues upon our character, is one thing. That the law should in us achieve the vindication of its own honour, is another. It could not do the first, through the weakness of the flesh. And as little can it do the second, excepting in those on whom it wreaks the vengeance of its insulted authority. It may be said to fulfil its own righteousness, in those to whom it serves as the ministry of condemnation. It, in the act of punishment, gives full proof of its own awful and unviolable majesty. It is a work of righteousness on the part of the law, when it pours forth the wrath, and executes the penalty that are due to disobedience. There is then open demonstration made, of its strict and sacred character; and the charge of impotency cannot be preferred against the law, as to the manifestation and fulfilment of its righteousness. It does not work in the persons of the impenitent, the virtues which it enjoins, nor fulfil in this sense its own righteousness upon them. But it wreaks upon these persons the vengeance which it threatens; and in this sense, may be said to make fulfilment of its righteousness. In the persons again of those who walk after the Spirit, the virtues enjoined by the law are effectually wrought; but how, would we ask, can the law, in reference to them, acquit itself of its juridical honours?—for they too have offended. The experience of every struggling Christian in the world, bears testimony to his many violations. There is, all his life long, a shortcoming from the law's strictness and the law's purity. There is a constant offence rendered by us in these vile bodies, against that commandment which will admit of no compromise, and suffer no degradation. So that even though the personal workmanship of righteousness should be in progress—though the

moral picture should be gradually brightening, into a faultless conformity to that pattern that hath been shown us from the mount—though at length our likeness to the law should be consummated—Yet is that very law subject even now to perpetual affronts from us, on its holiness and majesty; and the question remains, how, in these circumstances, shall its righteousness be vindicated upon us—even though we do walk after the Spirit, and do not walk after the flesh?

You all understand, I trust, how it is that the gospel adjusts this deficiency. It is stated in the verse before us; and though stated often, it is like ointment, which, though often poured forth, is always the same and always precious. There was something more, you will perceive, than a Spirit necessary to work in us a personal righteousness—a sacrifice was necessary to make atonement for our personal guilt. Though the former operation were to prosper onward every day, to its full and final accomplishment—yet, without the latter provision, there would have been still the spectacle held forth of a degraded law and a dishonoured lawgiver. The righteousness of the law might have been fulfilled, in regard to the impress made by it on the character of man; but it would not have been fulfilled, in regard to the perfect and undeviating adherence due by man at all times to its own authority. And so, to use the expression of the apostle John, the Saviour came not by water only, but by water and blood. It was not enough to regenerate, it was also necessary to atone. Without the shedding forth of the Spirit there would have been no righteousness infused: But without the shedding of blood there could have been no righteousness imputed. There behoved to be the one, for the renewal of man unto obedience; and there behoved to be the other, for the remission of his sins: And those are the weightiest verses of the Bible, where, in one short and memorable sentence, both are propounded to us, as the essentials of a sinner's restoration.

Now the passage before us, is one out of many exemplifications, that may be given us of this twofold announcement. It might be rendered clearer to you, perhaps, by a short paraphrase. 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did, by sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for a sin-offering—so as thereby to condemn sin in the flesh. And this he did, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.'

You will observe here, that the first step, was to make ample reparation for

the injuries sustained by the law; and so by satisfying its rights, making a full vindication of its righteousness. Ere the sinner could be operated upon so as to be transformed, the law which he had broken, it would appear, behoved to have compensation for the outrage done to it. There was a need be that the threatened penalty should not be arrested, but have its course—that it should break forth into the open and manifest discharge, which might announce to the world both the evil of sin, and the truth and justice of that God who had uttered His proclamations against it: And there seems to be a further, though perhaps to us an inscrutable propriety, in the chastisement of our peace having been borne by one, who bore our nature—in the Son having been sent, under no other likeness than the likeness of sinful flesh—in humanity having had to suffer the vengeance which humanity incurred. And though it called for the strength of the Godhead to bear the burden of our world's atonement—yet seemeth there to have been, in order to the effect of this great mystery, some deep necessity that we cannot fully penetrate, why it should be laid on God manifest in the flesh, and who took not upon Him the nature of angels, but the nature of the seed of Abraham.

And so the incarnate God suffered for our world. For this purpose, did He become flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone. There were laid upon Him the iniquities of us all; and from the intelligible symptoms of a sore and cruel agony, that even the divine energies of His nature did not overbear, may we conclude that the ransom has been fully paid—and so the worth and authority of the law have been fully magnified.

And this, it would appear, is an essential step to our sanctification. There behoved to be this satisfaction rendered to the law, ere they who had transgressed it could be turned to its love and its willing obedience. That law which was written on tables of stone, had to be appeased for its violated honour, ere it was transferred into the fleshly tablets of our heart, and became there the spontaneous and emanating principle of all goodness. The blood of remission had to be shed, ere the water of regeneration could be poured forth; and so the Son of God came in the likeness of sinful flesh, and became a sin-offering, and sustained the whole weight of sin's condemnation—And, after ascending from the grave, had that Holy Ghost committed unto Him, who was not given in abundance to men till the Son of man was glorified—and it is under the power of this mighty agent, that all who put

their trust in Him, are enabled to walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

Thus historically, the atonement by Jesus Christ took place, before that more abundant ministration of the Spirit, which obtains under the economy of the gospel—And so also personally, a belief in that atonement has the precedency to a sanctifying operation over the sinner's heart. Not till we accept of Jesus Christ as the Lord our righteousness, shall we experience Him to be the Lord our strength. Not till we put faith in that blood by which our guilt is washed away, shall we be free to love the Being whom before we were afraid of. Not till pardon is made known, shall we be loosened from the bonds of despair, or at least of that callous indifference—And it is only through a pardon which is sealed by the blood of a divine expiation, that to peace with God we can add a practical and purifying sense of the holiness of God. It is thus that a belief in the propitiation, is as sure to regenerate as it is to reconcile; and the knowledge that Christ was condemned in the flesh for our offences, is that which gives impulse to that heavenly career, in which we walk no longer after the flesh but after the Spirit.

We read in one epistle of the ministration of condemnation and the ministration of righteousness. The former is that which takes place under the law, when its denunciations have their course; and, as all are guilty, all are liable to the tremendous penalties of guilt. The apostle says of this ministration, that it is glorious; and glorious certainly in the exhibition which it gives of the Godhead—of that sacredness which admits of no stain, and would recoil from the most distant approaches of evil—of that pure and lofty throne, whence every award comes forth with authority inflexible—of that rectitude which will not hold compromise with iniquity at all, and, rather than suffer it to draw near, will send out flames from the awful sanctuary of its habitation to burn up and to destroy it—of that jealousy, which, like a consuming fire, spreadeth abroad among the hosts of the rebellious, so that not one shall remain a monument of God's connivance at that which He utterly abhors—of a dread intolerance for moral evil, even in the slightest shades and degrees of it, so that, rather than deign one look of acceptance to sin, every sinner must irrevocably perish. In all this, says the apostle, there is a glory—yet there is another ministration, even one of righteousness, which excelleth in glory. It is that which takes place under the gospel; and under which all the former glory is kept entire, nay enhanced into a

brighter manifestation. For there too, is the Law made honourable; and there the Lawgiver is evinced to be inflexibly just, and jealous of the authority of His government; and there the sacredness of Heaven's jurisprudence is made to shine forth, if not in the punishment of sin, at least in the atonement which has been made for it; and there the vengeance due to guilt appeareth more strikingly than before, by its transference from the head of the sinner to the head of the illustrious Substitute, who trembled and suffered and died in his stead. The glories of truth and of holiness are more highly illustrated under our new economy than under the old one, and with this additional glory which is all its own—that there mercy sits in benignant triumph among the now vindicated attributes of the Godhead; and sinners, who else would have been swept away into an eternity of pain and of deep oblivion, are transformed anew into the righteousness which they had lost, have their place again in the family of God—a part among the hallelujahs of the unfallen.

Let me conclude with two practical observations. In the first place see, how, in order that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, it is not enough that we walk as spiritual men. The more spiritual in fact that you are, the greater will your sensibility be to the remaining deficiencies of your heart and temper and conversation—the more oppressive will be your consciousness of the weight of your still unquelled carnality—the more affecting will be your remembrance, every evening, of the slips and the shortcomings of the day that hath past over you—So that if you only had to do with the law, and if its righteousness were the condition of your acceptance with God—you, though making daily progress even unto perfection, would, by every new addition to your spiritual tenderness, be only aggravating your despair. There behoved to be a daily remembrance of sin; and this, if unmixed with faith in the great propitiation, would leave you heartless and hopeless as to all the purposes of obedience. So that to the last half-hour even of a most triumphant course in sanctification, you must never lose sight of Him on whom has been laid the condemnation of all your offences—the confessions that you make, (and you will have to make them perpetually) must be over the head of the great Sacrifice—you must still keep by your great High Priest, as the anchor of your soul; and never for a moment transfer your dependence from Him to your own righteousness—you must look for all your acceptance only in the Beloved; and count for your justifica-

tion before God, on nothing else than on Jesus Christ and on Him crucified.

Now, this comes to be a mystery, which the world can never be made to understand by explanation; and which it is only for a Christian to realize in his own experience. There are constant alternations of sin and of sorrow, in the history of every believer; and the guilt of the daily transgression is actually washed away, in this case, by the evening acknowledgment—the act of confession on his part, being in very deed followed up by an act of forgiveness on the part of God. "For if any man confess his sins, God is faithful and just to forgive him his sins." And then the singularity is, (yet if you have no part in that singularity you are no Christian) it is, that, under this process of daily offending, and daily application to that blood by which it is again obliterated, there should, on the part of the disciple, be so fearful an avoidance of evil—such a dread of sin, and so grievous a discomfort when he falls into it—as honest an aspiring after his own personal righteousness, as if it formed the price of his salvation; and, withal, the same busy performance of duty that behoved to take place, had the old economy of the law been again set up, and heaven to be challenged upon the merit of our own obedience. Yes! my brethren, it is the wondrous property of the gospel, that, while it speaks peace to the sinner, it charms the power of sin away from his heart—inducing him to love the law, at the very time that it holds out an impunity for all its violations; and, with the soft whispers of reconciliation that it sends into the offender's ear, sending along with it a moral suasion into his heart, that gains it over to the side of all the commandments.

And hence my second remark is, that, however zealously the righteousness of Christ must be contended for as the alone plea of a sinner's acceptance, yet that the benefit thereof rests upon none save those, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Light where it may, it must carry a sanctifying power along with it; and you have no part nor lot in the matter, if you are not pressing onward in grace and in all godliness. It is not enough, that upon Christ all its honours have been amply vindicated—upon you, who believe in Christ all its virtues must be engraven; and it is thus, and thus alone, that there is brought about a complete and a satisfying fulfilment of its righteousness. The law is not made void by faith, but by faith it is established; and while, on the one hand, all the outrage done to it when written on tables of stone, has been repaired by the noblest of satisfactions—on

the other hand, does it come forth again in all the brightness of a new and a living lustre, by its being now written on the fleshly tablets of our heart. The hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, and contrary to us, has been taken out of the way, having been nailed to the

cross of Christ; but the hand of Jesus Christ as the Lord their sanctifier is ever on the persons of those who believe in Him—beautifying them with His salvation, and spreading over their characters all the graces of holiness.

LECTURE XLVII.

ROMANS viii, 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.”

I SHOULD like if I could give you a clear understanding of the difference that there is, between your simply dwelling in the flesh as your tenement—and your being immersed, with the practical consent of your will and mind, in those pursuits and pleasures which are natural to the flesh. And the first thing which might occur, for the illustration of this difference, is, to offer, as expressive of it, that distinction of meaning which one feels between the two phrases, ‘to be in the flesh’ and ‘to be after the flesh.’ The one may be thought simply to imply, that the flesh is the place of the soul’s present residence; and the other, that all the soul’s inclinations and energies, are in full prosecution of those objects which minister to the appetites of the flesh. But then you have the very phrase of being in the flesh applied in Scripture not to the state of one who barely occupies the flesh as his present tabernacle, but of one who delights in the flesh as his congenial and much loved element. And it must be in this latter sense of the phrase that it occurs at the distance of a very few verses from the one now submitted to you—when it is said that they who are in the flesh cannot please God; and when it is further said, that ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.

At the same time it must be remarked, that, in other passages of the Bible, the phrase of being in the flesh denotes the soul’s simple occupation of a fleshly tabernacle, and not the soul’s immersion in fleshly habits or fleshly desires. The apostle who said that Christ liveth in me, also says I live in the flesh; and that to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. In this sense too even Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh; and it was a most essential point of orthodoxy that He had come in the flesh. In both of these instances, flesh was the temporary abode;

but in neither of them was it the chosen or the much loved home. It is true of both, that, though in the flesh, they walked not after the flesh; and though we have not been so fortunate, as to find the former phrase to be in the Bible universally characteristic of nothing more than simple occupancy—yet we believe of the latter phrase, that it is uniformly descriptive of that state, in which a man abandons himself to the propensities of nature, and lives in the full prosecution of its delights or its interests.

And the distinction between these two things, is very well marked by the apostle within the compass of one verse. “Though we walk in the flesh, we do not walk according to the flesh—we do not war after the flesh.”

And it is well, that, in this fifth verse, we have a descriptive clause, by which we are presented with something like a definition of being after the flesh. They who are after the flesh, mind the things of it. It is not that the flesh assails them with its suggestions, for this it does, and often as forcibly with those who resist the suggestions as with those who yield to them. But it is that their mind follows after the flesh—that they make a study and a business of its enjoyments—that they prosecute them in thought, in purpose, and in will. Some there are who dwell in the flesh, and so are surrounded with the importunity of its delights and temptations; but who nevertheless abide in the firm attitude of withstanding them all. Their mind is not after the flesh, but in opposition to it. But for these some, there are many who are dragged willingly along in that very direction in which the flesh draws them—who, not only resign themselves implicitly to the force of its instigations; but who, even in their hours of calm and dispassionate exemption from them, are in some way labouring

or devising for the pleasures and accommodations of the perishable body—whose mind, both in its likings and in the exercises of its faculties, is wholly given over to the pursuit of these things. What the things are, we may learn from the apostle John—when he bids us love not the world neither the things that are in the world; and when he comprehends these things in the one summary description of all that is in the world, which he maketh to consist of the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life. Thus are we to understand of all those who are after the flesh, that either as slaves, they are tyrannized over by the master-idols of sensuality or avarice or ambition; Or that, with a sort of free and more sovereign agency, they at least give themselves up to the object of providing for these gratifications—that, if not dragged after them by the force of appetite, they at least drive after them, and that, of spontaneous and withal of steady and settled choice. And thus, in the habitual preference of their mind as well as in the propensities of their animal system, are they altogether entitled to the denomination of worldly.

And there is one thing that you would do well to advert unto. It is not necessary that you mind all the things of the flesh, in order to constitute you a carnal man. It is enough to fasten this character upon you, that you have given yourself over to the indulgence or the pursuit, even of so few as one of these things. A miser may not be a debauchee, and neither the one nor the other may be an aspiring politician. But whatever the reigning passion may be, if it have the effect of attaching you to some one object that is in the world, and which with the world will terminate and perish—then still your mind is in subjection to an idol, and the death of the carnally minded is your inheritance and your doom. Be not deceived then, ye men, who engrossed with the cares and observant of all the sobrieties of business, are not addicted to the profligacies of dissipation—nor ye, who, heedless of wealth's accumulations, can mix an occasional generosity with the squanderings of intemperance and riot—nor ye, who, alike exempted from sordid avarice or debasing sensuality, have yet, in the pursuit of an ascendancy over the minds and the measures of your fellow-men, made power the reigning felicity of your existence—nor yet even ye, who, without any settled aim after one or other of these gratifications, fluctuate in giddy unconcern from one of this world's frivolities to another. None of you mind all the things of the flesh; yet each of you minds one or other of these things; and that to the entire practi-

cal exclusion of the things of the Spirit from the preference of your habitual regards. We do not charge you with a devotion of heart to all those things in the world, which are opposite to the love of the Father—any more than we charge you, with idolatrously falling down in obeisance to all the divinities of a heathen polytheism. But still if only one of these divinities be your god, this were enough to constitute you an idolater, and to convict you of a sacrilegious disownal of the King who is eternal and immutable. And so your one earthly appetite, though free from the tyranny of all the others—your one habit of ungodliness, though it be the only one that breaks out into visible expression in the history of your life—of itself renders you a carnal man; of itself exiles you from the spiritual territory; of itself proves that you are still one of the children of this world, and that you have not passed from death unto life.

‘They who are after the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit.’ The man to whom this character belongeth is as effectually tabernacled in flesh, as he who is altogether carnal; and the natural tendencies of his constitution to evil, may be as strong and as urgent as those of the latter. By temperament, for instance, he may have as great a taste for luxury—by original disposition, he might be as apt to rejoice in grandeur or in wealth; and there be spontaneously within him, the same kindlings of ambition, or the same grovellings of sensual and avaricious desire. But though he feels these impulses, yet he walketh not after them; and that just because his mind is wholly set against them—whereas the mind of the other goeth wholly along with them. It is the direction of that sovereign faculty the will, which explains the difference. If this be enlisted on the side of the flesh, as it is with every unconverted man, then he sinneth wilfully. If this be enlisted on the side of the Spirit, as it is with every man who hath truly turned him unto the Lord Jesus Christ—then he may sin accidentally; and, in some moment of sleep or of surprise, he may be overtaken; and ere the will, as it were, has had time to rally and to recover, some outpost may have been carried, and even some advantage have been gained to the length of a most humiliating overthrow. But deep is the grief that is thereby awakened; and strenuous is the resistance, that is thereby summoned into the future warfare; and heavy is that mourning of sackcloth and of ashes, wherewith the soul of the penitent offender is afflicted; and though he hath stumbled on the way of temptation, yet utterly he refuses to walk therein—so giving testimony to the mode, in which

the leading tendencies of his spirit have most painfully and most offensively been thwarted by the momentary power and assault of his great adversary; and that the whole drift of his choosing and deliberating and purposing faculties, is indeed on the side of God and the side of righteousness.

The remark that we made however about the things of the flesh, is not applicable to the things of the Spirit. A giving up of the mind to but one thing of the flesh, makes you a carnal man. But a spiritual man gives himself up not to one thing, but to all the things of the Spirit. To be the servant of any other master than God, marks you an idolater; and, for this purpose, it is not necessary that you should obey all the masters who are apart from God or hostile to God. But to be the servant of God Himself, you must obey Him in all things—you must aspire at least, and that in firmness and in truth, at universal conformity—you must mind, not merely one thing, but all the things which he authoritatively lays upon you. And these are just the things of the Spirit, whose fruit is not in any one branch of righteousness, or in any specific number of them—but whose fruit is in all righteousness and goodness and truth. His office is to put the law in your heart, and so to give you a taste and a liking for all its requirements. It is not enough that you maintain the sobrieties of human conduct, if not its equities also. It is not enough that you be strict in honour, if not also kind and gentle in humanity. It is not enough that you excel your fellows in all the virtues of society—you must be further arrayed in the virtues of sacredness. And neither is it enough that a general sabbath complexion be upon your history—you must proceed on Christianity being the religion of your life, being the guide and the ornament of your daily conversation—a mingling ingredient, which diffuses itself throughout the mass of your ordinary affairs—a light that sheds its pure and celestial tint over the whole of your path; and leaves not one little space in the field of humanity unirradiated by its beams.

You have already heard me expatiate

on the difficulty of ascertaining the real state and character of one's mind, by a direct examination of it; and if the immediate question were put to the inner man, whether he minded the things of the flesh or those of the Spirit, a clear answer might not so readily be obtained—and that, more especially, as they who are spiritual often feel on the one hand the instigations of the flesh; and they who are carnal have at times the visitation upon their heart, of a wish and an aspiration and an effort however ineffectual after a life of sacredness. It is well then, that this verse supplies us with a test for the resolving of this ambiguity. They who mind the things of the flesh, are they who walk after the flesh; and they who mind the things of the Spirit, are they who walk after the Spirit. With both classes, there may be the inward struggle of the opposite and conflicting elements—the one not being totally exempted from evil inclinations, and the other not being totally bereft of their longings after godliness. When we look only within, it may be hard to say from the fight that is going on, which of these two elements shall prevail. But this may be decisively gathered, if not from the battle itself, at least from the issue of the battle; or, in other words, from the way in which it terminates upon the conduct. The spiritual man is urged by the corrupt propensities of his nature—nevertheless he follows not after them, and this from that preponderance of motive and of inward power on the side of what is good, which marks his mind to be set on the things of the Spirit. The carnal man is urged by the voice of conscience, and its remonstrances against all that is evil—nevertheless he obeys it not in deed, and this from that prevalency of force and of impulse on the side of what is corrupt, which marks his mind to be set on the things of the flesh. The working of the inner mechanism is not palpable. But the result of that working on the outward history is so; and thus from the stream do we learn the nature of the fountain, and by the test of man's fruits do we know them.

LECTURE XLVIII.

ROMANS viii, 6.

“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

THE death which is here spoken of, is something more than the penal death that is inflicted on transgressors, in the way of retribution. It is not a future but a present death which is here spoken of; and arises from the obtuseness or the extinction of certain feelings and faculties in the soul, which, if awake to their corresponding objects, would uphold a life of thoughts and sensations and regards, altogether different from the actual life of unregenerated men. To the higher and spiritual life they are dead even now; and, to estimate the soreness of this deprivation, just figure an affectionate father to have a paralysis inflicted on all those domestic feelings, which bound him in love and endearment to the members of his own family. Then would you say of him, that he had become dead to the joys and the interests of home—that perhaps he was still alive to the gratifications of sense and of profligacy, but that what went to constitute the main charm of his existence had now gone into annihilation—that to what at one time was the highest pleasurable feeling of his consciousness, he had become as torpid as if he had literally expired—and that thus he was labouring under all the calamity of a death, to that which occupies a high place among the delights of the feeling and the friendly and the amiable. And it is in a sense analogous to this, that we are to understand the present death of all those who are carnally minded—not a death to any of the impressions that are made upon their senses from without—not a death to the animal enjoyments of which men are capable—not even, it may be, a death to many of the nobler delights either of the heart or of the understanding—But a death to that which when really felt and enjoyed, is found to be the supreme felicity of a man—a death to all that is spiritual—an utter extinction of those capacities by which we are fitted to prove those heavenly and seraphic extacies, that would liken us to angels—a hopeless apathy in all that regards our love to God, and to all that righteousness which bears upon it the impress of the upper sanctuary. It is our dormancy to these, which constitutes the death that is here spoken of; and in virtue of which man is bereft, if not of his being, at least of the great end of his being which is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever.

And you may further see how it is—that such a death is not merely a thing of negation, but a thing of positive wretchedness. For with the want of all that is sacred or spiritual about him, there is still a remainder of feeling, which makes him sensible of his want—a general restlessness of the soul, on whose capacities there has been inflicted a sore mutilation; and from whose aspirings after undefinable good, the object is ever melting away into hopeless and inaccessible distance—a remorse and a terror about invisible things, which are ever and anon breaking forth, even amid the busy appliance of this world's opiates to stifle and overbear them. And there are other miseries, that are sure to spring up from those carnal sensibilities which have undergone no death—from the pride that is met with incessant rebuke and mortification, by the equal pride of our fellow-men—from the selfishness that comes into collision, with all the selfishness of the unregenerated society around it—from the moral agonies which essentially adhere to malice and hatred and revenge—from the shame that is annexed, even on earth, to the pursuits of licentiousness—from the torture that lieth in its passions, and the gloomy desolation of heart which follows the indulgence of them—All these give to the sinner his foretaste of hell on this side of death; and, whether they be aggravated or not by the fire and the brimstone and the arbitrary inflictions that are conceived to be discharged upon him in the place of vengeance—still they are enough, when earth is swept away, with all its refuges of amusement and business and guilty dissipation, in which the mind can now be lulled into a forgetfulness of itself—they are enough to entail upon the second and the eternal death, a burden of enormous and incalculable wretchedness—a curse so felt and so agonized under by the utterances of condemnation, as to make the utterance of Cain their theme of wailing and of weeping through all eternity, even that their punishment is greater than they can bear.

From what we have said of the death of those who are carnally, you will be at no loss to understand what is meant by the life of those who are spiritually minded. We read of those who are alienated from the life of God, and to this it is that the spiritual find readmittance. They

before stood afar off, and now are brought nigh. The blood of Christ hath consecrated for them a way of access; and the fruit of that access is delight in God—the charm of a confidence, which they never felt before, in His friendly and fatherly regard to them—a new moral gladness in the contemplation of that character, which now stands revealed in all its graces, while it is disarmed of all its terrors—an assimilation of their own character to His; and so a taste for charity and truth and holiness; and a joy, both in the cultivation of all these virtues, and in the possession of a heart at growing unison with the mind and will of the Godhead. These are the ingredients of a present life, which is the token and the foretaste of life everlasting—an existence in the feelings and concerns of which, all earthly existence is tasteless and unsatisfying; and to be awakened whereunto, is a transition as great and more joyful than for a dead man to be awakened from his grave.

But let me pass on from the life to the peace of those who are spiritually minded. There are two great causes of disturbance, to which the peace of the heart is exposed. The first is a brooding anxiety, lest we shall be bereft or disappointed of some object on which our desires are set. The second is the agitation felt by all who have a taste for human kindness; and which taste is most painfully agonised, amid the fierceness and the tumult and the din of human controversy. You will at once perceive how the man who is spiritually-minded, rises above the first of these disquietudes—for there is an object paramount to all which engrosses the care of a worldly man, and on which his desires are supremely set; and so what to others are overwhelming mortifications, to him are but the passing annoyances of a journey; and the same revolution of fortune which would plunge the earthly in despair, leaves to him who is heavenly a splendid reversion of hope and of happiness. So that neither can the actual visitation of any disaster so utterly discomfort him; nor can the apprehension of its coming so torment his bosom, with the dark imagery of poverty and ruin and blasted anticipations. To him there is an open vista, through which he might descry a harbour and a home, on the other side of the stormy passage that leads to it; and this he finds enough to bear him up, under all that vexes and dispirits other men. The pure and lofty serene which lies beyond the grave, gives a serene to his own bosom. The main question of his being is settled; and that enables him to sit loose, and to be lightly affected, by all the inferior questions. His soul is at anchor; and so he is kept

steady, under all the fluctuations that would make utter shipwreck of the desires or the delights of the worldly. He is freed from the cares of fame, or of fortune, or of any other interest upon earth; and with a mind engrossed by that which is spiritual, and without room in it for the anxieties of what is seen and temporal, he, in as far as these anxieties are concerned, is at peace.

I know not a finer illustration of this topic, than one which may be gathered from a recorded conversation, between Dr. Carey the missionary at Serampore and a wealthy merchant in Calcutta. One of his clerks had determined to give up all the prospects and emoluments of a lucrative situation, and henceforth devote himself to the work of evangelising the heathen. His employer, to whom this looked a very odd and inexplicable resolution, called on Dr. Carey; and enquired from him the terms, and the advantages, and the preferments of this new line, to which a very favourite servant whom he was exceedingly loath to part with was now on the eve of betaking himself; and was very much startled to understand, that it was altogether a life of labour, and that there was no earthly remuneration whatever—that, in truth, it was not competent for any member of their mission to have property at all—that beyond those things which are needful for the body, there was not an enjoyment within the power or purchase of money, which any one of them thought of aspiring after—that each of them, free from care like a commoner of nature, trusted that as the day came the provision would come, and never yet had been disappointed of their confidence—that, with hearts set on their own eternity and the eternity of their fellow-creatures, they had neither time nor space for the workings of this world's ambition. So that, however occupied about the concerns of the soul, each felt light as the bird upon a thorn, about the food and the raiment and the sufficiency of coming days, all which they cast upon Providence, and had ever yet found that Providence was indeed worthy of their reliance. There is a very deep interest to my mind in such a dialogue, between a devoted missionary and a busy active aspiring merchant; but the chief interest of it lay in the confession of the latter, who seems to have been visited with a glimpse of the secret of true happiness, and that after all he himself was not on the way to it—whose own experience told him that, prosperous as he was, there was a plague in his very prosperity that marred his enjoyment of it—that the thousand crosses and hazards and entanglements of mercantile adventure, had

kept him perpetually on the rack, and rified his heart of all those substantial sweets by which alone it can be purely and permanently gladdened. And from him it was indeed an affecting testimony—when, on contrasting his own life of turmoil and vexation and checkered variety, with the simple but lofty aims and settled dependence and unencumbered because wholly unambitious hearts of these pious missionaries, he fetched a deep sigh and said it was indeed a most enticing cause.

And some of you perhaps, though not spiritual men, may have caught a like glimpse of the peace that the spiritually-minded enjoy in the recurrence of your weekly Sabbath—the very chime of whose morning bells may have the effect of tranquillising you under the weight of this world's cares; and even from the pulpit ministrations may there descend a power to soothe and to sweeten and to elevate your bosoms, and, while it continues to operate, may all the perplexities of your business and common life be forgotten. Now just figure this influence, which with you may be flitting and momentary like a vision of romance—just figure it to be substantiated into a practical and a permanent habit of heavenly-mindedness, and then you have the peace of the spiritual realised throughout the whole extent of their every-day history.

There is another cause, by which the peace of many a heart is sadly torn—not by the fear of future misfortune but by the actual feeling of present malice and hostility—by being doomed to breathe in the rough atmosphere of debate; and having to witness the withering coldness and alienation that sit on the human countenance, as well as to hear the jarring discords of rancour and controversy when they come forth in unfriendly utterance from human lips. There are some minds to which the frown, and the fierceness, and the incessant threatenings of this moral warfare, are utterly insupportable—some who have a taste for cordiality and cannot be happy, when its smile and its softness and all its blessed charities are withdrawn from them—who, rather than be placed in the midst of unkindred spirits, would give up society and seek for recreation and repose among the peaceful glories of nature—who long to be embowered amid the sweets of a solitude and a stillness, into which the din of this fatiguing world would never enter; and where, in the calm delights of meditation and piety, they might lull their hearts into the forgetfulness of all its injustice and all its violence. It must have been some such affection as this that prompted the Archbishop Leighton, when he breathed out his desires for the lodge

of a wayfaring man in the wilderness; and that haunted the whole public life of Luther, who, though dragged forth to the combats and the exposures of a very wide arena, yet felt all along how uncongenial they were to the right condition and well-being of the human spirit; and so did he unceasingly aspire after a tranquillity which he was never permitted to enjoy—a nursling of that storm which he had enough of softness most utterly to hate, and enough of intrepidity most manfully to brave—by nature a lover of quietness, yet by Providence had he his discipline and his doom amongst life's most boisterous agitations.

There is nought in the character of the spiritually-minded, that exempts them from the outward disturbance, which has its source in the hatred and hostility of other men; but there is so much in this character that gives an inward stability, and sustains the patience and the hope of our souls even under the most outrageous ebullitions of human malignity, as most nobly to accredit the declaration of our text—that to be spiritually-minded is not only life but peace. For there is the sense of a present God, in the feeling of whose love there is a sunshine which the world knoweth not, and which even the lour of a hostile world in arms cannot utterly darken; and there is the prospect of a future heaven, in whose sheltering bosom it is known that the toil and the turbulence of this weary pilgrimage will soon be over; and there is even a charity, that mellows our present sensation of painfulness, and makes the revolt that is awakened by the coarse and vulgar exhibition of human asperity to be somewhat more tolerable—for we cannot fail to perceive, how much of delusion at all times mingles with the impetuosity of irritated feelings; and that were there more of mutual knowledge among the individuals of our species, there would be vastly more of mutual candour and amenity and love; and that the Saviour's plea in behalf of His enemies, is in some sense applicable to all the enemies that we have in the world—“They know not what they do.” The menace and the fury and the fell vindictiveness that look all so formidable, are as much due to an infirmity of the understanding as to a diabolical propensity of the heart; and it does alleviate the offence that is given to our moral taste by the spectacle of malevolence, when one reflects that malice is not its only ingredient—that it often hangs as much by an error of judgment, as by a perversity of the moral nature—that it needs only to be enlightened in order to be rectified; and that therefore there may be hope of deliverance from the ferocity of one's antagonists

even in this world, as well as a sure and everlasting escape from it in those regions of beauty and of bliss, around which there is an impassable barrier of protection against all that offendeth—where, after having crossed the stormy passage of this world, the spirit will have to repose itself in peace and charity for ever.

In one word, and for the full vindication

of our text, let it be observed, that, though in the character of being spiritually-minded there is no immunity from the tribulations that are in the world, yet there is a hiding-place and a refuge where the spiritual alone can find entry—so that though in the world they do have tribulations, yet well may they be of good cheer, for in Christ they do have peace.

LECTURE XLIX.

ROMANS viii, 7, 8.

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

BUT it might appear from the 7th verse, that the peace spoken of in the last verse is peace with God—for the enmity which is here ascribed to the opposite state of being carnally minded, is enmity against God. Where there is enmity between two parties, each is displeased with the other; and the enmity of the carnal mind thus involves in it two distinct particulars. First, it implies a feeling on the part of him who is its owner of hostility against God, and this necessarily comes out of the very definition of the carnal mind. It were a contradiction in terms, to say otherwise of the carnal mind than that it was enmity against God—for how, if all its preferences be toward the creature, can it be otherwise affected toward that Creator, who looks with a jealous eye on all such preference, and fastens upon it the guilt of idolatry—how, if its regards are wholly directed to sense and time, can it be otherwise than in a state of disregard to Him who is a spirit and invisible? If the law of God be a law of supreme love toward himself, how is it possible for that mind to be in subjection to such a law, whose affections are wholly set on the things and the interests of a passing world? It not only is not subject to this law, but it cannot be so—else it were no longer carnal. It would instantly be stripped of this epithet, and become a different thing from what it was before, did it undergo a transference in its likings from the things that are made to Him who is the maker of them all. It has all the certainty in it of an identical proposition, when it is said of the carnal mind that it neither is nor can be subject to God's law. Ere it become subject, it must resign its present nature and be carnal no longer. The epithet then will not apply to it; and though a mind before carnal should now have gathered

upon it the character of heaven, and become a devoted and willing and most affectionate subject under the government of God—still it holds true of the carnal mind that it is not so subject, neither indeed can be.

But it is not only logically true, that the carnal mind cannot be subject to God's law—the same thing is also true physically and experimentally. There is no power in the mind by which it can change itself. It has a natural sovereignty, we admit, which extends a certain way over the doings of the outer man; but it has no such sovereignty over the desires of the inner man. It can, for example, constrain the man in whom it resides to eat a sour apple rather than a sweet. But it cannot constrain him to like a sour apple rather than a sweet. There are many things which it finds to be practicable, which it does not find to be palatable; and it has just as little power over the taste and affections of the mind toward God, as it has over the bodily organ of taste, or the law of its various relishes for the various food which is offered to it. There are a thousand religious-looking things which can be done; but, without such a renewal of the spirit as the spirit itself cannot achieve—these things cannot be delighted in, cannot be rejoiced in. But if not rejoiced in, they really are not religious, however religious they may look. And this is the great moral helplessness, under which we labour. We can compel our feet to the house of God, but we cannot compel our feelings to a sacred pleasure in its exercises. We can take a voluntary part in the music of its psalms, but we cannot force into our hearts the melody of praise. We can bid our hands away from depredation and violence, but we cannot bid away the ap-

petite of covetousness from our bosoms. We can refrain ourselves from the infliction of all outward hurt upon our neighbour; but tell me, if we can so muster and so dispose of our affections at the word of command, as that we shall love him as we do ourselves. And, ascending from the second great commandment to the first great commandment of the law, we can, it may be thought, keep the Sabbaths of the Lord and acquit ourselves of many of the drudgeries of a carnal obedience—while, instead of loving Him with all our heart and soul and strength and mind, there exists against Him an antipathy, which we can no more extirpate, than we can cause a sycamore tree to be plucked up by the roots at the utterance of a voice—So that, in reference to the law which claims a supremacy over the heart, and taketh cognizance of all its affections, we are not and we cannot be subject to it.

And here I am sensible, that, when I charge you with a positive enmity against God—when I say that He is not merely the object of indifference, but of hatred—when I affirm of the human heart, not merely a light and heedless unconcern about Him, but also the virulency of a strong hostile affection against Him—I might not, in all this assertion, obtain the exact or the willing responsiveness of your own consciences. You may be ready to answer, that, really we are not at all aware of any thing half so foul or so enormous at work in our bosoms, as any ill-will towards God. We may be abundantly regardless of Him and of His laws; but we feel not any thing that approaches to a resentful emotion excited within us by His name. We may not think of Him often; and perhaps are very well satisfied to do without Him, if He would but let us alone. But, examine ourselves as we may, we can detect no affirmative malignity in our affections towards Him; and for once we have lighted upon a case, where the dogmata of a stern theology are really not at one with the decisions of our own intimate and personal experience.

Now on this we have to observe, that the greatest enemy whom you have in the world will excite no malevolent feeling in your heart, so long as you do not think of him. All the time that he is absent from your remembrance, he has no more power to stir up the painful and the bitter feeling of hostility within you, than if he were blotted out from the map of existence. And so let it not be wondered at, that you should not be ruffled out of your complacency by the thought of God, when in fact, for days or hours together, the thought is utterly away from you—

that no acrimony about Him should ever disturb you, during the whole of that period, when at play or pleasing yourselves with His gifts, the giver is wholly unminded—that, instead of carrying the tone or the aspect of an enraged adversary toward God or any one else, you should simply appear in the light of an easy comfortable good-humoured man, while, busied with the enjoyments of life, you have no room in your regards for Him who gave the life, and scattered these enjoyments over it. When one is in a deep and dreamless slumber, his very resentments are hushed, along with all his other sensibilities, into oblivion; and though in the latent dormitory within, there should lie a fell and unextinguishable hatred against the deadliest of his foes, yet even the presence of that foe would awaken no asperity; and, while under the immediate eye of him who with implacable revenge he could call forth to the field of mutual extermination, might he lie in all the meekness of infancy. And so of you who are not awake unto God—who are sunk in dullest apathy about Him and all His concerns—who, profoundly asleep and forgetful, are really no judges of the recoil that would come upon your spirits, did He but stand before you in all His characters of uncompromising truth, and inflexible justice, and sacred jealousy, and awful unapproachable holiness. By the thought of this Being you are not disturbed, because, steeped in the lethargy of nature, it is a thought that does not come with a realizing touch upon your perceptions. You may even hear His name, and this may stir up some vague conception of an unseen Spirit; and you still may have no feeling of that enmity which our text has charged upon you. But the conception of whom or of what we would ask?—Is it of the true God in His true attributes—or a being of your own imagination? Is it of that God who is a Spirit and claims of you those spiritual services which are due unto the character that belongs to Him? Is it of Him, the very view and aspect of whom would mar all your earthly gratifications, or put them utterly to flight, because of His paramount demand for the affections and pursuits of godliness? Oh how little do we know of ourselves, or of the mysteries of our inner man, which may lie hid and dormant for years—till some untried circumstances shall form the occasion that proves us, and reveals to us all which is in our hearts. And thus the manifestation to our understandings of God, not as we fancy Him to be, but of God as He actually is, would call forth of its hiding-place the unappeasable enmity of nature against Him; and would make it plain to the

conscience of the carnal man, how little sufferance he hath for the God that would bereave him of his present affections, and implant others in their room. The disrelish would be just as strong, as are the disrelish and opposition between the life of sense and the life of faith. Did God reveal Himself now to the unconverted sinner, He would strike the same arrow into his heart, that will be felt by the condemned sinner, who eyes on the day of reckoning the sacredness and the majesty of that Being whom he has offended. You have heard Him by the hearing of the ear, and yet remain unconvinced of nature's enmity. Could you say with Job that now mine eye seeth, then would you see cause with him, wherefore you should abhor yourself, and repent in dust and in ashes.

V. 8. My remarks have been hitherto on the hostility that is in our hearts towards God; but this verse leads us to consider the hostility that is in God's heart towards us. If we cannot please God we necessarily displease Him; nor need we to marvel, why all they who are in the flesh are the objects of His dissatisfaction. We may be still in the flesh, yet do a thousand things, as I said before, that, in the letter and in the exterior of them, bear a visible conformity to God's will, and yet cannot be pleasing to Him. They may be done from the dread of His power—they may be done under the trembling apprehension of a threatened penalty—they may be done to appease the restlessness of an alarmed conscience—they may be done under the influence of a religion that derives all its power over us from education or custom, or the exactions of a required and established decency; and yet not be done with the concurrence of the heart, not be done from a liking either to the task or to the bidder of it, not from a delight in the commandment but from the slavish fear of that master who issued it. And however multiplied the offerings may be, which we laid on the altar of such a reluctant obedience as this, they will not and cannot be pleasing to God. Would any father amongst you be satisfied with such a style of compliance and submission from your own children? Would the labour of their hands be counted enough, though the love of their hearts was withheld from you? Would you think that you had all out of them which was desirable, because you had as much of drudgery as was laid upon them—however grievous you said was the distaste which they felt for you and for all your requirements? If it were quite palatable, that their inclinations were in a state of revolt against you—would you think it ample compensation, that you still could restrain their outward movements,

and by the force or terror of your authority, could compel from them the homage of all their services; Oh let us know if you could sit down in complacency, because of such an obedience from your own children? And if you but saw that in their hearts, they were inly pining and murmuring and feeling resentfully, because of the utter repugnance which they felt to you and to your exactions, were it not the most wretched of all atonements, that still the bidding was executed, and still the task was performed by them?

And it is thus that I would like to reach the hearts of the careless, with the alarm of a guilt and a danger, far greater than they have ever been aware of. I should like them to understand, that they are indeed the haters of God—that they hate Him for what he is, and hate Him for what He requires at their hands; and though this hostile propensity of theirs lies hid in deep insensibility, when, amidst the bustle and the engrossment and the intense pursuits or gratifications of the world, there is nothing to call it out into distinct exhibition—yet that a demonstration of the divine will or the divine character is all which is needed, to bring up the latent virulence that is lurking in the bosom, and to convict the now placid and amiable man that he is indeed an enemy to his Maker. And in these circumstances, is his Maker too an enemy to him. The frown of an offended Law-giver resteth on every one, who lives in habitual violation of His first and greatest commandment. There is a day of reckoning that awaits him. There is a true and unerring judgment which is in reserve for him. That enmity which now perhaps is a secret to himself, will become manifest on the great occasion when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open; and the justice of God will then be vindicated, in dealing with him as an enemy. Such is the condition, and such are the prospects of all who remain what Nature made them—who, still in the flesh, have not been translated to that new moral existence into which all are ushered who are born again; and who by simply being lovers of the creature more than of the Creator, prove themselves to be still carnally minded and to be the heirs of death.

And it is only by taking a deep view of the disease, that you can be led adequately to estimate the remedy. There is a way of transition from the carnal to the spiritual. There is a distinct and applicable call, that may be addressed even to the farthest off in alienation; and which, if he will hear and follow, shall transform him from one of the children of this world to one of the children of

light. The trumpet giveth not an uncertain sound, for it declares the remission of sin through the blood of Jesus, and repentance through the Spirit which is at His giving; and your faith in the one will infallibly bring down upon you, all the aids and influences of the other. To you who are afar off, is this salvation preached; and the grand connecting tie by which it is secured and appropriated to your soul, is simply the credit that you give to the word of this testimony. Many feel not the disease; and so all the proclamations of grace pass unheeded by. Many listen to them as they would to a pleasant song; but the form of sound words is enough for them, and the realities which these words express never find admittance into their bosoms. But some there are whose ears and whose eyes are opened—who are made to hear with effect, and to behold the wondrous things that are contained in the word of God. With them the gospel is something more than a sound or an imagination. To them it

bears all the character of a great authentic transaction between Heaven and Earth. And they see God as God in Christ waiting to be gracious; and they no longer stand in dread of a justice that is now most abundantly satisfied; and they can brave the contemplation of all the attributes, wherewith mercy to themselves is now blended in fullest harmony; and they rejoice to behold that the throne of Heaven is at once upheld in all its august dignity, and yet that even the chief of sinners has a warrant to approach it; and while they take to themselves the security that is guaranteed by the atonement on the cross, they feel how that very atonement affords most entire illustration of the sacredness of the Godhead. And thus, uniting peace to their own souls with glory to God in the highest; they experience a love which was before unfelt, which weans them from all their idolatrous affections, and translates them from the state of the carnally to that of the spiritually minded.

LECTURE L.

ROMANS viii, 9.

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

THERE is nought more undeniable, than the antipathy of nature to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. This, it is likely, may have been felt by many of yourselves—and many have been the devices of human ingenuity, for mitigating the offensive features of the truth as it is in Jesus. We are not sure but that the doctrine of the Spirit calls out a more painful revolt from the children of this world, than even the doctrine of the Sacrifice. At least, the attempts and plausibilities have been just as frequent, for explaining it away. And this, perhaps, is the right place, for adverting to the way in which it has been endeavoured, to make all that is revealed of the Holy Ghost and of His regenerating influence upon man, more palatable than it naturally is to unrenewed taste—more fitted to satisfy the demand which obtains for a religion, that shall be altogether rational and devoid of mystery.

Agreeably to this it has been affirmed, that to have the Spirit of God implies no personal visitation by Him upon the soul; and, more particularly, no indwelling on His part in man, as His residence or as His habitation. One, it is thought, may be rightly enough said to have the Spirit

of God, if, from any cause whatever, it so happens that there be a resemblance of character and disposition and principle between him and the Divinity—just as any active and devoted philanthropist of our day may be said to have the spirit of Howard, without its ever being imagined, that there has been any transmigration into his body of that soul by which the body of Howard was animated. All that is intended is, that there is a common or kindred character between the one philanthropist and the other—just as we would say of a philosopher, that he had the spirit of Newton; or of a daring conspirator that he had the soul of Cataline. And thus has it been attempted to gloss over the truth, that there is in the souls of believers an actual occupancy by a Spirit from on high, or even so much as the communication of any influence from the one to the other; and to have the Spirit of God is understood as nothing more, than to be in the possession of god-like excellencies or virtues—that to have the Spirit of Christ is nothing more, than just to have the like mind in us that was also in the Lord Jesus.

It is their favourite imagination of the

sufficiency of human nature, which attaches them to this style of interpretation. They look upon it as a nature liable to the errors and infirmities of an occasional waywardness—but radically and substantially as sound; and possessed within itself of energies and principles enough, for the attainment of all that spiritual excellence which qualifies for heaven. They deem it to be in the power of ordinary moral suasion from without, to guide and accomplish humanity for the joys of an everlasting state; and they utterly repudiate the conception of any thing so altogether visionary in their eyes, as that of a new and preternatural infusion from above, by which the mind of man is transformed—and an impulse given, diametrically opposite to the bias of those native and original propensities which belong to it. They count, in fact, upon no greater transition, than from what is held base and dishonourable in our world, to what is held in it worthy of moral estimation. Now the fact is undeniable, that there are very many who stand in no need of any such transition at all; however great the revolution of principle must be—by which, from the creatures of sight and of sense and of mere earthliness, we are led to walk by faith—to be habitually and practically conversant with the things of an unseen world—to hold the concerns of immortality, as paramount to all the pursuits and interests of a fleeting pilgrimage; and, above all, to have a continual respect unto God as the supreme Master both of our affections and of our performances—as the Being with whom we most emphatically have to do. Now you, I trust, are aware of the necessity of this transition—of the magnitude of that change which all must undergo, ere they are fit for that heaven, the delights and the occupations of which are at such variance with the delights and occupations of this planet, now in a state of exile from heaven's family. And in proportion as you highly estimate the requisite transformation, so will you highly estimate the requisite power for carrying it into accomplishment; and you will be prepared for all the descriptions which the Bible gives, of the utter helplessness of man in himself for so mighty and decisive a change upon his own constitution—that just as there is nought of energy in a dead body for the revival of itself, but the principle of animation must come to it from without—so we, to be quickened unto a right sense of spiritual things, and to be made alive to the power of them, must be the subjects of a foreign or adventitious influence, which has no original residence in our nature; must be born again; must have the Spirit of God to

dwell in us; must be operated upon by an energy as distinct and separate from our own proper selves, as the body of Christ was: And accordingly are we told in one of these verses, that it is He who raised up Christ from the dead, who also quickens our mortal bodies by the Spirit which dwelleth in us.

It is this, in fact, which advances our state from that of being in the flesh to that of our being in the Spirit. We are in the latter state—if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in us. It is upon the entrance of Him, who bloweth where He listeth, that the whole of this great translation hinges; and it is well that you know, in all its certainty and distinctness, what that event is by which we are called out from death unto life—from being one of the children of this world, to being one of the children of God's kingdom.

'Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.' Still to have the Spirit of Christ is here to be understood, not in the light of our possessing a kindred character to that of Christ, but of our being the subjects of an actual and personal inhabitation by the Spirit. The Spirit of God may be denominated the Spirit of Christ—either because the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son; or, more particularly, because the Son, now that He is exalted at the Father's right hand, is entrusted with the dispensation of Him. You know the order of this economy in the work of our redemption. Christ finished on earth the work that was given Him to do. He yielded, in our stead, a perfect obedience to the law of God; and He suffered, in our stead, all the penalties that were annexed to its violation. And having thus wrought our acceptance with God, He attained as His reward, the power of sanctifying all those whom He had saved. That instrument was put into His hands, by which He could wash away the pollution of that sin, whose guilt He had expiated—and by which He could beautify

in all the lustre of heaven's graces, those for whom He had purchased a right of admittance into heaven's family. Our renewal unto holiness and virtue, is, in fact, part of the fruit of the travail of His soul; and the way in which it is accomplished, is, by the forthgoing of the Spirit at the bidding or will of our exalted Saviour. When He ascended on high, it is said, that He led captivity captive, and obtained gifts for men, even for the rebellious; and the most supereminent of these gifts is the Holy Spirit. It is through Christ that the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, are shed upon us abundantly. It is when the Spirit descends upon us, that the power

of Christ is said to rest upon us. Hence the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are equivalent, the one to the other. And as the Saviour uniformly regenerates all whom He redeems—as the conjunction is invariable, between the penalty being lifted off from our persons, and a purifying influence being laid upon our characters—as it is true, even in the moral sense of the term, that if He wash us not we have no part in Him—The truth is inevitable, and cannot be too urgently impressed on all our consciences, that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.

But though it must not be denied, that to have the Spirit of Christ, implies the entrance and the abode of a personal visitor with the soul, yet we have no other way of ascertaining that we have been thus privileged, but by our having become like in character with the Saviour. We can only judge of His being in us, by the impress He has made upon us. He often enters without one note of preparation, like the wind that bloweth where he listeth, and we know not whence he cometh. It is by the fruit alone that we know; and there is not another method of verifying that He has been at work with our souls, but by the workmanship that is manifest thereupon. So that though to have the Spirit of Christ, be something more than that our Spirit is like unto His—yet it is by the latter only as the effect, that we can infer the operation of the Saviour as the cause. And therefore the question, whether you belong to the Saviour or not, still hinges upon the question—whether there be the same mind in you that was also in the Lord Jesus.

And therefore it is thus that we ought to examine ourselves. That we may know what to pray for, we should advert to the work of God's Spirit upon our soul—as that by which alone the requisite transformation into another character can take effect upon us. But then to fix and ascertain the question, whether there have been any such work, we have nought to do but to read the lineaments of that character. It is right to be humbled into the impression of our own original and utter worthlessness, as destitute of any good thing; and, as wanting the power in ourselves, either to import what is good from abroad, or to raise it from within by any operation which lies within the compass of nature's mechanism. It is but proper for us to know, that for all that is of spiritual worth or estimation belonging to us, we stand indebted to an influence that is exterior to ourselves, and that comes to us from abroad—so as that each may say with the apostle, "Nevertheless not me but the grace of God that is in me." Yet

ought it never to be forgotten, that generally it is by the result of the visitation, and not by any sensible circumstances attendant upon the time of it, that we come to know whether the Spirit of God be really in us or not. It hinges on the question, whether we are like unto God or like unto Christ, who is His image, and was His sensible representative in the world; and thus the most direct way of settling the inquiry, is to compare our character with that of the Saviour—our history with the history and doings of Christ upon the earth.

And yet at present we should not like to discourage any, from their intended approach to His sacrament,* because of the width and magnitude of that actual dissimilarity, which obtains between their Saviour and themselves. They cannot dare to affirm, that they have yet grown up unto the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. They perhaps are nought but humbled and abashed—when they compare their own attainments of patience, and piety, and unwearied beneficence, with those of that high and heavenly exemplar, who is set before them in the gospel. They could not venture to sit down and participate in the coming festival, if the question turned on such a family likeness between them and the Master of the entertainment, as would mark them to be children of the same God, and members of the same spiritual brotherhood; and therefore let us assure them, that their right to place themselves at the table of the Lord, is not an argument of degree as to their actual progress in the divine life, but a question of principle as to their aims and their desires after it. Do they hunger and thirst after righteousness? Do they look unto Christ, not merely for the purpose of confidence, but also for the purpose of imitation? Is it the honest aspiration of their souls, under all the helplessness they feel, and the burden of their deficiencies over which they mourn and are in heaviness—that they might indeed be visited by a more copious descent of the Spirit's influence, and so attain a higher conformity to the image of the Saviour. Then sure, as we are, that Christ would not have spurned them from His presence, had He still been sojourning amongst us in the world—neither can we interdict the approaches of such unto the Saviour, through one of His own bidden and appointed ordinances. The Sacrament we hold to be not merely a privilege, but a means of grace—a privilege to all, who choose the Saviour as their alone dependence for time and for

* Delivered shortly before the celebration of the Lord's supper.

eternity; and a means of grace to all, who, humbled at their distance and deficiency from the perfections of the sanctuary above, seek to the instituted ordinances of the scene of preparation below, for the advancement of their meetness for the inheritance. Even for that very Spirit, the presence of which you long to ascertain, I would bid you come to this place of meeting; and see whether the blessing will not be shed forth upon you. Turn unto me, saith God, and I will pour out my Spirit. And sure we are, that there is not a likelier attitude for receiving the full and the free supplies of it, than when you look in faith to the consecrated

symbols of that atonement, through which alone it is that a sinner may draw nigh—and over which alone it is, that a holy God can rejoice over you. Come—but come with a sincere purpose. Come in honesty. Come aware of the total renovation which your personal Christianity implies. Come free of all those superficial and meagre conceptions of it, which are so current in the midst of this really infidel world. Come resolved to be and to do all that the Master of the assembly would have you; and look unto Him for the perfection of His own work upon your character, that in you He may see the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

LECTURE LI.

ROMANS viii, 10.

“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.”

I HAVE already affirmed, that to have Christ in us, is tantamount to the Spirit being in us. Christ dwells in us by the Holy Ghost. It is not because of this that the body is dead; but it is because of sin. The work of the Spirit in us does not counteract the temporal death of the body, however much it may counteract the second or eternal death to which the soul would have else been liable. It does not pour the elixir of immortality into the material frame—however much it may strengthen and prepare the imperishable spirit for its immortal well-being. Still, after Christ has taken up his abode within us and hath made a temple of our body, it is a temple that is to be destroyed. There remaineth a virus in the fabric, that sooner or later will work its dissolution; and as the law of temporal death is still unrepealed, even in the case of those whom Christ hath redeemed from the curse of the law; and as, in harmony with this palpable fact, there is still the doctrine that sin lurks and lingers in the moral system even after the renovation which the Spirit hath given to it—this suggests a very important analogy, from the farther prosecution of which we may perhaps gather, not a useless speculation, but a substantial and a practical benefit.

Suppose for a moment that the body, by some preternatural operation, were wholly delivered of its corrupt ingredient—that the sinful tendencies which reside there were not only kept in check, but eradicated, so that all its appetites were at one with the desires of a pure and perfect

spirit—Then there would be nothing to hinder our reception even now into the courts of the celestial. With such a harmony in our moral system as a soul all whose aspirations were on the side of holiness, and nothing to thwart these aspirations in the materialism by which it was encompassed, we see nought wanting to constitute a heavenly or an angelic character—nor do we understand why death should in that case interpose between our state of being upon earth, and our state of blessedness for ever. And accordingly, we read that on Nature's dissolution, when the dead shall rise from their graves in triumph, they who remain alive and who have never fallen asleep must, to become incorruptible also, at least be changed. The change on those who are alive and caught up to meet the Lord in the air, does for them what the death and the resurrection do for those who have been saints upon earth, ere they ascend as embodied saints into heaven. It is on the corruptible putting on incorruption, that the mortal puts on immortality; and the reason why even those in whom Christ dwells have still a death to undergo, is that sin, though it no longer tyrannizes, still adheres to them—and the wearing down of the body by disease, and the arrest that is laid on all the functions and operations of its physiology, and the transformation of it into inanimate matter, and the mouldering of it into dust, and then its reascend from the grave in which it for ages may have lain—These it would appear are the steps of a refining process, whereby the now vile

body is changed into a glorious one; and the regenerated spirit is furnished with its suitable equipment for the delights and the services of eternity.

To the question then, why is it, that, though Christ dwells in us, still the body is dead or liable to death—the answer is, ‘because of sin;’ and from this very answer do we gather, that sin is still present with every believer in the world, and as universally present too as death is universal. In regard to temporal death, there is one lot we know that falleth to the wicked and the righteous. And therefore though these two classes do not stand alike related to sin, yet both are so related to it as to partake in common of the mortality, which, ere they are so changed as to become incorruptible, all it appears must undergo.

The righteous, we all see, die in common with the wicked; and the text tells us that the death of the body is because of sin. There must therefore be something that respects sin, which the righteous hold in common with the wicked—securing that, because of it, there is a common suffering which both do undergo. What then is this common relation which they hold to sin as the cause, and in virtue of which they have a common participation in that bodily death that is here represented as the consequence?

In the first place, it cannot surely be that it is still inflicted on both as the judicial sentence which has been attached to transgression. It is very true, the announcement from the first has been, that he who sinneth shall die; and that, in reference to all from whom the condemnation hath not been turned away, temporal death may be regarded as forming a part of their sentence. But it cannot surely be viewed in this light, in reference to those of whom the Bible says that unto them there is no condemnation; in reference to those who savingly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so have the benefit of that expiation which He hath rendered, and of that everlasting righteousness which He hath brought in. It cannot for a moment be thought, that any suffering of theirs is at all requisite to complete that great satisfaction which was made on Calvary for the sins of the faithful. It is said of Him, who by one offering hath perfected the work of our reconciliation and made an end of iniquity, that He trod the wine press alone and that of the people there was none with Him. To Him belongs the whole glory of our atonement. He bore it all, for He looked and there was none to help, He wondered that there was none to uphold; and then did His own arm bring salvation. It cannot be that by any death of ours then, we eke out, as it were,

the satisfaction which hath been already rendered for sin; and when Paul says that he fills up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ in his flesh, it can never be that by any sufferings which the believer can endure, not even by the last and most appalling of them all, he makes good any deficiency in that great act, by which, and by which alone, transgression was forgiven, and the controversy between God and the sinner, is for ever set at rest.

The meaning then of a believer's death, is not to expiate the guilt of his sin—it is the root of the existence of it. It is not to cancel the punishment, for that is already done—it is to give the finishing blow, as it were, to the crucifixion of its power. It is not inflicted upon him as the last discharge of the wrath of God, after which he is conclusively delivered therefrom. But it is sent to him as a release from the plague and the presence of that corruption, which adheres to it would seem, as long as the body adheres to us. It has not, it would appear, been made part of the economy of grace, that, on our entering within its limits by accepting of the gospel, we are forthwith delivered from those ceaseless and besetting tendencies, which attach to our present bodily constitution. This could have been done without death. If a man, on the moment of believing, were just to be suddenly changed, in the way that they shall be who are alive at the last day, and are caught up alive to meet our Lord in the air—then at once would he have been made sinless in the material framework, as well as sinless in the regenerated part of his nature; and without the stepping-stones of a death, and a resolution of his body into sepulchral rottenness and dust, and a resurrection of it free from the taint by which it now is pervaded—without these stepping-stones at all, might he at once have winged his ascent into heaven, and had its gate opened to him—because now, as free from the presence of sin as he was from its penalty. And thus, without passing at all through the dark valley of the shadow of death, might he have been put into immediate preparation for the pure and lofty communions of paradise. This might have been the order of God's administration, but it is not so in fact. He hath arranged it otherwise. He hath thought fit, instead of working a miraculous change on the appetites of the body, to work that change on the principles and desires of the spirit—to renew the inner man, but to perpetuate for a season the outer man. He hath thought fit to make that Gospel by which peace is established between God and the believer—still to make it the harbinger, not of peace but of war, among the elements of that moral system which is in

the believer himself. There might have been an instantaneous transition, to all the repose and harmony and serene triumph of a virtue, that actuated every faculty of the mind; and met with nothing to thwart or to impede its dictates, in the vile affections of a body that still would grovel, were it permitted, among its own base and sordid gratifications. But this is not the way in which it hath appeared meet unto the wisdom of God, that our translation shall take place from earth to heaven. Like the processes both of His natural and His moral kingdom, this is accomplished not instantly but gradually; and there is a long intervening series of conflicts and exercises through life, and a death and a burial and a resurrection after it, ere the whole body and soul and spirit shall be fully matured for the high fellowships of eternity. And meanwhile, what Christ said of the world, holds true of every individual who receives Him—"I came not to bring peace but a sword." I came to raise an internal war among the feelings and the faculties of those who believe in me. I came to infuse a new principle within the limits of their moral economy, against which all the powers and principles of the old man will rise up in battle-array; and, instead of that harmony within which is felt by the seraph above, and even felt by many a secure and satisfied sinner below—there will be the war of rival tendencies, by which the believer's heart shall be kept in constant agitation; there will be all the pains and perplexities of many a sore conflict within; there will be an agony so fierce as to have been imaged in Scripture by a crucifixion; there will not it is true be unmitigated suffering—there will be a mixture of triumph and of tumult throughout the period of that singular transition which each believer must undergo—of triumph to that spirit which is now made willing, and of anguish to that body which is now made a sacrifice.

You see then, I trust, what that is of sin, which is common here to the children of light, and the children of this world; and what that is which constitutes the distinction between them. While both are alive upon earth, they have both one kind of body; and just as the eye of each takes in the same impression from the same objects standing visibly before it, so are the appetites of each liable to the same inclination from the allurements of the same objects when brought within their reach. The unhappy drunkard, who, at the very sight of his inflaming beverage, is visited with an affection thereunto which he finds to be uncontrollable—suppose him to be made a convert at this moment, there is

no change impressed by it upon his organ of taste. The relation that now subsists between his palate and the liquor that has so long and so frequently regaled it, is the same as before—the desire for it is not extinguished; and the physical affinity that now is between the appetite and its wonted indulgence, is not now changed into a physical repulsion. In the act of regeneration, the bodily affection is not eradicated; but there is infused into the moral system a power for keeping it in check: And, long after that this old man hath become a new creature, we do not see that the propensity which at one time tyrannized over him, is clearly and conclusively done away. It is not rooted out my brethren. It is only resisted; and all that regeneration has done for him in the world is to give him that moral force of determination and courage, by which he is enabled to resist it with success. He is now able to control that which before was uncontrollable.

Were this and all his other rebel appetites only rooted out; and were he under the dominion of a pure and holy principle, and of it alone, to serve God on earth without a struggle—then might he even now be borne aloft on angelic pinions; and placed, without so hideous a transition as that of failing and sickening and dying, in the city which hath foundations. But no: this, it would appear, is the arena of his discipline for eternity; and it is so, by being an arena of contest. The elements of moral evil are not purged away from his corporeal framework; but there is a spiritual element infused, which, if it cannot destroy the former, will at least subordinate them. The apostle complained of his body being vile; but herein he exercised himself, to keep that body under subjection, lest he should be a castaway. He is like unto a Heathen, in having a vile body. He is unlike unto a Heathen, in having now a spirit within him by which the body is subjected. Both have in them the desires of nature; but the one fights with these desires, and the other fulfils them. Both are lured by solicitations to evil; but while the one is only lured, the other is led by them. He is led away with divers lusts. He is led away with the error of the wicked, and so falls from his steadfastness. The very same evil propensity might offer to lead both; but while the one consents to be so led, the other refuses. He gives himself up to be led by another master. In the language of the apostle, he is led by the Spirit of God, and so approves himself to be one of God's children. He is led by the Spirit, and so fulfilleth not the lusts of the flesh.

You also see what the use of death is to a Christian. It is not laid upon him as a

sentence of condemnation. The whole weight of that sentence is already borne. It is not to complete his justification. That is already perfected for ever by the one offering. It is to release him in fact from his warfare. It is to deliver him from the presence of his great enemy. It is to remove from him that load under which he now groans being burdened, and which forced from the holy apostle the exclamation of his wretchedness. It is to assure him who hath fought the good fight, and hath finished his course, that the battle is now ended, and that now the repose and the triumph of victory await him. To the last hour of his life, it is the same foul and tainted body that it ever was; and his only achievement upon it, is not that he hath purified its nature, but that he hath not suffered it to have the mastery. He has all along been upheld against its encroachments, by the vigour of a counteracting principle within, even of that Spirit which is life because of righteousness. These two have been in perpetual conflict with each other, from the hour of the heavenly birth to the hour of the earthly dissolution; and the way in which it is terminated, is, not by the body in its present state being transformed, but by the body in its present state being destroyed.

The fact of the body being still subjected to death because of sin, is the strongest experimental argument that can be urged for heaven being a place to which sin can find no entry. It is not in the way of penalty that the Christian has to die—for the whole of that penalty has already been sustained. It is not exacted from him as the payment of a debt—for Christ our surety hath paid a full and a satisfying ransom. It is not then to help out the justification which is already complete in him—nor to remove a flaw from that title-deed which we have received perfect from His hand. It stands connected, in short, with the sanctification of the believer; and has sought to do with that sentence which Christ has fully expiated, with that legal chastisement which was laid upon Him who bore it all. The whole amount and meaning of it is, that our bodies are impregnated with a moral virus which might be discharged from them, it is certain, by a fiat of the Almighty—even as with those who shall be found alive on the day of resurrection. But this is not the way in which God hath seen meet so to discharge it. It is by death that the thing is to be done. It is, in the first instance, by the departure of the spirit breaking out of its tainted and leprous prison-hold—and then by the resolution into fragments and into dust, of this materialism that its tenement hath

abandoned—and then by the assembling again of all its particles, but without the corrupt infusion that formerly pervaded it—And so the transformation of the whole into what is now called a glorified body—a body like unto that of Christ, and free now even from the tendency to evil. And not till the whole of this change take effect upon it, is it fit for admission to the upper realms of love and purity and righteousness. The justice of God would have recoiled from the acceptance of a sinner, and so an expiation had to be made; and the holiness of that place where God dwelleth, would have recoiled from the approaches of one whose character was still tainted with sin, even though its guilt had been expiated—and so it is, that there must be a sanctification as well as an atonement—there must be a renewal as well as a sacrifice. For the one, Christ had to suffer and to die—for the other man has also to die, and so to fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ. And it is indeed a most emphatic demonstration of heaven's sacredness, that, to protect its courts from violation, not even the most pure and sainted Christian upon earth, can, in his present earthly garb, find admittance therein—that loved and revered as he is by his friends and his family, and little as they see about him of that which is unworthy even of fellowship with angels, still, that even he would be deemed a nuisance in that high and holy place where nothing that offendeth can enter—that ere the gate of the New Jerusalem be opened for his spirit, he must leave his tainted body behind him; and ere he walk embodied there, the framework that he had on earth must first be taken down, and be made to pass in mysterious transformation, through that dismal region of skulls and of skeletons, where the mouldering wreck of many human generations is laid. This death, which even the holiest of believers have to undergo, speaks loudly both to the loathsomeness of sin, and to the sensitive the lofty sacredness of heaven: And oh how should it teach all, who by faith have admitted the hope of glory into their hearts, that, in so doing, they have embarked on a warfare against moral evil—that the expectation of bliss in heaven is at utter variance with the wilful indulgence of sin upon earth—and that, by the very act of embracing the Gospel, they have thrown down the gauntlet of hostility to sin; and they must struggle against it, and pray against it, and prevail against it.

Now this principle of hostility to sin wherewith the believer is actuated, cometh down upon him like every other good and perfect gift from above. All that is evil

about him still cometh from himself, and from the vile body by which he is encompassed. The gracious ingredient of his now regenerated nature, does not extinguish the corrupt ingredient of it. It only, as it were, keeps it down; and, without delivering him from its presence, delivers him from its prevalency and its power. This it is which constitutes the struggle of the Christian life. This is the sore conflict which is carried on through many discouragements, and perhaps some defeats, and at least frequent alternations and variations of fortune. Nevertheless, throughout all the fluctuations of this spiritual history, the seed of blissful immortality is there; the element of a holy and celestial nature is at work; the honest aspiration after God and godliness will never be extinguished. A life of well-doing, and a produce in the fruits of righteousness, will force their way among all the impediments of a vile materialism. These two rival and opposing ingredients will at length be detached the one from the other; and of these the body will become dead because of sin, and the spirit be life because of righteousness.

With an unconverted man there are not two such conflicting elements. The mind and the body are at one. The evil tendencies are given way to. He not only submits to the instigations of the flesh; but, in the language of Scripture, he sows unto the flesh, that is, he devises and deliberately provides expedients for its gratification—laying up for the flesh, as well as fulfilling the lusts thereof. The whole man pulls as it were in one direction; and that is a direction altogether towards the creature, and altogether away from the Creator. He soweth unto the flesh, and of the flesh, he shall reap corruption. As he falleth, so shall he rise; and the body wherewith he is enveloped on the day of resurrection, will not, like that of the glorified saint, be expurgated of its tendencies to evil: But as he indulged them through life, so will they rise up against him in the full vigour of their absolute and imperious sway; and be his merciless, his inexorable tormentors, through all eternity. As he never resisted them with effect here, so there will he find them to be irresistible. They will lord it over him; and he be the miserable slave of vile and worthless affections, under the sense of which his now convicted soul cannot escape from the agonies of remorse, that undying worm, which gives to hell its fiercest anguish, and far its sorest tribulation. He thus pursued by a fire that is unquenchable within, and a fear without of that holy and righteous countenance that is now turned in rebuke towards him, will be made to taste of that

second death which has been called the wages of sin, because it is both its penal and its natural consummation.

Not so with him whose spirit has been made righteous; and who vexed and annoyed with the urgencies of his vile body, has, to the hour of death, carried on against it a resolute and unsparing warfare. He will have no part in the second death. His spirit because of its righteousness has become meet for that life, which is both spiritual and everlasting. So soon as it quits its earthly tenement, it will be with Christ in Paradise, where, freed from the incumbrances of a tainted materialism, it will instantly find—that, though to live for a season in the flesh was needful and salutary, yet to have departed and to be with Christ is far better. He soweth to the Spirit here, and hereafter he shall reap of the Spirit life everlasting. He has the very evil tendencies which the other hath who soweth unto the flesh; but, instead of giving to them his consent, he enters with them into combat, and he fights the good fight which terminates in victory, and he earns the blessedness of him that overcometh, and of him that endureth unto the end. Those inclinations of a corrupt nature, which the other pampered into lordly and domineering appetites, that will wield for ever their merciless tyranny over him, he hath in every way thwarted and buffeted and starved—so that though still alive while the breath was in his body, and he had even to weep their presence on his death-bed, and still to mourn even then the carnalities and the spiritual sins which he could not utterly extinguish—yet his reward is, that, at the moment of his dissolution, they will expire for ever; and not be raised up again to be his plagues and his persecutors through eternity. The reward is, that his risen body shall also be a regenerated body—that all about him shall then be in fullest harmony with the desires of his glorified spirit—and that the evil instigations which so perplex and disquiet him on earth, shall never haunt nor harass him in heaven. He will be altogether freed from those corrupt elements, which still adhere to the unbeliever when he arises from his grave, and which constitute in fact the elements of his moral hell. There will be nothing adverse to the love or to the services of God in any part of his constitution; and he will be fully enabled to glorify the Lord, with his soul and body and spirit, which are the Lord's.

This is not an idle speculation. It may be carried personally and practically to the conscience. Are you or are you not engaged in a warfare with moral evil? Are you busily employed in the work of subduing and bringing under discipline,

all the irregularities of your perverse nature? Or, instead of this, are you in peace with yourself; and that because of the friendly terms, in which your spirit and your body are with each other? Remember that there is a peace where there is no peace. Do you imagine that you are at peace with God, because you believe the Gospel? Remember that Paul preached the Gospel, yet, had he not kept the body under subjection, he would have been a castaway. And therefore in this did he always exercise himself, mortifying his affections for the things which are

beneath—and this not only the grosser affections of our nature, but the more reputable, the more refined, the affections for wealth, for honour, for fame, for literary reputation—for these too are among the things which are beneath—these also will perish in the using—these have their place on earth, and have no place in heaven; and it is only by the spirit being above all these, and resting its affections on the things which are above, it is only thus that it will be made to inherit life, and because of its righteousness.

LECTURE LII.

ROMANS viii, 11, 12.

“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 his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.”

V. 11. IN the last verse it is affirmed that Christ being in us will not avail to prevent the death of the body though it will avail to the preparing of the soul for life everlasting. And in the present verse, the apostle recurs to the body, and now affirms that it too, will at length have a benefit conferred on it—that neither is it altogether overlooked in this great work of regeneration—that though permitted for a season to moulder in the dust, and though every vestige of what it was is made to disappear; yet will it emerge from the hideous receptacle in which it lies, and come forth a quickened and a glorified body on the day of resurrection—that though the present occupation of it by God's Holy Spirit, does not save it from decaying into a loathsome spectacle of corruption; yet if that Spirit dwell in us now, it will again animate that matter which has gone into dissolution—raising it to a new framework, and investing it as before with all those graces which are expressive of the life and sensibility within. But it is to be observed that the wicked as well as the righteous are to rise again—that all the dead both small and great are to stand before God—and that therefore there must be a something which peculiarizes the resurrection of the believer, from that of a sinful and unconverted man. Now we know of no other peculiarity than this—that his body shall be delivered from that moral virus against which he struggled through life, and by overcoming which he is to be rewarded with a complete and conclusive exemption from its presence

for ever—that the same power which helped him to the conquest, will rid him altogether of his enemy; and his body will be so purified and transformed, as to become like unto the glorious body of Christ. The wicked are not so. As the tree falleth so it lies; and as they went to their graves with all the propensities of corruption unmitigated, they will again come forth from their graves, with these propensities in lordly and despotic rigour to be their tyrants and their tormentors through all eternity. And this, I imagine, will explain a verse which enters into the prophetic narrative of the earthly consummation of all things—“He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he which is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”

Now it is, in the first place, to be remarked—that the very same agent who raised up Christ from the dead, is to raise up all who are in Christ also. That He was the agent employed by God in the resurrection of the Saviour, may, I think, be gathered from this passage, where it is said, that He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead;—and still more obviously from the text (and this we hold to be the reason why it is said of Christ risen from the dead, that He is become the first-fruits of them who slept)—“Every man in his own order—Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they who are Christ's at his coming.” But there is a still more important set of passages that point, we think, to a very

pleasing analogy, between Christ's resurrection from the grave, and the resurrection of our souls into newness of life—that ascribe both of these events to the operation of the same power; and regard it as alike the functions of the Holy Ghost, to have restored the natural life to the body of the Saviour, when it lay insensible in the tomb—and the spiritual to those who are dead in trespasses and sins, but are awakened from this death at the moment of believing in Him. And thus I would understand it of Paul that he longs to make sure of the renewal of his soul unto holiness, when he speaks of his desire to know Christ and the power of His resurrection; and I can enter into the analogy which he states in these words, that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead in the glory of his Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life—and that thus it is that we are planted together with Christ, in the likeness of His resurrection. We read in various places of our being made conformable to His death by dying unto sin; and so are we made conformable to His resurrection by living unto righteousness. The thing is still more expressly affirmed in the epistle to the Ephesians, where mention is made of "the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all." And then he adds, "you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins"—"Even when we are dead in sins, hath God quickened us together with Christ."

Now this analogy between the raising of the body and the regeneration of the soul, both of which are ascribed to the agency of the Holy Spirit, forcibly reminds us of the history of the material creation in the book of Genesis—where it is distinctly affirmed, that, at the very first footsteps of that glorious transformation, by which a dark and disordered chaos was evolved into light and loveliness and harmony, that then the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And so when the Spirit begins with the soul of man, it is a perfect chaos of moral darkness and disorder on which it has to operate—whence it gradually advances from one degree of grace and godliness unto another, till, as God rejoiced on the

seventh day over that which a little before was without form and void, so God rejoices over us, when, in looking to the product of this new or second creation, He sees that it is all very good. You know enough, I trust, of our depravity by nature—to admit of our moral world that it is indeed a chaos—that, though there be occasional gleams of the bright and the beautiful, yet that the great master sin of ungodliness stalks triumphant over the face of society—that, though, as in every companionship even of iniquity, there must be recognised principles of truth and honour and fellowship which bind together the members of the human commonwealth, and make it a possible thing for society to subsist, yet that, as if altogether broken loose from the great original of Being, each individually hath betaken himself to the counsel of his own heart and the sight of his own eyes. The enlightened assertors of a native and original corruption in our species, never dispute that there is much of the fair and amiable and upright in human intercourse; and that this gives rise to many fine and graceful evolutions in the walks of social life. But what they affirm, and they deem that they have the experimental light both of observation and conscience upon their side, is, that while busily engaged, whether in the virtues or in the vices of our intercourse with each other, we one and all of us by nature have renounced our proper intercourse with God—that, intimately joined as we are to our fellows of the species by the ties of patriotism and neighbourhood and family affection, we live in a state of moral and spiritual disjunction from God—that just as if the gravitation that bound our planet to the great central luminary of our system were suspended, and it were to take its own random way in space, so have we broke adrift as it were from that main attraction to which all the duties and moralities of life are subordinate. And just as the stray world might still have active physical principles of its own—its cohesion, and its magnetism, and its laws of fluidity, and its busy atmospherical processes, even after the sun had ceased to have the imperial sway over it—So, in our stray species, are there a thousand mutual and internal principles of constant operation—the resentment, and the love, and the domestic affinities, and the dread of authority, and the delight in approbation, and the sense of shame, and the mighty power which lies in the awards of the general voice—principles these, which, in their turn, either agitate or arouse or restrain or even embellish the face of society—Yet still may it be a society altogether without the regard or

the reverence of God. In reference to Him, the family of mankind may be an exiled family; and while the men of its successive generations pass through the little hour of life, some deformed by earthly vices, and others decked in the ornaments of an earth-born morality, yet, equally aloof as all may still be from the virtue of that great relationship which is between the thing that is formed and Him who hath formed it, it may still hold true of our species, that we by nature are in a state of disruption from God—asunder from Him as to all right and habitual fellowship in time; and, if we decline the reunion which He himself proposes, likely to remain thus asunder from the great fountain of light and love and happiness through all eternity.

Now that this is the very chaos in which humanity is involved, we hold to be pretty obvious from the broad and general aspect of society. But far the most useful conviction that can be wrought upon this subject, is that which is carried home to the bosom of individuals, by a manifestation of their own heart to the conscience of each of them. It is not possible to lay open the characters of all to the inspection of any; but it may be possible to lay open the character of any man to the inspection of himself—and thus it is, that far the most profitable of all moral demonstrations, whether from the pulpit or from the press, are those which reveal to each individually the intimacies of his own spirit; and by which he is enabled, as in a mirror, to recognise such a likeness to the portrait of his own inner man as his conscience can respond unto. And therefore would we bid each unconverted man who is now present, to enter upon this recognizance of himself, and to see whether the very habit of his soul is not a habit of practical atheism—whether it be not true that God is scarcely if at all in his thoughts—whether he be not an utter stranger to the gait and the attitude of His servant—and whether the question is ever taken up, or ever brought to a conclusion, that is afterwards in very deed and history proceeded on, ‘What is the will of God in the matter before me?’ We do not charge you with any transgressions against the social or domestic principles of our nature—any more than we deny of a rambling planet which now flounders its capricious and unregulated way in space, that there the chemical affinities, or there the active play of all those influences which belong to its own peculiar and physical system are unknown. But we do charge you with the disownal of the authority of God. We affirm that against Him you have deeply revolted. We cannot deny that many of

you have much of secular worth and excellence. But we deny that you have the least tint of sacredness. You are not demoralized out of all virtue, but you are desecrated out of all godliness; and we appeal to the distinctly felt current of your plans and purposes and desires, or we appeal to the familiar history of your every day, whether the will of God be the reigning principle of your mind, whether God can be said to have the rule over you.

Now Christianity is a restorative system. Its object is to reinstate the authority of God over the wills and consciences of men; and by this great and ascendant power of moral gravitation, again brought back to its influence over our heart, to reclaim our wandering species into that duteous conformity to Himself from which they have departed so widely. What He wants is to restore us to our wonted place among the goodly orbs of His own favoured and unfallen creation; and this He does simply by turning away ungodliness from our hearts. It is to set up that ancient and primeval law, by which the creature is bound to recognise the Creator in all his ways—so that instead of fluctuating as heretofore through the mazes of error and wilfulness and sin, he might walk with assured footsteps on that right and lofty path, which is defined by Heaven’s jurisprudence, and to which he is willingly constrained by Heaven’s grace. And it is thought, that, though godliness be a single principle out of the many which operate on the heart, yet that upon its re-establishment alone, there would instantly emanate a peace and a virtue that should be felt in all the departments of our nature. The benevolence would be stimulated, and the justice become greatly more strict and sensitive, and the temperance and purity be more guarded than ever, and the malignant propensities be kept in check and at last exterminated—and so all the secondary and earthly moralities, which may and do exist without godliness, attain by godliness, a far more effective and salutary ascendant over the character and interests of our species. Even as the planet, that, without the scope of the law of gravitation to the sun, has deviated from its path, yet retained the principles which be at work throughout its mass and upon its surface—restore to it this single law which for a season has been suspended and you do a great deal more than simply reclaim it to the old elliptic path which it was wont to revolve in. You impress and you vivify all the operations of the terrestrial mechanism—you call those tides into force and action, which arouse the sluggish ocean out of its unwholesome stagnancy—and you set afloat through the air those refreshing currents

by which its purity is upholden—and you pour abroad that beauteous element of light, which, with its accompanying warmth both stimulates all the processes, and discloses all the graces and the laws of the vegetable kingdom—And, in a word, you, by this single restoration, turn the else desolate and unpeopled globe into a vast habitation of life and of enjoyment, where the notes of cheerfulness may be heard on every side; and there may be seen the work of busy design, the abodes of industry and comfort, the temples of piety.

Now it is the Spirit who evolved matter out of the chaotic state; and it is the Spirit who renews a living body out of the putrefaction into which it had mouldered; and it is the very same agent, even the Spirit of God, who renovates the heart of man, and forms him anew into righteousness and true holiness. It is a doctrine that is mightily nauseated in this our day—forming, as it does, one of the most offensive peculiarities of the Gospel; and perhaps more fitted than any other to revolt into antipathy, both the natural and literary taste of those who hear of it. It is therefore the more desirable, when any thing can be alleged, which might propitiate you in its favour. And surely—if you can be at all affected by the contrast between the loathsomeness of the grave, and the gracefulness of a living form invested with the bloom and vigour of immortality; or between the turbulence of warring elements, and that magnificent harmony of animate and inanimate things which has been made to emerge therefrom into our goodly world—this should enlist you altogether on the side of so beneficent an agency; and, instead of that felt and invisible repugnance wherewith the doctrine of the Holy Ghost as our refiner and as our sanctifier is listened to by men, you should hail these informations of the Bible, by which you are given to understand that the same plastic energy, which moved on the face of the waters at the beginning, and has since moulded the very dust into organism and living beauty—that this too is the principle of that new creation, which, out of ruined and distempered humanity, raises, upon every true disciple of Jesus, the worth and the excellence that fit him for immortality.

But better than all speculation on this topic, would it be that you prized the operation of the Spirit on your heart, and that you earnestly and habitually prayed for it. The doctrine of the Holy Ghost is too much neglected in practice. It is not adverted to, that all acceptable virtue in man is the product of a creating energy, that is actually put forth upon him; and that it is his business to wrestle in suppli-

cation with Heaven, that it may indeed be put forth upon himself. And this is the order in which the graces and embellishments of the new creature spring up in the believer. Ere God will pour them on his person, he must enquire after them. The Spirit of grace and supplication is generally given, ere the things which it is your part to supplicate for are given. And therefore be not surprised at your miserable progress in sanctification, if a stranger to the habit of prayer. Wonder not and complain not, that strength to help your infirmities is still withheld, if you have not mixed the prayer of faith with your severe yet ineffectual struggles against the power of corruption. Think not that you are to overcome, if, with all the humbleness of a needy and dependent creature, you do not look up to a power that is greater than your own; and give not the glory of all holiness in the creature, to that high and heavenly influence which cometh down from the Creator. You have never yet known what the receipt is for making you virtuous, if, to this hour, you have been ignorant or inexperienced as to the efficacy of prayer. Though you should have tried every thing else beside; you are still morally in a state of helpless and hopeless disease. And therefore, with all the eagerness of a patient who has been enquiring and experimenting for years about the right method of being healed, take yourself now to this prescription; and see whether a blessing will not come out of it. And, like those medicines which are of daily application, should you pray without ceasing. It should be a regimen of prayer. Earnest prayer and vigorous performance should be always alternating the one with the other. A good word with God in secret, qualifies for a good work with man in society. And, on the other hand, your deeds of righteousness with the hand, will send back an influence upon the heart, that shall brighten and inflame its sacredness. You will strive mightily according to the grace of God that worketh in you mightily. The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead will dwell in you, if you make Him welcome; and prayer may be regarded as your invitation to Him, as the expression of your welcome. And the Spirit so dwelling will be indeed the earnest of your inheritance—He who quickens you from the death of trespasses and sins shall quicken your mortal bodies from that death of nature which comes upon all men.

V. 12. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh."

The debtor is bound in certain duties or obligations to his creditor; and the

Apostle here tells us, that we are not so bound to the flesh. It has its demands upon us, and it would fain exact our compliance with them; but this is a compliance which it is not incumbent upon us to render. We shall not, as I have often affirmed in your hearing, be released on this side of death from the hateful exposure of having to feel its instigations; but that is no reason why we should follow these instigations. We are subject here to the annoyance of being oft solicited by this tempter; but we are not therefore bound to yield ourselves up unto him. Living as we do in the flesh, we are at all times in contact with its near and besetting urgencies; but there is no such acquiescence due on our part, as that we shall live after the flesh. This last is the debt wherewith the text releases us—nay, in the next verse, the most forcible motive is presented to us, why, instead of acquiescing, we should resist to the uttermost. For if we live after the flesh we shall die.

The motive in fact is as strong, as that which Adam, who lived under the first covenant, had to abstain from eating the forbidden fruit. In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die. So that there cannot be a more gross misunderstanding of the gospel economy, than that it is destitute of as plain and direct and intelligible sanctions against moral evil, as those which were devised for upholding the legal economy. Under both are we deterred from sin by the threatening of death; and the only difference between them is, that—whereas under the law one sin, however lenient in its character, or however strong and sudden the temptations were which hurried the unhappy victim onward to the commission of it, inferred the whole penalty—under the gospel, death is represented to be the effect as well as the penalty of such a character as has been formed in us by the habit of sinning, by the preference on our part of a carnal to a spiritual life, by a surrender of ourselves to the power of any evil affection—So that, instead of struggling against it and barring its ascendancy over us, we permit the ascendancy, and become the slaves of one against whom we should have fought with all the determination and hatred of honest enemies. This we must either do, or consent to live after the flesh; and against the latter alternative there is lifted under the dispensation of grace, as clear and decisive a warning of terror, as ever was lifted under the dispensation of works. We read in the book of Genesis how God said to Adam, that in the day that thou eatest of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt surely die. And in this epistle to the Romans, in this most complete record of evangelical

truth, and amongst all its rich promises of grace and pardon and remission from every legal consequence to believers, do we also read, that if we live after the flesh we shall as surely die.

But while there is this resemblance between the two dispensations, there is also a difference between them; and the difference might be illustrated by help of another text taken from the writings of Paul, and one of those very few in which there occurs the same term, debtor. He says of a judaizing Christian who insisted on the rite of circumcision as being essential to our acceptance with God, that, if circumcised upon this ground, he was a debtor to do the whole law; and that, in the act of becoming so, he would fall from grace, and cease in fact to have the privileges or the immunities of a believer. Now what is this to say, but that a Christian is not a debtor to do the whole law, and yet he is a debtor to live not after the flesh? He is not bound to the faultless obedience of a perfect commandment; and yet he is bound to a hearty and sustained warfare against all sin, which is a violation of the commandment. He is no longer under the economy of do *this* and live; and yet he is under an economy, where if he give himself up to the doing of what is opposite to *this*, he shall most inevitably die.

The truth is, that both the one economy and the other are on the side of moral righteousness; and both proceed alike on this undoubted position, that there can be no fellowship between God and iniquity, and that the heaven where He and His holy angels dwell, is a place where not a creature can find admittance, that has upon him the slightest taint or remainder of evil. And thus the law condemned the sinner to exile from heaven; but, after having done so, it could not restore him thereunto. It had no provision within its limits, by which it could either annul its own threatenings; or purge away from our now contaminated race that foul spiritual leprosy, the very existence of which, apart from the consideration of legal penalties altogether, barred the entrance of mankind from the habitations of unspotted sacredness. Under its continued administration, we had no release from our past guilt, and no remedy from either our present or our future sinfulness; and, in these vile bodies, how was it possible to escape the necessity of perpetual additions to the account which was against us—since, in the high reckoning of a holy and heart-searching law, the very existence of an evil thought, the very inroad of a wrong or licentious imagination, would be deemed and dealt with as the transgression of an offender? And there-

fore it was that this economy had to be suspended, and another set up with distinct principles and provisions of its own, that might render it competent for the sinner's restoration to that heaven which he had forfeited, and for admittance into which he both laboured under a legal and a personal incapacity. There needed to be a skilful adaptation for purposes so very mysterious, that angels are represented as looking on with the eye of eager and unappeased curiosity. And herein lay the profound, the unsearchable wisdom of the gospel, by which the guilt of the believer's sin was cancelled, and by which the existence of it upon his character is at length done away. He had to be saved by water and by blood. There is an atonement to do away the curse of sin, and there is a purification to do away its defilement. And thus, to complete our salvation, was it not enough that Christ bowed His head unto the sacrifice. When He rose again, He claimed, as the fruit of His obedience unto the death, the promise of His Father—the Holy Ghost given by Him to those who believe—the power over heaven and earth, by which He might subdue all things unto Himself, and, more especially, by which He might aid the moral warfare that is going on among His disciples here below, and at length so change their vile bodies as that they might be fashioned like unto His glorious body—So that, delivered alike from the presence and penalty of sin, every barrier may be removed, and every hindrance may be done away to unexceptionable admittance within the limits of the sanctuary that is above.

Behold then the very nice adaptation to our state as sinners, of that gospel economy whereby the legal economy has been suspended and superseded—because to our condition, as the wretched outcasts of a violated law, it brought no relief, and could bring no restoration. Under the former dispensation, every sin, however trivial and though urged to it by the besetting propensities of a constitution marred and vitiated since the fall, plunged us more hopelessly than ever in guilt and in

moral helplessness. Under the present dispensation, we are not without sin; but the sin of infirmity is not like the sin of wilfulness, unto death—and there has been a sacrifice provided, in the faith of which if we make daily confession we shall have daily forgiveness. So long as we are in these accursed bodies, it is impossible ever to venture off from any other foundation for our acceptance before God, than the perfect righteousness of Christ; and the very sin of our nature has the effect to remind us of our dependence, and to keep us closely and tenaciously thereupon. But, meanwhile, though vexed and annoyed by the instigations of the flesh, we are armed with a resolution and a strength and an affection for what is spiritual, that shall abundantly secure our not living after the flesh; and on the generous mind of the new-born Christian, the daily infirmities which he has to lay at the throne of grace, so far from working an indifference to moral righteousness, only shame and stimulate him the more to the vigorous prosecution of it. And the knowledge, that, though the infirmities of his flesh will be pardoned, yet that if he live after the flesh he will die, this is to him as direct and urgent excitement, as ever bore with practical effect on the legal aspirants after a reward and an acceptance of their own. And thus are the comfort after sin on the one hand, and the impulse to renewed holiness on the other, most admirably blended in such a way, as best to suit those who are weighed down with a corrupt materialism, yet are furnished with power in the inner man to war against and at length to overcome it; and the disciple who is thus employed can, at one and the same time, draw comfort from the saying that if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father—and derive the energy of a practical impulse from the saying, that "if any man sin wilfully, after that he hath received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation that shall devour the adversaries."

LECTURE LIII.

ROMANS viii, 13—15.

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 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.”

V. 13. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

And in like manner as the threatenings under the law and the gospel may be compared with each other, so may the promises or the rewards. By the former dispensation, he who fell into an act of disobedience was adjudged to die; and by the latter, he who by living after the flesh lived in a habit of disobedience was in like manner to die. It is well that we are liberated from the rigid and unbending economy of the law; for thus we are set free from the fears, and the scrupulosities, and in fact the utter and irretrievable despair, which would have paralysed the whole work of obedience. But it is also well, that, while the economy of the gospel has achieved our deliverance from these, it still lifts as loud a testimony on the side of righteousness, and is actuated by as determined a hostility against all sin—so as to set all its honest disciples upon a most resolved and persevering opposition to it. Had law been the arbiter of this contest, they never, in the vile bodies wherewith they are encompassed, they never could have obtained the meed or the honour of victory—each error being an irrecoverable defeat—each infirmity being a death-blow to their cause. And therefore it is well that they now fight under the banners of another empire, who can see, amid all the frailties of the old and the natural constitution, that there is rising and strengthening apace a force of moral resistance against the urgencies of corrupt nature, which is gradually undermining its ascendancy, and at length will overthrow it. The man who has been endowed with this force from on high, is ever reminded by the frailties that are within of his daily need of Christ's propitiation; and would give up the battle in despair, had he not the righteousness of Christ to build upon. Yet he never forgets that the battle is his unceasing occupation—that the gospel which has discharged him from the penalties of a law that he is ever falling short of, has not discharged him from this warfare—that his business is so to strive against all the corruption which is in him, as to make unceasing approximation to the purity

and perfection of this very law; and that though now exempted from the threat if ye fail in one jot or tittle thereof ye shall die—the threat is still against him and against all in full operation, that if, casting off the authority of the law, ye give yourselves up to your own heart's desire or live after the flesh ye shall die.

Now the like analogy and the like distinction may be observed in the promises or rewards of the gospel, when compared with those of the law. The apostle says of the law, that it is not of faith, but the man that doeth this shall live; and he saith in our text of him who hath embraced that gospel which supersedes the law, that if a man through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body he shall live. There is a doing to which death is annexed with as great certainty under the one economy as under the other. And there is also a doing to which life is annexed with as great certainty under the one economy as under the other. The ‘do this and live’ of the former dispensation however, is a condition which has long been violated; and which, in our present tainted materialism, we never can attain unto; and which therefore, instead of indicating to us a practical avenue to heaven, is like a flaming sword that guards and bars in every way our access thereunto. The ‘mortify the deeds of the body and live’ of the latter dispensation, is a condition again which might be rendered; which every believer in the grace and righteousness of the Lord Jesus will be enabled to perform; which from this moment we should set ourselves forward to for the purpose of making it good—and so exhibit in our history as direct a practical impulse taken from the hopes of the gospel, as any servant from the prospect of his wages, or any labourer under the covenant of works could take from the remunerations of the law. And in this warfare against the body, an advantage may sometimes have been gained by it, such an advantage as the law would have irretrievably condemned us for, and declared against us all the ruin and disgrace of a fatal overthrow; but such an advantage as under the gospel though it has cast us down yet will not destroy us—but, after perhaps a severe discipline of mortification and sorrow, will arm us with

fresh resolution for the contest; and inspire into us a more cordial hatred against the body of sin, and all its sinful instigations, than ever; and give to the heart a more burning earnestness, that we may not only recover all the ground which we have lost, but may rise more aloft than ever above all the gross and terrestrial ingredients of our corrupt nature—till, having passed through a series of watchfulness and endurance and busy working, and so having made full proof of our discipleship, we can say with the apostle when the time of our departure is at hand, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith—Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me on that day, and not to me only but also unto all such as love his appearing."

From the expression 'to mortify the deeds of the body' I may here advert to that law of our moral constitution, by which it is that if we refuse to perform a sinful deed, we by that very refusal weaken the sinful desire which prompted it; and that thus by mortifying the deeds you mortify the desires. Every act of sinful indulgence, arms with a new force of ascendancy the sinful inclination. Every act of luxury makes you more the slave of the table than before. Every draught of the alluring beverage, might bring you nearer to the condition of him who is the victim of a habitual intoxication. Every improper licence granted to the eye or the imagination, sinks you into more helpless captivity under their power. Every compliance with lawless appetite, enthrones more firmly than before another oppressor, another tyrant over you. And therefore if you want to dethrone the appetite, refuse the indulgence; if you want to starve and enfeeble the desires of the inner man, mortify the deeds of the outer man. Begin in a plain way the work of reformation. And let it be the resolute purpose on which you shall put forth all the manhood of your soul, that, however you may be solicited by the affections that are within to that which is evil, you shall not give the actions that are without to their hateful service—that however sin may have been desired, sin shall not be done by you—that with the control which you have over the hand and the tongue and all the organs of the body, they shall with you not be the instruments of sin but the instruments of righteousness: And thus it is that the corrupt propensities of the heart, wearied out with resistance, and languishing under the constant experience of hopeless and fruitless solicitation, would at length weaken and expire. The body would be mortified;

and the soul, delivered from its presence, and again translated into it after the last taint and remainder of its evil nature had been done away, would find itself in a perfect condition for the joys and the services of life everlasting.

But it is well to mark, that, in order to make this mortifying of the deeds of the body effectual unto life, it must be done through the Spirit. For the very same thing might in great measure be done without special grace from on high, in which case it hath no fruit in immortality. How many are the evil passions, which can at least be restrained by the pure force of a natural determination. In the pursuits of fortune, or of ambition, or of war, what a violence a man can put upon himself—what a heroic self-denial he is capable of carrying into full operation—what a mastery he can reach over some of the most urgent inclinations of nature; and all this certainly without one particle of a sanctifying influence, but rather by the strength and power of one unrenewed principle lording it with a high ascendancy over all the rest. To make then the mortification of your earthly desires available for heaven, there must be an agency from the Holy Ghost—else there is nought of heaven's character in the work, and will be nought of heaven's reward to it. And if the Holy Ghost indeed be the agent, then He will not select a few of our carnal tendencies for extermination by His power; but He will enter into hostility with all of them—He will check the sensuality of our nature, and He will mortify its pride, and He will check its impetuous anger, and He will wean it from its now clinging avarice. Let it be your care then, from the very first moment of your strenuous resistance to these deeds and affections of evil—let it be your care, that, instead of trusting to the energy of your own firm and high-minded resolves, you invoke the constant supplies of aid from a higher quarter. Let yours be a life of prayer along with a life of performance; and then will you strive mightily, but according at the same time to the grace of God that worketh in you mightily.

V. 14. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God."

There is frequent cognizance taken in the Bible, of the degrees in which the Spirit of God may operate on the heart of man. There is one work from which He ceases, because He will not always strive; and there is another work which after He hath begun, He will carry on even unto perfection. There is a tasting of God's Spirit by those who afterwards fall away; and there is an anointing by God's Spirit that remaineth. It is this

which hath given room to the distinction made by theologians, between the saving and the ordinary influences of the Holy Ghost,—the former signifying those by which a man is effectually called unto the faith, and afterwards completed in the sanctification of the gospel; and the latter signifying those by which he is made to feel the stirrings of conviction, and a desire and even a partial delight in many of the accompaniments of sacredness, which, had he improved, would have been followed up with larger measures of grace and illumination—but which as he quenched, do at length vanish into nothing, and leave him short of the kingdom of God. In these circumstances it were well, if any definite or satisfactory mark could be assigned, by which to discriminate between the one set of influences and the other—by which to ascertain whether we have only so much of this heavenly influence as will suffice for condemning our resistance to it; or so much as will carry us forward to a meetness for the inheritance above, as will be effectual for salvation.

Now the verse before us supplies us with the test that is wanted. There are many who are solicited by the Spirit of God, yet who are not led by Him—many to whom the Spirit offers the guidance of His light and of His direction, but who refuse that guidance—many, we believe all, to whom the Holy Ghost hath made through conscience that ear of the inner man the intimations of His will, yet most of whom have not followed these intimations. They have been in so far then the subjects of the Spirit's operation, as to have been perhaps in converse, and even occasionally in desirous and delighted converse with Him; but they have not given themselves up to His authoritative voice. They have been so far enlightened by Him, yet not led by Him. The man who through all the strugglings of remorse, at last gives way to the power of a temptation, has had light enough to forewarn him of sin, and light enough after it hath been committed to reprove himself and that most bitterly because of sin—and yet not power enough for the warfare of a successful resistance, so as not merely to feel what is right but to follow it. He therefore in this instance hath not mortified the deeds of his body; and if such be his habit he liveth after the flesh and he shall die. It is not they who mourn over the sin, that is practically and permanently indulged in; but it is they who mortify the sin that are led by the Spirit: And it is by this, as the consecutive tie which binds the last verse to the present one, that the reason is explained why they who mortify the deeds of the body shall live. They who do so are led by the Spirit; and they who are led by

the Spirit are the sons of God,—the heirs therefore of what their Father hath to bestow, which is life everlasting.

The Scriptures often affirm a harmony between two positions, which the first and natural apprehensions of men would lead them to regard as opposed the one to the other. We are the children of God says the Apostle by the faith that is in Christ Jesus. He is my brother and my sister says Christ Himself, who doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. It is through the redemption of the gospel, wherein we obtain a part and interest by believing, that, as Paul says in his Epistle to the Galatians, we receive the adoption of sons. It is when through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, that we are led by the Spirit; and, as he says in his Epistle to the Romans, are the sons of God. You will not be disturbed by the utterance of these propositions as if they were contradictory. You know in the first instance, that it is by faith, as by the hand of the mind, that you accept of the offered reconciliation. You know, in the second instance, that it is by the hearing of faith, and not by the works of the law, that the Spirit cometh. You know in the third instance, that the Spirit which so cometh is a Spirit of might and good-will for all holy obedience—so that through Him you are enabled to mortify the deeds of the body. And this last is not the cause why you are led by the Spirit of God, but the proof that you actually are led by Him—a proof which, if wanting, might still argue you to be in possession of His ordinary, but not in possession of His sanctifying, and therefore most assuredly not of His saving influences;—but a proof which having, is to you the best evidence that you are led by the Spirit, and have therefore received from God the seal of being one of His children.

When you adopt one as a son, it is because you design for him an inheritance; and one can conceive something to be given as the token or the acknowledgment of his acquired right thereunto. In the act of hiring a servant, there is often a pledge given by the master; and this assures to the hireling his title to enter at the specified time upon his employment. Now by one being adopted as a son of God, there is the destination for him of a very splendid inheritance—even one of eternal glory in the heavens. But this is only entered upon at the term of death; and meanwhile, previous to that, there is a pledge or a token bestowed upon him, and this is the Spirit of God which is styled by way of eminence the promise of the Father, and which, agreeably to the explanation which we have now given, is also termed the earnest of our inheritance.

This is that grace in time, which is both the pledge and the preparation of glory in eternity; and the best evidence of which is, that, enabled to mortify all those evil desires which would thwart the purposes of a holy obedience, you are thereby enabled to keep the commandments.

But there is a certain style of keeping the commandments, which we fear is not indicative of this grace. It may be done in a scrupulous, fearful, and painstaking way, by one who is under the workings of a natural conscience, and perhaps a terror of everlasting damnation. In this too it is possible, that there may be a certain measure of success—the avoidance of much gross and presumptuous sin, that might else have been indulged in—the penance of many sore and strenuous mortifications, so as that the body shall be starved, and in a good degree subjected, by the mere force as it were of a dogged and stiff determination; and so a kind of resolute sullenness in the whole aspect of the man's obedience, which certainly is of a different cast, and has upon it a wholly different complexion, from the gentleness and the grace and the good-will which characterise the services of an affectionate Christian. The truth is, that there might be a self-denial and a self-infliction which come through constraint—a drudgery which is rendered at the stern bidding of authority—a reluctant compliance to appease the dread or the troublesome remonstrances of the inner man—Which fall altogether short,—nay are altogether opposite to the temper of those, who mortify the deeds of the body but do it through the Spirit. What is done is done in their own spirit, which is the spirit of bondage; and not in that Spirit which cometh from above, and whereby we are made both to love the service and Him who enjoins it—to look upon God not as a taskmaster but as a friend, and so to execute His bidding with the alacrity of those whose meat and whose drink it is to do His will—to keep the commandments, not in the spirit of bondage which is unto fear, but in the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.

V. 15. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby ye cry, Abba, Father."

Had it been under a slavish terror that the work of mortification was gone into, this would have been no evidence of our filial relationship to God. It would have been the obedience of those that were lorded over, and not of those who were led as by the cords of love, as by the bands of a man. Henceforth ye are not servants or slaves, says Christ to his disciples, but ye are sons; and, conformably

to this, the spirit of sons is given unto them. And he appeals to the kind of spirit as being an argument for their being the sons of God—a spirit altogether diverse from that by which many are visited, under their first convictions of sin and of the soul and of eternity; who are pierced, as by an arrow sticking fast, with an agonising sense of their own guilt and of God's uncompromising authority; who are burdened under a feeling that the displeasure of Heaven is upon them; and whose conscience, all awake to the horrors of wrath and condemnation, never ceases to haunt them with the thought, that, unless they can make good their escape from their present condition, they are undone. Now, to make this good, they will set up a thousand reformations; they will abandon all their wonted fellowships of iniquity; they will strenuously, and in the face of every temptation, adhere to all the honesties and sobrieties of human conduct; they will betake themselves to a life of punctuality and prayer; and moreover graft upon their former habit the rigours of devoteship, the austerities and the forms of Sabbath observation. Thus it is that they will seek for rest, but they will find none. The law will rise in its demands as they rise in their endeavours, and still keep a-head, with a kind of overmatching superiority to all their fruitless and fatiguing efforts of obedience. They will labour as in the very fire and not be satisfied; and all their vain attempts to reach the heights of perfection, and so to quell the remonstrances of a challenging and not yet appeased commandment, will be like the laborious ascent of him, who, after having so wasted his strength that he can do no more, finds that a precipice still remains to be overcome—a mountain brow that scorns his enterprise, and threatens to overwhelm him. This has been the sad history of many a weary month, with some on whom the terrors of the Lord have fallen heavy—God having looked at them, as He did upon the Egyptians from a cloud and troubled their spirits—giving them no rest, till they fall back again perhaps into the lethargy of despair, and take up with this world anew as their portion because they have failed in their attempts to secure a portion in the next world—Or, if He had a purpose of mercy, in this sore visitation of darkness and tempest and wrath, at length leading them to the alone Rock of confidence; and endearing the Physician still more to their breasts, that they have been made to feel the disease in all its severity and all its wretchedness.

Now this spirit of bondage, which is unto fear, can only be exchanged for the

Spirit of adoption, by our believing the gospel. Every legal attempt to extricate ourselves from the misery of the former spirit, will only aggravate it the more; and we know of no other expedient, by which the transition can be made, than simply by our putting faith in the testimony of the Son of God. We have laboured in vain to seek a righteousness of our own, wherewithal we might stand acceptably before God, because this is the wrong way of it. It is true that He will not look upon us without a righteousness, on the consideration of which it is, that He deems it consistent with the honour of His government and the integrity of His character to take us into favour. But never, and on this point the gospel will enter into no compact whatever with the presumption of weak and guilty man, never will the act of friendship be firm and steady between him and his offended Lawgiver, in consideration of any righteousness of ours. And the distinct proposition is, that we shall look unto Christ as the alone ground of our acceptance before Him, unto His propitiation as that on which our hopes of pardon do rest, and unto His obedience in our stead and for our sakes as that on which we look for the rewards of eternity. Could I state the thing more explicitly I would. It is in the form of bare and unqualified statement that the Bible lays it down; and all who give credence thereunto will find, that in no one instance will they ever be disappointed. It is this in fact which forms the grand characteristic peculiarity of our dispensation; it is the burden of those good tidings which constitute the gospel, and which operated instantaneously as tidings of great joy—because they were no sooner announced in some cases than they were credited—no sooner revealed than they were relied upon. This is the one and the direct stepping-stone by which you may enter even now into rest. The merit which you laboured to possess is already acquired; and what you seek to deserve is held out unto you in the shape of a free donation. There is a perfect righteousness already brought in, and you need not therefore go about to establish one. It will indeed be going about, if you try to establish a righteousness of your own. Many a fruitless round will you have to ply—many a vain and weary circuit to accomplish; and after all be no nearer to your object than at the point from which you departed—many a laborious drudgery, which will be nought but a laborious deviation from that plain and unerring path, by which, with a majestic simplicity that is stamped upon all His processes, the wisdom of God would conduct you unto Himself. For this purpose,

hath He set forth Christ unto you; and He bids you enter through Him into full repose and reconciliation—accrediting the testimony that regardeth His blood, and thus will you be washed from guilt—accrediting the testimony that regardeth His services in your room, and thus will you be sustained by God as the rightful heirs of a purchased and glorious immortality. Submit yourselves therefore unto this righteousness of God. Be assured that it is the grand specific for your case as a sinner; and that you will never, but upon this, get solid or legitimate rest to the sole of your foot. Your acceptance of Christ as He is offered to you in the gospel, is the turning point of your salvation. He is freely offered; and never will you cease to be haunted by the disquietudes of a heart that is not at ease—never will the jealousies of the legal temper be done away—never will you attempt an act of fellowship with God, without the flaw of some guilty and misgiving suspicion adhering to it—never will you know what it is to draw near in the freedom of perfect confidence, with every topic of disturbance and distrust hushed into oblivion betwixt you—Till taking up with Him on His own terms, you alike cast the pride and the pain of self-righteousness away, and become the children of God through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

I fear, that there are many here present, who could never allege of themselves at any time, that they had the Spirit of adoption—with whom the sense of God as their reconciled Father, is as entirely a stranger to their heart as is any mystic inspiration—who have a kind of decent, and in some sort an earnest religiousness, but have never been visited by any feeling half so sanguine or extatic as this; and who perhaps may be interested to know, by the footsteps of what distinct or intelligible process, they could come to that filial affection unto God, wherewith as yet they have had no familiarity whatever. I would therefore say, in the first place, that I know of no more direct expedient for arriving at this end, than that of giving earnest heed unto the word of the testimony. "Hearken diligently unto me," saith God, "and your souls shall live." Your ears are so accustomed to what may be called the mere verbiage of orthodoxy, that when sounded anew or another time in your hearing, it stirs up no fresh exercise of the thinking principle. You are so well acquainted with the terms, that you arouse not yourselves to the contemplation of the truths. What you hear now, you have heard again and again; and this deafens, as it were, the whole activity of your understanding—so that whilst you recognise the words of the

evangelical system as so many old and oft-repeated common-places, you remain blind to all the important and affecting realities of which these words are nevertheless substantially the vehicles. In these circumstances, I can give you no likelier advice, than that you should put your minds forth and forward from the words to the things. Be not satisfied with the mere expression and cadence of orthodoxy. Engage, and that closely, steadily, perseveringly, with the matter of the gospel testimony. Think that there has been a movement in heaven towards a sinful world. Think that the express design of this movement, was to recall as many of our alienated race as would, to the joys and communions of that paradise, from which they had been exiled. Think that for its accomplishment every barrier in the way of this return is lifted away; and, more especially, that satisfaction was so rendered to a violated law, as that they who have trampled upon it might be crowned with honour, and yet the law itself be magnified and made honourable. Think that the whole burden of your guilt, and of its full expiation, has been laid upon another; and that all are invited, and you amongst the number, to come by this open way of access, and forthwith enter into peace with God. If, in lifting up your eyes to this contemplation, you still find that all above you is haze and that all within you is heaviness—continue to look—continue to give heed even until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your heart; and when this wondrous transaction between heaven and earth at length unfolds itself to your mental eye, in its characters of bounty and truth and tenderness—when the spectacle of God willing, and of God waiting to be gracious, is at length recognised by you—when all that moved His wrath and kept Him at a distance, is seen to be put aside by the work of the great Mediator, and that nothing is left but the exhibition of a mercy now rejoicing in the midst of the other attributes, and pouring a fresh lustre on them all, as it passes onwards to a guilty world through the channels of a consecrated priesthood and an infinite

sacrifice—It is when thus enabled to see God disarmed of all His terrors, and instead of the inflexible judge, to behold Him as now reconciled through Christ Jesus—it is when this assurance is made directly to bear upon our spirits from the word of revelation, that the confidence of our adoption enters into our hearts, and we can join the apostle and his converts in crying *Abba, Father*.

It does not follow, however, because you lift your eyes, that the manifestation is then in readiness, for your first and earliest regards towards it. There may be a cloud which intercepts it from your view; and even after many a wishful look towards that quarter whence you expect the light and the comfort of divine truth to come down upon your soul, may you have to complain that I cannot believe, I cannot discern—neither is Jesus Christ evidently set forth crucified before me. One advice of an eminent theologian in these circumstances, and it is a good one, is that though you should have missed the object of which you are in quest a hundred times, still make the other and the other effort; and who knows but that next time you will be met with the very revelation which your soul longeth after? To this advice I would shortly add another. While busy in seeking after the development to your belief of Christ's work—be equally busy in your practice at the doing of Christ's will. Labour, though in the dark. Mortify sin, though in such a spirit of unsettledness as to be almost equivalent to the spirit of bondage. Be diligent in duty, and thus might you pioneer your way to clearness and to comfort in doctrine. Forget not the saying that Christ manifests Himself to those who keep His words; and that the Holy Ghost is given to those who obey Him; and that they whose eye or whose aim is single shall have their whole body full of light; and that to him that hath, more shall be given; and that he who wills to do the will of God, and proves the sincerity of his will by the vigour of his performances, that he shall be made to know of Christ's doctrine whether it is of God.

LECTURE LIV.

ROMANS viii, 16.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

We can well imagine the desirousness, wherewith an earnest and aspiring Christian might enter into the interpretation of this verse. For, at the first view of it, he might think that it so far outstrips his own personal experience, as to leave him utterly behind all legitimate hope of his own personal salvation. He may be honestly conscious to himself, that he hath never felt any such witnessing as the text seems at least to advert to—no secret and preternatural intimation of his being one of God's children—no inward communion going on between the Spirit of God and his own spirit, whereby he might assure himself of that test whereby the apostle and his converts assuredly knew that they were the heirs of coming glory—no whisper of this sort to the ear of the inner man—no feeling of any other principle that was active and astir in his own heart, but the thoughts, and the emotions, and the desires of his own busy and familiar self—And thus, on the perusal of this verse, and of those in St. John where the apostle speaks of the witness in himself, and of his positively knowing that God had taken up His abode and dwelt in him even by the Spirit which He had given him—why there are many, who, from the want of all finding and participation in this sort of experience, feel themselves thrown at an utter distance from that which ministered the high hopes of immortality to the Christian of the New Testament; and who seek in vain for that inscription on the tablet within, which shone in characters of such bright and legible reflection to the primitive disciples, and assured them of their being indeed sealed unto the day of redemption, of their indeed having the mark impressed upon them of God's own family.

Now the first thing that I would say unto all who are in this state of painful ambiguity, is, that if they can obtain no satisfaction in their inquiry after the tests which they are looking for within, they ought to remember, that these tests are come at in no other way, than by a believing contemplation on their part of certain truths which they should often and habitually be looking to without. Even the Spirit, whose presence and whose inward witness they so vehemently desiderate, cometh by the hearing of faith. It was in the act of listening to the words

spoken by Peter, that the Holy Ghost fell upon Cornelius and the members of his household. The word of God is the vehicle upon which this heavenly visitant maketh entrance into the heart; and the very first announcement that He gives of His presence, is by the truths of that word impressed convincingly and feelingly upon the mind. This is the way in which He becometh sensible; and if you look for the Holy Ghost in any other way than through the power of Bible doctrine seen to be real, and felt to be morally touching and impressive, you will have no more success than if you looked for a spectre or some airy phantom of superstition. And therefore, if you will to realize upon your own person the test by which Paul knew of himself and his disciples that they were the children of God, begin at the beginning.

Ere you look for that joy which is one fruit of the Spirit, look to the tidings by which you are made joyful. Ere you look for the peace which is another of His fruits, read the pacific message that came from Heaven to earth; and you will cease from your disquietude, when you know that God hath ceased from His displeasure. Ere you make sure of love being in your hearts towards God, make sure of love being in His heart towards you—for it is only upon your believing sight of that love which looketh down from Heaven, that a responding love will rise back again from the earth. We know not if the shepherds of Bethlehem became spiritual men. It is very likely that they did, and that the Holy Ghost took up His residence within them. But they first heard the voice from the sky, of glory to God in the highest and peace on earth and good-will to men; and, under all the doubts and perplexities of your various cogitations, do we also bid you attend to the import of the same voice—and it is in the attitude of a full outlook on the objects, that you realise upon your own person the work and the consequences of faith. And therefore, in defect of experience, in defect of all feeling or confidence on your part that the Spirit is within you, in utter darkness though you may be on the question whether you are the subjects of grace, gaze upwardly and outwardly on the revealed objects of that economy of grace which hath been set up in the

view of all—and that, that from the uttermost ends of the earth all may look and be saved. Your first business is with the gospel. Your first attention should be to its overtures. They are the approach and the errand and the work of the great Mediator, which have a prior and a preferable claim upon you. What you have done once, you have to do always; and if ever a confidence sprung up in your bosom, when to Christ as a great Saviour, you brought yourself as an empty unfurnished and altogether helpless sinner, this you have to do again and again—this beginning of your confidence you have to hold fast unto the end; and it is by a constant renewal of your affections at the fire of this spiritual altar, that the flame of your spiritual grace can be so upheld as to be at all distinct or discernible.

And even when all discernment of your inward graces is lost, and nothing remains of which you are sensible but a desire after them—when utterly at a stand on the question whether you ever had the Spirit, or whether you have it at this moment still—You have a patent way by which to secure the attainment that your heart is set upon, if it be really so set. If there be nothing within to which you can look with any satisfaction, still you have God above standing forth in the aspect of graciousness, and waiting the applications of human willingness and human want. You have that being to repair to, who hath pledged His truth to the promise that He will give the Holy Spirit to them who ask it. When in the chaos and confusion of the inner man, all appearance of His workmanship hath disappeared, still you can pray; and just as the natural hunger ever recurring stands in need of constant and periodical supplies, so it is of our spiritual necessities. They are not met and conclusively provided for by one effusion of living water from on high. You perhaps have been counting upon a stock in hand—when in fact the style of this spiritual administration, is of grace to help you in the time of need. And the felt time of your need, is the fit time of your application. So that let you at present be as far aback as possible, on the question of your having an unction from the Holy One—there are expedients between you and utter despondency. There is the direct act of faith on the truths of the gospel, by which the Spirit cometh. There is the exercise of prayer, in answer to which the Spirit is abundantly poured upon you.

Now how shall we verify the answer to this prayer? How shall we ascertain that upon us there has been the fulfilment of that promise which is unto faith—even the Holy Ghost who is given to as many

as shall believe? In reply to this it is most important to observe, that His work is visible, but His working is not so. It is not of His operation that we are conscious, but of the result of that operation. We do not see the wind, though we see the impulse and the direction which it gives to many sensible things. And neither can we tell of the Spirit's agency on a human soul, though the impression which He hath made upon it may be quite palpable. We do not see Him at work, though we may see the workmanship that He leaves behind Him. As in vegetation our eye is upon the fruit, and not upon the secrets of that hidden physiology whence all the efflorescence cometh—so, in spiritual husbandry, the eye of our consciousness is upon deeds that are palpably done and desires that are palpably felt, and not upon the primary influence which touches the inner mechanism and originates all its goings. There is much, in that parable, where the kingdom of heaven is likened unto seed thrown into the ground, and which springeth up one knoweth not how; but which still leaves the test unaffected that by its fruit ye shall know it. The Spirit may not be felt in His access to the soul, but His fruits may be recognised in the now holy and heavenly affections of the soul. There is neither a light, nor a voice, nor a felt stirring within, to warn us of His presence; but there may now be a goodness, and a righteousness, and a truth, in the heart which give testimony to His power. It is thus that from certain plain characteristics we may come at the inference that we are the children of God—from distinct and intelligible remarks to which we have access without mysticism; and on which apostles have condescended in other parts of the New Testament—"Hereby know we that we know Him if we keep His commandments." "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."

There is one very obvious way then, in which the Spirit may bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; or in which, according to the translation of many, the Spirit may bear witness to or attest to our spirit that we are God's children. It is He who worketh a work of grace in our souls, and that work may become manifest to our own consciences. We may read the lineaments of our now renovated character; and it may be regarded as an exercise of our own spirit, that by which we become acquainted with the new features or the new characteristics that have been formed upon ourselves. And we may furthermore read in

the Bible, what be the Scripture marks of the new creature; and as all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God—this is one way in which a joint testimony may be made out between God's Spirit, and our spirit upon the subject; or in which a communication may be made to pass from the one to the other—so that they both shall concur in one and the same sentence that we are indeed God's children. The part that the Spirit of God hath had in this matter is, that He both graves upon us the lineaments of a living epistle of Christ Jesus, and tells us in the epistle of a written revelation what these lineaments are. The part which our own spirit has is, that, with the eye of consciousness, we read what is in ourselves; and, with the eye of the understanding, we read what is in the book of God's testimony: And upon our perceiving that such as the marks of grace which we find to be within, so are the marks of grace which we observe in the description of that word without that the Spirit hath indited, we arrive at the conclusion that we are born of God.

But what is more, it is the work of the Spirit to make one see more clearly in both of these directions—to open one's eyes both that he might behold the things contained in the Bible with brighter manifestation, and also that he might behold the things which lie deeply and to most undiscoverably hidden within the arcana of his own heart. In virtue of his clearer outward discernment, he may have a more sure and satisfying belief in the Son of God; and in virtue of his clearer inward discernment, this belief, now more sure and strong, may also become more sensible. There are many natural truths in authentic history, in science, in common life and experience, which you not only believe, but which you know that you believe—so that you can not only say of them that these are truths, but of which you can say I know the firmness and the certainty of my own faith in them. In like manner, a man may both believe in a gospel truth, and which is a distinct thing, may know that he believes it. The Spirit may have so far enlightened him as to the doctrine, that he is quite satisfied as to the truth of it; and may also have so far enlightened him as to the state of his own mind, that he knows the belief or the conviction to be assuredly there. Let him have no doubt upon this point; and, on the single assertion that he who believeth in Christ shall be saved, he may have no doubt of his salvation. If he know himself to be a believer, and also knoweth that every believer shall go to heaven, what more is necessary to assure

him of his own destination to an inheritance of glory? He hath data enough for such a conclusion. He hath both the major and the minor proposition for the winding up of an argument, which to him at least is irresistible. Still it is the Spirit which hath furnished him with both. By it he discerns the evidence that there is in the Bible, and by it he discerns the reflection that there is of that evidence in his own heart—so that he not only recognises the Bible to be true, but recognises himself to be a believer in the Bible. The one recognition in fact may be so clear and confident and strong, as to lead instantaneously and forcibly to the other. And thus believing in the Son of God, may he come to have the witness in himself, and assuredly to know that he is one of God's children.

No man can know any thing, or believe any thing, but upon evidence. Yet this evidence may be of such prompt occurrence to him when he goes in quest of it; and it may work its convictions upon the mind so quickly and so powerfully; and with all the rapidity of consciousness might so hasten on the argument—that, as the Bible is true, and he is thoroughly aware of his own belief in it, therefore to him all its promises are sure, and all its glorious prospects are unquestionably in reserve for him: And this sunshine of hope may come so immediately on the back of prayer, or be so lighted up at the view of a scriptural passage, or be so supported by all the regards that he is enabled to throw on his past history or on his present feelings—as not only to assure him of the sufficiency of all these proofs for his personal interest in the gospel, but also that it is the Spirit of God who at the moment hath assembled them in such force and frequency and radiance around him—Not an intimation from that Spirit either by a voice or a direct impulse, but an intimation rationally gathered from those materials of contemplation which it is the office of the Spirit to set before him—gathered from that written record, to understand which the Holy Ghost hath opened his understanding—gathered from what he knows of his own believing heart, to perceive which the Holy Ghost hath enlightened his conscience—gathered from the retrospect of his bygone experience, for the perusal of which the Holy Ghost hath performed the office that belongs to Him, of bringing all things to his remembrance: And thus through the medium, not of visionary but most significant and substantial proofs, yet proofs brought together in a way that announces the preternatural agency concerned in the representation of them—may

the Spirit of God witness to the spirit of man, that he is a child of mercy and that the seal of his redemption is set upon him.

I could not, without making my own doctrine outstrip my own experience, vouch for any other intimation of the Spirit of God, than that which he gives in the act of making the word of God clear unto you, and the state of your own heart clear unto you. From the one you draw what are its promises—from the other what are your own personal characteristics; and the application of the first to the second may conduct to a most legitimate argument, that you personally are one of the saved—and that not a tardy or elaborate argument either, but with an evidence quick and powerful as the light of intuition. By a single deposition of conscience, for example, I may know that I do indeed hunger and thirst after righteousness; and, by a single glance with the eye of my understanding, I may recognise a Saviour's truth and a Saviour's tenderness in the promise that all who do so shall be filled; and, without the intervention of any lengthened process of reasoning, I may confidently give to this general announcement in the gospel such a specific application to myself, as to carry my own distinct and assured hope of a particular interest therein. Thus there is no whisper by the Spirit, distinct from the testimony of the word. Thus there is no irradiation, but that whereby the mind is enabled to look reflexly and with rational discernment upon itself. And here there is no conclusion, but what comes immediately and irresistibly out of premises which are clear to me, while they lie hid in deepest obscurity from other men—And all this you will observe with the rapidity of thought—by a flight of steps so few, as to be got over in an instant of time—by a train of considerations strictly logical, while the mind that enjoys and is impressed with all this light is not sensible of any logic—and yet withal by the Spirit of God; for it is He who hath brought the word nigh, and given it weight and significance to my understanding; and it is He who hath manifested to me the thoughts and intents of my own heart, and evinced some personal characteristic within that is coincident with the promise without; and it is He who sustains me in the work of making a firm and confident application. In all this He utters no voice. The word of God made plain to my conviction, and His own work upon me made plain to my conscience—these are the vocables, and I do imagine the only vocables, by which He expresses Himself; but enough to furnish any Christian with a reason of the hope that is in him, and, better than articulation itself, to solace

and to satisfy the enquiring spirit of its relationship to the family of God.

Mine eye can carry me no farther among these experimental processes—these hidden mysteries of the Christian life—these lofty eminences of grace and of attainment, which, high and inaccessible as they may appear to many who are here present, have nevertheless been reached and realized by believers in this world. And would you like to realize them? Are you convinced that there is much of recorded experience in the Bible, and even much of actual and yet occurring experience among the Christians of the day, which overshoots all that you have ever felt or become familiar with in the intimacies of your own bosom? Would you like personally to taste of this experience, to ascertain and upon your own finding what sort of thing after all it is—Really to have to do with these witnessings of the Spirit—these communications of light and love from the upper sanctuary—these foretastes of a coming blessedness—these ecstasies, that, almost look like so many inspirations of which you read in the lives of the holy, but which belong it would seem to a more elevated region of faith or of fancy that you have yet soared into? We hold it to be no fancy. We deem that such a region exists, and we also deem that there is a series of firm stepping-stones by which it may be gained. We have already spoken, and at the outset of these remarks, of the direct exercise of faith in the gospel; and we now say, that, up to your faith in the doctrine, let be your diligent following of the duties of the gospel. The manifestations for which you long, are given to those who do the commandments of Christ. You desire to reach the assurance of so bright and joyful an anticipation, as the apostle expresses in our text. It is to be reached by a path of labour, and so he says in another place—"labour with all diligence unto the full assurance of hope unto the end." It is not by a flight of imagination that you gain the ascents of spiritual experience. It is by the toils and the watchings and the painstaking of a solid obedience. Performance alone will not do it—for performance un sanctified by prayer is a legal and a presumptuous offering. Prayer alone will not do it—for prayer unaccompanied with performance, is an idle or a hypocritical effusion. But prayer and performance together will do it. What looks now a secret and inaccessible thing, will then become familiar—for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. What now looks dark and deep and wholly undiscernible, will then become manifest—for to him that ordereth his conversa-

tion aright will God show His covenant. There is a working to establish a righteousness of your own, that will land you in utter disappointment and defeat; but there is also a working which is taken up with a looking unto Christ as the Lord your righteousness, that brings down upon your soul the illuminations which

He is ever ready to bestow on His faithful followers; and which He delights in showering down upon them from His seat of exaltation—as the tokens of His love to all those who evince the sincerity of their love to Him, in the keeping of His commandments.

LECTURE LV.

ROMANS viii, 17, 18.

“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 also glorified together. For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

‘And if children, then heirs.’ The one implies relationship to God, the other a right of property from Him—differing from the corresponding right in society in this—that for one man to be the heir of another, implies a right to that which the other possesses upon his relinquishing it by death. It is a right in reversion; but which, instead of entering upon at the death of another, he enters upon at his own death. And he is an heir of God, not because at that period he succeeds Him, but because at that period he is admitted by Him into the enjoyment of himself—nay into as full a participation as his limited faculties will allow, of the very joys and the very characteristics of the Godhead. He then enters on the glory that is to be revealed, and he is then filled with the whole fulness of God. St. John felt himself unable to enter into the details of what that is which the children of God shall be, but still he could say in the general that we shall be like Him. He knew of himself and of his fellow-disciples that they were the sons of God, and exclaims on the manner of love wherewith God had loved them in that they should be so called; and then he seems to pass from their relationship as sons of which he spake with present certainty, to their relationship as heirs of which he could only speak distantly and dimly—yet speaks in such a way as makes out a very apposite conception of our property in God; for what can give us a nearer use and enjoyment of the Deity, than we have by actually seeing Him as He is, and so gazing with unexpended delight on all those lovely and venerable graces by which He is irradiated—and, what comes nearer to a communication of Himself unto us or to our having a portion in the Divinity, than our being made like unto Him? It would look too as if the circumstance of

our seeing Him led, by a sort of casual or influential energy, to the circumstance of our being assimilated to Him—as if we gathered, by a sort of radiation from His glory, the reflection of a kindred glory upon our own persons—as if His excellencies passed into us when ushered into His visible presence, and became ours by sympathy or ours by transmission. He does not part with His character; but He multiplies His character by the diffusion of it through all the members of the blest household that is above; and they may most significantly be called heirs of God—may be most significantly said to have God for their portion, and God for their inheritance—When not only admitted to the full and immediate sight of Him; but when the efficacy of that sight is to actuate and inspire them with His very affections, is to cover and adorn them with His very moral and spiritual glories.

‘Heirs of God.’ This phrase brings us to the same conclusion as that in which we have often been landed, by the consideration of other phrases and other passages of the Bible, in regard to the kind of happiness that is to be enjoyed in heaven. To be filled with the fullness of God, is to have a full view of Him as He is; and not merely a full view of His character, but a full participation of it. This is the inheritance that we have to look forward to. An heir hath something in prospect, and something in reversion; and this is our prospect. There is a glory to the revealed: and of which we shall be admitted as the beholders, and not only the beholders but also the sharers of it. Our eye will be direct on the manifested Godhead; and in the act of looking to Him we shall be made like unto Him. We shall imbibe the very character that we gaze upon; and not only shall we have unspotted moral excellence in full and

faultless perfection before us, but we shall have all that inherent delight which springs from the ample possession of it. So that after all, it is not the happiness of sense but mainly and substantially the happiness of sacredness. It is the very kind of happiness wherein God hath dwelt from everlasting; and in which he had supreme and ineffable enjoyment before the world was. It is that happiness to which the viewless Spirit of the Eternal is competent; and which lay profoundly seated in the depths of His incomprehensible nature, ere there was any sensible delight to be tasted or any sensible beauty to gaze upon. He was happy in the contemplation of His own virtues; and this is a happiness that we are made to inherit, when, admitted into His presence, these virtues stand in illuminated glory before us. And He was happy in the complacent possession of these virtues—in the harmony within to which they ever attune the bosom of their serene and abiding occupation—in the deep and capacious peacefulness, wherewith they pervaded the very essence of the Divinity—in that fulness of joy, whereof purity and righteousness and love are the sole but the sufficient elements. This happiness too we are made to inherit, when the character of God is not only set before us in radiant perspective, but is made ours in real and actual possession—when all His moralities take up their dwelling-place in our own souls, and have over them entire and absolute dominion—when, in the ethereal play of our kind and holy and heavenly affections, we shall have pleasure for evermore—when ours shall be the blessedness that essentially resides in every well-conditioned and well-constituted spirit; and opposed to all that turbulence and misery, which wrath and malice and deceit and the fierceness of unhallowed desire are ever stirring in the heart which they agitate and possess—there will be a well of living water in the soul, the play of a celestial fountain that yields to the feelings a perpetual refreshment; and which, apart from all external gratification, can minister the choicest sweets of elysium from the deep and inward complacencies of rectitude alone.

And then there is the sympathy of all this conscious feeling between soul and soul,—there is the diffusion of God's own likeness over all the individuals of Heaven's family—there is the moral radiance that issues from His throne, and is reflected back again from the countenance of all the worshippers who are around it—there is the law of kindness, that emanates from the central place of glory, and circulates throughout the mighty hosts both of the redeemed and the unfallen—

These are the properties of that divine inheritance whereunto we are called—these are the beatitudes to which, as the heirs of God, we are invited to look forward; and though we do believe of the paradise above, that it will be lighted up in material splendour, and have all the hues and graces of material loveliness scattered over it in rich and infinite profusion—yet will it be in the healthful temperament of spirits; in the action of mind upon mind; in the worth, and the beneficence, and the piety, that are inwardly felt by each, and spread abroad in one tide of joyful communication among all—it will be in these that the happiness of immortals shall essentially lie. It will be a moral and a spiritual gladness that shall hold jubilee there; and the high and heaven-born festivities that are there enjoyed will be characteristic, not of a place of sense, but of a place of sacredness.

And this should hold out a lesson to all who are pressing forward to acquire, or who do now entertain the hopes of the gospel. It is a hope which should lead directly unto holiness. The son, who is also heir, receives upon his spirit an impression and a tinge from the nature of his inheritance. If it be an inheritance of wealth—he may now be busied with all the plans, and have entered in some degree upon the habits of expenditure. If it be the inheritance of an official dignity—he even now rises upward in thought to the measure of the elevation that awaits him. If it be a place of duty, and where eloquence or scholarship or high philosophy be indispensable to the discharge of it—then will he give himself up to the toils of an unseen but busy solitude, to the labours of the midnight oil in the work of preparation. And so if it be a place of holy delights and holy exercises—will there even now be a foretaste of the coming joy, and a preparation for the coming services. The expectants of heaven will even now, be of heavenly character and heavenly conversation. There will be a mortification unto the present, there will be an engrossment with the concerns of the future. The urgencies of sense will be resisted, because they are not the delights of sense which are to constitute the portion of their eternity. The high communions of sacredness will be aspired after, because it is a habitation of sacredness whither they are going. The spirit of holiness that is in them here, will be the earnest to them of a holy inheritance hereafter. They will know themselves to be strangers and pilgrims; and their affections will be kindred with the country to which they travel, and not with the country through which they pass. They will sit loose to this world's cares

and this world's pleasures; and thus a patience under all earthly discomforts, and a self-denial to all earthly gratifications, will be to them the discipline that shall at once inspire the hope and qualify for the enjoyment of higher gratifications.

'Joint-heirs with Christ.'—The term son implies only a relationship. The term heir implies something more—a right to something in reversion, and on which we are afterwards to enter. The heir hath a title to the inheritance; and joint-heirs have a joint or common title thereunto. We who believe in Christ have a common title with Christ, to the inheritance that is above. It is a title by us possessed, but by Him purchased. It is called a purchased inheritance, because a price was given for it—a ransom or a redemption-price, whereby the title that we had forfeited is again made up to us—a right that we share along with Him who earned it—and of which it is most material that you should know, that by Him it was altogether bought, and to us it is altogether rendered in the form of a present. There is not a greater stumbling-block in the way of our entrance upon the divine life, than the legal imagination that we often set out with, of making good as our claim that which is freely offered to us as a gratuity. We either never shall be satisfied with the goodness of such a claim, and so be all along haunted by a most oppressive sense of insecurity; or, if we are satisfied, it is only by dishonouring God—by bringing down His law to the measure of our loyalty,—by an affronting comparison between the lofty commandment of Heaven and our unworthy and polluted services. And, accordingly, this is a point on which the gospel will stoop to no compromise whatever with human guilt. It makes you welcome to heaven, but not through the works of righteousness that you have done; and if you persist to make this the footing on which you rest your hopes of immortality—this it denounces as a presumption on your part which it resents to the uttermost, and for which it has no toleration. You must take the gift of eternal life, if you are to obtain it all, on the footing of that mercy which hath saved us—and of mercy too, that, not satisfied with giving it as a simple donation, gives it conjoined with all the securities of a title-deed, and of a legal investiture. It is given to you in consideration of a righteousness, and that not your own but the righteousness of Jesus Christ; and you altogether defeat the economy of the gospel, and miss the very spirit which it is designed to impress upon sinners, if you hold not by your hopes of a coming inheritance, on the terms that to

you it is freely given, because by Him it has been amply earned.

But though we had no part with Christ in the purchase of that inheritance which belongs jointly to Him and to us, yet there is one thing that is common betwixt us. He alone achieved the purchase. He trod the wine-press alone. And when, He saw that there was none to help, His own arm brought Him salvation. But whilst there is no similarity between Him and us as to the fulfilling of that righteousness by which heaven is purchased, there is a similarity as to the fulfilment of that righteousness by which heaven is prepared for. It was He who reared the pathway of communication between earth and heaven; but He not only reared it, He also walked upon it, and we have to follow His steps. For this purpose He was set forth as an example; and to make it an applicable and an imitable one, He assumed such a humanity as felt the power of temptation, though He overcame it—as was tried by sufferings, and was actually schooled into perfection thereby—as was exercised by affliction in such a way as to be taught by it, and from it to learn obedience. We have nought but revelation to guide us through the mysteries of a nature that none but He ever realised—yet it was a nature so conformable to ours, as that we could make a study and a copy of it; and, accordingly, we are told by the apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews, that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings—that by the things which He did suffer He learned obedience—that He became qualified by this process of discipline to make our sufferings the instruments of our sanctification, even as His sufferings were the instruments as we are expressly told of His sanctification—that both He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are in this respect one—that from the like contest of trials here, there is the like crown of triumph hereafter—and that He hath not only pointed out this way by describing it before us, but hath been enabled thereby to help us over all its difficulties; for "to him that overcometh" he says "will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne."

'If so be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together'—or 'seeing that we suffer with him that we may also be glorified together.' There is this difference you will perceive of import between the two phrases 'if so be that,' and 'seeing that.' By the former phrase, the present suffering is made the essential condition of our future glory. By the latter phrase, the present suffering is re-

cognised as that which hath actually happened; and the future glory as that in which it will most assuredly terminate. And though we would not say of sufferings in time, that they are indispensable to the triumphs of eternity—yet, certain it is, that the one is often made the stepping-stone to the other. Certain it is, that, in point of fact, they are the instruments of a salutary discipline for the growth and establishment of a believer in holiness. They not only go before our glory in heaven; but it is expressly said that they work out that glory. “Our light afflictions which are but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” The chastisements of God yield, it is said, the peaceable fruit of righteousness; and they are inflicted for the express purpose of making us partakers of His own holiness. “It is good” for me says the Psalmist “that I have been afflicted.” “Ere I was afflicted I went astray.” And it is very remarkable that the Saviour who assumed the person, and put on the infirmities, and became subject to the temptations of a man—that He also exemplified the very processes by which humanity is purified and exalted unto a meetness for the celestial habitations—that He, of whom we might well imagine that He had nothing to learn, actually learned obedience by the things which He suffered—that He, of whom no one could think that any imperfection adhered to Him, actually became perfect through suffering—that He, whose natural manhood was carried forward from infancy in a way analogous to the rest of the species, seems to have grown to His moral and spiritual manhood in the same way, being cradled among the elements of suffering and pain, being tutored in the school of adversity, being tried and at length established in virtue under the lessons of this severe teacher—So becoming in all points, with the single exception of sin, like as we are—not feeling only as we ought to feel, and acting as we ought to act, but learning as we ought to learn.

I have had occasion formerly to explain in your hearing the beneficial efficacy of an afflictive process—how it emptied the heart of an idol that had seduced or withdrawn us too much from God—how it loosened the tie by which man is so often bound to the vanities of a perishable world—how by rending asunder the connection that there formerly was between our affections and certain earthly objects by which these affections were secularised, it left the soul more clear and unoccupied for the things of God and eternity—how, additionally to all this, it tried our faith and patience, and by the very trial strength-

ened them the more—how it, in a manner, compelled us upon our resources in heaven, to make up for crosses and deficiencies on earth; and, in so doing, brought us into closer contact and made us have more abundant conversation there—So, in a word, as to confirm our attitude of strangers and pilgrims upon earth; and habituate us to the frame of those, who, looking forward to another resting-place, sit loose to the world and to all its treacherous enjoyments.

And it would greatly lighten the burden of our afflictions, did we but lay our account with them—did we regard them as forming a necessary part of our lot—did we, forewarned of their frequency, stand in the attitude of readiness and were prepared to receive them. It would serve to repress the murmurs of our impatience, and reconcile us to the hardships of life, did we look on life as a journey whose hardships must be traversed; and that they, in fact, were the steps of that laborious ascent which led to the higher scenes of a sinless and unsuffering kingdom. There is nought which aggravates more the painfulness of affliction, than the thought that we have been singled out for calamities which are but rarely exemplified in the world; and one of the most familiar effusions of discontent is—that never was man so beset and tormented and cruelly agonised both by misfortune and injustice, as I have been. To meet this tendency, the apostle makes use of many arguments. He tells us that our afflictions are not rare—“Think not that any strange thing hath happened unto you,” and that others experience the same—“There has nought befallen you that is not common to the rest of your brethren in the world,” and that it is not so great as might easily be imagined—“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin;” and, lastly, that they are useful in the great work of our spiritual education. Be reconciled therefore and patient. You do not know what others suffer as well as you. The heart knoweth its own bitterness: And each believer hath his own appropriate visitation laid upon him, by the God who chastens because He loves; and who conforms us to Christ in suffering, because He means that we shall be conformed unto Him in glory.

V. 18. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

This is a testimony which cometh well from the apostle Paul who was so singularly afflicted in his day; who stood at all times in imminent peril of his life, from the unrelenting enemies of that faith which he so steadfastly adhered to; who,

in addition to fightings from without, had fears and forebodings within; and whose spirit, made the subject of constant agitation and turmoil both from his misgivings as to the success of his ministry and from that deep and tender sensibility of conscience which rendered him so alive to his own weakness, was well nigh wearied into utter despondency—so that he longed to depart from the world, and to be with Christ which he deemed far better. Such a testimony from a man of so much experience in the sufferings of life, should be prized by the sufferers of after ages—even as the record of that grace and mercy which were bestowed upon him a sinful persecutor, should be prized by the sinners of all after ages. It is a signal exhibition of the power of faith, proving that with him immortality was somewhat more than a dream—that it was embodied into a practical reality; and had the same substantial influence to console him, in the dark and trying hour of adversity, as the near prospect of deliverance even in

this world. The man who frets impatiently, under the little crosses and disasters of our peaceable day—who abandons himself to despair, when his visions of prosperity on this side of time are scattered by the hand of misfortune into nothing—who feels that all is lost, because the earthly portion upon which he set his heart is lost—who, differently reckoning from Paul, reckons himself an outcast from hope and happiness because of the clouds that sit on this temporary scene—He may try himself by these marks, and learn how little indeed it is that he lives by the power of a coming world—learn how, after all, when his faith is brought to a really practical test, it is found most wofully to fail him—and, more especially learn, how possible it is to have quite the form of sound words, and to have all the notions and phrases of the evangelical system, without being impregnated with that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

LECTURE LVI.

ROMANS viii, 19—22.

“For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

V. 19—21 “FOR the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

To understand these verses let it first be adverted to, that the term here translated creature signifieth also creation; and so might comprehend all animate and all inanimate things. It is true, that the inanimate are not capable of hope; and this feeling perhaps should not be extended beyond the members of the human family—though, certain it is, that, amongst the inferior tribes of living creatures, there is also, in some partial degree, the same restlessness, the same dissatisfaction with present things, the same desire of things better, and perhaps even the same tendency of wish and expectation towards them, that are so palpably evident of ourselves and all the fellows of our species. And then of mute and insensible things it

holdeth true, that, though they cannot hope, they at least wait a restoration. We cannot ascribe to them, without an effort of poetry or of personification, the posture of looking forward to that day of their coming enlargement, when they shall be emancipated from the distress and imprisonment in which they are now held—But still when we include them in the description of these verses, we commit no greater violence upon the literalities of sober and prosaic truth than is done in other parts of Scripture—when all nature is summoned to an act of attendance upon God—when the voice of praise is heard by the ear of fancy as arising to heaven from the mountains and the forests, and the valleys are made to sing, and the little hills on every side to rejoice—when on the approach of its Maker, the whole creation is represented as vocal—when the fields are called upon to break forth into gladness, and the floods to clap their hands. These all are now waiting such an advent and such a jubilee as this; and there is no great stretch of the imagination, when the apostle affirms that they

all now hope for a futurity, at which when it becomes present the Psalmist figures them to rejoice.

The next remark that we shall offer for the elucidation of these verses is, that the middle clause of the 20th verse should be thrown into a parenthesis. The main assertion of this verse is, that the creature was made subject to vanity in hope; and we are told by the way that it was so made subject unwillingly, or without its own consent. It was not for example by any wilful act of theirs, that animals were made subject to death. There could be no willingness on the part of the ground, in that act of which its curse was one of the consequences. It could be from no fault of the will in nature, that she was visited with that sore distemper, under which she now labours; and whereof she giveth palpable symptom in the volcano, and the earthquake, and the storm, and that general conspiracy of all her elements against which man has to fight and to fatigue himself his whole life long—that he might force out a subsistence, and keep footing through a history that is made up of little better than to drudge and to die.* It was not of its own willingness that the creation was thus brought under the power of vanity, but by reason of him who subjected the same. There are some who understand this of the great tempter, who, by seducing man from his obedience, brought death into our world and all its woe. Others understand him who yielded to that temptation, our first parent, at whose fall a universal blight came upon nature and she is now become a wreck of what she was—still lovely in many of her aspects, though in sore distress—still majestic and venerable, though a venerable ruin—appearing as if out of joint; and giving token by her extended deserts, and the gloom of her unpeopled solitudes, and her wintry frown, and her many fierce and fitful agitations, that some mysterious ailment hath befallen her.

So that the whole passage may be thus paraphrased. The creation is now waiting, as if in the attitude of earnest expectancy, for that era—when, transformed into a new heavens and a new earth, it shall become a suitable habitation for those who are declared and manifested to be the sons of God. For creation, then to be so gloriously restored, has for a time

been made subject to vanity not willingly, on the part at least of any who now live, but by reason of him who by his fatal disobedience hath brought it into this bondage—yet it is a bondage that is mingled and alleviated with hope; and that too a warranted hope, because creation shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption: And emancipated from those fetters which now bind and burden and make it impracticable and ungracious, it will come forth in smiles that shall be perennial and immortal, it will yield a grateful compliance to the wishes of its happy inmates, and have in all its operations the beneficent flow and freedom of God's own children.

Having rendered to you a general exposition of this remarkable passage, let us now look a little more narrowly into the separate clauses of it.

'For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.' We have already hinted at the extension of this clause even to the lower animals, and to mute insensible things. There might be somewhat of personification and fancy in such an application. But there is no fancy in generalising it so far, as to include at least all the members of the great human family. There is a sort of vague undefinable impression, we think, upon all spirits, of some great evolution of the present system under which we live—some looking towards, as well as longing after immortality—some mysterious but yet powerful sense within every heart, of the present as a state of confinement and thralldom; and that yet a day of light and largeness and liberty is coming. We cannot imagine of unbelievers, that they have any very precise or perhaps confident anticipation on the subject, any more than the world at large had of the advent of our Messiah—though a very general expectation was abroad of the approaching arrival of some great personage upon earth. And, in like manner, there is abroad even now the dim and the distant vision of another advent, of a brighter and a blander period that is now obscurely seen or guessed at through the gloom by which humanity is encompassed—a kind of floating anticipation, suggested perhaps by the experimental feeling that there is now the straitness of an oppress and limited condition; and that we are still among the toils, and the difficulties, and the struggles, of an embryonic state of existence. It is altogether worthy of remark and illustrative of our text, that, in like manner as through the various countries of the world, there is a very wide impression of a primeval condition of virtue and blessedness from which we have fallen—

* A few of the following passages had been transferred twelve years ago, from the author's MS. Lectures on the Romans to his preparations on Natural Theology, and have since been printed from p. 339 onward of vol. ii of his work on that subject. Nevertheless they are still retained here though in a different connection; and to ourselves at least it is interesting to feel, that the same process of reflection which suits the dimness of nature anterior to the light of Christianity, is alike suitable to our present state, while we yet see through a glass darkly and anterior to the disclosures of our future immortality.

so there seems a very wide expectation of the species being at length restored to the same health and harmony and loveliness, as before. The vision of a golden age at some remote period of antiquity, is not unaccompanied with the vision of a yet splendid and general revival of all things. Even apart from revelation, there floats before the world's eye the brilliant perspective of this earth being at length covered with a righteous and regenerated family. This is a topic on which even philosophy has its fascinating dreams; and there are philanthropists in our day who disown Christianity, yet are urged forward to enterprise by the power and the pleasure of an anticipation so beautiful. They do not think of death. They only think of the moral and political glories of a renovated world, and of these glories as unfading. It is an immortality after all that they are picturing. While they look on that gospel which brought life and immortality to light as a fable—Still they find that the whole capacity of their spirits is not filled, unless they can regale them with the prospect of an immortality of their own. Nothing short of this will satisfy them; and whether you look to those who speculate on the perfectibility of mankind, or those who think in economic theories that they are laying the basis on which might be reared the permanent happiness of nations—you see but the creature spurning at the narrowness of its present condition, and waiting in earnest expectancy for the manifestation of the sons of God.

‘For the creature was made subject to vanity. We have already spoken somewhat of the inanimate creation—of the curse under which the ground lieth, and the consequent toil to which man is subjected that he might live—of the visible derangement into which nature has been thrown, so that all her elements are impregnated with disease, and often by hurricane or pestilence or sweeping flood become the ministers of desolation. We do not know how much lovelier the face of creation would have stood out to the eye, had not sin entered within its confines. We do not know what tints of sweeter beauty had diversified the landscape, or with what finer notes of melody and peace the purer and fresher atmosphere had been charged. It is not for us to tell the precise amount of deterioration, which the mute and unconscious materialism hath sustained by the fall of Adam. But certain it is, that vanity hath thereby obtained a sad ascendant over every thing that lives on the surface of our lower world. It was by sin that death entered amongst us; and this stamps the character of vanity of vanities on all who

are subject to it. Through the whole of life doth man walk in a vain show, and he vexeth himself in vain; and even though it had flowed in one clear and untroubled current of felicity, how surely and how sadly it reacheth its termination. It is this which puts a mockery on all the splendour and stateliness of this world. The grave absorbs all and annihilates all; and as one generation maketh room for another, and the men of the present age are borne off the scene by the men of the age that is to follow, we cannot regard the history of our species, and indeed of all the living tribes that people the surface of this labouring earth—we cannot regard it in any other light than as a series of abortions. There is so much of the promise of immortality in the high anticipation and heyday of youth—there is so much of the seeming power of immortality in the vigour of established manhood—there is even so much of the character of endurance in the tenacity wherewith age keeps itself rivetted to the pursuits and interests of the world, to its busy schemes, and its eager prosecutions, and its castles of fame or accumulated fortune—clinging, as it does, to these things on the very brink of the sepulchre; and keeping the firmer hold with the hand of avarice, the sooner that its deeds and its documents and its various parchments of security are to be torn away from it—Why the whole picture looks so farcical if I may be allowed the term—that surely it may well be said of life under its happiest guise, and in the midst of its greatest prosperity, that it is altogether subject unto vanity.

‘Not willingly but by reason of him who hath subjected the same.’ This as I said before is a parenthesis, by which the main current of observation is suspended. Yet here it comes most pertinently in. This is a condition which hath passed upon it by the sentence of the Creator, not gone into with the consent of the creature. It is a thing of ordination not of choice. The mute and inanimate things had no choice of that derangement which they have been made to undergo—of that decay under which so many of them, and these the loveliest in nature, do yearly sicken and expire; and so exemplify a death that likens them to those who are immediately above themselves in the scale of creation. Neither had the inferior animals any voluntary part in that law of mortality whereunto they are subject—or in that law of their sentient or organic nature by which in obedience to a tyrant appetite, they go forth upon each other in mutual fierceness to raven and to destroy. And even with man it is a thing of destiny, and he comes

into the world all unconscious of that which is abiding him. What does an infant know of death? or what does it know of those restless passions by which ere death ensues, the period that intervenes is a troubled dream of vexation and vanity? They lie unevolved and sleep in mysterious embryo among the curious receptacles of its little bosom. If this subjection of our world unto vanity is resolvable into willingness at all, it must be the willingness of those first parents who yielded to it. And it is indeed a most striking demonstration of the malignity of sin, and of God's unfaltering hostility against it—that, on its first entrance within the confines of our planet and ever since, Nature took on a hue of sickliness; and the very elements were charged with disease; and even that ground, which erst offered a soft and flowery carpet for the impress of ethereal footsteps, gathered into a more rugged and intractable temper than before; and death established its grim relentless empire over every thing that breathes; and more especially man has been doomed by the very nobleness of his endowments, by the greater reach of his forebodings and the finer sensibilities that belong to him, to a larger participation, to a higher pre-eminence in the general distress.

'In hope.' Take away the parenthesis and you read 'Vanity in hope'—or an experience of present evil mixed with the anticipation of release from it. In the condition of the accursed angels, there is evil unmixed and unalleviated. We can imagine it, but we do not feel it. We deem that in every clime and with every human creature, there is, it may be dimly and faintly, but there is we think a sort of restless aspiring towards better things, which could not exist within a certain prospect of enlargement. There is a constitutional impulse in the human spirit, by which it is ever stretching forward to a better and a happier condition than the one which it now occupies; and if it can find no earthly prospect on which to rest, still the tendency abides with us; and goads us on as it were to unknown futurity, which we fill with wishes and schemes and fond imaginations, rather than that a faculty should lie unemployed or a feeling should continue to actuate our hearts that shall be left without an object to exercise and entertain it. We cannot fancy a situation of greater wretchedness, than that from which hope is excluded, and before which there lies no open vista whatever that admits one ray of light from the fathomless unknown; or rather perhaps when it is all known to be the cheerless infinite of one vast and unknown desolation—when grim certain-

ty informs the conscience, that what the present void and the present agony are now, such will they ever be—when the weight that is now upon the spirit is surely believed by the owner of it to be irremediably there; and there is ever ringing in his ear, the unvaried knell of a ceaseless and changeless and comfortless eternity. Such may be the sad state of those apostate spirits that have fallen before us; but it is not ours. The vanity to which we are subject is mingled with hope; and it bears a kind of experimental evidence to that economy under which we live, that the prospects which it sets before us are so adapted to principles which God hath still permitted to remain in our nature. It shows that there is a counterpart within us to the doctrine that is without us. It secures a more ready coalescence on our part with the revelation of immortality. It gives to that revelation the advantage of being met with and responded to, in a way that it could not so promptly and immediately have been, had there not been such an adaptation between the mechanism of our spirits and the matter that is addrest to them. It secures it, that we shall spring forth with more alacrity and desire to that message by which our futurity is unfolded—And however misdirected this tendency of our nature, either on the part of those who have a false mythology and a fabled elysium, or on the part of those who without religion at all have still a philanthropy that urges them forward in pursuit of an earthly elysium that after the lapse of generations they conceive to be waiting our species—still they are better subjects for being plied with the doctrine of a true revelation, than if they had no such tendency.

That there is this tendency, and a strong one too, even without and beyond the limits of Christianity is quite obvious. The very thirst after immortal fame, on the part of orators and philosophers and poets, is an exemplification of it; and so are the magnificent sketches of a prouder and better day for our species, that float before the eye of our sanguine economists; and so is every effort to shake off the trammels of antiquity, and to speed if possible with an innovator's hand, the amelioration of our race; and so are those lovely visions of a world regenerated into benevolence and purity and peace, that certain uninspired prophets love to gaze upon. Each has a millennium of his own on which he doats and dwells with kindred imagination; and whether you read of the future triumphs of virtue by the progress of light, or are called to look upon it in the perspective of planned and regulated villages—put it

all down to the craving appetite, or even to the strong expectancy that there is in human bosoms, for some bright and beautiful evolution in the history of human affairs.

There is a prophetic announcement of such an era, or, what is stronger still, a habitual advertance to it, on the part of many prophets and apostles and evangelists. This is a topic on which Christians feel that they have a warrant for very noble and high anticipations. The gospel throws open to the eye of faith a vista, that terminates in a better day of glory and of rejoicing which shall fill the whole earth; and with this peculiarity, which is all its own, that, while it points the eye to this moral scene, it puts into the hand that specific instrument by which it is to be realized. It is through the ministry of that by which the world is reconciled, that it shall at length be regenerated. It is on their acceptance of the message of peace, that a purifying influence is to descend from the sanctuary; and, in very proportion as the word of faith circulates and finds admittance with the species, will the work of renovation take effect upon them. And, amid all the ridicule which is incurred by those who put their trust in the operation of a preached gospel, we, at this very day, have witnessed the samples of its efficacy. And surely it is not for us who know the wonders of missionary success; who, within the compass of our own evanescent memory, have seen the transition of a whole people from the grossness of heathenism to the light and love of Christianity—it is not for us to give up as hopeless the cause of this world's amelioration.

V. 21. "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Because—is capable from the original language of being rendered into that—in which case the passage would run thus—'For the creature was made subject to vanity, in hope that the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption.'—We prefer however the present translation. It is not true that all have the specific hope of a deliverance in the terms of the verse—though all I think have a kind of longing and indefinite hope—a vague anticipation of a better and a higher existence that awaiteth them—a fond imagining of future bliss—Not confined to the mythologies or the faiths of the old world; but felt even by the Indians of the new,—mixing itself with their feasts and their battles and their war-songs, and descending with something like the power of inspiration upon their hearts. We would not however just say

of these wild and untaught children of Nature, that they hoped specifically for the glorious liberty of the children of God—though we should say, that, because such a liberty is awaiting us, therefore there is a general hopefulness of some enlargement or other among all the members of the human family. There is a marvellous adaptation between the truths of the gospel, and the constitutional tendencies of those to whom it is addressed. There are counterparts in revelation, to every feeling and every faculty of nature. There is something in it suited to our fears and our wishes and also to our hopes; and in all that is said of the millennium and the latter-day glory, do we recognise a tallying accordancy with an expectation, which, however it may have originated, is in some shape or other very widely diffused throughout the world.

But let it be your care, my brethren, to have a hope more precise and practical than this—a hope that looks forward to the prospects, and is founded on the promises of the gospel—a hope of enlargement certainly, but such an enlargement as even now it is competent for you at least to enter upon though not fully to expatiate in it. What the liberty is, we may infer from what the bondage is. It is the bondage of corruption from which you are to be delivered; or, in other words, it is the liberty of a will set free from the tyranny of evil desires into which you are to be translated. It is a moral and spiritual liberty to which you look—a release from the servitude of sin, from the power and the prevalency of those base and earth-born affections which war against the soul. Now let me apprise you, that, to obtain this release, the soul must now put forth all the energy that is in it, and forthwith embark on a war against them. If you permit them to be your tyrants in time, they will be your tormentors throughout eternity. Here the victory will not be complete, but here the battle must be begun; and it is only to him who overcometh in the conflicts of grace, that the crown of glory is given. The hope of the gospel is not that floating and vague and aerial speculation, which is merely addressed to the contemplative faculties, and over which a man may luxuriate in a sort of indolent elysium of the fancy. It is a hope that turns immediately to a practical account; and, if real, will urge forward, and that immediately, in a practical direction. The hope of unspotted holiness in heaven, leads to the toils and the trials and the purifications of holiness upon earth. This is the life on which a man enters, and that in good earnest and in a real spirit of business, on the moment that his mind is taken possession of by a true

faith in the gospel. It is when we know the truth that the truth makes us free. It is when we look to the fulness of that propitiation which was made for the sins of the world, and feel how under its blessed operation all sense of guilt and of reckoning is made to disappear from the conscience—it is then that we are loosed from the bond of despair, and can see that there is a hope in the new obedience of the gospel. And it is then too that we are visited with trust, when before there was terror—that we are visited with a delight in those ways, to which before there were distaste and antipathy—that we are visited with gratitude to Him, who before was lightly esteemed by us—and that, under the impulse of this gratitude, we enter with alacrity and good-will on that new path, which, by His example and His precepts He hath pointed out to us. You have no part nor lot in these things, if you are not so bestirring yourselves.

V. 22. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

It may be thought by some that there is a little too much the character of fancy in our previous remarks, for the solid and simple instruction of those to whom they are addressed. And yet you find that the evangelical Paul, he who was determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, he who gloried to preach the gospel in the face of the oppositions of vain philosophy and of science falsely so called—you find of him that he casts a widely speculative eye over the whole creation, which in this verse he represents as groaning and travailing in pain. It is quite obvious that he here extends the range of his contemplations, beyond the limits of the Christian church properly so called. In the next verse, he expressly singles out believers, whom he represents also as in the agony of a yet unfulfilled expectation. Not only they—that is Nature at large—not only they but we who have the first-fruits of the Spirit do groan inwardly. So that in this the present verse, he is indulging himself with a very ample perspective—he is taking a distant outlook beyond the precincts of the consecrated territory—he is roaming abroad, as it were, and with generalised survey over the whole expanse of animate and inanimate things—he counts not this pas-

sing, but sublime and comprehensive regard, unworthy of a place in the page of inspiration. And accordingly, set and shrined as it were in an epistle the most replete of them all with the very strictest peculiarities of the theological creed, do you find an image more striking I am sure and more descriptive of a universal character, that takes in the whole compass of nature in all its varieties, than any which I have ventured to bring forward—the creation in a state of big and general distress, giving token of some pregnant but yet undisclosed mystery wherewith it is charged, and heaving throughout all its borders with the pains and the portents of its coming regeneration.

This is the aspect which our present system of things bore to the eyes of the apostle, and its aspect still. The world is not at ease. The element in which it floats is far from being of a tranquil or a rejoicing character. It has somehow gone out of adjustment; and is evidently off the poise or the balance of those equable movements, in which we should desire that it persisted for ever. Like the stray member of a serene and blissful family, it has turned into a wayward comfortless ill-conditioned thing, that still teems however with the recollection of its high original, and wildly gleams and gladdens in the hope of its future restoration. It hath all the character now of being in a transition state; and with all those symptoms of restlessness about it which brooding insect undergoes, ere it passes into the death-like chrysalis, and come forth again in some gay and beauteous expansion on the fields of our illuminated atmosphere. Meanwhile it is in sore labour; and the tempest's sigh, and the meteor's flash, and not more the elemental war than the conflict and the agony that are upon all spirits—the vexing care, and the heated enterprise, and the fierce emulation, and the battle-cry both that rings among the inferior tribes throughout the amplitude of unpeopled nature and that breaks as loudly upon the ear from the shock of civilized men—above every thing the death, the sweeping irresistible death, which makes such havoc among all the ranks of animated nature, and carries off as with a flood its successive generations. These are the now overhanging evils of a world that has departed from its God.

LECTURE LVII.

ROMANS viii, 23—25.

"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. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

V. 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."

It is the turn of expression here, the introduction of 'even we ourselves'—as additional to and apart from all that he had asserted before, in regard to the intense and even painful expectancy of nature for its coming enlargement—it is this which, more than any other, convinces us of the amplitude that there is in the apostle's contemplations; and we are satisfied that we only follow in his track, when we affirm of creation at large, the agony and the suspense and the brooding anticipations that we have ascribed to the general species, and have even extended in some sense to the irrational creatures, nay to mute and inanimate things. The apostle seems to pass from this wider speculation to the present state of his own limited society—to draw himself in as it were from the world to the church, whom he represents as in like manner labouring. Even with them too, there is a present draw-back from that full and final blessedness that awaits them—there is hope far more specific and sure, than that which floats and dazzles so indistinctly upon the vague imagination of those who are without; but still it is a hope subject to the deduction while they remain in the world of a remaining vanity—there is an evident composition of two ingredients, one of them the Spirit whereof they have received already the first-fruits, but the other of them a vile body that is still in a bondage from which it has not yet been fully redeemed or emancipated.—Insomuch that, under a sense of its thwarting and oppressive presence, there is the feeling, and even the exclamation of a sore agony. The reader will not fail to recognise in this passage, the very lamentation that is uttered elsewhere "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." "Our life at present is hid with Christ in God, and when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." "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 wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." It is when thus clothed upon that "our vile bodies are changed and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ."

These passages all harmonise, in the account they give of the present state of believers in our world. In spite of the enlargement they have gotten, it is still a state of durance. They have not yet had the Spirit without measure, but only the first fruits of it. They have not yet been delivered from the presence of an evil nature. It is only overruled, not exterminated. It is only under watch and under warfare—yet not stript of its power to fatigue and to annoy. The life of a Christian differs as much from that of another man—as the smart of the wounds that are inflicted in a battle for freedom, differs from the smart of the wounds that are inflicted upon captives or slaves by the lash of an overseer. But then it also differs as much from that which it will be—as the strenuousness and hazard and agony of the day of conflict, differ from the rest that is enjoyed, and the triumphs which are felt, and the music that is lifted up, and the smiles of gratulation and high contentment that are exchanged from one happy countenance to another, on the day of victory. There is no respite from the warfare on this side of death. A larger supply and manifestation of God's Spirit will not even secure it to us—for while it arms with new power against the enemy within, it also endues us with new and powerful sensibility to the now diminished but still more hated remainders of evil than before. So that the final release will not be enjoyed till death, and even then perhaps it will amount to little more than rest from our labours. The final triumph will not be till the resurrection, when the body shall again be called forth from the tenement in which it long hath mouldered; and the corrupt principle shall by the mysterious transformation of the grave be fully disengaged from it; and that framework, every vestige of

which was before obliterated, shall put on its ancient form, but be thoroughly freed of that moral virus which now so thoroughly and so intimately pervades it; and its reappearance from the land of its present captivity will indeed be to it a redemption of joy—achieved by Him, who, in giving up His own body, gave up the price of their glorious immortality in behalf of all who believe on Him.

You perceive how it is, by the very nature of the case, that there can be no deliverance to the Christian from the agony of a conflict, and from a sense of soreness and heaviness and discomfort, on this side of death. For there passeth no such transformation upon his body, as to change it from the state and character of being a vile body—for it so remaineth till the departure of the last breath from it. The whole of what the New Testament describes as the old man, or the carnal man, is alive even unto the moment of our earthly dissolution—enfeebled, no doubt, by the habit of frequent thwarting and mortification to which it hath been subjected—kept more effectually under in proportion to the growth and energy of the rival principle, that is fostered by prayer, and strengthened by exercise, and placed after every new victory on the vantage-ground of a higher ascendancy than before over all the rebellious appetites of our ungodly and accursed nature. Yet, in spite of all this prosperity, there is a felt annoyance; and to which the mind becomes more painfully and sensibly alive, as it advances into a meetness for the inheritance of the saints. For if a disciple be making genuine progress—Then, along with the triumph of this which bears him up on the one hand, there is a tenderness that keeps him down on the other; and that because of the remaining evil which still lurks and lingers in his moral constitution, less than before but better seen than before—of a milder taint, but now looked at with a purer eye, now reflected on with a deeper humiliation. And thus a burden upon his spirit which the world cannot sympathise with; and a deeper groaning within, even while to all without the graces of his character are brightening into a more vivid lustre than before—a greater annoyance from one quarter, along with a greater hope and satisfaction from another, and that because his self-acquaintance is growing, and his sensibility is growing: And thus it is that he longs more earnestly as he proceeds, for the entire repose of perfect godliness and purity and love—for a thorough extinction from his moral system of all that evil by which it is still pervaded, and is the more offensive to him just as he becomes

more ethereal and heavenly than before—for a final relief from the last dregs of that vitiated nature, which still hangs about him and troubles him with its hateful presence—Insomuch that the purest and the saintliest of men have been known to weep upon their death-bed, for that still adhering corruption which they felt to be most dishonouring to God, and most disquieting to their own souls.

Such being the state of matters, Christians have not yet come to the inheritance of perfect virtue. They are only waiting for it. They now bend forward in the attitude of expectants. They have already got the first-fruits of the Spirit; and this serves at least as an earnest. But they are far from thinking that they have yet attained. St. Paul thought so much otherwise, that he counted his acquisitions to be as yet nothing; and such is the infinite distance between a saint on earth and a saint in heaven, that the former, so far from having any adequate share of the perfection and the glory to which the latter is elevated, has not even an adequate imagination of them. He sees it, by a medium of such exceeding dimness, that he is said to see it through a glass darkly. He knows himself to be one of the children of God; but he knows not yet what he shall be—what the whole amount of blessedness and of perfection is which belongs to that exalted relationship, and to which when he is preferred, he receiveth what may substantially and in the full significance of the term be called his adoption. It is then that the most signal mark of this relation to God is conferred upon him; and this is what in the text he is represented as now waiting for. This adoption is followed up by a short explanatory clause, which maketh known what it is that it consists in—to wit—the redemption of the body. It is brought back from the land of its captivity. It is called forth again out of the grave into which it had entered, where it perhaps ages before had been deposited as a natural body, but whence it now ariseth a spiritual body. And the redemption which it then undergoes is an everlasting redemption. Death will no more have the dominion over it. It will become immortal; but this is not the whole of its coming glory. It will also be immaculate. It will furnish no element to thwart or to impede the movements of a righteous spirit; and by which it is that the whole man of a believer upon earth is kept in a state of controversy. From its then regenerated mould there shall have been ejected, and that conclusively, both the seeds of mortality and the seeds of moral evil. The death which our first parent entailed, and the corruption which he entailed, shall

be alike put forth of that materialism wherewith the spirit of man is forthwith to be encompassed, and in which he is to be equipped for the services of eternity. It is saying much for what that is which essentially constitutes heaven, when it is said here to consist in the redemption of the body. It is in truth the jar, and the dissonance, and the maladjustment with all that a righteous spirit aspires after in the way of moral excellence—it is this which now distempers our world; and it is this, aggravated and universal, which will give its fiercest agonies to the accursed in the place of condemnation. And on the other hand, it is a total exemption from the carnal and the corrupt ingredient—it is the harmony of a system all whose parts are in unison, and all on the side of purest virtue—it is the scope that will then be for the doings and the desires of holiness, when the body shall lay no weight as now upon the willingness of the spirit—This is the redemption for which believers are waiting here, and the hope of which upholds them in their struggle with all the perversities of our earthly nature—it is this of which they have now the dim and distant perspective, and which when realised will constitute the glorious liberty of the children of God.

V. 24, 25. "For we are saved by hope—but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

In the whole of this passage, it seems the drift of the apostle to reconcile those whom he addresses to their present sufferings—and that not merely to the persecutions which they had to sustain from without, but to the perplexities and spiritual misgivings whereby they were agitated within; and the main cause of which in the aspiring bosom of every honest Christian, is a sense of his own exceeding shortness from the high standard of gospel obedience. What he desiderates and longs after, is to be saved from the deadness and carnality of his own earthly nature; and the apostle meets this anxiety, by telling him that the actual economy of salvation is not so constituted, as to bring to those who are its objects the fulness of an immediate possession, but as to hold this out to them as a thing in reserve—as a thing in distant anticipation. We are saved by, or rather we are saved in hope. Christians in this world are maintained in a sort of analogy to the general state of the world, which has already been affirmed as a mixture between present vanity and future expectation. If we look for a full and finished salvation now, we look for that which the gospel gives us no warrant to count upon. The condition in

which it places us here is one of expectancy, and not of attainment. The salvation that it hath brought is not one which we have now, but one which we hope to have afterwards. We are in the wrong if we give way to heaviness, because we are not yet fully inducted into the spiritual privileges and immunities of heaven. It is not so arranged by Him who had the ordering of this whole administration of grace. By the very constitution of it, what we aspire after, and are in heaviness because we have not yet reached, is ours only in prospect and not in possession. This ought to satisfy our disquietudes. It is an argument for patience. The dispensation under which we sit is not one of sight but one of hope. This hope is the essential characteristic of it, which would in fact be expunged were the full and finished reward a thing of presence and not a thing of futurity. It would cease to be a matter of hope if it were a matter of vision—for hope that is seen is not hope, for what we see we do not hope for—what is in possession is no longer in prospect. Seeing then that such is the economy of the gospel, that is so framed as to place its consummation not beside us but in a distant futurity before us, let us conform ourselves thereunto—let us sit down and be satisfied with hope instead of perfect happiness in the meantime—let us wait for the coming glory and wait for it with patience.

But though the phrase admits of the translation that we are saved *in* hope, intimating thereby the simple truth that salvation is in the main a thing of expectancy while we live in the world—yet though we should adhere to the present translation of our being saved *by* hope, and thereby ascribe to this principle a kind of efficacy in bringing about our salvation, we should not on that account traverse any of those principles that are unfolded in the New Testament. There is indeed a very close alliance stated throughout the evangelical writings, between the hope of a Christian and his salvation. There is a hope that is instantly awakened by the faith of the gospel; and it is often reiterated upon us that by faith we are saved. I cannot conceive a man really to believe even in the general announcements of the gospel, without appropriating to himself the comfort wherewith they are charged, and which is addressed unto all—for while addressed unto all they are at the same time as I have often affirmed, pointed specifically unto each: Nor can I think of any honest enquirer after salvation, that he shall read believingly such a statement as that "whosoever cometh unto Christ shall not be cast out," or such an invitation as

"Come unto me all ye who weary and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," or such a widely sounding call as "Look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be saved,"—I cannot think of faith in any of these apart from the hope the individual hope and trust they are fitted to awaken—so that the affirmation of being saved by hope is about tantamount to the saying that by faith you are justified. But this of being justified is far from being the whole of salvation. The term includes a great deal more than our being saved from wrath; it signifies further our being saved from the power of sin—as in that passage where it is said that we are saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And that we are so saved by hope, that by this principle we are sanctified as well as justified, is directly affirmed by St. John—when he tells us that "he who hath the hope of seeing God and being like unto God purifieth himself even as God is pure."

To understand how it is that hope should operate in this way, we have just to reflect what that really is to which a genuine believer looketh forward. It is not to a paradise of sensuality, else he might revel as nature would incline him among its delights and gratifications. It is to a paradise of sacredness; and we hold it morally impossible that a man should dwell with fond anticipation on such a destiny, without a taste and temper of sacredness. The man who prefers what is earthly to what is heavenly, will turn away his face from the better country, and from the road that leads to it; and in reference to it there will be no belief, no hope, no kindred aspiration. With such a preference he withholds all attention as well as all desire from the futurities of another world; and, wholly immersed in the cares or joys of the present one, he lives without faith, and he dies with the burden of this condemnation upon him that "he loved the darkness rather than the light, because his deeds were evil." It has been defined of hope that it is a compound of desire and expectation; and no man can desire such a heaven as that which is represented in the New Testament, without the work of holiness being begun in him. Were it merely a heaven of animal enjoyments, or a heaven that rang with melody, or a heaven that was lighted up with variegated splendours, or even a heaven of science where the understanding was feasted with truth even unto extacy—then one might have the hope of such a heaven without being moralised by it. But when it is a heaven whose essential characteristic is that it is a place of holiness, when it is a heaven defined in the book of Psalms as the land

of uprightness, and described in the book of Revelation as that eternal city where the servants of God do serve him—then it is not in truth or in nature, that one should look forward with complacency to his entrance upon such a heaven, without a growing conformity in his character here to that which he believes and rejoices to believe shall be his condition hereafter. He cannot look with pleased expectancy to such a place, without gathering the radiance of its virtues upon his soul; and if, amid the crosses and fatigues of a treacherous world, this be habitually the hope by which he is sustained—then, as surely as by any law of his moral or sentient constitution, this also is the hope by which he will be sanctified.

Before quitting this subject, let me simply advert to a cause, that serves very much to aggravate the struggle of a Christian here below, and to expose him to a still more acute sense than he might otherwise have had, of that deadness and deficiency from the spiritual life, under which even Paul and his converts are represented as groaning inwardly. What I allude to, though perhaps it looks like an excrescence from the main subject of these remarks to allude to it at all, is the way in which an aspiring Christian must be weighed down, as to all his holy and heaven-born tendencies—by the engrossments of business—by the multitude of hours that he consumes every day among the attentions and labours of a pursuit, along which he never meets with any one of the influences of sacredness—by the exhaustion in which this lands him on each recurring evening—and by the call that he feels to lie upon him, of giving the first and earliest vigour of his necessary repose to the very toils, that so spent and secularised him yesterday. To a man who has been visited with any unction upon his soul from the upper sanctuary, I cannot figure a heavier burden or a sorer discomfort than this; and just as we have thought it right occasionally, even from the pulpit, to protest against the keen and busy and almost gambling adventure of an over-trading age—so would we protest against that total absorption of spirit, that overwhelming load upon all its faculties, that utter alienation from better things, which must ever accrue from an undue and overdriven employment. The two evils work in fact to one another's hands. The man who trades beyond the compass of his means, gives himself more to do than he can well overtake; and so has to labour at the desk of his counting-house, or to bustle among markets, or to run to and fro among customers and correspondents at a distance, beyond the compass of his time or his physical strength—and so,

in the neglect of all spiritual cultivation, his heart becomes a wilderness, and his family ceases to profit by his instructions or his example, and Christianity goes to utter waste on a mind thus overrun with the cares and the keen ambitions of a perishable world, and the good seed of the word of God is choked and overborne—And all from what? from the temptation that he has given way to of extending, and that to undue dimensions, a business that, within safe and moderate limits, might have yielded him a quiet and comfortable passage through this land of vanity. There never was so cruel a sacrifice as this—of all the snugness and tranquillity that he might have perpetuated, in the character of a thriving well-conditioned, though withal perhaps a plain and unambitious citizen—had he only not adventured himself on the high and slippery places of daring speculation; and given up his domestic evenings, and his unbroken Sabbaths, and the perennial contentment that used to flow within his bosom, and his simple gratifications, and all the quiet opportunities that within the shelter of a humbler but happier sphere he would have enjoyed for communion with a present God and the preparations for a future eternity. Be assured, that there is a limit which ought to be laid on the number and extent of the services, that are rendered to the great divinity of the place. The commerce of the world cannot be pushed beyond a certain bar-

rier; and the share that each individual takes of it cannot be so pushed either without the ruin of his fortune, or at all events, the utter ruin of a mind wholly given over to a most deceiving and a most dangerous idolatry. Take pity on yourselves. Take pity on your clerks and journeymen and apprentices. Offer not the encroachment of one moment upon their Sabbaths; and even be careful through the week, lest they be drudged and worn out of all energy for a far nobler service and a far higher interest than your own. There is nought for which I more admire the Bible, than the experimental sagacity wherewith it pronounces on all the habits and temptations and characteristics of human life in each of its varieties—a sagacity that might still be recognised even in modern days; and though the apostle had lived in our city, and spent years in the capacity of a student or a spectator on the exhibitions of our nature that he found in it, he could not have more happily described the wretchedness and the folly of extreme mercantile ambition, than in this passage to Timothy—“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil—which while some have coveted after they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

LECTURE LVIII.

ROMANS viii, 26, 27.

“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. 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.

V. 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.”

It would appear from the first clause of this verse, that the great subject of labour and sore anxiety to Christians, and under which they groan inwardly, is their deficiency from holiness; and the great subject of their hope, is the perfect holiness that awaits them in heaven. But, additionally to this expectation of the future, the apostle also tells us here that there is partly a deliverance at present—a foretaste of that which they are looking forward to; and from the nature of the

foretaste, we may infer the nature of the anticipation. Now the benefit that they have in possession is help against their infirmities; and so the benefit which they have in prospect is that these infirmities shall be utterly and conclusively done away. In other words it is a moral enlargement on which the truly renovated Christian hath set his affections and his hopes. They are the glories of perfect virtue after which he aspires. It is the fulness of the image and character of the Godhead, that form the triumph and the rejoicing of the blest in eternity. It is an emancipation from the present carnality; and the present corruptness; and the weight of present low and earthly affec-

tions into love and light and liberty, while they gaze directly on the excellence of God and reflect that excellence back again from their own character—this is the true heaven which they have in prospect, and for which they have already set themselves out in busy preparation—a preparation therefore of holiness, the only preparation that can fit them for joining in the services or the joys of the upper sanctuary, the only one that can make them meet for the inheritance of the saints.

But, meanwhile, they have somewhat more than a future hope—they have a present help; and it is worthy of remark that they are not delivered from their infirmities, they are only helped against them. The burden of them, it would appear, is not lifted off. But strength is afforded that they may be able to bear it. The pressure still exists; but there is an adequate power of resistance given, by which it is effectually withstood. Nevertheless it is a pressure, a felt and a grievous pressure, under which they groan—even as a strong man might do under a burden, though able with much pain and fatigue to carry it. It is just so with the Christian. He is still weary and heavy-laden; and in this respect he differs from a saint in heaven. But his sins, which so weary and so overload him, are not cherished by him as his enjoyments—they are hated and denied and striven against, as his deadly enemies; and in this respect he differs from an unrenovated man upon earth. His state in fact is a state of composition. His life is a life of conflict. There is war in his soul. The vile body aspires to the mastery by its instigations. The mind seeks to retain the ascendant against it; and God's Spirit is sent to help it in its purposes. There will be repose at length, but not here. The battle will not be terminated on this side of death. But reinforcements of strength will be daily sent to keep up the combat—by sustaining that one party, which, but for them, would have surrendered. So that though the soul is not defeated, it is kept in the busy turmoil of a sore warfare—it is often cast down though not destroyed.

‘For we know not what we should pray for as we ought.’ We are convinced that many feel a general undirected desire to be right—a kind of vague though vivid earnestness—an indefinite lounging after God and goodness—a sort of looking towards Zion and preference for heavenly things—who at the same time are unable to rest upon aught that is specific or satisfying. They have the sense of not being as they should be—an indistinct yet strong impression of helplessness—the assurance, though not a very specific or luminous one, that there is a way of pas-

sing into a state of rest and a state of enlargement, could they only but find it out and practically enter upon it—There is such an obscure, yet upon the whole urgent and habitual tendency, incidental to men at the outset of their religious course; and even abiding with them, as it did with Paul and his disciples in our text, for a long time after they had entered upon it. They know not perfectly or precisely what is the matter with them, or what that is which is correctly suited to the disease or the deficiency under which they labour. They would fain give vent to all this feeling of want and of necessity in prayer; but, hazy and unsettled as their spiritual conceptions are, they know not what to pray for as they ought. We think that there must be some present, whose inward experience responds to the sketch that we now set before you—whose hearts are filled with desirousness, but who, incapable of shaping the expression of it into any distinct or definite prayers, send forth instead the sighs and the aspirations which bespeak little more than a soul in earnest. Amid all these struggles then, between the fervent sincerity of the feelings on the one hand, and the cloudiness of apprehension and intellect on the other, it is somewhat satisfactory to perceive, that even the apostle and his converts, after they had received the fruits of the Spirit, had experience of the very same thing—that before their eye too, there passed such floating uncertainties of yet distant and unrealised attainment as they could not embody—that, under the pressure of yet unsatisfied desire and a still remaining ignorance of what they would be at, they heaved ejaculations rather than prayers; and that because they knew not what to pray for as they ought.

‘But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.’

It is still more satisfactory to be told, as we are in this clause, that, in those general and vague but withal very intense and earnest aspirations of soul which we have now adverted to, there is, not only a resemblance to the habit of Paul himself and of those disciples who had the first-fruits of the Spirit, but that it is the Spirit itself who dictates and inspires them. When the Spirit maketh intercession for us, it is not by any direct supplication from Himself to God the Father in behalf of any one individual; but it is by pouring upon that individual, the Spirit of grace and supplication. The man whom He prays for, is in fact the organ of His prayer. The prayer passes, as it were, from the Spirit through Him who is the object of it. Those groanings of the Spirit

of God which cannot be uttered, are those unutterable desires wherewith the heart of a seeker after Zion is charged; and which, in defect of language, perhaps even in defect of very clear and definite conceptions, can only find vent in the ardent but unspeakable breathings of one who feels his need and longs to be relieved from it—who hath a strong and general appetency after righteousness, and yet can only sigh it forth in ejaculations of intense earnestness. Now these are called here the groanings of the Spirit of God, because it is in fact He who hath awakened them in the spirit of man. When He intercedes for a believer, the believer's own heart is the channel through which the intercession finds its way to the throne of grace. It is not that there is any want either of light or of utterance about Him; but He doeth His work gradually upon us, and often infuses a desirousness into our hearts before He reveals the truth with distinctness unto our understandings. He walketh by progressive footsteps, in accomplishing the creation of a new moral world—even as He did when employed in the creation of our present system of materialism. He then moved upon the face of the waters, before He said Let there be light and there was light. The dark and muddy element was first put into agitation, and the very turbulence into which it was thrown may have just thickened at the first that very chaos out of which it was emerging; and so it often is with him who is born of the Spirit, when the Spirit begins to move upon his soul. There is labour without light—there is a strong and general excitement without a clear guidance, either where you are to turn, or on what visible path you are to enter—there is a busy fermentation of shadowy and floating desires and indistinct feelings, whether of a present misery or a future and somehow attainable enlargement—And, these all come forth in the very indications of our text—proceeding originally from God's Spirit, but passing through the intermedium of man's; and, while struggling there with the darkness and obstinate carnality of nature, giving rise to a vigour and a vehemence of emotion that discharges itself in sighs but not in articulations. If any here experience such a condition, or make any approximations towards it, let him not despair—for it may be the Spirit that is at work with him; and he may now be labouring in the agonies of his new birth, in the distress of his coming regeneration.

That among the first-fruits of the Spirit, there should be the prayers of deep and desirous earnestness, is in perfect harmony with the order of the administration of

grace. It gives important insight into the methods of the divine economy in this world, when we observe that the promises of God are meant not to suspend but to stimulate our prayers. And, accordingly, after that He has declared, He will give the clean heart and the right spirit, He saith, yet for all these things must I be enquired after. Before, in fact, that He poureth those influences upon the soul by which it becometh rich in all spiritual accomplishments, He poureth upon it a sense of its own barrenness, and a correspondent longing after the right feelings and fertilities of a new creature; and so anterior, to all other supplies from the sanctuary that is above, did He pour on the house of David of the Spirit of grace and supplication. One of His promises is to turn the soul into a well-watered garden—yet, ere this is realised, there must be a felt thirst on the part of the soul; a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, before that it is filled; an appetite that craves to be satisfied, ere the satisfying food is administered; a seeking that precedes the finding: And so from the descriptions of prophecy it would appear, that, when the desert is made to flourish, it is by the pouring forth of water upon thirsty ground—upon ground not merely destitute, but that feels as it were and desires to be relieved. Let us cease to wonder then, that prayer should appear among the foremost indications of the Spirit of God being at work with us; or that it takes the precedency of other blessings, or that it has happened so frequently in the church, that a season of supplication went before the season either of a gracious deliverance or of a gracious revival; or that with individuals too, as well as with communities, ere you can point to any one of them as rejoicing in the hope or as fruitful in all the righteousness of the gospel, you find him earnest in supplication—and perhaps too a supplication that is not spoken, that does not find articulation for its effluxes from the heart, that does not even proceed on any very clear or distinct conception of what the want is or what are the supplies which are expressly suited thereunto; but that, in the language of my text, ascends in general and undirected fervency from the soul with groanings which cannot be uttered.

And neither are we to wonder, that, though this be indeed the Spirit's doing, yet, nevertheless, there is a mixture of darkness and distress in the whole operation. There is perfect light and liberty with Him. But when He comes into contact, and especially at the first, with a soul before dead in trespasses and sins—when He has to operate on that mass of carnality, where He finds nought but one

inert and sluggish mass of resistance—when, instead of doing the work separately and by Himself, He does it through the opaque medium of a corrupt human soul—We should not marvel, though the prayers that even He hath originated, be tinged with the obscurity of that dull and distorted medium through which they have to pass. We know that to the sun in the firmament, we should ascribe not merely the splendour of the risen day, but even the faintest streaks and glimmering of incipient twilight; and that without him, all would be thick and impenetrable darkness. It is because of the gross and intervening earth, that, though something be seen at the earliest dawn of morn, it is yet seen so dimly, and the eye is still bewildered among visionary and unsettled forms, while it wanders over the landscape. And, in like manner, it is the Spirit to whom we shall owe at last the effulgence of a complete manifestation; and to whom also we owe at present even the misty and troubled light that hath excited us to seek, but is scarcely able to guide us in our enquiries. And this imperfection is not because of Himself, in whom there is perfect and unclouded splendour. It is only because of the gross and terrestrial mind upon which He operates. There is the conflict of two ingredients, even the light that is in Him and the darkness that is in us; and the result of the conflict is prayer, but prayer mixed with much remaining ignorance. It is the mixture of His intercession with our unutterable groanings—an obscure day that precedes the daylight of the soul—a lustre that cometh from Him, but tarnished with the soil and broken with the turbulence of our own accursed nature. And let us not think it strange therefore, that, as the compound effect of God's Spirit working with our spirit, and not overbearing our infirmities but only yet helping these infirmities—let us cease to think it strange, if the effect should only be a certain vehemence or urgency of desire, but still in some measure vague or undirected, because of a still abiding darkness in the soul. And again therefore, to comfort all who are labouring among the disquietudes of such a condition, we repeat, that, even amid the mazes and uncertainties in which they toil and have as yet had little satisfaction, the Spirit, for aught we know, may even now be at work with them. The heavenly visitant may have made His entrance, and have begun the process of a glorious transformation on the materials of their inward chaos. The spiritual twilight may now be breaking out as the harbinger of a coming glory, as the dim flickerings of

that light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

There is an example remarkably analogous to this in the old prophets. They spake only as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. They poured forth their predictions only as the Spirit gave them utterance; and though He of course knew the meaning of all that He had inspired Himself, yet they themselves, though the organs for the conveyance of His intimations to the world, knew but little or nothing of the sense that lay under them. And, accordingly, we are informed by the apostle Peter of the very singular attitude in which they stood—as prying into the sense of their own prophecies—as searching and enquiring diligently into the nature of that coming grace, whereof the Holy Ghost had given them certain warnings, which to themselves were unintelligible—as speculating what thing it could be, and what manner of time it was which the Spirit of Christ in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. It was not in fact unto themselves but unto us that they did minister; and though the resemblance does not hold throughout, yet we may gather from the case that we are now quoting, how in like manner as holy men of old knew not the meaning of those predictions wherewith themselves were inspired—so holy men of the present day, and more especially at the outset of their holiness, might feel the inspiration of a strong desirousness from above, and yet be ignorant of the whole force and meaning of their own prayers. There may be a decided fervour of prayerfulness—an aspiring tendency after better things—yet a most indistinct apprehension of what the things really are of which they most stand in need, and that most suited them. And so at the very time that the Spirit helpeth their infirmities, they know not what to pray for as they ought; and at the very time that the Spirit itself maketh intercession for them, do they send forth groanings from the recesses of their now touched and awakened souls which cannot be uttered.

But, in conclusion, it ought to be remarked that this state of darkness is not a desirable one to be persisted in. One would not choose to live always in twilight; but rather does he press onward, in wish and in expectation, to the coming day. Labour after distinct and satisfying apprehensions of the truth as it is Christ Jesus. Seek to know your disease; and seek to know the powers and the properties of that medicine, which is set forth in the gospel. Study and search with diligence, and by a careful perusal of Holy

Writ, into the economy of man's restoration—the blood which atones—the righteousness which justifies—the sanctifying power that maketh holy—the law that before your reconciliation condemned you, and that after your reconciliation became the rule by which you are to walk, the compass by which you are to guide your movements towards heaven. Even in this work too you must have the Spirit to help your infirmities. For He is the Spirit of wisdom, as well as of prayer, and gives you revelation in the knowledge of Christ. You increase by Him in acquaintance with God; and though at the beginning of His work, and perhaps for some time afterwards, there may be a sore conflict of doubts and desires and difficulties—yet such is the process of this work, that you will at length come to experience that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is light—where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

But still it ought ever to be kept in mind, that, while we are in this tabernacle, there will to the latest hour of our abode, be a remainder of darkness. There may be a brightening manifestation of divine things, as we proceed onwards. But our outlook towards them, will be through the loopholes of a bedimmed and tainted materialism. Still we shall see through a glass darkly. It is in fact with the light of the gospel, as it is with its love and its peace and its holiness. It will be compounded with the grossness of an earthly nature. It will be shaded with an incumbent carnality. The realities of faith will be seen, not through a purely ethereal medium, but through a curtain as it were—the transparency whereof shall have much of the soil and the tarnish of nature pervading it. And this transparency, though clarified as we advance, will never be perfect on this side of death. Inasmuch that the complaint of our text will be found to suit the Christians of all degrees, the disciples of all stages. Still we shall not know all the things which we should pray for as we ought. Still will the Spirit be needed to help this infirmity. Still will His illumination have to meet and to struggle with the impediments of a vile body; and the desirousness after more light, still outstripping the actual attainment, will vent itself forth, in some degree as at the first, in aspirations that are yet indefinite—in groanings that are yet unutterable. Let this teach, in all our meditation and study upon things that are sacred, still to proceed on the incapacity of Nature for the right apprehension of them—still to recognise the Holy Ghost in His office as a revealer—still, in our perusals of the word, to court the guidance of that Spirit, through whom it is alone

that the word shines with clear and convincing lustre upon the soul—still to meet the promise of help to the infirmity of our understanding with a prayer for that help: And thus shall we be enabled, more and more, to order our speech and our argument aright before God—to pray intelligently as well as affectionately—and to body forth those desires which now actuate us in a way so vague and undefinable, to body them forth in words that may be audibly uttered, in conceptions that may be distinctly seized upon.

V. 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."

You may perhaps not have reflected much on the office of the Spirit as an intercessor—viewing this as more properly the office of the now exalted Saviour. The Saviour intercedes for us in heaven. The Spirit intercedes for us in our own breast. The one intercession is pure and altogether unmixed with the dross of earthliness. The other passes through a corrupt medium, and finds its way among the adverse impediments of an earthly nature; and by the time that it cometh forth in expression, has had to encounter the elements of darkness and of carnality that are within us. And, not from any defect in the power which originates our prayers, but from a defect in the organ by which they are conveyed, do they arise as so many broken and indistinct aspirations to Him who sitteth on the throne. The man from whom they ascend is perhaps conscious of nothing but a deep and determined earnestness—thoroughly intent on being right, yet clouded and confused it may be in his apprehensions as to the way of becoming so—not knowing therefore what he should pray for, yet in virtue of the Spirit's operation pouring out the ejaculations of utmost feeling and utmost fervency. Now, in like manner as the holy men of old when moved by the Holy Ghost did not understand the predictions that were put into their mouths, so might holy men now though similarly moved not understand their own prayers. All that they are sensible of may be a spirit of prayerfulness venting itself in the breathings that are not articulated, in the groans that cannot be uttered. But though they have no such insight into the workings and expressions of their own heart, God who searcheth the heart discerns them thoroughly. He knows from what quarter they come—whether from His own pure Spirit, or from that corrupt origin whence there issueth nought but that which is abomination in His sight. He can distinguish between the genuine and the counterfeit; and, more especially is

He acquainted with the mind of His own Spirit—even as man is acquainted with his own thoughts. If from the former—the prayer that has been suggested, even though it announce nothing to the man himself but the intense desirousness whereby he feels that he is actuated, announces most clearly to God all the characters of truth and rightness and conformity with the whole views and spirit of His government which can recommend it to his acceptance. He will meet with graciousness the supplication that Him-

self hath awakened. He hath said in another place that if any man ask that which is agreeable to the will of God, He will give it to him. Now what the Spirit suggests though darkly to the man himself, yet clearly to Him who searcheth man's heart and can ascertain the character of every movement that is experienced there—whatever is thus suggested must be agreeable to the will of God, and have the very recommendation upon which God hath pledged Himself to entertain and to answer it.

LECTURE LIX.

ROMANS viii, 28.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”

He recurs again in this verse to the topic that he introduced in the eighteenth verse, even to the sufferings of the present time; and, after having contrasted them with the glory and the enlargement of their future prospects, and having adverted not merely to the hope that will be realised then but also to the help that is administered now, he, as a last argument for reconciling his disciples to all the adversities of their earthly condition, affirms that they all work together for their good; that even the crosses and disasters of life are so many blessings in disguise; and that the whole machinery of Providence, in fact, is at work for the accomplishment of a great and beneficent purpose towards them. It, in the first place, is abundantly obvious of many a single adversity—that a great and permanent good may come out of it. This is often verified on the ground even of every-day experience—when the disease brought on by intemperance hath been known to germinate a course of determined sobriety; and the loss by a daring speculation hath checked the adventurer on his hazardous path, and turned him into the walk of safe though moderate prosperity; and the felt discomfort of a quarrel hath made him a far more patient and pacific member of society than he else would have been; and many other visitations, unpalatable on the instant but profitable afterwards, have each turned out to have in it the wholesomeness of a medical draught as well as its bitterness. Apart from Christianity, or from the bearings which our history on earth has on our preparation for heaven—Man has often found that it was good for him to have been afflicted—

that, under the severe but salutary discipline, wisdom has been increased, and character has been strengthened, and the rough independence of human wilfulness has been tamed, and many asperities of temper have been worn away; and he, who before was the boisterous and implacable and unsafe member of society, has been chastened down into all the arts and delicacies of pleasing companionship. And so of many a single infliction on the man who is viewed, not as a citizen of the world that is below, but as a candidate for the world that is above. The overthrow of his fortune has given him a strong practical set for eternity. The death of his child has weaned him from all the idolatries of a scene—whereof the family, the home, the peace and shelter of the domestic roof, formed the most powerful enchantments. Even the dreariness of remorse hath given a new energy to his spiritual frame, and made him both a more skilful and a more vigilant warrior on the field of contest than before. The tempests of life, if so withstood that they have not overthrown him, will have fastened him more stedfastly to the hold of religious principle. It is thus that the traveller through life is nurtured for the immortality beyond it. He is made perfect by sufferings. He sits more loose to the world, in proportion as he finds less in it to fascinate and detain him. Its very disappointments have the effect of throwing him upon other resources; and, casting away the desires and the delusions of the hope that perisheth, he clings as to the alone anchor of his soul by the hope that abideth for ever. On the scale of infinite duration, a present evil becomes

a future and everlasting benefit; and we are at no loss to perceive, how even a calamity, that to the eye looks most tremendous and would overwhelm one of the children of this world in despair—how it may work for the good of one of the children of light, by working out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

But these adverse visitations do not always come singly. The apostle supposes otherwise, as may be gathered from the phrase of all things working together. He supposes in the text, not one single influence from one event alone; but he supposes the mutual or the concurrent influence of two or more events, all verging however towards the one result of good for him to whom they have befallen. It has often been said that misfortunes seldom come by themselves; and there is no doubt that it often occurs, when one passage of our history is signalised by an accumulation of ills—when, instead of being called upon to measure our strength with one calamity, our attention is shared and distracted among several—when the boding dread of disaster and distress lowers upon us from more than one quarter of that visible sphere by which we are surrounded—and when we are made the subjects, not of one, but of manifold tribulations. It has often been alleged that the pressure of each distinct calamity is lightened, when the anxiety is thus dispersed and divided among several. I do not think so. I hold it easier to meet with the summoned intrepidity of the bosom one great and nearly overwhelming misfortune,—than it is to have a constant tumult kept up in the spirits, by the ceaseless play of so many petty yet interminable harassments. I hold it a less ineligible condition, to have all the energies of the soul collected and prepared for a mighty shock of adversity, than to have them wasted in the skirmishes of a lighter yet more complicated warfare.

I hold it not only an occasion of greater glory, but positively an occasion of greater ease, when one tremendous combatant approaches on whom there hangs the fearful issues of life, or of that which than life is dearer—than when doomed by the stings of an insect tribe to die by inches, or to spend in perpetual annoyance the remainder of your days. And therefore it is well, that, for the comfort of exercised humanity, deliverance is promised out of six and of seven troubles; and when we are told that the afflictions of the just are many, but that God will extricate out of them all; and when we are bidden to count it all joy, though we should fall not into one but into manifold temptations; and lastly, when we are

assured by the apostle that, not merely one, but that all things work together for good unto those who love God. For it is the compounding of one evil thing with another that aggravates so much the distress of each of them; and the sensation of plague or of perplexity increases in a much faster proportion than the number of them; and, like the problem of the three bodies, one additional element of distress more might make the line of prudence far more difficult, and every plan and every prospect far more inscrutable than before: And thus though each of his cares might be easily provided for, could one meet each with undivided strength, and bend upon it the whole force of his anxiety—yet, from the very multitude of them, might there ensue a general helplessness, that needs to have the precise consolation which is now before us. The mechanism of Providence is made up of so many parts, as often to baffle the comprehension of man—yet all is clear to the eye, and under the sovereign hand of Him who works it; and when we are lost in the bewilderments of a history that we cannot scan, when we are entangled among the mazes of a labyrinth that we cannot unravel, it is well to be told that all is ordered and that all worketh for good.

I should imagine that I now speak to the experience of those, who, manifold in the adventures of business, have a very extended circumference around them, from every quarter of which fears and mischances and the arrivals of disastrous intelligence might bring fresh and frequent inquietudes into the soul; and who therefore may have felt what it was to be visited with one plague after another—perhaps agonised in all the moral sensibilities of your nature, by some aggravated wrong of injustice; and ere you have recovered this shock, told of some menacing fluctuation in that market where the main bulk of your interest lies; and furthermore waiting on the rack of anxiety for the appearance of that richly-laden vessel, which some recent storm must have put in jeopardy, and that with the eye of midnight fancy you conceive to be fearfully rocking amid the surges of an angry ocean: And all this mixed up with the rumoured bankruptcy of customers and correspondents, with bills unanswered and the swift approaches of that time when payments that far exceed your present strength shall be imperiously required—These are the foreign invaders of your peace, and should they meet unhappily with the broils and miseries of a dis-tempered home—should these days of vexation be followed up by evenings of discontent and discordancy; or, what is

also grievous, should there be peace and love in your dwelling, but its dearest inmate be laid on the couch of irrecoverable sickness—should one child of the family be dying, or another by his vice and his wilfulness minister a grief as heavy to the hearts of his parents—should the burden upon his spirit, which this sorely agitated man brings with him daily from abroad, have nought to alleviate its pressure within the door of his own habitation—What a noble faith it would require to bear him up under the weight and accumulation of all these evils; and is there ought within the compass of nature so suited to his weary and heavy-laden spirit, as the assurance of my text that all of them shall work and work together for his good?

You must often have been sensible, in the course of your own history, how big and how important the consequences were, that emanated from one event, which in itself was insignificant—how on the slightest accidents the greatest interests were suspended—how, moving apparently at random, you met with people or with occasions that gave rise perhaps to far the most memorable passages in your life—how the very street on which you chanced to move, brought you into contact with invitations or appointments or proposals of any sort, which brought results of magnitude along with them—Inasmuch that the colour and direction of your whole futurity have turned on what, apart from this mighty bearing, would have been the veriest trifle in the world. It is thus that the great drama of a nation's politics may hinge on the veriest bagatelle, that could modify or suggest some process of thought in the heart of a single individual. The most remarkable instance of this which I at present recollect, is, when the pursuers of Mahomet who followed hard upon him with a view to take his life, were turned away from the mouth of the cave in which he had the moment before taken shelter, by the flight of a bird from one of the shrubs that grew at its entry—inferring that, had he recently passed that way, the bird must have been previously disturbed away and would not now have made its appearance. It is a striking remark of the historian, that this bird, by its flight upon this occasion, changed the destiny of the world—instrumental as it was in perpetuating the life of the false prophet, and, along with him, the reign of that superstition which to this day hath a wider ascendancy over our species than Christianity itself. And such indeed are the links and concatenations of all history. A word, a thought, an unforeseen emotion, an event of paltriest dimensions in itself,

may be the germ of an influence wide as a continent and lasting as a thousand years; and thus it is that the politics of man are baffled in the mystery of that higher politics, by which the government of the Supreme is conducted, and whereby the minutest accidents and the mightiest results interchange and have equal efficacy the one upon the other. It is well that God has the management; and that what to man is a chaos, is in the hands of God a sure and unerring mechanism. Man is lost and wilders in the multiplicity of things, and their diverse operations; and he staggers and is at his wit's end; and therefore it is well that all things are under the control of that great and presiding intelligence which is above, and that God maketh all things work together for good unto those who love Him.

To conclude then for the present. Do you not perceive that at this rate God would be divested of His sovereignty, if His superintendance were not universal? Is not the historical fact, that what is most minute often gives rise to what is most momentous, an argument for the theological doctrine of a Providence that reaches even to the slightest and most unnoticeable varieties? If God did not number all the hairs of our head—if His appointments did not include the fall of every sparrow to the ground—then, from the observed relation of events to each other, empires might have fallen, and the faith of whole nations been subverted, and the greatest evolutions been made in the progress of human affairs, all the time that the will of God and the authority of God were elements of utter insignificance. Should he let go as it were one small ligament in the vast and complicated machinery of the world, it might all run, so to speak, into utter divergency of from the purposes of the mind that formed it. As things are constituted, the influence of litters carries along with it an experimental demonstration, that the power and direction of the Godhead extend even unto litters. From it we argue, that there is no alternative between a providence so particular as to embrace all, or an atheism so universal as to exclude all, from the guidance and the guardianship of a Divinity. In such a world, where all are so bound together in the way of influence or unvarying succession, there is need of such a Providence. And even from this contemplation, may be gotten something that should reconcile us to the idea of a predestinating God. In the following verses the apostle passes onwards to this conception; and we shall be more prepared to go along with him, when we only think, that, by shutting out the ordination of God from any event in nature

or in history, we, in fact, shut Him out from that lengthened train of events, whereof it only formed one of the stepping-stones—that by breaking one link, however small, we in fact wrest the chain out of that hand from which it was suspended—that, by refusing Him the supreme and directing agency over the least incidents, we in fact depose Him from all government of men or of things, even in the greatest passages of their story.—In a word, that we cannot disjoin God from one particle of the universe, without desolating the universe of its God.

‘To them that love God.’ We have already spoken of His providence; and of the sureness wherewith He works out His own purposes by a mechanism far too complex for our apprehension; and of the way in which He intermingles the little with the great in the history of human affairs; and of the need that there is for a constant superintendance by Him—seeing that on the minutest incidents of life its mightiest and most abiding interests are often made to turn; and of the support which a sound experience renders to a most important doctrine of sound theology—even that God, instead of sitting in remote and lofty unconcern to our world, save in the noblest and grandest passages of its history, busies Himself in fact with the operations of every atom, and bears a microscopic regard to the most trivial of events and of things—even while He sits in heaven’s high throne, and casts a directing eye over space and its immeasurable regions. This we have already attempted to make as palpable to your discernment as we could; and we are now led by the clause that is before us, to bethink ourselves of the character of those to whom it is that God maketh all things work together for their good—even that they love God.

We seldom meet with so of much earnestness among those who are intent on their preparation for heaven, as that which is excited by the question whether or not they really do love God. It is indeed a trying question on which few adventure themselves; and on which most who do, have to record that marvellously little satisfaction is to be found. It forms one of the most anxious topics of self-examination; and the thing which the enquirer is in search after, even the affection for the Godhead that exists in his own bosom may be either so dull and undiscernible of itself, or lie so buried in the multitude of other things that crowd and confuse the receptacles of the inner man, as to elude the investigation altogether. And then the question comes, how am I to be assured of my interest in the declaration that all things shall work together for my

good? The promise here is not unto all in the general, but to those who harbour within them a certain feeling, and are stamped upon their moral or spiritual nature with a certain character. It is unto those who love God. Now I may not be sure that I love Him. I may desire to love Him; but to desire is one thing and to do is another. I may have a wish for the affection—of this I should suppose that many of you are conscious; but to have a wish for the affection is not to have the affection itself, and the question recurs—what title have I to appropriate the comforts of this passage, or to presume on the strength of an affirmation that is evidently restricted to the possessors of a certain grace, even of love to God—what title have I to imagine, that the power and the providence of Heaven are wholly upon my side?

Now it does not follow, that you are altogether destitute of love to God, because it stirs so languidly within you, that you are not able very distinctly or decidedly to recognise it. Your very desire to love Him is a good symptom—your very grief that you love Him not bodes favourably for you. The complaint that you utter of a heart hard and ungrateful, and that hath been very much unmoved by the claims which God hath to all the affections of it—is one which has been echoed by the disciples and the saints of all ages; and which, if you feel as you ought, will to the end of your life be the subject of your humiliation and your prayers. Love to God is a heavenly aspiration, that is ever kept in check by the drag and the restraint of an earthly nature; and from which you shall not be unbound till the soul by death has made its escape from the vile body, and cleared its unfettered way to the realms of light and life and liberty. In very proportion to the desirousness wherewith you now soar aloft, will you be galled by the tenacle that holds you; and, feeling with the Psalmist of old how your soul cleaves unto the dust, will you pray that God might quicken you. Where there is a complaint of hardness, there is in fact a beginning of tenderness. Where there is an honest wish for affection, there is in fact the embryo affection itself, struggling for a growth and an establishment in the aspiring bosom. Where there is a feeling of sad insensibility, the sensibility hath begun; and that good seed, which one can with difficulty see among the still vigorous and unbroken elements of carnality, is already deposited, and will rise into a tree that might overspread with its droppings the whole mass of our then regenerated nature. Meanwhile it is most desirable that the germ should expand—

that the precious element should be fostered into a more visible magnitude—that the affection, of which you are now so fruitlessly in quest, should so grow as to announce itself—that the flame should brighten and break forth out of its present dull and lambent obscurity: And the question is, how shall this be brought about? Never we affirm by the exercise of self-inspection alone—never in the mere employment of inwardly brooding on the characters that are already graven upon the tablet of the heart—never by looking to oneself as the subject, at the time when you are called to look unto the Saviour as the object. The eye is not a luminary. It sheds no light on the field of its contemplation. It diffuses no heat over it. It only witnesses the splendour, but can in no way create it. It may discover that which is visible, but it does not make it visible; and, therefore, if you complain that you cannot see the love of God within you, it is not by poring and penetrating among the arcana of your moral constitution that this love is to be inspired.

‘To those who are the called.’ This new clause may be turned to some practical account in the resolving of the difficulty. They who love God are described by another and a distinct characteristic. They are the called, by which we understand not those who have merely had the call or invitation of the gospel sounded in their ears; but those who have felt the power of the call upon their hearts, and have complied with it accordingly. In the well-weighed language of our Shorter Catechism, it signifies those who are effectually called. There has not merely been a call on the part of the gospel, but there has been a compliance with it on the part of their souls—and that just because the gospel hath come to them, not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost and with much assurance. Their eyes have been opened to behold the reality of the gospel overtures. They recognise the death of Christ as an effective propitiation for sin. They perceive that the benefit of this propitiation is held out in offer to them individually. They hear the beseeching voice of God accompanied with such terms as *any* and *all* and *whosoever*; and they understand this to be as good as a voice addressed specifically to each of themselves; and they regard a message, so couched and so worded, to be a message from Heaven to their own doors; and as the message is neither more nor less than an entreaty on the part of God that they will be reconciled to Him, they respond to it with the full consent and confidence of their hearts; and by so doing they in fact enter upon reconciliation.

Their faith in the offer constitutes their acceptance of it. By meeting God’s assurance with their trust, they will find, that, according to this trust, so shall it be done unto them. By simply regarding the transaction of the sacrifice for sin as a real and honest transaction, they shall have a full share in it, and be absolved from their sin. Many are outwardly called; but, turning a deaf and listless ear thereunto, they come not under the designation of my text. They are not the called—a designation reserved for those, who have not only heard the call, but who have perceived its honesty and worth, and have proceeded upon it.

You see then the connection that there is, between the two characteristics of those for whose good God maketh all things to work together. The two characteristics are that they love God, and that they are the called. The second of these in the order of enumeration, is the first in the order of succession. It is only upon our entertaining the call of the gospel and consenting thereunto, it is only upon this transition taking place in our minds—that there ensues a transition of the heart to the love of God, from that indifference or even hatred which we formerly bore unto Him. Anterior to this, the thought of God stood associated with feelings of jealousy and insecurity and alarm. The conscience, if at all faithful, could not fail to reproach us for our delinquencies. The law of God, and more especially if regarded in its pure and lofty and uncompromising character, could not but suggest the disturbing imagination of many accounts that were unsettled, and many violations for which no recompense to its outraged dignity had been made. The character of God, as being that of august and unapproachable sacredness, offered no asylum from the disquietudes that haunted us; nor could we ever with our eyes open to the incommutable attributes of His holiness and His justice and His truth, could we ever find any solid repose in that fancied indulgence of His nature, which forms at once the refuge and the delusion of a meagre and sentimental piety. Those imaginations of the God-head, which make up a religion of poetry, are not enough for a religion of peace; and, in these circumstances, He, to all practical accounts, is regarded by the eye of nature with that dread and that disquietude, which are inspired by the sight of an enemy. It is a sense of guilt that has so alienated us from God; and it is under the latent yet powerful conviction of His displeasure, that we stand before Him with our hearts in chill and torpid apathy, and our countenances fallen. It is this which stands as a wall of iron be-

tween heaven and earth ; and wholly debars the intimacies either of confidence or of regard, from Him who dwelleth in the high and the awful sanctuary. And the only way, we repeat it, by which this else impregnable barrier can be scaled, and we can draw nigh in kind affection to the Father who made us, is by accepting the only authentic offer that He ever held out to us of reconciliation. It is by beholding Him in the face of Christ. It is by rejoicing in that mercy which flows so copiously on all who will, through the channel of his consecrated priesthood—and that not at the expense of His other attributes, but with their fullest and noblest vindication. It is this alone which by quelling the suspicions and the fears of guilty nature, at the very time that it presents the attractive exhibition of a God whose graciousness hath not impaired but illustrated His glory—it is this alone that can achieve the great moral revolution in the character of man ; and by rending the enmity of nature, can soften the before sullen and intractable heart of man, for the impression of that new character in virtue of which it now loves God.

Now it is by the recurrence of the mind to that truth which first conveyed to the love of God, that this affection is upholden—just as to rekindle your admiration of a beautiful scene or picture, you would return again to gaze upon it. It is on this principle that so much stress is laid on keeping the truths which we believe in memory—insomuch, that, if not so recalled and dwelt upon, we are said to have believed them in vain. The doctrines of the gospel are intended for a further purpose than that of merely making up a creed. One main design of them is to move the affections ; and more especially, to reawaken that affection to which nature, when oppressed with fears or weighed down with the lethargies of sense, is wholly incompetent—even the love of God. And that this love be perennial in our hearts, there must be a constant reference to the truth which first inspired it. The way to keep our hearts in the love of God, is to build ourselves up on our most holy faith. To recall the emotion when it hath vanished from our heart, we must recall the truth which hath vanished from our remembrance. The way to alight and perpetuate the one, is to detain the other, and let it be the habitual topic of our fondest contemplation. You complain of your love to God being so exceedingly dim as to be beyond the reach of your discernment. I know of no other way to brighten it, than simply to think of Him as He is, and more especially as He stands forth to the believer's eye in the glass of His own revelation—as abundant

in mercy, but mercy shrined as it were in the immutabilities of truth and holiness—as longing for the approaches even of the guiltiest of His children, but laying His firm and authoritative interdict on that approach in any other way than by the appointed mediatorship—as turning His throne into a throne of grace, but without undermining the eternal props of judgment and of righteousness by which it is upholden—as mingling in His own character the tenderness of a friend, with the venerable dignity of a Sovereign—as blending at once in that economy which He hath set up over His erring creatures, the meekness of a paternal government with the majesty of its power. The man who is groping for the discovery of an affection towards God among the secretaries of his own inscrutable bosom, I would bid him cast an upward eye to the revealed countenance of the Godhead ; and this will do something more than discover the affection,—it will create it. Ere it can be made manifest, it must be made to exist ; and, most assuredly, it is not by downwardly probing and penetrating among the mysteries of your own moral constitution, that you will summon it into being. Ere you can love God, you must see Him to be lovely ; and this is a vision which the terrors of unexpiated guilt, and the sense of a controversy with God that has not yet been satisfactorily or intelligibly made up, are sure to scare away. It is the gospel, and it alone, that resolves this obstruction—nor am I aware of any expedient by which the first and the greatest law can again be established within us, than by accepting the call of that gospel wherein He is propounded as a just God and a Saviour.

'According to his purpose'—or according to His previous design. We now tread on the borders of what is deemed by many to be a great mystery ; and though we have no great respect for that Theology which loves to grapple with the incomprehensibles of lofty speculation—yet we must not shrink from ought that Scripture lays across our path. There is an ambition on the part of some to be wise above that which is written ; but that is no reason why, in avoiding this, we should not attempt at least to be wise up to that which is written. You may remember that a few chapters ago, which, from the exceeding tardiness of our progress, makes it nearly as many years ago—we came to an encounter with the very formidable doctrine of original sin, and found the task so ponderous that it took several successive Sabbaths ere we did acquit ourselves thereof. The few succeeding verses present us with a similar exercise on the doctrine of predestination ; and we most

assuredly would not embark on so arduous an undertaking, did we not hold it right to follow fearlessly wherever the light of revelation may carry us; and did we not further believe, that, like all other Scripture, this too is profitable, and in most entire harmony with the interests of truth and virtue in our world.

The purpose then signifies a previous design; and this in so far previous, as to be even anterior to the existence of those who are the objects of it. In the second epistle to Timothy there is an allusion to this very purpose of our text, and where it stands associated too with the very call that is now under consideration.—"God hath saved us," says the apostle, "not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given in Christ Jesus before the world began." The purpose then is the prior determination in the mind of the Divinity, that such a one should be converted from the error of his ways—should be called from darkness unto light—should make that transition by which he passes from a state of condemnation to a state of acceptance; and the call which we have already supposed to be an effectual one, is just as distinguishable from this previous determination, as the execution of a purpose is from the purpose itself—or as a design entertained and resolved upon long ago is from its fulfilment, that may only take place this very day, or at some distant and indefinite futurity before us. 'Moreover whom he did predestinate them he also called.' By the one He makes the decree—By the other he carries it into effect. And we again repeat, that it is not in the daring spirit of an adventurer we would have you to enter this field, or on a game of strength or of skill with the difficulties of human argument; but in the simple and lowly spirit of genuine disciples would we have you to submit yourselves to the Divine testimony.

It is quite obvious that the being *called* here means something totally different, from what it does in the verse where it is said that many are called but few are chosen. In that verse the call of the gospel is supposed to be heard by many, but complied with by few. But in the verse before us they who are the called have not only heard the call, but they have responded to it. In the one sense all who are here present, may be made to pass among the called, simply by sounding forth among you the offers and the invitations of grace—simply by bidding, as we are fully warranted to do, each and all to put his confidence in the blood of Christ, and so have his sins washed away—simply by coming forth with the assurance, which we cast fearlessly abroad in the

hearing of the people, that there is no man, be his guilt what it may, whom God will not welcome into peace with Him, would he only draw nigh in the name of that great propitiation which has been rendered for the sins of the world. In this sense every one of you is called. But it must be clear to your own experience, that there is the widest possible difference between one class and another as to their reception of this call—that on some it falls in downright bluntness, and moves them not out of the deep unconcern and lethargy of nature—whilst others recognise it as a voice from Heaven; and are awakened thereby to a sense of reconciliation; and feel a charm and a preciousness in the doctrine of that cross, whereon the enmity between God and a sinful world was done away; and through the faith which they are enabled to put in the word of this testimony, are translated into a felt peace and friendship with that God, who turns away His displeasure from them on the moment that they turn away their distrust from Him: And thus, while you all in one sense of the word are called, they are the latter class alone who are the called of my text—because, called effectually, they have not only heard the call but answered it. Here then is a palpable difference between two sets of hearers, that falls to be accounted for; and the account every where given of it in Scripture is, that the Spirit, who bloweth where He listeth, hath carried the message with power to the listener's heart in the one case, and hath gone along with it in the other—that He hath inclined the one to God's testimonies, and left the other to his own waywardness—that wherever a saving impression has been made, there the Holy Ghost has been at work, who operating not without the word but by the word, hath fulfilled on the person of the new believer, that purpose which God conceived in his favour before the foundation of the world.

But let not any feel himself thrown at a distance from salvation, by thus connecting it with the antecedent decree of God respecting it. We are sure that none ought, who feel a true moral earnestness on the subject, and are honestly and desirously embarked on the pursuit of their immortal well-being. For though the Spirit bloweth where He listeth, yet He listeth so to do on all who court and who aspire after Him; and though by His work upon a human soul He is fulfilling a design that hath been conceived from eternity, yet it is not with this past design but with the present fulfilment that you have to do: And the matter in hand, the matter with which you should feel yourself urged and occupied, is, that by the

operation of that Spirit you may indeed be enlightened in the truth of God, and made wise unto your own salvation. For this purpose let me assure you of His readiness to help and to visit all who ask Him—let me entreat your attention to that Bible, which with Him is the mighty instrument, whereby the understanding and the heart and all the faculties of man are gained over to that truth, which is

able at once to sanctify and to save us—let me press you to awake and be active in the work, putting forth all the strength that is in you, and confident that if you really do so more strength will be given—So that if the whole force which you have now be honestly and heartily directed to the object, by force the kingdom of heaven will be carried.

LECTURE LX.

ROMANS viii, 29.

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.”

THERE is a vast and immeasurable progression of events, between the conception of God’s will in the depths of the eternity that is past, and the full consummation of that will in the yet unresolved mysteries of the eternity that is to come. And we occupy our given place along the line of that progression. We form one in the series of many generations; and, in our assigned part of this mighty chain we can only see a little way on either side of it—because from our post of observation, and with our limited range of faculties, it soon loses itself both in the obscurity that is behind, and in the almost equal obscurity that is before us. Nevertheless we concede to Him who originated the whole of this wondrous process, that His eye reaches from the beginning to the end of it—that, from the lofty and uncreated summit of His own omniscience, He can descry all the successions of the universe that Himself hath made—that in the single fiat of His power, by which the mechanism of creation was called forth, and all its laws were ordained, there were comprehended all the events that took place in the history of nature or of providence—and that neither their variety can bewilder, nor their minuteness can elude the one glance, by which he is able to embrace all worlds, and look onward through an infinity of ages. And He doth thus foreknow, just because He did predestinate—just because in the very constitution of His work, there are the principles and the powers by which its every evolution is determined—just because the sovereignty that He hath over it, is far more absolute than that which the human artificer hath over all the operations and results of the machinery that he hath framed. It is not the only mode of conception in which we might regard the

sovereignty of God, to imagine of every one event as isolated from all the others; but which still, at some period of high antiquity in the history of the Godhead, was made the subject of a distinct and authoritative ordination. There is another mode, and by which the sovereignty would still be maintained in all its entireness—even to imagine of Him, that He brought forth the universe, just as a skilful inventor bringeth forth a piece of curious and complicated workmanship; and that He furnished it at the first with all the springs and the weights and the moving forces, that fix and ascertain both the most minute and the mightiest of its evolutions; and that the wisdom by which He could frame the mechanism, is inseparable from the wisdom by which He could foresee all the particulars of its operation: And thus, just as you might say of him who maketh and who windeth up some orrery of human art, and who is able to calculate and to predict all the consequent movements and positions of it at any point of time that may be specified—that it is he who by his own will hath determined through each of its separate footsteps the miniature history of his own little workmanship—in like manner may you say of the great the stupendous apparatus of creation, that all the facts and the futurities of its state at every moment, are determined by Him who called it into being at the first, and endued it at the first with all its properties. We do not affirm in which of these ways it is that the affairs of the divine government are conducted; but in either way, you concede to Him who presideth over it, the entire and absolute sovereignty—in either way you realise the idea of a predestinating God.

And we seldom meet with any disposi-

tion to question this entire and unexcepted sovereignty of God, in reference to the material world. In all the operations of a purely unconscious materialism, there is abundant willingness to admit a precise necessity, a rigid and unailing ordination. There is not a more impressive exhibition of this, than in the simple but magnificent apparatus of the visible heavens—where, out of only two forces, those enormous masses that float in boundless vacancy, have for thousands of years persevered with mathematical certainty in the courses that God hath ordained for them—insomuch, that, even by the skill of man, the mystic complexity of these shining orbs hath been most beautifully unravelled; and, sure as geometry itself, the place and the velocity and the direction of every planet are most rigidly to be found. Now this is predestination; and it positively matters not to the question, whether the actual state of the heavens be willed by God at every one instant, or be the sure result of that invariable law which He at first impressed upon them.

And even in other departments of the material world, where the order of succeeding events hath hitherto baffled all human calculation, still it is held that there is such an order necessarily fixed by the laws of nature, or by the will of Him who hath established these laws—insomuch, that even the fluctuations of the weather are not at random; and a certain principle determines every fitful breeze, and every forming cloud, and every falling shower—though that principle hath not yet been seized upon by us, so as that we can prophesy a day of rain, just as we can prophesy the day of an eclipse. The vastness of Nature's variety, soon overpasses our feeble apprehension—yet this does not hinder our belief, that, apart from life and thought and volition, there reigns throughout the whole of its wide empire an unailing necessity; and, supposing that there were nought but blind and unconscious materialism in the world, we should not quarrel with the doctrine of predestination. We should recognise the appointment of God as descending even to the humblest event in the history of nature—as determining the force of every billow that breaks upon the shore—as prescribing both its velocity and its path to every flying particle of dust that to our eye had been accidentally raised by some gale that blew over us—as conducting every vegetable seed to its determined spot; and so parcelling, as it were, over the soil of an uninhabited island, all the varieties of the produce that it bore—So that it is not according to a fortuitous, but a rigidly preordained distribution of them, when we witness the

trees that have arisen in one place; and the tufts of grass that abound in another; and places of rank luxuriance, where nevertheless there is not a blossom and not a stalk of herbage, that has not been set by an intelligent hand, and bidden into the very nook it occupies by that sovereign voice which assigns the bounds of every habitation.

Thus where there is nought but unconscious matter, we meet with no exception against the doctrine that God fixes all and predestines all; and that each process, however lengthened and however complicated, is overruled throughout by Him—so as that it goeth onward at every moment of time, with the sureness of mechanism: And, moreover, if, at any instant, you were to open your eyes on a landscape that had never been visited with human footstep, or rather that had never been disturbed by the spontaneous movement of any animal whatever—then it is questioned by few or by none, that the whole existing arrangement upon its surface is as it hath been ordered by the will of God; and standeth forth in all its most minute and subordinate details as He hath appointed it. Neither doth it disturb the conviction in our minds, that the influences which preside over this arrangement, or rather which actually gave rise to it, are so very complex, so very manifold, and to us so very much beyond the reach of all foresight and all calculation, that we are disposed to apply to the whole distribution of the things and objects within our contemplation the epithet of accidental—as of the breeze which wafted the downy seed to the random situation of the plant that afterwards sprung from it; or of the stream upon which it had alighted, and which carried it down to the jutting bank that detained and harboured it; or of the capricious weather, that gave to the future vegetation the very growth that was actually experienced, and the very strength and magnitude that were actually attained. We do make a heedless application of the term accidental to all these varieties—just because they are far too complex and bewildering for us to follow them in their history, or to trace them to their causes. Yet, nevertheless, when we do summon our attention to the topic, we do not refuse that the hand of God hath been in one and all of these countless diversities—that the flower which hath found its accommodation in the crevice of the rock has had its bed prepared by Him, and that He hath planted and watered it—that over the whole face of this wilderness, there is not an hairbreadth of deviation from that very picture of it, which was in the mind of the Divinity before that He evoked it into being—that

design and destiny, in fact, are imprinted, in irreversible characters, on each individual specimen of botany in this yet untrodden land—that an intelligent finger did assign the precise locality and limits of every species, so that He hath fixed their residence, and marked their borders, with all the sureness of geometry—and that, confused to our eyes as are these vast and varied assemblages which lie dispersed over some wide and solitary domain, yet, in this whole husbandry of nature, there is positively nought that hath fallen out at random, because under the absolute superintendence of Him who hath the elements in His hand, and each of which renders in His service the precise accomplishment of that whereunto He hath sent it.

We are all abundantly willing then to admit of an entire and absolute predestination, in the world of created matter ; but it is when the same doctrine is extended to the world of created mind, that we shrink and are in difficulties. For example, let this solitary island, where Nature hath so long reigned and luxuriated without a rival, at length meet the observation of the voyager, and be recovered from its deep oblivion of ages—let it now become the peopled abode, both of animals and men—let new powers and new elements be thus brought to act upon its husbandry—let the skill and the labour and the intelligence of human creatures, spread a refined agriculture over the surface of it—So as to cause another distribution of the vegetable family, from that which obtained in the days of savage and solitary grandeur. Now you will remark that the actual state of this territory is not resolvable into the operation of physical causes alone ; but is the mingled result of the physical blended with the moral—that the former influences, which wont to operate by themselves, are now complicated with other influences still more capricious, or at least still less within the reach of calculation—that human thought and human choice now share an influence, over that arrangement which before was determined by the elements of nature. Now what the predestinarian holds is, that the determination is just as precise and as necessary, after the accession of this new influence as it was before—that though living creatures have taken possession of the territory, yet that all its changes and all its processes are just as rigidly and as absolutely as ever under the sovereignty of God—that, in the dispersion of plants for example, the flying bird carries the seed to its, destined spot with as great sureness, as it could be wafted there by the breeze of heaven—that the hoof of the unwieldy quadruped

is as surely guided to crush the vegetation which God meaneth to be destroyed, as are those invisible particles that float through the atmosphere, and are made to fall in blight or in mildew on those fields which they have spotted with disease—that when the skipping deer hath dabbled by his foot a soft receptacle for the falling acorn, the law of gravitation hath not more determinately guided the one in a strict rectilineal path to that place, whence the magnificent oak of many centuries is to arise, than the law of animal nature hath brought the other with all its light and airy and tremulous motion to be the unconscious auxiliary therein. Hitherto then all is destiny ; and even when we pass upwardly to the doings of conscious and intelligent man, the sturdy predestinarian will not quit his hold ; but affirms, that, even after the introduction of this new element, all is in as strict subordination to the will of God as before—that though the now cleared and cultivated farms, and the well-kept gardens, and the beauteous shrubbery of rising villas, and all the comforts and ornaments of civilized life which grace the transformed landscape—that though these form a different picture of the island from that which we have imagined of it many generations before—Yet that the picture now, was in the mind of the Divinity before the creation of the world, as correctly and as vividly as the picture of it then—that He did not lose sight of it, when it passed from the operation of His own unconscious elements into the hands and the busy management of His own living, nay even of His own planning and purposing and rational creatures—that even then, it did not pass beyond the scope of God's prescience and of God's predetermination—that men are as certainly the instruments of His pleasure, as the fire and the air and the water that are said to be His ministers—Insomuch, that, in the glowing domains of art and population, every item of the perspective which is afforded, realised though it hath been by the busy hearts and hands of human beings, was also all settled and made sure in the councils of eternity.

And it does give a semblance of great consistency and truth to this whole speculation—that, just as matter acts in virtue of certain powers and properties wherewith the Creator hath endowed it, so mind also hath powers and properties to which all its movements can be referred—and, more especially, that the part which man takes in the husbandry of the ground, may as distinctly be traced to the operation of a law in his nature, as the part which the elements have can be traced to certain fixed and unalienable principles,

according to which they act on the physiology of the vegetable world. It is the Maker of all things who hath given to each of them its own peculiar characteristic, according to which each moves in its own peculiar and characteristic way. It is He, in particular, who hath adapted the economy of man's frame to the fruits of the earth; and who goads him on by the ever-recurring appetite of hunger; and who, making him wiser than the fowls of heaven, hath given to him a reach of anticipation through all the seasons of the year; and who hath enabled him to treasure up the experience of the past; and who hath supplied him with principles on which he can calculate and select and determine according to circumstances, and fix himself down in the abode of his settlement and on the field of his industry. And with these busy processes of choice and deliberation and the agency of motives, doth God, not only decide the greater movements of his life, but in reality fills up all the subordinate details of it. And thus when man goeth forth unto his labour, he is all day long the creature of circumstances; and the soil, and the grain, and the exposure, and the local convenience, and the right successions for a profitable husbandry, and the facilities that may be opened, and the obstacles that must be overcome—these act upon him as so many effective considerations every hour of the day, and they necessarily guide and influence him even through the minutest details of his agriculture. And it is thus that we may detect a real process in his part of the operation, as well as in the operation of the unconscious elements—a series of causes and effects, by which the instrument man is directed in the husbandry of art, along with all the other instruments that without him carried forward the husbandry of nature—an actual and a firm concatenation of influences, by which he is guided to all his plans and all his performances, and which descends to every furrow that he draws, and every field that he incloses, and every handful of corn that he strews upon its surface. And thus it is that in the opinion, we shall not say of theologians only, but even of those who are profoundest in philosophy, the intervention of man is not conceived to affect the predestination of God—the creature is regarded as but an instrument in the hand of the Creator, which He wieldeth at His pleasure—the mechanism of thought and desire and determination is held to be only one of those countless diversities of operation, through which it is God that worketh all in all. And, accordingly, it is the article of many a philosopher's as well as of many a theologian's creed, that the

newly acquired features of the now cultivated island, were, one and all of them in the perspective of God from the beginning—nay that it is the hand of God Himself which hath imprinted them all upon the face of the altered landscape—that with man, as the tool by which His own designs are carried into effect, every hedge-row hath been drawn, and every acre hath been reclaimed, and every edifice hath been raised, and one definite space hath been pencilled over with sweetest verdure, and another made to wave in foliage, and another to shine forth in flowery decoration, and another left in Nature's untamed luxuriance; but altogether, so as that with the agency of man, He hath as effectually impressed His own design and His own destination upon the whole of this territory, as when without this agency He had nothing but His own passive and unconscious elements to work by.

Thus far have we deemed it necessary, in justice to a topic, which, in the ordinary course of our lecturing, hath come in our way, to say something on the much controverted doctrine of predestination—Yet, while we do not hesitate to affirm that all our convictions are upon its side, such is our antipathy to any thing like mere speculation in the pulpit, that we are glad to dispose in half an hour of an argument, that would require a lengthened and elaborate treatise for the full solution of it. The particular illustration that we have chosen, is not perhaps the most effective for the purpose of convincing—yet we have preferred it, because we think it the best that has occurred to us, for elucidating all the particular uses that stand connected with this article of faith. These we shall defer till a future opportunity; and, meanwhile, we shall barely advert to one argument more, that, even apart from Scripture, (which according to my own view is altogether on the side of predestination,) but that even apart from Scripture, might we think be most triumphantly alleged in its behalf.

The argument is, that, by admitting of predestination in the world of matter, and excluding it from the world of mind, you, in fact, exclude God from the most dignified part of His own creation. While you invest Him with an entire and unexcepted supremacy over the mass of unconscious bodies, you rifle from Him His authority over the moral and the intelligent empire of spirits—Nay, by erecting each of these spirits into a principle of spontaneous and independent operation, the capricious movements of which God can neither predict nor predetermine, you lay open by far the noblest department of the universe, to an anarchy that no power can.

control, and no wisdom can foretell the issues of. He who hath made, and who sustains all things, is represented as standing by, unable to foresee the turns, or to direct the transitions of all those random and unaccountable processes, that are now in the hands of His own creatures; and, let the plans and wishes of the Divine Mind have been what they may, there is nought in providence and nought in history that is sure. It is but a poor compensation that He presides over the motions of a sublime astronomy. It is but a poor compensation that the winds and the vapours, and the tides of ocean, and the changes of the atmosphere, and even all the processes of the vegetable kingdom—save when the usurper man hath wrested them from his grasp—It is but a poor compensation, that both the mechanism of the heavens above, and the whole of terrestrial physics on the earth below, are at His absolute disposal,—if He be thus dethroned from His ascendancy over the best and the fairest region of His works; and if, when once the elements of thought and life and will are caused to mingle their influence with other things, He, from that moment, is struck with impotency, and must suffer the progress of events to take its own fortuitous and unmanageable way. This consideration obtains great additional strength, when we recur to the undoubted experience which I lately insisted on—even on the might and the magnitude of little things, in regard to their bearing on the grandest passages of history; and that therefore if God be wrested of His power and His providence in that which is least, you in fact dethrone Him from His sovereignty over that which is greatest. You remember the example

that we gave from a very critical passage in the life of Mahomet—how he was preserved by the flight of a bird, and by the rapid process of inference which this gave rise to in the minds of his pursuers; and that, had it not been for these two steps in the concatenations of providence, all the designs of the impostor would have been arrested: And one of the greatest moral revolutions in the history of our species was thus made to turn on the most minute and familiar of all incidents. The doctrine that would limit the predestinations of God to the world of matter, might allow that it was He who hallowed the cave in which the pretender hid himself; and guarded its entrance with shrubbery; and perhaps even detained the bird for the purpose of turning away the footsteps of the destroyers: But one step remains, and that hath been placed by the assertors of a self-determining power in man beyond the reach of the Being from whom he sprung. It all hinged, you will observe, on a rapid volition in the breast of the murderers. And if there be any thing there to abridge God of His sovereignty—if when it be the part of man to will, it is the part of God as it were to stand by and to wait on the uncertain decision—if the Creator, instead of foreseeing all and determining all, must thus attend on the decisions of the creature; and shape the measures of His providence on earth, according to the signals that are given out by all the petty and independent powers that swarm upon its surface—Then never, in the whole history of this world's politics we will venture to affirm, never was there exhibited a more disjointed and tumultuous government—never have we read of a more helpless or degraded sovereign.

LECTURE LXI.

ROMANS viii, 29, 30.

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. 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.”

In my last remarks upon the subject I confined myself, nakedly and absolutely, to the truth of the doctrine of predestination; and had no time left for any moral or practical application. And yet it is for a good and powerful application of the truth in this instance that I feel greatly more anxious, than even for the truth itself. It is not your curiosity but your conscience that I want to address; neither am I so solicitous for dogmatizing you

into a right belief on the topic of predestination, as for evincing that, whether true or false, all your present energies should be given entire to the present work of repenting, and believing, and labouring with all diligence in the new obedience of the gospel. As to the speculative doctrine itself, I do not scruple to aver, that, while a firm and unexcepted believer in it myself, I do not regard it as one of those articles which are indispen-

sable to salvation—that many are the eminent worthies, and more especially of our sister church, who have the root of the matter in them; and yet who eye this doctrine, not with incredulity alone, but with a sort of keen and sensitive antipathy—who have, in short, a kind of horror at this most revolting feature of what they denominate a rigid and revolting Calvinism; and deem, that, unfit for modern ears, it should now be suffered to be forgotten in the unwieldy folio, whose scowling frontispiece represents the theologian who penned it. I, of course hold them to be wrong. I think that they misunderstand the subject, and view it through a medium of passion and prejudice which may at length be dispersed. Nevertheless, though we count them in an error, it, like certain sins mentioned by the apostle John, is an error not unto death. I do not see how they can get over the evidence that there is for predestination—both in the scriptures of truth; and in those independent reasonings to which man, even unaided and alone, seems altogether competent. Yet I am aware, that to a certain limit, there may be varieties of opinion, and all of them alike consistent with reverence for God and His communications, so far as the ability to understand them has been given; and such varieties on the much controverted topic of predestination appear to me within that limit. So that it is not in the spirit of Athanasian intolerance, that I have hitherto urged my convictions upon this subject; nor indeed so much with a view to impress these convictions as to demonstrate if I can—that the great cause of practical Christianity remains uninjured by a doctrine, which is conceived by many to be fatal to it.

The apostle Paul, however strenuous and resolute in his assertions of certain doctrines, was, in regard to certain others the most indulgent and liberal of men. He admitted a certain latitude of sentiment even among his own converts; and, though there were errors for which he had no toleration, yet there were also errors, both in opinion and in practice, which he regarded in the spirit of a most benignant forbearance. There were articles of faith, on which he would not give place even to the slightest mitigation of them—no not for a single hour; and when the apostle Peter offered something like a compromise with the doctrine of justification by faith alone, he withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed. Nay he called down the imprecation of Heaven on any who should pervert the mind of his disciples from that gospel of free grace, wherewith he linked the whole of a sinner's salvation; and yet while there were truths respecting Jesus Christ and

Him crucified which he could not surrender, there were also truths in which he suffered a variety of conception on the part of his fellow-Christians; and so far from scowling excommunication upon them because of it, he waits in hope and charity the progress of a more enlightened conviction in their minds. "Let as many as be perfect be thus minded, and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless whereto ye have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things." This he would not have said of the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. This, for aught that is known, he might have said of the doctrine of predestination. And it is sufficiently remarkable that the apostle Peter adverts to certain things of Paul, not as indispensable to be believed, but what is far more characteristic of our present topic as hard to be understood—a topic that has met us on our way, and which it were surely unworthy of the fearless believer in the authority of Scripture to decline from; but a topic which we at the same time entertain, not with the purpose to regale your curiosity, but if possible to stimulate your conscience—not to make intelligible that which an inspired teacher hath pronounced to be dark—not to make you more learned in this redoubted dogma than the Bible is fitted to make its humble interpreters and scholars, but to save if possible, to save the unlearned and the unstable from wresting this and the other scriptures to their own destruction.

I have already stated that the doctrine of the text might be apprehended by a series of historical events—each linked in firm and necessary concatenation with the other, and altogether forming a chain which extends from the first purpose of the Divine Mind to the final accomplishment of it in eternity. The intermediate place at which each of us now stands forms one of these links. It is a step of that mighty progression which reaches from everlasting to everlasting, and of whose distant extremities we are in profoundest ignorance. We may know that there is a primary decree, either for or against us; but of the decree itself we know nothing. We may know that there is a fixed destination in reserve for us; but which term of the dread alternative between heaven and hell is to be realised on our imperishable spirits, of this we have no information.

We see but a little way on either side of us; and from the visible place where we now stand, each in the chain of his own personal destiny, does it soon lose itself, both behind and before, in a dim and distant obscurity which we cannot pen-

trate. And the question that I have to address to every plain understanding is, whether we shall be guided in the business that is now before us by that which we do know, or by that which we do not know—whether by our fancies of that which lies in a conjectural region away from us, or by our findings of that which is at hand—whether by our vague speculation on the first and the last steps of that process which connects the pre-ordination of God with the future eternity of man, or by those steps in which we now are actually implicated, the near and the besetting certainties of our own present condition. For, let it be observed, that there are such urgent and immediate certainties in your state as it now is; and the question is, shall you proceed upon these, or upon the far-fetched imaginations which you choose to draw from a territory that is fathomless and unknown? A fool's eyes, says Solomon, are abroad over all the ends of the earth; and we appeal to common sense—whether it be practical wisdom or practical folly, to guide your footsteps by the uncertain guesses of what God hath written regarding you in the book of His decrees, or by what He hath written for your present direction in the book of His revelation. Grant that I am moving along a chain which hath one end certainly fixed in the eternity that is past, and another is certainly fixed in the eternity that is to follow. The movement of this day, at least, depends on the few links that are within the reach of your present observation. It is not by looking distantly aback, neither is it by shooting your perspective ahead of all that is visible before you, it is not thus that you are practically carried forward on the line of your history as an immortal being—it is by the links that are presently in hand that your present route is determined—it is to these that you have to look—it is upon the realities within your grasp that you are to decide the enquiry, what shall I do; and not upon the visions that float before the eye of your imagination. And what are these realities? What are the matters on hand, that we would have you substitute in place of the speculations about things beyond our reach, and things at a distance? There is an embassy of peace from heaven at your door. There is the truth of the Godhead staked to the fulfilment of your salvation, if you will only rely upon Him. There is His beseeching voice addressed to each and to all, and saying "Come now let us reason together." There is the free offer of forgiveness, and what is more, the assurance that if you will only turn unto God He will pour out His Spirit upon you. These are the matters on hand. This is the business to

which I should like to recall you; and would rather quash all your thoughts on the topic of predestination as so many hurtful vagaries, than that the urgencies of a free gospel should be held in abeyance. If you are not able to see the consistency of this doctrine with the plain declarations and entreaties of the New Testament, do not bewilder yourselves. Mispend not that precious time in fruitless cogitation, which should be employed in proceeding upon the calls of repent and believe and be reconciled unto God. Put away from you the doubtful disputations, and give your busy entertainment to the honest assurances of the gospel. Be content with your ignorance of higher mysteries, and forthwith enter on the open walk of reconciliation—being very sure, that, whatever doubt or darkness may have gathered around the loftier summits of Theology, it hath also its safe and its patent road for the humble wayfarer—that it has an offered pardon which you cannot too confidently trust, that it has its revealed hopes of glory which you cannot too joyfully cherish, that it has its promises of salvation which none of you can too surely or too speedily embrace, that it has its prescribed path of holiness which you cannot too diligently walk in.

You remember the illustration that I have already given upon this subject, when I endeavoured to show how the doctrine of predestination could be exemplified in the processes of nature and of history—not only holding an unquestioned sway over inanimate things, and stamping a precise necessity both on the simpler movements of the heavens above, and the more complicated operations that take place in the physics and the physiology of the earth below; but, even when man mingles his energies and volitions with the unconscious elements as he does in the plans and proceedings of husbandry—that, then too, there is as sure a presiding sovereignty, which determines the site of every plant, and fixes the condition of every spot of territory, as if nought but the winds and the waters, these unconscious ministers of the Divinity, were in play. But, granting this to be a true speculation, will it ever warp the designs and the doings of the practical agriculturist? Does he ever think of the predestination that runs through all his busy processes, or is it necessary that he should? Did ever in this world's history a party of colonists tread on some before untrodden shore and begin its cultivation, under the impulse of such a metaphysical speculation? Did the notion of God's prescience and of God's preordination extending to every movement, supply one element of influence or direction in a single choice that

they made, or a single labour that they put their hand to? It might be true, that every resulting farm, with its fields and its crops and its boundaries, emerged, after the busy willing and working of many years, into the very state that had been pictured in the Divine Mind from all eternity—yet the truth never, for a single instant, be present to the mind of a single operator in this process. He was set agoing by other considerations. He is decided by other influences. He never vaults so high as to the first determinations of the Almighty. He never looks so far as to the remote transformation that the surface of the territory on which he now labours is to undergo. He is moved both to will and to do by nearer elements—by the nature of the soil that is under his feet—by the present weather which is around him, and which calls him forth to his toils by the promises of a climate, that experience has told him warrants the hope of a recompense for his labours. There is nought of predestination in all his thoughts. He may exemplify the doctrine, but he does not recognise it; nor is it at all essential to the practical result of a domain now rich in all the fruits of a prosperous agriculture. It is the very same in spiritual husbandry. It is the very same in that process, by which souls, now dead in trespasses and sins, are turned into well-watered gardens. It is a transformation that may be effected, without one thought being bestowed, or one intelligent regard being once cast, on this sublime mystery. The mind is decided by nearer and more effective contemplations—by the voice of a beseeching God—by the view of an open door of mediatorship to His throne—by the tidings of peace even to the worst of sinners, through the blood of a satisfying atonement; and by the honest and affectionate urgency wherewith these tidings are pressed upon the acceptance of you all—by the promises of a spiritual climate, now rendered fit for the transformation of sinners, these thorns and briars, into trees of righteousness; for living water is made to descend on the prayers of every believer, the Holy Ghost being given because Christ is now glorified. Let these obvious considerations be plainly and obviously proceeded on; and, whether you have settled the high topic of predestination or not—be very sure, that he who strives to enter in at the strait gate shall save his own soul, that he who presses into the kingdom of heaven shall take it by force.

If the doctrine of predestination be true, as I believe it to be, then it extends to all the processes of human life; and, in virtue of it, every career of human exertion hath its sure result, and must terminate in one

certain fulfilment that is absolute and irreversible. It is not the state of your future eternity alone, that is decided by it; but the state of your fortune and family in this world. Are you entering upon business for example? If this doctrine be true, even as I think it to be, the wealth to be realised, the height of affluence to be gained, the precise sum to be bequeathed as an inheritance to your children, are fixed and immutable as if already written in the book of destiny. Now attend to what that is which you take your motive from, when you actively engage in the pursuits and speculations of merchandise. Do you ever think of fetching it from the predestination that has been already made in the upper sanctuary? What is it that sets you so busily agoing? Is it the predestination that is past, and which has its place in heaven? or is it the prospect which lies immediately before you, and which is furnished both by the present realities and the future likelihoods that be on the field of your earthly contemplations? Does the argument that all is already determined, and there is no object to be gained by the most strenuous forth-putting of activity on your part—does ever this paralyse or impede any of your movements? Practically and really, I would ask, do you not resign yourselves as fully to what may be called the operation of the *contiguous inducements*, as if there was no predestination—as if this were a work that you had never heard of, or a conception that never had been presented to your thoughts? There is no such lofty or aerial speculation that is ever permitted to embarrass this part at least of your history; and, what is more, no complaint of hardship is ever uttered by you—because the affairs of your worldly business are all chained down in adamant necessity. The thought of this fated necessity as to this world's business, will neither provoke nor will it paralyse you—provided that you could only see a good and a likely opening for the prosecution of it. You will instantly forget the abstract speculation, and enter with all the busy ardour of intense and unrestrained faculties on the path of action. Give you only a hopeful enterprise—give you credit, and the countenance of steady and powerful friends, when you embark upon it—give you the assurance of rising markets, and of a demand that will speedily absorb all the commodities which, either by purchase or by preparation, you can assemble together for the purpose of pouring into them—And then, only think of the impetuous contempt wherewith you would overleap the paltry obstacle, if, in the midst of all this glee and animating

hurry, one of your cool metaphysical acquaintances should offer to arrest you on the path of fortune, by the assurance that fortune and every thing else had already a decree of predestination laid upon them. You would no more think of giving up because of this, than you would think of regulating the history of your present day by what you read of history before the flood. And certain it is of all the operations of commerce, which, if predestination be indeed true, are as much within the iron grasp of fatality as any other of our concerns; that still these are as much the spontaneous doings of busy active plodding and locomotive creatures, as if there was no such doctrine at all; and that, in respect of the calculations and the correspondencies and the bargains and the voyages and all the other processes that prevail in the world of trade, the doctrine, which some conceive would freeze the whole into apathy and lay upon it a sudden congelation, leaves the affairs of human beings precisely on the footing in which it found them.

It is just so in all the other processes of human life. It is so, for example, in the education and settlement of children. If the doctrine in question be true—then every footstep, and every advancement, and the whole train of the future history of each, are already the subjects of a prior and unailing ordination. But does this encumber the activity and the outlook, even of those parents who are of sturdiest and most inflexible Calvinism? In the whole plan and conduct of their proceedings in behalf of their own offspring, it is still the operation of the contiguous inducements that sets them practically agoing. No one ever thinks of fetching one consideration to guide or to influence him, from that period of remoteness and mystery when God made His decrees; but all the influence which tells upon them, cometh from the circumstances that are immediately around them, or from the probabilities that are immediately before their eyes. Give a parent an accessible place of best scholarship for some rising member of his family—give him a likely avenue to some office of emolument or honour—give him a promising line of business, a promise too that he reads not in the book of heaven's ordinations but in the book of earth's common and everyday experience—give him these; and predestination will no more affect either the direction or the activity of his movements, than any category of the old schoolmen. It may be a truth, and he may believe it as such; but never does he suffer it to bewilder him away from the plain course, on which wisdom and observation and a sense of interest have urged him to enter

—and on that course, do we see him plying all its expedients, as if God had decreed nothing, and as if man had to do every thing. All that he needs to put him into motion is an opening towards which he may turn him, and along which he will be guided just by the events which cast up—just by the circumstances and things that meet his observation. Such an opening in trade will at once make of him an aspiring and indefatigable merchant. Such an opening in family politics will at once set him, under the stimulus of his parental affection, to do all and to devise all for the future provision of his offspring. Such an opening in near or distant colonies will, under the powerful operation of interest, bring out capital and skill and personal activity, and make him a busy agriculturist. Predestination may, or it may not, have stamped a rigid and inviolable necessity on each and on all of these processes; but whether the one or the other it matters not to him, who is directly and personally engaged in them. He gives himself up to the play of those motives by which he is immediately beset; and under which he is powerfully urged forward on that course of activity, where he strives for his object, and where he carries it.

It is even so in the business of religion. Predestination no more locks up the activities of this business than of any other, and no more lays a hurt or a hardship on those who are engaged in it. We never hear of the merchant or the parent or the agriculturist, complaining that all his energies are bound fast by a decree; but we see them instantly set in motion by a good opening. Neither ought we to hear such a complaint from the adventurer for heaven, provided only that he too is presented with a good opening. His proper and practical concern, is, not with the decree at all that is behind him; but with the opening that is before him. It is with the gate of Christ's mediatorship, now flung back for his access to the throne of God, and with the voice of invitation that issues therefrom. It is with the call, "cease to do evil, learn to do well." It is with the honest assurance, that, if we return unto God, God will return unto us and abundantly pardon us. It is with the proclamation of welcome to one and to all; and, lest you should feel yourself secluded by the doctrine of election, it is with such terms as all and any and whosoever—terms that both embrace all and point specifically to each, and by which therefore an obliterating sponge should be made to pass over the hurtful and the withering imagination. These are what you have immediately to do with; and with the question of your name being in

the book of life, I speak unto those who meditate the great transition on which hingeth the whole of their future eternity, with this question at present they have positively nothing to do. The merchant would not so embarrass himself—his love of gain would urge him forward to the opening. The parent would not so embarrass himself—the love of his children would urge him in like manner to take the practicable opening. Neither would the agriculturist—his love of a prosperous settlement would lead him instantly to seize upon the goodly opening. And if an opening goodlier than them all—if the plain and practicable path to which you are cheered forward by the invitation of Heaven, and along which you have the guarantee of Heaven's grace and Heaven's promises to assure you of a harvest of glory—If this be not enough to arouse you from indolent speculation—if this do not break you loose from metaphysical difficulties, as from the entanglement of so many cobwebs—The inference, we fear, is too obvious to be resisted—that barrier over which the love of gain, or the impulse of natural affection, so easily forced its way, hath withstood the impotent efforts of the religionist; for he had not the love of God or of holiness that would have carried him over it, and this is his condemnation that he loved the darkness rather than the light because his deeds were evil.

There are innumerable successive links in the chain of your destiny, and it is only a few of the greater ones that are adverted to in the text. The first of all is coeval with the foreknowledge and predestination of God. With this you have nothing at present to do. God at that time was alone, and what He then did is one of those secret things which belong unto Himself. The second link is the call that He addresses to you: 'Whom he hath predestinated them he also called.' With this you have to do. God at this part of the series is not alone. He makes a forthgoing of Himself to the sinner.

There is now a converse between Him and you; and the particulars of this converse are among the revealed things which belong to yourselves and to your children. By this call He points out the opening through which you may escape from the coming wrath, through which you enter upon friendship with the God whom you have offended. To this then I would solicit your attention; and I warn you, that, with the dark and unknown territory which lies behind this actual communication from heaven to earth, you have positively no more at present to do, than with the territory that lies beyond the confines of our planetary system. The matter in hand is the call. It is the

widely sounding proclamation of "Look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be saved." It is the assurance of a welcome and a good-will lifted from the mercy-seat, and made to circulate at large among all the families of the world. It is the good news of a propitiation, the blood of which cleanseth from all sin; and of a Spirit ready to be poured on the returning penitent, that it may both actuate the holy desire and uphold his footsteps in the way of holy obedience. And the truth of God is staked to the fulfilment of all these declarations. He hath so framed the economy of the gospel, that if you simply trust—then either you are saved or God is a liar. He hath indeed descended very far, that He might again make up the controversy between Himself and a sinful world. He bids one and all of us only put Him to the trial. "Prove me, prove me," says God "and see whether I will not pour out a blessing upon you." "Plead your cause with me and put me in mind of my own promises. "Take with you words and turn to the Lord, say unto him Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously. I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely for mine anger is turned away." It is not with God, shrouded in the depths of His past eternity—it is not with God, in that era of high and remote antiquity, where all His footsteps are unsearchable—it is not with God in the secrecy of those unrevealed counsels by which He fixes the destiny of all worlds, that you have to do. You have no right to intrude into those mysteries of the Royal Presence, and you should count it enough, if you are included in the benefits of a Royal Proclamation; and you are positively left without one shadow of complaint—now that God hath broken silence—now that He hath set Himself forth in that most winning and impressive attitude of God waiting to be gracious—now that He stands before you like a Parent bereaved of His children, and longing for them back again. And now that it is God beseeching you to be reconciled, and God entreating your acceptance of His mercy, and God importunately plying you with the offers of pardon and the calls of repentance, and God swearing by Himself that He hath no pleasure in your death but rather that one and all should come unto Him and live—now it is with Him and with Him only that you have really and practically to do.

I can tell you nothing about the first link; but I am just fulfilling the duties of my office, when I bid you lay hold of the second. I know not aught of the individual predestination of any of you; but I do most assuredly know that each

of you is the fit and legitimate subject for an individual call. I therefore do most freely and unreservedly call you. If you respond thereunto with the question, But is not there only a certain number set apart for salvation and what may that number be? I know not how I can better reply than after the example of Jesus Christ, when asked Were there many that should be saved? He gave no countenance to the speculative interrogation, and simply bade the man look to himself. "Strive you to enter in at the strait gate." In like manner do I say Strive you to make your calling and election sure. I am not able to trace the chain of your destiny backward. But here is one link of it, the call; and could I gain your compliance with the call, could I get you to close with the chain at this part of it—then I can pursue it with certainty forward; and, in fullest confidence that he who is called is also justified and that he who is justified is also glorified, I, in darkness though I be about the secrets of the book of life, could read in the book of your own visible history in the world your destination to the glories of an everlasting inheritance.

Let me beseech you then to take yourselves plainly and practically to that revealed opening, through which all who will might find egress from death unto life. Suffer not ought to suspend this transition. Cease now your hands from disobedience; and submit now your hearts to that grace, which never is withheld from those who truly and desirously seek after it. Give speculation with all its doubts and difficulties to the wind, rather than that another moment should elapse, ere you give entertainment to the free overtures of the gospel, and render a full and a resolved compliance therewith. Christ knocketh at the door of every heart; and let that knock be first answered, ere you feel yourselves at leisure or at liberty for the controversies of an argument that has baffled many, and that never should be permitted to detain or to embarrass you—whilst so urgent an interest, as that of your salvation, is still in dependence. The question, my brethren, is not Am I by election one of the saved? but the question is What shall I do to be saved? This is the first question, and your highest wisdom is simply to adjourn the other; and when pressed upon you so as to interrupt your progress on the plain way of a plain Christian, then do as they do in Parliament, when they want to dispose of a topic, or rather to dismiss it from their deliberations—move the previous question, or proceed to the order of the day. It is a most idle expenditure of thought and energy that many do lavish

upon predestination; and if carried to the length of elbowing out the faith and repentance of the gospel, it is worse than idle, it is ruinous. It finds you on the ground of alienation from God; and, if it take up the room that belongs to the plain matters of salvation, it will leave you there. It is not your orthodoxy on this point that will prepare you for heaven. Nay it may only train you for the companionships of hell, for some of the employments that are carried on there, for converse with infernal spirits who have gone before you,

"And now apart sit on a hill retired,
In thoughts more elevate and reason high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And find no end in wandering mazes lost."

Next to that of being called is the step of our being justified, and next to that of being justified is the step of our being glorified. There are some who feel as if here a vacancy had been left in the sense that needs to be filled up, and they would interpose between two of these terms the step of our being sanctified—making the whole to run thus, 'Whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also sanctified, and whom he sanctified them he also glorified.' Now this is as good as done, though not so as to sustain a continued order of enumeration. The called in a former verse are designed to be those who love God; and indeed this affection springs directly in the bosom of the complying sinner, after that he hath acceded to the offers of peace and pardon which are addressed to him in the gospel. And what perhaps is stronger still—the predestination that is spoken of fixes all the intermediate steps, as well as the final and the glorious consummation; and, more expressly, does it settle and make sure—that all who are the objects of it should be conformed to the image of Christ. It is thus that virtue here is made the indispensable stepping-stone to glory hereafter. It is thus that a doctrine, misconceived by many as superceding the need of holiness and all exertions after it, supplies the strongest urgencies upon its side—by giving us to know, that a moral excellence, like unto the Saviour's, forms part of the invariable order, which lies between the primary ordination and the final blessedness of all who are redeemed by Him. The consistent predestinarian knows, that every step in the series of a believer's history, is as irrevocably sure as is its termination; and it is not for him of all men, to break up the alliance between holiness in time and happiness in eternity. To obtain the happiness, I must

have the holiness; and, wanting the one on earth, I shall never reach the other in heaven. There is nought, we have affirmed already, in the doctrine, that should avert the eye of the inquirer from the call of the gospel; and there is nought, we affirm now, in the doctrine, that should exempt him who hath accepted of the call from the earnest prosecution of its holiness. Nay, it tells him more impressively than ever, that it cannot be dispensed with—that there is a necessity, as rigorous as fate, for its being and for its power in the person of every believer—that, wanting it, he is altogether out of the way of a blessed eternity—and that, having it, his calling and his election are sure.

This doctrine then does not affect the business in hand. It should neither deafen upon the sinner's ear the gospel call of reconciliation—nor should it slacken, but rather stimulate to the uttermost, all his incentives to obedience. The direct work of Christianity, either with or without predestination, abideth as before; and unable, as I have been from unlooked-for circumstances, to pursue this topic even through the whole extent of its useful and practical applications—my main design is fulfilled, if it no longer stand as a stumbling-block in the way either of your firmly trusting in God, or of your diligently doing good in His service.

More particularly, the doctrine leaves the question of your preparation for the Sacrament,* on precisely the same footing as before. It fixes what must be your character in time, as well as what must be your condition in eternity. It stamps its own irreversibleness on the truth, that grace here must go before glory hereafter; and it is not, my brethren, on the strength of your fancied predestination, but on the strength of your felt and your present holiness, that you infer yourself to be among the people of God—who might now share in the ordinances of His church, and might afterwards look for admission into the festivities of His paradise. Do then examine yourselves, not by what hath taken place in heaven before you, but by what now you feel and know to be within you. I do not ask what are your attainments; but I at least ask what are your purposes? Is it your desire to be conformed unto the image of Christ? Under the conscious load of imperfection that is upon you, are you weary of sin, and is it your heart's earnest longing to be translated into the element of sacredness? Have you resolved to give up all that you know to be evil; and breaking loose from the companionships of the world, is it your determination to come

out from among them, and to touch not the unclean thing, but give yourselves singly to the invitation and service of that Master—who without bar or hindrance, is willing to receive you all, and be a Father to you all. These are the plain questions, on which the step of your worthy communion is suspended; and be very sure, that, if fit for this act of fellowship with the saints on earth, you are fit and on full march, to the high joys and the holy exercises of the sanctuary that is above.

I conclude with an extract from the commentary of Archbishop Leighton on Peter, of which I know not whether to admire most—the exquisite skill, or the exquisite beauty, of his deliverance on this whole topic. But it will require your attention to follow it. It is one of his paragraphs on this verse, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." "Now," he says, "the connection of these we are for our profit to take notice of, that effectual calling is inseparably tied to this eternal foreknowledge or election on the one side, and salvation on the other. These two links of the chain are up in heaven in God's own hand; but this middle one is let down on earth into the hearts of His children, and they, laying hold on it, have sure hold on the other two—for no power can sever them; if therefore they can read the characters of God's image in their own souls, these are the counterparts of the golden characters of His love, in which their names are written in the book of life. Their believing writes their names under the promises of the revealed book of life, the Scriptures; and so ascertains them, that the same names are in the secret book of life that God hath by Himself from eternity. So finding the stream of grace in their hearts, though they see not the fountain whence it flows, nor the ocean into which it returns—yet they know that it hath its source, and shall return, to that ocean which ariseth from their eternal election, and shall empty itself into that eternity of happiness and salvation."

"Hence" he adds "much joy ariseth to the believer. This tie is indissoluble as the agents are, the Father the Son and the Spirit; so are election and vocation and sanctification and justification and glory. Therefore, in all conditions, believers may, from the sense of the working of the Spirit in them, look back to that election, and forward to that salvation. But they that remain unholy and disobedient, have as yet no evidence of this love; and therefore cannot, without vain presumptions

* Probably preached on a Sunday before the Sacramental Sabbath.

and self-delusions, judge thus of themselves, that they are within the peculiar love of God. But in this let the righteous be glad, and let them shout for joy all that are upright in heart.

“If election, effectual calling, and salvation be inseparably linked together—then by any one of them, a man may hold upon all the rest, and may know that his hold is sure; and this is the way

wherein we may attain, and ought to secure that comfortable assurance of the love of God.” “Find then but within thee sanctification by the Spirit; and this argues necessarily both justification by the Son, and election by God the Father.”

This Spirit will be given to your prayers, and to your endeavours. Here is your opening; and it lies with yourselves to enter it.

LECTURE LXII.

ROMANS viii, 31, 32.

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He 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?”

V. 31. “WHAT shall we then say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us?”

In this verse the apostle makes a special application of what he had said immediately before to himself and his disciples. ‘What shall we say to these things? What inference shall we draw for ourselves from this train of reasoning? He takes encouragement from it you will observe. It is both to him and to his followers a cheering contemplation, which it only could have been on the presumption that they had part and interest in that election of which he had spoken already, and to which he afterwards recurs in the course of his argument. ‘If God be for us who can be against us?’—is a consideration that stands obviously allied in the mind of the apostle, with the question of Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? He must have believed then in his own election, and that of the converts whom he addresses; or, if he did not know it as a certainty, he at least grasps at it as he would at a strong and pretty confident probability. Now how is it that any man arrives at this conclusion? And while all have a warrant to rejoice in that offer of salvation which in fact is universal—while any of our world may look unto Him who is set forth, as a propitiation for the world’s sins and be lightened thereby—while each and every of our species may respond unto the gift of eternal life, that is held out for the acceptance of as many as will; and may, without let or hindrance, draw nigh and touch that sceptre of forgiveness which now hath been made to stand forth in the sight of the whole human family—while thus it is, that all without exception are invited to take comfort in that redeeming love which prompted God to send His Son

into the world, that whosoever receiveth Him might along with Him receive peace and pardon and reconciliation—Whence comes this peculiarity in the case of Paul and of his correspondents, that they here take comfort, not in the redeeming, but in the electing love—that they indulge in strains of gratitude not because of the part they have in that book of revelation which circulates at large among mankind and is addressed unto all, but because of the part they have in that book of life where the names of the blest have been enrolled from before the foundation of the world—not because they have been spoken to in that language of welcome, which under the economy of the gospel, hath gone forth among the sinners of all degrees and of every denomination; but because they have been singled out as the objects of a favoured and friendly destination, that was coeval with the first purpose of the Eternal Mind, and reaches from everlasting to everlasting?

This is an assurance which they, and which no man, can gather from a direct perusal of those secrets that are written in the book of destiny. This is a book which is never unsealed to the eye of any mortal here below. Paul, and his brethren in the church, had access to none other truths than those which are made accessible to all in the book of God’s testimony to the world. They simply dealt with the matters of that book, just I would have you to deal with them. They made the plain and the practicable use of all that is revealed in the preceding chapters of this epistle, before they felt themselves on the vantage-ground whence they could pour forth the utterances of confidence and joy, wherewith the apostle brings the present chapter to its triumphant conclusion. They felt the conviction of their own sin-

fulness, and this I would labour that you might be convinced of—"There is none righteous—no not one." They felt their exposure to the wrath of the Lawgiver, and this I would have you to feel—"How shall we escape the judgment of God?" They felt the preciousness of a satisfying atonement, and this too I would have you all to rejoice in—"to joy in God through the Lord Jesus Christ by whom you have received the atonement." They, in the face of nature's fears and nature's difficulties, kept fast their confidence even as you should—"staggering not at the promise because of unbelief, but being strong in faith and giving glory thereby unto God." They, in the exercise of this faith, felt not only a peace but a power, "because the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost;" and you also, upon the same belief, will most surely be made to realise the same experience. And then, and not till then, it is that the evidence of one's election dawns upon the mind. It is only upon your obtaining the earnest of your inheritance, that you should ever quote this doctrine as any argument for the inheritance being yours. It is only because now upon the stepping-stone of grace in time, that you infer your preference by the destination of God to glory in eternity. It is not till you have dealt aright with the humble and school-boy elements of the Christian faith, with the first principles of the oracles of God, that you have any right to associate this sublime mystery at all with the question of your everlasting prospects. This election, in fact, warrants no prospect to any in heaven, but as seen by him through the medium of his preparation on earth. It is only in as far as you have laid hold on the link of a present holiness, that you can infer of the chain of your history that it is to terminate in paradise. No one can read in the book of God's decrees, that he has been predestined unto glory; but all may read in the book of His declarations, what be the marks of those who travel thitherward. These he can compare with the book of his own character and experience, and he can count upon his own special destination to an eternity of bliss—only in as far, and in no farther, than as he is sanctified.

It is thus, and thus only, that I would have you to reach the settlement of your creed on the high topic of predestination. Many do not reach it on this side of death. Many a humble and genuine Christian feels himself baffled and bewildered thereby; and many such there are, who fall short of the blessed assurance that God hath so signalised them. I would have you go to school upon this doctrine—not in the hall of controversial debate—not

around the pulpits of an abstract theology—not among the mighty tomes that have handed down to us the ponderous erudition of other days. I want no other school than that of your own individual experience—no other preparation than that of a heart smitten by the contrite sense of its own deceitfulness, and heaving its aspirations towards Him who alone can comfort and can heal—no other expedients than those of which the very simplest enquirer would bethink himself, when, touched and awakened by the importance of eternal things, he is made to know the guiltiness of sin and the grace of an offered Saviour. Should you come to repent of the one and to rejoice in the other—that transition is all which I want, and all which I care for. After that you have really and historically made it, it is possible that you may review the way by which you have been led; and that you may recognise both the finger of Providence and the power of grace, in that you are what you are. There is many a Christian who refuses the doctrine in the general; but seldom do you meet with a thoroughly christianised man, who refuses that it is altogether a higher hand which hath made him what he is—that it was in the counsels of God to have brought him within reach of that preacher's voice, whose demonstration first arrested him by the conviction of his danger—that it was He who directed his eye to that bible passage, which told with deciding efficacy upon his conscience—that the volume which first evangelised all his feelings met him upon his else heedless way, by a direction impressed on it from Heaven—that the family bereavement which for a season dispossessed the world of its power, and laid him open to an influence from above, was the preparative by God Himself for that mighty change on which hang the issues of his eternity—Above all, that it was the Spirit from on high which gave enforcement to all that he heard, and all that he experienced—Insomuch that he has positively nothing which he did not receive; and all the faith and all the fruits of righteousness which belong to him, he of all men is the readiest to say, 'Nevertheless not me but the grace of God that is in me.' This man, whatever his general notion may be, is a predestinarian in all that relateth unto himself. He recognises the power and the will of God, in every footstep of his own spiritual history. He may not dogmatise on the case of others; but, in his own case, it is one of the firmest articles of his faith, and it ministers nought but humility and thankfulness to his bosom. He rejoices in the tokens of a blessed ordination, that he already hath obtained; and the more that these evi-

dences of God's electing love multiply upon his observation, the more intensely does he feel a close and endearing relationship with his Father in heaven. It is not on the foundation of an imagined decree, but on the foundation of a felt and actual experience, that he grounds his confidence in God and joins the apostle in exclaiming—"If he be for us who can be against us?" Hitherto the Lord hath helped us, and now He will not abandon the objects of His care. He hath begun the good work, He will carry it on unto perfection. He hath granted the earnest, He will not withhold the fulfilment. We have experienced the supplies of His grace in time, and they are the pledges to us of our coming glory.

This is the period of your Christianity, an advanced and an elevated period, at which your thoughts on predestination may be profitable and may be safe. To take up with it sooner, is cutting before the point. It is wildering yourselves among initial perplexities, that only serve to darken the outset of your religious course. Inasmuch that I have often been tempted to wish, that it had no place in the Bible at all; or, at least, that it never met the eye of an enquirer, on his first attempts to understand or to realise the salvation of the gospel. But the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men; and I must confess, that, in a goodly number of instances of spiritual distress which I have seen, it was this very doctrine of election which first shook the soul out of its lethargies—that it was the instrument for unsettling the natural man out of the listlessness of nature; and thrown agog by it, as it were, from the deep and fatal unconcern that might else have terminated in the sleep of death, he, alive and alarmed and set on edge by this one obnoxious article, hath gotten an impulse from it upon his spirit, under which he has passed from the state of a careless sinner to that of a hopeful and aspiring disciple. In such a case as this, it seems to have served as the projecting hook, by which to fasten the else inert soul to the whole contemplation; and what many, and myself among the number, may at one time have wished to be expunged from the field of a sinner's vision altogether, has occasionally been the very word that startled him as it were into spiritual life, and whence he may date the time of his having become awake and at length intelligent about the things of salvation.

V. 32. "He 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?"

It is with great satisfaction that I now clear my way to a topic the most salutary,

and I will add the most sacramental, within the whole compass of revealed faith—even to the love wherewith God so loved the world as to send His Son into it to be the propitiation for our sins. I fear, my brethren, that there is a certain metaphysical notion of the Godhead which blunts our feelings of obligation, for all the kindness of His good-will, for all the tenderness of His mercies. There is an academic theology, which would divest Him of all sensibility; which would make of Him a Being devoid of all emotion and of all tenderness; which concedes to Him power and wisdom and a sort of cold and clear and faultless morality, but which would denude Him of all those fond and fatherly regards that so endear an earthly parent to the children who have sprung from him. It is thus that God hath been presented to the eye of our imagination as a sort of cheerless and abstract Divinity, who has no sympathy with His creatures, and who therefore can have no responding sympathy to Him back again. I fear that such representations as these have done mischief in Christianity—that they have had a congealing property in them towards that affection, which is represented as the most important, and indeed the chief attribute of a religious character, even love to God—And that just because of the unloveliness which they throw over the aspect of our Father which is in heaven—whereby men are led to conceive of Him, as they would of some physical yet tremendous energy, that sitteth aloft in a kind of ungainly and unsocial remoteness from all the felt and familiar humanities of our species. And so it is, we apprehend, that the Theism of Nature and of Science has taken unwarrantable freedoms with the Theism of the Bible—attaching a mere figurative sense to all that is spoken there of the various affections of the Deity; and thus despoiling all the exhibitions, which it makes of Him to our world, of the warmth and the power to move and to engage, that properly belong to them. It represents God as altogether impassive—as made up of little more than of understanding and of power—as having no part in that system of emotions which occupies so wide a space in the constitution of man, made after His own image and according to His own likeness. It is true that this image in us is wofully defaced; but can you think, that, after we are restored to it, all feeling and all fervency, whether of desire or of fond affection, shall be extinguished within us—that we shall not then compassionate the sufferings of others; and feel the kindlings of a seraphic fire in the contemplation of excellence; and have all the indignancy of pure and holy spirits at the

sight of worthlessness; and be actuated by the kindest regards and the most affectionate longings of charity towards all whom we can soothe by our simple regards, or benefit by our zeal and devoted services? But if all these emotions be ingredients of the renewed character, and it be after the image of the Godhead that the renewal is actually made, does it not prove that the Eternal Spirit hath emotions also—a characteristic of the Divinity indeed, which beams upon us from almost every passage in the history of the Saviour, who, though the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person, yet fully partook in all the sensations and all the sympathies of man; who wept, and who rejoiced, and who was angry, and who was exceeding sorrowful, and who with all His meekness and gentleness still delivered Himself with impassioned energy when denouncing the hypocrisies of the worthless—Surely if he who hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also, then ought we to conceive of Him not as of some frigid and desolate abstraction; but that in the bosom of the High and the Holy One who inhabiteth eternity, there live and move and have their busy operation—all the resentments of perfect virtue against the sinner—all the regards of perfect love and of infinite compassion towards the righteous who obey, and the penitent who turn to Him.

With this view of the Godhead, and which we hold to be the scriptural one, let us look unto that great transaction on which all the hopes of our sinful world are suspended. The Father sent His Son for our sake, to the humiliation and the agony of a painful sacrifice. There is evident stress laid in the Bible on Jesus Christ being His only Son, and His only-beloved Son. This is conceived to enhance the surrender, to aggravate as it were the cost of having given up unto the death so near and so dear a relative. In that memorable verse where it is represented that God so loved the world as to send His only-begotten Son into it, I bid you mark well the emphasis that lies in the *so*. There was a difference in respect of painful surrender, between His giving up another more distantly as it were connected with Him, and His giving up one who stood to Him in such close and affecting relationship. The kin that He hath to Christ is the measure of the love that He manifested to the world, in giving up Christ as a propitiation for the world's sins. What is this to say, but that in this great and solemn mystery the Parent was put to the trial of His firmness—that, in the act of doing so, there were a soreness and a suffering and a struggle in the

bosom of the Divinity—that a something was felt, like that which an earthly father feels when he devotes the best and the dearest of his family to some high object of patriotism. God in sparing Him not, but in giving Him up unto the death for us all, sustained a conflict between pity for His child, and love for that world for whom He bowed down His head unto the sacrifice. In pouring out the vials of His wrath on the head of His only-beloved Son—in awaking the sword of offended justice against His fellow—in laying upon Him the whole burden of that propitiation, by which the law could be magnified, and its transgressors could be saved—in holding forth on the cross of Christ this blended demonstration of His love and His holiness, and thus enduring the spectacle of His tears and of His agonies and cries, till the full atonement was rendered, and, not till it was finished, did the meek and gentle sufferer give up the Ghost—At that time when angels looking down from the high battlements of heaven, would have flown to rescue the Son of God from the hands of persecutors—think you that God Himself was the only unconcerned and unfeeling spectator; or, that, in consenting to these cruel sufferings of His Son for the world, He did not make of His love to that world its strongest and most substantial testimony?

It blunts the gratitude of men, when they think lightly of the sacrifice which God had to make when He gave up His Son unto the death; and, akin to this pernicious imagination, our gratitude is further deadened and made dull, when we think lightly of the death itself. This death was an equivalent for the punishment of guilty millions. In the account which is given of it, we behold all the symptoms of a deep and a dreadful endurance—of an agony which was shrunk from, even by the Son of God, though He had all the strength of the Divinity to uphold Him—of a conflict and a terror and a pain, under which omnipotence itself had well nigh given way; and which, while it proved that the strength of the sufferer was infinite, proved that the sin for which He suffered in its guilt and in its evil was infinite also. Christ made not a seeming but a substantial atonement for the sins of the world. There was something more than an ordinary martyrdom. There was an actual laying on of the iniquities of us all; and, however little we are fitted for diving into the mysteries of the divine jurisprudence—however obscurely we know of all that was felt by the Son of God, when the dreadful hour and power of darkness were upon Him—Yet, we may be well assured, that it was no mockery—that

something more than "the mere representation of a sacrifice, it was most truly and essentially a sacrifice itself—a full satisfaction rendered for the outrage that had been done upon the Lawgiver—His whole authority vindicated, the entire burden of His wrath discharged. This is enough for all the moral purposes that are to be gained by our faith in Christ's propitiation. It is enough that we know of the travail of His soul. It is enough that He exchanged places with the world He died for; and that what to us would have been the wretchedness of eternity, was all concentrated upon Him, and by Him was fully borne. The suretyship was an equivalent for the debt, and the ransom laid down was an adequate price for the redemption that was achieved by it. When this thought takes full possession of the sinner's heart, it lightens him of all his fears. He feels the charm of an entire deliverance; and great are his peace and his joy, as he cherishes the full assurance of all being clear with God. He goes out and in by that way of access, which hath been consecrated by the blood of a satisfying atonement; and there are a light and a gladness in all his approaches unto God in Christ, which the world knoweth not. And it is well that he rates at its full

amount, the expense of that mighty service which has been rendered—that he deems it to have been what it really was, a costly sacrifice; and that he bethinks him solemnly and tenderly of the deep endurance of the cross. He should look unto Him whom he hath pierced, and on whom the heavy chastisement of his peace was laid. It is thus that the gladness and the gratitude keep pace with each other; and that in very proportion as he rejoices because of his full deliverance, does he feel the devotedness of all his faculties to Him who hath achieved it. Christ gave up His life unto the death for him, so he gives up his life in entire dedication to the will of Christ—living no more unto himself, but unto Christ who died for him and who rose again. And therefore it is, that, as you approach these tables, I would have you look with an intelligent eye on the affecting memorials that are laid thereupon. I would have you light both your faith and your love at this altar; and when you see the symbols of the body that was broken and the blood that was shed for you, I would have you fully to recognise both the service that has been achieved and the suffering that has been borne in this mighty expiation.*

LECTURE LXIII.

ROMANS viii, 31, 32.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He 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?"

'FOR US ALL.' The apostle may perhaps be confining his regards in this clause to himself and to his converts, to those of whom he had this evidence that they were the elect of God—even that the gospel had come to them with power and with the Holy Ghost and with much assurance. But, notwithstanding this, we have the authority of other passages for the comfortable truth, that Christ tasted death for every man—and so every man, who hears of the expiation rendered by this death, hath a warrant to rejoice therein; and that He is set forth a propitiation for the sins of the world—and so it is competent for every one in the world, to look unto this propitiation and be at peace; and that He gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time—and so might each of you who hears this testimony, embrace it for himself, and feel the whole charm of his deliverance from guilt and from all its consequences. Christ did not

so die for all, as that all do actually receive the gift of salvation. But He so died for all, as that all to whom He is preached have the real and honest offer of salvation. He is not yours in possession, till you have laid hold of Him by faith. But He is yours in offer. He is as much yours, as any thing of which you can say I have it for the taking. You, one and all of you, my brethren, have salvation for the taking; and it is because you do not choose to take it, if it do not indeed belong to you. It is because you have treated it as the worthless thing that you trample under your feet, and will not stoop to seize upon. Or it is because, ere you appropriated it, you would break it into fragments, and either choose or reject of these fragments at your pleasure. All of you are welcome even now to salvation, if you are only willing for a whole salvation. I can promise

* Preached on a Communion Sabbath.

nothing, nor can I hold out encouragement, to the man who would grasp at the offered immunity from punishment, but would nauseate the medicine that purifies and heals him—who would cling with all his might to the pardon of the gospel, but would decline its expedients for his sanctification—who can listen with a charmed ear to the report that is brought to him of the Sacrifice, but shrinks from that great moral revolution of taste and affection and habit that is wrought in every believer by the Spirit. Your mincing and mutilating of the testimony of God will do nothing for you; but your entire faith in His entire testimony will do every thing. And give me the man, who is desirous of a full rescue both from sin in its condemnation and sin in its hateful ascendancy over him—give me the man as ready to flee from the present worldliness, as to flee from the coming wrath—give me the man who is earnestly set, both on repentance from his sins, and the remission of his sins—And all the treasures of the gospel are open to him. He may come, even now, and share in all the spoils that have been won by the Captain of our salvation. The everlasting righteousness that Christ hath brought in may even now, be to him an investiture of glory. The Holy Ghost, which is the promise of the Father, may even now descend abundantly upon his prayers. The gospel makes no man an outcast, though many is the man who makes an outcast of himself. And so to prevail upon them, as that they might move forward—so to make plain the gospel overture, as that each may put in for his share of its purchased and proclaimed amnesty—so to manifest the way that leadeth unto the fountain opened in the house of Judah for sin and for uncleanness, as a way that is patent and accessible to every man—so to vindicate the unexcepted goodness of God unto each, as that each may feel himself led thereby unto repentance—For this we have a host of testimonies in the Bible; and not the least impressive of these is, that God spared not His own Son but delivered Him unto the death for us all.

You know how constantly I have been in the habit of urging this representation upon you, at every returning sacrament—how, in the first instance I have laboured to impress upon every hesitating spirit the perfect freeness of the gospel invitation—how I have attempted to demonstrate in your hearing, that access to this feast is regulated on the very same principle, with access to Him who is the Master of the feast—how even he who, up to this moment has been the chief of sinners, might draw as confidently nigh as when

he maketh his first approach unto the Saviour—how there is no barrier of exclusion around this ordinance, which the Founder of the ordinance did not throw around His own person, or around His own office as the High Priest and the Mediator between God and man; and thus have I never felt any restraint in applying to this great festival those precious calls, first of a prophet, and then of an apostle: “Ho every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good; and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” This free invitation of the Old Testament is re-echoed by the New: “And the Spirit and the Bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.”

It is thus that I should like to overbear the scruples of the fearful. It is thus that I would divest the communion of that certain air of repulsiveness, in which it stands forth to many a superstitious imagination. It is thus that I would have you to regard it in its true character as a feast of welcome and of good will, from which no past transgression, if repented of and turned from, was ever meant to exclude even those, who, in the darkness of other days, were the most abandoned of our species—And, even now, though smarting under the recency of some sore and melancholy fall—though all trembling and abashed, at some fresh discovery of your weakness—though humbled to the very dust, because of the temptation that assailed and overcame you; and under the mortifying sense of which your memory still is agonised, and all the faculties of your soul are in a wild uproar of turbulence and disorder—Even in these circumstances of apparent desperation, if the sinner can only lift up his eyes to the mercy-seat, then may he move his footsteps to that table on which its emblems and its memorials are laid. The heart that can rise in humble and holy confidence to the Saviour, should ever be accompanied with the hand that can stretch itself out to the symbols of His death; and often, have we reason to believe in the history of our church, often has the appointed use of these been felt as a precious restorative to the broken spirit—often have the weary and heavy-laden penitent risen from the festival, with a reanimated vigour for making good the

distance that he has lost, with all the energy of a man refreshed, for the toils of new obedience.

And you further know, how this latitude of invitation to the sacrament can be made to harmonize with the pure and holy character of this ordinance. Just in the very way that the gospel is at one and the same time, both a doctrine of free grace and a doctrine according to godliness. The past iniquities that have taken place in your history form no barrier in the way of your approach to these tables; but the purposed iniquities that have now place in your heart, these are what ought to form an invincible barrier. In coming here, yours must be the very state and the very preparation that are indispensable to every sinner on his coming unto Christ. He is freely invited; but with the same breath of utterance he is told that he must forsake all. He has his salvation for the taking; but he is not at liberty to divide it into parts, and to accommodate his own taste by the selection of one, by the refusal of another. He must give himself over wholly to Christ; and be as willing to make use of Him as the Lord his strength, as to confide in Him as the Lord his righteousness. This must characterise his first movement to the gospel; and this must characterise his first and all his following movements to the table of the sacrament. The bread and the wine that he receives there, must be viewed by him, not merely as the symbols of that sacrifice by which he is reconciled, but also as the symbols of that spiritual nourishment by which he is renewed. And he partaketh unworthily, he eateth and he drinketh judgment unto himself—if to the peace of a redeemed creature, he do not add now the firm purpose, and do not experience afterwards the heaven-bestowed power, of a sanctified creature.

You will now perceive then, what the principle is, on which all our debarments from the table of the Lord do turn. It is not on the magnitude or the number of your past offences—for the guilt of these, that blood of which the wine of the table is the memorial, can wholly cleanse away. It is not even on the weakness of your present energies—for that nourishment from above, of which both the bread and the wine are the symbols, can wholly invigorate and restore them. But it is the duplicity of a heart, that wavers between its own will and the will of God. It is the want of a thorough-going devotedness to Him who died for you and who rose again. It is a vice not in the performance, for who is there that cometh not short of the pure and the perfect commandment? Far more radical than this, it is a vice in the purpose. It is such a

vice in the feelings and inclinations of the inner man, as met the discerning eye of the apostle, when he looked upon Simon Magus, and could perceive in him a heart not right with God. The compromise that he wanted to strike was between godliness and gain; and, in like manner, if you have not the singleness of aim and the singleness of desire—you would partition the matter between the service of the one master and the service of the other—if you cleave not fully unto the Lord, and are not resolved to be His only and His altogether—you partake unworthily—you add the guilt of hypocrisy to the guilt of your ordinary transgressions—you do what is decent and creditable, it is true, in the eyes of the world; but you do it at the heavy expense of an insult to Him who made the world, of a solemn mockery in the face of Heaven. Beware of thus aggravating your guilt and your danger—"Cleanse your hands ye sinners, purify your hearts ye double-minded."

You may remember that precious verse of our great apostle—"For if when we were sinners we were reconciled by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." There is a close analogy between the sentiment here, and that in our text of the day—"He who spared not his own Son but delivered him up to the death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

This, my brethren, is the great hold, the great security, if I may so speak, which a believer has upon God. He hath a pledge in his hand already, that to him is the warrant or the guarantee of the very largest fulfilments. He hath accepted of Christ, and, having Him in sure possession—and the stronger his faith the surer that possession is—he cannot doubt that with Him he shall receive all things necessary to life and to godliness. God who hath bestowed upon him the greater gift, will not withhold from him the less. He who for his sake put the soul of His well-beloved Son to grief, will not fail, now that the grief is past and the glory of an exalted mediatorship is entered upon—will not fail to illustrate that glory the more, by the bright accomplishments and virtues of all His disciples. He who gave up Christ unto the sacrifice, will not fail through Christ to give out His Spirit unto the sanctification of all who are redeemed by it. God made a painful surrender, when He consented to the humiliation and death of our Saviour. But now that the Saviour hath arisen—now that the bitterness of the deep expiation is past—now that the toil, and the conflict, and the agony are all over—now that the sore obstruction is moved away, and,

through the open portal of a reconciliation that Christ travailed in the greatness of His strength for the purpose of achieving, there is a free and unimpeded channel, through which the mercy of God might descend in fullest exuberance on the guiltiest of us all—Now we have every reason for building ourselves up on the assurance, that He will withhold nothing which can make either for our grace in time, or our glory in eternity. After so wonderful a demonstration of His love, the believer hath nothing to fear. He is on high vantage ground. He sees in the mission of Christ to our world, a token and an evidence of friendly regard, that already overpasses his largest expectations. He rejoices in the secure and the wealthy place that he now occupies, under the covering of the ample mediatorship; and when he thinks of the pledge which hath been already given, he delights himself in the abundance of hope—and peace floweth through his breast like a mighty river.

It is thus that I would have you to arise from these tables, refreshed and reassured by all that you have seen and tasted and handled here of the Word of life. In eating the bread, and in drinking the wine, you have at least received the symbols of the body that was broken, and of the blood that was shed for you; and if there have been a correspondence between the heart and the hand in this solemn transaction, you have really and substantially received the atonement. Christ is yours, and ye are Christ's. The act of reconciliation between you and your offended Lawgiver has been struck; and you may descend from the mount of ordinances with this song of triumph—'He hath given His own Son, and how is it possible that He will not with Him freely give us all things?'

This is the very reflection by which I would have you to be sustained and comforted under a fear that might naturally enter your hearts, when you look onward to the pilgrimage that is before you. The fear is lest you fail by the way; lest you should again be surprised, and again be overtaken; lest sin and Satan should have some fresh advantage over you; and, in the darkness of a troubled spirit, you should lose the light of the divine countenance, and be cast aback, as it were, on that world from which you had emerged, and a fellowship with which is death. The main anxiety of a truly christianised heart is for its own integrity. Its breathings after perfect love and perfect holiness. Its most sensitive dread is of moral evil. Its most cherished desire is spiritual excellence. Of the all things which are promised unto the believer, this is the

thing which it is most intently set upon. That which Christ signalised above every other privilege by calling it the promise of the Father, that is the promise which every worthy communicant is most in earnest to realise—the Spirit given to all who trust in the Saviour—the Spirit that helpeth all infirmities, and strengthens with all might in the inner man—the Spirit that ever acts as the powerful though unseen auxiliary of the faithful, amid the heat and the hurry and the fierce onsets of the Christian warfare—the Spirit that, even among the familiarities of your daily path and the hourly occasions of your business, operates with real though invisible agency in the secret chambers of thought—He who writes the law of God upon your heart; and is ever ready, if He only be prayed and watched for, is ever ready, with His suggestions of wisdom and of moral energy and even of scriptural admonitions wherewith to meet and to conquer the temptations of the cruel adversary—This is the gift that, now that he hath laid his confident hold on the gift of the Saviour, every true Christian most earnestly covets, and whereof he is most insatiable. The gift of the Spirit is that for which he now wrestles in supplication with his God. Like the law which it imprints on his renovated heart, it is more desired by him than gold yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb.

Now this is what I would propose as your defence and your main stay, against the melancholy shipwreck of those who return unto the pollutions of the world, are again entangled therein, and at length fall away. It is the Spirit who keeps all who look for Him from this awful catastrophe. This living water descendeth, not upon the heart in one wholesale ministration; but, like your daily nourishment, it is dealt to you in occasional supplies. It is grace to help you in the time of need, and therefore bestowed upon you as you need it. It is distributed in season, and so as to suit the ever-recurring necessities of the soul. You are therefore not to count upon an inherent stock of grace. You are at all times to go as at the first, on the footing of a wholly void and vacant and unfurnished creature; and it is when you go thus, that the promise is verified of "open thy mouth and I will fill it." "The height of creature-perfection" says an eminent divine "lies in the constant habit of bringing our own emptiness to Christ's fullness." You are not to presume on the store of your accumulated energies; you are not to presume on your acquired habits; you are not to shift your confidence from the emanating fountain to that stream which, if not momentarily fed

and upholden therefrom, would soon fleet away, and leave nought but a dry and rocky and unfruitful strand behind it. Your eye must ever be towards that fountain, whence all the supply cometh. You may be grateful and glad, because of the glories of the ascending superstructure. But you do not lean on the superstructure, you lean on the foundation. And so it is, that I would have you at all times to have no confidence in yourselves, but to rejoice in the Lord Jesus—to fetch from Him all those influences by which you are enabled from one hour to another, to serve God in the Spirit—ever to be intermingling your aspirations with your efforts, your prayers with your practice; striving mightily, yet supplicating constantly; fervent in spirit while not slothful in business: And be assured that it is on the basis of profoundest humility, that the noblest elevations of Christian worth and excellence are reared.

That process by which the prayer of faith and the performance of familiar duty are made thus to reciprocate the one with the other, goeth on among the recesses and the intricacies of experimental religion. It forms the main spring and aliment of that life, which is hid with Christ in God. He who verifies this process in his own heart, realises fellowship with the Father and with the Son. The secret of the Lord is with him; and in the busy chambers of the inner man, there is a joy that the world knoweth not, and a spiritual mechanism at work which the world cannot comprehend. But though they see not the working of the mechanism, they may both see and admire the produce of that working—even as we might have our eye regaled by the beauty of a pattern, though you have not an understanding for the complex machinery by which it is inlaid. Even so it is that the eye of nature, cannot apprehend what that is which hath wrought the true and the lovely and the honourable on the groundwork of your character—yet each

one of these features, and many more, can be discerned by the men who are without, and call forth an applauding testimony from them all. And be it your care that your light so shine before men, that they, who see nought but mysticism in your orthodoxy, and in your high communions with God, and in your life of faith upon His Son, and in your habitual fellowship with His Spirit—that they, utterly in the dark about the secret principles of your character, may at least be compelled to render an homage to the visible exhibitions of it. It is thus, my brethren, that Christ is magnified in your body. It is thus that His doctrine is adorned: and that your souls become a living epistle, read and acknowledged not merely by your fellow-saints, but read and seen of all men. They cannot understand the high and the hidden walk of godliness. But they can understand your common honesty. They can understand your every-day usefulness. They can understand the courtesy of your manners. They can understand your patience under injuries and the noble sacrifices that you make in the cause of humanity. They can understand all the duties of that varied relationship, which you hold with your fellow-men. They know the distinction between a good and a bad parent, between a kind and a quarrelsome neighbour, between a dutiful and a disobedient son, between a profitable and a pernicious member of society. Make it clear to them as day then, that your Christianity which is a religion of faith is also a religion of virtue—that all the fit and graceful moralities of life follow in its train—and that, while it assimilates to the angels who are above, it scatters beauties and blessings innumerable over the face of society in this lower world. Strive thus to recommend to others the gospel which you profess: Strive mightily according to the grace of God that is given to your prayers, and that worketh in you mightily.

LECTURE LXIV.

ROMANS viii, 31.

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”

THE apostle, in the utterance of these words, evidently proceeds on the belief that God is upon his side; and it is a belief grounded on certain things which may be found in the preceding context:

‘What shall we then say to these things? And surely it concerns us to search what the things were, that we too, if possible, may realise the same glorious confidence; and be raised to that highest van-

tage-ground on which a creature can be exalted, even the vantage-ground of the Divine favour, whereupon he stands secure amid the shock and the conflict and the hostility of all those subordinate elements which be in the universe—and just because he can count on the greatest Being of the universe as his friend.

In taking a retrospect then of this epistle, with a view to ascertain the footing upon which our apostle rests the assurance of God being for him, we shall find that there are two distinct considerations upon which the assurance turns. The first consideration is that of God's truth in His promise—a consideration which lays hold on those who have faith, and which lays no hold on those who want it. What first then led the apostle to count upon God as his friend, was faith in God—a faith that counted Him to be faithful—a faith that hung direct upon the promises of God. Of this an example was given by Abraham, and is quoted by Paul, in the preceding argument. The patriarch relied upon God, from the time of his very first communication. He did not wait the experience of God's truth—he believed in it from the outset. He did not ground his confident anticipation of the whole promise being fulfilled, from the fulfilment of one or any part of it. He trusted from the moment of its utterance. He reckoned upon God's friendship, so soon as God had made any overture to him at all. He believed, ere he set out from his native country; and prior to all the subsequent tokens that he obtained of God's faithfulness, in the course of his journeying over distant lands. He believed in Him the first time, and before that he met with Him a second time. The truth of God's whole promise was more unlikely to the eye of nature, before that Abraham had got any part of it made good to him, than after that part of it was verified by an actual accomplishment. But it was at the time of greatest unlikelihood, that his faith made its brightest display, and was most acceptable to God. It was because that against hope he believed in hope—it was because he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief—it was because fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able also to perform—It was because of all this that his faith was well-pleasing to God, and because of all this that his faith was imputed unto him for righteousness.

Now this very footing upon which Abraham placed reliance upon God as his friend, is a footing furnished in the gospel of Jesus Christ to one and to all of us. "It was not written for his sake alone that it is imputed to him, but for ours also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on

him that raised up Jesus from the dead." The very first address of the gospel message to your understanding, should be met by your faith. You should not postpone your belief in the promises contained there, till one or more of them have been accomplished. You might see a truth and honesty in all the promises from the first, and, anterior even to the very least experience, confidently wait for the fulfilment of them all. Man's faith should come immediately on the back of God's utterance; and my reason for insisting upon this is, if possible, to convince one and all of you—that even now you may step over to the place on which the apostle is standing in our text, and join him in the triumphant affirmation that God is upon your side. The most alienated of God's rebellious creatures has a warrant in the gospel for changing sides, and that immediately, from a state of variance with God to a state of friendship and peace with Him. With the uttermost stretch of our charity we cannot believe, that all of this congregation are within the bond of the covenant—that all have entered into reconciliation, and are now encircled within the limit of God's adopted family. Of more importance then is it that you should be told, that, among other grounds for the assurance of God being indeed your friend, there is one of which the most hopeless of outcasts might instantly avail themselves—one which brought Abraham out from the land of idolatry, and which should now bring out you from amongst the idolatries of a present evil world—one upon which the patriarch of old entered forthwith into the friendship of God, and upon which you also might forthwith enter into the same friendship, and that without the intervention of any given period during which you have to wait for signs and fulfilments and for more of the reiteration of the gospel testimony in your hearing. There is warrant and warrant enough for your proceeding upon the gospel testimony now. It is addressed to you as well as unto others. The voice of "Abram Abram," heard from the canopy of heaven by the patriarch, was not a more specific call—than the voice of "whosoever will let him come," read in your bibles, is a specific call on each who is here present to proceed upon this invitation; and to set out, not on that journey by which he describes a great physical distance from the land of his fathers, but most assuredly to set out on that journey by which he describes a great moral distance from the vain conversation of his fathers: And with the very first footstep we contend, and it is a footstep that should be taken now, might there be this delightful

confidence to urge and to animate the whole movement—even that God will receive him and will be a Father unto him, and that he shall be as one of His sons and daughters as saith the Lord Almighty.

It were doing injustice to the gospel, did we not hold it forth as charged with friendly overtures, and that for the instant acceptance even of the worst and most worthless among you. Even now, are you offered the justification that is by faith. Even now, the sceptre is held out to you of peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Even now, could we only awaken your confidence,—even now, did the message wherewith we are entrusted but call forth a responsive trust in your bosom, might you rejoice in the conscious possession of that grace or favour wherein the believer stands, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It is well to open up the way of your direct translation into the friendship of Heaven; and, for this purpose, to insist both on the perfect freedom and the perfect universality of Heaven's invitations. They are to you who are afar off, as well as to you who are nigh. There is an offer of forgiveness of which you shall be held to have accepted, simply by your reliance on the honesty of the offer. There is a proposal made to you for an exchange of conditions, even that you shall exchange your present condition of hostility for that of entire peace and amity with God; and a faith in the reality of this proposal on your part, will be sustained on His part as the valid signification of your having acceded to the proposal. It is thus that the agreement which had been broken between Heaven and earth is restored. It is thus, if I may so speak, that the knot of reconciliation is tied. Your belief is the ligament that binds together the parts which had been dissevered. And there is not a surer concatenation in the whole expanse of Nature or of Providence, than that which obtains between man's faith and God's faithfulness. It is upon your believing in the testimony of God regarding His Son, that you pass from the ground of condemnation to the ground of acceptance; and we again repeat, that there is not an individual amongst you who lies without the scope of this generous and widely-sounding call—so that however much God is against you at the present because of your unrepented of and unexpiated sins, even now, upon the instant of your moving from sin unto the Saviour, God at once will be for you, God at once will be your friend.

And now that I have said of this transition from a state of enmity to a state of peace with God, how it is a transition competent to one and all of you at this

moment,—let me but make one short utterance on the blessedness of the transition itself—even of that wide and momentous difference which there is between what by nature you are, and what by grace you might be—between being the objects of God's wrath, and the objects of His good-will—between the Sovereign of creation, and having all its energies at command, looking towards you with all the displeasure of His broken law and His incensed dignity; and that same Sovereign looking to you with as much complacency, as if His Son's unpolluted obedience had been rendered personally by you, or as if His splendid righteousness had been all your own—and so rejoicing over you to do you all manner of good. Let God be your enemy, and He is the enemy of all who have not laid hold of the great propitiation; and what I will not say is your condition in time, but what are your prospects for eternity? In time you may be comfortable, and along with this you may be careless; and, amid the busy engrossments of a little day, forget the dreadful reckoning and the dreadful retribution that await you. But the danger is not less real, that you have shut your eyes against it; and, amid the tremors of your approaching dissolution, you may be visited with the fears and the forebodings of that which is to come—or, as often happens, the agonies of the perishing body might only cradle the soul into a deeper lethargy about the interests which are imperishable: And, falling asleep amid the profound insensibilities of nature,—not till the spirit is sisted in the presence of its offended God—or not till the risen man comes forth at the sound of the last trumpet and stands before the judgment-seat, will you have full understanding of those dread realities by which you are now encompassed. And therefore it concerns you now, to cleave unto the propitiation which God Himself has set forth, and for the very purpose that peace may be made with Him and that from your enemy He may become your friend—that it may be possible for Him the just God to be at the same time your Saviour; and, sinner as you are, to fill your heart with the satisfaction and the triumph of those who know that God is upon their side. The very greatness of such a consummation is a barrier in the way of your believing it. The incredulity of nature is fostered into strength and obstinacy, by the very largeness of the offers wherewith nature is addressed. The narrow and suspicious heart of man cannot find room in it, for the generosity of Him whose thoughts are not as our thoughts and whose ways are not as our ways. He cannot bring him-

self to believe, that heaven, with all its glories, is indeed so open to him—or that the gospel is indeed so free—or that eternity, in all the richness of its promised blessings, is indeed so much within his reach—or that there is nought but the one step of his own confidence in the message of peace that has come down from the upper sanctuary, between the sinner's soul and the loving-kindness of that God who waiteth to be gracious. And therefore it behoves every minister of the New Testament, to be loud and frequent and importunate in knocking at that door, by which the tidings of grace and pardon may enter in; and often to repeat the testimony in the sinner's ear, that unto him a Saviour hath been born; and to protest on the side of Heaven that nought but good-will to earth is the feeling there, if earth would only respond thereunto, and not keep at so sullen and impracticable a distance away from it; and to spread abroad the assurance among all its rebels, of the God whom they now imagine to be shrouded in darkest ire and severity against them, how soon and how certainly they might have Him for their friend.

Let me now advert, but advert briefly, to another ground on which Paul affirmed both for himself and for his converts, that God was upon their side. The first ground is the ground of a direct faith in the promises and invitations of the gospel—a ground placed before the feet of one and all who now hear me—and on which every one of you is free, nay is entreated, nay more is commanded, and last of all is threatened, that he might be persuaded to step over upon it even now and be safe. The second ground is distinct from the first, the ground of experience—that ground which is occupied by those who are not merely infant believers, but who have been believers for some time; and so, in addition to their first faith in God's faithfulness, can now allege their actual finding of this faithfulness. The distinction between the one ground and the other, is exceedingly well marked by the apostle in his epistle to the Ephesians: "He whom also ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." Here was the trust of those who simply counted the word to be true—a trust competent to you all at this moment. But then he goes on to say—"In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance." Here was the experience of those on whom the promise had been in part fulfilled; and who esteemed that part, as a pledge or an earnest of the fulfillment of the remainder; and who could there-

fore now look forward to the purchased possession, not merely because the promise of it had been sounded in their ears, but because the pledge of it had been put into their hands. They were like men who had gotten a first instalment punctually made good to them, and so were confirmed in the hope of the whole engagement being liquidated. Agreeably to the promise, they had received grace in time; and therefore they confided the more on that which was also included in the promise, even glory in eternity. Now Paul and his disciples had been preferred to this additional vantage-ground. Their experience was added to their faith. It was this experience which confirmed to them the hope which made them not ashamed. They looked the more confidently to the promised joys of heaven, that they actually felt the love of God to be already shed abroad in their hearts. They had brighter hopes of a place being prepared for them there, that they were conscious within themselves of a preparation for the place going on in their own souls here. They believed when they first heard of a promised grace on earth and a promised glory in heaven. But now that they had been visited by the grace—now that this part of the promise, instead of being merely counted on with faith, had been verified and made good to their own present finding, there was superadded one ground of trust to another; and they could say with the Psalmist "As we have heard so have we seen in the city of our God."

Now my reason for treating of the one ground distinctly and separately from the other, is that the first may even now be entered upon by all—the second, I fear, may have only yet been entered upon by few. The word of the promise may be addressed to all, and it is the part of all to believe it. An experience of any of the things promised may have only yet been realised by a very small number. Now I should like not to discourage those who have never yet been on the second ground, and to assure them that this ought not to check the instantaneous entrance of themselves on the first ground. They must not wait for the experience of the gospel, till they shall have the faith of the gospel; but they should enter upon the faith immediately, and from that they will be conducted to the higher platform of experience. The apostle and his disciples had been elevated to this platform, and let me fondly trust that some at least who are here present may now be standing upon it—some who have had a finding and a foretaste of heaven in their souls—some who can look forward to the good work being perfected upon them,

and that not merely because of their faith in the promise, but because of their finding within themselves a performance in that a good work is actually begun—some who can compare their memory of the past with their consciousness of the present; and can now vouch for a hatred to sin, which they wont not to feel; for a discernment of Scripture, which they wont not to have; for a distaste of worldly concerns and worldly companionship, the very opposite of that tendency which wont to reign and have an ascendant over them; for a love to the people of God, whom perhaps before they nauseated as the dullest and the weariest of all society; and, if not for a love to God Himself as their reconciled Father in Jesus Christ, at least for a grief and a self-reproach in their hearts that they do not love Him more and serve Him better. Now these are the first-fruits of the Spirit of grace, and the symptoms of a coming glory—the goodly evidences of your movement towards a destination of final and everlasting blessedness—the marks and the recognitions of that very path which leads through the pilgrimage of time to the promised land of eternity. They constitute a most precious addition to the argument of God being on your side—for, over and above his promises which you rely upon by faith, they are His gifts which you have realised by experience. They are to you the satisfying pledges of a friendship in which you have trusted ever since you knew the gospel, but of which you have now tasted the fruits and the actual verifications in your own person. You can now affirm that God is for you, on the ground not merely of what He has promised for you, but on the ground of what he has done for you; and while I would have you to shake off their distrust, and join even now in our apostle's exclamation—yet it is for you to feel a peculiar assurance, and with peculiar emphasis to say, 'If God be for us who can be against us?'

Having thus stated as simply as I could, the two main grounds on which it is that man may count upon the friendship of God; or, in the language of my text, upon God being for him—let me now proceed shortly to the inference which the apostle derives from this blessed relationship, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'

It is evident, that, over against the conception of God being his friend, he raises the conception of some other Being as his enemy; and the question is, With a friendship so powerful as that of the Creator, what have we to dread from a hostility so feeble as that of the most formida-

ble of His creatures? It is tantamount to the sentiment which he expresses in his epistle to the Hebrews, "The Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The sentiment however might be so extended as to include every species of adversity, though it should not proceed from the malice or ill-will of any Being whatever. It might fairly be translated into this more general form, 'If he be for us *what* can be against us?' There are many of the evils of life, though not the most severe and overwhelming certainly, that cannot be traced to any mischievous intent on the part of a living and willing enemy. There is the death of relatives, and there are the accidents of misfortune, and there are the misgivings of fond and promising speculation—And in the walks of merchandise some of you must oft have experienced, how crosses and disasters accumulate upon you, and give a dreariness and dismay to the earthly prospect; and, did you look no farther than to what is visible or to what lies before you on the region of sense, all might appear to be dark and menacing; and you might figure yourself to be a deserted creature, against whom all the chances of fortune and all the elements of nature seem to have entered into a conspiracy for your ruin.

And this is just the triumph of faith over sense—when you can be upheld in the thought, that, after all, the evils of life are but the shadowy spectres of a passing scene that will soon flit away; and that, behind all which the eye of man can reach, there is a good and an all-powerful Spirit who smiles propitiously upon those only interests which are worth the caring for; and that all the energies of this world, which look as if they stood in battle-array against your prosperity or your peace, are nought but instruments in the hand of a presiding Deity, who, for the trial of your confidence in Himself, might brandish them over your head, but only to discipline and not to destroy you—driving in all the props of your earthly confidence, that you might lean the whole weight of your dependence upon Himself, and prove how firmly your soul is anchored upon its God by the very strength and violence of those agitations which still cannot turn you away from Him.

There can be no doubt, however, that the apostle, in the text, sets over, and in opposition to the actual friendship of his God, the conceived Malice of some living and designing enemy. From such, he and his fellow-disciples suffered in the persecutions of that era; and from such, all of us are still exposed to suffer in the manifold

collisions of human passion and human interest that obtain throughout society. It is hard to believe, that there should be in any of our fellow-men, a spirit that is truly diabolical—a fiendish delight in all the pain and mischief and dissension and disgrace which it can be the instrument of scattering—a restless activity in the pursuit of evil, and of cruel suffering to others—and a satanic satisfaction in the success of their hateful and hated enterprises. Such a character, it is thought, might do for some deep and darkly aggravated romance; but is never realised among the familiarities of living and daily experience. Yet we do hold it to be a real, though perhaps a rare and occasional phenomenon in human life. We think that for the purposes of a secret discipline, a scourge of this kind is at times permitted to appear, who might be the terror of his relationship, and the torment of all with whom he has ever had closely or intimately to do—a being, though in human shape, yet in the whole purpose and policy of his mind infernal; and, in the hidden chambers of whose breast, the very counsels are brooding that give their hellish occupation to the spirits which are below—a being whom it is unsafe to approach, lest we should be implicated in his wiles; and lest, among the mysteries of his fell iniquity, some infliction or other should be preparing for us—a being of whom the patriarch of old might have said, "O my soul enter not thou into his secret," recoiling from all fellowship with such a spirit just as he would from the pandemonium for which it is ripening. When the apostle exclaims 'Who can be against us?'—we are not to imagine that a Christian, in his progress through the world, is to be exempted from the hostility of such characters as these. When fully understood the apostle says, 'If God be for us who can be against us and prevail?'—There will ever in this world be a hostility that shall bruise the heel of the Christian, though its own head shall be bruised under his feet shortly. For trial and for exercise, the tares must grow along with the wheat—the good and the evil must live together—the path of the redeemed through time must be beset by the contempt or the calumnies of an evil world—and perhaps in the way of sanctifying him wholly, or of bringing upon him some signal chastisement, an enemy may be raised, in whose every word there is deceit, and the very tenderness of whose mercies is cruelty. Yet if the Lord be upon his side, he most assuredly has nothing to fear. The short-lived triumph of every earthly foe will speedily come to an end. The day is posting, when the se-

crets of all hearts shall be laid open; and when there shall be a right allotment both of the vengeance and of the vindication.

But perhaps it is of more Christian importance, to advert to another kind of living adversary than the most fierce and formidable of our fellow-men. We think that Paul had such an adversary in his eye; for, in the enumeration of a few verses below, he speaks not of earthly plagues and persecutions alone, but of angels and principalities and powers as being against him. He reminds us here of what he says elsewhere, that we wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities against powers against the rulers of the darkness of this world against spiritual wickedness in high places. However much the doctrine of a great moral warfare between the Captain of our salvation on the side of righteousness, and the arch enemy of all that is good on the side of rebellion—however much this doctrine is slighted and has become now-a-days the topic of an infidel scorn—yet, among the Christians of the New Testament, we find that a reference to Satan and to his wiles is constantly mingling itself with the concerns of their sanctification. They speak of themselves as being personally implicated in the warfare; and well they might—for the very field of contention is human nature, and an ascendancy over it is the prize of victory. Practically and really, it cannot be a thing of indifference to us, if there be an actual and a busy competition at this moment between the powers of light and of darkness for a mastery over our species. There must be a something incumbent upon us, and that we are called on to do surely, in connection with a struggle of which the object to each of the parties is the possession of ourselves, and the sway of a superior over the powers and the principles of our constitution. We are not to sit, and merely look on as passive and unconcerned spectators, during the pendency of a contest, by which our own interests are so momentarily affected. And, accordingly, we are called upon to resist the Devil, and he will flee from us—to resist not the Spirit of God, and He will take up His abode in our hearts—to put away from us every instigation of evil, as coming from the evil one—to cherish every instigation of good, as coming from the Holy One and the Sanctifier—Thus to view ourselves as engaged in a warfare of which we are the subjects; and unseen but the lofty and supernatural beings are the principals: And, to encourage us the more in the prosecution of this warfare, we are told that Satan shall be bruised under our fee-

shortly, and that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world, and that Christ came to destroy the works of the Devil, and finally as in the text that if God be for us, there is none who can successfully be against us.

LECTURE LXV.

ROMANS viii, 32.

“He 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?”

WE have endeavoured to make it good, that the encouragement of the last verse might be taken on two separate grounds—first on the ground of direct faith in the calls and promises of the gospel, and secondly on the ground of certain fulfillments which personally and experimentally take place on those who have believed the gospel. The first encouragement then might be addressed to all—for it might be embodied in the very first overtures of the gospel; and these should be laid before all for their acceptance, on the moment of which a reconciliation with Heaven ensues and God is upon their side. The second encouragement is for those who have found and tasted that God is gracious, in the change that by grace He has wrought upon themselves—in the pledges which they have already received of a coming glory in heaven, even by a conscious preparation for it going on within their own heart and upon their own history on earth—in the first-fruits of the Spirit upon their souls, and by which the evidence of God’s friendship has been carried forward from promises to gifts, from those promises which they relied on at the moment of their first believing, to those gifts wherewith even in this life the believer is privileged.

Now it so happens that this very distinction is still more obviously spread before us in the 32nd and 33rd verses—for, instead of being enveloped under the covering of one verse as in the 31st that we have already attempted to expound, we find that of the two following verses, the former is addressed to a belief which may or may not have as yet been accompanied with experience; and the latter is addressed to experience alone. When He spared not His own Son, He delivered Him up for us all; and He is so far given to every one of you, that, though not your sin possession, He is at least yours in offer. In this sense God may be said to have given to each and to every eternal life, which life is in His Son. And so much has every one a warrant to lay

hold of this gift, that God is offended if he do not—He feels it an indignity to Himself, if you do not have confidence in the honesty of His offer—He is affronted by it as if by an imputation of falsehood, saying that “he who believeth not the record which God hath given of his Son makes God a liar, and this is the record even that God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in his Son.” All ought even now to close with this overture: and on the instant of his doing so, he is instated in the full benefit of the apostle’s argument, and might confidently join him in the question of my text ‘He 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?’

This is an argument of which the apostle seems on more occasions than one to have felt the great strength and importance, and to have urged it accordingly. There cannot, in fact, be imagined a firmer basis on which to rest our confidence in God. He has already done the greatest thing for us, and why not expect then that he will do what is less? The great and heavy expense has already been incurred, and surely He will not leave unfinished what with so much cost and difficulty He hath carried so far. He will not make abortive that, to begin which required such a sacrifice at His hand; but now to end or to complete which, will require but the free indulgence of His own kind and generous desires for the happiness of those whom He has formed. Before that He gave up His Son unto the death, there was a let and a hindrance in the way of His mercy to sinners; but now that the let is overcome, now that the hindrance is moved away, now that justice and truth have been vindicated and no longer forbid the exercise of His tenderest compassion towards the men of our guilty world—now will that compassion flow over in blissful and beautiful exuberance on all who shall put themselves in its way; and He who spared not his own Son, but gave Him up

unto the death for us all, is now free and ready to give us all things.

There is an expression used elsewhere by the apostle of the unsearchable riches of Christ. We are apt to look at the truth that is in Jesus, as if it were a meagre and very limited sort of doctrine—consisting perhaps of a few bare catechetical propositions, which we can get by heart just as we do the rules of syntax or arithmetic; and which, almost as little as these, excite any sensibility or awaken any glow, whether of imagination or feeling, on the part of its disciples. It is marvellous how many there be, who, familiar with all the terms of orthodoxy, are utter strangers to the warmth and the vividness and the power which lie in the truths of it; and who, though they can listlessly repeat the whole phraseology of evangelical sentiment, have not yet entered into the life and substance, and variety of thought and of application which belong to it. The interrogation of the text, we will venture to say, may have been read by some of you a hundred times over, without your being aware of the comfort and power of argument wherewith it is so thoroughly replete—read with that sort of unmoved torpor in which so many prosecute their daily mechanical task of perusing a chapter in the Bible—run over much in the same way that a traveller passes rapidly along in a vehicle whose blinds have been raised, so as to intercept all the diversified loveliness of that scenery which he has not once looked upon. He can speak of the miles he has described, as you can of the chapters. Both of you have made progress; but the one without having had his senses regaled by the prospects of beauty and fertility in the landscape, and the other without having had his spirit regaled by aught in the promises of Scripture or in the preciousness of its consolations.

Now this verse is so very pregnant with these, that if I could but unfold the matter aright—it might perhaps let you into the significance and the descriptive truth of the apostle's phrase—the unsearchable riches of Christ. The fruit of our search may be such a view of gospel wealth, or the fullness of gospel blessings, as, not only to regale our spirits with all that we have found, but as to convince us that there is as much more to find as might furnish the delightful employment of an eternity. We may be made to see more of the ways of God, than are yet known or conceived by us; and yet after all say with Job, "Lo these are parts of his ways, and how little a portion is heard of Him!" The economy of our redemption is a theme for the understanding, as well as for the affections, to dwell upon—it

being not more hard to feel as we ought, than it is to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and to comprehend the length and the breadth and the depth and the height thereof.

But, to go rapidly over a few of the leading points, First—God hath already given the very greatest thing to set my salvation agoing, and what security then is there that He shall give all other things which are needful to complete that salvation? He hath given what every parent who had but one beloved Son would surely feel the greatest of his treasures, He hath given His only and His well-beloved Son for us all. In human transactions, the first fruits of an engagement are generally but a small fraction of the whole—the pledge is but a minute proportion of the final and complete performance—the earnest is a mere scantling of that main bulk which is still in reversion—the instalment only a part, and generally a small part, of the sum that is due—And yet in each of these cases, there is a distinct and additional hope awakened of the entire fulfilment, from the token that has thus been put into your hands. But in this transaction between heaven and earth, the matter is reversed—the pledge is more dear and valuable to Him who is the giver, than all that He hath pledged Himself for—the earnest of what He will do in future, is a mightier surrender than all put together which He hath promised to do. It is true, that, in reference to our own interest and feelings, the joys of the coming eternity may be of greater value to us, than all the first fruits and tokens, which, in the shape of grace and a growing meekness for heaven, are conferred upon believers in time. But, in reference to God, He has already given up in our behalf what to Himself was of the greatest value. He has given up the Son of His love to the death for us all;—and, having done this, what a ground of confidence that He will freely give all things!

But secondly, take into account the deep and mysterious suffering that was incurred, at this first and greatest step in the historical process of our salvation—and that now the suffering is over. Take into account that the travail of Christ's soul hath already gone by; and that now He has only to see of the fruit of this travail and be satisfied. Remember that when He set forth from His place of glory on the errand of our world's restoration, He had the dark imagery of persecution and distress and cruel martyrdom before Him; and that what he thus originated with pain, He has only now to prosecute in peace and triumph to its final consummation. And remember that we estimate

the matter wrong, if we think not of His death as a substantial atonement—if we measure not the sore infliction that He sustained, and that drew tears and agonies and cries even from that Being who had the strength of the Divinity to uphold Him—if we measure not His big distress by that guilt of millions, which an eternity of manifold and multiplied vengeance could not have washed away. And all this He did, and all this His Father consented that He should do and suffer, in order to open up a clear avenue towards the restoration of the human family—And think you it possible, that, having done thus much with sore and heavy labour, He will not go forward on the path that He Himself hath struck out, and on which He can now advance by easy and delightful procession towards the full accomplishment of His great undertaking? Will not the Father who spared not His own Son from the indignities and the pains of a deep humiliation, and that to commence the enterprise of our recovery to God—will He now refuse to magnify His Son, by most willingly giving all and doing all that might be needful to perfect this recovery, and bring the enterprise of Him who is the Captain of this glorious warfare to its most honourable termination? In other words, after so much has been endured to set on foot the salvation of our world, will He suffer it that all this endurance should go for nothing; and will not He who has already given for sinners His only-beloved Son give to them also the needful grace upon earth and the finished and everlasting blessedness in heaven?

And thirdly—remember that all which God hath done from first to last in the work of our redemption, has been entirely of free will. It was not because He owed it to us, but because His own heart was set upon it. It has all along been with Him a matter of purest and most perfect freeness—not the reluctant discharge of an obligation, but the forth-putting of His own spontaneous generosity. This makes it a wholly different case from that of a debtor, who after having made payment of so much, would like to get off from his obligation for the remainder. There is nought of this kind to stint or to straiten the liberality of God. There is no such straitening with Him, however much we may be straitened in our own narrow and selfish and suspicious bosoms. The truth is, that when He did give up His Son, it was because He so loved the world. It was His own love for us, that prompted this wondrous movement on the part of Heaven, towards the earth which had strayed into a wide and wretched departure away from it. His desire is towards a restoration; and though there be many

who would like to stop short of the debt which they owe being fully paid, there is none who would like to stop short of the desire which they feel being fully accomplished. The thing were a contradiction; and more especially, if such was the force of this desire that it bore itself through the struggles and difficulties of a most arduous outset—it is utterly impossible that it will make a dead stand, and refuse to go farther when there is nought but an inviting and a gentle progress before it. It was because of God's longing desire after the world, that He gave up His Son unto the sacrifice; and, after the sacrifice has been gone through, He will not turn round upon His own favourite object, and recede from the world which He has done so much to save. That force of affection which bore down the obstacle that stood in its way, will, now that the obstacle is removed, bear onward with accelerated might and speed to the accomplishment of all the good that it is set upon. To do otherwise would be throwing away the purchase after the purchase-money had been given for it; and well may we be assured that after God had freely given such a price for our salvation, He will freely give all things necessary to make good that salvation.

But—fourthly—it should still more be recollected, that when He did give up his Son, it was on behalf of sinners with whom at the time He was in a state of unreconciled variance. It was in the very heat and soreness of the controversy. It was at the period when His broken law had as yet obtained no reparation—when insult without a satisfaction, when disobedience without an apology and without a compensation, had been rendered to Him—when a blow had been inflicted on the sovereign state and dignity of His government, and a sore outrage laid on Heaven's high throne by the defiance of creatures whom its power could annihilate or sweep away. That was the time of Heaven's love, and the time at which the Son of God went forth unto the sacrifice. Now the state of matters is altered. The breach has been healed. The debt has been paid. The sinner has got hold of his surety, and may be no longer reckoned with. The law has been set up again in vindicated dignity; and, by means of an expiation for the rebel's guilt, the monarchy of God rises in untainted honour above the rebellion that earth had waged against it. And if God did so much for sinners then, will He do nothing for them now? If in the season of their unmitigated guilt He gave up His Son, will He cease from giving now in the season of their atonement? If, when nought ascended from the world but a smoke of

abomination, the price of its redemption was freely surrendered—will there be no movement of grace or liberality now that there arises with every prayer which is uttered in the name of Christ, and every mention which is made of His offering, the acceptable incense of a sweet-smelling savour? If there was such a forth-putting of kindness to the children of men, when looked to by God in the native deformity of their own guilt—will there be no forth-putting now, when He looks to them as covered and arrayed in the goodly investiture of His Son's righteousness? And if in our state of condemnation then, He delivered Him up for us all—is not the assurance doubly sure, that, in our state of acceptance now, He will with Him also freely give us all things?

But once more. He gave up His Son, at a time when mercy was closed in as it were by the other attributes of His nature—when it had not yet found a way through that justice and holiness and truth, which seemed to bar the exercise of it altogether—when it had to struggle therefore and make head against an obstacle, high as the dignity of Heaven's throne, and firmly seated as the eternal character and constitution of the Godhead. It was in fact on very purpose to open an avenue through this else impassible barrier, that Christ went forth; and, by a substitution of His own obedience for ours, and a sacrifice by His own death instead of ours, magnified the law in that very act wherewith He averted its penalties from the head of our devoted species. And is not the inference as resistless as it is animating—that the same mercy, which forced a passage for itself thorough the imprisonment of all those difficulties which hemmed it in, will, now that they are cleared away, burst forth in freest and kindest exuberance among all those for whom it sealed the mountain of separation; and, now that the middle wall of partition between God and the guilty is broken down by this tide of compassion, that it will set in upon our world, fraught with the richest blessings from that throne whereon sitteth the God of love—who rejoices over the success of that enterprise by which He might again beckon to Himself His wandering family. He who gave His Son while Justice was yet unappeased, will freely give all things now that Justice is satisfied; and if when the obstruction lay between the lawgiver and the rebel, if then it was that the mightiest surrender on the part of Heaven was made, the conclusion is irresistible, that, on the obstruction being done away, there is ready to shower down upon the earth the most plenteous dispensation of all that is good and generous and friendly.

But I feel this subject to be inexhaustible. It is not the preciousness of Christ as being Himself a gift that the text leads me to expatiate on. It is the goodness of it as a pledge of other gifts. Unspeaking blessing in itself, it is the sure harbinger of every other blessing in its train—rich in the promise of things to come, as well as great in the performance of a present stupendous benefit; and, along with the full acquittal and the all-perfect righteousness which it brings along with it to the believer now, affording the best guarantee for all the grace and all the glory that shall afterwards accrue to him. There are even other securities for this than those on which I have insisted—other aspects in which the sure and well-ordered covenant may be regarded—other evolutions of its solidity may and strength, that might well cause the believer to rejoice in it as in a treasure the whole value of which is inestimable; and to delight himself greatly in the abundance of peace and of privilege that with Christ are invariably made over to him. For will God stamp dishonour on this His own great enterprise of the world's redemption? Will He leave unfinished that which He hath so laboriously begun? Will He hold forth the economy of grace as an impotent abortion to the scorn of His enemies; and more especially of him, against whom the Captain of our salvation has gone forth on a warfare, to root up his empire over the hearts of men and to destroy it? Is not the very hostility of Satan to all the designs and doings of our Saviour in itself a guarantee, that we, who have run to Him for refuge, shall be covered over with His protection and be at length brought out by Him in triumph? It was to destroy the works of the Devil that our Saviour went forth, and, after having done so much to silence him as an accuser, will He then stop short and leave him in full possession of his hateful ascendancy over the spirits of men? He hath furnished His disciples with the merit of His own obedience and death as their plea of justification, and by which they can repel the charges of their great adversary. Will He furnish them with nothing by which they might repel his temptations? Will He only release them from the prison-house of condemnation, and suffer them to remain as helplessly the slaves of corruption as before? Will He not complete their deliverance from the great enemy of human souls; and, after having so thoroughly purchased their forgiveness at the court of heaven, will He not give them all things that might be needed to achieve their sanctification also?

Never then, in all the views that can be

taken of it, was there a firmer basis for hope to rest upon, than that gift of Jesus Christ that has already been bestowed—regarded as the pledge or the guarantee of all those future gifts, that make out for those who trust in Him a full and a finished salvation. Never was foundation more surely laid, nor can we tell how many those unshaken props are by which it upholds the confidence of a believer. We invite you to cast upon it the whole burden of your reliance. In the quietness and the confidence wherewith you lie down upon it, you shall have strength. You will be in the very attitude wherein God delights to pour down upon you of the prodigality of His blessings—when you stand before Him in the attitude of dependence. He will not dishonour the trust that you lay upon His Son, by leaving you to the mortifying experience that it is a vain treacherous reliance, and wholly unproductive of any good to your souls. O then lean upon it the whole weight of your expectations; and be very sure, that He who hath given you His Son, will with Him also freely give you all things.

‘All things.’ We are not to understand this absolutely—but rather appropriately to the condition of one who has set forth upon the good of eternity, as the great and engrossing object of his heart. All things certainly which an immortal being, and who is in full pursuit of the blessings of immortality, counts worth the caring for—all those things for which he has a warrant to pray, and which if he pray for in faith he shall receive—all those things which are held out to him in promise, and which go to complete his privileges as a believer—all things qualified in the way which Peter has done, when, speaking of the great and precious promises, he makes them embrace all things which are necessary to life and to godliness—all things that belong to the relation of one, who, by receiving Christ, has become a child of God’s adopted family; and therefore, in a more special manner than all the rest, referring to that gift which by way of distinction has been termed the promise of the Father—or, as pre-eminent in the list of those things which God bestows upon His now reconciled children, the Holy Spirit. “Because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts”—a gift so universally bestowed upon those who are Christ’s, that it may be affirmed without exception “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.” And so, were we called upon to specify the most prominent of those all things which God giveth unto all who receive Christ, we would say, that they were those things

which prospered and carried forward the sanctification of a believer, which furnished him with the grace and enabled him to render the services of new obedience—those things which marked him as a new creature, and stamped that holiness upon his character here which rendered him meet for the only kind of happiness that shall be enjoyed hereafter. In a word, the great gift which is in reserve for the believer after he hath laid hold of an offered Christ, is the gift of a clean heart and a right spirit—whereby he is inclined to walk in the way of those commandments that he had aforesaid violated whereby he renounces ungodliness; and that Being, who ere then was habitually forgotten, is now habitually referred to as a Father to whom he owes all filial and affectionate regards. “For as many as receive Christ, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.”

You thus see how it is that the gospel of Jesus Christ, ushers in all those who embrace it to a life of virtue and of progressive holiness. Their purification is as much a free gift as their pardon is. The Spirit called a free Spirit is as much a ministration from on high, as is that act of forgiveness which passes upon all at the moment of their believing in the Saviour. Christ is given, and all those things of which He is the pledge are given also. Eternal life is a gift through Him, and so is meetness for eternal life a gift through Him. The Christian disciple is as much and more a man of performance, than the disciple of mere morality is. Only he performs, not with that strength which he natively possesses; but he performs with that strength which he has prayed for. It is this which forms the grand peculiarity of his practice. Most strenuous and painstaking in all his duties; but there is ever mixed up with his various and unceasing activities the apostolical sentiment, “Nevertheless not me but the grace of God that is in me.” It is thus that his humility and his holiness keep pace together; and he feels himself not more a pensioner upon God for the pardon of his offences, than he is for ability to think a right thought or to do a right and acceptable thing.

The two gifts are inseparable. All who are justified are sanctified. All who truly receive Christ enter immediately upon a course of sanctification—in which course they prosecute a departure from all iniquity, and press forward to the perfection of holiness as the mark of their earnest and persevering ambition. Be assured, that you have not received Christ if you have not received an impulse upon your spirits on the side of goodness and righteousness and truth—that if He be not wash-

ing you, you have no part in Him—and that in the very act of stretching forth upon you the hand of a Saviour, He stretches forth upon you the hand of a Sanctifier. Hence it is that there are certain tokens, by which a man may most assuredly know that as yet he hath no part nor lot in the matter. If he have not yet begun a struggle with sin—if he do not feel a new tenderness upon his conscience—if he be not visited with a sight and sense of his ungodliness—if he be not breaking off from that which he knows to be offensive to God—if the state of his heart and practice be not a thing of practical concern with him—Then is there every reason to fear, or rather every reason to conclude, that as yet Christ is not his and he is not Christ's. If Christ had really been given to him, a change of spirit and of life would have been among the very first of the all things given along with Christ. And if no such change has actually taken place, there is as yet no interest of any kind in the Saviour.

This is a point on which we should like you to have a clear and consistent understanding. Do not wait till you be holy, ere you shall cast your confidence on the Saviour; but cast your confidence on Him even now, and you shall be made holy. It is not your faith that is the accompaniment of your holiness—but it is your holiness that is the accompaniment of your faith. The gift of Jesus Christ is

not to you as a holy, but to you as a sinful creature; and we entreat the most sinful of you to lay hold of Him. With Him you shall receive holiness. After ye have believed, ye shall be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. I do not want to embarrass the simplicity of your dependence upon Christ, when I speak of holiness as the unfailing mark of your discipleship. I barely inform you what you have to look for as the fruit of that dependence. Go to Him now and accept of the offered Saviour; and certain it is, that along with Him, you shall be made to accept of a clean heart and a right spirit. But do not invert this order, else you shall never arrive at peace of conscience; and as little will you ever arrive at holiness of character. It is not your sanctification that forms the stepping-stone to your peace; but your peace that forms the stepping-stone to your sanctification. Lay hold upon Christ as your peace-offering; and then the very God of peace shall sanctify you wholly. Come forward at the gospel call, and touch the sceptre of forgiveness which it holds out to you. There is a virtue in the touch—a purifying as well as a pacifying virtue. There is not merely spiritual comfort but spiritual health in it; and the soul of the patient is more than reconciled from a state of wrath into a state of acceptance—it is renewed from sin unto holiness.

LECTURE LXVI.

ROMANS viii, 33, 34.

“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 also maketh intercession for us.”

LET your first act be an act of reliance upon Christ for pardon; let this act be so repeated by you, day after day and hour after hour, as to ripen into a habit of reliance—and then shall we confidently look for the marks and evidence of your regeneration. And these marks may at length so multiply upon you—they might so brighten and become palpable even to the eye of your own observation, that you shall begin to suspect—nay further to guess—nay further still to be assured, and to read the full assurance, that you are indeed one of the elect of God. That you are among the elect is not a thing to be presumed by you at the first; but a thing gathered by you afterwards, from your subsequent history as a believer. If you

are wise, you do not meddle with the doctrine of election at the outset—whatever comfort or establishment of heart you may draw from it, in the ulterior stages of your spiritual progress. When you go forth on the career of Christianity, you look at the free offer of the gospel. You perceive it to be addressed to you as well as to others. You yield a compliance therewith. You enter into peace with God—in obedience to His own call, whereby He now beseeches you to be reconciled to Him. It were great presumption indeed for you, to start with the assurance that your name is in the book of God's decrees; which He keeps beside Himself in heaven—but no presumption at all, to set out with the assurance that

you are spoken to in that book of God's declarations, which He circulates through the world. The "look unto me all" and the "come unto me all" and the "who-soever will let him come"—these are sayings in which one and all of the human family have most obvious interest. You presume nothing when you presume upon the honesty of these sayings. And if furthermore you proceed upon them—if now you strike the act of reconciliation, and forthwith enter upon that walk by which they who receive Christ and receive along with him power to become the children of God are sure to separate themselves from the children of the world—and pray for grace, that you may be upheld and carried forward therein—and combine a life of activity with a life of prayer—Then, and after perhaps many months of successful perseverance, you may talk of your election, because now you can read it, not in the book of life that is in heaven, but in the book of your own history upon earth—not that you have drawn out the secret from among the archives of the upper sanctuary; but because now it stands palpably engraven upon a character the light of which shines before the eye of the world, and which is read and known of all men—not that you have access to that tablet which has been inscribed from eternity by the finger of God; but that you have access to the tablet of your own heart, and, by the eye of conscience, can discern thereupon the virtues of the new creature, inscribed by the Spirit of God within the period of your own recollection.

Even the apostle went no higher than this, when judging of the state of his own converts. Their election was to him not a thing of presumption, but a thing of inference—drawn, not from what he guessed, but from what he saw—brought, not from those third heavens which he had at one time visited, but lying palpably before him and within the precincts of his own earthly home. When he tells the Thessalonians that he knew their election, he tells them how he knew it, "Knowing brethren beloved your election of God—for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and with much assurance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake, and ye became followers of us and were ensamples to all." He concluded them to be of the elect, not from any access that he had to a book of mysteries, but simply from the manner of men they were. It was not because of any high communication that he had with Heaven upon the subject; but because of the daily companionship that he had with his disciples, and

in virtue of which he saw the very things that others saw also, and observed nothing else or nothing more than those evidences of faith, those graces of holy and newborn creatures, which were known and read of all men.

My anxiety is that you do not embarrass yourselves with this matter of election—for there is positively nothing in the doctrine which ought to encumber or in any way to darken the plain and practical work of your Christianity. What I fear is that some may founder at the outset of their discipleship, by prematurely and previously meddling with it. I want that if they feel any speculative difficulty about it now, that they may not waste their strength on the business of resolving it; but set out on the scholarship of the gospel in a plain way, and leave their election to be gathered afterwards from the progress which they have made in that way—which is neither more nor less than the way of holiness. Then they may both perceive a consistency, and feel a most precious comfort, in the doctrine; but now, and I speak to those who are meditating an entrance on that path which leadeth unto heaven, now their concern is to accept of Christ as He is freely offered to them in the gospel, and to take full encouragement from the reasoning of our preceding text, "He that spared not his own Son but gave him up unto the death for us all—how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" I would have them to close alike with the pledge and the promise; and on the high vantage-ground of Christ being theirs I would have their hearts to be gladdened even now with the assurance of faith, and thence that they should pass forward to the assurance that cometh from experience—giving all diligence to make their calling and election sure, and assiduously labouring at those things of which it is said in the New Testament, that if a man do these things he shall never fall.

The point at which God begins in the matter of our salvation, is not the point at which man begins. The apostle assigns the order of God's procedure when he says, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, and whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified." It is at the call that man's part commences. Let him listen to the call—let him yield a compliance with the call—let him take both the comfort and direction of the call—Understanding it to be both a call from wrath unto acceptance, and a call from sin unto righteousness. It were well that he kept by his own share of the process, and encroach not on the

part or the prerogative of God. These ambitious speculations about God's eternal decree and man's eternal destiny, often argue a creature misconceiving his own place, and making himself like unto his Creator. He in fact comes in at the middle, between the decree that went before and the destiny that comes after; and, alike ignorant of both at the outset of his Christianity, his distinct and only concern is with the matters that are in hand—with the guilt that can be charged upon his person—with the vengeance that lours upon his prospects—with the offered interposition of a Saviour to cleanse away the one and wholly to avert the other—with the honest invitation of that Saviour to cast upon Him the burden of every fear, and to make use of Him as the appointed Mediator whose business it is both to reconcile and to sanctify. This is the opening at which man is admitted; and be very sure that you misunderstand the gospel, and are entangling yourselves with mysteries that you would be greatly better to abstain from—if you have any other conception of it, than that there is most wide and welcome admittance for you all; and, let your obscurities be what they may about that high transcendental process which connects the first purpose of the Divine Mind with your final place in eternity, there should at least be no obscurity in that process which you have personally and individually to do with, and by which it is that whosoever believeth shall be justified and whosoever is sanctified shall be glorified.

I would therefore say to all who profess their faith in Christ, that the great business on hand is their sanctification. And it is one of the all things which God gives freely along with His Son to all who believe upon Him. It is this my brethren which constitutes the great peculiarity of their practical habit. They work, not upon the strength which they natively possess, but upon the strength which they have prayed for—given no doubt with freeness, but because asked in faith; and leading to vigorous obedience, but from a vigour that is infused, and not from a vigour which properly or originally belongs to them. This is the great thing in which the strength of a Christian lies. He works mightily because the grace of God works in him mightily; and one of the most beautiful harmonies in the experience of every true Christian, is the accordancy that obtains between the worth of his performances and the fervency of his prayers. It is in this walk of secrecy that the secret of the Lord is at length made known to the believer; and in those multiplied exchanges which take place between prayer and the answer of

prayer, he reads the tokens of his coming destination. As the present grace brightens upon his person, the future glory brightens to his hopes. His humility and his holiness keep pace together—till from the increasing splendour of the one, he may without violence done to the other conclude that his election is of God. He ascends from the platform of faith to the higher platform of experience; and though, even on the former, he may join the apostle in that strain of triumph wherewith he brings this magnificent chapter to a close—yet it is from the latter, because the more advanced and loftier elevation, that he has the fullest confidence in saying, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth!'

'It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?' I have already said all that I mean to do at present which bears relation to the first clause of the verse, and shall now proceed to a few observations on this last clause of it. I fear that it is to a very small degree experimentally known, how much the light and love and liberty of a Christian's mind depend on the sense that he has of his justification; and that he is in his very best and healthiest condition, when, reviewing the grounds of this justification, he feels his security to be rivetted as it were and himself securely resting upon the strength of them. There is one aspect of justification that is peculiarly fitted to impress a comfort, and a clear impression of deliverance, on the heart of a believer—even the aspect set before us in the text, and where it is stated as proceeding directly and of his own personal act from God himself. 'It is God that justifieth.' It is He to whom he was liable, declaring that all was fully paid. It is He who alone was entitled to make the change against us, declaring how amply and conclusively we stood discharged from all further reckoning on account of our iniquities. It is He who before was our offended lawgiver, Himself undertaking our cause and pronouncing with His own voice upon the goodness of it. It is the God from whom at one time we had nought to apprehend but the emphatic condemnation and the overwhelming vengeance—it is He filling His mouth with arguments upon our side, and pleading our cause, and protesting how much and how completely He is satisfied. It is our vindication coming from the very quarter whence our vengeance was looked for; and that Being who alone had the right to accuse, not merely acquitting and so withdrawing from us all the dishonour that is due to guilt; but raising us above the midway state of innocence, and re-

garding us with all the positive favour, and as entitled to all the positive regard, that is due to righteousness. It is He who might have wreaked upon us of His sorest displeasure, now telling how much he is pleased with us, and how rightfully we are privileged to obtain from Him the rewards of a happy and honourable eternity. It is He of whom we might well have dreaded, that when the arm of His justice was lifted up it would be lifted up to destroy—it is Himself saying, that this very justice demanded not only our exoneration from all penalty, but our preference to the glories that are due to righteousness. They who have felt the terrors of the law—they who have been stung with the arrows of self reproach; and, alive to the miseries of their spiritual condition, have shrunk from the dreaded eye of a judge and an avenger, as it took cognizance of all their ungodliness—they who have laboured under the agonies of a burdened conscience, and to whose inner man this witness hath rung the alarm of an angry God and of His utter intolerance for evil—They can report how blessed the emancipation is, when through faith in “the tidings of the gospel, they come to see that the whole account between them and the Lawgiver is reversed; and that He who before challenged them because of their offence, now challenges the whole universe to make good one charge or one ground of condemnation against them—when from His own mouth they hear how valid is the plea that now they have got hold of, and how much He has reason to be satisfied—when, in the precious doctrine of our redemption, they are made to perceive that the suretyship was an equivalent for the debt, and the atonement by Christ a full reparation to the dignity of Heaven for all the outrage which sinners had inflicted on it; and so that all is clear with God, who now can at once be a just God and a Saviour—can be just while the justifier of those who believe in Jesus—justifying them freely by His grace through the redemption that is in His own Son.

I might expatiate further upon how thoroughly the conscience is unburdened of its guilt, by the very Being against whom the guilt has been contracted thus taking the work of our vindication into His own hands; but I now pass on to remark upon that tendency which there is in us, to overlook the direct interest that God the Father has felt, and taken all along, in the matter of our salvation. We are apt to regard Him as having no great will for our deliverance, till that will was wrought upon and prevailed over by the services of the Mediator in our behalf—that with Him lay all the displeasure

which wrecks itself upon a work of vengeance, while with His Son lay all the delight which compassion feels in a work of mercy—that to the one there belongeth the jealousy of a vindictive nature, while to the other there belongeth the engaging generosity of a jealous nature: And thus I fear, that, as the general effect in many instances of the whole contemplation, the government of Heaven is conceived to be in the hands of an inflexible tyrant, who, at the same time, has had his severity often appeased and turned away by a Son of popular and endearing qualities; and under whose administration it is, that character of the divine jurisprudence is disarmed of all those terrors by which it would else have been encompassed. We greatly fear, that along with the general truth of their contemplation, there is a wrong impression of the Godhead; and that, along with the truth and justice and holiness of the Lawgiver, there are not seen the tenderness that He feels towards His own offspring—the softness and sincerity of His parental longings, after the children who have wandered in the errors of their disobedience away from Him.

Now, to rectify this impression and restore you to a juster sense of that great Being with whom you have to do, I would have you to gather from Scripture the part He has taken in the whole recovery of our fallen world. The pity of God has in fact been working upon our side from the very outset of the human apostasy; and you do Him wrong—you bear in your heart the hardest and most injurious thoughts of Him, if you conceive of Him otherwise, than as one bereaved of His family, and bent on the object of calling them back again.

It is true—that, for what in reference to the government of His moral and intelligent creation may significantly enough be called Reasons of State—it is true, that, to uphold the dignity of His throne—it is true, that, to vindicate the attributes of His nature, and to save the Universe which He had thrown around Him from the spectacle of a dishonoured law and a degraded Sovereign—There behoved, ere sin could be passed by, there behoved, to be a sacrifice. But with whom did this way originate?—with God Himself who found out the ransom—with Him who so loved the world as to send His only-begotten Son into it. At whose expense was the sacrifice made? Had the Father think you to bear none of it, when He spared not the Son of His love but delivered Him up unto the death for us all? Was there no struggle do you imagine in the bosom of the Divinity when He thus surrendered the object of His dearest affec-

tion, and laid upon Him the full weight of the world's atonement? In the sufferings of Christ will you overlook the palpable expression of regard for our alienated species, manifested by Him who consented to these sufferings?—and, after looking to this transaction in all its relations and its bearings, will you refuse to allow, that, while judgment is the strange though needful work of the Almighty, mercy after all is His darling attribute; and that to strike out an open conveyance by which it may be poured exuberantly over the face of the whole earth, was indeed a grand design in that economy of redemption, which Himself did frame and which Himself hath instituted. All along He has taken a direct and an interested part in the object of our world's restoration. He did not wait in passive and unmoved indifference, till another should interfere; or cherish the stern purpose of revenge within his bosom, till another should step forward and satiate the wrath that else was unappeasable. The truth of Heaven, we admit, and the stable interest of Heaven's high monarchy, did require an expiation; but it was the love of God Himself that prompted the undertaking—it was in love that he prosecuted it through all its obstacles and its hard necessities—it was in earnest busy and persevering love, that He carried forward the enterprise from one step to another; and no sooner was the atonement rendered, and the great moral difficulty resolved whereby a just God might reinstate the sinner in acceptance who had made open defiance to the authority of His moral government—no sooner were the great sanctions and securities of this government provided for, than He opened the prison-door of the grave, and raised to His throne of Mediatorship the once crucified but now exalted Saviour—no sooner was the plea of His everlasting righteousness brought in, than Himself laid hold of it; and it is now His delight to use it for the purpose of our vindication—So that God Himself asserts for us the merits of His Son's obedience; and, instead of dissevering Him from the work of our salvation, we have the warrant of apostolical example for saying that God Himself affirms our cause, and that it is God Himself who justifies.

That righteousness which Christ brought in, is termed in various places the righteousness of God. The Jews stumbled and fell because they sought to be justified by their own righteousness, and would not submit to the righteousness of God. But how great our security, if, instead of being found in our own righteousness, we are found in that which God calls his own. Well may He be said to justify those who

believe, when He holds them to be invested with a righteousness which it is His part to vindicate, because to Himself it belongs—dear to Him therefore as His own character, and as ready to be asserted and made good by Him in the eyes of a whole universe as the attributes of His own nature.

Over against, and in counterpart to the office of God as our justifier, there is put the question, 'Who is he that condemneth?'—suggesting the idea of another and an opposite party, who felt an interest in our guilt and was intent on making it good—who had charges to prefer, and laboured after the establishment of these charges—who delighted in the work of accusation, and felt a satisfaction and a triumph should he succeed in this his favourite employment. It instantly recalls the title which is given to our great adversary in the book of Revelation, as the accuser of the brethren; and in the history of Job there is given a very forcible exhibition of the characteristic pleasure that he feels in pleading on the side of condemnation. We can fancy an interest in this, because, by every case in which he fails of his object, he is abridged of his monarchy; and each, who, either under his own personal righteousness or under the provided righteousness of the gospel stands justified in the sight of God, is one man more wrested from the thralldom of his power. But we allude to this, not for the purpose of remarking on the gratification that every instance of made-out and established guilt yields to his ambition, as on the gratification that it yields to his malice. In like manner as I would lure you to virtue, by setting forth the graces of its pure and perfect exemplification in Christ—so I would warn you against all vice, by setting forth the hideousness of its deformity in the picture that is given of him whom Christ came to destroy: and, more especially, I would have you to understand that satisfaction in another's guilt is diabolical—that in the complacency which is felt by some on the discovery of a neighbour's weakness or his crime, there is that which savours of the spirit and the morale of pandemonium—that even in the zest which is so currently felt when scandal mixes up of its infusions with the gossip of an assembled party, there are the distinct traces of a contagion from below—that there is a secret exultation of heart on some humiliating exposure of an acquaintance, which is absolutely fiendish—Nor am I aware of any test that so decisively fixes the distinction between a good and an evil spirit in man, as the emotion which arises in his bosom, when there is brought to his ears the delin-

quency of one to whom he had been accustomed to yield the homage of unimpeached character. The grief of the former and the gladness of the latter, serve to mark two characteristics of the human heart, which stand as opposed as do the elements of light and darkness. It is said of charity that it rejoices not in iniquity. But in the hateful temperament which I am now labouring to expose, there is upon the sight or the report of such iniquity a bellish joy—a gleam of malignant triumph, that is peculiarly hideous; and were I called to fasten on the one trait that forms the most sure and specific indication of a satanic heart, I would say that never is it given forth so unequivocally as by him, who, on the first opening to a brother's humiliation or disgrace, would eagerly seize upon it, and rejoice in the hold that he had gotten—who would now delight himself with the ignominy of him, on whom he went to lavish the hypocrisies of his seeming friendship; and, like that great father of lies to whom he bears a family resemblance so strikingly appropriate, would convert the base advantage into an instrument by which he might tyrannize and entangle and destroy.

'It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again.' I shall not expatiate further on the death of Christ as the basis of our justification; but only advert to the way in which the argument for our confidence, is made more complete and conclusive still by His resurrection. Instead of looking to His death, let us look rather to His having risen again. In a former verse of this epistle where He is said to have been delivered for our offences, He is said to have risen again for our justification. And it would greatly tend to augment your security—did you only realise the contemplation of a now alive and risen Saviour, at the Lawgiver's right hand—were the eye of our faith open to behold Him, sitting and holding converse with His Father there—could you only represent to yourself the present and the actual state of matters in the upper Sanctuary, where He, who by His own death, expiated the sinner's guilt, now interposes with God that the sinner's trust might not be put to shame—where He who was Himself the surety, can allege the debt to have been fully paid; and hands up His people's prayers to the seat of the Eternal, mingled with the incense of His own merits, accompanied with the remembrance and the plea of His own sacrifice. This is a topic on which I cannot expect the unbeliever to sympathise—for he would need to have a spiritual revelation of the objects, ere he could take on the distinct or the vivid impression of them. But only

grant of any human creature that he saw this to be a reality; and with what a light and unburdened heart, he may rejoice and be in confidence before God. Let him but figure the things which are above as we have now represented them—let him take a correct view of Heaven's mercy-seat—let him look to the Throne of Grace as it is now constituted; and, if he just see it as it is what should restrain him from entering with all boldness thereunto.

The God who is upon it waiting to be gracious—The Mediator who is beside it beckoning with kindest welcome the chief of sinners to draw nigh, and undertaking to be the Advocate of all who shall put their cause for eternity into His hands—The Father delighting to honour the Son, and give full effect to His great enterprise—The Son presenting to His Father another and another application for mercy; and with this resistless argument of the Law itself being more proudly magnified by an act of pardon sealed with the blood of His own atonement, than it ever would have been by the obedience of the transgressor for whom He pleads—The perfect unity of heart and of counsel between Him who intercedes for mercy, and Him who judgeth in righteousness—And the golden harmony that now awaketh among all the attributes of the Godhead, when, through Him that liveth for ever after the order of Melchisedec, His full and His finished salvation is accorded to the offender. It is by this wondrous economy of a perpetual and consecrated priesthood, that such music is now heard in Heaven; and that, in sweetest concord with the whole of Heaven's jurisprudence, love for the sinner mingles and is at one with the now vindicated majesty of holiness and truth. The believer, before the eye of whose enlightened understanding these things stand in open and convincing manifestation, feels all the glory of an elate confidence as he looks to the grounds and the guarantees of his safety; but then does he chiefly rejoice with joy exceeding and full of glory, when he looks to Him who was dead and is alive again. It is true that by His obedience unto death, He has furnished every sinner of the world with the materials of a most substantial and satisfying plea; but by rising again He has Himself become the pleader—And let us not wonder if the apostle himself felt as if ascending upon a higher vantage-ground—when, passing from the consideration of the death of Christ, he so exultingly adds that yea rather He is risen again, and is even at the right hand of God, and also maketh intercession for us.

I may just here advert to that historical circumstance which is connected with the

resurrection of the Saviour—even that it was achieved by a forth-putting of direct and personal agency on the part of the Father. On this subject we have several express testimonies in the Bible. “Whom God hath raised up.” “This Jesus hath God raised up.” “Being by the right hand of God exalted.” “Whom God hath raised from the dead.” “Like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.” “If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you.” “Wherefore also God hath highly exalted him.” There are many similar testimonies, and the believer has not overlooked the preciousness of them. To him all scripture is profitable; and the information of those scriptures which have now been specifically cited, has not been without its use in the

establishment of his faith. They prove by a striking historical event that the justice of God has been satisfied—that He has accepted of the sacrifice as a full and a finished expiation—that in releasing our Surety from the imprisonment of the grave, He has now ceased from all further legal demand upon us—that in placing Him by His own side in heaven, He testifies His complete approval of all that has been done for the salvation of the world—In a word, that the great errand has been fulfilled; and that, with the now admitted presence of our forerunner within the veil to plead the accomplishment of it, nothing is wanting to the confidence wherewith we may now leave our cause in His hand and look for the sure mercies of David.

LECTURE LXVII.

ROMANS viii, 35—39.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord

To have the precise understanding of this passage, you should remember that the love of Christ in ver. 35, and afterwards the love of God in ver. 39, may be understood in two senses—either as signifying His love to us, or our love to Him. The whole context seems to decide for the first of these meanings—as in that part of it which goes before, it is of God’s dealings with, and regards to His elect; it is of His being upon their side; it is of the surrender that He made in their behalf, when He gave up His Son unto the death, and with Him shall freely give them all things; it is of Christ dying and interceding for our good; it is of the love that is felt in heaven and is pointed downwardly to earth, and not of the love that is felt on earth and is pointed upwardly to heaven—that the argument is held: And in that part of the context which follows, it is still of Him who loved us that he speaks. Notwithstanding however, we shall find, I think, on a narrower examination of the whole passage, that our love to Him is embraced therein, though it be His love to us that is more directly and obviously expressed by it.

You will observe that there is nothing in all the adversities which Paul enumerates, that would in the first instance tend

to effect a separation between Christ’s love to us and our own persons. The tribulation and the distress and the persecution and the famine and the nakedness and the peril and the sword, to all of which the Christians of that day lay so peculiarly exposed—there was nought in these that could of themselves alienate the regard of the Saviour from those who had enlisted themselves as His followers and friends; but every thing, on the contrary, to enhance the interest and the tenderness which He felt for them. But though they did not effect such a separation, yet they might indicate it. At least, they who were weak in the faith might be discouraged into such a conclusion. They might be led to infer, that, as the ills and adversities of life were the portion of those who embraced the Saviour, there could be little love on His part towards those whom He had the power to rescue from these, but did not choose to put it forth. When they saw that it was for His sake they were so pursued even unto the death, their courage and their confidence might have given way, and they have stood in doubt of there being any regard on Heaven’s part towards them. The terrors and trials of that distressing period might have prevailed against them;

and they, trusting no longer to the affection of Christ for their persons or their interests, might have renounced their faith and along with this their affection for the Saviour.

Now St. Paul in the passage before us, is bearing up his own mind, and that of his converts, against the despondency of this unbelief. He, as it were, is not suffering himself to think, that all these dark and lowering adversities manifest either the decay or the dissolution of any love for them on the side of their merciful High Priest. He comes, in fact, to the very opposite conclusion. "Nay in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." He looks back to the great fight of afflictions that they had formerly been involved in. He recalls the manifold escapes, or, what is more characteristic of victory, the occasions on which they had been armed with intrepidity for the contest, and were enabled to face all the hostilities and hardships of the Christian profession and to endure them. And he connects the inspiration of all that courage by which they had been upholden so nobly, with Him from whom it descended. They were conquerors, only through Him that loved them. It was He who nerved them for the conflict. It was He who gave them either wisdom to overcome in argument, or strength to suffer under the inflictions of personal violence. It was a moral warfare in which they were engaged, and in this He enabled them to conquer. It was a struggle between pain and principle; and He so succoured and sustained the latter, as that they could bid defiance to the fiercest assaults of the former—causing the spiritual to prevail over the animal nature; and between these two elements, the infused heroism of the new man and the creeping fearfulness of the old, enabling the grace to make head in this internal conflict against the corruption and to carry it.

And here it is of great practical importance to remark, that the way in which God often manifests His protecting and fatherly care of us, is, not by obtaining for us the safety of a flight; but, better and nobler than this, the triumph of a victory. In plainer words, He may neither withdraw the calamity from us, nor us from the calamity; but, leaving it to bear with full weight upon our spirits, He pours a strength into our spirits which enables them to bear up under it. It is in this way frequently, that He makes good the promise of not suffering us to be tried beyond what we are able to bear. He does not lighten the suffering, but He adds to the strength; and, as it were, cradles us, by the education of a severe

spiritual discipline, into a state of spiritual maturity. After that the apostles had been threatened by the Jewish rulers to desist from preaching, they did not pray that no more threats might be uttered, or that the power of executing their menaces should be taken away. They did not pray for a deliverance from the outward trial; but for a supply of inward resolution, that they might be upheld against it. "And now Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word." And so with Christians of all ages. They estimate the kindness of God towards them by His spiritual, rather than by His temporal blessings. They count not that God has separated or withdrawn Himself, because His earthly comforts have abandoned them. The most distressing separation to them were to be abandoned by the aids of His grace. That they fell into suffering, were to them no indication of His faded or expiring regards for them; but, should they fall into sin, this were the sad and sorrowing evidence of an angry or of a withdrawing God. When He puts some dark adversity to flight, this may prove that He has made them to be safe. But higher far when he discharges this adversity upon them, and they come out, of erect and unhurt spirit, from the onset and the uproar of its violence—this proves that He maketh them to conquer, and to be more than conquerors.

The great object in fact with every true Christian, is, not that the life of sense shall be regaled with pleasures or protected from annoyance; but, above this and ulterior to this, that the life of grace shall flourish and advance under all the varieties whether of sensible pain or sensible enjoyment. In the prosecution of what may be termed this higher game, there is at least secured to him that which according to Lord Bacon forms one chief ingredient of human happiness—even heroic feelings or heroic desires. The man you will observe whose heart is thus set, has a loftier aim than those of an everyday character, and he may be said to expatiate in a loftier region. They are certain moral and spiritual points that he tries to win; and that, in the face of certain hurts or hazards to which they are exposed—and in this higher walk of profit and loss, you will at once see how wholly dissimilar his engrossments are from those who travail in the ordinary pursuits and speculations of merchandise. It is most true that he may so travail and yet be a Christian; but there is all the distance in the world between him who diligently labours after riches as the ultimate landing-place on which his heart does termi-

nate, and him who while not slothful in business yet fervent in spirit labours to keep that heart with all diligence. They look wholly different ways; and must be variously affected by the same events, according to what that is which mainly occupies them. Now a man is never over-set, never plunges into helpless and irrecoverable despair, but on the giving way of that which he holds to be his main interest; and hence you will perceive, that the same visitation of calamity which should make one man feel that he is undone, might give to another a sense of noblest independence—in that he has met the poverty or the pain with a spirit unhurt, if not bettered by the collision; and that, in the triumph of a faith which looks onward and ahead of all that is visible, he can rise superior to the disaster and trample it beneath him.

V. 38, 39. Before taking our conclusive leave of this subject, I should like to unfold if I could, how it is that our love to God and God's love to us act and react the one upon the other. There is an ambiguity in the general expression—the love of God—that causes it to be significant of either of these two affections; and we do think, that in order to arrive at the full spirit and meaning of the passage which is before us, reference must be made to both of them.

For, in the first place, our persuasion of God's love to us, is of all other things the most fitted to keep alive within us our love to God. It is just in fact the spiritual process of faith working by love. We believe in the love that God has to us, and we love Him back again. It is His good-will to us acting upon our gratitude to Him—a good-will however which must be perceived and trusted in, ere the responding emotion is awakened in our hearts. Apart from the view of Christ, and apart from the conviction of God's good-will to us in Christ, we could not possibly love Him. The heart would be preoccupied with another affection, which should keep love from entering; for if it be true that love casts out fear, it is just as true that fear keepeth out love. Now while the view of God in Christ awakens love, the view of God out of Christ awakens terror. We then see Him as a law-giver armed to destroy us—a God of sacredness whose hostility against sin is unappeased and unappeasable—a judge sitting in the high state of His affronted dignity, and roused by the jealousies of His holy nature to an act of Vengeance on the creatures who had renounced His authority, and east despite and defiance upon His throne. It is thus that the thought of God stirs up images of dread and disturbance in the bosom, amid which the love

of God most assuredly cannot dwell; and it is not till this dark imagery gives place to another view and another aspect of the Divinity—it is not till the Mediator steps between, and we see that economy of wisdom and grace by which the Law has been disarmed yet the Lawgiver has been pacified—it is not till we behold Him as God in Christ, through whom truth and mercy have met together, and good-will to men has been made most firmly and harmoniously to unite with glory to God in the highest—It is then, and not till then, that the great moral revolution is brought about in the sinner's heart, of a love for that Being whom he before stood afraid of; and kindest regard for that awful but now amiable Deity, who, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, stands forth in all the graces of His manifested kindness towards a guilty world. Let but this persuasion find entrance into the bosom; and it will clear away the distrust and the alienation, and I will add the hatred, that had before the possession and the mastery therein. It is the exprest persuasion of the apostle in our text. He believed the love of God in Christ towards him; and, retaining this belief in the midst of disasters and of trials which would have shaken the confidence of other men—just as he kept by the persuasion that these dark and lowering appearances did not indicate any separation of God's love from him, so neither did they effectuate any separation of his love from God.

It was the strength of his persuasion in God's love to him, that so settled and secured his love to God. It was because his persuasion in the love of God did not give way, that his love to God did not give way. It was a persuasion brought to the trial and that stood its ground against it—and just by the very force of that sentiment which made Job say, that though he slay me yet will I trust in Him. There was a storm that might well have made his confidence to falter. There were, in those days, a desertion and a dreariness in the profession of the gospel, by which God meant to discipline the spirit of its converts; but which by the eye of sense might well have been interpreted into the manifestation of His displeasure. And it was because faith prevailed over sense—it was because the persuasion of God's love to him availed the heart of Paul, like an anchor of hope that kept him attached and steady amid the conflicts and fiercest agitations of this world's violence—it was because, like Abraham of old, he staggered not out of his belief, for all that seemed menacing in the persecutions and cruel sufferings of that tempestuous age—it was because, notwithstanding of these, he still held by

the confidence that God's love was not separated from him—that neither was his love separated from God.

There was nothing, I have already said, in all these adversities, that could effect the separation of God's love from Paul and his disciples. The very most which they could do, would be to indicate or to make them fancy such a separation—after which, and when driven from their trust, they would lose their hold of the very principle by which their love was alimanted; and thus although there was nought in this world's fortunes which could have any immediate effect in separating God's love from them, they might be of powerful effect in separating their love from God. It is not to be imagined indeed, that the creature can have such influential operation on the mind of the Creator, as to detach His affections from those to whom they had been given; but it may have influence enough upon their mind to detach their affections from Him—after which, no doubt, He ceases His regards from those who have thus cast Him off. Their prayers for aid in the hour of temptation lose all efficacy, because no longer raised with the faith of those who utter them. The love of God in Christ will never fail those who keep a firm and confiding hold of it. But they let go their hold, and so fall away; and thus, not because of the power which this world's fortunes have over the mind of God, but because of the power which they have over the minds of men, there may come to be between these two parties a complete and conclusive separation.

It is on these considerations, that we deem it the best practical way of closing our lengthened elucidations upon this passage, shortly to urge upon you the tendency which there is in the world and its fluctuations to separate you from God; and how, making head against this tendency, you should retain the love of Him in your hearts, and so retain His love towards you, under all the varieties whether prosperous or adverse of this present scene.

For you will observe, that, in Paul's enumeration of those influences which he stood determined to resist, but which certainly exposed to hazard the steadfastness of his love to God, there is room allowed, not for the assaults of adversity alone, but for the wiles and the blandishments of prosperity. He says that neither life nor death should separate him from the love of God—that neither things present nor things to come should do it—that no creature of any kind whatever should do it—All giving reason to believe that he had in his eye, what was agreeable to the life of sense and which might seduce our love

from God, as well as what was painful or terrifying and which might cause that love to perish in a storm of calamity. And what we now propose is, to attend a little to each of these distinct influences, that you may beware alike of both, and suffer neither the joys nor the griefs of your earthly pilgrimage to separate you from God.

First then as to the effect of that which regales and satisfies the life of sense, in withdrawing our hearts from their love to God. There is nothing, we admit, in it, that should induce the suspicion of God's unkindness or hostility against us—or that should make us cease to be persuaded of God's love to us, and so to uphold the love of our gratitude to Him back again. We may continue to believe as before; and, in as far as faith worketh by love, it may be thought that there is every security we shall love as before. But in regard to the operation of faith upon the character, there is a most important principle laid down by the apostle in one of his epistles to the Corinthians. He there speaks of our believing in vain, unless we keep the truth so believed in our memory. The use of our faith in any truth, is that we may ever be recurring in thought and remembrance to that truth, for the purpose of our ever and anon keeping its appropriate moral influence close upon the heart. Without this, it would appear, that the faith is of no use to us. There are a thousand things which we at one time believed, and which we would believe again were they called up to the remembrance, but which now lie as forgotten things in the mind's dormitory. Our faith in them is of no further use. There are many events, through the years that have gone by, of private and personal history, which we believed at the time on the testimony of others—many of which we have read, and read with conviction, in books of public and political information—many propositions of science so demonstrated as to carry our firm assent to their truth, and all of which have now faded and escaped from the memory for ever. We once believed in them, and were they recalled into the mind's presence, we should believe in them again. But ceasing to be thought of, all their practical influence has ceased also; and the very same holds and is indeed expressly affirmed by the apostle, of the truths of Christianity. It is of no use that on some one day they have been acquiesced in—if day after day they are not adverted to. Even the death of Christ it would appear loses its efficacy for salvation, if it have not been kept in remembrance. And even though we should have once believed the love

which God has to us—this, if not dwelt upon in thought and cherished as our habitual recollection, is of no effect to perpetuate or keep alive our love to Him back again.

You will hence understand the hazard to which this affection is exposed from prosperity. It does not make us cease to believe that God has a yet unseparated love to us; but it makes us cease to think of it. We are satisfied with things present, and we look no farther. Or we dwell on the bright and golden hopes of the things that are to come, and the mind so occupied ceases to have God in its habitual contemplation. It is thus that both things present and things to come, neither of which the apostle was determined should separate his love from God, do in point of fact separate and withdraw the affections of many from Him, who is the fountain of all that they have and all that they hope for. The mind is otherwise engaged than with the thought of Him. The heart is otherwise engaged than with the love of Him. It is taken up with sensible things, and forgets the unseen God on whom they all are suspended. The apostle, by way of contrasting two habits of the soul which are opposite and incompatible, says of one set of men that their conversation is in heaven, and that thence they look for the Saviour; and of another set of men, that they mind earthly things. Now the effect of our prosperity is to engross the mind with earthly things; and to withdraw its conversation and its lookings from Heaven, and from all the benevolence which is there. We cease to love the God whom we have forgotten. He is out of mind, and so out of heart. He is dispossessed as an object of thought, and so is dispossessed as an object of affection. What is not present to our view, is not of power to stir up our emotions; and, not because prosperity has shaken us out of any belief that we ever had in God's love to us, but because it hath stolen us away from the thought of it, therefore our love to Him waxeth cold.

This effect of prosperity in making us forget God and His love, by fastening our regards upon other objects, is palpably evinced by the state and tendencies of almost every heart throughout the winged hours of a free and festive holiday—when we give ourselves wholly up to the fascination of things present; and, amid the glee and bustle and vivacity of our successive enjoyments, not the futurities alone of an eternal world, but even all the futurities of our earthly pilgrimage are forgotten. We just ask you to compute how much or how little of God there is in the bosom that is thus animated—whether it is not in reality true, that the exhilara-

tions of such a day banish all thought of Him; and though the lake or the landscape on which you make delighted excursion be of His workmanship; and the happy faces by which you are surrounded be lighted up by a life and a spirit that He has breathed into every moving creature; and all the luxuries by which your various senses are regaled to the uttermost have been scattered from the hand of Him, who hath opened it wide, and poured them liberally forth on the face of a world, which He hath most bountifully stocked and most beautifully adorned—Yet we ask you, on your own recollection of the joyous party and all that gladdened them in the shape of nature's brilliancy without, or the music and the dance and the plenteous hospitality and the costly decorations and the ring of merry companionship within—we would just ask, if, amid the turmoil of all these bright and busy images which are then made to occupy the heart, there has been room during one short minute of the whole protracted gratification for the thought of God as your reconciled Father, of God as the friend to whom all the glory and the gratitude should arise? Now the life of a prosperous man is one lengthened holiday. His business is the game, and the successful game at which he plays. His rapidly succeeding centages are the stakes that have been won by him, and which lead him onward to bolder adventures than before. His bills and his bargains and his law-suits, are the moves and the checks wherewith he carries the enterprise to a fortunate termination. In launching a speculation, there are felt by him the sport and the high-blown spirit of the race, and, in its run and prosperous return laden with spoils and with profits, there is felt by him all the exultation of victory. Between the gains of the counting house and the hours of evening enjoyment with his family—between the calls of his urgent business and the delights of his summer recreation—between the season at which he hardly and heartily labours, and the season at which he relaxes amid the beauties of his magnificent retreat and the blandishments of expensive luxury—We see nought in the life of a thriving citizen, but that still its reigning character is that of a busy and protracted holiday—a life taken up to the full with the interest and the urgency of present things—where that which is seen dispossesses the heart of all regard to that which is unseen—where in the hurry and the splenour and the successive evolutions of one thing to delight and occupy the heart after another, the thoughts of God and of His love are kept at a wide and habitual dis-

tance from the bosom ; and, without once caring whether the love of God be separated from you, you have abandoned your feelings to the force and ascendancy of things present, and so separated yourselves from all love to God.

And in such a life there are not only things present, but things to come, that withdraw our hearts from the love of God. Man lives in futurity. The desire which stretches forth to a distant good has far greater mastery over the heart, than the delight wherewith it regales itself in the good which is actually realised. The charm of a coming prosperity, has more power to fascinate and detain the heart from every other object, than even all the joys of our existing prosperity. The mind is still more engrossed with the prospects of a speculation that is still afloat, than with the actual proceeds of a speculation that is now terminated. And it is this I imagine, which must constitute the main hazard to your souls, of that walk on which many who now hear me are to be found—hasting perhaps with too much eagerness after the wealth that perisheth—giving, it may be, every affection and energy within you to some fancied sufficiency that you have not yet attained, and the possession of which you hold to be enough for happiness—fastening all your thoughts and regards on this object which is placed below, and so of necessary consequence shifting them away from every object that is above—occupying the mind with that which is earthly, and in that very proportion withdrawing the mind from that which is heavenly. We do not suppose that you have admitted a wrong belief all the while into your understanding. If you once gave credit to God's testimony of His love to you in Christ Jesus, the likelihood is that on the question being put, you will profess the same credit still.

You are not sensible of any such revolution in your opinions on this subject, as should either change or in any way impair the orthodoxy of your creed. The thing is credited as before, but it is not attended to as before. When the mind does come into contact with the doctrine, it just entertains it as it wont, and judges of it as it wont ; but then it is not so habitually in contact with it as it wont. We do not complain that now you think of it erroneously, but we complain that now you seldom or never think of it at all. The love to you of God in Christ is seldom present to the eye of the mind, because the eye is elsewhere directed ; and so it is that your love back again waxes cold. When the good-will ceases to be seen—the gratitude ceases to be felt. The object is not kept in the memory,

and so the affection which that object is fitted to awaken is not kept in the heart. When the one disappears the other dies away ; and it is this which explains the decline and at length the utter extinction of Christianity with many, whose notions were all evangelical and even continue to be so—but whose zeal, fervent and declared as it may at one time have been, is now scarcely ever felt, just because the things which awaken zeal are now scarcely ever thought of. The man does not understand the things differently from before, but he does not look to it so frequently as before. He is otherwise taken up. The engagements of business have gotten the entire hold of him. The multitude of his prospects and affairs and brooding speculations wields an entire and absolute mastery over his spirit. He lives under the power of things that are to come, but they are not the things of faith and eternity. They are altogether the things of a perishable world—the coming profits of some goodly adventure—the coming result of some keen and busy negotiation—the coming market, whose sales might elevate his fortune to that of the most affluent and honourable among the citizens. In the turmoil of such engrossments as these, the man has never changed his creed—he has had no time for it. He is every way as sound and evangelical as ever—and if one time the professor of a strict and serious orthodoxy, may still have a name to live, while in spirit and in reality he is altogether dead. And thus we have not to go back to the apostle's days—that we may witness the power either of present or future things to separate the heart from the love of God. We see the vivid exemplification of it around us ; and as much we fear on the walks of peaceful and prosperous merchandise, as in any bygone age of persecuting violence—as much in the seduction of this world's good, as in the terrors of this world's dark and menacing adversity.

But we mistake the matter, if we think that sensible things derive their power to alienate the heart from God, only from the deceit and the blandishment which lie in prosperity. It should never be forgotten, that there is no other way in which we can be made to love God than by our looking to His love for us—no other way by which we can keep ourselves loving Him habitually, than by our looking at Him habitually. Whatever then withdraws the eye of our mind from Him, will withdraw the regards of our heart from Him ; and we just ask you to think, whether the things that distress or terrify the spirit, have not to the full as great a mastery over the attention, as the things that

satisfy and regale it. Have not grief for some actual adversity, and fearful anxiety for a coming one, have not these as great a power of engrossment as either the present delight or the bright and joyful anticipations of prosperity? They affect the mind differently it is true; but each may in its turn take up the mind wholly and exclusively, and so be alike mischievous in keeping the thoughts at a distance from God. And it argues an enlightened discernment by Scripture of the human spirit and all its mysteries, that, while it pronounces of this world's riches how they beset the entrance of the kingdom of heaven, it also affirms that there is a sorrow of this world which worketh death; and you do well to notice that in the parable of the sower, where the heart of an engrossed and overcrowded man is compared to the ground that is overrun with thorns, and on which the vegetation of the good seed is stifled and destroyed—you do well to notice, that they are not merely the riches and the pleasures, but also the cares of this life, which choke and hinder from ever coming to maturity the good seed of the word of God.

Such then being the effect of crosses and adversities on your spiritual condition—is it the safe plan for you as Christians to lengthen out or to contract the line of your exposure to them? Ought you not to pause ere you comply with the invitations for some new enterprise, that shall bring along with it a train of hazards and anxieties and fearful misgivings, ere the termination be arrived at; and perhaps after all a termination of defeat and disaster that may utterly overwhelm you? We know little of the details of your merchandise; but we know enough to affirm, in the general, that, if your means be limited, the field of your operations ought proportionally to be moderate and manageable—that what is true in the business of other things is also true in the business of trade, you ought not to meddle with matters too high for you—that every risk which you cannot meet with your own property, and every daring adventure by which that of others is brought to hazard, should be avoided as unlawful. This much we know; and that nevertheless there is an insidious temptation that is perpetually operating, and by which the ambitious and the unwary are led into a higher game than they are adequate to all the chances of—that oft there is a floating vision which dances before their eyes in the shape of some goodly or gainful speculation, and by which they suffer themselves to be lured into a sea of troubles—that thus their cares and their concerns are greatly multiplied; and the ground on which they stand, now become

more precarious than before, is felt as if it tottered under them; and in expedients for putting off the evil day, and shifts for temporary credit, and devices and disguises innumerable, they flounder from one difficulty to another—with a heart wholly oppressed and overcharged. Even had fortune smiled on their aerial voyage, there would, as we have already endeavoured to show, have been, in the prosperity that crowned it, an influence to war against their souls. But in the calamity which crosses it, there may lie a tenfold hostility; and when we look to the sadly beset and bewildered man, as he writhes in secret under the necessities that encompass, or ruminates on the sad explosion of disgrace that is before him—when we think of the way in which his heart is occupied, and that positively there is not room in it for any thoughts of God—when we consider thought as the aliment of affection, and that we can only love our Maker in as far as we have time and space for the leisurely and undisturbed contemplation of His love to us—when we compute the manifold distractions of such a misguided individual, and the constant weight or agitation that lie upon his spirits—Then we can no longer wonder, that, in reference to the things of faith and of an eternal world, his soul should have been utterly dispossessed as if by the violence of fierce invaders—that other thoughts and other feelings should wholly monopolize him; and that, with an outset perhaps of seemly professorship, he should at length, because pierced through with many sorrows, have separated between himself and all sacredness, and become an alien and an apostate from his God.

There is danger to your soul from the abundance of this world's cares, as well as from the abundance of this world's comforts; and therefore it is that you should avoid all wanton or unnecessary exposure to the former, even as you ought to be vigilant and sedate and sober minded amid the blandishments of the latter. That there is a power in earthly sadness, as well as in earthly joy, to dispossess the heart of its love for God, may be exemplified by what we sometimes see in a case of forlorn widowhood. It has occurred that the sufferer under such a bereavement has been irrecoverably woe-struck, and so abandoned herself to helpless and hopeless melancholy—wholly unable to lift her spirits up from their dejection, and, with a determination somewhat like impracticable sullenness utterly refusing to be comforted. That under a grief so immeasurable and absorbing there are very many things which now cease to interest her, is not marvellous; but what most indicates the dispossessing

power of this affection, is that now she should cease to love her own children—that even to those whom nature had so powerfully endeared to her, her heart has become cold and alienated; and, immovably fixed as it is on the departed object of her tenderness, all its affinities with present objects have been broken. This is rare we admit; but it proves what a force of separation there is in grief, if, even once or at any time, the strong parental attachment has been thereby discovered: And much more does it prove how possible it is, that an affection at all times so slender as that of love to the unseen Deity, should give way under the power of a similar visitation—how in grief for the loss of fortune, there might be a force at least equivalent to that of separating us from the love of God—how that which though rarely is the cause of a literal suicide inflicted upon the person, may frequently be the cause of a moral and spiritual suicide inflicted upon the soul; and so, by hasting to be rich, have many fallen into temptation and a snare and erred from the faith; and, just because they pierced themselves through with many sorrows, have they also drowned themselves in destruction and perdition.

If then there be danger to the soul, both from success in business and from its crosses and misfortunes—what, it may be asked, should they who are immersed in the prosecution of it do? Not withdraw from their callings certainly; but so regulate and restrain and rectify, as that their callings shall not withdraw them from the love of God. There must be a way of being not slothful in business, and yet of being fervent in spirit; and, lest we should be charged for having dealt in this important question with generalities alone let me conclude with one plain and practical direction to you. The thing which separates your love from Christ, is, that, with so much of the earthly to think of, you think but little and perhaps never of His love to you. What I hold to be indispensable for the preservation within you of spiritual life, is that you clear out for yourselves a season, and that too a frequently recurring season, of contemplation and prayer. In the constant appliance of sensible objects and sensible interests to your heart, all the grace that is in it must wither and decay; and, unless you take up the sentiment of the apostle, and desire with him, that neither things present nor things to come, neither the pride and prosperity of life nor the death of all our worldly hopes, nor any creature whatever shall have power to separate you from the love of Christ—your religion may perish amid the many

urgencies by which you are surrounded. What I hold to be your peculiar necessity is, that you so arrange as frequently to escape from these urgencies. It were well that you had many a breathing-time, and for this purpose it is not enough that your Sabbaths be hallowed to the exercises and the studies of sacredness—you should have many a hallowed moment through the week—you should have a morning and an evening sacrifice—you should train your spirit to the work of oft retiring within itself, and oft raising up its faculties that it may lay hold of God. Even in the heat and bustle of the day there might be room for the occasional aspiration; and though noight more disparaging to Christianity than to fancy it a religion of days and forms and stated punctualities, yet, beset and occupied as many of you are, I hold that the highest principle, as well as the highest prudence, is involved in your set and regular observations of sacredness. The soul might else move adrift among the countless influences that are ever and anon bearing upon it; and such is the actual opposition between all the things which are in the world and the love of the Father, that the drift is away from God. To recover those thoughts of God and Christ which the world would dissipate—along with the stray thoughts to recall the stray affections, and so maintain and constantly renew a fellowship of heart with the Father and the Son—to light again and again the flame of sacredness within, and so to keep it from expiring utterly—to lift yourselves from the deadness and degradation of the things that are beneath—I am aware of no better expedient than that you have your times of communing through the Bible and prayer with the things that be above, and that you determinedly adhere to them. Let not the urgencies of business separate you from those precious minutes, which you should give to the remembrance of God's love to you in Christ Jesus; and then the fortunes of business, whether prosperous or adverse shall not be able to separate your hearts from that love which you owe to God in Christ Jesus back again. Pray unceasingly for His grace to overcome the world and you shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you.

It is high time to break away from this world's entanglements—to dispossess your heart of things present, and turn them to the things that are to come; and that not to the coming things of your earthly pilgrimage, but overleaping these and the death which is beyond them, to look onward to the awful realities which lie upon the other side. If you have not yet made the movement from the habit of walking

by sight to that of walking by faith, it is a movement which must be made ere you die—else the life eternal, which is only to those with whom all old things have been done away and all things have become new, you shall never realise. And it concerns you all to understand, that, by every day of postponement, you are getting more helplessly implicated in the slavery of sense and of sin than before—that if you seek not first the kingdom of God, every other thing which you seek and set your affections upon just widens your distance from Him the more—that the love of all which is in the world separates and alienates the heart the more irrecoverably from Him who made the world—that thus in every footstep you make, there is a farther departure from the Being whose favour is life, but whose frown is endless and irremediable destruction: And, more particularly, may every fresh speculation in which you engage, and that constant trooping of successive cares and hopes and interests from one mercantile engrossment to another, so

multiply the ties by which you are robed and fastened down to a perishable scene—that when at length overtaken and torn forcibly away from it by the last messenger, you shall be found to be wholly of the earth and altogether earthly—overrun with carnality, and having a full part in the saying that the carnal mind is death. I ask you, not to be hermits and to abandon either the world or its business, but I ask you to be aware of the evil of it. I ask your instantaneous and habitual recurrence to the objects of faith, that the objects of sight may no longer have the ascendant over you. I ask you so to retire and separate yourselves from the love of things present, that you may not be separated from the love of God—not to give up the use of the world, but so to use it as not to abuse it—not to cast away from you the good things of this life, but, by your habitual regard to the better things of another life, to strip them of their power, so as that they shall not be able to separate you from the high interests of an accountable and imperishable creature.

LECTURE LXVIII.

ROMANS ix, 1—3.

“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

THE matter of which Paul here makes such strong asseveration, is not one that could be looked upon by the eyes of those whom he addresses; but one that himself only could take direct and immediate cognizance of. It had not its residence without, so that others should have access to it by any faculty of external observation; but had its residence within—within the repository of the apostle's own bosom, and he only had access to it by the faculty of conscience. He could not therefore say of it—this is true, for come and see that it is so—he could not thus make his appeal to the senses of other men, for no other earthly eye was upon it than that of his own mind. He therefore had recourse to the only expedient which those in general have, who feel that a certain suspicion attaches to their testimony, and who have no additional testimony wherewith to confirm it—even that of strenuous and repeated affirmation, ‘I say the truth, I lie not.’

But Paul, in this necessary defect of human witnesses, does make mention of other witnesses; and which he seems at

least to appeal to. He does not simply assert that he says the truth but that he says it ‘in Christ;’ neither does he simply quote the testimony of his conscience, but his conscience as bearing him witness ‘in the Holy Ghost’—most competent witnesses assuredly to the matter here spoken of, seeing that both had thorough insight into the recesses of the human spirit—Christ knowing what is in man—the Holy Ghost searching all things, and how much more the things of man, when He searcheth even into the deep things of God.

In our readings of the Bible, we often acquit ourselves of the task very currently; and are apt to speed our way over whole phrases, without being at all arrested by any thought or feeling of their significance—and that too with a book where there is nothing insignificant. The introduction of Christ and of the Holy Ghost in this verse, has perhaps with most of us never stirred up any enquiry into the mind and meaning of the apostle, when he thus refers to them. We recognise their names as well-known sounds, that are quite familiar to the ear;

and the understanding therefore not started, as it were, into vigilance, by any strange or rarely uttered vocable, remains asleep and insensible to the thought which lies couched in the phraseology of the apostle. It is thus that it fares, we apprehend, in very many instances with the Bible—that this mine of precious things is passed over without being entered into—that, full though it is of truth and of meaning throughout all its clauses, there is little drawn out of it by the daily perusals of the mere formalist in Christianity, who, satisfied with running his eye over the pages of Scripture, obtains no view whatever of the richness that is underneath; or who content that with his mouth he should pronounce the language of inspiration, although with his mind he never touches or comes close to the realities which that language embodies, is truly one of those to whom the kingdom of God cometh in word only and not at all in power.

It was for the sake of Christ that Paul made departure from the great body of his countrymen. It was to win Christ, that he counted all the honours which his zeal and his talent might have earned for him among the Jews, and all the pleasure which he had enjoyed in their society—that he counted them but loss in his estimation. They looked on his association with Christ, as the act by which he had broken friendship with them. He had at least, however, given full evidence of his sincerity by it. He had relinquished all hopes of earthly preferment, and had braved all the terrors of persecution. In speaking of his truth in Christ, he spake of that by which his truth was most nobly accredited. His being in Christ was that which gave the fullest possible demonstration of his own uprightness; and, in the face of the Jewish apprehension that because the friend of Christ he was an enemy of theirs, he in that very name affirms his desire for their eternal welfare to be the most urgent feeling of a bosom, which still felt all its wonted affinities to his countrymen, and glowed with all its wonted affection towards them. And besides, the joining of that name to an affirmation was tantamount to the confirming of it by an oath. It was a name, they might well have known, which he never could have associated with the utterance of a falsehood; and so, to overcome the impression which obtained among the people of his own nation, as if he had lost all his ancient and natural regard for them, he appeals to that very Jesus for whose sake he had abandoned the faith of his countymen, in support of his solemn averment that he had not aban-

doned any part of that friendship which he ever entertained for them.

There must be also a meaning which he intended to convey, when he spake of his conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Ghost. It is competent for any man's conscience to take notice of any urgent or strongly felt affection that might be at work in his bosom—as, for example, of the great heaviness and continual sorrow that was in his heart. It needs not the special intervention of any divine or supernatural agent to inform a human creature, whether it be joy or sadness or anger or fear that is the occupant of his heart for the time being; and we should therefore like to find what the precise addition was, or what the peculiarity which distinguished it from a mere ordinary intimation of conscience, when Paul's conscience bore him witness in the Holy Ghost.

Apart from the force which the very mention of Christ and of the Holy Ghost gives to this asseveration of the apostle, as if calling upon them to be witnesses of its truth, and so giving to his utterance all the sanction and solemnity of an oath—apart from this, there is conveyed to us by the phrase in question, that the Holy Ghost was at the time of this affirmation in Paul—that it had to do with his conscience while it testified of that which was in the heart of the apostle, and had to do with his heart by putting and upholding that affection in it of which his conscience bore witness. The fruit of the Spirit it is said is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. It is by the last of these fruits, by the truth which it puts into the inward parts, that it both enlightens and directs the conscience. It acts by enabling the conscience to look more clearly on its own proper field of observation—by shedding a greater brightness and legibility on the lineaments of that inward tablet whereon are graven all the characteristics of a man's soul—whether that soul be now an epistle of Christ, so that in reading it we examine ourselves and ascertain that we are indeed in the faith—or it still bears the unaltered inscription of original and unrenewed nature, so that in reading it we become convinced of sin. It is thus, by revealing to the eye of conscience the real condition of the inward parts, that the Spirit performs the office either of aiding in the work of self-examination, or of convincing a man of sin ere he becomes a Christian. And He not only makes truth known to the conscience, but He makes the man who professes to utter the intimations of this conscience to be strictly observant of the truth—so that the man

whose conscience bears him witness in the Holy Ghost, is both a man who is not deceived himself in regard to the real nature of his own internal feelings, and neither would deceive others when he reports what these feelings are.

But further, the Holy Ghost not only enabled him clearly to apprehend the affection by which he was actuated, not only guided him to make true and faithful declaration thereof—but gave him the affection itself; and, in virtue of His fruit being goodness as well as truth, put into him that good and gracious distress which so overweighed his spirit when he be-thought him of the spiritual condition of his own countrymen. What would have been a natural in others, was in the heart of Paul made by the Holy Ghost a sanctified affection. There was something most natural, and I could almost add justifiable, even in the pride of Jewish patriotism—for never was a nation so distinguished; and never had a people, even among those whom history has most gorgeously blazoned in all the honours of ancestry and of great achievement, such marvellous distinctions to boast of. All the trophies of conquest and of literature and of all earthly renown, make not out a crown of traditional glory for any of the states or monarchies of other days, which is at all like unto that crown of transcendental glory, that halo from heaven, which sits on the character and the fortunes of the children of Israel. There is nought in the sages, and in the warriors, and in all that is recorded either of the prowess or the philosophy of any other land, which serves so to irradiate its name,—as the name and the land of the Hebrews are irradiated by their patriarchs and their prophets and their holy men of God. The traveller, whose imagination has been sublimed among the historic remembrances which he saw around him in the classical territory of Greece and Rome, has confessed a deeper visitation of awe and of lofty emotion, as he walked over the priestly and consecrated land of Judea. Even the very humblest of that outcast race, kindles in the recollection of his own ancestral dignity, and feels a sort of conscious superiority to other men—when he thinks of himself as one of that selected nation whom seers did instruct, and whom angels visited; and that they were forefathers of his, who heard from Sinai's flaming top the words of the Eternal. Paul seems to have felt some such patriotic inspiration—as he made mention of the Israelites to whom pertained the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises—whose, he says, are the fathers; and of

whom, so far from having lost all sense of their nobleness by having become a Christian, he sums this heraldry of his nation by what he deemed the brightest of all its ensigns—even that of them as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, amen.

It may serve to guard you against a delusion—should you, on this subject, make the proper distinction between that which was natural and that which was spiritual in this patriotic affection of the apostle. The former might be deponed to by an ordinary intimation of the conscience—the latter is wholly the work of the Holy Ghost; and can only be manifested to the man who has it, by the conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Ghost. It will perhaps make the distinction between these two things all the more palpable—if we only ask, what this high and heavenly ingredient has at all to do with those compositions of our recent poetry known under the title of 'Hebrew Melodies.' It has truly nothing to do, either with the genius and enthusiasm of those who framed them, or with the delighted admiration of those who listen to and perform them. The poetry, the pathos, the music, the beautiful and touching imagery, the recollections of domestic tenderness, the resolves and the vows of lofty patriotism—these are natural feelings, and must all be put down to the account of nature. But it follows not, ye sons and daughters of song, alive though ye be to the fascination of these touching numbers, that, because you kindle at the inspiration of genius you have any part in the inspiration of Heaven. It is not for us to pronounce on the Christianity of the men who emanated these magical effusions; but we affirm it to be possible of the very man whose hand has so embellished these sacred themes, that in his heart there might not have been a particle of sacredness. And so with you, who melt in all the luxury of emotion over these strains of ancient psalmody; and which only now, when set to the cadence of modern versification and the music of our modern drawing-rooms, have become strains of enchantment.

V. 2.—'That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart.'

But to return from this digression. In the heart of Paul, we have no doubt, that both the natural and the spiritual were blended; and, in the estimation of unconverted men, the former might of itself account, for the great sorrow and continual heaviness that was in his heart. He felt for the overthrow of such a nation. He had sympathy for its fallen greatness. It would seem, from the enumeration that he made of its glories, as if its proud and

prosperous days had passed in recollection before him; and he could not but mourn over the prostrate condition that awaited it, when it should be trodden under foot of the Gentiles, and become the outcast and the mockery of all people. He would have sorrowed, and that most profoundly, although he had felt no more than other Hebrews feel, because of their dispersed nation, their ruined temple, their profaned and desolated sanctuary. The sadness of nature would have been enough to overwhelm him in such a contemplation; but the heart of our apostle was weighed down by a still more oppressive sadness. He was not insensible to the sorrows of wounded patriotism, but his were the deeper and more distressful sorrows of reflecting piety. He sorrowed for his countrymen after a godly sort. He had his eye upon their rejected souls, their now hopeless salvation, their undone eternity. And of far more bitter endurance to him than even the slaughtered hosts and the captive families of Israel, was the miscarriage of his heart's fondest desire for them that they might be saved.

V. 3.—'For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.'

Whatever be the precise import of those terms in which the apostle here expresses his affection for the Israelites, there is one thing of which there can be no mystery or mistake—and that is, the strength and exceeding urgency of the affection itself. The circumstance of their being his kinsmen according to the flesh, gave him a special interest in their welfare; and the interest which he thus felt was mainly directed to the welfare of their immortality. On whatever other question criticism may stumble and go astray, there can be no misunderstanding of this. The literal sense of the verse may in one thing be somewhat unintelligible. But its moral and spiritual expression is altogether obvious. We have here the long-*ing earnestness of an apostle after the salvation of his countrymen; and those sympathies of kindred, which in the hearts of ordinary men lead but to earthly gifts and earthly services, we see them in the instance before us taking a heavenward direction, and prompting the efforts and the expostulations and the prayers of this great Christian minister—not for the temporal but the everlasting welfare of those to whom he stood related by the affinities of blood. We cannot doubt the strength of these affinities, even in the hearts of the veriest children of this world; and that innumerable are the kindnesses and the charities of domestic life, to which they give rise. We cannot refuse, even to unsanctified nature, those*

warm and benevolent affections which have their living play in the bosom of almost every family, and by whose workings it is that the society of earth is upheld. The lesson of the text is not that we should love our relatives, for this is what untaught and instinctive humanity can do. But to love the souls of our relatives—this comes of something higher than the motives or the tendencies of spontaneous nature. Any man's conscience may bear him witness that he has parent's instinctive fondness for his own children; but, ere he can vouch with truth for a regard at all so strong or so lively to their imperishable souls, there must be a higher agent than nature at work with him. Ere he can say it with truth, he must say the truth in Christ—Ere his conscience bear witness to it, it must bear him witness in the Holy Ghost.

But let us dwell at greater length on this phenomenon of character and feeling—for it is in truth an exhibition of humanity, most pregnant with inference, and fitted more especially to prove how wide an interval there is between the things of sense and the things of sacredness. The agony of an infant's dying-bed is not more real, than the agony inflicted by it on a mother's bosom. The sufferings endured by the one have not a more stable or undoubted certainty, than the sympathy which is felt for them by the other. They alike belong to man's sentient nature—in virtue of which there is scarcely a parent to be found, who bears not in his heart a thorough devotion to all the earthly interests of those who have sprung from him; and shares not in all the distresses, to which, by pain in their bodies, or disappointment in their fame or in their fortunes, they as earthly creatures are exposed. In other words, all that belongs to our sensitive economy which is taken down at death, is most feelingly sympathised with; and what we affirm is, that, with all that belongs to our spiritual economy that survives death, there might be no concern and no sympathy whatever. After all then, this tenderness for relatives might at the very best be but a mere animal sensibility—an instinct, which has just as little of fellowship with the things of faith and of eternity, as has the similar instinct of any inferior creature. And it is indeed most striking to observe, under how many a parental roof, all the amenities of nature's charity and of nature's care are absorbed, and have their full termination in earthliness—how, while the bodily wants of every little nurseling is most tenderly provided for, it is forgotten all the while that their spirits are imperishable—how, amid all the sighs and all the tenderness of family affection,

scarce one effort is ever made to secure and scarce one alarm is ever felt lest they should fall short of a blissful eternity—So that while we, alive at every pore to all that is present or visible in the condition of our children, do watch over their sick-beds, and weep over their tombs—we rarely ever think of those fearful possibilities, which, on the other side of death, may still be in reserve for them; and seldom does the dread alternative of their

future hell or their future heaven cost us one moment's agitation.

That such is experimentally the fact, we have, I am persuaded, the responding testimony of many a conscience among yourselves; and melancholy as the contemplation is, we should like to prolong it through one or two lectures more, for the sake of those practical uses to which it is subservient.

LECTURE LXIX.

ROMANS ix, 3.

“For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

AND first, it may be employed to rectify that meagre theology which is so far satisfied with man as he is, that it would hold a few slight and superficial amendments to be enough of themselves for changing him into man as he ought to be. This is one use to which we should turn what we have just observed of the parental affection. The earthliness of its whole drift proves man to be a creature altogether earthly; and the very strength of the affection serves to aggravate this lesson the more, and to betray all the more palpably our state of spiritual destitution. That the same parent who is so intent on the preferment of his children in the world, should be so utterly listless of their prospects, nor put forth one endeavour to obtain for them preferment in heaven—that he who would mourn over it as the sorest of his family trials, should one of them be bereft of any of the corporeal senses; and yet should take it so easily, although none of them have a right sense of God or a right principle of godliness—that he, who would be so sorely astounded did any of his little ones perish in a conflagration or a storm, should be so unmoved by all the fearful things that are reported of the region on the other side of death, where the fury of an incensed Lawgiver is poured upon all who have fled not to Christ as their refuge from the tempest, and they are made to lie down in the devouring fire and to dwell with everlasting burnings—that to avert from the objects of our tenderness the calamities, or to obtain for them the good things of this present life, there should be so much of care and of busy expedient, while not one practical measure is taken either to avert from them that calamity which is the most dreadful,

or to secure for them that felicity which is the most glorious—Why there is indeed such obvious demonstration in all this of time being regarded as our all, and eternity being counted by us as nothing—so light an esteem in it of that God, an inheritance in whom we treat as of far less value for those who are dear to us than that they should be made richly to inherit the gifts of His providence—such a preference for ourselves, and for the fleeting generations that come after us, of the short-lived creature to the Creator who endureth for ever—As most strikingly to mark, even by the very loves and amiable sensibilities of our hearts, how profoundly immersed we are in the grossest carnality—that after all it is but an earthly horizon that bounds us, and an earthly platform we grovel on—that Nature, even in her best and most graceful exhibitions, gives manifest token of her fall, proving herself an exile from Paradise even in the kindest and honestest of the sympathies which belong to her—that, retaining though she does many soft and tender affinities for those of her own kind, she has been cast down and degraded beneath the high aims and desires of immortality—accursed even in her moods of greatest generosity, and evil in the very act of giving good gifts unto her children.

But another lesson than that of rectifying the meagre theology of the general public, is that of rebuking those peculiar few who disown this theology, and hold themselves to be sound in the faith. We greatly fear, that, in many instances, this soundness in the faith is little more than a holding of the form of sound words. The expression of the truth is acquiesced in, but the truth itself is not realised. A mere holding of the dogmata of a creed

is not faith. It is not the substance of things hoped for, neither is it the evidence of things not seen. The man who looks onward to some station of emolument for his son, who provides him with the best education to qualify him for its duties, who himself superintends the preparation and strenuously plies him with the fit exercises for his training and future habits, who bestirs himself in the work of securing friends and soliciting patronage—this man may be laudably employed, but he is walking by sight. To look onward for your children to a place in heaven—to enter them accordingly into a process of spiritual education—to watch and examine and labour, until the spiritual principles be established and the spiritual character be formed in them—to besiege in prayer the upper sanctuary, that you may obtain the patronage of the great Intercessor who is there in behalf of your family, and through Him the grace and liberality of the King upon the throne—Let me practically see this, and I would say of it that it was walking by faith. It is not the mere verbiage of an orthodox phraseology that constitutes you a believer. You believe substantially only if you do. It is not by the professing of these things that you show faith. It is by proceeding on the reality of these things. The man, upon whose work and upon whose walk the futurities of the unseen world have the same deciding power, as the futurities of the seen and the sensible world that is before him—he it is who has the substance and not the shadow, the faith unfeigned. It will show itself in the regulation of the family, as much as in any other of his personal affairs. The man whose heart is set on the conversion of his children—the man whose house is their school of discipline for eternity—He it is, and we fear he only of all other parents, who lives by faith. If you love your children and at the same time are listless about their eternity, what other explanation can be given than that you believe not what the Bible tells of eternity? You believe not of the wrath and the anguish and the tribulation that are there. Those piercing cries that here from any one of your children would go to your very heart, and drive you frantic with the horror of its sufferings, you do not believe that there is pain there to call them forth. You do not think of the meeting-place that you are to have with them before the judgment-seat of Christ, and of the looks of anguish and the words of reproach that they will cast upon you, for having neglected and so undone their eternity.

The awful sentence of condemnation—the signal of everlasting departure to all

who know not God and obey not the gospel—the ceaseless moanings that ever and anon shall ascend from the lake of living agony—the grim and dreary imprisonment whose barriers are closed insuperably and for ever on the hopeless outcasts of vengeance—These, ye men who wear the form of godliness but show not the power of it in your training of your families—these are not the articles of your faith. To you they are as the imaginations of a legendary fable. Else why this apathy? Why so alert to the rescue of your young from even the most trifling of calamities, and this dead indifference about their exposure to the most tremendous of all? O, the secret will be out. The cause bewrayeth itself. You have not faith; and, compassed about though you be with sabbath forms and seemly observations and the semblances of a goodly and well-looking profession, yet, if you labour not specifically and in practical earnest for the souls of your children, your doings short of this are we fear but the diseased and lame offerings of hypocrisy—your Christianity we fear is a delusion.

Let me therefore, in the third place, charge it upon parents, that they make proof of their own Christianity by looking well to the Christianity of their children. They profess the rewards and the glories of Paradise to be the noblest objects which an immortal being can aspire after. To these objects then, let them guide the ambition of those young immortals who are under their own roof; and, instead of regarding them as the inmates of a habitation that is to last for ever, let them be treated as passengers in the same vessel with themselves—as fellow-voyagers to an eternal home. In the work of their common preparation for such a home, let them never cease to ply the household with their precepts, or to ply Heaven with their prayers. Paul travelling in birth that Christ may be formed in his converts, is fit to image forth the effort, the assiduity, the intense moral earnestness, wherewith parents should long and should labour for the conversion of their children. Be assured that this is an object for which one and all may be instant in season and out of season; and that no application, however pointedly directed and however urgently borne home on the consciences of any of your offspring, if under the guidance of that wisdom which winneth souls, is too much for an achievement so precious. O remember that under the roof of your lowly tenement, there might happen an event which shall cause the high arches of heaven to ring with jubilee; and that surpassing far the pomp of this world's his-

tory, is the history of many a cottage home—at which a son or a daughter turned unto righteousness becomes the reward of a parent's faithfulness, the fruit of a parent's prayers.

But—fourthly—let me not forget that the affection of Paul, as expressed in the passage before us, was not that of a Christian parent for his children, but that of a Christian man for his kinsmen in general. It was in love for the souls of all his relatives, that he could have endured any sacrifice by which he might have procured salvation to them. It was an affection which went round the whole circle of his relationship; and, under the impulse of which, we would not confine our apostolic zeal and activity to the single object of Christianising the young of our own family, but would lay ourselves out for the souls of others of our kindred—whether they lived with us under the same roof, or exchanged with us the visits of a familiar and frequent hospitality. And we cannot look upon this extension of the duty, without adverting to a most powerful and a most peculiar obstacle in the way of it—a certain mysterious delicacy, most deeply felt in many a bosom, though most difficult to be analysed—a repugnance so much as to talk of Christianity in the hearing of parents or brethren or more distant relatives, in the spirit of religious tenderness—and a repugnance that would almost strengthen into a moral impossibility, did we propose to urge upon them the Christianity of their own souls. However undescribable this antipathy is, yet we are confident of our speaking to the inward experience of many, when we affirm the existence of it; and that in truth it is often stronger and more sensitive far in reference to our own kindred, than in reference to any of our more distant and general companionship. The solitary Christian of that household, where all but himself are yet carnally-minded and of the world, feels as if spell-bound among the entanglements of an insuperable delicacy; nor can he find utterance at all for the things of sacredness, among the parents and the sisters and the other inmates and daily familiars even of a much-loved relationship; and the seriousness, wherewith his heart has of late been visited, lodges there in solitude and in silence—as if ashamed to disclose itself in the midst of a now uncongenial society; and, marvellous to tell, it can experience a greater freedom and facility of religious converse with the irreligious neighbours, than it can with the irreligious members of his own family. And thus, by an inexplicable peculiarity of temperament, do the nearest of relatives often maintain on that topic which most nearly concerns

them, a dead and immovable silence, and which for the world they cannot break; and though posting on to eternity together, yet on all the prospects and all the preparations of eternity their lips are sealed; and while on every other partnership, whether of interest or of feeling, there is the frankest and the easiest communication—yet, on this mightiest interest of all, each wraps himself in his own impregnable disguise, and positively dares not lay it open. It is so very singular, that it almost looks like a satanic influence—a sorcery by which the prince of darkness obstructs this sort of reciprocal interchange in families, lest his kingdom should suffer by it—a device by which he guards the very approaches of religious conversation; and so scares even the devout and desirous Christian away from it, that he stands speechless and we-struck even in the presence of his own brother. It is indeed a curious anomaly of our nature, and might well excite to philosophic speculation; but it has a higher claim upon our notice, in that it stays the operation of the gospel leaven among men, and forms one of the sorest impediments to the growth of Christianity in the world.

We feel the whole difficulty of advising in a matter which so many have found to be unconquerable; and yet, formidable as the difficulty is, we cannot help being assured of this as of all other temptations—that if you resist the devil he will flee from you. We are persuaded that had you only courage to break the accursed incantation, a most cheering and triumphant result would often come out of it. It is our conjecture that by a frank and intrepid management of the case, it would in many instances have an issue more pleasing and more prosperous than we at first do apprehend. We believe, that, did you openly avow to your kinsman according to the flesh the recent awakening that had come upon you, and did you pour into his ear the affectionate urgency of your now christianized regards for him—there might ensue a gratitude and a confidence that to your old and previous fellowship was altogether unknown. We are hopeful, that by taking the direct way with that relative whom you want to associate with yourself on the path of heaven, and telling him plainly both of sin and of the Saviour—that in his kindness to you, and perhaps in the conversion of his own soul, your fearlessness and your faithfulness would have their reward. We have no doubt, that, did every Christian come forth in the bosom of his own household with more bold and explicit testimonies, we should at length have vastly more of Christianity in our land; and that, did

our love for souls and our sense of the worth of eternity so far prevail as to force a way for us through the tremors and the delicacies of this our mysterious nature, we should at times realise within the precincts of home the noblest achievements of the missionary. That there would be a fierce resistance, is unquestionable; and then the generous adventurer for human souls would be put upon his charity and his wisdom. "Give not that which is holy unto dogs," and "cast not your pearls before swine," these are the precepts which might afterwards have their turn when he had acquitted himself of the duty to confess Christ before men, and proved himself not to be ashamed of His testimony. Yet even in suffering and in silence he would preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and perhaps more emphatically than if with all eloquence and all argument. Let but the meekness of wisdom never abandon him—let peace and truth and kindness be at once the guide and the ornament of his walk—let him command that homage to his practice which he failed to obtain for his principles—let him carry that admiration for the virtues of his life which by the doctrines of his creed he could not carry—And thus what he did not by his expostulations, he might do by his example and by his prayers.

It were well that we had a conscience altogether clear in this matter—that we stood fully acquitted of what we owe to each others' souls—that we could lay our hands upon our hearts; and say that we had done all which we ought, for the purpose of rescuing from the delusion that is unto death, him who is ready to perish—that we held faithful and intrepid discourse with our fellow-pilgrims on the high topics of eternity; and did whatever wisdom could approve, even among those that are without, for awakening them from the lethargy of nature, and impressing that movement upon their spirits by which they might turn from the world unto God. We know that there are difficulties and delicacies in the way; but we also know how gladly it is that many a desirous Christian takes shelter under them. We know that the formal attempt to Christianise has often misgiven; and that there have been occasions, when the whole effect of a rash and misguided enterprise has been just to call forth from the heart the reaction of a stouter and more resolute hostility than before. And, upon this consideration, there are men, even of religious earnestness, who have exonerated themselves from the task of religious conversation altogether. Now there may in this be a guilty cowardice. God knoweth. There may, in this inveterate silence be-

fore men, be the cruellest indifference to the fate of their eternity. The benevolence of nature may expatiate among all the kindnesses and courtesies of the life that now is—while the benevolence of faith is most profoundly asleep to the momentous interests of the life that is to come. In a word, because of our criminal reserve, souls may have perished everlastingly; and, just because Christianity is left out by us in conversation, many perhaps there are who have been confirmed in the habit of leaving it out of their concern altogether. Surely that which even the friends of the gospel deem not worthy of a place among the other topics of science or of taste or of politics or of trade or of agriculture, which take their respective turns in every party—we may well deem not worthy of any large or very prominent place in the general system of our affairs. It is that by our shrinking timidity, a countenance is given to that spirit of worldliness wherewith the earth throughout all its companies is overspread; and, just because Christians are not so free and frequent in their avowals as they should, the mischief is propagated more widely and settled more inveterately than before. We are aware, at the same time, that evil might ensue from unbridled and unreasonable urgencies of talk upon this subject; and that there is a time to refrain, as well as a time to venture forward. It were well, however, if amid the excuses and exonerations of which we are so fain to avail ourselves, we, like Paul, could vouch to our own consciences for the perfect sincerity wherewith we longed after the salvation of those who are around us. He could speak for himself in this matter—his conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Ghost. This heavenly judge is now looking towards us; and, agreeably to that impressive passage from the book of Proverbs, He knows whether to charge us with the barbarity that would neglect the means of averting from others their awful and everlasting condemnation. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest Behold we knew it not—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?"

It were well if what I have said should subserve, not merely its own proper and immediate purpose, but should serve the purpose of a general conviction regarding the state of your own souls. Ere you can be practically in good earnest about the eternity of your children, you must have in your own spirit a sense of the worth of eternal things. Ere you can labour for

the good of their immortality, there must be a faith in that immortality—even the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Ere you can make a distinct and business object of their conversion from sin unto the Saviour, you must be imprest with the guilt and danger of the one, as well as the all-sufficiency of the other. And, on the other hand, your habitual listlessness in the matter of family religion, is an experimental proof that you are destitute of all these things. From a thing so familiar, as just your domestic and daily habit in reference to those of your own house; and from a thing so accessible, as just the state of your own

heart in regard to the affection which it bears for the souls of your children—from these we may gather the evidences, we fear, of the entire spiritual destitution of many who are here present. In urging the Christian duty which lies upon you of watching over their souls, we feel as if we had to go back to a duty more elementary still—that is, of fleeing, for yourselves, from the wrath that shall come upon all those of carnal and unrenewed nature, who have not yet made the transition from death unto life; nor taken refuge in that Saviour whose blood alone can make atonement for the past, whose Spirit alone can revive and rectify the future.

LECTURE LXX.

ROMANS ix, 3.

“For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

BEFORE bidding a final adieu to this topic on which I have at such length detained you, I may take notice of another interesting aspect which it opens to our view. You will observe that the fervency of affection professed by Paul in this passage, is all in behalf of his own countrymen; and yet none more zealous and more indefatigable than he, in the labours of a Christian missionary among the distant climes and countries of the world. What gives more importance to this remark is the tendency in our own day to place these two causes in opposition to each other—as if they were conflicting interests that could not both be befriended by the same heart, or helped forward by one and the same hand. It might serve as a useful corrective, to look at Paul, and at the one comprehensive affection which actuated his bosom—cleaving with utmost tenacity, and with all the devotedness of a thorough patriot, to the families of his own land; and yet carrying him abroad and beyond the limits of a contracted patriotism, among all the families of the earth. The truth is, that home and foreign Christianity, instead of acting upon the heart like two forces in opposite directions, draw both the same way—so that he who has been carried forward to the largest sacrifices in behalf of the one, is the readiest for like sacrifices in behalf of the other—The friends of the near being also, as they have opportunity, the most prompt and liberal in their friendship to the distant enterprise—

recognising in man, wherever he is to be found, the same wandering outcast from the light and love of heaven, and the same befitting subject for the offers of a free salvation. We cannot therefore sympathise with those who affect an indifference to the Christianization of the heathen, till the work of Christianization shall have been completed at our own door. Let them be careful, lest there do not lurk within them a like indifference to both—lest the feelings and the principles of all true philanthropy lie asleep in their bosoms; and they, unlike to Paul who found room for the utmost affection towards the spiritual well-being of his own kinsfolk and the utmost activity among the aliens and idolaters of far distant lands, shall be convicted of deep insensibility to the concerns of the soul, of utter blindness to the work of eternity.

It holds out indeed a marvellous exhibition of our nature, that, with such dread realities as the death and the judgment before us, we should be so unmoved by any fear for ourselves and by any sympathy for our fellow-men—that such should be our heedlessness or our hardihood, that we can drown every gloomy anticipation; and spend whole hours of joyous companionship with those whom yet, according to our own principles, we still deem to be in the abyss of impenitency—that we can view them as on the brink of a precipice whence they are to be engulfed in irreversible wretchedness and woe; and, without so much as a

friendly whisper by which to warn them of their state, can thus while away the precious intervening moments in the jest and the song and the various other fascinations of a free and festive society—that even they who wear the semblance of a more declared and ostensible seriousness, can so lend themselves to a deep and ruinous illusion—and be the instruments of cradling into a still profounder infatuation than before, those familiars of their own who are speeding merrily onward to a hopeless and undone eternity. It is not that we are wholly desitute of feeling—for often they are the very men with whom we should not only rejoice when placed beside them at the hospitable board, but with whom we should weep in the hour of their dark and distressful visitation—stretching forth a hand of ready assistance in the midst of their difficulties, and bearing in our bosom a heart of kindest sympathy towards them. What other possible explanation can there be then for a phenomenon so glaring, than that we are destitute of faith!—and did the Saviour now descend to the judgment amongst us, and did the sound of the last trumpet bring the world to a pause, we fear, we fear, that, even in this age of godly profession and of gathering respect for the forms and the doctrines of godliness, there might be room for the question which Christ put to His disciples, “Verily, verily, when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith upon the earth?”

We now come to a less important matter—the difficulty which occurs in the third verse of this chapter, where Paul says that he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. Before however attempting our solution of it, on which by the way we lay no great stress, let us premise one observation on the subject of those occasional puzzles in Scripture, which have often exercised and sometimes even baffled all the ingenuities of criticism. We are aware of the objection that has been founded on them, as if they threw an air of hopeless and impracticable mystery over the pages of inspiration—as if they were utterly at variance with the character which the Bible assumes, and which infidels say it should better have supported, of being a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path—as if they darkened that road to heaven, of which it is written that a wayfaring man though a fool should not err therein—and as if they made the faith of Christians to rest on the precarious foundation of controversies that never can be settled, of hard and enigmatical sayings that never can be satisfactorily explained or clearly under-

stood—Thus throwing a painful suspicion over the whole record of Christian doctrine; and reducing those who are carried about by every wind of new and fanciful interpretation, to the state of ever learning and yet of never coming to the knowledge of the truth.

Now it might serve to disarm this objection, did we compare the real value of that which is palpable with that which is hidden or obscure in the passage before us. Grant that this imprecation of Paul upon himself does resist all our attempts at explanation, and abide an unsolved mystery in our hands—shall we therefore say of the casket which holds it, that any moral or intellectual treasure it may contain is useless to us, because locked in the concealment of a disguise that is impenetrable? Whatever we may make of the terms by which he expresses his affection, is not the affection itself patent as the light of day? Can the most unlettered reader here mistake the high worth which an apostle sets upon eternity? This at least stands forth most unequivocally, along the course of these few sentences. The sense of one little clause may be under shade, but the sentiment of the whole passage is most broadly and openly manifest. The longing of the apostle's heart after the salvation of his countrymen—the largeness of the personal surrenders that he would make to obtain it—the impressiveness of all this in the way of excitement and example to ourselves—the entire moral and practical force of the lesson which is thus held forth to us—Of these we have a most fully lucid exhibition—nor are we aware that any critical solution of the difficulty in question, would at all sensibly or materially add to the power of them. In other words, within the limit of these verses there is enough of revelation for the conscience, though not enough perhaps for the curiosity of the reader. The spirit of them might be caught by the very simplest of Christ's disciples, although in the letter of them there may be a something to baffle our profoundest commentators. We have tried to expound some of the obvious instruction wherewith this passage is replete—and if there be not enough in it to satisfy the ambition of that knowledge which puffeth up, there is at least enough in it to light up in every soul the glorious inspiration of that charity which edifieth. There may lie within its confines a yet undeveloped mystery, even as there is a spot in the sun which sensibly impairs not the force or the splendour of that luminary. And so, in the words of doubtfulness upon which we at present have alighted, there is nothing that can obscure the general character of the whole—

nothing to cloud or to enfeeble the expression of its great principle; or that can in any way dim the manifestation of that Christian philanthropy, which so blazed forth in the soul of our devoted apostle, whose heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was that they might be saved.

Now we need not have stopped perhaps for the utterance of such an observation, did it not apply to the whole Bible. It cannot be denied that in this book, there are some things hard to be understood; and that the intellect of man is still kept at bay, by some of its yet unravelled difficulties. And still, notwithstanding, it may be as fit an instrument for the general illumination of our species—as the sun, with all the partial obscurations which lie scattered over its surface, is fit for being the lamp of our world. For, in truth, with all its occasional difficulties—it, in every great lesson which it concerns man to know, shines forth with most unambiguous splendour. Who, for example, can misunderstand the high power and presidency which it throughout ascribes unto God—the subordination in which it places all creatures to their glorious and sovereign Creator—the great moral characteristics of truth and consistency and awful sacredness which it everywhere assigns to Him—His deep antipathy to sin, and the sad ruin which has followed in the train of this plague and destroyer of our species? And the grand scheme of man's recovery; and the mission to our world of that great celestial Being who is at once its author and its finisher; and the tidings of a purchased forgiveness in His name; and the offered aids of a Spirit to begin and to perfect that repentance, without which we shall all likewise perish; and the great lessons of faith, and of charity, and of heavenly-mindedness, and of self-renunciation, and of crucifixion to the world that now is, and of living in the hope of a better and lovelier world that is beyond it, and of grateful dedication to the Saviour, and of piety to God, and of peace and truth and unbounded kindness among all our fellows, and of long-suffering in the midst of provocation, and of hallowed purity not in speech or in action only but in the secret imaginations of our own heart—these, whether in the shape of doctrine or of duty, are all written as with a sun-beam on the page of Revelation: And, let the occasional blots or shadings of a darker cast be what they may—these give an overruling splendour to the whole mass and assemblage of those materials whereof this book is composed. And thus again, like the glorious lamp of heaven, is this Spiritual Sun a light that may enlighten

all lands. The prying telescope of the astronomer may find spots upon the one, which nevertheless casts a broad effulgence among the habitations of men. And the keener scrutiny of critics or commentators may lead to the view of difficulties in the other, which nevertheless escape the notice of ordinary readers, who find enough of guidance in its general illumination for the business of their souls. And many is the unlettered peasant who rejoices in the light thereof. It has translated him out of darkness; and he feels surrounded by an element of sufficient transparency, both for the direction of his footsteps and for the irradiation of his hopes. It may not be an altogether unclouded luminary, yet a luminary of force and light enough for all people—providing them with a medium of noon-day through which they may walk, and casting a general brightness and beauty over the whole field of their spiritual vision.

And striking indeed is the difference in point of manifestation, between the accomplished theologian who has nothing but the light of erudition to carry him through the Bible, and that simple Christian in whose mind a light has been struck out between the doctrines of Scripture and the depositions of his own conscience—between him who can argue from Greek the doctrine of the atonement, and him who believes it to be true because he discerns it to be the very aliment that is needed by his soul—between the scholar who is convinced by his study of its proofs, and the sinner who is convinced by his feeling of its preciousness. The one sees his Bible to be true by the light of a by-gone history—the other sees it to be true by the light of a present consciousness. To him belongs a deeper scriptural wisdom than all scholarship can bestow—a wisdom grounded on his perception of the internal evidence, as made known by the adaptations of all the doctrine which is without to all the felt necessities of the spirit which is within. That is no visionary evidence which is thus evolved between his readings of the Bible and the responses of his own heart. It is as stable and satisfying, even to the eye of intellect, as the other; and is as much more impressive as the vivacity of sentiment surpasses the coldness of mere speculation.

After these general remarks I shall not take up so much of your time with the critical solutions which have been offered of the difficulty in the letter of the passage, as I have done in attempting to unfold and to impress upon you the undoubted spirit of it. We hold it to be a triumphant vindication of the Bible from

the charge now adverted to—that while the letter is occasionally shaded with obscurities, which however by dint of scholarship are gradually clearing away, yet, in the whole spirit of it, all is direct and intelligible and decisive. In other words, there can be no mistake in regard to that which is really of most importance; and if, at times, the curiosity of man should be left unappeased—yet that far higher principle of our nature, even the conscience of man, is never left without the most explicit and satisfying light on all which concerns, either a Christian's peace with God, or the regeneration of his heart and his walk before Him. Be assured, that it is not he whose curiosity is all alive to the difficulties of Scripture, while his conscience is asleep to the clear and impressive simplicities thereof—who is the most hopeful of its disciples. And I shall therefore count it enough if you have caught the inspiration of the apostle's ardour in behalf of human souls, and feel how incumbent it is both to long and to labour for the good of their immortality.

I accordingly do not hold it necessary, to detain you by the solutions which have been given of the difficulty in the verse that is before us. If understood in the strictly literal sense of the English into which it has been rendered, it would be startling enough—for, high and heroic as the virtue of a devoted patriotism is, we could never reconcile our feelings to a sentiment so monstrous, as that of wishing oneself to be eternally damned, were it possible to obtain by this step that others should be eternally saved. We are required to love our neighbours as ourselves, but this were loving them better than ourselves—besides involving in it somewhat like the impiety of a voluntary exile from God and enmity towards Him, and that everlastingly. The common interpretation that is given of this passage, though by no means the unanimous one, is, that the word anathema in the original, and which we read here accursed, was the technical expression applied to that sentence of excommunication by which the members of the Hebrew church were put forth of its communion, and so made outcasts from all those privileges on which the countrymen of the apostle set so high a value. He had become the member of another church that had distinct privileges of its own; and whereof the Jews would naturally imagine that Christians must have the same preference, and hold them in the same sort of exclusive regard which themselves felt for the proud distinctions of their own establishment. They would think more particularly of our apostle, that, in renouncing the one and passing over to the other, he ex-

changed one set of privileges for what he of course did conceive to be nobler and higher privileges still; and Paul meets this imagination by assuring them, that there is not a privilege belonging to the Christian Society as a visible church upon earth, which he would not give up most willingly if they were only to take up his place, and enter into the fellowship from which himself had been cast out. It is not that he would give up his final salvation, but that he would give up all which was short of his final salvation—that, for example, he who made himself all things to all men if by any means he might save some, would make every lawful approximation in order to reconcile his countrymen to Christ, even though in doing so he should give such offence to all other Christians, as to bring about his own expulsion from their society. He would consent to all temporal infamy and suffering—rather than that his compatriots the Jews should persevere in their obstinate rejection of the Saviour, and incur that awful destruction which he saw to be approaching. He was addressing himself in fact to men who in a great degree were strangers to the conception of a spiritual economy, or of those its spiritual privileges which had their chief place and fulfilment in eternity. Apart from these altogether, the expression of the text had all the strength which it could possibly have to a Jewish understanding, although Paul's imprecation upon himself was felt to extend no further than to the loss of those present distinctions which belonged to him, while in communion with the Christian church, and as a recognized member of the Christian society. It is somewhat in this strain that commentators have attempted to vindicate this effusion of the apostle—though after all it may not be capable of full vindication. There might really have been a distempered extravagance in the mind of the apostle upon this subject, even as there seems to have been in Moses, when, pleading for the forgiveness of the children of Israel, he offered himself as an expiation for their sins. "Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not blot me I pray thee out of the book which thou hast written." The proposal met with rebuke and resistance in the answer that was given to it—"And the Lord said unto Moses, whosoever hath sinned against me him will I blot out of my book."

Before leaving this part of the subject, I may just take notice of an interpretation which I do think the original admits of, although not much insisted on by scripture critics. The translation really appears more literal, when, instead of being rendered 'I could wish,' it is rendered

that I did wish that myself were accursed or separated from Christ for my brethren my kinsmen according to the flesh. This signification has the further advantage of being historically true. Paul at one time did for the sake of his countrymen, did, for what he conceived to be the honour and the good of his nation, embark in a most resolute opposition to Christ and to His faith, and would gladly have consented to be in a state of everlasting disunion from Him: And this is quite pertinent to quote now, in proof of the affection which he still retained for the children of Israel. He appeals to the zeal manifested then in their behalf; and assures them that the same spirit, misdirected though it was at a former part of his life,

of fervent and devoted attachment to those of his own nation, still remained with him—although under the guidance of other views, and now directed to other objects. It is analagous to other appeals made by the apostle, when called to make his own vindication. "I have served God with all good conscience unto this day." "This I confess to thee, that so worship I the God of my fathers—believing all the things which are written in the law and the prophets." And then in this place, I protest that I have great heaviness of heart, for on your account, I did indeed wish myself separated from that very Christ, whom now I press upon your acceptance.

LECTURE LXXI.

ROMANS ix, 4—10, 12.

"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called; that is they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger."

V. 4. 'WHO are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises.'

After the utterance of his affection for the Jews, he enters upon the record of their distinctions; and to no nation under the sun does there belong so proud, so magnificent a heraldry. No minstrel of a country's fame was ever furnished so richly with topics; and the heart and fancy of our Apostle seem to kindle at the enumeration of them. They were first Israelites, or descendants of a venerable patriarch—then, selected from among all the families of the earth, they were the adopted children of God; and to them belonged the glory of this high and heavenly relationship; and with their ancestors were those covenants made which enveloped the great spiritual destinies of the human race; and the dispensation of the Law from that mountain which smoked at the touch of the Divinity was theirs; and that solemn temple service where alone the true worship of the Eternal was kept up for ages was theirs; and as their history was noble from its commencement by the fathers from whom they sprung, so at its close did it gather upon it a nobility more wondrous still by

the mighty and mysterious descendant in whom it may be said to have terminated—even Him who at once is the root and the offspring of David, and with the mention of whose name our apostle finishes this stately climax of their honours—'of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever. Amen.' They are far the most illustrious people on the face of our world. There shines upon them a transcendental glory from on high; and all that the history whether of classical or heroic ages hath enrolled of other nations are but as the lesser lights of the firmament before it.

V. 5. 'Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came who is over all God blessed for ever. Amen.'

We do not insist upon this very unequivocal expression of our Saviour's divinity, in proof of the doctrine. This is not necessary, for in every simple and unsophisticated mind an instantaneous belief must be lighted up—provided only that the Bible is held to be true. There is a delusion to which the very controversial style of almost all our theology has given rise—that our chief business with every doctrine of Christianity is to prove it. Now this is not true. Our chief business

with every doctrine is to proceed upon it. To bring it home to our conviction, there may be often, as in the present instance, no need of argument—for it may effectually be brought home, and that immediately, by a simple and authoritative statement. And it is a deep practical delusion, that after you have lodged a truth in the understanding where it lies stored among the other articles of your orthodoxy, your concern with it is all over; and you may now regard it as a matter settled and set by. Now, instead of this, your concern with it is only yet beginning; and, so far from being done with it because you now have reached a faith in its reality, that faith is but the commencement of those various influences which it is fitted to have upon the heart and history of a believer. The effect of our controversial theology is to make us regard the doctrine itself as the ultimate landing-place, at which when we arrive we may go to rest. But in Scripture, instead of the place at which we land, it is in fact regarded as the place from which we start. A doctrine is never revealed to us merely for its own sake. It is for the sake of something produced by itself, and therefore ulterior to itself. In the contests of human authorship, the terminating object is to gain the intellect of man to some doctrinal position. In this book of divine authorship, the intellect is but the avenue through which a new impulse may be given to his affections, or a new direction may be impressed upon his conduct. And thus the divinity of our Saviour, so far from being but one of the articles or abstractions of a metaphysical creed, is proposed to us in the Bible chiefly for the moral and spiritual account to which it is capable of being turned; and, agreeably to this, let us very briefly advert to two of those lessons which may be urged upon you from the consideration that Christ is God.

The first lesson is that of condescension to those of lower estate than ourselves. This is the very lesson which the apostle urges upon the Philippians; and it is just for giving enforcement and a motive to this plain and practical and every-day morality of the Christian life, that he announces to us the divinity of the Saviour. He brings down this mystery from heaven, for the purpose of lighting up by it a mutual kindness between man and man upon earth—So that in his hand, instead of being as in the hand of Athanasius a fire-brand to burn up and to destroy, it is that mild and peaceful luminary, which sheds over the face of human society the radiance of a virtue the most beautiful and the most gracious. "In lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves;" and "look not every man on his

own things but every man also on the things of others;" and "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

It is for the enhancement then of this moral lesson, that we are told of the dignity of that Personage who lighted upon our world, and that on an errand of beneficence and mercy to its sinful generations—that it was not the visit of some fellow-subject from some distant place of the creation, but a visit from the sovereign Himself, who owned all creation as His monarchy, and upholdeth all the things that are therein by the word of His power,—that the earth which we tread upon was on that occasion honoured by the footsteps, not of angel or of archangel, but by the footsteps of God manifest in the flesh—and that He, in bowing Himself down to the lowliest offices of humanity for our sakes, did so for the purpose of an example as well as for the purpose of an expiation, even that we might look on no living and created thing as beneath the notice or the condescension of our services. The distance upward between us and that mighty mysterious Being who let Himself down from heaven's high concave upon our lowly platform, surpasses by infinity the distance downward between us and any thing that breathes. Under the impulse of such a contemplation, not only might the lordliest of us all condescend to the wretched and worthless of our own species, whom either misfortune or crime has made the veriest outcasts of humanity; but we feel ourselves carried by it beyond and beneath the limits of our species, and that it should extend the compassionate regards of every Christian over the whole of sentient and suffering nature. The high court of parliament is not degraded by its attentions and its cares in behalf of inferior creatures—else the sanctuary of heaven has been degraded by its counsels in behalf of the world we occupy; and in execution of which the Lord of heaven Himself relinquished the highest seat of glory in the universe, and sojourned amidst contempt and cruelty and contradiction of sinners in this its humble and accursed territory. By our benevolence to all that is beneath us, we only imitate the glorious munificence that is above us; and though we have now lingered for such a time upon these few verses, that even the beauties of a lesson so delightful must not

tempt us to expatiate any further—yet we cannot refrain from one observation on the contrast which is suggested by it between the theology of the Bible, and the theology although made up of the very same doctrinal positions but urged by human expounders in the spirit of a fierce and intolerant dogmatism. That article of faith which in the one theology is a moral principle, and carries us forward at once to its moral application, so that we instantly find ourselves in the midst either of the most easy and familiar graces, or of the most noble virtues by which our nature can be adorned—undergoes in the other theology a transmutation into a thing of another air and aspect altogether, a dry hard ferocious metaphysical dogma, glaring frightfully upon us with an eye of menace, and set round in characters of dread and denunciation against all who shall refuse to fall down and worship it. This is not the way in which the triumphs of genuine orthodoxy are won; and the man, who exemplifies the godlike virtues of Him who is at once our God and Saviour, will do more to recommend the truth as it is in Jesus, than the stoutest and sturdiest polemic who has nought but the armour of controversy to brandish in its cause. The benign condescensions of a Howard who went about continually doing good, will do more to accredit that evangelical system which he embraced so cordially, than the boisterous invectives of a Horsley—even with all the might and momentum of that polemic arm which he lifted in defence of it. It is not that his victory was doubtful, or that on the field of conflict with his adversary he did not achieve a most signal and conclusive triumph. But it was a triumph on the arena of intellect alone; and there is not a truth in Christianity, which is not divested of more than half its power to convince and conciliate, if, propped up only by argument, there is no exhibition given of its mastery over the affections and the principles of our moral nature. It is not by the warfare of argument, but by the meekness of wisdom, that we obtain the conquests of the faith. It is when urged in the gentle and peaceable spirit which is from above that truth is omnipotent, instead of being urged in that wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God.

The second lesson is founded on the subservience of this doctrine to the peace of the believer, even as the first is founded on its subservience to his charity. We have already said that the divinity of Christ enhanced the worth of His example, in those condescending services which He rendered to the world. We now say that His divinity enhanced the worth of

that expiation, which to us is the most precious of His services. However unfathomable in all its depth, that mystery might be which angels desired to look into, certain it is, that the most unlettered Christian can apprehend a sufficiency, and can draw a comfort from the reflection that the Saviour who died for him was God. There is none, we deem, who has ever trembled at the thought of that offended sacredness against which he has sinned, who has not felt a most significant and a most substantial consolation from the thought that there is an equal sacredness in the atonement which has been made for sin. There is none who has been duly arrested by a sense of that guilt, against which the truth and the justice and the holiness of the divinity are all leagued together for its everlasting condemnation; who, if a solid and satisfying hope have arisen from the midst and the profoundness of this despair, does not feel that it is intimately linked with the divinity of Him, who poured out His soul unto the death—even that the world's guilt might be washed away. That the dignity of the sacrifice which has been made is commensurate to the dignity of the law which has been violated—that the force of the divine wrath against moral evil has had the force of a divine propitiation to neutralise it—that if the sin of the transgressor brought forth an arm of infinite strength to destroy, the sacrifice for sin is one of such prevailing force and efficacy as to have brought forth an arm of infinite strength to save him—In all this, my brethren, there is something more than the unmeaning jingle of a mere sonorous or scholastic antithesis. There is many a disciple who feels it to be the very alimment of his confidence and peace, that Christ is God over all blessed for ever, Amen.

V. 6. 'Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel.'

He had just said of his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh, that they were Israelites; and that to them belonged the promises. And yet it might appear that these promises had not been verified upon them—seeing that they were on the eve of being rejected by God, for that by this time they had rejected His Son. This calls out the apostle to a vindication of God's truth in the promises which He had made of old respecting this people. His word in these promises had not failed in its effect, although the whole of nominal Israel should not be saved. All the descendants of Israel were named after his name, but that did not constitute them to be of the true Israel—in like manner as he had said before that he is not a Jew

which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; 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 is not of men but of God.

V. 7. 'Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called.'

The promise was given to Israel—yet it no more followed from this that all the descendants of Israel should have an interest therein, than that all the seed of Abraham should be included in the fulfilment of the promised blessing—because, when announced to him at the first, it was nakedly and generally expressed, without any restriction of it to one part of his seed more than to another. In the twelfth chapter of Genesis, it is stated that the Lord appeared unto Abraham and said, that "unto thy seed will I give this land." Yet we afterwards read in the twenty-first chapter of a very numerous division of his posterity, who were to have no part in this inheritance, even the descendants of Ishmael—"for in Isaac shall thy seed be called," and the bondswoman and her son were cast out accordingly. This part of the Old Testament history is adverted to in another of Paul's epistles; and for the very purpose of illustrating the distinction between the nominal and the true Israel, between the children of the flesh and the children of the promise, between the earthly Jerusalem which then subsisted in the bondage of her yet unextinguished ritual and the Jerusalem which is above and is free—and so of vindicating that great step of the divine administration, by which so many even of Israel's natural descendants were put forth of God's spiritual kingdom, and admittance was given to the men of other tribes and other families.

V. 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.'

The object of the apostle is to break down that confidence in the flesh (as he terms it in his epistle to the Philippians) by which his countrymen were so generally blinded; and in virtue of which they arrogated so much of what might be termed a religious nobility to themselves, just because of their literal descent from the patriarch Abraham. To meet and rectify this imagination, he goes back with them to their own primeval history. He first shows how Isaac superseded Ishmael—how the child of faith, born out of due time and in opposition to all the likelihoods of nature, superseded the child of ordinary descent and in whose birth there was nothing of the miraculous—thereby

giving one instance of a disinheritance that God had passed even on the posterity of the patriarch in whom they gloried; and of another posterity being formed for him in virtue of a gracious promise on the part of God, and of a faith in that promise on the part of man. It is thus that he laboured, by such types and symbols as their own history furnished, to bring down the arrogance of those who vaunted in Abraham as their father, and said "we be his seed and were never in bondage to any man." It is thus that he prepared the understandings of those whom he addressed for another disinheritance—even of those who grounded all their imagined privileges on a carnal obedience, and sought not to be justified by faith. And it is thus also that he typified by Isaac, the child of promise and given out of the course of nature and experience to that patriarch who against hope believed in hope, all those who shall afterwards walk in the steps of faithful Abraham, and become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus—who are born again, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

V. 9. 'For this is the word of promise At this time will I come and Sarah shall have a son.'

In this verse he specifies the limitation that was actually made on the general promise unto Abraham's seed,—whereby the descendants of Ishmael, although they could plead the same natural relationship to the patriarch, were nevertheless excluded from that more close and peculiar relationship to the God, into which he was pleased to admit the descendants of Isaac.

V. 10, 12. 'And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac'—'It was said unto her The elder shall serve the younger.'

He here states a further limitation, and shows still more strikingly of how little avail the general promise given at the first was, for all and every of the descendants of Abraham. There might appear a good natural reason why Isaac should be preferred before Ishmael—the son of the wife before the son of the bondmaid; and besides, as this preference took place after their births and after the insolent behaviour of the one in mocking the other, it might warrant the idea that his rejection was a thing of desert and of moral government, and not a thing of absolute and antecedent sovereignty on the part of God. It therefore brings this out more unequivocally, when the election is made between two children of the same mother; and, moreover, when, in opposition to the natural claims of seniority, the elder is rejected and the younger is chosen. There

is even something in this latter peculiarity, that might be made to bear on the fulfilment which took place in the days of the apostle, when the first were made last and the last first; or, in other words, when the Jews that ancient people were rejected, and God, in the course of His now more advanced administration, chose the Gentiles in their place. This was matter of prophecy and preordination anterior to the birth of the children, as is evident from the intimation of God himself to Rebecca, of which we read in the book of Genesis. And as by the former instance of a limitation on the general promise, the apostle teaches that the children by faith and by miraculous regeneration have the preference over the children of nature—so, by the present instance, he rather points to the sovereignty of God. In looking to the one, we are led to connect an admission into the great spiritual family with the new birth that takes place in men upon earth. In looking to the other we are led to connect it with the mysterious counsels and destinations of eternity, with the high purposes of God in heaven.

Thus much at all events is clear in the apostle's argument. There was a promise given to Abraham in regard to his posterity; yet one branch of that posterity was rejected without invalidating the truth of the promise. After this first restriction the promise was to the seed of Isaac; yet one great division of his offspring was also rejected, without those Jews against whom the apostle now reasoned deeming the promise to have been at all violated. Last of all it was restricted to Jacob or Israel; and what the apostle argues is, that a still further rejection might take place even of his descendants, and yet God not be chargeable with having uttered a promise that was of none effect. As with all the former and successive excisions that were made on the posterity of Abraham, still a portion was reserved on whom the promised blessings had their verification or their fulfilment—so, in the tremendous excision that was about to take place by the utter destruction of the Jewish polity, a remnant might be saved. And not only so, but by movements yet undisclosed in the womb of futurity, and by the new light which these should evolve on the sense and bearing of the ancient prophecies, might there be evinced such an enlargement of the family of Abraham, as should harmonise with all the former passages of scripture history in regard to it, and, so far from falsifying, shed a lustre of consistency and truth over all its declarations.

I have the feeling on this part of our chapter, that, without a very extended

comparison of passages both in the Old and the New Testament, which were more properly addressed through the medium of authorship to a student in his closet than from the pulpit to a listener in the church, I cannot make full exhibition of those mystic harmonies between the one and the other, which, though less obvious to the general eye, are, to the devoted enquirer after the truth and meaning of the sacred volume, both most satisfying and most precious; and which serve to convince him that it is one wondrous design which runs through this composition of many ages—one great presiding Spirit that has harmonised and that actuates the whole. We feel most thoroughly persuaded, that, without entering upon the regions of fancy at all, even the most literal and sober of our ordinary Christians, if he only give time and patience to the study, will reap the most substantial conviction of a marvellous, a supernatural accordance between the two dispensations; and that, as on the one hand he will find even the books of Moses to be impregnated with gospel—so, on the other hand, he will find the doctrine which apostles taught, after being visited with the light and enlargement of Pentecost, to be but the expansion of an earlier dawn, the development of truths that were dimly shadowed forth in the imagery of the Mosaic ritual. We ask but the perseverance of his attention, and without any aid from the imaginative faculties of his nature, we promise him the discovery of many traces and analogies that are now hidden from his eyes; and which, as evincing that the one economy has given its impress to the other, will, at the same time, evince that both are the productions of a loftier and more recondite wisdom than that of man, and that both have proceeded from the same author. And this holds, not alone in the peculiarities of the Jewish ceremonial, but also in the passages of the Jewish history—which things, says the apostle of one of its plainest narratives, are an allegory. It is thus that the age of our earliest patriarchs was but the morning of a lengthened day, whose gradually increasing light shone more brightly along the track of its advancement; but still shone on the same truths now disclosed to the eye in fuller manifestation—even as the sun in the firmament has not altered the landscape on which there rested his twilight obscurity a few hours before, but only invests the same objects in a clearer element of vision, only irradiates the whole more gloriously.

And I might here advert to a very frequent experience of Christians; and that is their growing relish, as they advance in life, for the types, and the prophecies,

and the sketches of character, and the strains of olden inspiration, and the many beautiful passages of most pleasing and picturesque history, and the description of that whole machinery even to the minutest parts in it of Israel's figurative or symbolical church, which are so abundantly met with in the Old Testament. Even those stories which went to charm them in early boyhood, while they preserve all the delight of this association, now recur to them with the force of an augmented interest, because they now see them to be, throughout pervaded by the character and the meaning of their own spiritual dispensation. Like the disciples of Emmaus their hearts burn within them, while their understandings are opened to understand these scriptures; and when recognising Christ in every page, they are made to behold the bearing and the significance of the things which are written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Him. Very pleasant as to the mind of good Bishop Horne were the songs of Zion, when every morning called him anew to their study, and every evening found his spirit more satisfied than before with their richness—very pleasant to many a humble Christian, are the things which God, at sundry times and in diverse manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. It is as if the delights of imagination were superadded to the delights of piety, when the doctrines of the New are beheld in the drapery of the Old dispensation; and if there be any aged here present, who, exempted from the cares that engrossed the morning or the middle of their days, can now afford to live and to look more heaven-ward than before—we promise them, not a different gospel in the earlier from what they have found in the later scriptures, but the same gospel seen through a veil of ever brightening transparency, and heightened by the zest of many dear and youthful remembrances. It is thus that, in the study of the Old Testament, the faded spirits, the dim and the decaying lights of age have been revived again; and in the solace and satisfaction of its repeated perusal, they have experienced of the things that be recorded there, that they are written, not alone for older generations, but for our admonition also to whom the latter ends of the world have come.

We are aware that some will concur with us, in looking upon these as the befitting studies of age, just because they regard all typical and all prophetic interpretations as so many senilities—even as Voltaire, in the examples which he has quoted of the aberrations of the human understanding, along with the case of Ro-

ger Bacon having written upon witchcraft brings forward also that of Sir Isaac Newton having in his declining life written a commentary upon the book of Revelation.

Now fully admitting, as we do, that manifold have been the visions and the vagaries of those who have adventured too far either on the field of prophecy or in the work of spiritualising the Old Testament, yet we confidently affirm, that none can enter upon this walk of contemplation with intelligence and candour, without being satisfied of a most substantial accordancy between the Old and New Testaments—that they are indeed the two witnesses of Heaven speaking the same things; and, instead of emitting such cross lights as are fitted to bewilder the eye of the observer, they are the two candlesticks which man hath not planted, but which stand before the God of the whole earth. And as to our great philosopher, who transferred his mighty intellect from the study of the works of God to the study of his word, this may have taken place at the decline of his years, but not most certainly at the decline of his understanding. The truth is that he felt a kindredness between his old and his new contemplations—that after having seen further than all who went before him into the godlike harmonies of the world, he was tempted to search and at length did behold the traces of a wisdom no less marvellous in the godlike harmonies of the world—that after having looked and with steadfastness for years on the mazy face of heaven, and evolved thencefrom the magnificent cycles of astronomy, he then turned him to Scripture, and found, in the midst of now unravelled obscurities, that its cycles of prophecy were equally magnificent—and whether he cast his regards on the book of Revelation or on the book of Daniel, who, placed on the eminence of a sublime antiquity looked through the vista of many descending ages, and eyed from afar the structure and the society of modern Europe, he, whose capacious mind had so long been conversant with the orbits and the periods of the natural economy, could not but acknowledge the footsteps of the same presiding divinity in the still higher orbits of that spiritual economy which is unfolded in the Bible. And while we cannot but lament the deadly mischief, which the second-rate philosophy of infidels has done to the inferior spirits of our world; we feel it an impressive rebuke on their haughty pretensions, that all the giants and the men of might in other days, the Newtons and the Boyles and the Lockes and the Bacons of high England, have worshipped so profoundly at its shrine.

But chief of these is our great Sir Isaac, who, throned although he be by universal suffrage as the very prince of philosophers, is still the most attractive specimen of humanity which the world ever saw; and, just because the meekness of his Christian worth so softens while it irradiates the majesty of his genius: And never was there realised in the character of man so rare and so beautiful a harmony, that he who stands forth to a wondering species of loftiest achievement in science, should nevertheless move so gently and so gracefully among his fellow-men—not more honoured for the glory he won on the field of discovery, than loved by all for the milder glories of his name—his being the modest unpretending graces of a child-like nature—his being the pious simplicity of a cottage patriarch.*

LECTURE LXXII.

ROMANS ix, 11, 13—24.

“For the children being not 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.”—“As it is written Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 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. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto 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. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? 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? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles?”

WE have read these verses at once and together, because of the one principle which runs through them all—even the unexpected sovereignty of God, in the exercise of which He is so absolute, and at the same time so incomprehensible. Many of you will recollect, that, in former parts of this epistle, the same doctrine met us on our way; and that we at the time bestowed very lengthened discussion upon it. To revive that argument in all its fulness, merely because months have elapsed since its delivery, would, in fact, be making a barrier of this passage through which we should never find our way, and compelling ourselves to be forever stationary. I must therefore be content with as summary a recapitulation as possible, that we may be enabled, ere taking leave, to bring not merely this passage but also this chapter to a conclusion. My apology, as heretofore, for meddling at all with a topic that is deemed by many to be so stubborn and so hopeless, is, that we really are not at liberty to blink any of those informations which the Scripture sets before us; and if, on the one hand, we should not go out of our way to meet a theme that has been so burdened with controversy as this—neither ought we to go out of our way to shun this theme, whenever obtruded upon our notice as it is here in the record of the counsel of God. While I have already endeavoured to grapple with such dif-

ficulties as I hold to be conquerable in this high argument—I will frankly confess, what the other difficulties are which appear to me beyond the treatment of human strength or human sagacity to deal with; and before which we should bow in silence, till the mystery of God is finished and made known to us. We think that the passage now read, brings that line of demarcation into view, which marks off the one set of difficulties from the other; and it is our honest aim in the management of this question, instead of ministering to the gratification of an idle or speculative curiosity, so to shape our observations as that they shall recommend the gospel of Jesus Christ to the free acceptance of all, and have a bearing on the great interests of practical godliness.

The first point then which we have already laboured to impress is, that there is no such thing as chance or contingency in any department of nature—that this principle so readily admitted in regard to the world of matter, should also be extended to the world of mind—that if the one have its laws of motion and its regular successions and its unvarying pro-

* It must be owned however, that with all the sound philosophy which he evinced in the general question of the Christian evidences—even as Bacon did in the general view which he gave of the methods of investigation—So, as the latter failed in his more special disquisitions on the particular phenomena and laws of Nature—did the former alike fail, there is good reason to believe, in his understanding both of particular texts in the Bible, and particular doctrines of Christianity.

cesses, the other has its laws of thought and of feeling; and, in virtue of these, has all its processes alike regular and alike unvarying—that in neither is there ought so monstrous as an event uncaused, or coming forth of the womb of nonentity without having a progenitor in some event that went before it; and if not uncaused then necessary, having the same certain and precise dependence on something preceding itself which the posterior has on the prior term of any sequence—So that the phenomena of thinking and feeling and willing and doing in the spiritual department of Nature, do as surely result from the previous constitution which has been given to it, as any of the varied phenomena in the material department result from its constitution. According to this view the history of our species may be regarded as one vast progression, carried forward by definite footsteps; and with the state of each individual as surely fixed at every moment of time by the laws of mental nature, as is the situation of any planet above or of any particle of dust below by the physical laws which are established in the material world. This is that doctrine of philosophical necessity, whose ablest advocate is President Edwards of America—a clergyman of whom we might have feared that the depth of his philosophy would have spoiled him of the simplicity that is in Christ, did we not recollect that it is not against all philosophy that we are warned in the Bible, but only against vain philosophy; and of whom we might have feared that his transcendent ability for science would have hurt his sacredness, did we not recollect that it is not all science which the Bible denounces but only the science that is falsely so called: And it does reconcile us to the efforts of highest scholarship in the defence and illustration of our faith, when, looking to Edwards, we behold the most philosophical of all theologians, at the same time the humblest and the holiest of men—the most powerful in controversy with the learned, and yet the most plain and powerful of address to the consciences of a plain unlettered congregation—the most successful in finding his way through the mazes of metaphysic subtlety, and yet the honoured instrument of many awakenings, the most successful in the work of winning souls.

This first consideration on the side of a strict and determinate necessity, even in the world of mind as in that of matter, might be suggested by a mere view of nature to the philosophical observer of its sequences and its laws; but our second consideration is founded on the view of nature's God. It seems hard to deny Him,

either a prescience over all the futurities, or a sovereignty over all the events of that universe which Himself did create; or that, sitting as we conceive Him to do on a throne of omnipotence, there should be so much as one department of His vast empire, where His power does not fix all, and His intelligence does not foresee all. It greatly enhances this argument, when the department in question happens to be far the highest and noblest in creation; and it does seem to place our doctrine on very secure vantage-ground—that the denial of it would appear to involve the degradation of heaven's high monarch from entire and unexcepted supremacy, not over the material world, but certainly over the spiritual world. The apostle contends for as great a mastery on the part of God over the spirits which He has formed, as the potter has over the clay which he fashions as it pleases him; but the adversaries of an overruling necessity in mind as well as in matter, would limit God as well as man to a mere dominion of clay—or, in other words, while they admit that it is the strength of His almighty arm which gives impulse to all the particles, and both their place and their movement to the most unwieldy masses of mute and passive and unconscious materialism, they would strip Him of the like ascendancy over the moral world; they would people the whole of His living creation with a host of wayward and independent forces, in the agency of which the world of intelligence and of life took its own random direction, and drifted away from the control of Him who formed and who upholds it. For, really, should any thing happen not because the Creator hath so appointed it, but because of some power and liberty in the creature, that thing is beyond the scope of the sovereignty of God—it hath made its appearance in this universe by Him unbidden and unwilling—the history of men is abandoned to a wild misrule, through the caprice and confusion of which not even Omniscience itself can descry beforehand any character of certainty; and, in as far as the history of men is at all mingled with or has influence on the history of things, there is a vast progression of events over which God has no hold, and that wilders in loose and lawless contingency away from Him. We vainly try to reconcile with this imagination, either the foreknowledge or the supremacy of God—impossible as it is that the eye even of His prophecy can look any way through the descending steps of a series liable at every turn to the intervention of what is purely self-originated and spontaneous, or that the

hand of His power can have the entire guidance and government thereof. This consideration obtains great additional force on seeing, as we do experimentally every day, how closely interwoven causes the most minute are with consequences the most momentous, in the history of human affairs. It is quite familiar to us, that the word or thought or feeling of a moment might germinate a big and a busy story—that on what appeared the accidental meeting of two individuals in a street, such events and arrangements might turn as shall give a wholly new direction to the futurity of both—that in this way, on the very humblest of incidents the very greatest passages of history have been suspended; and could all the movements of a nation's policy be traced to their mysterious springs in the character or circumstances of the actors concerned in them, that, what in itself looked an unimportant casualty, drew the fortune of many nations, and the successive evolutions of many centuries in its train. In a world, so linked and constituted as ours is, if the destination of God do not reach to its things of greatest minuteness, then are its things of greatest magnitude beyond the reach of His ascendancy. If He ordain not the fall and the flight of every sparrow, then it is not He who ordains the rise and fall of empires. If He reign not supreme in every little chamber where the passions and the purposes of men are formed, then is He divested of all power and of all presidency in the larger transactions of our world. If He have not the command over every latent spring in the mechanism of human society, then must that mechanism drift uncontrollably away from Him. And thus, it is argued, that, if all things do not fall out with fixed and determinate certainty upon earth, He who has been styled its governor occupies in heaven but the semblance of a throne. His are the mock ensigns of authority; and if man be not a necessary agent, God is a degraded Sovereign.

Our third consideration is, that, let this necessity be as rigid and adamant as it may, it leaves all the motives and all the influences of human activity precisely where it found them. Although God is the primary, the overruling cause of every one event, whether in the world of mind or of matter, this does not supersede the proximate and the instrumental causes which come immediately before it. Although He worketh all in all, yet if it be by means that He worketh, the application of these means is still indispensable. It is so for the consummation of a good harvest, which never comes round without labour on our earth below, and the genial

influences of shower and of sunshine from the heaven above. And it is equally so for the attainment of any good in human life—in pressing forward to which, man never thinks of acting upon that extended contemplation, which reaches from the first decree of God in eternity, to the final destination in which that decree has its accomplishment. He comes in as it were at an intermediate part of the series; and enters at once into close and busy engagement with those terms of it, which succeed to each other at the place that he occupies. In labouring for example after an earthly fortune, he never thinks of mounting upwards to the purpose of the divine mind regarding it; and scarcely ever of reaching his anticipations forward, either to the sum which shall be realised at death, or which, after the accumulation and perhaps the reverses of future years, shall fall into the hands of his children's children. There is a darkness which hangs over the distant past, which he makes no attempt to penetrate. There is a darkness which hangs over the distant future, that he as little attempts to penetrate. Instead of acting the part of a speculatist with the things which lie remotely away from him, he acts with all intensity and practical earnestness on the things which are at hand. They are the likelihoods of the present adventure—they are the means which he possesses, and the arrangements which are held out to him, for his next speculation—they are the openings of trade and of correspondence which lie immediately before him—they are the calculations which he makes upon existing appearances, of the returns that might arise from his existing operations—These are what set his utmost desire and his utmost diligence agoing, and just under the excitement of a hope after the proceeds which he longs and which he labours to realise. His ambition, his keen and unsated appetite, his legitimate aim for the provision and then his interminable aspirations after the splendour of a rising family, the ardent spirit of rivalry with competitors on the same gainful walk of merchandise with himself, and the powerful charm which the fortune and the magnificence that lie in golden perspective before him have over his sanguine imagination—these may be the instruments in the hand of God for ensuring some precise destination that may have been in the view of the divine mind from the infinity that is behind us; and yet with man who never once looks backward to that infinity, these may be the very stimuli which operate on his heart, and make him the busy earnest and aspiring creature that he is. And just, my brethren, as with the business of

working for your interest in time, so it is with the business of working for your interest in eternity. I have no wish to theorise you into the doctrine of predestination; but rather to convince you of predestination, article though it be of my own and our church's creed, that it has no more to do with the present and the practical business of your Christianity, than it has to do with the present and the practical business of your counting-houses. It is in the religious as it is in the trading world. You fetch not your inducements from the hidden things that lie shrouded to mortal eye in the eternity which is past, neither do you fetch them from the things that be alike hidden to us in the yet untravelled depths of the eternity which is to come; but you walk in the light which is immediately around you. With the decree that is written in the book of heaven, with its corresponding fulfilment to be manifested on the closing day of this world's history, these are the secret things which belong unto God, and these you have positively nothing to do with. But there are revealed things which belong unto yourselves and unto your children, and with these you have to do. Repent or you shall perish—with that you have to do. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved—with that also you have to do. Cease to do evil and learn to do well—these are matters in hand and with these you have to do. Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near—this carries in it the urgency of a very pressing and present application, and with this you have to do—God has His designs, and He employs the very passions and the very interests which we are now addressing for the accomplishment of them. Yet man's part is not to speculate on these designs, but to be moved by this passion, even the fear of the coming wrath; and to proceed upon this high interest, even the good of his coming immortality. We are now standing together at one link of that extended chain which reaches from God's first decree to your final destination; and the fastening of that link is by Him who alone gives earnestness to the voice of the preacher, who alone gives susceptibility to the heart of the hearers—Yet the one is at his post when, ignorant as he is both of decrees and of destinies, he, arrested by the worth of your imperishable souls, beckons you to that plain and palpable way whereon they shall be saved; and you are at yours, when, alike ignorant of matters that are indeed too high for us, you catch the impression of a kindred feeling from his lips, and simply and practically betake yourselves to that way. It is thus that

the high predestinations of Heaven affect not the proceedings or the business of practical Christianity upon earth; and that while God, on the one hand, preordains all the children of His election unto life—man, on the other, presses forward unto life by putting to the utmost strenuousness of their laborious and busy play all the activities of his nature.

Our next consideration and the last we can propound with any degree of confidence—feeling, as we do, that we are now approaching that limit which separates the known from the unknown—is, that, as the doctrine of necessity thus understood seems to affect not our most familiar motives to human activity; so neither does it seem to affect the familiar estimate which we are in the habit of forming every day, with regard to the moral character whether it be a character of vice or of virtue in human actions. There is a species of force that does exonerate and excuse a man from all moral responsibility—the force of external violence, and by which he is compelled against his will to do that which in the matter of it is wrong; as to inflict, for example, some dire and dreadful perpetration with his hand, which in his heart, and with all the feelings and principles of his spontaneous nature, he utterly recoils from. The case is altogether different, when, instead of the deed being against the will, the will goes along with the deed; and when, instead of being driven thereto by a strength that is without him which he finds to be resistless, he is prompted thereto by the strength of an inclination within him which also turns out to be resistless. The first necessity does away all the moral characteristics; but the second necessity, it will be found, so far from doing away, serves to fix and to enhance them the more. The man into whose hand you have forced the instrument of death, and compelled against all his strong and struggling antipathies to plunge it unto the bosom of a friend, you would never regard as the object of any condemnation. The man, on the other, who has done the same act, but done it wilfully, either to execute his revenge or to satiate his thirst for blood, you never fail to execrate as a monster; and if told of one who had doubly a greater strength within him of murderous disposition than another, so that you incurred twice a greater danger by meeting him in a lone place, you would hold him to be doubly the more fiendish and execrable of the two. And it is the same with all the other vicious propensities. The stronger they are the more hateful, nay the more criminal and worthy both of reprehension and of punishment do you regard the owner of them.

If of two men you felt it necessary to be greatly more on your guard in an act of negotiation against the one than the other, because the first if you be not on your utmost vigilance will be greatly more sure to deceive and to defraud you than the second—this greater sureness, arising of course from the greater strength of his sordid and selfish appetencies, will, instead of palliating, just fasten the taint of a greater delinquency on his character.

And this is true of the good as well as of the evil propensities of our nature. The God, for example, who cannot lie—whose very omnipotence is thus limited by the force of a moral necessity—who could certainly lie if He would; but with whom, from the very revoltings of His holy and righteous nature against all that is evil, it is impossible that He would—We say of this necessity, that it enhances the worth of His character, and enthrones Him in the higher reverence of all His worshippers. And it is just so with any of our fellows, who, if so constituted as to lay upon him a moral necessity to be righteous which he felt to be invincible—would just be all the more good and estimable in our eyes. Let such be his inward mechanism, that he could not find it in his heart to do an act of cruelty or unkindness to any thing that breathes; or such

the strength of his antipathies to all that is profane or base, that he would rather die than be dishonourable; or such his unswerving fidelity to every utterance which falls from him, that you may count with as great certainty on the fulfilment of all his promises as you would on any predicted eclipse in the firmament of heaven; or, in a word, let such be his unflinching adherence to rectitude in the midst of strongest temptations, that you might reckon on his constancy to truth and to virtue with as firm an assurance as you would on the constancy of Nature—why, my brethren, all these are so many necessities, and yet they are necessities, which, so far from annihilating the moral characteristics of him who is their subject, only serve to enhance and to illustrate them the more. And they do prove, that while there is a necessity which, acting on the muscles of the outer man, would sweep away the distinction between good and evil—there is another necessity, which, acting on the motives of the inner man, would but shed a brighter moral exaltation over the one, and put a stigma on the other of a deeper moral debasement: And, so far from nullifying the difference between them, would aggravate the characteristics of both.

LECTURE LXXIII.

ROMANS ix, 11, 13—24.

“For the children being not 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.”—“As it is written Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 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. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto 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. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? 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? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour? 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; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles?”

WITHIN the circle of the preceding remarks there lies enough for the guidance of man's conduct in time, though not enough for scanning the counsels of God in eternity. The high doctrines of predestination leaves all the scope which they ever had, to the active and moral principles of our nature; and just as notwithstanding that great planetary movement of our world, in the tremendous velocity of which man it might be fancied would be hurried off its platform, yet can

he walk his earthly rounds with as great security as if all were at rest—so, amid the lofty and comprehensive movements of the great spiritual economy, man has a definite and prescribed path, in which it is simply his business to move forward; and, let the past decrees or the coming destinies which begin and which end the mighty cycle of Heaven's administration be what they may, it is our part if we but knew the place which belongs to us—it is our part to work, and to watch, and to

strive, and to pray, and to go through the whole walk and warfare of practical Christianity, just as before.

This should be enough for one who is simply bent on the attainment of his salvation, though not enough to satisfy the proud the restless spirit of soaring adventurous and speculative man—who, not content with knowing all that belongs unto himself, would lift up the enquiries of his mind to matters that are greatly too high for it; and seize, as if within the lawful domain of his intellect, on all that belongs unto God. It is precisely at this point, we think, that the real difficulties of the question begin; and they are just such difficulties as it is our wisdom, not to brave, but to retire from. This is the very point at which the apostle repels the question which he is either not willing, or more likely not able even with all his apostolical endowments, to resolve—‘Thou wilt say then Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?’

You will observe that in these words, there is an arraignment of God, and a call or a challenge for His vindication. The part which belongs to man, when plied as he is most urgently and most affectionately by the offers of the gospel, is abundantly clear. But in point of fact some do accept these offers, while others turn away from them; and when this difference between the one and the other is traced to the power and predestination of God, this brings the high policy of the Eternal into view, and the reasons of that policy are not so clear. Were the question never stirred as to the part which God has in the matter, there might be nought to embarrass or disturb us—for all is simple and shining as the light of day, about the part which man has in the matter. Could we only prevail on him to bestow all his intensity on the things which properly belong unto himself, and which himself has personally to do with, all would be plain and practical; and the great work of salvation would go on most prosperously. But we will be meddling with the things which belong unto God; and thus it is that a theology floundering beyond her depths, and compassed about with difficulties through which she cannot make her way, gives forth her hard sentences and her cabalistic sayings—when she might be otherwise and far better employed, in lifting the direct and the urgent and withal the clearly intelligible calls of the gospel. It is when in the act of plying these calls that the minister of the New Testament stands upon his vantage-ground. It is when charged with the overtures of forgiveness to guilty men, he, in the name of a beseeching God, presses the acceptance of them upon every creature

who is within the reach of his voice. It is when, in the discharge of his ample and unexcepted commission to all who are sitting and listening around him, he invites each, and forbids none, to cast their confidence on the great propitiation; and then it is impossible they can perish. It is when on the strength of this precious declaration, that whosoever cometh shall in no wise be cast out, he both sends the invitation abroad among the multitude, and brings it specifically home and with all the power of his tender and most earnest solicitations to the heart of each individual. With him there is no distinction between the elect and the reprobate, for he knocks at every door; and while it is most true, that some do welcome, and others do most obstinately and impreguably withstand him, yet his business is to address a free gospel unto all, and to lift in the hearing of all the assurance—that, for each and for every of our species, there is an open mediatorial gate to that mercy-seat where God waiteth to be gracious. Again it may be asked to explain this wondrous diversity of influence among men, and why it is that some do reject and others do receive these tidings of salvation? Our answer roundly and absolutely is that we do not know. But this we know, that the way to lessen the number of those who shall reject, and to add to the number of those who shall receive, is just to ply these tidings as heretofore in the hearing of all and for the behoof of all. It is most true that God has the power over human hearts, to turn them whithersoever he will; and if demanded why then do not all the hearts of men receive that touch from the hands of His omnipotence which might turn them unto the way of life, our reply is still that we cannot say. But this we are empowered to say, that there is not a hard-hearted sinner amongst you, who is not within the scope of the invitation, Come ye also and be saved; and to your prayers for the clean heart and the right spirit, a softening and a sanctifying influence will be made to descend upon you. For aught we know our world might have never fallen, or after having fallen, a voice may have gone forth again from Heaven, armed with a force and an efficacy of grace, to recall every individual of its departed generations; and if again the question be reiterated, why is it not so with the world we occupy, again it is our answer that we cannot tell: But this we can truly tell, that not an individual is here present, who has not the word and the warrant from Heaven's high throne, to believe in Christ that he might be saved. That thing may be conceived, whereof we have the woful evidence that it has not been realised—

even a sinless universe, whose every sun lighted up the habitations of unspotted holiness, and whose every planet was proof against the inroads of every ruthless destroyer; and if called upon to vindicate either the entry or the continuance of moral evil, we sink under the burden of the deep and the hopeless mystery, and feel it to be impracticable; but of this we can assure you, even a plain and a practicable way of escape for ourselves, both from the tyranny of evil and from the terrors of that vengeance which is due to it. And O if we but stopped at the place, where apostles stood silent and solemnized and did reverently stop before us—if, forbearing a scrutiny into the counsels of Heaven, we simply betook ourselves to that bidden walk upon earth, which will at length conduct us both to the light and love of its unclouded habitations—if, waiting and working at our allotted task here below, we would but suspend that judgment, which we can neither pluck from the mazes of the eternity that is past, nor from the yet unexplored distances of the eternity before us—in a word, if, instead of speculating we were humble enough to submit, and, instead of dogmatising were teachable enough and obedient enough to do—This were the way for arriving at the resolution of all difficulties; and we should at length, when the mystery of God was finished, emerge into that region of purest transparency where we shall know even as we are known.

Peter says of Paul in one of his epistles, "and account that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation,—even as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him, has written unto you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

We doubt not that in the reference which the one apostle makes to the writings of the other, he in the first instance had in his eye that passage in the second chapter of the Romans, where Paul says, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 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, who will render to every man according to his deeds." But we have as little doubt, that he, in the second instance, had in his eye some of those very things which now engage our attention in this ninth chapter of the Romans; and

more especially that passage which forms a most remarkable counterpart to the one last quoted, and where the long-suffering, instead of being related as it is by Peter to the salvation of sinners, seems as if related by Paul to their destruction—"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; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called ^{not} of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles."

We shall go over a few of the verses of this chapter, and lay aside that in them which is hard to be understood from that which is otherwise. It will be uniformly found that all that is difficult, attaches to those prior steps which belong to the part wherewith God had to do, before that man's part fell to be performed—leaving as clear and as comprehensible as before, both the part which man has to do, and also those posterior steps of the divine administration which follow on the part which we shall have taken in the world. Or, in other words, if there be not enough of revelation to appease the restless curiosity of man that would pry into the concerns of God, there is enough to enlighten his conscience and to guide his hopes in every thing which relates to his own proper and personal concerns.

In the eleventh verse then, we cannot refuse the statement that God had before the birth of Jacob and Esau an anterior purpose respecting their destinations; and that the actual and historical difference which afterwards took place between the two, was the effect of that purpose. Of this election on the part of God I can give no account—I submit to be informed of the fact, but I am utterly in the dark as to the reason of it. I have to remark, however, that, although this purpose according to election is not of works but of Him that calleth—although the purpose of the divine mind was the primary, the originating cause of the favour shown to Israel, yet it followeth not, that works on the part of those whom He does favour are not indispensable. You would say of a stream of water that issued first from a fountain-head, and then was collected into a reservoir or second fountain whence it flowed anew, you would say that though it came through the lower fountain, it came from or of the higher. And so of this high predestination on the part of God. All that regards either our history in time, or our final condition in eternity, might originate there; and yet it may be true, that we cannot pass onward to glory in heaven, without passing through a course

of personal righteousness upon earth. The primary will of God may be the aboriginal fountain of all the blessings which the children of life are to enjoy ; and yet there may be a secondary fountain derived therefrom—even a fountain of grace struck out in the heart of man, and whence all the virtues of moral worth and of spiritual excellence overflow upon his history. It is thus that we can harmonize the doctrine of an absolute preordination on the part of God, with the indispensable necessity of a conditional obedience on the part of man—So that while we admit the one as true on the strength of the passage now before us, we can, in perfect consistency therewith, admit to be true, and on the strength of other passages, that without holiness no man can see God—that all shall receive according to their works—that those who are predestinated unto life eternal are predestinated to be conformed beforehand unto the image of Christ, so that they shall not be ushered into the place of His exaltation, without being first adorned by the virtues of his example—and lastly, which describes the successive steps of this process, that “by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” So that though God’s primary decree is not of works, it is at least to works—insomuch that even among the children of the predestined Israel, the rewards and the preferments of eternity follow in the train of good works ; and among the children of reprobate Esau, the disgrace and the wretchedness of their irretrievable condemnation followed in the train of their evil works. In the thirteenth verse we have a quotation from Malachi, where the love and the hatred might not be the feelings on the part of the Godhead which prompted Him to His respective acts of election, but the feelings wherewith He regarded the respective characters of the good and the evil—not the prior affection which caused the difference ; but the posterior affection of a Being of whom we distinctly know that He loveth righteousness, and as distinctly know that He hateth iniquity.

The posterior affection is all that we have to go by, for indicating the moral character of God. The prior one is hidden in a depth that is behind us, and is to us unfathomable. On this point we can say no more than the apostle has done before us. He can but assert, for he makes no attempt to argue, that God may without injustice thus affix His distinctions

beforehand, on the creatures whom He calls into existence. He gives us only assertion for this in the fourteenth verse, and no more than the bare assumption of a sovereignty for God in the fifteenth verse. It is true that in the sixteenth verse, he makes a statement which admits of being qualified in the very same way with the previous statement that the purpose of God according to election is not of works. In like manner as the predestination on the part of God should be antedated before the performances or the works of righteousness on the part of man, and yet these works are indispensable—so the predestinating mercy of God should be antedated before the willing and the running of man, and yet this willing and this running are indispensable. The way in which this prior will of God goes forth and takes effect upon us, is to set us a-willing. The way in which this prior work of grace by God goeth forth and taketh effect upon us, is to set us a-working. He works in us, not to supersede, but to stimulate our working for ourselves. He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. And He does so, by the efficacy which He gives to those familiar and every-day instruments, which are within the reach of man. He does so by the moral urgency of bibles, and pulpits, and zealous messengers of salvation, and Christian parents labouring for the immortality of their children, and bringing the truths and the lessons of revelation to bear upon their consciences—so that, while behind the curtain of our visible world there is a predestinating God, the movements of whose finger we can neither trace nor account for, yet before that curtain there is a scene of movements, which correspond to those that be veiled from observation on the other side, and which being on this side are palpably before our eyes ; and what we behold of all those destined heirs of immortality is, that they are striving to enter through the gate which leads to it—and working out their own salvation—and so willing and running as that they may obtain—and putting forth all the activities of their nature, in quest of a blissful eternity—and carrying their point, only by urging onward with an intensity of effort which our Saviour Himself has characterised by the epithet of violence—Insomuch that He hath told us, how, under that economy which He has instituted, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

I cannot bid you too often, my brethren, distinguish between the anterior part of this process which belonged to God, and the present or the posterior parts which belong to man—between those secret foot-

steps of the Almighty which preceded the ushering of His creatures into the theatre of their actual existence, and the parts which now that they have been introduced upon the theatre they are called upon to perform. The darkness of thickest midnight may rest upon the one quarter of contemplation, while the other is lighted up by the blaze of noon-day effulgence. The question of what man ought to do, may be met by the promptest and the plainest deliverance. The question of what God has done amid the counsels and the measures of His past eternity, or what He is now doing behind that impenetrable mantle which lies on the hidden part of His ways—this question may be one of deepest and most hopeless obscurity. I may know the present counsel which should be given to my fellows. I know not the past counsels of the profound, the predestinating Deity.

This is a reflection that falls with overwhelming force on the perusal of the two following verses, and with mightiest emphasis of all when we come to the last clause of them. To the demand for a vindication of God's proceeding in this matter, I can only reply with the apostle in the three following verses; but, while professing all the impotence of a child when viewing God's part of the question, I cannot look to man's part of it without such distinct and decisive feelings, as I am sure will be sympathised with by all who hear me. It was the part which a haughty tyrant had taken against the liberties of a captive and subjugated people, whose piteous moanings had now reached unto heaven, and the blood of whose slaughtered little ones cried aloud for vengeance. But ere the stroke of vengeance should fall, the voice of warning was sent unto him; and repeated miracles were wrought before his eyes; and demonstrations were given of a power that was long brandished over his head, before it came down upon him with the fell swoop of a final and irreversible destruction; and, at each of the ten successive plagues, there were space and opportunity given for repentance; and if he would but have been righteous and redressed the wrongs of a sorely outraged and oppressed nation, neither would the angel of death have put

forth his hand upon the families of Egypt, nor Pharaoh and his mighty hosts have been overwhelmed in the Red sea. But after every new chastisement, did he gather into a stiffer and a prouder attitude than before; and alike cast the judgments of Israel's God and the remonstrances of Israel's patriarchs away from him; and, in despite of that sore and bitter cry which reached to his inner chamber from all the weeping families of a people to whom his own had owed their preservation, did he send forth from his despot throne the mandates of a still more reckless and relentless cruelty—aggravating a bondage that was already intolerable, and trampling more fiercely and scornfully than ever on the trembling victims of his wrath. We again say, that we positively are not able to pronounce on the movements of that secret but supreme power, in whose hands the whole power of Egypt's monarchy was but an instrument for the accomplishment of higher purposes; but, looking to him who filled that monarchy, we instantly and decisively pronounce upon the doom that rightfully belonged to him—nor, while the heart of man remaineth as it is, can he keep it from revolting against this false and unfeeling oppressor, or from rejoicing in the destiny which hurled him from his throne. And should, in this world's latter day, the scene be acted over again, between the struggles of a patriot nation and the stern resolves of a lordly and barbaric despotism—neither what is told and authoritatively told of the mysteries of a predestinating God, nor what is reasoned and irrefragably reasoned of the metaphysics of an unveering necessity, shall ever overbear the judgment or the sensibilities of our moral nature; but, in spite of ourselves, should the spectacle again be offered of a triumphant people and a tyrant overthrown—still, as heretofore, should we feel it to be a retribution of Heaven's high justice upon the one; and still unite with the other in their lofty acclaims of gratitude, loud as from the hosts of Israel when the horses and the chariots of Pharaoh were cast into the sea, and joyful as the song of Moses over his now liberated nation.

LECTURE LXXIV.

ROMANS ix, 19—24.

"Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will? 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? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour? 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; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles?"

BUT before entering upon the affirmation of Peter, we again recommend your attentive comparison of the two passages in Paul—in the one of which the part which God has in the processes, either of man's ruin or of his recovery, is adverted to by the apostle; and in the other of which the part is adverted to that man himself has in these processes. The first passage is in Romans, ix, 22—24: "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; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" The second in Romans, ii, 4—11: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 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; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath: tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God." You will observe that what the inspired writer says of God's anterior processes regarding the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy, is in the form of a query and not of an express deliverance. This is not a subject on which he lays himself out for the satisfaction of his readers, and so it remains an unrevealed mystery. But what is of chief because of practical importance to us is, that they, of whom it is said in the 9th chapter, that the long-suffering of God will terminate in their

destruction, are only those who in the language of the 2nd chapter shall be found to have despised that long-suffering—that they who are called vessels of wrath and whom God is said to have hardened in the obscure passage, are they who in the clear passage are said after their own hardness and impenitent heart to treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God—that while in the one God is represented as preparing aforehand unto glory, yet in the other He is represented as rendering to every man according to his deeds—that while in the one He is set before us as calling Jews or Gentiles of His own past ordination, yet, this must be in harmony with that which is our present concern, even that God giveth eternal life to those who have observed a patient continuance in well-doing; and tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil, whether Jew or Gentile, for there is no respect of persons with God. And thus again while a hopeless and as yet impracticable obscurity sits on God's part, there is none whatever which sitteth upon ours. We do not know why He may have selected us as the individuals in whom He worketh to will and to do; but we do know what is incumbent on us, which is to work out our own salvation. We do not know why any individuals ever come into contact with the first influences of that hardening process which shall terminate in their destruction; but we know it to be the pressing, and we shall add the practicable duty of all individuals, to harden not their own hearts—and that if any individual here present shall but awaken unto a concern for his own soul, and betake himself in good earnest to his perusals of the Bible and to his prayers, God is in readiness to descend with an influence that shall soften and shall save him, saying unto one and all "Turn unto me and I will pour out my Spirit upon you."

This brings me to the utterance of Peter "that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation"—not willing, as he says some verses before, that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

We are aware of the distinction made by theologians between the secret and the revealed will of God; and the only use we should like to make of it is this, that whatever is secret belongs unto Him and we have nothing to do with it—whatever is revealed belongs unto us and with that we have to do. What God's past ordinations are in regard to us we do not know. Paul singles out no individuals. He treats the doctrine generally, and even then bids adieu to it with a question which he leaves unsolved; and so let us leave it. What God's present attitude is in regard to us we do know; for Peter, instead of guessing at it by a question, tells us of it by an affirmation the most distinct and decisive—and not only so, but bids us beware of suffering ought that has been said by Paul to defeat or to do away the impression of it. Our wisdom is to forbear the question, and to proceed upon the affirmation; to imitate the one apostle in his speculative reserve, and to take from the other apostle the impress of his practical earnestness—assured, that, however impenetrable the haze may be which hangs over the path-way of God from His first decrees to the present moment of our history, there is now a clear path-way for man; and on which God Himself invites one and all of you to enter. He has suffered you so long, that He might still ply you with the offers of a free salvation. He did not cut you down yesterday, that this day you might be met by at least one call more; and have another opportunity of making good your reconciliation; and be again told of the open door of Christ's mediatorship; and that deep as is the crimson dye of your manifold iniquities, and provoking as the indifference has been of your past feelings to that gospel which has so oft been sounded in your hearing and sounded in vain—yet this one day more if you will but hear His voice, are we empowered to say to each and to every that God is still willing and still waiting to be gracious.

And there is one way in which you might turn to plain and practical account the doctrine of God's agency. You may propitiate it by your obedience. You may obtain it by your prayers. Instead of probing into the mystery of God hardening the heart of Pharaoh, know that there is one way in which you may realise a hardening process upon your own heart—even by your resistance of our present call. That will harden you the more against the impression of every future call. Or, instead of waiting for a special and a satisfying operation upon your own soul, know that there is a way by which you may work for it. Give all your present strength to the doing of God's will,

and ask for more. Think not that the way of your salvation is one of hidden and impracticable mystery. It is indeed a plain and a practicable way, and the way that we now want to reduce you to. Never was there a more distinct and open path laid down by any sovereign for the return of his offending subjects, than the Sovereign of heaven and earth has laid down for us His apostate creatures. He offers you forgiveness through the blood of Christ. He promises you strength and sanctification through the influences of His own free Spirit. He tells you what the new obedience of the gospel is. And He bids you enter on that obedience, trusting in the Lord and doing good continually. To incite your earnestness, He addresses Himself to the various feelings and principles of your nature—at one time moving your fears by His report of the coming vengeance, and at another your desires and your hopes by His representation of heaven and its unfading glories. And, to crown all, He stretches out even now to the guiltiest of you all the hand of a purchased and a proffered reconciliation—declaring that if you will only come over from sin unto the Saviour, He will be forthwith a Father unto you, your guide in time, your guarantee for an inheritance in eternity. Surely the God who is doing all this is wiping His hands of you. Your blood will be upon your own heads; and He, clear when He speaketh and justified when He judgeth, when He says what more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done for it, will leave you without a speech and without an argument.

This doctrine of predestination ought never to be a stumbling-block in the way of your entertaining the overtures of the gospel. Leave it to God himself to harmonise those everlasting decrees, by which He hath distinguished between the elect and the reprobate, with His present declarations of good-will to one and to all of the human family. Your business is to let the decrees alone, and to cast your joyful confidence upon the declarations. Should an earthly monarch send a message of friendship to your door, must you reject it either as unintelligible or unreal, because you have not been instructed in all the mysteries of his government? Because you cannot comprehend the policy of his empire, must you therefore not receive the offered kindness which had come from him to your dwelling-place? And ere you can appreciate the gift which he holds out for your single and specific acceptance, must you first be able to trace all the workings and all the ways of the vast the varied superintendence which belongs to him? It is truly so with God,

who, although presiding over a management which embraces all worlds and reaches from everlasting to everlasting, has nevertheless sent to each individual amongst us, the special intimation of His perfect willingness to admit us into favour; and must we, I ask, suspend our comfort and our confidence therein, till we, the occupiers of one of the humblest tenements in creation and only the creatures but of yesterday, till we shall have mastered the economy of this wondrous universe and scanned the counsels of eternity?

Although I have expatiated at such length upon this subject, it was not for the purpose of schooling you into the doctrine of predestination—for, while we deem it to be true in itself, we deem it not to be a truth the belief of which is essential to salvation. It is not even in the hope that our argument in its favour should be understood by all; nor do we hold such an understanding to be at all indispensable. Far less was it in the presumptuous imagination, that I could vindicate all the ways of God to man—for small indeed is that part of His ways to which we have access. But it was solely with the view to urge upon you, that, whatever obscurity was cast by this high doctrine on the ways of God to man, the ways of man to God were not altered, and should not at all be obscured by it—but rather that the hopes and the obligations and the whole business of your practical Christianity, are left by it on the same familiar footing as before; and that with the view of averting a great mischief incurred by those unstable and unlearned who wrest this scripture, even as they do the others, to their own destruction. You may not even understand how it is that God's predestination affects not your practice, but be assured that so it is; and grievous indeed will be your condemnation, if one principle about which you are confessedly in the dark, shall be found to have bewildered you away from the light of those other principles which are clear and conspicuous, and by proceeding with honesty and in good earnest upon which it is that you are saved. We can truly own that we entered upon this subject with reluctance, and only because it stood in our way. We now leave it without regret, unwilling to say more and yet feeling that we could scarcely have said less—though, after all, there is perhaps a remaining obscurity essentially inherent in the subject, and which no explanation can do away.

But let me hope that a time is coming, when many here present shall fondly and with felt advantage recur to it—even when

after having laboured with all diligence, and being compassed about with all the virtues of heaven, they shall attain the assurance therefrom that heaven is their destined habitation. Then indeed may the doctrine be contemplated both with safety and with profit by aged and advanced Christians, when they reflect on all that way by which they have been led, and recognise in it the grace and providence of a God who has so evidently spiritualised them—when they shall adopt the language of the apostle that it is by the grace of God I am what I am; and when, to the comfort and the gratitude which such a reflection is fitted to inspire, they shall add the humility of this other sentiment, It is God alone who hath made us to differ, and we have nothing that we did not receive.

V. 24. 'Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.'

I recur to this verse for the purpose of noticing a distinction of sentiment between two classes of theologians on that subject which has recently engrossed us—the first of whom would extend the doctrine of predestination to individuals, and make the final and everlasting condition of each single man the subject of an absolute and rigorous decree from all eternity; and the second of whom, revolted by what they feel to be the utter harshness of such a representation, would at the same time yield so far to the authority of Scripture, as to advocate a certain application of this doctrine to whole nations or collective bodies of men. That is—they will allow, not of certain individuals being predestinated to life eternal in heaven to the exclusion of all others; but they will allow of certain nations being predestined to the light of Christianity upon earth, while others are left in the darkness of superstition or of paganism. They cannot refuse, for example, that the call of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews were both of them matters of prophecy and of predestination in the counsels of heaven. But this they contend for as the whole length to which the doctrine of God's fixed and irreversible decrees ought to be carried—arguing, in fact, that the only purpose of the apostle was to vindicate the great national movement which the true religion made in his day away from his people, and onward to the other countries and people of the world. They hold the doctrine to be tolerable thus far, and chiefly because it does not infringe on the warrant of each individual man to embrace the gospel in those places where the gospel is proclaimed; and appears to leave untouched

all the practical influences, by which men are led to choose, and to resolve, and to endeavour, and to strive, and to put forth all the activities of their nature in the business both of willing and of working out their own salvation.

We have already laboured to assure you, that the most staunch and sturdy advocates of a predestination which reaches even to individuals, would contend as earnestly as others for the unexcepted range of the gospel call, and for the freest and widest scope to all the activities of gospel obedience. And we further concede the great object of the apostle throughout the whole argumentation of this chapter, to have been just to establish a national predestination; and that with the purpose of justifying the transference which was about to be made of the true religion from Jews to Gentiles. Nevertheless, he, in the course of his argument, unfolds to us the power or the predestination of God as extending to individuals also—to the good destinies of Isaac and Jacob on the one hand—to the evil destinies of Ishmael and Esau and Pharaoh upon the other. The truth is, it is by an influence upon the hearts and the histories of individuals, that He gives a direction to the fortune and to the history of nations; and again, on the state of a nation may turn both the present character and the future nay eternal condition of each individual belonging to it. They who admit of a predestination in regard to the larger historical movements of this world's kingdoms, cannot escape from the necessity of this predestination having an influence upon individuals and upon families. More especially upon the light of the gospel having been predestinated for any nation, may there depend the eternal life of every separate man in that nation who shall have embraced the gospel. But we now bid our final adieu to the general argument; and we should like to do it in the very spirit wherewith our Saviour met the speculative question of that enquirer, who asked him if there were many that should be saved. He was bidden to recall his attention from this wide and general survey, and simply look

to himself and labour for his own salvation. The reply was strive to enter in at the straight gate—for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able. And so, my brethren, would I have you to turn yourselves from the general survey of God's arrangements, to a personal search and application of your own case and interest therein. He has at least introduced the light of the gospel to that country in which you dwell. He has at least visited you with Christian Sabbaths and Christian opportunities. The effect of His having so selected and signalled our nation is, that He has selected and signalled each individual amongst you by a pointed personal offer of reconciliation. This is the matter that concerns you; and, could we only prevail upon you duly to entertain this matter, we should hold it a far higher achievement, than to furnish you with all the arguments, and exhibit even to your full conviction all the parts and proportions of our systematic theology. We tell you of God's beseeching voice. We assure you, in His name, that He wants you not to die. We bid you venture for pardon on the atonement made by Him who died for all men. We bid you apply forthwith to the Spirit of all grace and holiness, that you may be qualified to enter into that beatific heaven from whose battlements there wave the signals of welcome, and whose gates are wide open to receive you. We would bring this plain word of salvation nigh unto every conscience, and knock with it at the door of every heart; and, commissioned as we are to preach the gospel not to a chosen few while we keep it back from the hosts of the reprobate, but to preach it to every creature under heaven, we again entreat that none here present shall forbid themselves—for most assuredly God hath not forbidden them. But come unto Christ all of you who labour and are heavy-laden, and ye shall have rest. Look unto him all ye ends of the earth; and, though now placed at the farthest outskirts of a moral distance and alienation, even look unto Him and ye shall be saved.

LECTURE LXXV.

ROMANS ix, 25—33.

“As he saith also in Osce, I will call them my people which were not my people; and her beloved which was not beloved. 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. 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: for he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness; because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. 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. What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; 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.”

V. 25. ‘As he saith also in Osce, I will call them my people which were not my people; and her beloved which was not beloved.’

The apostle, with his usual skill and dexterity of argument, addressed himself as a Jew to the Jews; and so brings their own scriptures to bear upon them. He first quotes a prophecy from Hosea regarding the Gentiles; and of whom it is most distinctly stated that they were to be admitted to the same favour, by which the children of Israel had been specialised, and from which themselves had heretofore been outcasts. He thus takes shelter under the old and venerable authorities, which the very people against whom he contended held in equal reverence with himself, and proves that it is no new idea—this extension of the family of God, in such a way that other nations might enter into the same close relationship with Him of His people, which had hitherto been confined to the descendants of Israel.

V. 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.’

This verse seems necessary for describing the precise manner in which the extension was to take place. It had been no unwonted thing for Gentiles to become proselytes; but still the land they occupied was regarded as an outcast region of heathenism, and they looked to Judea as the Holy Land—to Jerusalem as the priestly and the consecrated place whereunto they looked as the great metropolis of religion, and whither many of them repaired every year to join in the solemn services of the temple. It was not in this sense however that the coming enlargement was to be brought about. In the language of our Saviour to the woman of Samaria, the hour was at hand when neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem the Father was to be worshipped. Even the local affinity, between the true religion and the country or the cities of the people of Israel, was forthwith to be dissolved; and in every nation he that

feared God and wrought righteousness was to be accepted of Him. Still proselytes from every nation under heaven came to Jerusalem at the time of their great festival; but now, without any such annual migration, a priesthood and a religious service and an acceptable worship were to be established in the very seats of idolatry. *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.

V. 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.’

The prophecy of Hosea respected the Gentiles; and is quoted for the purpose of reconciling the children of Israel to their participation, in what had been hitherto the distinguishing privileges of but one people. The prophecy of Isaiah respects Israel itself; and is quoted for the purpose of showing, and from the mouth of their greatest Prophet, that, although God had uttered promises in behalf of a seed numerous as the sand of the seashore, yet that He regarded not these promises as broken although they were made good only to a remnant of them. That prophecy referred, in the first instance, to a fell destruction which came on the children of Israel, and reduced them to but a remnant—proving it to be no strange thing in God, to have abandoned to their ruin a vast majority of the children of Abraham, even notwithstanding the word of promise which He had made to the patriarch; and therefore that this promise would be as little falsified now as it was then, although the great bulk of the nation should be reft of the divine favour, and but a small fraction of them should remain in that favour by embracing Christianity. “Esaias also crieth concerning them, Though the number, the predicted and promised number to Abraham, of descendants who should spring from him, was that they should be as the sand of the sea, yet but a remnant shall be saved.”

V. 28. ‘For he will finish the work

and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.'

This alludes to the work of vengeance, that in His righteous indignation was executed upon the children of Israel; and that, by a sudden and overwhelming invasion of their enemies. The same work was speedily to be done over again by the forces of the Roman empire; and, in like manner as the truth of God's promise to Abraham stood unimpeachable and firm because of the remnant that survived the sweeping destruction of these former days—so the impending destruction of the latter days would also leave a remnant which should vindicate the word of God from the charge of having taken none effect.

V. 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 Lord of Sabaoth signifies the Lord of Hosts. Had He left no remnant, had He made a clean and total destruction of Israel, then it would have shared in the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah—cities of which now no vestige is to be found, and of whose people the descendants are altogether lost in the history of our species. It is not so with the Jews. A goodly number of them were obedient unto the faith, and in them all the blessings promised to Abraham had their richest accomplishment. Even those who stood obstinately out in their rejection of the Saviour were not all cut off; and their posterity maintain a separate and a monumental character to this very day—at once affording a most impressive evidence of that special part which the Divinity takes in their affairs; and forming a reserve, as it were, for the fulfilment of such restoration upon them as shall pour a lustre on all the prophecies which have been delivered in their behalf; and make it obvious, that, after the many dark reverses and humiliations which this singular people have undergone, that, after all, there is not a promise which has been uttered to their patriarchs of old which has not obtained a splendid verification in the subsequent history of the race.

V. 30. 'What shall we say then?—That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.'

It might well disarm predestination of all its terrors, when we look to the way in which its fulfilments are practically brought about. There is the offer of a justifying righteousness made unto all; and they who accept, as the Gentiles in the present instance, are the objects of a

blessed predestination. The reprobate are they who decline that offer. However tremendous it may look when viewed by us from afar, among the sublime and mysterious altitudes of that past eternity where be the primary links of a vast progression reaching from the decrees of the unsearchable God to the yet unrevealed destinies of all His creatures—certain it is, that God when, instead of being contemplated in His place at the commencement of this chain where He stands at so lofty and incomprehensible a distance away from us, is contemplated in the place He occupies at the present and the contiguous links, appears to us under a very different aspect from that in which our imagination arrays Him, when we cast our regards athwart the boundless interval of those ages which are past. And whether is it better, we ask, to take our impressions of the Divinity in the act of looking to Him as God at a distance—or in the act of listening to Him as a God who is at hand? Whatever He may have purposed or done then, when creation and all its issues were fixed by an act of preordination, that reached forward unto all and embraced all—this is what He is doing now. He is stretching out for your acceptance the title-deeds to an inheritance of glory. He is offering to put into your hands a right of entry into the city which hath foundations. He is making the issues of *your* eternity, at least, to turn upon this—whether, accepting of Christ's righteousness as a gift and so coming into possession of a valid plea for the honours and rewards of heaven, you shall obtain sure entrance thereinto, or, declining this offer and casting the die upon your own righteousness, you shall utterly fail of everlasting bliss. Grant that you are the objects of a blessed predestination, here is the way in which you make it good—even by accepting through faith the righteousness of Christ as your meritorious plea of acceptance with God. Grant that any of you shall turn out to have been the objects of dire reprobation, this will not be without your refusal of an offer complied with by others, but made also unto you—made without reserve and without exception unto all. Let me entreat you then, once more, to forego the distant, and to take up with the near contemplation. Attend not to God's past decrees, but to God's present dealings with you—not to what He has written of you in that book of His secret counsels which is up in heaven, but to what He has written to you in that book of His open declarations which is now circulating freely on earth, and on a copy of which each may lay his hand. In the language of the next chapter—try not to pluck the secret of

your destiny from heaven above, or from the recesses of that eternity which is behind—try not to fetch it into the light of day from the profundity that is under your feet, or from the yet untravelled depths of that eternity which is before; but take all your direction, and the guidance of every footstep, from the word which is nigh unto you. There you read of God's beseeching voice—of His protestations, nay of His very oaths, that in your death He has no pleasure—of this proclamation the sound whereof reaches from the mercy-seat to the farthest outskirts of His sinful family, even that "whosoever calleth upon the name of his Son shall be saved." And if, on looking across the medium of that endless retrospect where clouds and darkness at last terminate the vision, you could descry nought to cheer you into confidence, learn now to regard the present attitude, and hearken to the present accents of a God—all whose thoughts to those who seek after Him, are thoughts of graciousness, and who now holds Himself forth unto all as a God benign and placable and tender.

It is said of the Gentiles that they followed not after righteousness and yet obtained it. The righteousness of that law which was written in the books of Moses, they were generally ignorant of. The righteousness of that law which was written in their own hearts, they knew but they did not follow; but there was a righteousness followed after, even till it was finished, by Christ Jesus as the substitute of sinners. This was declared to them as a righteousness in which they might appear with acceptance before God—a declaration believed by many, and according to their belief so was it done unto them.

V. 31. 'But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness hath not attained to the law of righteousness.'

The law of righteousness here is the same with the righteousness of the law. They strove by their obedience to its precepts after a right to its rewards. It was not with a view of simply adorning their character by the graces or virtues of the law, nor was it from the impulse of a love for its righteousness, that they so laboured. It was with the view of making good that condition, on which they conceived that the reward was suspended—after which they could challenge that reward as their due, as a thing that they had as much won as either the wages for which they had served, or the goods for which they had paid down the purchase-money. This was that after which they laboured, and this they fell short of. Their obedience did not come up to the high requisitions of the law, and so they missed of

its reward. On the contrary, their disobedience, both in transgressing and in coming short—their sins, both of commission and of omission, brought them under its clear and decisive condemnation. They may have fulfilled in some things, but they failed in many things; and though toiling with all the strenuousness of men whose eternity was at issue, none could overtake the whole length and breadth of its commandments.

Now observe the precise effect of this state of matters. However willing God might be that all these transgressors should be admitted into Heaven—yet this admittance of them might not be possible, so long as they on the other hand are not willing to be admitted there, but on the footing of a remuneration for their obedience. There might be enough of the disposition of kindness on the part of God to bestow heaven upon them as a present; but there might be a disposition on the part of man to decline it in this character, and to demand it as the term of a contract which they challenge the other party to fulfil. This brings the parties to a stand, and it is no light matter which they stand for. It is for a high principle of divine jurisprudence, of which we are taught in the Bible that there is a moral impossibility that it should be violated. Upon the difference between heaven as a thing of free grace to the sinner, or heaven as a thing of due and merited return to him for his obedience as it is, there just turns the difference between a vindicated and a dishonoured law. This difference man, obtuse and deadened as he is in all the sensibilities of his moral nature, might feel to be a slight one; but it was not so felt among the pure and ethereal intelligences of the upper sanctuary. The angels who are there saw the dilemma, and looked on with most intense earnestness to the evolutions of that great problem by which it might be extricated. It was a question of pure and lofty jurisprudence; and, however shadowy it might appear to beings of our grosser faculties, and withal darkened and made dull in all our perceptions of what is due to Heaven's high sacredness by the blight which sin has cast upon them—it was truly a question for which all heaven was put in motion; and on which the King who sitteth upon its throne, put forth the resources and the energies of a wisdom that is infinite. And His authoritative declaration to this our rebel world is, that the sanctions of His law could not be nullified—that all creation must pass away rather than that any of its promises or any of its threatenings should fail—that the truth and justice and righteousness of the lawgiver, admitted of nothing short from the rigid execution of

all its penalties—that sinners could not be admitted to His complacency, till their sin had been branded with the mark of an adequate condemnation; and, more particularly, that He would not descend to any compromise with those, who, instead of trembling as they ought lest the fire of an offended jealousy should go forth upon them to burn up and to destroy, persisted for their plea of acceptance in an obedience so paltry and so polluted, as being honourable enough to the Law and as every way good enough for the exalted Lawgiver.

V. 32. 'Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.'

This is a most important question, and a most instructive reply to it—more especially when we view it as given by the apostle newly emerged from the subject of predestination, on which he had just been arguing. All fresh as he was my brethren from the high topic of God's decrees, yet, on the moment that he turns himself to consider the reason why Israel fell short of the promised blessing, he lays it on the familiar topic of man's doings. The cause of their not attaining to righteousness, and so of their being excluded from life everlasting, is here resolved, not into the destinies of the Creator, but into the doings of His creatures—not into the predestination that is made by God above, but into the wrong and the wilfully wrong direction that is taken by man below. Instead of speculating on the incomprehensible mystery of that will in heaven by which some are elected into life, he tells us of the way upon earth which all men should take in order to arrive at it. And the reason simply why the children of Israel missed the object of a blissful eternity, at least the only reason which either they or we have to do with, is that they took the wrong way. They sought a righteousness which might justify them before God by the works of the law; and this proved a stumbling-stone at which they stumbled and fell, and that very far short indeed of the goal to which they were pressing forwards. They tried to master the requisitions of the law, in order thereby to get at its reward; and the law proved too hard for them. They chose to enter the lists with the judgment of the law, and that judgment therefore must take effect upon them. They have sped according to their own choice. They threw their stake on the commandments of the law; and, not having won the length of perfect obedience thereunto, nothing remains but that they must abide its condemnation.

Now what they did, the natural legality

of the human heart prompts the men of all ages to do. Our first, our natural tendency, is to seek after a righteousness—and that by a conformity to the rule of perfect righteousness. Did we attain the righteousness, we would thereby acquire a title to the reward. But the universal fact is that none do attain; and hence, with all who persist in seeking life by the law, there is but one or other term of this alternative. They either live in the apathy of a false and an ill-founded peace, or they live in the alarm of a well-founded terror—on good terms with themselves because of their imagined adequate fulfilment of the demands of the law, or on bad terms with themselves because of their sad distance and deficiency therefrom. And so they sink down into the state of mere formalists in obedience, or into the restless unconfirmed and withal most unfruitful as well as unhappy state of a perpetual fearfulness. In either state they are destitute of an availing righteousness for their acceptance with God. He will not, on the one hand, merely because men are satisfied with themselves, recognise the incomplete and tainted offerings of their human imperfection—as if they made out a full and satisfying homage to that law, all whose demands are on the side of a personal spiritual and universal holiness. Neither, on the other hand, will He sustain the dread and the distress and the painful anxieties of those who are not satisfied with themselves, as a sufficient homage done to His law. What He wants with them further is, that they should do homage to His gospel. It is well that they have such a true discernment of God's law, as clearly to perceive, that no effort of theirs can reach upward to its sublime and empyreal elevation. But it is also essential, that they should have such a true discernment of His grace, as to perceive, that, by its condescensions and by its offers, it reaches downward even to a worthlessness as humbling and as polluted as theirs. It is right that they should defer to the terror of those penalties which are denounced by the one; but it is equally right that they should defer to the truth of those promises which are held forth by the other. They ought to tremble, when be- thinking 'them of their violations' of the law; but they ought to feel re-assured, and to cease from trembling when be- thinking themselves of the sufficiency of the gospel. If it be an offence to have done disobedience to the precepts of His authority, it is also an offence to have done discredit to the overtures of His good-will. And so we read of the fearful and the unbelieving, as well as of the presumptuously secure, that both alike have

a place assigned to them in the abodes of condemnation.

V. 33. 'As it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence, and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.'

Our only method of escape from this is by fleeing unto Christ, and casting a confidence upon Him which shall never be put to shame. He is represented as being to some a stumbling-stone and rock of offence. It were entering upon a subject far too wide for us at present, did we enlarge upon all the varieties of that repugnance which is felt by men towards Christ—the absolute nausea of some at the very utterance of His name—the utter distaste for all conversation regarding Him—the antipathy, nay even hatred, which rise in the bosoms of many against His peculiarly marked and devoted followers; and, along with the toleration which very generally obtains for a meagre and moderate and mitigated Christianity, the secret revolt and the open declaration against those, who carry the doctrines and the demands of Christianity to what is apprehended to be a great deal too far. In a certain decent and regulated proportion, it is borne with; but very apt to be impatiently or indignantly flung at, when it offers to engross the whole heart, or to make too large or ostensible an inroad on the state and history of human affairs. But for a field of so much extent and latitude, we verily at present have no time; and must be content now with but one observation on a certain apparent crossness or contrariety of sentiment in the doctrines of Christ and His Apostles—which has an effect rather to gravel the understanding, than to alienate the affections of men. We advert to the place which the law and the works of the law have in the theological system of the New Testament—where at one time they are set aside as utterly insignificant; and at another it seems to be represented as the very end as the ultimate landing-place of Christianity, to make its disciples zealous and perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works. There is the semblance of a most obvious, nay very

glaring inconsistency here, which does embarrass even honest enquirers; and put them at a loss for the right adjustment of this whole question. It is a question which stumbles them, which perplexes them, and has all the effect of a painful and puzzling ambiguity upon their minds. It is not too much to say that the disgrace and the disparagement which appear to be cast by the men called evangelical, on the worth and the importance and the noble character of virtue, constitute at least one of the offences, one ground of strong and sensitive aversion, against the truth as it is in Jesus.

I cannot pretend to a full deliverance upon this subject; and will therefore only suggest a distinction which can be stated in one sentence; and should, as far as that goes, be all the more memorable; and which, if duly pondered upon, will achieve for you I think the extrication of this whole difficulty. The distinction is between the legal right to heaven which obedience may be supposed to confer, and the moral rightness of obedience in itself. When the New Testament affirms the nullity of good works, it is their nullity from their not being perfect to the object of establishing our legal right to the rewards of eternity. When the New Testament affirms the value of good works, it is their value, even though not yet perfect, in regard to their moral rightness—which moral rightness brightens more and more unto perfection, till at length it passes into the sacredness of heaven, and becomes meet for the exercises and the joys of eternity. A Christian utterly renounces all good works, as having any value in them to confer a legal right to heaven. And yet a Christian devotes himself assiduously to the performance of good works, as having in them that virtue of moral rightness which is in itself the very essence of heaven. For his legal right to heaven, his whole reliance is on the obedience of Christ, as that which hath alone won and purchased it. For his personal meetness for heaven, he plies all the strength that is in him, whether by nature or by grace, in order to perfect his own obedience.

LECTURE LXXVI.

ROMANS x, 1.

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

THE words of this text derive a special position which it here occupies. You will and an augmented interest from the very observe that it is at the close of a very

elaborate argument held by our apostle on the high topic of predestination; and from which the reader is fully warranted to imagine, that those Israelites, in whose behalf he plies Heaven with such fervent importunity, had already been the objects of Heaven's irrevocable decree. It is altogether worthy of notice, that, in this instance, the preordination of the Creator did not supersede the prayers of the creature; and that he who saw the farthest into the counsels of the Divinity above, saw nothing there which should affect either the diligence or the devotions of any humble worshipper below. We believe that there are some men with loftier reach of intellect than their fellows, who can discern the harmony between these two things; or how it is that the seat of the Eternal might be assailed with prayer, on a matter whereabout the purposes of the Eternal have been unalterably fixed from the foundations of the world. They can perceive that either the prayer, or the performance of man, is but a step in that vast progression which connects his final destiny with the first purposes of God; and that, being as indispensable a step as any single link is to the continuity of the whole chain, it must be made sure else we shall never arrive at the right or prosperous termination. In other words, if man will not address himself to the business of supplication, the blessing of salvation will not follow; and, however indelible the characters may be in which the ultimate futurities of man are written in the book of heaven, this, it would appear, should not foreclose but rather stimulate both his prayers and his efforts upon earth. There be a few who can clearly discern the adjustments of this seeming difficulty; but for these, there are many, who, should they attempt to resolve, would sink under it as a mystery of all others the most hopeless and impracticable. To these we would say that they should quit the arduous speculation, and keep by the obvious duty—taking their lesson from Paul, who, though just alighted from the daring ascents which he had made among the past ordinations of the Godhead, forthwith busies himself among the plain and the present duties of the humble Christian; and so makes it palpable to the Church throughout all ages, that, however deep or hard to be understood his article of predestination may be, there is nothing in it which should hinder performance, there is nothing in it which should hinder prayer.

Theology has its steeps and its altitudes—pinnacles far out of sight, or shooting upwardly to heaven till lost in the cloudy envelopment which surrounds them. Yet this does not hinder that there

should be a most distinct and discernible path which winds around its basement, and by which the lowliest of Zion's travellers may find an ascending way, that at length when the toils of his pilgrimage are ended, will land him in a place of purest transparency, where he shall know even as he is known. There are some whose vision can carry them more aloft among the heights of arduous speculation. Yet let none be discouraged—for there is a way of duty that may be practised and of doctrine that may be understood which is accessible to all—a way the entrance upon which requires but the union of a desirous heart with a doing hand—a union this that is often realized by the veriest babe in intellect; who, wholly unable though he be to scan the awful mysteries of a predestinating God, yet can lift the prayer both of affection and confidence, while looking to Him in the more legible as well as more lovely aspect of a God that waiteth to be gracious.

Our first remark then is that predestination should be no barrier in the way of prayer. Our second is, that unless the desire of the heart goes before it, it is no prayer at all. Prayer is the utterance of desire, and without desire is bereft of all its significancy. The virtue does not lie in the articulation—but altogether in the wish which precedes, or rather which prompts it. Prayer is an act of the soul; and the bodily organ is but the instrument and not the agent of this service. The soul which thinks and wills and places its hopes or its affections on any given object—this and this alone is the agent in prayer. Inasmuch that although not one word should have been framed by the mouth—the man might substantially be praying. It is thus that he might pray without ceasing. In company, or in business, or in any scene whatever whether of duty or of discipline, there might at least be a prayerful heart apart from the formalities of prayer—a supplicatory, a kneeling attitude, on the part of his inner man, and to which he is bowed down continually by an aspiring earnestness on the one hand to be and to do at all times as he ought; and by a lowly sense on the other hand of his native insufficiency and dependence on a higher power than his own, for being constantly up-holden in the way of rectitude. This will be sustained as prayer by Him who weigheth the secrets of the spirit; and, on the contrary, all expression disjoined from this will be dealt with as an affronting mockery of Heaven. It is true that in the case of prayer, God has committed Himself to the amplest promises of fulfilment; and all nature and providence would be

at our command, if the mere verballity of a petition upon our part were to bring upon God the literal obligation of these promises. But He is not pledged to the accomplishment of any prayer where the desire of the heart does not originate the utterance of the mouth. The want of such desire nullifies the prayer; and to imagine otherwise would be to revive the superstition of other days—when a religious service, instead of being held as a community of thought and spirit between the creature and the Creator, consisted in the mere handiwork of a certain and stated ceremonial. And be assured—that neither the counting of beads nor the conning of Pater-nosters is at all more irrational, than are those devotions, whether of the closet or the sanctuary, which the heart does not emanate. or the heart does not go along with.

This remark, obvious although it be, should be urged more especially on the coming round of every great religious anniversary. Although Popery in respect of denomination may have gone conclusively forth of our borders—yet in respect of spirit and character may it still abide in the land, and be as inveterately rooted as ever in the hearts of our population. Even long after that the creed of these realms has been purified of all that is erroneous in the dogmata of Catholics, might the conscience be infected with a certain Catholic imagination, which in truth forms by far the most misleading heresy of the Church of Rome. It consists in the charm which is ascribed to mere handiwork, to performance separate from principle, to that bodily exercise whereof the apostle saith that without godliness which is a thing of soul and sentiment altogether it profiteth little. Their delusion is that it profiteth much; and we fear it is a delusion which has left deep and enduring traces behind it, even among a people who have abjured the communion of Popery, and would treat its disciples with intolerance. Under all the disguises of our Protestantism, the inveteracy of the olden spirit breaks forth at sacraments. And when we behold of many who breathe the element of irreligion through the year, how at the proclamation of this great religious festival they come forth in families—how although on any other Sabbath the ordinary services of the house of God should be honoured with but half a congregation or with half an attendance, yet on the Sabbath and the service extraordinary, the place should teem to an overflow with worshippers—how an importance so visible should be given to this solemnity, and by those who have not habitually in their hearts any solemn reverence for the things or obligations of

sacredness—We cannot but recognise somewhat like the dregs of our ancient superstition in this great periodical homage, founded as it often is on a sort of magical or mystic spell which is ascribed to sacraments.

Be assured of this and of every other ordinance of Christianity, that, unless impregnated with life and meaning, it is but a skeleton or framework—a body without a soul—a mere service of bone and muscle—which the hand can perform, but which the heart with all its high functions of thought and sensibility has no share in. It stands in the same relation of inferiority to genuine religion, that the drudgery of an animal does to the devotion of a seraph. This is not the service which God who is a Spirit requires of his worshippers—who, to worship Him acceptably, must do it in spirit and in truth. Religion is no doubt the homage of creatures who are immeasurable beneath the Sovereign whom they address; but still it is the homage of intelligent creatures—the homage of the subordinate to the Supreme intelligence—of beings, therefore, who look with the eye of their mind towards Him who sits in presiding authority over the universe which He has made; and who at the same time are conscious, that they are looked upon with the eye of a Mind that discerns all and that judges all. In one word, if in the doing of any ordinance there be not the intercourse of mind with mind, there substantially is nothing; and yet we fear it to be just such a nothingness as is yielded by many who are regular in prayer, and who walk with decency and order through the rounds of a sacrament. In this wretched drivelling, both superstition and hypocrisy appear to be blended—a vain confidence in the efficacy of forms, and at the same time a willing substitution of them for the purer but more arduous services of a moral and spiritual obedience. It is this last alone which availeth. Your sacrament is vain, if the dedication of the whole life to God do not come after it. Your prayer is vain, if, unlike the apostle's in the text, the desire of the whole heart have not gone before it.

But let us now attend to the subject of the prayer—even that Israel might be saved. And here we may remark that although desire be a constituent part of prayer and therefore essential both to its reality and to its acceptance—yet it is not all desire thus lifted up from earth that will meet with acceptance in heaven. It were an attempt much too unwieldy at present, yet none more interesting, to specify what all the desires are of creatures here below which are sure of welcome and of a willing response in the

sanctuary above. It is not every random desire that will meet with such a reception—for the same scripture which holds out the promise of “ask and ye shall receive,” has also held out the warning that many ask and receive not “because they ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their lusts.” Still, believing as we do, that Scripture does furnish the principles by which to discriminate the warrantable from the unwarrantable—and so, if I may thus speak, to classify the topics of prayer—we know not any exposition of greater practical importance, than what those things are which we may confidently seek at the hand of God even till we have obtained them; and what those other things on the seeking after which the Bible lays such discouragement, that we dare not or rather cannot though we would pray for them in faith, or pray for them in that which gives to every request its prevalence and its power. As an example of what now I can but briefly touch upon, it is written “that if we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us.” This does not confer a sanction upon every suit or solicitation that we may press at the court of heaven, but certainly upon a vast number of them. Thus surely, every petition in that prayer which He himself hath dictated, even the Lord’s prayer may, as according most thoroughly with His own will, be preferred with utmost confidence on our part; and so it is that while we have no warrant to pray for this world’s riches, we have a perfect warrant to pray for daily bread. The same principle of agreeableness to the will of God sustains our faith, when praying in behalf either of ourselves or others, for the riches of a glorious immortality—being expressly told that God willeth such intercessions to be made for all men, and on this ground too that He willeth all men to be saved. Such is the large and liberal warrant that we have from God Himself for turning our desire into a request, when the object of that desire is salvation. No imagined desire on the part of God, or imagined destiny on the part of man, should lay an arrest on this plain exercise. Let there be but a desire in our heart after salvation, even as there was a desire in the heart of Paul for the salvation of his countrymen the Jews; and the patent way of arriving at our object is just to vent this desire in confident utterance before the mercy-seat of Heaven. So near does God bring salvation to us—So fully does He place it within the reach of all, and at the receiving of all. It is just as if we had it for the taking; or as if no obstacle whatever intervened between our sincere wish for it, and our secure posses-

sion of it. At least there seems, in that gracious economy under which we live, to be but one stepping-stone between them; and that is prayer. So very near and accessible to us has God made the blessedness of our eternity. He has positively committed His attribute of truth to the declaration, that if men will but ask He will bestow. He has invested, as it were, every honest petitioner with a power over his own future and everlasting destiny; and made the avenue so open between the earth we tread upon and His own upper sanctuary, that if the bent or aspiration of our soul be towards heaven, heaven with all its glory and its happiness is our own. This at least is the object of a most legitimate desire, and that prayer is a most legitimate one which proceedeth therefrom. Ask and ye shall receive, is a promise which embraces within the rightful scope of it, all that is good for the soul and for the soul’s eternity. And so let us ask till we receive—let us seek till we find—let us knock till the door of salvation is opened to us.

But thus to say that we may have salvation for the asking, certainly points out what may be called a very cheap way of obtaining it—Cheaper far than we naturally or usually have any imagination of. For what may be easier it is thought than the utterance of a prayer—and even although desire should be indispensable to the success of it, we will not on that account lose our object in the present instance—for who is there that desireth not the salvation of his soul? Is there a human creature that breathes, who would not like to be assured of his exemption from the agonies of a hideous and intolerable hell, and who would not prefer to spend his eternity in the palaces of heaven? Put the question even to the most reckless and abandoned in all sorts of profligacy, would it not be his dread and his aversion to lie down amongst the everlasting burnings of the place of condemnation; and would it not be his choice rather, to be regaled throughout the unceasing ages of a glorious immortality, by those rivers of pleasure, and amid those sounds of jubilee, which cease not day nor night in the paradise of God? There is an instinctive horror of pain which belongs to all, and there is an instinctive love of enjoyment which equally belongs to all; and these it may be thought, will guarantee a desire and an honest desire with every possessor of a sentient nature for his salvation from the one, and for his secure inheritance of the other. So that if it be enough for the salvation of any that it should be his heart’s desire and prayer to be saved—who after all wants the desire, and who is there that might

not pray? This of all subjects, it may well be reckoned, should be one where the instigation of the heart is in unison with the utterance of the mouth; and thus while God wills the salvation of all, and man both wills and asks it, what obstacle can exist in the way of Heaven—or why should there be the distance of a single hairbreadth between any soul and the certainty of its salvation?

That you may apprehend aright how this matter stands, let me state to you the whole extent and import of the term salvation. We are aware of its common acceptance in the world—as if it signified but a deliverance from the penalty of sin. Whereas, additionally to this, it signifies deliverance from sin itself. He shall be called Jesus said the angel, for He shall save his people from their sins—save them from a great deal more let me assure you than the torment of sin's penalty, even from the tyranny of sin's power. The one salvation is spoken of when it is said of Jesus that he hath delivered us from the wrath which is to come. The other salvation is spoken of when it is said of Him, that He hath delivered us from the present evil world. The first secures for the sinner a change of place. The second secures for him a change of principle. By the one there is effected a translation of his person, from what is locally hell to what is locally heaven. By the other there is effected a translation of his heart and spirit, from that which is the reigning character of hell to that which is the reigning character of heaven. The one is but a personal emancipation from the agonies of a tremendous suffering which is physical, to the joys of an exquisite gratification which is also physical. The other is a higher for it is a moral emancipation from the thralldom of sensuality and sin to the light and the love and the liberty of a new heaven-born sacredness. This last is an inseparable constituent of the gospel salvation—or rather I would say that it is the constituting essence of it. The other is more the accompaniment than the essence. The essential salvation surely is that which stands related to the moral economy of man, even his deliverance from sin unto holiness. The subordinate or the accessory salvation is that which stands related to his animal or sentient economy, even his deliverance from the fire and brimstone of hell to the music and the splendour and the sensible enjoy-

ments and the everlasting security of heaven. The one takes place after death. The other takes place now. At least it has its commencement in time, though its perfect consummation is in eternity.

You will now understand what the legitimate desire is which should animate the heart when the mouth utters a prayer for salvation. There is the desire it is true for a future and everlasting happiness—but there is also desire for present holiness. There is no other salvation held out to us in promise or in prospect throughout the New Testament. It is the only salvation which man has a warrant to ask; and it is the only salvation which God is willing to bestow. Nothing more true than that if man really wills the thing which he prays for, and if the thing be agreeable to the will of God, he will certainly obtain it. Now God, on the one hand, willetth all men to be saved; and if any one of these men, on the other, will for his salvation, every barrier appears to be done away, and the sinner is on the eve of a great and glorious enlargement. But be sure that you understand what this will for salvation means. It is not merely that the hand of vengeance shall be lifted off from you. It is also that the spirit of glory and of virtue shall rest upon you. It is not merely that you shall obtain a personal exemption from that lake of living agony into which are thrown the outcasts of condemnation. It is also that you shall obtain a spiritual exemption from the vice and the voluptuousness and all the worldly affections which animate the passions and pursuits of the unregenerate upon earth. It is not alone for some vague and indefinite blessedness in future. It is for a renovation of taste and of character at present. The man in fact who desires aright and prays aright for the object of his salvation, is not merely on the eve of a great revolution in his prospects for eternity. He is on the eve of a great moral revolution in his heart and in his history at this moment. His prayer to be saved embraces it is true the transference of his person on the other side of death, from the torments of hell to the transports of paradise—but without a transference of character on this side of death the thing is impossible; and so there is enveloped in the prayer this cry of aspiring earnestness—"O God create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me."

LECTURE LXXVII.

ROMANS X, 1.

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

MAN on the one hand might like to be put into a state of happiness without holiness; but God on the other hand does not like that such a happiness shall be conferred upon him. Let a sinner pray with all fervency for his deliverance from hell and translation into heaven—he prays for that which is not agreeable to the will of God, if he desire not at the same time to be filled with heaven’s charity and heaven’s sacredness. Heaven we are told is that pure and holy place into which nought that is impure and nought that is unholy can enter; and the sinner who cries for salvation yet would keep by his impurities, is wasting the desirousness of his heart on an object that is impossible. It is most assuredly not God’s will that heaven should be peopled with any but those, who, of the same family likeness with Himself, reflect His own image back again upon that throne which is irradiated with the lustre and the loveliness of all virtue. It is said that when He first willed the visible creation into existence, and looked over that terrestrial platform which His hand had garnished with so many beauties, He pronounced it to be all very good. Even for the graces of mute and unconscious materialism the Divinity may be said to have a taste and an approbation; and in the tints and the forms of Nature’s glorious panorama, its ocean and its landscapes and its skies, hath the Supreme Architect of our universe embodied His own primary conceptions of the fair and the exquisite and the noble. He delights in beauty, and is revolted by deformity even in the world of matter; and the far higher characteristics which obtain in the world of spirits, call forth proportionally higher and stronger affections in the breast of the Godhead. He loves the happiness of His creatures, but He loves their virtue more. And so from that moral landscape in paradise by which His own immediate presence is surrounded, all that offendeth shall be rooted out. There is nought of the sinful or the sordid that can be admitted there. The God who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity would not tolerate the sight of what is evil. Heaven is the place of His own especial residence; and He will fill and beautify it according to His own taste for the higher graces of the mind, to His own conceptions of spiritual worth and spiritual excellence. To suit

Him, it must be a land of uprightness; and love must be the music which gladdens it; and the atmosphere which blows and circulates around its habitations must be one of ethereal purity. Himself will lay out and decorate the precincts of His own dwelling-place—nor will He suffer aught to settle there which can violate the moral harmony of such a scene, or mar the spectacle of its perfect and unspotted holiness.

Now remember that in praying to be saved, you just pray that such a heaven may be the place of your settlement through all eternity. Else there is no significance in your prayer. It is not enough that you seize by faith on a deed of justification. You must with diligence and effort and all the expedients of moral and spiritual culture, enter forthwith on a busy process of sanctification. It is well that Jesus Christ hath by the expiation of the cross, moved away that barrier which obstructed our access to the Jerusalem above. But, now that a way for the ransomed of the Lord is open, let us forget not that it is the way of holiness. There is a work of salvation going on in heaven, and by which Jesus Christ in some way that He hath not explained is there employed in preparing a place for us. “I go to prepare a place for you.” But there is also a work of salvation going on in earth, and by which Jesus Christ through His word and Spirit is here employed in preparing us for the place. And our distinct business is to be ever practising and ever improving ourselves in the virtues of this preparation. It is not a selfish affection for happiness in the general which forms the leading principle of Christianity. It is a sacred affection for that happiness which lies in holiness—or rather for that holiness, which, to every being possessed of a moral nature, brings the best and the highest happiness in its train. In one word, if you take the right aim for salvation, it must be a moral heaven to which you aspire; and ere you can find entrance into such a heaven you must be moralised.

This desire for salvation then, if rightly understood, is desire for a present holiness. This longing after heaven at the last, is, with every honest and intelligent disciple, a longing after the virtues now which flourish there. There will be an immediate entrance on heaven’s uprightness and heaven’s piety. So long as we

are in this world, we have neither reached the hell or the heaven of eternity. We are only on the one or the other of those paths which lead to them. Now to turn from the wrong to the right path, is just to turn from sin unto sacredness. And, in the very act of so turning, we receive strength for all the fatigues of that new journey which leadeth unto Zion. Turn unto me says God, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you. This influence from on high will be given to your efforts and your prayers. Your prayer for some abstract and indefinite beatitude in another state of being, is not a prayer which accords with the will of God; and can no more be listened to by Him or meet with acceptance, than any sordid or selfish petition for some luxury or splendour of this world which your heart is set upon. But when, instead of this, the prayer is for that beatitude which lies in holiness; when it is a prayer for the very beatitude of the good and the glorified spirits in heaven; when the desire for a joyful eternity above is thus consecrated by a desire for grace and godliness below; in one word, when, in place of a mere animal or selfish aspiration for the comfort, it becomes a moral and a sacred aspiration for the character of heaven, the prayer to a holy Creator from a creature desirous to be holy—then, in the answer of such a prayer, will the gospel make full vindication of that gracious economy which it announces to the world. The pardon of his sins through the blood of Christ, is as free to him as are the light and air of heaven to the commoners of nature. The spirit who gives him victory over his sins and upholds him on his advancing way to all righteousness, is alike free to him—nor does there exist one obstacle in the way of his salvation, who is honestly intent to be as he ought and to do as he ought.

This argument is not wholly inapplicable at a sacramental season, which generally more than usual is a season of devotion. There comes now upon many a spirit a greater than its wonted desirousness about the things of eternity; and there is withal the imagination that what you are to do upon the morrow,* is somehow connected with the furtherance and the security of your everlasting interests. Now the impression which I want to leave upon you is, that your good in a future world can in no conceivable way be promoted by it, but in so far as it subserves your goodness in this world. The literalities of a sacramental observation will of themselves avail you nothing; and there is superstition, at once the most deceitful

and degrading superstition, in the thought that your claim for heaven can at all be improved by an act of sacredness which leaves not one habit or one affection of sacredness behind it. This we particularly address to those who make due presentation of themselves on the communion Sabbath, and discharge themselves of all the punctualities of the communion table, and yet the whole year round cleave most tenaciously and with hearts full of secularity to the dust of a perishable world—who in hand and in person intronit with all the forms of the ordinance, but catch not so much as one breath upon their spirits from the air of the upper sanctuary—or, if they do experience among the solemnities of a rare and remarkable occasion some transient inspiration, all is dissipated, and goes to nought, when they return to their homes and thence lapse again into all the earthliness of their unchanged natures. Be assured that the part you thus take in what may be called the mechanism of a sacrament, without any part in the mind which should animate and pervade it, will leave no other bearing on your immortal state than just to aggravate your condemnation; and therefore to escape the guilt which lies in this mockery of Heaven, and to turn the morrow's service into the real purposes of your salvation, let me entreat you to open your heart to the affecting realities which are couched in the symbols and shadowed forth as it were in the acts of the institution. The bread and the wine which are the memorials of your atonement should encourage even the guiltiest of you all to draw nigh in faith—for there is no guilt beyond the reach of that atonement. But remember that you also draw nigh with full purpose of heart after the new obedience of the gospel. Coming thus, you are warranted to sit down at the table of the sacrament; and the prayers of a heart desirous of a present holiness as of a future heaven, will most surely meet with acceptance, and as surely be answered with power. Your prayer to be saved from the punishment of sin, lifted while the emblems of the Redeemer's sacrifice are before you, will most certainly prevail. Your prayer to be saved from the power of sin, lifted in the presence of Him who is Master of the assembly and to whom the dispensation of the Spirit has been committed, will as certainly prevail; and your joining in this ordinance will contribute to save, just as far as it contributes to sanctify you.

But I have all along spoken as if this were a direct prayer for the object of one's own personal salvation. Whereas it is an intercessory prayer, and suggests what we ought to do for the salvation of

* Preached on the day before a Sacrament.

those who are dear to us. Paul had made many a vain effort for the salvation of his countrymen. In every city where he found them, he began with the Jews ere he addressed the overtures of the gospel to the Gentiles. His obligation to them was the first obligation of which he acquitted himself. In the discharge of it he incurred many a hazard; and brought upon himself the hatred of those who had been formerly his friends; and made prodigious exertion in the way of travelling, and preaching, and doing all the labours of the apostolical office, in behalf of these his kinsmen according to the flesh; and not till compelled by the hostility of a whole nation either to flee from place to place, or turn him to the Gentiles, did he desist from the strenuousness of his efforts to secure the immortal well-being of those in his own family or in his own land. And even after every effort failed, still he had recourse to prayer. The desire of his heart was not extinguished by the disappointment he met with upon earth; but when baffled and thrown back upon him there, it took an upward direction to heaven—when obstructed on all sides by the resistance of man, it ascended without obstruction to the throne of God. Even in the busiest period of his work and his warfare for the conversion of these obstinate Israelites, he mixed with his activities his prayers—but after that the activities were repressed, the prayers continued to arise. He was forced to desist from the labours of the hand—but the love in his heart still abode unquenched and unquenchable: and when he could do no more, he prayed for them. This survived the longest and the last of all the other expedients; and long after he had found it was vain to labour, he did not think it was vain to pray.

This might serve as admonition to those whose hearts are set on the eternity of relatives or friends—to the mother who has watched and laboured for years that the good seed might have fixture in the hearts of her children, but does not find that this precious deposit has yet settled or had occupation there—to the sister whose gentle yet earnest remonstrances have been wholly unable to control a brother's waywardness—to that one member perhaps of a family whom the grace of the Spirit hath selected, and who now strives and supplicates in the midst of an alienated household, that all may be arrested in their way and turned unto God—to that holy and heaven-born disciple, whom the pollutions of the world have touched not; but who standing alone in a companionship of scorners, mourns over the profaneness and the profligacy that hitherto have marked all his solemn

warnings, all his friendly but ineffectual protestations. All these may, like other zealous missionaries, have had but a hard experience. They may have long been in contact and collision with the power of sin and unbelief in the hearts of others, and had much to discourage them. Their fidelity may have given offence—their affectionate counsels may have been spurned—their moral earnestness may have been laughed at—all their expedients to impress or to convince may have vanished into impotency—their very speech may at length become a signal for the attitude of suspicion and of prompt resistance on the part of their fellows—And so their every argument might only strengthen, might only confirm, the impenitency which it was meant to soften or do away. In these, and in many other ways, might they receive most palpable intimation that they are doing no good; and even perhaps but fixing more inveterately than before the distaste of children or of friends for God and godliness. And so might they be tempted to desist, even as the apostles desisted, from their countrymen. Yet let them never forget, that what has heretofore been impracticable to performance may not be impracticable to prayer. With man it may be impossible; but with God all things are possible. That cause which has so oft been defeated and is now hopeless on the field of exertion, may on the field of prayer and of faith be triumphant. Never cease then your supplications to the sanctuary above; for that power to turn the unregenerate and subdue them—which all your experience has told you does not reside unless it be given, in the earthen vessels that are below. Let those anxieties for the Christianity either of your household or of your acquaintanceship, which have hitherto been so unproductive of good—let them still continue to be unbosomed as before in the ear of your Father in heaven. He willeth intercessions to be made for all men, and He willeth all men to be saved. These declarations place you on firm and high vantage-ground in praying for human souls; and never, we may be well assured, never, can any intercession be lifted with greater acceptance than that of a Christian parent, when he asks in behalf of those children who now gladden his home upon earth—that they shall be preserved and permitted to spend with Him their eternity in heaven.

It must not be disguised however, that this is a matter on which parents may delude themselves—that in their disinclination to spiritual things, and their indolence together, they may be glad to stand exonerated from the fatigues of performance, and take refuge in the formalities

of prayer—that under the semblance of doing homage to the omnipotence of grace, they may omit the doing of those things which it is the office of grace to make effectual for the conversion of the human spirit—that in contemplating the part of the Holy Ghost as the agent, they may forget their own part as the instruments of this mighty operation; And therefore would we warn them lest they turn the orthodoxy of their creed, into a justification for the laxity and remissness of their conduct. That prayer never can avail which is not the prayer of honesty; and it is not the prayer of honesty, if, even though you pray to the uttermost for the religion of others, you do not also perform to the uttermost. Could we only purge the prayers of men of all their hypocrisy, then should we behold the pro-

mises of the Bible nobly accredited by the verifications of experience; and the interchange of petitions and their responses between heaven and earth would demonstrate to the eye of observation, that there was indeed a living reality in the gospel. Even as it is, though we cannot just say that Christianity always runs in families, yet frequent enough are the instances of a transmitted faith and a transmitted holiness from parents unto children—to assure us that did the former but acquire themselves in all strenuousness and with all supplication, of their duty, the blessing of an efficiency from above would descend upon the souls of the latter; and manifold more than at present would be the examples of those who were born unto Christian parents being also born unto God.

LECTURE LXXVIII.

ROMANS x, 2.

“For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”

VER. 2. It is evident from this verse that the Israelites had one good quality while they wanted another. But the remarkable thing—I had almost said the strange thing of this verse—is, that the apostle should make their possession of this one good quality the reason of his prayer. ‘It is my prayer that they might be saved—for I bear them record that they have a zeal of God.’ They had zeal, but they wanted knowledge. One would think, that, if they wanted both, they would at least stand in greater need of his prayers; and the mystery is, how it comes about, that their having something of what is good should be the moving cause why Paul should be led to pray for their supreme good, even the everlasting salvation of their souls—a pretty plain intimation, that if they had not been in the possession at least of this something, if they had not had thus much of good, even zeal for God, he would not have prayed for them.

The only explanation I can give of this peculiarity, and it appears to me a very probable one, is this. You know that it is only the prayer of faith that availeth; and that in proportion as this faith is staggered or weakened in any manner, in that proportion prayer loses of its efficacy. It is thus that you have not the same heart, the same encouragement, the same confidence, in praying for

some great and palpable unlikelihood—as in praying for that which you either know to be agreeable to the will of God, or to be in harmony with the established processes of nature and of providence. It is thus that you could not pray so hopefully for the salvation of a thorough and confirmed reprobate, as for that of a man in whom you could perceive some lurking remainders of good—some aspirations towards a state of betterness—some symptoms or promises of a coming penitency or coming amendment. When all these are utterly extinguished, then faith is extinguished, and the tongue of prayer is either put to silence or paralysed. There is the despair of any reformation; and whosoever asks for that which he despairs of, let not that man think that he shall obtain it of the Lord. There is a dependence affirmed constantly in the New Testament between that faith wherewith a prayer ascends upwardly to heaven, and that fulfilment which comes in answer thereto downwardly upon earth; and whatever therefore shall tell adversely or favourably on the faith of supplicants below, must tell adversely or favourably on the fulfilments that are granted in the sanctuary above. And so it is just as if all chance of a man’s salvation were done away, when all hope of it had died away from the hearts of those who should pray for it.

There is an observable harmony here between that process which takes place in the hearts of believers, and that process which takes place in the counsels and acts of the upper sanctuary. You know that according to the usual methods of the divine administration, the Spirit is given in larger measure and larger manifestations to those who have dutifully responded to His earlier intimations, or made right and faithful use of His first and feeblere influences upon their hearts—whereas He is more and more withdrawn from those who quarrel or who resist these first impressions of His upon the conscience—so that at length He may take a final and irrecoverable departure away from their souls, and abandon to their own infatuation the unhappy men, who, growing every year in moral hardness, live in the recklessness of all that is sacred, and die at the last in fatal impenitency. With this view of it you will be at no loss to understand the saying—that to him who hath, more shall be given; and from him who hath not, there shall be taken away even that which he hath. Paul himself, who served God with good conscience from his youth, though then in ignorance and in unbelief, had at length a full revelation given to him—whereas those of his countrymen who even against conscience maligned and resisted the Saviour, and so put away from them the things which belonged to their peace, were delivered up to that state of judicial blindness in which they were forever hid from their eyes. The life of a Christian is made up of perpetual accessions of grace from one degree of it to another, till he arrives at perfection, and is ripe for glory. The life of an impenitent is made up of perpetual and successive extinctions of one good feeling, of one lingering sensibility after another, till he pass away into utter darkness, and is ripe for the awful the irremediable destruction which follows it. There is a point somewhere in this dismal this descending pathway, where the irrecoverable step is taken, and he has sinned unto death. You will here be reminded of the apostle John, who bids us pray for those who have not sinned unto death; but who adds that there is a “sin unto death and I do not say that he should pray for it.” Now, as the last symptoms of any remaining good die away from the character of these reprobates, so the last sparks of a hope for their recovery die away from the hearts of by-standers who are looking on, and who at length cease to persuade and even cease to pray for them. Paul had not just sunk so low in despondency with regard to the Jews, He was not yet discouraged out of all faith and

all prayer about them. He still observed one good point or property in the character of that nation—a zeal of God, even that very zeal which actuated himself when he breathed forth threatenings and slaughter against Christians—And so he still could hope, and still could pray for them.

From the materials of such an argument as this there may be constructed a powerful appeal, by which, if possible, to arrest the headlong way of that moral desperado, who, hastening on from one enormity to another, is fast losing all the delicacies of conscience, the truth and the tenderness of other days—in whose breast that light of the inner man which has been termed the candle of the Lord is fading away to its ultimate extinction; and whom the Spirit, tired and provoked by the stubborn resistance of all His warning, is on the eve perhaps of abandoning, and that forever, to his own heart's wickedness since he will have it so. Every year finds him a more confirmed alien from God, and stouter in all the purposes of rebellion than before. The disease of his soul grows and gathers in inveteracy—till, encrusted all over with that judicial hardness to which he has been delivered, all the touching demonstrations of Providence and all the loud artillery of menacing sermons play upon him in vain. Even when age and disease overtake him, even the alarm bell of his coming mortality might bring no terror to his ear; and with all his sensibilities lying prostrate under the power of that corruption which has withered them, he may be alike unappalled by the demonstrations of his guilt, and the fell denunciations of the vengeance which is due to it. The truth is that he is sunken, he is profoundly sunken in spiritual lethargy; and now beyond the possibility of recall, he affords the dire and the dreadful spectacle of a helpless a hopeless creature, whom the Spirit of God hath irrecoverably forsaken. Know then all ye regardless hearers who have entered and are now walking on a path of wilful iniquity, that this is the state to which you are descending. Your friends behold the progress of this impenitency. They sigh and they even supplicate Heaven on your account; but the time may speedily arrive, when the characteristics of your impiety shall look so indelible and so desperate, that to supplicate in faith is beyond them. And O is it not time to retrace your footsteps on this way of destruction, unknowing as you are how near or how soon you shall be on the verge of that condition when the Spirit of God shall cease to strive; and the very parents who gave you birth may weep, but cannot pray for you!

The Jewish character was not yet so utterly desolated of all worth and goodness, as to drive the apostle from hope's last refuge—even prayer. They wanted knowledge, but they had zeal; and this so far propped his spirit in that exercise, to the success of which a certain faith and a certain hopefulness are so indispensable. That must have been a valuable property, in virtue of which they could still be prayed for. But that on the other hand must have been a most important and essential property, from the want of which they eventually perished. Had they added knowledge to their zeal, they would still have remained the favourites of Heaven; and from the actual history of the Jewish people, we may learn what a serious want the want of knowledge is. That day of their tremendous visitation, in the prospect of which our Saviour shed tears over their devoted city, came upon them, to use His own language, just because they *knew* not the things which belonged to their peace. Their ruin as a nation was the effect of their ignorance; and in that fearful that overwhelming doom which our Saviour wept over, but would not recall, we have experimental proof of that alliance which obtains, by the ordinations of the gospel, between the knowledge of man and his salvation, on the one hand, and between the want of that knowledge, and his utter and irreversible wretchedness, upon the other. The judgment which went forth against them because of their ignorance, had in it as much of the spirit and character of a vengeance, as if it had been inflicted on the worst moral perversities whereof humanity is capable. It is true that the awful extermination came upon them, because they had killed the Prince of life. But it was in the spirit of a blind zeal, and as Peter and John testify, through ignorance that they did it. Their condemnation still resolves itself into the want of knowledge—for had they known, Paul says, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Let us not then underrate the importance of knowledge in religion; nor, under the imagination that ignorance is not a responsible or not a punishable offence, hold that men might be in safety however defective in point of information, however wrong in point of mere understanding.

But in addition to the historical proofs, for what may be called the religious importance of knowledge, which might be drawn from the narratives of Scripture, there is abundance of still more direct proof in its merely doctrinal or didactic passages. On the one hand the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ is said to be eternal life. And on the other hand

many are said to perish for lack of knowledge. When Christ shall come in flaming fire and amid the elements of dissolving nature, it is to take vengeance on those who know not God. Knowledge and ignorance in fact are dealt with, even as righteousness and sin are dealt with. They are dealt with morally, or as the proper subjects of a moral reckoning; and whereas under our existing economy the pleasures and preferments of a joyful eternity in heaven come in train of the one, hell and destruction and all the penal consequences of guilt in most frightful aggravation are made to follow in train of the other.

Now the question is, ought this in moral fairness to be? The equity of such a dispensation has been stoutly and openly denied. It has been asked if man be responsible for knowledge or understanding or belief, just as he is responsible for the dispositions of his heart or the doings of his hand. They can understand how man should be punished for his wrong behaviour. But they understand not how man should be punished for his wrong belief. The difficulty is to conceive on what ground the mere views of the understanding should properly be made the subjects of count or reckoning at all. Are the wrong views of the understanding to be resented or revenged upon, just as you would resent or revenge the wrong volitions of the will? You at once perceive the justice of retribution for the conduct. But you do not perceive the justice of retribution for the creed. You would never think of blame or of vengeance either for the height of a man's stature, or for the hue and the features of his countenance. And in like manner the opinions of the judgment are held by some to be equally exempted, as things of physical and organic necessity, from blame or from vengeance. Man is held by them to be responsible for his doings, which he can help; but not for his doctrines, which they say he cannot help—And so the God of Christianity has been charged with unrighteousness; and Christianity itself with this dread inscription upon its forehead that "He who believeth not shall be damned"—has been indignantly exclaimed against as a hard and a most revolting dispensation.

Now we shall not enter on the consideration that the punishment consequent on the unbelief is not all for the unbelief, but for the guilt of a broken law, the condemnation of which takes its own proper and primary effect upon you, because you have not found your way to the place of refuge or of protection therefrom. This is very true—yet it is further true, that the guilt of a broken law is

every where spoken of as enhanced and deepened to tenfold aggravation by the guilt of a rejected gospel. There is a wrath that abideth on unbelievers—even that wrath which their sins had excited in the bosom of the Deity, and which they have not escaped from by the way announced and intimated in the New Testament. But there is also a wrath added to the former, and augmented on the head of unbelievers, just because they have not betaken themselves to that way. In other words, there is a displeasure on the part of God towards unbelief, just as there is a displeasure towards any moral violation. The creed of the infidel is dealt with as his crime; and the question still remains, how comes it that the mere errors of the understanding should have the same sort of delinquency affixed to them, as the wilful errors either of the heart or of the conduct?

In reply to this interrogation, we fully admit that no man is punished for what he cannot help, but then we affirm that his belief in certain circumstances, (and we think that Christianity is in these circumstances) is that which he can help. We admit that a moral delinquency should be charged on that which is not wilful—but we affirm that many are the occasions in which the belief or the unbelief is wilful; and that therefore, there might be no contravention of obvious justice in pronouncing the one to be a duty, and in proceeding against the other as you would against a crime. It is utterly a mistake to imagine that knowledge and opinion and belief, and in a word the various states of the understanding, are in no way dependent upon the will. It is by an act of the will that you set yourself to the acquisition of knowledge. It is by an act of the will at the first, and by a continued act of the will afterwards, that you first commence, and then continue a prolonged examination into the grounds of an opinion. It is at the bidding of the will, not that you believe without evidence, but that you investigate the evidence on which you might believe. In all these cases the will either gives its consent, or withholds it. It cannot create the light of evidence any more than it can create the light of nature. But it lies with it whether the evidence shall be attended to or regarded with the eye of the mind, even as it lies with it whether the illuminated landscape shall be looked upon or regarded with the eye of the body. It is in your power to shut or to avert the mental eye, just as it is in your power to shut or to avert the corporeal eye. It is in no way your fault, that you do not see when it is dark. But it is in every way your fault that you do not look when

either the light of the natural heavens, or the light of Heaven's revelation is around you. It is thus that the will has virtually to do with the ultimate belief, just because it has to do with the various steps of that process which goes before it. Where there is candour, which is a moral property, the due attention will be given; and the man will arrive at the state of being right intellectually, but just because he is right morally. When there is the opposite of candour—a thing pronounced upon by all as a moral unfairness—the due attention will be refused; and the man will be landed in the state of being wrong intellectually, but just because he is wrong morally.

You find a most impressive exemplification of this in the history of those very Jews whom we now are considering. During the whole of our Saviour's ministry upon earth, they were plied with evidences, which, if they had but attended to would have carried their belief in the validity of His claims and credentials as a Messenger from heaven. But the belief was painful to them; and at all hazards they resolved to bar the avenues of their minds against the admittance of it. This was the attitude, the wilful, the hardy, the resolved attitude in which they listened to all His addresses and looked upon all His miracles. That unwelcome doctrine which so humbled the pride, and did such violence to the bigotry of their nation, was not to be borne with—and, rather than harbour a thing so intolerably offensive, they shut their minds against all that truth which lay both in the words and in the works of the Son of God; and they shut their hearts against all that tenderness as well as truth which fell in softest accents from a Saviour's lips, or beamed in mildness and mercy upon them from a Saviour's countenance. Who does not see that the will had a principal concern in all this opposition—that the pride and the passion and the interest and the ease, that these propensities of man's active and voluntary nature, had undoubted sway and operation in this warfare; that their love of darkness and their hatred of light affixed to their unbelief the stigma of a moral condemnation—their love of that which left a veil over their corruptions, their hatred of that which laid them open to the display and the disturbance of an exposure which they feared? It was on the strength of these moral perversities that they resisted and withstood the Saviour, and at length perished in the delusion which themselves had fostered. There was not the darkness of men whom no light had visited, but it was the darkness of men who obstinately shut their eyes—who had lulled

their own consciences asleep; and whom neither the voice of pitying friendship, nor the voice of loud and angry menace could again awaken. They were in this state when Christ wept over them, as He pronounced the doom of their approaching overthrow—a doom that fell upon them, not because of their mental delusion, but because this delusion was the fruit and the forthcoming of their moral depravity—not because they had minds that did not receive the truth, but because they had hearts that did not love and would not listen to it.

And this is for our admonition to whom the latter ends of the world have come. In this our day, the want of faith is still due, we believe, as heretofore, to the want of a thorough moral earnestness. Did we only prevail upon you to seek after; to enquire as you ought, we have no doubt that you would come to believe as you ought. If blind, we fear that you are wilfully blind; and if short of that faith which is unto salvation, it is because you are not honestly and with all your heart in pursuit of salvation. You are not giving earnest heed to the witness upon earth, that is to the Bible, which is a light shining in a dark place; and which at

last would manifest its own truth and divinity to the conscience of him who attentively regarded it. And you are not sending forth earnest prayer to the witness in heaven, that is to the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to pour the light of a convincing and an affecting demonstration over the pages of the written record. You are not doing what you might if you so willed—and if you do not see the light of that evidence which belongs to the truth as it is in Jesus, it is positively because you are not looking for it. In other words, if you die in mental darkness, it is because you live in moral unconcern; and whatever the damnation be which rests on unbelief it is altogether due unto yourselves. Often are you visited with the misgivings of a conscience which tells you that your present state is far from satisfactory; but these you contrive to stifle and suppress. The whole business of your souls is postponed and wilfully postponed from one day and from one year to another; and, abiding in darkness because you choose the darkness, you remain to the end of your lives in a voluntary destitution of that knowledge for the lack of which men perish everlastingly.

LECTURE LXXIX.

ROMANS x, 3—5.

“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. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doth those things shall live by them.”

THERE should be no difficulty in fixing whether the term righteousness in this passage must be understood according to its personal or its legal sense—whether that righteousness which designates a character that is marked by its virtues and its graces; or that which is pronounced by a judge, or him who is entitled thereby to its honours and rewards. In this place, as in others, the context clears up the text. For example in Matthew, v, 20—the righteousness which is there spoken of cannot be mistaken for any other than the personal—that being made obvious by the illustrations which follow, and whence it appears that its superiority over the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees lies in the higher style of certain virtues which are there specified. And again in Galatians, iii, 21, there can be as little mistake, when we affix the legal or judicial meaning to the

righteousness there spoken of—it being such a righteousness as could have given life, and which is viewed therefore not in the moral graces of which it is made up, but in the rewards, even those of a blissful eternity, which are judicially conferred upon it—just as the ministration of death in 2 Cor. iii, 7, is clearly juridical, it being termed in ver. 9, the ministration of condemnation, for death is the penalty of sin: And so the ministration of righteousness contrasted therewith must be juridical also, it being the ministration of life, even that life which is the reward of righteousness. In like manner when one looks to the verse before us in conjunction with the verses which immediately succeed, there should be no difficulty in settling the judicial import of the term righteousness throughout this whole passage of the apostle’s argument—as being, not the righteousness which has its place in the

character or person of a disciple, but the righteousness which can be plea'd or stated by him at the bar of jurisprudence when he stands there as a claimant for the rewards and honours of eternity. In short it is the righteousness which gives a right to eternal life or which challenges eternal life as its due—that righteousness which the Jews fell short of, because they sought to establish it by the merit of their own doings, while they refused to make use of the plea which God offered to put into their hands as a righteousness that He would accept—this being a righteousness of which they were ignorant, or would not acknowledge, or would not submit themselves thereto. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness," or of that righteousness on the ground of which or consideration of which He would take man into acceptance; "and going about to establish a righteousness of their own," seeking to make good their title to heaven, as rightful claimants to its inheritance on the strength or merit of their own proper services—"they would not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God," but sought to be justified in their own way which was by their own works, rather than by His method of justification.

My only additional remark on this verse is, that, in the ignorance there spoken of, there is something more than the mere passive blindness of those who cannot help themselves because of the total darkness by which they are encompassed. It was very much the ignorance of those who would not open their eyes. There was an activity, a will in it, as much as there was in the other things ascribed to them in these words—in the 'going about' to establish a different righteousness from that which they would not acknowledge, or would not submit to—resisting it, in fact, because of their not liking it. This forms the true principle on which the condemnation of unbelief rests. "They love the darkness rather than the light;" and so the ignorance or unbelief is criminal—just as far as there were affection and choice in it. Even as the Gentiles "liked not to retain God in their knowledge"—even so the Jews liked not in this instance to admit God into their knowledge, or give entertainment in their minds to that way of salvation which He had devised for the recovery of a guilty world—even the transference of man's sins to the person of Christ, and the transference of Christ's righteousness to the persons of all who believe in Him. It is the part which the will has in it that makes ignorance the proper object of a vindictive retribution; and so when Christ cometh, He will take vengeance on those who know not God, and obey not the gospel

of Jesus Christ. The will has to do with the want of obedience; and so far as the want of knowledge is punishable, the will has to do with that want also. There is a wilful resistance to the light—though a resistance this it must be admitted which the light itself may overcome by the greater force of its evidence, by the greater brightness and intensity of its own manifestation—just as Paul's ignorance and unbelief were overpowered by the light that shone upon him near Damascus; and as the faith of converts in the present day is carried, when God is pleased to reveal Christ in them, by commanding the light to shine out of darkness, or by calling them out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel.

Ver. 4. 'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' There is one obvious sense in which Christ is the end of the law; and that is when the law viewed as a school-master brings us to the conclusion, as to its last lesson, that Christ is our only refuge our only righteousness—thereby shutting us up into the faith. But this is not the sort of end which is meant here. We should have a more precise understanding of the verse by taking the word end as equivalent to purpose—and that a purpose too which the law was fitted to serve not merely after it was broken; but at the time of its original institution, and when it was first set up for the moral government of men. Now that the law has been violated, and we are the outcasts of its rightful condemnation, it is good to be schooled by it into the lesson that Christ is our only hiding-place, in whom there is no condemnation; and thus to make Christ the end or the final landing-place of that educational process through which we are conducted, when studying the high precepts and authority of the law, and our own immeasurable distance and deficiency therefrom. It is not thus however that this verse is to be understood; and for the right determination of what it signifies, we should go back to one of the purposes for which the law was given at the time of its first ordination—a purpose to be gained, not after the breaking of it, but which would have been gained by the keeping of it. One of these purposes was to secure the moral rightness of man's character and conduct. But another of these purposes was to secure for him a legal right to eternal life. The one was the end of the law for his personal holiness. The other was the end of the law for his judicial righteousness, and this is what we hold to be precisely the 'end of the law for righteousness' in our text. Its direct and primary object was that man should be justified by his

obedience thereto; but man falling short of this object or end by falling short of perfect obedience, can only now obtain it in Christ, in whom alone we have righteousness, even a part and an interest in that everlasting righteousness which He hath brought in, by His obedience—which righteousness, with all its associated privileges and rewards, is unto all and upon all who believe. It is the merit of His obedience imputed unto us and made ours by faith, which forms our right or title-deed of entry into the kingdom of heaven. He is the Lord our righteousness; and in receiving Him we receive that righteousness which it was the end of the law to have secured for us had it been by us fulfilled; but which we in vain seek by the law, now that it has been broken.*

Ver. 5. 'For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doth those things shall live by them.' One expedient by which men have attempted to dilute or do away the substance of the gospel, is to represent the insufficiency of the law for salvation as attaching only to the ceremonial law of Moses. In the passage now before us however, the righteousness which is of the law is said to be superseded by the righteousness which is of faith; and the former righteousness, or that which is laid aside, attaches to the law whereof Moses said that the man which doeth those things shall live by them. This surely must include the moral as well as the ceremonial. The great lawgiver of the Jews nowhere represents the doing of the things of the ceremonial law as enough for life. "Cursed is every one," he saith, "who continueth not in all the words of the book to do them." And so far is any sufficiency of this sort from being awarded to the ceremonial alone—there is many a prophetic remonstrance founded on the insignificance of the ceremonial, when compared with the worth and lasting obligation of the moral. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? Put away the evil of your doings and learn to do well." It is not, if a man do the things of the ceremonial—it is if he do the things of the whole law, that he shall live. It is our sufficiency for the righteousness of the whole law which is here brought to the trial; and if found wanting, which eventually it will be in every instance, we must infer that man can no more attain to everlasting life by his most strenuous observation of moral righteousness, than by his most faithful and laborious discharge of the Mosaic ritual.

It is on the ground of the moral law and of it alone, that this trial for eternity now rests. We of the present day stand delivered from the obligations of the Jewish ritual, and of its burdensome services. Should we decline the gospel, we shall be dealt with purely and exclusively as the subjects of the moral law; and still it holds true that the man who doeth these things shall reach everlasting life without a gospel and without a Saviour. If the law, the moral law, be sufficient to any man for this object—then to him the gospel is uncalled for. It is thus that the economy of grace may be brought to the trial of its worth and its importance; and to this very law the man who yields a perfect moral obedience may challenge for himself the right of neglecting its offers—the claim to an inheritance in heaven without the need of a passport from Him who is represented to us as the Author of a great salvation.

The two ways to eternal life here brought into comparison are clearly and distinctly contrasted. The one is by doing—the other is by believing—The one by doing a full and finished righteousness for ourselves—the other by believing that Christ has done a full and sufficient righteousness for us; and makes each and all of us as welcome to its rewards as if they had been earned in our own person, by the merit of our own services. It is either in the one or the other of these ways that heaven is at all accessible—so that should we both fall short of the first, and refuse to enter upon the second, we are hopelessly and helplessly barred from the paradise of God.

There are two places, as it were, at which these respective ways may be compared with each other—either at the entrance of them before we set out; or anywhere, after that we have set out, along the pathway of each—whether cheered on by the encouragements, or struggling with the difficulties peculiar to the one or the other of them.

I. Let us first take a view of the state of matters at the entrance of the two ways—when man, under the first effectual visitation of earnestness, resolves to go forth in busy search and prosecution after the good of his eternity. And here a consideration meets us at the very outset of the way of doing; and that is whether the condition of eternal life in that way be not already fallen from, and so the eternal life itself already forfeited. It is he who doeth all things that shall live. Have we hitherto done all things? Are we in circumstances now, for making a clear outset on this enterprise for heaven? It is not enough that there be the purpose of universal, of unreserved, obedience in all

*For a fuller elucidation of this verse, see our Sermon on Romans, x, 4, in vol. iii. of our Congregational Sermons, being vol. x. of the Series.

time coming. There must have been the performance of an obedience alike universal, alike unreserved, throughout all the stages of the history that is past. Can the memory and the conscience of any man living depon to this? Can he lay his hand upon his heart, and say without misgiving—that throughout all the successive days of his past existence in the world, there has ascended to heaven the continuous incense of a pure and sinless offering? Has he altogether loved God as he ought? Has he altogether lived among his fellows as he ought? Has his hand done all that it might in the services of benevolence? Has his heart been filled as it should have been—If not with the sensibilities, at least with the purposes and the aspirations of piety? Has the will of the Creator, in no one instance, made place for his own waywardness? Has that law, every jot and tittle of which must be fulfilled, had this unflinching this unswerving this unexcepted fulfilment rendered to it by him? Can he appeal to every hour of his by-gone history; and confidently speak of each, having, without one flaw or scruple of deviation, been pervaded by that loyalty of principle, by that grateful recollection, by those dutiful conformities of a heart ever glowing with affection and of a hand ever glowing with activity, which the creature owes to the Creator who gave him birth? These are questions which must be settled, ere he can advance one hopeful footstep on this way to heaven by the deeds of the law. Should there be one single deed either of sin or of deficiency to soil the retrospect of his past experience, it nullifies the enterprise. By a single act of disobedience the power of making good our eternity in this way is gone, and gone irretrievably. Heaven may still become ours by a deed of mercy. But that it should be ours by a judicial award of law, and of law sitting in cognizance over our deserts and our doings, is a thing impossible.

If the conscience be at all enlightened, this will be felt as a difficulty which overhangs the entrance of the proposed journey to heaven in the way of obedience. The sense of a debt which no effort of ours can possibly lessen, and far less extinguish—the sense of a guilt that by ourselves is wholly inexpiable—the sense of an impassable gulf between us and God, seeing that when viewed as our Lawgiver and ere reparation for the injury of His outraged law shall have been made, His attributes of truth and justice and holiness unite to lay an interdict on any terms or treaty of reconciliation—these are what paralyse the movements of a conscious sinner; and just because

they paralyse his hopes. The likeliest thing to it in human experience is, when a decreet of bankruptcy without a discharge has come forth on the man who has long struggled with his difficulties, and is now irrecoverably sunk under the weight of them. There is an effectual drag laid upon this man's activity. The hand of diligence is forthwith slackened when all the fruits of diligence are thus liable to be seized upon—and that by a rightful claim of such magnitude as no possible strenuousness can meet or satisfy. The processes of business come to a stand or are suspended—when others are standing by ready to devour the proceeds of business so soon as they are realised, or at least to divert them from the use of the unhappy man and the good of his family. The spirit of industry dies within him when he finds that he can neither make aught for himself, nor, from the enormous mass of his obligations, make any sensible advances towards his liberation. In these circumstances he loses all heart and all hope for exertion of any sort; and either breaks forth into recklessness or is chilled into inactivity by despair. And it is precisely so in the case of a sinner towards God. If he feel as he ought, he feels as if the mountain of his iniquities had separated him from his Maker. There is the barrier of an unsettled controversy between them, which, do his uttermost, he cannot move away; and the strong though secret feeling of this is a chief ingredient in the lethargy of nature. There is a haunting jealousy of God which keeps us at a distance from Him. There is the same willing forgetfulness of Him, that there is of any other painful or disquieting object of contemplation. God, when viewed singly as the Lawgiver, is also viewed as the Judge who must condemn—as the rightful creditor whose payments or whose penalties are alike overwhelming. We are glad to make our escape from all this dread and discouragement into the sweet oblivion of Nature. The world becomes our hiding-place from the Deity—and in despair of making good our eternity by our works, we work but for the interests of time; and, because denizens of earth, we, estranged from the hopes of heaven, never once set forth in good earnest upon its preparations.

These are the impossibilities, which, at the very commencement, beset this way of making good your eternity by your doings; and from which there is no release to the spiritual bankrupt, till the gospel puts its discharge into his hands. By this gospel there is a deed of amnesty made known, to which all are welcome. There is revealed to us a surety who hath

taken the whole of our debt upon Himself—having fulfilled the ample acquittance of all our obligations, and so made us clear with God. Even to the worst and most worthless of sinners the offer of this great deliverance is made. It is our faith in the reality of this offer which constitutes our acceptance of it; and whereas in the way of doing, the very entrance was impracticably closed against us—this initial obstruction is entirely moved aside from the way of believing. In the language of the Psalmist, the bond is loosed; and restored to hope, we are restored to alacrity in the bidden services and preparations of eternity. With the conscience lightened, through the peace-speaking blood of Jesus, of its guilt and of its fears—we are made to walk with the feeling, with the hopeful inspiration of men at liberty. The debt is cancelled; and we can start anew in that enterprise for heaven, on which but for the ransom of the New Testament, there lies a burden of utter impotency and despair. Like the emancipated debtor to whom the fruits of all his future toil and diligence are now fully assured to him, a weight is taken off from the activities of nature. Our labour is no longer in vain—because now it is labour in the Lord; and every effort becomes a step in advance towards heaven, when thus the old obedience of the law is exchanged for the new obedience of the gospel.

II. But we might imagine the conscience of man not to be enlightened at the outset of his religious earnestness; and that therefore, instead of the stillness of his despair under a sense of nature's insufficiency for the righteousness of the law, he actually sets forth in the pursuit of this righteousness, and makes the weary struggle it may be of months or of years in order to attain it. It is oftenest in this way that the first movements are made under the first powerful visitation of seriousness. The law in its unsullied purity—the law in its uncompromising rigour—the law in its unexcepted right of sovereignty over every desire of the heart and every deed of the history—These may not be adverted to at the time of the soul's incipient concern about these things; and so the attempt might fairly be made, to compass such an obedience as might found a claim or title to the rewards of eternity. In the prosecution of this object there may be the forth-putting of great strenuousness—the anxious feeling of great scrupulosity—the new habit, at least of toiling at the servilities, if not the new heart which had a taste for the sanctities of religion. At all events, many laborious drudgeries might be gone through. The regularities both of private and family

prayer might be instituted. There might be allotted hours for the exercises of sacredness; and these in full tale and measure may be observed most rigidly. In short, a thousand punctualities may be rendered—and all with the view to establish a merit in the eye of heaven's Lawgiver, which never can be effectually done without a full and faultless adherence to Heaven's law. Now, we say, that if conscience feel as it ought, there will throughout this whole process be a festering, an insatiable disquietude—a self-jealousy, and a self-dissatisfaction which no doings or deserts of our own can terminate—a feeling of unworthiness which in spite of every effort will adhere to our best services, and turn all into hopelessness and vexation—For, let it be observed, that, reach what elevation of virtue we may, there will in proportion as we advance and we ascend, be further heights and distances in moral excellence beyond us and above us. The higher we proceed in this career, we shall command a farther view of the spaces which still lie before us; or, in other words, we shall be more filled with a sense of the magnitude of our own short-comings. The conscience, in fact, grows in sensibility, just as the conduct is more the object of our strict and scrupulous regulation; and so, with every advance we make towards the perfection of the law, does the law appear to rise upon us with her exactions—and we feel as if more helplessly behind than at the outset of our enterprise. The presumptuous imagination of our sufficiency comes down when we thus bring it to the trial; and that impotency of which we were not aware at the outset, we are made to know and to feel experimentally. Meanwhile that is a sore drudgery in which we are implicated; and all the more fatiguing that it is so utterly fruitless—that the peace which we seek to realise by our obedience recedes at every step to a greater distance, because new heights of obedience are ever rising on the view, and baffling every effort to substantiate a valid plea for the rewards of immortality. This is that law-work, of whose aspirations and toils and frantic unavailing struggles, like those of a captive to break loose from his prison-hold or to scale the precipice which hems him, we read in the affecting history of so many a convert—whose awakened conscience only spoke to him in louder terms of reproach the more he did to appease its endless upbraidings, and whose every attempt to flee from the coming wrath made it glow the more fiercely upon his imagination. Not ten thousand punctualities of the outer conduct can purify a heart that is every day obtaining some

fresh revelation of its own worthlessness, and which when brought to the touchstone of a spiritual law finds itself destitute of all right affection or affinity towards God. This is the grand failure. His hand can labour; but his heart cannot love—And after wasting and wearying himself in vain with the operose drudgeries of a manifold observation, he still finds that he is a helpless defaulter from the first and the greatest commandment.

Now, it is when thus harassed and beset among the impracticable obstructions which lie in the way of doing, that he finds the very outlet he stands in need of when the way of believing is opened to him. The righteousness, which he has so ineffectually tried to make out in his own person, has been already made out for him by another; and now lies for his acceptance, as a simple and unconditional offer which he is invited to lay hold of. The sin, which hitherto has so hardened him with despondency and remorse, is now washed away by the blood of a satisfying expiation; and God in the gospel of Jesus Christ calls upon him to draw nigh, with the erect, the joyful confidence of one who never had offended. The Saviour has completely done for him, what with so much of strenuousness but with so little success he has been trying to do for himself; and he is warranted to step immediately into the hopes and the happiness of one, not merely reconciled to God, but vested with the same right to His favour, as if he had earned it by the worth of his own services, by the merit of his own full and faultless obedience. What a mighty enlargement when the title-deed to heaven, for which he had been stretching forward with many long and laborious efforts, till he at last sunk down into exhaustion and despair, is put into his hand; and the gifted creature, now set loose from bondage and terror, exchanges the services of constraint for the willing services of a grateful and affectionate loyalty!

It is thus that the guiltiest of sinners, simply on believing the testimony which God hath given of His Son, is instated, and that immediately, in all the titles and privileges of a pure and perfect righteousness before the Lawgiver whom he has

offended. He passes from death unto life. Individually he is freed from the penalties of sin, and judicially he is vested with an absolute right to the rewards of a full and finished obedience. The righteousness of Christ is reckoned to him, and he is dealt with accordingly. No wonder that the tidings of a salvation so marvellous should be so generally met by the incredulity of nature, opposed as it is to all the expectations and all the tendencies of nature, which, when awake to the concerns of another world at all, is ever prompting man to make good his own way to a blissful eternity, and that by a righteousness of his own. It is when delivered from the burden of this felt impossibility, that man breaks forth on a scene of enlargement; when in the secure possession of a right to heaven in the righteousness of his accepted surety, with all the alacrity of an emancipated creature whose bonds have been loosed, he proceeds to offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and to call on the name of the Lord.

And let us not be afraid lest this judicial salvation, if it may be thus termed—so full, so free, so competent to every sinner, however vile, if he but place his confident and unembarrassed reliance on it, so ready, nay so importunate for the acceptance of all, and that without the least distrust or delay on their part—let us not be afraid, lest this judicial salvation should not bring a moral salvation in its train, as if exemption from the penal consequences of sin were not to be followed up by exemption from the power wherewith, anterior to our reception of the gospel, it lorded over us. The great author of that economy under which we live will not leave any of its parts or any of its provisions unfulfilled upon us. He will sanctify as well as justify; and if we but trust in Christ, we shall be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who will superadd the personal to the judicial righteousness, and make us meet in character as well as meet in law for that heaven, the door whereof Christ hath opened to us—for the service of that glorious inheritance which He hath purchased by His obedience, and is the fruit of the everlasting righteousness which Himself hath brought in.

LECTURE LXXX.

ROMANS x, 6—9.

“But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) 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; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

This passage in the Epistle to the Romans is taken from a similar one in the book of Deuteronomy; and it has been made a question, whether it be strictly a quotation in the sense of its being applied by the two writers to one and the same subject, or if it be used only by Paul in the way of accommodation, and applied differently because related to an essentially different covenant from that which is spoken of by Moses. For the covenants being the same, it is argued that the words of the text as they occur in the Old Testament were not uttered on the occasion of that covenant which was made with the children of Israel at the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai, but years afterwards, and on the eve of their entrance into the land of Canaan—when the address containing the sentences from which our text is taken was delivered by Moses, and with the following prefatory announcement—“These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.”* And certain it is, that in this latter covenant there are evangelical privileges held forth, and evangelical promises, which enter not into the description of that righteousness which is of the law, “That the man which doeth these things shall live by them.” For we therein read of forgiveness to the penitent, “When thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God, he will have compassion upon thee”†—and of regeneration, “The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul”‡—and not only of forgiveness, but of positive beneficence and favour, “For the Lord will again rejoice over thee for good.”§ These perhaps may identify this latter of the Old Testament covenants with the covenant of peace and mercy under which we now live, and so identify the application of the words both as uttered by the Jewish legislator and by the Christian apostle to one and the same subject, even the gospel of Jesus Christ—leaving the distinction which there is in the right-

ousness of the law from the righteousness of faith to be exemplified and upholden by the earlier of these Hebrew covenants, even the covenant of Horeb—under which we have this promise of hopeless fulfilment, that the man who doeth these things shall live by them; and this denunciation of terror and despair, universal because inclusive of the whole human race—“Cursed is every one who continueth not in all the words of the book of this law to do them.”

But we must not spend further time in the settlement of this question. Whether the words of our text were employed both by Moses and Paul to characterise the same or two different economies, there is a common property ascribed by each to that one economy of which he is speaking. The condition upon which its blessings are suspended, and by the fulfilment of which these blessings will be realised, is not a distant and inaccessible secret—either imbedded in the fathomless depths below, or placed far out of sight among the unscalded heights of the firmament above us. “For this commandment,” it is said by the founder of the old dispensation, “the commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.” “But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.”* And, in counterpart to this, it is said by the chief among the apostles of the new dispensation, “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; That if thou believe, thou shalt be saved.”

But the great peculiarity in the verses of my text, and to which I would at present direct your more special attention is the precise and particular object of the ascent and the descent respectively which are there spoken of by the apostle. These objects are different from that which is spoken of in the book of Deuteronomy—where to bring the commandment or the word from afar, is the assigned purpose both of the imagined ascent into heaven, and of the imagined descent into the abyss or bottom of the sea. In the New Testa-

* Deut. xxix. 1.

† Deut. xxx, 6.

‡ Deut. xxx, 2, 3.

§ Deut. xxx, 9.

* Deut. xxx, 11, 14.

ment this is stated differently—the assigned purpose of the ascent being ‘to bring Christ down from above,’ and of the descent being ‘to bring up Christ again from the dead.’ It is still possible, notwithstanding this difference—that Moses and Paul may after all have been dealing with the same truth, and looking to the same quarter of contemplation—the first, as is customary in the Old Testament, giving utterance to a doctrine, but couched in enigma or shrouded in hazy obscurity; the second, as is customary in the New Testament, giving utterance to the identically same doctrine, but evolved from the dimness in which it lay hidden, and with the light of a clearer and broader manifestation thrown over it. However this may be, let us now hasten to our explanation of the verses here before us; and which we think fitted to throw a new and interesting light, over the gracious economy that has been instituted for the salvation of our world.

In the parallel verses of Deuteronomy there seems no difficulty. The children of Israel are there simply told—that, instead of having to seek afar or among remote and impracticable places for the rule of life, this rule brought from heaven to their door, now stood within reach of one and all of them. The same could have been said of a law anterior to that of Moses, even the law of the heart—the voice within the breast, which is heard in the homestead of every human conscience; and gives forth lessons that serve, in part at least, for the guidance of all men. And the law of Moses, though brought from the heights of the upper sanctuary, might be said, as far at least as viewed in the generalities of its ethical system, to have placed itself in the hearts of those who heard it—responded to in all its great unchangeable principles by the light and the law of every man’s conscience—thus finding a voucher, as it were, for its own truth and authority in every bosom—and in virtue of this its ready introduction to the innermost recesses of our moral nature, of the prompt and familiar recognition which it meets with there, so establishing and so accrediting itself as the rightful inmate of humanity all the world over, as both to warrant and explain the saying, that this word framed though it was in the highest heavens, and thence brought down to the earth we live in, still this word is in thy heart. And then as to the ritual and the positive of this great religious directory, though it could awake no consenting testimony from within, and could therefore meet with no internal evidence to welcome or to own it—yet enforced as it was by every demonstration of authority from without, by the smoke and

the thunder, nay, by the voice and all those signals of a present Deity, which convinced and overawed the thousands of Israel—we may well believe that the book written by Moses, and which recorded all the precepts whether ceremonial or judicial or moral, that were delivered to this great prophet in the converse which he held with God, and which also described all the usages and forms of their earthly service, conformably to the pattern showed him in the mount, by which were represented the ministrations of the upper sanctuary, or things of the tabernacle in the heavens—that this book, in all its contents, would be deferred to by the Hebrews of old, as the rightful and authoritative directory both of their solemn worship, and of their every-day conduct: And being read at stated seasons by the priests to the people, as well as read by parents to those children whom they were strictly charged to teach diligently in the statutes of the Lord, it might well be said of this word that it was in their mouth as well as in their heart. They had not to go abroad, as sages of old, are said to have done, when they travelled in quest of wisdom. They had neither to search for it as for hid treasure in the depths of the earth, nor to pluck the secret from unseen or mysterious altitudes beyond the sky. It had been brought down from thence to Sinai; and imparted to Moses; and placed by him in a volume of little room within the reach and reading of every man; and so, passing into the hearts and homes of all the people, the word of life was thus made nigh unto them.

But the law has not given life—neither that law of the heart which is of universal obligation, its voice having been heard all the world over; nor that law of a written revelation proclaimed in the hearing of a special nation, to whom were committed the oracles of God. Be it the one or the other law, there is not a man who liveth on the face of the earth who has not fallen short of its righteousness. It has proved the ministration of a universal death—and that because of a universal disobedience. It is not that the law fell short; but that man, the subject of the law, fell short. The rule of righteousness as given to him at the first was perfect. It is because of defects and deviations from that rule, that ruin, a universal ruin, has come upon our species; and another righteousness had to be devised, on the basis of which man might recover the blessings which he had forfeited, and be reinstated in that favour with God from which he had fallen. Such is the design of the gospel, or of that righteousness of faith which the gospel has made known to us; and our enquiry now is into the

nature of that common property which has been claimed for this last as well as for a former revelation—insomuch that Paul could reiterate what Moses had substantially said before him—“But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) 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; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

For our better understanding of these remarkable verses, and more especially of the two parentheses which are peculiar to this passage, there being no trace of them in the parallel passage of the older scriptures—let me state, in a few words, what may be termed the two great steps or stages of that redeeming process, by which man has been restored to that place of relationship with God which he now occupies. Man by transgression had done dishonour to the law of God; and we may learn or estimate the magnitude of the outrage, from the magnitude of the steps which were taken for repairing it—even that the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, had to descend from heaven; had to put on the shroud of humanity; had, during the whole period of a sinless yet suffering life, to sustain a mysterious conflict with the temptations and infirmities of our nature; and, finally, had to take upon Himself the whole burden of the penal infliction to have been otherwise discharged on a rebellious world, by bowing down His head unto the sacrifice: And thus, as the fruit or final object of His descending movement, was He delivered for our offences. But this is not the whole amount of the boon He has achieved for us. There is something a great deal more than the cancelment of our debt, or blotting out of the sentence that was against us in the book of condemnation. He not only suffered, but He served. He not only absorbed for us the penalty of a wretched and undone, but He earned for us the reward of a blissful eternity. He who, to use the language of Daniel, “made an end of sins,” also did more, “He brought in an everlasting righteousness.” In other words, He not only worked out our legal release from the torments of a hideous and everlasting hell, He made good our rightful inheritance among the triumphs and the felicities of heaven—not only annulling but reversing our condition from that of the

outcasts of a hopeless condemnation, the children of a wrath that was to come, to that of the expectants and the heirs of a coming glory. We are not able to discriminate among the various passages of His history, between the endurance by which He bore the chastisement of our peace, and the obedience by which He won for us the prize of immortality. But there is a real and substantive distinction between these two services—a distinction recognised in Scripture—between the pardon by which we cease to be reckoned with as sinners, and the justification by which we are reckoned and dealt with as positively righteous. And as the event of His death is clearly set forth as related to the one, that death being an atonement for sin—so the event of His resurrection, or rather of His re-admission into paradise, though not so frequently yet is clearly set forth as related to the other, that exaltation being conferred on Him as the reward of His obedience, by which He opened the door of heaven both for Himself and for all His followers. It is thus that He who is said to have reconciled us by His death, is also said by His life to have consummated our salvation. And thus if, as we have already said, the fruit or final object of His descending movement was His being delivered for our offences—so the fruit or final object of His ascending movement is His being raised again for our justification.

There are other passages in Scripture which intimate the same relation that we have now stated—between, on the one hand, the death and resurrection of our Saviour; and, on the other, the two distinct points of that salvation, (removal of the penalty and a right by service to the positive reward) which He hath achieved for us, and by which He hath completed our title-deed to an entry and a purchased possession in the paradise of God. But that I may come at once to the lesson of our text, I would only now bid you think of these two great movements, from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven, and of the illustrious Person who had to make them—ere the high demands of the divine jurisprudence could be fulfilled, or a way of access be again opened for guilty man to the Lawgiver whom he had offended. It was a question in the policy of Heaven which angels desired to look into; and the highest wisdom as well as highest strength of these upper regions had to be put forth for its settlement. For this, the Eternal Son had, from amid the wondering hosts of the celestial, to leave the bosom of His Father; and He, whose forthgoings were of old, even from everlasting, had to veil all His primeval glories in an earthly tabernacle; and, when God

manifest in the flesh, did He partake to the full in the infirmities of our assumed and associated nature; and beyond the ken of mortal eye, were there sufferings unknown of which we read a few mysterious outbreaks in the agonies of the garden; and unknown struggles too in still deeper passages of His history, as when He engaged in conflict with the forces of darkness, and spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly. And after a death of deep and dreadful endurance, an equivalent sacrifice for the guilt of a world; and a descent into the lower parts of the earth, the purpose whereof, from the imperfect glimpses which revelation gives of it, is to us an unsolved enigma—did the once crucified, retrace His way to the position and pre-eminence which He at present occupies of the now exalted Saviour—First by the reanimation of His body, then by His resurrection from the grave, then by His sublime ascension above the world, where He slowly withdrew from the gaze of chosen witnesses; and last of all by His entrance into heaven, and the assumption of His Mediatorial place at the right hand of the Father—and that, we may well believe, amid the hosannas of an angelic host, who, in numbers without number, welcomed and did Him homage as the Author and the Finisher of a mighty enterprise—Even the enterprise by which He brought in an everlasting righteousness, in the merit and investiture of which, the guiltiest sinners of our fallen, our dishonoured species, may, without disparagement either to the law or to the Lawgiver, stand with acceptance before the throne of God. We ask you to ponder on these things. Slighted, disregarded, scarcely recognised at all in the hazy atmosphere of earth—we ask you to think of the movement and the stir, if I may so express myself, which they made in heaven, and of the lofty estimation in which they are held by the intelligences there. Above all, keep a fast and firm hold of this consideration. To reinstate our fallen world, the Son of God had first to descend and die for sin; and then to ascend even to the place which He now occupies—where, as the fruit of the travail of His soul, He completes and effectuates our salvation.

With this fully in your mind, we are in a fit condition both for your understanding and for our enforcement of the lesson in the text. And first, as a lesson of rebuke to those of whom we read in the preceding context, who, refusing to take up with this righteousness of God, vainly and presumptuously sought to establish a righteousness of their own. Other foundation, the Bible tells us, than that which

is laid already, can no man lay; but they, unchecked and unhumbled by any sense of their own utter impotency, labour with all their might to construct and lay over again a foundation of merit and of dependence for themselves. In other words, they would usurp the office of the Saviour; or, as if that office had been imperfectly fulfilled, and left unfinished, they would lay aside His work and substitute their own work in its place—in the proud imagination that their own strength was commensurate to the mighty enterprise, that enterprise of toil and conflict and suffering and at length of triumph which brought Christ down from heaven, and brought Him up again from the deep and secret places of the earth. In despite of this great achievement, their constant inclination is for another basis of acceptance on which to lean than that which Christ hath so laboriously reared; or, as if to supersede and set at nought the plea of His righteousness—which alone is adequate to the dignity of Heaven's jurisprudence—would they thrust forward their own puny and polluted righteousness as being good enough for God. You may now understand the principle on which this self-dependence of man becomes so high an offence in the sight of Heaven. It implies the disparagement and the mockery of all that has been already done for the world's salvation. We read of Christ as the Captain of this salvation—and that He trode the wine-press alone—and that of the people there were none with Him. Say not then in thy heart, that thou canst make atonement or amends for thine own disobedience—a work so arduous, as to have brought down Christ from heaven for the achievement of it. And say not in thine heart that thou canst substantiate a right by thine own services to the rewards of immortality—a work of Christ's also, and for the victorious fulfilment of which He was brought up from the dead, and highly exalted to a place of advocacy and intercession at God's right hand, where even within the precincts of that august sanctuary of which justice and judgment are the habitation, He, on the single strength of His own righteousness, can make good the claims of all who believe on Him. To turn from such a salvation as this, and labour for the achievement of it with one's own arm, is indeed to stumble at a stumbling-block. It is affronting to God. It is ruinous to man.

But this is not all. There is in this passage not only a lesson of rebuke to the proud—but the far kindlier and more congenial lesson, and the one we are most anxious to impress, a lesson of highest encouragement to the humble. For it is not

always pride that actuates a man, when seeking to establish a right to heaven by his own righteousness. Apart from this, there is the natural legality of the human heart—a most natural imagination, and upheld by a thousand analogies in the transactions of man with man, that obedience is the work and heaven is the wages—the one the purchase-money, the other the purchase—related to each other like the counterpart terms of any contract or bargain in the numerous exchanges of human society. It is not always in the spirit of pride that the aspirant after salvation falls in with this conception and acts upon it. He simply thinks it the direct way of going to work, that he should try to earn God's favour by deserving it; and accordingly he labours to be right, and to be even with the law, and to bring up his conduct to the level, or rather to the high standard of its acquirements. But in very proportion to his sincerity, and if his conscience be at all enlightened, the more he labours the more is he oppressed and borne down by a helpless sense of deficiency—heavy-laden under the weight of his past delinquencies, and wearied by efforts alike fruitless and fatiguing to recover his unmeasurable distance from God's lofty commandment. It is when thus toiling in pursuit of impossibilities, that the true understanding of these verses, as if by the letting in of light into his mind, dissipates every cloud, and at once releases him from his anxieties and fears. Let him only learn that the identical enterprise at which he now labours as in the very fire, the Only-begotten, the Son of the everlasting Father, Himself the Mighty God and Prince of Peace, hath already put His hand to; and left not off till, in the triumph of its full consummation, He called out that it was finished. He first had to descend from heaven, that He might become sin for us, and in our nature bear the punishment that we should have borne; and then did ascend into heaven, having by His obedience unto death, completed the titles of entry and inheritance there both for Himself and for all His followers—and so that, in the merit and acceptance of His high service, we might become the righteousness of God. Let the weary and the heavy-laden sinner but submit to this righteousness and be at rest—nor seek to establish for himself, that which cost the incarnation of our crucified, and has been rewarded by the exaltation of our risen Saviour. And thus would we explain these parenthetic clauses. Strength to do the thing implies a strength to wield the alone instrument that was adequate for the doing of it. I can no more make atonement for my own guilt, than I could

have ascended into heaven, and there brought down Christ from above who has poured out His soul unto the death for me. I can no more earn or establish my own right to the high rewards of eternity, than I could have descended into the deep, and there brought up Christ again from the dead, who, in virtue of that everlasting righteousness which Himself alone hath fulfilled, was raised to the Mediatorial throne which He now occupies, and from which He welcomes the approaches of all and casts out none who come unto Him. Let me say not in my heart then, that there is a strength in me commensurate to the work which called for either the one or the other of these movements; but dismissing the vain imagination, let me forthwith rejoice that it is a work no longer to do, because already done—that it is a work which has already passed through such able hands, even of Him who travailed in the greatness of His strength for the full and finished performance of it—that a ready-made righteousness is now looking down upon me from heaven, made to my hand, and which I am simply invited to lay hold of—that personally and practically, my concern now is not with the doing, but with the report of the doing—not with a work which is far above my reach, but with a word which is nigh unto me, and in which with the felt helplessness and docility of a little child, my only part is to acquiesce—a word now standing at the door, and soliciting admittance from every one of us; and which, when once it finds entrance into the home of a believer's heart, makes good his interest in the whole of this wondrous salvation.

The question and the remonstrance now held with the men of our fallen race is not, Who of you hath made good the righteousness of the law; but "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

We can at present expatiate no further on this high topic; but will conclude with a brief reply to one question which may have been suggested in the course of these explanations. If salvation, it may be asked, is brought so nigh and made so free to us, might not all exertion on our part cease? or if the righteousness of Christ be thus made to supersede the righteousness of man, then under such an economy as this, what place for human virtue is to be found? We answer, that all exertion for the object of establishing a valid and challengeable right, or of making good a judicial claim, or claim in law to the kingdom of heaven, ought to cease; and that because human virtue has no place in the title-deed, or forms no part of the price and purchase-money by

which that glorious inheritance has been earned for us. But if to be meet in law is indispensable for our entry into paradise, to be meet in character is alike indispensable; and though for the former, or the legal meetness, human virtue is of no possible avail, for the latter, or the personal meetness, human virtue is all in all. The truth is, that the doctrine of our justification, our forensic justification by faith, so far from acting as a drag or discouragement on the virtue of man, sets him at large, as if by the removal of an incubus, for the busy cultivation of all its graces, for the diligent performance and discharge of all its services. So long as the endeavour or the task, was to bring up his obedience to the standard of the jurisprudence of heaven, and so as at once to meet all the demands, and clear all the penalties of God's high and incommutable law, the burden of a felt impossibility weighed him down to inactivity and despair. But when told that the work on which in vain he might have wreaked and wasted all his energies is already done—in other words, when told of the complete atonement and perfect righteousness of Christ—human virtue is not overborne or extinguished thereby; it is only turned away from the fulfilment of an object by itself impracticable, but now achieved in another way, and set forth on that more hopeful career along which it presses forward by successive footsteps from grace to grace, till it appears perfect before God in Zion. Man could not, in the strength of his own energies, either implement the obligations of God's perfect, or far less sustain so as to liquidate the penalties of God's violated law. But man can, with

the aids of the all-powerful and regenerating Spirit, advance, and that indefinitely his own holiness. The righteousness of faith, so far from operating as an extinguisher on the righteousness of works, affords the only opening by which, under the impulse of gratitude, and the inspiration of a heaven-born hope, to enter with alacrity and comfort on the labours of a new obedience. "I am thy servant, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds, I will offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows now unto the Lord in the presence of all his people." Justification is not the landing-place of Christianity. It is but the commencement, or the starting-post—where the emancipated children of love and liberty break forth on all the activities of a willing service. And so in our text, confession with the mouth is joined as the inseparable accompaniment to faith in the heart—such a confession as many of you witnessed yesterday*—Only, however, a good confession, if your walk and conversation afterwards be such as becometh the gospel of Christ. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If the main lesson I have tried to expound be understood and acted on, you will "hold fast your confidence and the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end." In one word, let me follow it up by the lesson of another scripture. "Be stedfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord—forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

* Delivered on the day after a Communion Sabbath.

LECTURE LXXXI.

ROMANS X, 10—13.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

BEFORE entering on the consideration of these verses, we would briefly advert to one lesson, which, if not contained in the passage that we have just left, has at least been suggested by it. To bring Christ down from above, or to bring Him up from the dead, would be to present Him to the view of the senses, and make Him an object of sight—after which there could be no doubt of His resurrection. One of the common and current aphorisms which we hear most frequently is, that seeing is believ-

ing; yet though thus identified, there is a distinction made in Scripture between them. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, faith is defined the assurance of things not seen. A belief through the medium of the senses is differently regarded, and we may add far less valued than a belief in a testimony—belief in the word—belief in what prophets "have spoken."* It is thus that after His resurrection He up-

* Luke, xxiv, 25.

braids those disciples, not who believed Him not after they had seen, but who believed not the report of those who had seen Him.* It was on this principle too that He valued less the faith of Thomas, after he had at length given way under the power of an ocular demonstration. "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen me, and yet have believed." When faith supports itself under the want of sensible helps and accompaniments—then it is that the "trial of it is precious"—when, though not seeing Christ, yet we love Him; and in whom, "though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."† We meet with the same high estimate of faith in many other places—that is, when it is faith in the naked word, faith without the aid of vision, the faith which maintains its strength and constancy against even the likelihoods of nature and experience, which simply reckons that what God hath said is true, and is "fully persuaded that what He hath promised He is able also to perform."‡

Now there is another, a third way, in which an absent thing might be viewed by us—not as an object of sight, for we are supposing it so separate or removed as to be unseen by us—neither as an object of faith; but as an object of conception, an act often conjoined with faith, yet perfectly distinct from it—so distinct as to be referred by certain mental philosophers to a special power or faculty of its own. One might conceive a thing without any belief in its reality; and, on the other hand, though one can scarcely believe without some conception of the object of faith—yet may that conception be so dull and languid and hazy, as almost to justify the expression of our believing in the dark. We should like you to discriminate between belief in a thing and the conception of that thing. You might believe not only in the existence of an absent friend, but in the reality and warmth of his intense affection for yourself; and this belief might be as strong to-morrow as it is to-day—and yet it is possible, that your conception of all this might not be so lively or strong to-morrow as it is to-day. His benignant smile, his looks of graciousness, his whole countenance and manner and tones of voice, bespeaking the utmost cordiality and kind affection—these may all tell more vividly on the imagination at one time than another; and in proportion to the vivacity and force, wherewith they are thus presented and pictured forth as it were to the eye of the mind, will the spirits be exhilarated, and the whole man

experience an animation and a comfort, as he dwells on a contemplation which the conceiving faculty has made for the time so bright and joyful to him. Now it must be obvious to the experience of all that this conception flits and fluctuates, as if dependent on the ever varying mood of the spirit—at one time gleaming forth towards the vivacity of sense, and at another fading almost onward in deeper and deeper shades of obscurity to extinction and utter vacancy. But the remarkable thing to be observed is, that, under all these varieties of conception, the faith might remain invariable, a constant quantity as it were, an element which abideth steadfastly and substantially the same amid all those changing hues which affect the colour or representation of the object, but do not in the least affect our belief in its reality. There may be a dimness in the contemplation, without the slightest mixture of a doubt in the object contemplated. The man never lets go his confidence in his friend—though, just as this power of conception is in languid or vigorous exercise, he may sometimes have greater and sometimes less degrees of sensible comfort in the contemplation of his friendship.

What is true of an earthly friend, is true of our Friend in heaven. He is far removed out of sight, but may become the object of faith through the word that is nigh unto us. And he might also become the object of conception, which is a sort of substitute for sight, brightening and clearing as it sometimes does towards the vivacity of a sensible demonstration. But let us never forget, that as faith without sight is all the more pleasing to God in that it subsists on its own unborrowed strength without the aid of the senses—so might faith be in the absence of any lucid or enlivening conception, having nothing to sustain it but the simple credit which it gives to the word of the testimony. Yet we hold these bright and exhilarating views of the Saviour to be unspeakably precious—the manifestation of which He Himself tells us*—a most refreshing cordial to the spirit of a believer; and of which we have no doubt that, if analysed into its ingredients, it will be found, that it consists not merely in the greater force of evidence wherewith we are made to behold the Saviour, but in the quickened facility and power of conception wherewith we are enabled to set Him more vividly or impressively before us. Nevertheless we should distinguish between the conception and the faith—because while the one may be a minister of sensible comfort, it is the other which is the guarantee of our salvation. The man who, to repair

* Mark, xvi, 14. † 1 Peter, i, 7, 8. ‡ Romans, iv, 21.

* John, xiv, 21.

the insufficiency of the word, would bring down Christ from heaven, but exemplifies the man, who, as if to make up for the same insufficiency, strains but ineffectually to frame some graphical or picturesque idea of Him there. The danger is, that he may compass himself about with sparks of his own kindling, or walk in the light of his own fancy or his own fire. Let him keep then determinedly by the word which is nigh, rather than by the imagery wherewith he peoples the distant and lofty places which are away from him. He who has conception but not faith, will at length lie down in sorrow. He who has faith, but from the want of conception walketh in darkness and has no light, is still bidden trust in the *name* of God and stay upon His word. He who conceiveth may have sensible comfort; but, with or without this, he who believeth is safe.*

Faith and conception may be so disjoined, that the one may be strong and never give forth a stronger exhibition of itself, than when the other, faint and feeble, is utterly unable to figure aught of the unseen and eternal things which are above. It may trust in the name of the Lord, even when the Lord Himself is shrouded in darkness from its view. It may stay upon God, even when the light of God's endearing and paternal countenance is not shining in its wonted force of manifestation upon the soul. The light of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ may be hid for a season in deepest obscurity—yet during the whole of that season may the spiritual mourner, even in the midst of heaviness and discomfort, be fixed and settled on the certainties of the word; and this he may prove, if not by the raptures of a seraph, at least by the obedience of a servant—evinced by the toils and the sufferings and the sacrifices of his daily and devoted walk, that he can stake the world and every interest he has in it on the truth of Christ, that he could give up all for Him, that He could die for Him.

Yet while the primary and most essential requisite is our belief in the objects of faith, let us not undervalue the enjoyment and the spiritual good which lie in the luminous conception of them. Conception may lead astray, bringing us into converse with mere things of fancy. But conception deals with the true as well as the fictitious, brightening and enhancing our view of unseen realities, and thus bringing us into clearer and more intimate converse with the things of faith. To be gifted with such a faculty, even to be visited though only at times and intervals with such illumination, is an inestimable privilege to the Christian wayfarer—as

conveying to his soul the glimpses and foretastes of his coming glory in heaven, and so yielding him a refreshment and strength for the fatigues of his journey through this lower world. There is a felt ecstasy in this transcendental light, like that which the apostles experienced when they beheld the transfiguration of our Saviour, and exclaimed it is good to be here. How to attain or find our way to this light is a question therefore of deepest practical interest to all who make a real business of their eternity; nor are we aware of aught more interesting in the economy of the gospel, than that connection which it reveals between the plain duties of the Christian life, and the highest attainments, be it in grace or in knowledge, of the Christian experience. The way to get at the light after which we aspire, is to work for it. It is to deal aright with the word which is nigh unto us, and to do aright with the things which are nigh unto us. Whatever the sublime mysteriousness may be of those higher manifestations which shine on the soul of the advanced Christian, there is no mystery in the initial footsteps of the path which leads to them. It is not by the transcendental flights of an imagination labouring to realize Christ in heaven, and failing as signally in the enterprise as if the attempt had been to bring Christ down from heaven. It is by a humbler but more solid pathway—an every-day walk with God in the bidden obedience of the gospel—that path of the upright which as the shining light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

Ver. 10. 'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' Because in the Old Testament passage whence the quotation is taken, Moses makes mention both of the heart and mouth, Paul does the same, attributing to each such functions as are severally proper to them—as belief to the heart and confession to the mouth. It is true, that by our modern idea, the heart is the seat of the affections; and we should ascribe belief rather to the mind, which with us is the seat of the intellect: And hence the inference of many commentators is, that the belief of the New Testament—unlike to what it is in the common sense of the term,—is a thing of feeling as well as mere faith; and that the consent of the will as well as of the judgment, formed a constituent part of it. We, however, are more inclined to think that the ancients, whether Hebrew or Greek, did not

* For Scriptural intimations of this connection between duty and discernment, see John, xiv. 21; Acts, v. 32; Matt. vi. 22; Matt. xxv. 29; Isa. lviii, 5—9; Psalm cxix 100; xxv. 14; 1, 23.

* Isaiah, 1, 10, 11.

proceed on the discriminations of our recent philosophy; and that the heart with them being equivalent to the whole of the inner man, might be the seat of all that proceeded therefrom, and so both of the emotions and the intellect—and this without merging the two into one, although they should emanate from the same fountain; and so we read of men understanding with their heart, nay of laying up in their hearts*—making the heart the seat of memory, even as is done by ourselves in the vulgar phrase of learning by heart. Still in point of just and sound metaphysics, we hold faith to be an act of the understanding alone; and that though affection may be both an immediate cause, and as immediate a consequent of the same, it is never properly an ingredient thereof. We confess ourselves not partial to this confounding of the various functions and faculties of the mind which are really distinct from each other; and we confess our preference for the views of those, who conceive of faith that, however it may have sprung beforehand from the desirousness of a heart visited with moral earnestness and prompting both to prayer and to enquiry; or, however it may issue afterwards in the feelings and desires of holiness—yet that faith in itself is an act of the mind purely intellectual, the judging of certain testimonies or certain propositions that they are true, the simple credence of such statements as are laid before us. We fear of any view different from this, that it tends to embarrass or to darken the freeness of the gospel salvation—while the view that we contend for is the only one which does full honour to the grace of God as all in all, and is at the same time eminently subservient to the practical righteousness as well as comfort of the believer. Though faith should be regarded as belief and nothing else, this is not to hinder but that it may have originated in a virtuous or good affection, or that the affections and deeds of virtue might follow abundantly in its train.

‘For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.’ Yet neither is it the personal but the judicial righteousness that is here spoken of—the righteousness of faith—that righteousness which is unto all and upon all who believe—not the righteousness here which is wrought in us by the Spirit; but that righteousness of Christ which is reckoned to us, and in virtue of which we are invested with that right to heaven which He by His obedience hath won for us, or are presented with a part and a lot in that inheritance which He purchased in behalf of a guilty

world. It becomes ours on believing. We believe unto righteousness—this righteousness being the object in which our faith terminates, the landing-place to which it carries us.

‘And with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.’ The apostle proceeds from an inward sentiment to the expression or manifestation thereof in an outward act; and such an act, as, *in these days*, was, very generally speaking, the sufficient token or pledge of a universal obedience. For then it held pre-eminently true, that he who confessed Christ forsook all, gave up all, made surrender or (which, as a manifestation of principle, was equivalent thereto) exposed themselves to the surrender and loss of all, by following after Christ. We read,* “that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue;” and this was but a specimen or sample of that larger excommunication which every man underwent, or at least hazarded, in the act of becoming an ostensible and declared Christian—an excommunication from all that was dear to nature—becoming liable thereby not merely to be put out of the synagogue, but to be put out of society; to incur the loss of all which they had; to renounce or be renounced, to forsake or be forsaken of, house and brethren and sisters and father and mother and wife and children and lands, yea of their own lives also, for the sake of Christ and of His gospel. No wonder then that confession was so honoured in these days, it being the exponent in fact and symbol of a universal discipleship. It gave evidence, that even as Christ suffered in the flesh, so these ready and resolved followers of His had armed themselves likewise with the same mind—and prepared not only to suffer in the flesh but to cease from sin,† that they should no longer live the rest of their time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God. Well may it be said of every spirit who thus confesses Jesus Christ, that he is of God; and we may now understand, whenever such a confession is meant, how no man could say that Jesus was the Lord but by the Holy Ghost. All who were so actuated were in full readiness to drink of the cup which Christ drank of, and to be baptized with the baptism, that baptism of deep affliction which He was baptized with; and we may well conceive of this fixity of principle and purpose, that, impossible to mere nature, it could not be attained unto but through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. The confession of these days in fact, as being the best evidence and pledge

* Luke, i, 66.

* John, ix, 22.

† 1 Peter, iv, 1, 2.

of a man's sincerity, was an effectual guarantee for his good works as well as his good words; and was therefore held in as great honour and demand, as obedience itself was. And as we read of those unworthy disciples who in works denied God—so may we learn from this expression that by works too we may confess Him; and though it be only the confession of the mouth that is spoken of in our text, yet when we consider the actuating spirit in which it originates, we are not to wonder though the same high ascriptions should be given to it, as we find given to the conformity of the whole man with the will of God and the prescriptions of the gospel. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven." It was because of their confessing Christ, that they had to endure a great fight of afflictions; but he that maintained his steadfastness notwithstanding, had the truth of our text literally fulfilled upon him. The confession he made was unto salvation—for "he that endureth to the end shall be saved."*

Understanding then, that, for reasons now given, confession was placed in the same rank, and had the same powers and consequences ascribed to it, with general obedience—it follows, that the apostle who tells us so often throughout his writings that we are saved by faith, in effect tells us at this place that we are saved by works. You must all have heard of the alleged contrariety between Paul and James upon this subject; but here there appears to be almost as strange a seeming contrariety between Paul and himself—not a real opposition of course in either instance, but the mere semblance of one, and which has been so often and so successfully disposed of by the explanations of those who undertake to effect a reconciliation, as they term it, between the two apostles, that we shall not at present repeat any of them. We shall only call attention to a distinction in the language of the apostle, when he expresses the several effects of faith upon the one hand, and of confession upon the other. When man believeth it is unto righteousness—whereas when he confesseth, or confession is made by him, it is unto salvation; and understanding righteousness, as it unquestionably ought to be in this place, in its forensic or legal meaning, we learn from the first clause of the verse before us, that by faith we are justified—while understanding confession as the equivalent of a universal obedience, we are told in the second clause that by works we are saved. The truth is, that justification and

salvation are not perfectly synonymous. The former is part of the latter, but not the whole of it. To complete one's salvation, there must be deliverance from the power of sin as well as from its punishment; and accordingly, while reconciled by the death of Christ, we are saved by His life*—that is, because He lives, we shall live also; or because He hath overcome, we shall overcome also; or because of the grace dispensed upon us from the hands of a risen Saviour, He, through the work of His Spirit in us effectuates our sanctification—even as by His work in the flesh for us, He hath effectuated our acceptance with God. In like manner, if no man in these days could say that Jesus is the Lord but by the power of the Holy Ghost, then to be saved by the confession of the text, which is really tantamount to our thus saying, is to be saved by the operation of this heavenly agent—in perfect keeping with another declaration of the apostle, when he tells us that we are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Ver. 11. 'For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.' That is either—First, Shall not be ashamed by the nonfulfilment of that which is the object of their confident expectation. It is a confidence which they might well cherish and avow—secure as they are from the mockery of any failure or disappointment in their hopes. All the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea and amen; and it is because of their certain and punctual accomplishment, that the hope which they inspire is a hope which maketh not ashamed.† When the verse is regarded in this view, its reference is to the distant future—not to the time past when the promises were made, not even to the present time when the promises are believed, but to that future time when in act and by performance the promises will all be made good. When found in very truth that the glory, now only revealed, and looked forward to, but in perspective or by anticipation, is fully realised—then will the believer lift up his head and rejoice. Otherwise, ashamed of the vain and illusory imagination on which he had before rested, he would sink into despair.

Or, secondly, the text may be understood in reference to the present time, when the promises are only as yet believed, and the fulfilment of them is still in reserve. Even at this earlier stage, might faith have a present and powerful effect in repressing shame, and more especially the shame of making the avowal of itself, and so of testifying for Christ. Like every other

* Matt. x, 22.

* Romans, v, 10.

† Romans, v, 5.

principle of strong and felt urgency within, it may delight in the vent and forthgoing of its own utterance, and in bearing down the restraints whether of shame or of fear, which might have otherwise intercepted the expression of it. "I believed, therefore have I spoken."* "My heart was hot within me, and the fire burned—then spake I with my tongue."† "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."‡ These verses point not to the future vindication and triumph of our faith by the verification of its object; but to the present antagonism and victory, so to speak, of the principle of faith over the principle of shame—as exemplified by our Saviour, who, for the joy that was set before Him, but was only yet in prospect, endured the cross and also despised the shame. Thus too the apostle was not ashamed, and that because of the certainty he felt in Him whom he believed, and the firm persuasion he had of His ability to save him. And so he bids Timothy not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, who Himself tells us—that whosoever shall be ashamed of Him and of His words, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of His Father. It is therefore a present feeling, a present sensibility, that is spoken of in all these passages; and of which it is required that in the strength of our faith it should be over-ruled, and not given way to. We like this view of the text. It binds so together the belief of its first clause with the confession of its second—making them, if not so identical, at least so inseparable, as fully to explain the common virtues or common effects which are ascribed to each of them; and fully to harmonise the saying, that 'confession is unto salvation,' with the saying, that "the end of our faith is the salvation of our souls."§

From the proposition of this verse, a certain converse proposition might be drawn, that might well be used as a criterion by which to test and to ascertain the reality of our faith. If it be true that whosoever believeth on Him is not ashamed, then it should be true that whosoever is ashamed of Him doth not believe. Or in the terms of the preceding verse, Whosoever maketh not confession of Him with the mouth, believeth Him not with the heart. How comes it then, that Christ and all which is expressly Christian, are so habitually and systematically excluded from society as topics of conversation? What shall we say, even of those who are denominated the professing people, what shall we say of their silence on the sa-

cred themes of the soul and the Saviour and eternity, amid the companionship of this world? When do we ever meet with the free and copious utterance that would flow from the mouth on these subjects, if only the heart was full of them? The general emigration of a whole neighborhood from one country to another in this world, would be the constant talk of all its parties and throughout all its families, for months before the embarkation, and while the busy work of preparations and outfits was going on. How is it that we meet with nothing like this, on the subject of that universal emigration from one world to another, which, by successive transportations across the dark valley and shadow of death, will so surely and in so short a time overtake the whole of our living population? Is it because there are no outfits, no preparations, and therefore no prospects to talk about?—these having no place in the converse, just because they have no place in the business or in the hearts of men? They are seldom or never the subjects of speech, just because they are seldom or never the subjects of thought. Or if there be any who think of them, but are ashamed to speak of them—such we say is the overbearing magnitude of the interest at stake, that it needs but a realising sense of them to put to flight both the fear and the shame of this world. The engrossing affection of the great and the one thing needful would displace and subordinate every inferior affection of our nature; and, on the other hand, the total want of a practical earnestness or concern therein, as evinced by the tenor and talk of almost every company, might well justify the question—Verily, is there such a thing as faith upon the earth?

Ver. 12, 13. 'For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' But even a universal apostacy or unbelief would not make the faith of God to be of no effect. He is true, though every man should be a liar; and the precious truth announced in these verses invests with an ample warrant the messengers of salvation, who might go forth the bearers of a full and unexcepted commission, to assail even a whole world lying in wickedness and unconcern, by plying with the overtures of a free salvation, each and every individual of the great human family. God, it is said here, makes no difference between the Jew and the Greek; and there are some, who, in defending the articles of their own scientific theology, would make the universality of the gospel offer lie in this—that, now when the middle wall of partition is

* Psalm cxvi, 10.
† Matthew, xii, 34.

† Psalm xxxix, 3.
‡ 1 Peter, i, 9.

broken down, it might be offered to men of every nation. But the Scriptural theology carries the universality farther down than this—and so as that the gospel might be offered, not merely to men of every nation, but to each man of every nation. God is not only no respecter of nations, He is no respecter of persons. It is not only whatsoever nation shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved; but whatsoever man of that nation shall call upon the name of the Lord, he shall be saved. We are not now probing into the depths of the Almighty's government; or speculating on the counsels of a predestinating God. But on the authority of these verses, we are attempting to give forth the plain and palpable duties of

every minister and every hearer—which is for the former to knock at every single door, and crave admittance for the gospel into every single heart, making an honest, and in the most obvious sense of the term, a real tender of salvation to every man; and for the latter to respond with the same honesty and in full confidence, to the call that has been thus sounded in his hearing—So that his call back again shall not be of words merely. For as the confession which availeth is not with the mouth only, but proceedeth from faith in the heart, so the call which availeth is not one of utterance only, but proceedeth from desirousness in the heart; and whatsoever so calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

LECTURE LXXXII.

ROMANS X, 14—21.

"How then 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? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

THE gospel should be preached to every creature—it being a universal message from heaven to earth, co-extensive with the species; and not only to be carried forth over all, but to be pressed on the specific acceptance of each. A commission thus universal should have had at our hands a universal fulfilment; but we have only to open our eyes, and see how palpably short it has come of this—both internally or within the limits of Christendom, and externally or abroad and over the face of the world. And yet we affect to wonder, as if it were something mysterious and inscrutable, at the partiality of the Divine government, in having limited the blessings of the Christian religion to so small a portion of the human family. Before carrying the reproach so far upward, we had better first take account of our own immediate share in it; and deal with the proximate cause of this phenomenon, ere we take cognisance of any of its remote and anterior causes. We complain of a limited Christianity, but there was no limit in the terms of that commission which was put into our hands at the outset of this dispensation—and that in the form of a precept, Go and promulgate this gospel every where; accompanied

with a promise, Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. It is not time to charge the Almighty, or to arraign the methods of His administration—till we have enquired in how far this precept has been carried into operation; and then what the instances are in which, when the precept was fully acted up to, this promise has ever been withheld. Man's prone and precipitate inclination is to reckon with his God, and to leave unsettled all the while that reckoning which we ought first to hold with ourselves,—a transgression this both of piety and of sound philosophy—it being the dictate of each, instead of speculating on His part in the matter which is secret and belongs unto Him, fully to examine how we stand acquitted of our own part which is revealed and belongs to us and to our children.

Ver. 14, 15. 'How then 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? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!' These

verses give the first answer, the answer which is readiest and most within reach, to the question—How is it that the whole earth is not Christianised? God could, by an exercise of power and unlimited sovereignty, achieve this result at the instant bidding of His voice—even as on the first day of creation, He said let there be light, and there was light. But God hath, in the exercise of wisdom, to us perhaps inscrutable, yet in perfect analogy with the many thousand processes of nature and providence, He hath chosen to ordain an instrumentality for the diffusion of the Christian religion over the world. Now it so happens that men are component, nay the chief parts of this instrumentality; and we should first enquire how they have done their part—so as to ascertain whether it be not we the men who are in fault, before daring to lay the fault upon God.

It is a sound doctrinal theology which acknowledges, amid the countless diversity of operations around us, that it is God who worketh all in all. But God worketh by means; and when a certain prescribed human agency enters into that system of means which He hath instituted, it is a sound practical theology to labour as assiduously in the bidden way, as if man worked all. It is one of the highest points of Christian wisdom, to combine the utmost dependence on God with the utmost diligence in the prosecution of all those activities which He Himself hath appointed—insomuch that though the Holy Spirit be the undoubted agent of every conversion, Paul held it no infringement on orthodoxy, to say as much as that, under our present economy, the conversion of the world, without the instrumentality of men, is impossible. ‘How shall they believe, unless they hear? How shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach except they be sent?’ He himself was converted, by a direct communication from heaven, apart from all converse with flesh and blood, receiving the gospel not of man nor taught it by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ—yet none more strenuous than he, in affirming the necessity of human co-operation, in the great work of evangelising the world. Not but that he imagined, in every instance as well as in his own, that faith is not of ourselves but is the gift of God; and that even when conveyed by the preaching of one man into the mind of another, it is but the pouring from one earthen vessel to another of a treasure which had come down from heaven—so that whenever, in any age or country of the world that precious faith which is unto salvation is deposited in any heart, it is established by a supernatural agency, and standeth there not in the wisdom of

men but in the power of God. It is for Him however, and not for us, to make choice of His own pathway for the conveyance of His own blessings, and the propagation of His own spiritual influences into the souls of men; and if He choose to make one man His vehicle for the transference of light and grace into the heart of another, it is the part of him whom He has thus selected as His instrument, to labour with all his might and assiduity in the sacred duties of that vocation whereto he has been called. This preference for the agency of men in the work of Christianisation is conspicuous in every age of the church; and at no time more than in the first age, even though it was the period of miracles and supernatural visitations. We have often looked on the history of the conversion of Cornelius as a striking illustration of this. God could have worked a saving faith in the heart of Cornelius, by an immediate suggestion from His own Spirit, or through the mouth of an angel. And He did send an angel to Cornelius, not however that he might preach the gospel to him, but that he might bid him send for Peter, and receive that gospel at the lips of a fellow-mortal. And God also sent to Peter a communication from heaven to prepare him for the message—thus doubling as it were the amount of miraculous agency, in order that the gospel might be heard by a yet unconverted child of Adam, not through the medium of a supernatural and angelic, but through the medium of a natural and a human utterance. Yet not so as that the natural should supersede or displace the supernatural—for while Peter spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard. The function of Peter was the same with that of a minister or missionary in the present day—it was to tell Cornelius the words by which he and all his house should be saved. And the function of the Holy Ghost for the purpose of giving demonstration and efficiency to the word, is the same now as ever—He falls on us still even as He did on them at the beginning. Let no man put asunder the things which God hath joined; but let all in deed and in performance strive mightily for the spread and prevalence of the gospel on the earth, and give no rest to God in prayer, that by His grace He might work in them mightily.

The application of all this to the question of missions, whether home or foreign, is quite obvious. Let these be multiplied to the uttermost, so as to fill up all the vacancies which are within, or to spread abroad over all the mighty spaces which are beyond the limits of Christendom. Yet all will be useless and effete, if unblest or

unaccompanied by the Spirit of God. Some there are, men of devotion, like many perhaps of the Puritanic age, who have a contempt for machinery, and who think to succeed by prayer alone for the extension of our Redeemer's Kingdom. Others there are, men of bustle and enterprise, like many perhaps of our present age, who live, if not in the contempt, at least in the neglect of supplication; and think to succeed in the work of Christian philanthropy, by the busy prosecution of those schemes and societies which have recently sprung up in the religious world. Neither will do singly—neither the human instrumentality alone without the agency from above; not yet the celestial agency, which refuses to come forth but through an earthly apparatus which itself prescribes, and to the working of which it gives all its vitality and all its vigour. Without the conjunction of these, both the men of prayer and the men of performance will fall short of the object which their hearts are set upon. He who knows rightly to divide, or rather rightly to compound the word of truth, knows how to conjoin these, and so gives himself wholly, not to prayer alone or to the ministry of the word alone—but like the apostles of old to prayer and the ministry of the word. The one sets up and works a machinery upon earth. The other brings down from heaven that inner element which actuates the movements, and imparts to them all their living energy. It is to this prolific union of devout and desirous hearts with busy hands, that the church of Christ stands indebted for all its prosperity, in those seasons of gracious revival, when the frequent and earnest preaching of the word has been preceded or accompanied by a spirit of frequent and importunate prayer. Thus alone can the word of God be caused mightily to grow and to prevail—be it in a household, or a parish, or an empire, or through the world at large.

'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.' Nothing can exceed the admirable tact and sagacity, wherewith Paul adapts his argument to the tastes and partialities of those with whom he at the time is holding converse. In an upright and honorable sense he was all things to all men. To the Greeks he was a Greek—as in his address to the people of Athens, when he quoted from their own poets, and reasoned with them from the mythology of their nation. And to the Jews he was a Jew—as in the passage before us, in which we can discern the same principle of accommodation—as indeed in all his recorded addresses to the men of that nation, when he never fails to quote abundantly from their own prophets,

and to reason with them out of their own scriptures. And the quotation before us seems eminently fitted to subserve, what was evidently a great object with Paul, throughout the whole of this epistle—that of reconciling his countrymen to the admission of the Gentiles into a religious equality with themselves. It is taken from one of their own most illustrious writers, to whom they could not turn back, without reading in almost immediate contiguity with the passage to which he refers them, of the salvation of the Gentiles along with the comfort of their own people and the redemption of Jerusalem. "The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations (Gentiles); and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."* But how could they behold that salvation—or, to understand their seeing in the mental sense of the term, how could they believe in it, unless they were told of it, unless it was preached to them, unless messengers were sent to them as well as to God's peculiar and favored people? In other words, as the Gentiles were under the gospel economy to be made partakers of the same faith, and so of the same high privileges with themselves, and as they could not believe without hearing, nor hear without a preacher—it was necessary that the message of life should be propounded to them also; And thus he vindicates his own peculiar apostleship, in that he was commissioned as a chosen vessel to bear the tidings of salvation before the Gentiles as well as the children of Israel.

Ver. 16, 18-21. 'But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?—But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Isaiah is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.' We have already said that ere we charge God with partiality in that the blessings of the Christian religion are so limited, we should first acquit ourselves of the universal commission to go and make a tender of these blessings to every creature under heaven; and so make trial of the promise which accompanies this injunction—"Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." But ere we bring this ex-

* Isaiah, lii, 7, 9, 10, 15.

periment to any thing like a full and finished completion, we are anticipated by a decisive fact, and from which we know, beforehand, that though the gospel were preached to all, and by competent messengers too, sent forth by God Himself—yet that all would not receive it. It had been so preached in many distinct neighborhoods even by prophets and inspired apostles—yet without effect upon many, who heard but did not believe. It was prophesied by Esaias, that all should not obey the gospel, even though brought to their doors, or though reported to them, and so placed within the reach of their hearing it. ‘Lord, who hath believed our report?’ Or who hath believed the hearing which they have heard of us? The word translated report in this verse is the same with that translated hearing in the next.

There could be no mistake then as to their hearing. ‘But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily.’ He might have given historical proof of this, by quoting his own experience and that of his colleagues in the apostleship—who had so often in the past course of their ministry lifted their testimony in the hearing both of countrymen and others who rejected it—to whom they preached the gospel, which, though to some it was the savour of life unto life, was to many the savour of death unto death.

But in order to trace the line of continuity in this whole passage, we must look to the verses more in connection with each other.

Ver. 16-21. ‘But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.’ It is obvious that one main design of this epistle is to establish the common ground, on which Jews and Gentiles now stand under the Christian dispensation—in regard first, to the like disease or condemnation that were upon them both; then to the like remedy which they equally stand in need of; and, most offensive of all, or what required the most strenuous effort on the part of the apostle in reconciling it to the minds of his own countrymen, the same

free appliance of that remedy to all upon the face of the earth,—which involved the admission of those, who were before aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, to the same faith and the same high privileges with themselves. This aim, which from first to last he never lets go or loses sight of, appears so early as in the first chapter, where he speaks of the gospel (i, 16) as being the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. After which, he enters more distinctly and at greater length on the theme in the second chapter (ii, 17-29) where he argues for the common religious footing on which these two now stand—evidently not without the apprehension, or rather the actual experience of a strong repugnance on the part of the Jewish mind to the conclusion which he was labouring to establish. He then—as if a truth revolting to the prejudices of those whom he was addressing should be unfolded gradually—he ventures, if I may say so, in the third chapter, on terms of greater expressness and particularity—charging the Jews with the same sinfulness as the Gentiles (iii, 9); and holding forth to both the same salvation, even that righteousness by faith which is unto all and upon all who believe (iii, 22) ‘for there is no difference’—no difference he certainly means between Jews and Gentiles, though he does not here make use of these designations, as if he shrunk at first from naming the two, when for the first time he places them on the same even platform of acceptance with God. Yet ere the chapter closes, and as if waxing bolder in the progress of his argument, he does make distinct utterance, though under an aspect of greater generality, of the one Father in heaven being the God not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles—nay of His justifying the one whom he there calls the uncircumcision, in the same way that He justifies the other whom he distinguishes as the circumcision, which titles he keeps by throughout the whole of his remaining argument in the chapter which follows. He had experienced the sensitiveness of the Jewish prejudices, when the name of the Gentiles was introduced in connection with any such preferment as brought them up to a level with the men of their own nation—more especially on the occasion of that public address he made in person to a great multitude at Jerusalem, who heard him patiently till this word escaped from him; “and they gave him audience unto this word”^{*}—after which there were no bounds to their indignation. We can fancy as if it were due to that admirable

* Acts, xxii, 22.

delicacy which is so palpably one of our apostle's great characteristics—that if, when holding converse with Jews, he has occasion to mention the Gentiles as of equal rank and consideration with themselves, he does it so frequently under the cover of a quotation from their own Scriptures.

It is obvious from the whole substance and texture of his argument in this epistle to the Romans, that he feels himself dealing throughout with Jewish understandings, and with men of Jewish education. He never loses sight of the Old Testament; but seems at all times glad of an opportunity, whenever he can fortify his reasonings by passages and illustrations taken out of these Scriptures. There is great richness of such allusion in the fourth chapter; nor is it wholly absent from the fifth and seventh; and makes a full reappearance in the ninth, onward to those verses wherewith we are now occupied. In an earlier part of the epistle which we have quoted, where the apostle speaks of the righteousness by faith being unto all, he adds—"for there is no difference." And again in the part to which we have now come (x, 12)—in conjunction with those terms of glorious universality, "all" and "whosoever," he adds the very same words—"for there is no difference"—only telling us furthermore between whom—"no difference between the Jew and the Greek." He had before affirmed of Jews and Gentiles, that they laboured under the same disease, and that the same remedy was provided for them in heaven; and he is now employed in demonstrating, that, in order to the remedy having effect, the hearers of it on earth must carry it equally home to both—or that both must be alike preached unto, and plied with the same calls and overtures, by the messengers of a common salvation. And so he evidently feels himself again to be in contact with certain points of repulsion in the Jewish mind; and, for the purpose of gaining access thereunto, recurs to his usual expedients—speaking to their own familiar recognitions, and reasoning with them out of their own Scriptures.

He begins this work of quotation at the 5th verse, and continues it downward—till he had established the necessity of sending men over the world, to bring men to the faith of the gospel—Whence it follows, as the Gentiles by the new economy were to have a part in the same salvation through the medium of the same faith with the Jews, that, in order to their believing alike, they must be preached unto alike, for how can they believe without hearing, or hear without a preacher?—which preacher or preachers must be sent

to them; and this he confirms in the 15th verse by a passage taken from one of the most celebrated of their prophets. But here he interposes in verse 16th, a needful and qualifying remark which might have been suggested indeed by another passage from the same prophet very near to the former one, and to which at all events the apostle expressly appeals. It follows not, that though preaching should be the ordinary or even the indispensable prerequisite to faith, it follows not that faith should always be the result of preaching. A given cause might be indispensable to a certain effect, and yet not always produce that effect. Though the hearing of the gospel were necessary to the believing of it, it follows not that all who hear should necessarily believe; and accordingly the apostle tells us, 'They have not all obeyed the gospel'—by which he undoubtedly means, that, of the all who have heard it so many have not obeyed it. And he fortifies this assertion by the quotation from Isaiah, 'Who hath believed our report?' The question implies that few had believed; but it also implies, that though belief does not always follow in the train of a previously heard report, yet that when it does take place, it is always or generally in the order of this succession—Or, in other words—Though hearing is not always followed up by a subsequent faith as its effect—yet that seldom or never does faith arise in the mind, but from an anterior hearing as its cause. And this explains the dependence of the 17th verse on the last clause of the 16th—a dependence more obvious to the reader of the original than it is in the translation; for the word 'report' in the one, and the word 'hearing' in the other, are both rendered from the same term (*ακουη*) in the Greek. It helps also to impress the connection more strongly—that whereas in our English bibles the belief in the one verse and faith in the other, though they signify the same thing yet sound so differently, in the original the same radical is employed in both (*πιστευω* and *πιστις*); and these two verses would therefore have been translated more synonymously at least, if in the 16th it had been translated, Who hath believed in the hearing that we have sounded in his ears, (which though a complaint and implying therefore that few had believed, implies also that belief, if not the actual, was at least the proper consequent of hearing,) which would have brought out the inference in the 17th more palpably, Therefore belief cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The question, What plants have arisen from the seed which has been cast into the ground?—clearly implies, that, while all seeds do not germinate into plants, yet

a plant never arises but from a seed, and that the one is the proper and causal antecedent of the other.

The question then is naturally started at this place, Whether the hearing indispensable to faith, has been carried abroad?—and a reply is given in the affirmative, couched in language all the more congenial to the Jewish ear, that it was taken from Scripture, and which conveys thus much at least, that the gospel ought to go forth as freely and universally throughout the world, as the light of the sun is spread abroad over the surface of it. And, in point of fact it had, even when the apostle was writing, been proclaimed far and wide beyond the limits of Judaism; and now there was no let or hindrance, in the nature and design of the economy itself, to restrain the diffusion of it through every place and territory where men were to be found. And accordingly it had sounded forth to the outskirts of the Roman empire, which was then spoken of in terms that properly signified the whole of the habitable earth—insomuch that Paul says of the word of the gospel, “which is come unto you as it is in all the world,” and “which was preached to every creature which is under heaven.”* So that to the question, Have men heard the gospel?—there could be no difficulty in giving the prompt and decisive reply, ‘Yes verily.’

Ver. 19. After having replied in the preceding verse generally and for all mankind, the question is reiterated with a special reference to the children of Israel. Did not they in particular know?—had they also the advantage of being made to hear and be acquainted with the subject-matter of preaching? This Paul might have replied to in a clear and decided affirmative—grounding it on the events of his own age. They had a preference over the Gentiles in every respect. They saw Christ in the flesh—they witnessed His miracles—they heard his discourses—even after His ascension, and a commission was left with the apostles to go and preach the gospel unto all nations, still the priority was given to them: For though the apostles went forth with the message of salvation over all the earth, it was after beginning at Jerusalem; and in every place or nation they came to, it was their practice to seek after the Jews and preach to them first—till wearied out by the obstinate rejection of their doctrine, they made this protest against it—Since you hold yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo we turn to the Gentiles. Paul could have thus answered in his own person: but, as his

general manner was, he goes back upon earlier times—for even then it may be said that the gospel was preached to those of that remoter period as well as unto us of the present day; and from the mouths of two of their own most honoured writers, he gives the same answer, and pronounces upon them the same condemnation. First Moses, who, on a former occasion, had said of them, “What nation is so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?”—this same Moses who thus affirmed the knowledge of the people of Israel to be above that of all the other people upon earth, says afterwards, and in the words here quoted, that, as they had abused these privileges, God would transfer them to others who had not been so distinguished, and so provoke them to jealousy by a people who hitherto had been no peculiar people to Him; and anger them by a foolish nation, a nation destitute of the knowledge which had been so plentifully communicated to themselves. And in verses 20th and 21st, Isaiah expresses himself in still bolder and clearer terms. By the boldness which he ascribes to Isaiah, the apostle very distinctly intimates, that he felt himself treading on delicate ground—engaged as he was in telling the Jews of their national misconduct, and of the forfeiture which they had thereby incurred of the national honours, which at one time singled them out and signalised them above all the rest of the human family. “I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not after me.” All day long had God stretched forth His hands unto Israel—addressing them, and bringing Himself near unto them, and giving them the knowledge of His will and of His ways. Verily they have not all obeyed the gospel, even though pressed upon their acceptance—for these Israelites in particular, to whom the closest approaches had been made, and the fullest revelation had been given, turned out after all a disobedient and gainsaying people.

This somewhat unmanageable passage may be thus paraphrased. “There is no difference between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord and Maker of all, is rich to all who call on Him. For whosoever shall call on His name shall be saved. But how can they call on Him till they believe in Him, and how can they believe unless they hear of Him, and how can they hear but by a preacher? And in order to this, preachers must be sent, even as those were of whom Isaiah speaks, when, hailing them as the messengers of good, he exclaims, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of

* Col. i. 6, 23.

peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Yet it follows not that all who are thus preached unto shall believe. In point of fact, all did not put faith in the good tidings; and accordingly the same Isaiah complains of the smallness of their number—saying, Who hath believed our testimony? Yet though belief does not always come after a testimony, a testimony always, or at least ordinarily comes before the belief—for faith cometh by hearing, though not by all or any sort of hearing, but the hearing only of the word of God. Has not this word then been proclaimed to all? Yes truly—the barrier between Jew and Gentile is now moved away; and the Sun of Righteousness should be made as free and patent to all as is the sun of nature. But did Israel share in this light? Yes, and that in a more signal and preeminent way: But, unworthy as they proved themselves of the privilege, even their own legislator threatened the removal of their candle-

stick to the other and darker places of the earth; and the highest of their prophets told them in still more decisive terms, that those high preferments of which they boasted, should be taken away from them, and given to others—and that because of their continued resistance to a beseeching God, who had so long but in vain, pressed on their acceptance the overtures of His great salvation.'

There are various and important topics for reflection presented throughout the passage which forms the ground-work of this Lecture. But we forbear the further consideration of them at present; and all the more readily, that the opportunity for a future treatment of them will not be wanting in what remains of the epistle. For the views which have been already given by us of the 17th verse we refer to a Sermon published many years ago.*

* First printed in 1812, and now to be found in our volume of 'Public and Occasional Sermons,' being vol. xi of the Series.

LECTURE LXXXIII.

ROMANS xi, 1—5.

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. 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. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

IN the preceding chapter we are told of the perfect and unqualified freeness of the gospel—insomuch that it may be held forth, nay urged, with all simplicity and earnestness on the acceptance of every man; and in virtue of this, whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved. It follows therefore, that there is not a human creature under heaven, from whom the offers of this said gospel ought to be withheld; and it is on the undoubted truth of this position that we have founded at least one reply to a question put, and sometimes in the form of a charge or complaint against the equity of the Divine administration, Why the blessings of Christianity should be so limited in point of extent, or, Why a religion, expressly designed for all mankind, should have appropriated or taken full possession of so small a part of the human family? Our answer then was, that, ere we arraigned the policy or procedure of the Almighty in this matter, we should first hold a reckoning with ourselves, and determine whether we stand exempted from

all censure and crimination on account of it. Certain it is, that a full and unrestricted commission has been put into our hands—Go unto all nations, Go and preach the Gospel unto every creature. Have we fulfilled this task? Before speculating on the part which God may have had in this result, would it not be well to inquire how far we stand acquitted of our own part in it? Ere we put the question, Why is it that all men do not believe—is there not another question which seems to have the natural precedency, Have all men been preached unto? Have missionaries yet gone abroad over all the dark places of the earth; or, even at our own doors, has the message of salvation been enough sounded forth, or pressed with sufficient importunity on the attention of all the families within the limits of Christendom? If in this we have failed or fallen short, which we have most glaringly, it is scarcely for us at least to charge God with partiality—the God who has put into our hands so liberal and large a warrant, and accompanied it with the promise too,

that, in the discharge of it He would be with us always even unto the end of the world. Have we worked enough under the precept?—or prayed enough over the promise? It is scarcely for us at least to cast reproaches on the high government of Heaven, ere we first addressed ourselves and that with diligent hands and dependent hearts, to our assigned task upon earth; and then, after having over-tured the gospel to all men, seen whether, as the effect of a universal proclamation, a universal Christianity did not follow in its train.

But this, however justly or pertinently it may be said, is yet far from a complete or adequate solution of the phenomenon in question. It is not enough to tell us that the gospel might be declared unto all men, and that all who believe shall be saved—when in point of fact all do not and will not believe it. As to the objective presentation thereof, there might be the utmost possible latitude and freeness in the gospel; but, in order to its taking effect, there must also be a subjective consent thereto on the part of those to whom it is addressed. Now it appears from thousands and thousands more of successive specimens, in the as many different localities where the experiment has been tried, that all who hear the gospel, even however rightly and authoritatively preached to them, do not obey the gospel; and this difference, this subjective difference between one man and another, is a fact or phenomenon which remains to be accounted for. We shall not here say over again what we have already said, when, expounding former chapters in this epistle, we were led to discuss the high topic of predestination. We then admitted, and still with all confidence repeat, that while there is diversity of operations, it is God who worketh all in all—that He is throned in universal sovereignty—as supreme in the inner and unseen world of spirits, as He is absolute and uncontrolled in fixing all the events which belong to the visible history of nature and providence. On this principle, we cannot look to the fact of one man believing the gospel, without connecting it with the fact that God has ordained it so—and neither can we look to the fact of another man disobeying the gospel, without connecting it with the fact that God has left it so. If asked to assign the reason of God having so done, or the cause of this difference between one man and another, and that with the view of explaining or vindicating the counsels of the upper sanctuary—we have no other answer to make, but make it frankly and immediately, that we cannot tell. At an earlier stage of this exposition, we have attempted

to draw what we conceive to be the limit between the knowable and the unknowable in this question; and have also there stated the principles on which I hold, that, whatever difficulty there may be in explaining the procedure of God, this carries in it no excuse for the wickedness of man. The moral certainties in the one field, are not in the least bedimmed or overshadowed, by the metaphysical obscurities which rest on the other and the more arduous field of speculation. Man's unbelief, if resolvable into man's wilfulness, and our Saviour does resolve it into the evil of his own doings,* stands as clearly out a rightful object of condemnation, whether the policy and jurisprudence of Heaven are thrown open to our view, or shrouded in deepest secrecy. If the question be put, Why are some only preached unto, and not all? we reply, that as far as this proceeds from the indifference of those called Christians to the souls of the perishing millions around them, the fault lies clearly with man. If the question be put, Why do some only of those preached unto believe and not all? we reply, that as far as this proceeds from the love of darkness and the power of depravity, the perversity and the fault still lie clearly with man. But if the question be put, Why is it that the Spirit from on high selects some only, whom he disposes to receive and obey the gospel, and not all? we confess ourselves overawed by the difficulties of a theme so transcendently and so hopelessly above us; and would join the apostle in saying, Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?

Ver. 1. 'I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.' At the conclusion of the last chapter we find the apostle saying, that, all day long, or during the whole period of their political subsistence as a nation, God had held converse, whether in the way of remonstrance or entreaty, with the children of Israel—Sending them, from one age to another, prophets and righteous men, whom they slew and persecuted—till at length they crucified the Lord of glory, after which, by an act of terrible retribution, the whole Jewish economy, both civil and ecclesiastical, was utterly exterminated, or swept off by the "besom of destruction" from the face of the earth. The question of our present verse follows quite naturally in the train of such a contemplation. Hath God then entirely rejected His ancient people? Hath He wholly and conclusively cast them away? to which question Paul's answer is a prompt and emphatic negative; and,

* John, iii, 19.

in confirmation of which, he quotes himself as a specimen. He himself was an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham and tribe of Benjamin, or as he elsewhere says, an Hebrew of the Hebrews—yet, so far from being an outcast, was a convert to the new faith, and in full possession both of its hopes and privileges. It is perhaps somewhat gratuitous in some to imagine that he particularises his tribe, because it was the last and least of the twelve, and at one time indeed on the eve of its extermination—as all the more striking illustration or proof, that, great and signal though the days of their calamitous visitation had been, yet “the Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake His inheritance.”* But, instead of straining at ingenuities of this sort, let us be satisfied with the idea, that Paul meant nothing more by the specification of his tribe than simply to authenticate his genealogy as a Jew, and so make it all the more palpable that he incurred no forfeiture thereby—seeing that he was not only himself gifted with the unsearchable riches of Christ, but commissioned to preach, and thus make a full tender of them to others also.

Ver. 2, 3. ‘God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.’ God did not reject all Israel. He did not cast off those of whom He foreknew, and who were the objects not of his prescience only, but of His predestination to eternal blessedness. “Whom he did foreknow them he did predestinate.” We are here reminded of the expression, that “they are not all Israel which are of Israel.” God knoweth His own. He hath known them from the beginning, and all His purposes regarding them shall stand.

And these gracious purposes of the Almighty often extend to a greater number than we think; and of this the apostle gives a most memorable historic illustration in the case of the prophet Elijah—who cast a despairing eye over the land of Israel, and could not recognise over the whole length and breadth of it, even so much as one true worshipper. He made complaint to God of a universal apostacy—grounding as is often done in all sciences and all subjects, a hasty generalisation on his own limited and personal experience. But, God seeth not as man seeth. He knew the children of His own election, His own “hidden ones,” as they have been termed; and could discern no

less than seven thousand, when the prophet, gifted and endowed as he was, could not fix on a single individual. God knew them now as well as foreknew them (ver. 2) from all eternity; but it is altogether worthy of observation, that it is not by their election that He marks them out to Elijah. He does not read their names to him out of the book of life in heaven, or make any revelation of the secret purposes respecting them which He had from everlasting. He singles them out to the prophet by a sensible and a present mark, by a great and palpable act of obedience to His will upon earth. ‘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.’—Ver. 4.

Now we hold it of great theological importance to notice this peculiarity. God might have told Elijah of His primitive decree respecting these men. But no—He prefers telling him of their present doings. Known to Himself are all His works, and among the rest, the state of these seven thousand men from the beginning of the world; and on this high and transcendental ground, He could have told the prophet of their safety. But, instead of this, He chooses what may be called a lower and experimental ground, on which to indicate or make known to him the condition of these men as children of God’s own family. They had not bowed the knee to Baal; and this He thought to be ground enough on which to satisfy the mind of Elijah—thereby maintaining and exemplifying the distinction between the secret things which belong unto God, and the revealed things which belong to us and to our children.

And surely if God, even at the time of a special and extraordinary communication to one of His highest prophets—when telling him of these seven thousand men—reserved the secret of their predestination, and laid all the stress upon their practice—Surely it is not for us, unvisited by any such illumination, to explore the dark recesses of a past eternity, or seek to open the book of God’s decrees, that we may find the names of the persons who are recorded there. There is a better method, and one nearer at hand, by which to assure ourselves that we are the subjects of a blessed ordination, even by doing as these Hebrew saints in the days of Elijah, by keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. The Lord knoweth them that are His, and so knew them from all eternity. But man knoweth them that are the Lord’s in another way; and this in virtue of the perfect, the never-failing harmony, which obtains between the election and the sanctification. It is true that God predesti-

* Psalm xciv, 14.

nates to eternal life, but never without predestinating those whom He designs for this glorious inheritance to be conformed to the image of His Son.* Election is anterior to character—Yet so unbroken is the connection between them, that character becomes a criterion by which to ascertain the election. For this we need not aspire to the inaccessible steep which are above, but have only to persevere in the toils of our appointed task below. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and some there are who love to carry upward their speculation there, even to the highest point of a high and supralapsarian Calvinism. Let not this supersede the carefulness wherewith every Christian should observe, nor yet the earnestness wherewith every Christian minister should urge the saying—"Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."†

But there is something more in this verse which we have not yet adverted to—fitted to animate and cheer the heart of him who eyes with despondency the present moral and religious state, whether of the country or of the world. We mean the superiority by which God's estimate, or the true estimate, of what was still good in Israel, exceeded in amount that of the prophet. The 'even so' of the next verse warrants our making this application. Elijah's imagination was, that he stood alone; but God knew better, and told him of seven thousand who were like-minded with himself. And so are there many in this our day, and sometimes the more saintly and spiritual are the most liable to this miscalculation, who, as they contemplate the prevalence of infidelity and wickedness around them, underrate the Christianity both of their own neighbourhood and of the nation at large. The number of God's hidden ones may be greater than we think of—known only to Him, and in places where we have no suspicion of their existence. It is thus that the pleasing discovery is sometimes made within the bosom of vicinities and households where we least expected it; and many, we trust, even at short distances from our own habitation, are the unseen heirs of grace and immortality, whom we shall never recognise as such till we meet them in heaven. It were better certainly for the interests both of personal and public Christianity, that all real disciples of the truth as it is in Jesus, should know each other better, and company with each other more. And this makes our obligation all the more imperative of "confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus,"‡ or of coming forth with those frank and intrepid avowals which

might "declare plainly that they seek a country"*—and thus, by leading to a greater mutual acquaintanceship, might bring these fellow-travellers to Zion more closely and constantly beside each other. It were well in these expectants of a higher citizenship, these voyagers for heaven, to seek out each other by the way—and that not merely for a benefit to themselves, from the fellowship or communion of saints here; but for the greater command which it would enable them to wield over the moral destinies of the world.† Union, it has often been said, is strength; but it is not in the secret, but in the ostensible union of the friends and followers of Christianity, that the great strength of their cause lies; and what with the greater force of that cementing principle which binds them together, as well as the mighty hold which their peculiar objects have over conscience, the highest faculty of our nature, we should look for the greatest possible results from their visible combination—in speeding onward the triumphs of the faith, or the full and final establishment in the world of the empire of Truth and Righteousness.

And it is not enough that we look to the state of Christianity as it now stands. We should look to Christianity in progress. For by however small a fraction we may compute its hold of our species now, a time is coming when we shall cease to count it by minorities and remnants. The eye of God not only explores the present; but, with a thorough cognizance of time as well as space, it reaches onward to the most distant futurity. He not only knows, but He foreknows. By the voice of an immediate revelation, He gave comfort to the despairing heart of Elijah, when He told him of the numbers, who, even at the time of what seemed an all but universal defection and idolatry, still held by the true religion. And by the voice of prophecy in Scripture, He gives the like comfort to us, as we cast perhaps a desponding eye over the moral state and prospects of the world—in the bright perspective which He there has opened up to us, of the enlargement and the triumphs that still await the gospel of His Son. For amid all that is fitted to darken and discourage, we should recollect of the present that it is but the infancy of the Christian religion, and that we are yet among the struggles and the uncertainties of its embryo state. To have some idea of the glorious and magnificent expansion before us, we have only to look at the millennium of our regenerated world in the dimensions of prophecy, where every day is a year and every year is made up

* Rom. viii, 29. † 2 Tim. ii, 19. ‡ Rom. x, 9.

* Heb. xi, 14.

† John, xvii, 21.

of centuries—inasmuch that what may be termed the middle age of Christianity, is reckoned by only three years and a half, comprehensive though it be of many generations. And beyond this spectacle of blessedness and glory, we have the glimpse of further and larger developments, which, in the closing chapters of the book of Revelation, retire onward from the view till lost in the distances of eternity. Could we see the whole in the light of the Infinite Mind, the perfect wisdom and perfect goodness of all His purposes would be seen most gloriously; and as even in one of Israel's darkest days, when He told of the seven thousand whom He reserved to Himself, He alleviated the brooding imagination of the prophet, and taught him not to think so despairingly of the state of his nation—so could we be made to behold across our present day of small things, the evolutions of a greatness and prosperity still in reserve even for a world now lying in wickedness; or did the mighty and successive eras of the Divine administration rise in vision before us, then, instead of looking forward with dejection or dismay, we should lift up our heads and rejoice in the destinies of our species.

But though the apostle, in the course of this chapter extends his regards to futurity; and lays before us, though in dim transparency, the varying fortunes both of Jews and Gentiles in distant ages—he has not yet quitted the consideration of matters as they stood at the time when he was writing, and accordingly tells us in the 5th verse, that even of his own countrymen there was at that moment a remnant who should be saved. We may indeed gather directly from the Scriptural narrative, the evidences of a goodly number of converts to the gospel, or at least of professing disciples, from among the children of Israel. We have first the apostles; and doubtless so many of Hebrew extraction, in the hundred and twenty who were with them on the day of Pentecost; and also of the thousands who believed anterior to the calling of the Gentiles; and further, all of that great company of the priests who were obedient to the faith*—all in harmony with the assertion of Paul, that, 'Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.'

Ver. 5. Grace in the New Testament signifies either a gift, or the kindness which prompted the gift. There can be no misunderstanding of it, for example, in the former sense, when in 1 Cor. xvi. 3, the apostle speaks of bringing their *liberality* to Jerusalem—that is the fruit of

their liberality, so rendered from the original word, commonly translated into grace throughout Scripture. And there can be as little misunderstanding of it in the latter sense, when the same Greek word is translated into favour in Luke, ii. 52, where we read, that Jesus increased in favour with God and man. In those instances where the gift is specified in connection with the grace which originated or conveyed it, this leaves no other meaning for the grace than the kindness, which is a very common and perhaps its primary signification. For example, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation,"* where salvation is the gift, and grace the kindness of the giver.—"Grace reigneth unto eternal life," where eternal life is the gift, and grace the goodness which prompted it of Him whose gift it is—"Being justified freely by his grace," where the being justified or justification is the gift, and grace is the kind or generous disposition of Him who hath conferred it. And to close our list of instances with the verse which is before us—'The election of grace'—where grace is the cause, election the effect; or where election is the gift, and grace is the kindness of the Giver to him on whom He hath bestowed it. It is thus that the election of grace has been defined gratuitous election—the election of pure kindness or good-will—the fruit of a generosity altogether spontaneous—a present in short, and not a payment in return for any service or in consideration of any merit on the part of him who is the object of it.

Now this distinction between the kindness which prompts a gift and the gift itself; or between the generosity as it exists in the bosom of the dispenser and the fruit of that generosity, as imparted in the shape of a service done or a benefit rendered to him who is the object of it—in a word, between the beneficence and the benefaction, enables us to discriminate between the different kinds of grace, which, though all emanating from the same fountain, even the good-will of Him who is in heaven, yet are each characterised or specified, and so as to distinguish them from the rest, by the distinct and particular good done to him in behalf of whom the grace and goodness of the Father of all spirits has been exercised. Thus there might be a justifying grace, as when God justifies the ungodly; or a sanctifying grace, as when God bestows His Spirit to help our infirmities; or comprehensive of both, a saving grace, as† when it is said "by grace are ye saved and that not of yourselves—it is the gift of God:† Or,

* Acts, vi, 7.

† Titus, ii, 11.

† Ephesians, ii, 5, 8.

finally, the grace of our present text, the electing grace, here termed the grace of election—that in the exercise of which He set His special love on certain of His creatures from all eternity, as on the seven thousand of Israel whom He reserved unto Himself, and who, in virtue of this

His distinguishing favour, were borne onward in safety through all the dangers and temptations of their earthly pilgrimage, till admitted into secure and everlasting enjoyment to the blessedness of heaven.

LECTURE LXXXIV.

ROMANS xi, 6—10.

And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them: let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.*

THERE is one very obvious distinction between the electing grace of God, and the other sorts of it which have now been specified. In the election of any man thus favored and thus signalised, God stood alone. The act took place before that the man was born, nay before the foundation of the world.* It is not only prior to all the other forthputtings of Divine grace, but it gives birth to them all. If it be true that none but the elect shall obtain the kingdom of heaven; and it be also true that unless we are justified, and unless we are made holy, we shall not enter therein—then must every elect sinner have both the justifying and the sanctifying grace put forth upon him, ere that he reaches his final destination; and the connection is not more inseparable between any consequents in nature or history, and the antecedents from which they have sprung, than that which binds together the justification and the sanctification which take place on earth with the election which took place in heaven—the one, in fact, being the source or the fountain-head whence the others flow. They follow each other like the links of a chain stretching backward to the eternity that is past, and forward to the eternity which is to come. Paul enumerates a few of these links, not all of them contiguous,—for other links than these he mentions, and intermediate between them, could be supplied both from other Scripture and from experience. “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, (them he also sanctified; and whom he sanctified,) them he also glorified.”

We have already said of the great and primary act of grace, the grace of election, that at the time of passing it, God was the alone party; and in this respect it stands distinguished from the other or subordinate acts of grace. For in these last man *bears* a part—nay we should hold it the evidence of a sensitive and extreme, and in fact ill-understood orthodoxy, to shrink from the assertion, that in these last man *acts* a part. By saying so, we infringe not in the least on the supremacy of God; nor abridge by ever so little the agency of His grace, as being all in all in the business of man's salvation. It is most true that He worketh all in all; but he worketh on every distinct subject of His power agreeably to its distinct and characteristic nature. When working in the world of inorganic matter, He does not change the elements or bereave them of their respective properties and forces; but upholding them in these, and preserving the distinction between them—he maketh the winds and the waters and the lightnings, and even the inert and solid earth we tread upon, the instruments of His pleasure. When he worketh in the animal or vegetable kingdoms, He reverses not one law or process of physiology; but operating on every thing according to its kind, and without violence done either to the general or special varieties of each—still it is He who “causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth;”* and it is He also, who maintains the powers and the instincts of every living creature, as when in the sublime language of Job, He giveth to the horse his strength and clotheth his neck with thunder.

* Ephesians, i, 4.

* Psalm civ, 14.

And it is even so in the moral world. Every where He is all in all—supreme in the higher as in the lower departments of nature; and yet neither obliterating the characteristics, nor overbearing the functions of any individual thing in which or by which He is pleased to operate—whether it be a plant, or an animal, or finally a man—over whom He has the entire and resistless sovereignty, yet exercises it with perfect conformity to all the feelings and faculties of his moral nature—his conscience—his intelligence—his choice—and the whole busy play of his emotions and purposes and endeavours. God worketh all in all, and as completely in man as in any other of His creatures. But what is it that He worketh in him? He worketh in him to will and to do. So that there is room both for the sovereign grace of God the Creator, and the spontaneous acting of man the creature. In all that is good, and therefore agreeable to God's good pleasure, the creature acts just in the degree, be it great or small, in which the Creator actuates. And therefore it is that in those acts of grace, which, as contradistinguished from its great and primary act, or the grace of election, we termed its subordinate acts—we say not merely that man bears a part, but even acts a part—As in believing, though faith be indeed the gift of God;* or in understanding, though it be the Spirit who opens the understanding to understand the Scriptures; or in attending, though it be the Lord that openeth the heart to attend, as He did that of Lydia;† or in praying, though it be from above that the Spirit of grace and supplication is poured upon us;‡ or in willing, though it be God alone who makes us willing for good in the day of His power;§ or in striving, though we can strive mightily only according to His working who worketh in us mightily;|| and finally, in the business of purifying ourselves and perfecting our own holiness, though this can only be as fellow-workers with God, who have not received His grace or His promises in vain, when God will dwell in us and walk in us.¶ In all these instances there is a grace put forth from on high, and this responded to by being acted on from below. This may serve to establish our discrimination between the primary act of grace, even that of election, in which man has no part, and the subordinate acts, in which man has a part—and termed by us subordinate, not only because posterior in time, but because dependent in the order of cause and effect on the preordination from which they all

have germinated. It is obvious that man had no part in the primary act, any more than he has had a part in his own creation. But it is alike obvious that he has a part in the subordinate acts, though a part of as entire subjection as is that of the clay in the hands of the potter. It is a part however; and such a part as properly and characteristically belongs to a willing, understanding, purposing, and acting creature. And so he believes, perhaps after inquiry and prayer, in order to his justification; and he obeys, with prayer and painstaking both, in order to his sanctification; and while nothing is more true than that by grace alone he is saved, yet in perfect harmony with this, and as being a grace which both teaches and enables him to live soberly righteously and godly—it is equally true that it is for him to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.

Now we hold it of capital importance, both for rightly dividing the word of truth and for the guidance of our practical Christianity, clearly to understand—that there is nothing in the consideration of the primary grace passed in heaven long ago, which should in the very least affect or embarrass the part we ought to take on earth in that subordinate grace wherewith we have presently to do. We are the more anxious to press this home, because of the imagination—that the one is a barrier in the way of our dealing freely and confidently with the other, just as is prescribed and plainly laid down for us in Scripture. Whatever your capacity may be for the doctrine of election—whether it be a strong meat that you are able for; or, if fit only for the milk which serves to the nourishment of babes, you ought not to meddle with it—this cannot change, nor should it in the slightest darken, those stable categories of Scripture, that concern either the duties to be done by all, or the calls and the promises which are there held out to all. This doctrine must be profitable to some at least, else it would have formed no part or parcel of Scripture,* though perhaps it may not yet have been profitable to you—nay in danger, it may be, of being so perverted and misunderstood, as to be wrested by you to your own hurt. God may at length, or He may not, reveal even this unto you, as He does to others who are perfect.† But be this as it may—let that great and primary deed of grace which took place amid the counsels of the past eternity, and was transacted when God stood alone—let that be to you a lofty and transcendental theme which you cannot lay hold of, but which must

* Eph. ii, 8.

† Acts, xvi, 14.

‡ Zech. xii, 10.

§ Psa. cx, 3.

|| Col. i, 29.

¶ 2 Cor. vii, 1; vi, 1, 16.

* 2 Tim. iii, 16.

† Phil. iii, 15.

remain an inaccessible mystery till the time cometh when you shall know even as you are known—There is, posterior to this and subordinate to this, a grace, in the operation of which God standeth not alone, but which He brings to bear on earth's lowly platform—that here it may circulate at large and come into busy converse with the hearts and among the habitations of men. Of this grace as placed within the reach of all, it is the duty of all to avail themselves. "Ask, and ye shall receive; Seek, and ye shall find"—Pray for the Holy Spirit, and He shall be given to you—Believe, and ye shall be saved; and, in order to this belief, give earnest heed to the things which are spoken—These are all so many parts and manifestations of that subordinate, or as it may be termed, of that accessible or available grace whereof I am now speaking, and of which each man is called on to avail himself; and that without once bestowing a thought or a conjecture on the question, whether he has or has not a part in the grace of election. These are the revealed and the patent and the palpable things we have to do with here; and they ought not to be complicated with the hidden things, which lie far out of sight among the viewless eminences of the region that is above us. We cannot in any possible way change our election, or make it surer than it is in itself. Neither can we make it surer than it already is unto God. Yet there is a way, and that too a way of diligence in certain things,* by which we may make it sure unto ourselves—"for if ye do these things ye shall never fall." No doubt it is by the election of grace, that a remnant of Jews was preserved to the exclusion of the rest of the nation; but there is no such election as should foreclose the application to that outcast people of all that available grace, the means and instruments of which have been so amply put into our hands. It was upon their seeking wrongly, and not on election (ix, 32) that their rejection immediately or proximately turned; and again upon their seeking rightly will their restoration as immediately turn. "If they bide not still in unbelief," they will certainly be recalled; and there is nothing respecting them in the book of secret destiny which will hinder this result. Let the things which are written there be as impenetrably shrouded as they may, our way is clear—which is, to ply the children of Israel with the offers of salvation, and give no rest to God in prayer till He make Jerusalem a praise upon the earth. And for speeding onward the work of home Chris-

tianity our way is equally clear—which is, for ministers, on the one hand, to preach it urgently and freely in the hearing of every man; and for aspiring disciples, on the other, to read and to supplicate and to reform the evil of their doings, and not only to seek but to strive, nay even to press with all vigour and violence into the kingdom of heaven, till they take it by force.

Ver. 6. 'And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.' For the full and clear exposition of this remarkable verse, it must be taken to pieces, that several distinct things may be adverted to.

'And if by grace.' If what by grace? Look to the preceding verse. 'There is a remnant according to the election of grace, and if by grace.' If it be by grace that there is a remnant—or if it be of grace that God has elected; or, looking to the anterior verse, if God have reserved them to Himself by grace.* The apostle is here making statement of the cause or origin to which the selection of a certain number as God's own peculiar people, is to be referred. Their selection is by grace—a matter of mere favour—of free generosity and good-will, and so altogether a gift on the part of God.

'Then is it no more of works.' Grace is not only the cause of God having reserved a certain number to Himself; but it is the sole cause. He makes mention of another and a rival cause which has often been assigned for this preference of the elect by God; but he does so for the purpose of rejecting it—and thereby fortifies the simple assertion which he had made, or makes a more strenuous asseveration of it. He utterly repudiates the idea of its being a reward or recompence for works done, or we may add, for works foreseen. It is not of works in any way; but altogether a thing of sovereign and spontaneous bounty. It is a present, not a payment—a thing freely conferred by God, not rightfully claimed or challenged by man. Yet though not of or by works, it may be to works. That is a different matter. Though it is not because we have lived righteously that we are made the objects of this grace, yet because the objects of this grace are we both taught and enabled to live righteously.† "Not of works, lest any man should boast." Yet, after all, created unto good works—for the same God who ordains to everlasting life, ordains also the heirs of a blissful eternity to walk in them.‡ It is interest-

* 2 Peter, i, 10.

* Ver. 4, *κατ'ελεον*—Ver. 5, *δωριμα*.

† Titus, ii, 11, 12.

‡ Eph. ii, 9, 10.

ing to observe that the same high and absolute terms, which guarantee the final salvation of the elect, guarantee also the virtuousness of their character and conduct. They are ordained, it is true, to eternal life*—yet are they ordained also to walk in good works.† And they are predestinated to be His children—yet predestinated to be conformed unto the image of His Son.‡ And they are chosen before the foundation of the world—yet chosen to be holy, and without blame in love.¶ And they are elect according to foreknowledge—yet is it an election sealed and confirmed by the sanctification of the Spirit, as well as belief of the truth.¶

‘Otherwise grace is no more grace.’ By this clause there is an advance made in the apostle’s argument; and we are made to know of grace and works, that, not only are they distinct, but in the matter at issue they are opposites, or incompatible, nay mutually destructive the one of the other. What is earned by service is not received as a gift. As far as you make it a thing of favour, you annihilate it as a thing of merit; or as far as you make it a thing of merit, you annihilate it as a thing of favour. Neither must we understand it to be so far of works and so far of grace, or compounded and made up as it were of these two categories. The doctrine of the apostle here, as of the New Testament everywhere, is, that God’s friendship is either of works wholly or of grace wholly. There is no intermediate ground between the first and second covenants—the one being altogether of works, and the other altogether of bounty. It is not of works in part and of grace in part, but either of grace entirely and works not at all, or of works entirely and grace not at all. It is by grace and not of works by ever so little, lest to the extent of that little any man should boast,** or lest to the extent of that little it should be of debt.†† These two elements are not only separated, but placed in opposition to each other, and so in fact as to make it a war of extermination between them. The attempt of piecing the one to the other, or of mixing together the two covenants, is utterly repudiated in Scripture, as fatal to the peace of the believer, and subversive of the whole economy of the gospel.

‘But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.’ This whole clause is by critics of greatest authority rejected as an interpolation. It is but an expression, or more properly a reiteration of the same truth; and signifies that, of the two elements in question, as grace would utterly dispossess works from

having ought to do in the matter of our acceptance with God, so works would as wholly and effectually dispossess grace.

That this holds true of God’s electing grace is quite obvious, both from the nature of the grace itself and from other parts of Scripture. The children of election are made so before that they are born, or had yet done either good or evil—and this that the purpose of God might stand according to election, and not of works, but of Him that calleth.* In the act of choosing or predestinating at the first, works could have no place; and grace was all in all. Then God was alone. Out and out the destiny of the blest to their everlasting happiness is a thing of His determination—a determination including, no doubt, the previous or preparatory works of each, as well as his final salvation, but still a determination which was at once the primary cause and fountain-head of both.

And, what to us at least is of practically greater importance, the same holds true not of electing grace merely, but of justifying grace also. We hold it as being of prime and vital magnitude, for else the gospel were nullified, that we should understand our justification to be altogether of grace, and not in the least, not at all of works. Our meritorious acceptance with God, or as it may be termed our judicial right of entry into heaven, rests upon a basis that is one and homogeneous, consisting of but a single ingredient, even that of grace—grace through the righteousness of Christ†—at least to the utter exclusion of our own works as the other ingredient, the admixture whereof, though in but the smallest item or iota, would operate as a vitiating flaw to deteriorate, nay utterly pervert the pure quality or essence of that which constitutes the available righteousness of a sinner before that Lawgiver, of whose throne justice and judgment are the habitation. Let a man’s own deservings be admitted, by ever so little, as forming part of his plea in law for the rewards of eternity; and the question would instantly be stirred—has that little been made out?—on which we should have aspirants for heaven of two sorts—First, they of more delicate and enlightened conscience, who always and with good reason dissatisfied with themselves, would be incessantly seeking rest and never finding it. Secondly, they of blunter moral sensibility, who, under their system of at least a little human virtue to eke out the price of purchase-money for a place in heaven, can sit at ease, and just because they can make so little serve. The two elements of our text, the grace

* Acts, xiii, 43.

† Eph. ii, 10.

‡ Eph. i, 5.

§ Rom. viii, 29.

¶ Eph. i, 4.

¶ 1 Pet. i 2.

** Eph. ii, 9.

†† Rom. iv, 4.

* Rom. ix, 11.

† Rom. v, 21.

and the works, in the matter of justification, will not amalgamate—for let works but enter in proportion and degree however small: And it either, on the one hand, wakens up again all the jealousies and disquietudes of the old covenant; or infuses that mercantile and mercenary spirit which, labouring to drive a hard bargain for heaven, both limits the amount and secularises the character of our obedience—making it as unlike as possible, whether in respect of indefinite progress or willing alacrity and delight, to the services of heaven-born love and liberty. We may hence see the moral purpose of the Epistle to the Galatians as part of the Bible. In the Epistle to the Romans, the doctrine of justification without works is presented with great force and fulness as a general proposition. In that to the Galatians, we have the apostolic treatment and disposal in a specific case of a claim put in, for one virtue at least, to a share in the office of building up a meritorious righteousness before God—so as that consideration and a place might be given to it, however small or subordinate it may be, in the title-deed of Christians to the Jerusalem above. This was the solitary rite of circumcision—the main observance, if not the all, which the Jews contended for. To whom Paul would not give way, no not for an instant; but withstood to the face, in the spirit and with the determination of a mortal warfare—as if a question of life or death to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so he fought with all his might against it, giving no quarter—for he saw the evil of it in its full extent—That it would make the cross of none effect; and revive the bondage of other days; and reinstate the whole law, with its unsatisfied demands and unappeased terrors, over the consciences of men—so as to substitute the obedience, either of slavish dread or of a lifeless form, for the free and grateful and confiding services of the gospel. We cannot but admire the exquisite wisdom of thus keeping the ground of a sinner's acceptance with God intact and inviolable; nor let us wonder at the intense earnestness of Paul, when, in every form of strenuous asseveration, he maintains the doctrine of justification, not by faith, but by faith *alone*—as being the only solid foundation of peace, the only outlet and incentive to virtue along the career of a progressive holiness.

Ver. 7. 'What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.' The same apostle who tells the primary cause of the difference between Jews and Gentiles, by tracing it upward to the predestination of God, also tells us the proximate cause of this differ-

ence in the practice of men. Israel did not obtain that which he sought for, because he sought it wrongly, that is by the works of the law instead of faith. Only they of the election obtained it, and why?—for the primary does not supersede the proximate—because they sought it rightly. Yet he recurs again from the part which men had in it to the part which God had in it, when in the last clause of this verse, taken along with a few succeeding verses, he tells us that 'the rest were blinded.'

Ver. 8-10. ' (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them: let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.' One might imagine that on the back of the assertion in the last clause, even that the rest were blinded—the question might be put, Who blinded them? and the answer be given in the verses now placed before you. We are sensible that this would be felt by many as a harsh and injurious representation of the Deity; and we are also aware of the softening expedients which have been resorted to, in order to mitigate or do it away. For this purpose ingenious men have drawn upon the hypothesis, that like as all matter is essentially at rest* till put in motion by an external cause—so every created being, though endowed with both moral and intellectual capacities, is essentially devoid† of all spiritual light or spiritual goodness, till these are communicated by Him who is the author of every good and perfect gift. It is thus that they would repel the charge of God being the author of sin, by denying that God makes men sin—for that He only withholds the grace which would make them righteous. And in like manner would they deny that God blinds the eyes of any, but that He only withholds the light which would make them see—insomuch that He is no more the author of spiritual, than the sun is the author or fountain-head of material darkness. And so they view the matter thus—That all which is evil springs from the creature or from beneath, but all which is positively good from the Creator—He often leaving men to themselves, but never putting Himself forth or operating efficiently upon them, save for the purpose of illuminating or making them holy.

Now for ourselves we feel it not neces-

* By its *vis inertia*.

† By the essential defectibility of the creature.

sary, either to adopt this hypothesis or decisively to reject it. For aught we know, there may be—grounded on some deep-hid physical necessity, which we are not in circumstances either to affirm or deny—be that essential defectibility in every created thing which the schoolmen tell us of; and if so, it looks a plausible conclusion that all the direct moral influences put forth by God upon His creatures are on the side of what is good,—while all the evil which they exhibit is not worked in them by the Divinity, but only left to its own working, as it comes inherently and properly from themselves. We have no quarrel with this argument—for though not convinced by it, neither do we feel ourselves able to overturn it; and so long as it remains a plausibility which infidels cannot dispose of, then it rests on at least as good a footing as their own objection; and both therefore—both the hostile consideration of religion's enemy, and the defensive consideration of its friend—may be kept alike at abeyance. It is thus that we are sometimes led to look with indulgence on this one and that other scholastic ingenuity, conjured up for the protection of the faith—for though not in itself absolutely proved, yet, if incapable of being disproved, it may at least neutralise many an objection, intended by their authors as so many deadly trusts at the Christian revelation—a revelation which stands secure on the basis of its own evidences, amid the conflicting and sometimes alike shadowy speculations both of its friends and its adversaries. But as we said before, for our own satisfaction these conjectural theories are in no demand with us; and though with some minds they should serve for the removal of stumbling-blocks at which they might otherwise have fallen, yet for ourselves we can take these verses as they stand, and in their obvious meaning too—a meaning all too plain to require the exposition of them. We expect enigmas in theology as well as in nature; and as in the one department, we do not permit them to overbear the manifestation of the senses—so in the other, they ought not to overbear either the lights of history in favour of the Bible, or the manifestation of its truth unto our consciences.

And yet in these verses, hopelessly recondite and intractable as they might appear, we can read a lesson of signal value in practical religion. Even in philosophy, with the objects which we most familiarly handle, and the processes which pass most currently before our eyes, we are soon baffled and get beyond our soundings, when we attempt to trace present appearances into the past, though but a few steps back among the depths of causa-

tion. Let us not wonder then, if we should find it to be the same in the spiritual processes of Christianity; or if there should be a distinction here too between things present, which we know how to deal with, and things remote, which elude our every effort to grasp or comprehend them. This is remarkably exemplified in the subject-matter of the passage now before us. We can say little or nothing of anterior, and especially of first movements—just as little in fact as we can clear our way upward to the electing grace of God. And yet we can see thoroughly to the movements in hand, and wherewith we have most emphatically and most urgently to do. If we indulge in listless and spiritual sloth about the high matters of our salvation, God will give us the spirit of slumber. If we refuse to look with our eyes, God will take away that which we have, and so darken our eyes that we cannot see. If we hearken not diligently now at the call of principle, the conscience within will afterwards emit a feebler voice; and even the loudest remonstrances from without of the word and the preacher, may, in the growing obtuseness of faculties that we will not exercise, be altogether unheeded by the moral ear. If the store of comforts wherewith providence has blessed us, prove but a snare and a provocative to our unbridled appetites—these too will be made to war against our souls. In short, by that economy of grace under which we sit, there may be an ever-growing blindness and evergrowing hardness, which follow judicially in the train of guilty indulgences; and, on the other hand, let the most be made of the light and the strength we at present have—and then, in the order of God's administration, or on the principle of the Holy Ghost being given to those who obey Him, this will be followed up by a supply of larger powers and larger manifestations. Here then is a view of these particular Scriptures now before us, eminently subservient to the business of our discipleship as Christians; and, whatever obscurity may rest on the initial steps of this process—it is surely our part among the actual steps of it in which we are now implicated, if we cannot solve the difficulties of the past, at least to busy ourselves with all diligence in the duties of the present—That is to awaken from our lethargies, and Christ will give us light; to order our conversation aright, and God will show us His salvation.* These are the matters on hand wherewith we plainly have to do; and even the history of the Jews may be turned to the practical account which we are now making of them. For though the primary cause of their being

* Ephesians, v, 14; and Psalm 1, 23.

cast off may be traced upward to a degree of election (ver. 5), its proximate cause was their own misconduct. Their personal rejection by God came on the back of their own rejection of the Saviour. They had withstood His miracles. They had turned a deaf ear to all His invitations. They had shut their eyes and steeled their consciences against such evidences of His mission as ought to have overpowered them; and the effect was, that it just hardened and blinded them the

more—Insomuch that in the view of their approaching desolation, when the pitying Saviour wept over them, He pronounced as the final result of their impenitency in not minding the things which belong to their peace—that now they were hid from their eyes. Well then did the apostle supplement the quotations from writers of an ancient period, by a clause which applied their description to the Jews of his own time—‘Unto this day.’

LECTURE LXXXV.

ROMANS xi, 11—22.

“I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office; if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches. 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; boast not against the branches; but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”

ONE of Paul's maxims was, that, for the sake of the gospel, he should be all things to all men; and, more especially, that to the Jews he should be as a Jew. No one could practise with greater skill or delicacy than he did, the art of conciliating those whom he addressed—though, of course, he only carried this so far as truth and principle would let him. Nothing could be more sturdy and determined than his resistance, as we may see in his whole Epistle to the Galatians, when any great or cardinal doctrine of the gospel was trenched upon, though by ever so little. Yet when it possibly could be avoided, none more sensitively fearful of giving offence than he was; and when unavoidable, which it very generally was, he was always at the greatest pains to soften it to the uttermost. Even in the verses we have just quoted, and in which he had to pronounce an awful sentence of abandonment and utter degradation upon his countrymen the Jews, still he does it as a Jew—interposing their own writers as a sort of screen between him and them; and, as if more effectually to secure their conviction though not their acquiescence and consent, speaking to them not in his own person, but in the persons of their most revered prophets and holy men of old. And in the succeeding verses we can very obviously see, with what congeniality, as if to redeem and compensate the severities which he had just uttered, he breaks forth

on the coming enlargement of the children of Israel; and with that exquisite wisdom he manages, if I may so speak, between them and the Gentiles, with both of whom he at the time is jointly holding converse—claiming kindred with the one because of his office, and with the other because of his relationship. In short, unlike to the polemics of our modern day, and yet as uncompromising and bold as any of them—whenever an agreeable thing can be said, he says it—So that while, in truth and substance, he had the stern integrity of an old prophet when dealing with principles—he, in manner, had the pliancy and nice perception of an accomplished courtier when dealing with persons—and all this for the sake of the gospel, all for the purpose of gaining some.

Ver. 11. ‘I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.’ And so in this verse he hastens to inform them, and that with all promptitude and decision, that theirs was but a temporary stumble—what the stumbling-block was he had before told them*—not an irrecoverable fall. After laying his rebuke on the perversities of men, he looks onward with the eye of a prophet to the yet unfulfilled purposes of

* Romans, ix 32; x, 3.

God, in whose hand men are but the instruments of His policy; and who causes even their very sins redound to His own glory, and subserve the accomplishment of all His pleasure. When as a preacher he views them morally, he connects these sins with the wickedness of man—When as a prophet he views them historically, (for prophecy is but history in anticipation, or the history of the future,) he looks to them in connection with the sovereign power of God—first put forth at election by Him who ordains all, afterwards carried into effect by Him who worketh all in all throughout the successions of nature and providence. One of these successions he distinctly announces in the verse now before us, when he affirms the fall of the Jews to have been the salvation of the Gentiles—as if these two events stood related to each other in the way of cause and effect, or of antecedent and consequent. The same connection he reasserts several times in certain clauses of the verses which follow, and which we may now single out, and thus save the necessity of our again adverting to them—as in the 12th verse, where we are told that the fall of the Jews was the riches of the world, and the diminution of them the riches of the Gentiles; and in the 15th verse, where we read that the casting away of them was the reconciling of the world; and in the the 28th verse, where we learn, that by their treatment of the gospel they became the enemies of God for the sake of the Gentiles, to whose benefit therefore this rejection of the Jews was in some way subservient; and finally, in the 30th verse, which gives us expressly to understand, that through the unbelief of the Jews mercy was obtained by the Gentiles—All suggesting the idea of a metaphysical sequence, or of a connection between these two events in the order of cause and consequence; and this again has set curiosity on edge to discover what the ligament could be which so bound together the infidelity of the Jews with the faith of the Gentiles, or what the operating influences were in the first which could bring the second in its train.

Now if God affirm that the two are thus linked together, it is our part so to believe it, whether all the cementing links and influences have or have not been submitted to our observation. We hold it the more necessary to premise this, because we think that with all men's powers of exploration, they have not been able thoroughly to unravel the process which intervenes between the rejection of the gospel by the Jews, and either the diffusion or acceptance of the same gospel among the other nations of the earth. It may

have been partially but not fully explained, either in regard to the efficient or the final causes which are concerned in it—so that it remains in great part still a mystery in the counsels of God, of which the most we have to say is, that such is the will and the appointment of Him our Almighty Sovereign. We must not expect, that, at least in our present state, we shall ever so master the philosophy of the question, as to leave no room for the exclamation of the apostle, O the depth and unsearchableness of God's judgments, and how past finding out! Yet let us not forget that, in the language of Job, there are parts of His ways which do lie open to our observation, though it be indeed a little portion that we know of Him. And of His ways as of His works, it is well that they should be sought out of all them who have pleasure therein*—as far as they are shone upon by the lights, whether of Scripture or of experience. Let us attend then a little to what these enquirers have got to say about this question, and what the fruit of the consideration which they have bestowed on it. There are certain palpable things which lie on the surface, as it were, of this hidden mystery; and which it were quite legitimate to notice.

Had Christianity been received by the great bulk of the Jewish nation, and had they in consequence been animated by that spirit of proselytism which essentially characterised it—a spirit heretofore new to them, though under its influence now they might have laboured for the diffusion of their new faith over the whole earth—still it might well be imagined, that coming as it would with one mind and by one effort, from the whole people, it was but a development of their old Judaism, still unchanged, or changed only in this, that, whereas it used to be tolerant though unsocial, it had now become restless and aggressive,—making inroads on all other countries which they had hitherto let alone. It might have been most plausibly conceived, that such a national enterprise, sanctioned by all the authorities of their state, as well as by the enthusiasm of a unanimous population, would have provoked a national resistance every where; and far more readily awakened the suspicion of those ambitious designs, which would array every community whom they invaded, in an attitude of all the more resolute and prepared hostility against them. Nothing, it might with all seeming fairness be reasoned, nothing could more effectually disarm this adverse imagination, than that the new religion should be carried

* Psalm cxi, 2.

abroad by a few persecuted outcasts, whom the Jews as a nation had disowned—a better vehicle surely for a religion which was to owe all its triumphs to the unaided force of principle and truth over the consciences of men. It was thus in fact that it first made way upon the earth—protected for a time, rather than withstood by the Roman authorities; and certainly not calling forth the whole power of the empire against it, till it had acquired a magnitude which alarmed the civil magistrate for the safety of existing institutions, but not at the same time till it had acquired a strength which weathered and survived all his efforts for its extermination. And as this great national resistance of the Jews, with the consequent dispersion over all countries both of Jews and Christians, acted most powerfully as second causes for the propagation of Christianity at its outset in the world—So it has further been contended, that to us who look retrospectively on past ages, the evidence for the truth of our religion is thereby presented in a far more impressive form than it would otherwise have been—the testimony of its first disciples being thus far more decisively tried and found to be of purest stamp and quality, when thus delivered and thus persevered in before the presence of these resolute and implacable adversaries, who yet could not overthrow it; but who rather have contributed and that mightily to its strength, both as the depositaries, and the unexceptionable, because hostile witnesses for the elder Scriptures of our faith, and so for all the corroborative argument, whether of doctrine or of prophecy, that is contained in them. And certain it is, that we have an evidence before our eyes in the present state of the Jews, which, but for their unbelief persisted in for so many centuries, we could not have appealed to—the evidence of their singular preservation, unprecedented in all other history; and bespeaking the special providence of God, both in upholding this wonderful people as a remnant of former revelations, and in reserving them for fulfilments and further evolutions in the scheme of the Divine administration which are yet to come. Altogether it is a phenomenon charged with argument on the side of Christianity; and having in it all the power of a living voice, to rebuke, if not the infidelity, at least the neglect and heedlessness of those who look on the Bible and all its revelations, as a thing of nought.

Such are some of the explanations which might be given for the actual footsteps of the Divine procedure, in thus regulating the advances of Christianity throughout the world. Nor does it hinder

but that they might be sound and good explanations, although they very much proceed on the natural influence of circumstances, as they were brought to bear upon human nature, such as it is. For though it lies within the power of God to overrule all the ordinary influences for the furtherance of His designs—yet we know it to be the general policy of His administration that He should be exceedingly sparing of any conflict with, or that there should be an exceeding rarity of deviations from, the laws and the regular processes which He Himself has established; and so with the exception of a few select miracles to accredit His various revelations, it seems the rule of the Almighty's government, that its purposes shall be carried into effect in the uniform course of things, and not by a series of violations upon that uniformity. And thus it is that it comes within the philosophy of history to assign what the connections and methods were, by which the unbelief of the Jews opened a way for the gospel, and so as to speed its progress and acceptance among all other nations. But yet though in this way we may have a deal of valid and satisfactory reasoning on the relation or the subserviency of one event to another, under our existing economy of moral and physical causes—there remains unresolved, and we think in our present state unresolvable, the transcendental question, Why such an economy was instituted, so as to necessitate evil that good might follow, and so as to postpone for many centuries and generations the reign of universal virtue and happiness in the world. It is well for man to be made sensible of the limit within which his faculties are beset and encompassed; and so as to acknowledge, with all his certainty of a thing that so it is, his own profound ignorance of how it is. Let our attempts then be successful as they may, to explain the actings and reactions of Jewish infidelity and Gentile faith upon each other, they must carry us at last to the inscrutable will of God; nor do they supersede that apostolic reflection which follows, and which we again anticipate, of "O how unsearchable his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Yet with all this sense of a present darkness and a present difficulty, it is our unbroken confidence, that what we know not now we shall know afterwards; when we join in the triumphant song of eternity, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!"

'For to provoke them to jealousy.' But however unable to make out the whole meaning and mystery of this proce-

ture by reasons of our own, yet when Scripture condescends to give a reason, we may adopt it with all safety, as part at least, if not the whole of the explanation. The effect stated in this verse was predicted by Moses many centuries before (x, 19). The calling of the Gentiles tended to provoke the Jews to jealousy or emulation; and the use of this, we are told by the apostle in the 14th verse, was, that it 'might save some of them.' And in future verses of this chapter the same thing is hinted at, as in verse 26th, where, after mention has been made of the fullness of the Gentiles to come in, it is represented that *so* all Israel shall be saved; and in verses 30th and 31st, where it is intimated, that in like manner as the unbelief of the Jews was the medium through which mercy comes to the Gentiles, so the mercy shown to the Gentiles was afterwards the medium through which mercy should come to the Jews—And the impellent cause for this result we gather from the clause now before us, even that the sight of Gentile Christianity had in it something which moved a desire on the part of the Jews after, and so as to turn them to the faith—when no longer biding in unbelief, they shall be again grafted into their own olive tree. (Ver. 23.)

We cannot say that we have seen much yet of the distinct operation of this motive among the children of Israel. Indeed there has been little hitherto of conversion to Christianity from among the Jews, when compared with the whole bulk and body of the people; but even in the individual cases of such conversion, we are not aware that the principle adverted to in the text has had much of an efficient or actuating influence, for bringing about this change from one religion to another. Before we could affirm this, we should require to know more the history of particular conversions, and have greater access to the minds of those who have undergone the transition, than we have had the privilege of enjoying. We cannot therefore say in how far the observation of Gentile Christianity, and of its good effects on those who had embraced it, has acted as a provocative on the Jewish mind, and impelled to such efforts and enquiries as may have led in more or fewer instances to the faith of the gospel. But as the great national conversion is yet to come—so we can anticipate how the motive specified in our text might gather strength with the lapse of time and in the course of successive generations. In the first place, their own hopes of the Messiah on whom they still calculate as a Prince and Deliverer yet to come, other than Jesus Christ the only Son of God, must every year become more languid; and at length,

we should imagine, when all the periods of their computation have run out, must finally expire. And in the second place, it lies with us to fulfil the part which is here assigned to the Gentiles. We should make Christianity the object of emulation and desire to the Jews and to all others, by our exemplification of it. Let us not wonder that this influence has hitherto come so little into play. This is not altogether owing to Jewish insensibility. The failure is ours—at least as much, if not more, than theirs. If their minds have not been excited to an attention or a respect or a longing after Christianity, it is because we have done so little, or done nothing at all, to excite them. The light of our religion has not so shone upon them, as to make it glorious in their eyes. It may have told in the first ages, when the very heathen could exclaim, "Behold these Christians how they love each other." But it ought to be no surprise to us, that, when Christianity declined, this moral force, which the apostle ascribes to it, should decline also—so that men would cease either to imitate or admire it. This its constraining and attracting power is obviously discernible in apostolic times, as may be gathered from distinct and repeated traces in the book of Acts;* and perhaps for a century or two it may not have altogether expired. But we are not to marvel that we so entirely lose sight of it in the miserable degeneracies which followed—as in the middle ages, when, instead of their examples or their guides, Christians became their fierce and contemptuous persecutors; or even in the present times, when such a wretchedly inadequate exhibition is still made, either of the virtues of the gospel or of its consequent effect on the peace and prosperity of men. We have indeed a mighty distance and declension to recover, ere we can make the Jews emulous to be what Christians are—whether by an exhibition of the grace and beauty which our faith imparts to the character of its individual professors, or of its beneficial influences on the well-doing of society. Were they made distinctly to see what Christianity does for the virtue and happiness of men, we can understand how the principle of the text might, even at this day, come into powerful operation. But as it is, the sad imperfection of Gentile Christianity operates as a barrier in the way of Jewish conversion.

It is this which makes the task of a Christian missionary among the Jews all the more arduous; and lays an awful responsibility on us, if, instead of being instruments for the furtherance of the great

* Acts, ii, 47; iv, 21; v, 13, 14, 26; vi, 7.

design unfolded in this passage, by adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, we shall, by an opposite conduct, inflict a discredit and injury on the religion which we profess, and so as to hinder its progress in the world.

We are here distinctly told by what sort of efficacy it is, that the disciples of our faith, in the very act of being its patterns, might become its propagators among God's ancient people—even by the exhibition of its virtues, and so of the health and melody which dwell in the habitations of the righteous. Some devoted men there have been, the apostles of our modern day, who, single-handed, and with the force of the Christian argument seconded by the demonstration of their own example, have, through the grace of God, effected genuine conversions here and there among the children of Israel. They have been the instruments of 'saving some,' (ver. 14). But ere a general effect can be anticipated from this cause, there must be a far more general representation of the worth of Christianity—and that both in its family and social pictures, as well as in those occasional specimens which one person has given after another of its ennobling and beautifying influences on the characters of men. If we would be fellow-workers with God in His great and gracious designs for the recovery of the whole earth; and if we would not, as far as in us lies, incur the guilt of frustrating the objects of His Divine administration—it mightily concerns us how we should comport ourselves before the eyes of this select and peculiar nation, whom the Father of the human family at one time separated from all the people of the world, and for whom the highest moral destinies are yet in reserve. If it be through our mercy that they are to obtain mercy let us remember that it is a mercy which saves us by the washing of regeneration;* and that the graces of this regeneration must appear palpably and convincingly before their view, ere we can expect that we shall win them either to the love or admiration of the gospel. Did they but see the evidence of God being in the midst of us, whether in our preparation for the life that is to come, or in the promise which never fails to go along with these of the life that now is—did they but witness in bright exemplification on our persons the virtues of our holy religion, its exalted faith, its heaven-born charity, its unwearied patience under calumnies, its ethereal sanctity, and without its gentleness of spirit and tenderness for every thing which breathes—did they

but observe the effect of these, not merely in gracing the individual possessor, but in upholding the spectacle of peaceful and well-ordered homes, of happy and harmonious neighbourhoods in every territory which Christianity blest and enlightened by its presence—Did all this stand forth in manifest and undeniable contrast with the selfishness and impiety and moral degradation of their own acquaintances, the men of their own kindred—then should we be at no loss to understand, how it is that Gentiles might provoke Jews to jealousy and emulation; and what the process was by which, through the mercy bestowed on the former, mercy at length accrued to the latter also.

Such then is our part in this scheme of moral government, and such the mighty importance of our right bearing toward the Jews. We have a task and a duty laid upon us for the fulfilment of their restoration; and, accordingly, the rest of the passage now on hand is mainly taken up with the manner in which we Gentiles ought to comport ourselves towards them. We shall therefore close our observations on the verses or clauses of verses which remain, by briefly noticing the points and proprieties of our incumbent conduct to the now scattered tribes of Israel.

No wonder then that the conversion of the Jews should all this while have been at a stand, when our treatment of them has for so many a long century been utterly and diametrically the reverse of that which the apostle here prescribes to us. Verily if the times once were, when the Jews looked with intolerance and disdain on all the world besides, this has been amply repaid by the wholesale contempt and contumely which these outcast people have since received at the hands of all the nations. Truly we are in fault in having thus made them a reproach and a by-word over the whole earth; and though the part we have acted be the fulfilment of a prophecy, this for us is no extenuation—any more than for the murderers of our Saviour, in that with wicked hands they did that which God had predetermined should be done. It would have been more godlike, had we held them beloved for their fathers' sakes, (ver. 28). The sacredness of their origin might well have given them some place of sacredness in our consideration. The descendants of such ancestors should have been honoured because of them—for 'if the root be holy, so are the branches,' (ver. 16). So ought this latter clause of the verse to be understood—while as to the former clause, 'If the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy'—we incline to the view of those who regard the first-fruits as the first Jewish converts

* Titus, iii, 5.

to the faith—to whom the apostle appeals as proof, because samples of the capabilities of the whole nation for readmission to the great spiritual family. Nay he argues for their greater capability, (ver. 24)—Seeing that they were the natural, and we only the exotic branches of the olive tree which now bears us, (ver. 17)—they being by descent, and we by faith the children of Abraham, who is the father of the faithful, and from whom our Saviour, the Son of David according to the flesh, came. We are therefore told to boast not against the branches, (ver. 18)—more kindred than we are to the root which bears us; and which, though for a time broken off, will at length be grafted in again. Our part meanwhile is to be more lowly and diffident of ourselves, and more reverential of the Jews—‘Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.’

Ver. 19–22. ‘Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.’ These verses are instinct with principle, the full exposition and enforcement of which would require a succession of sermons. We shall but state the leading ideas which they are fitted to suggest. This passage altogether is an argument by which the apostle would repress the arrogance of the Gentiles, because they now occupied the place which the Jews before monopolized; and what, with this view, he presses on their attention, is the tenure of that occupancy which they now gloried in—a tenure, the due consideration of which would annihilate all boasting, and lead them to carry with all humility and meekness the privileges wherewith they were invested. They held them altogether on the footing, not of their own merits, but of another’s goodness—and which goodness they can only continue in by the respect and reference of their minds towards it—for without such respect or reference there can be no faith, and it is by faith we stand. The whole distinction, whether of superior happiness or superior honour, conferred on us by the gospel, is exclusively and altogether of grace—not a thing worked for, but a thing given; And the precise office of faith is to receive it on this footing, to see and acknowledge it as a gift, and to depend for it on the truth and liberality and withal power of the Giver; trusting that what He had

promised, He was able and also willing to perform (iv, 21). It is thus that faith essentially carries one out of himself, and by its very nature must, at every moment of its exercise, accredit another with the blessings which itself cannot earn, but only can appropriate as the fruit of a generosity from without. It is thus that faith necessarily excludes boasting, as much so as one antagonist principle must displace and exterminate the other which is opposed to it.* And thus also nothing could be more pertinently adduced to restrain the boasting of the Gentiles against the Jews—‘against the branches’—than the consideration that themselves were standing only by faith, and that therefore they should not be high-minded, but fear.

But how, it may be asked, can faith and fear exist contemporaneously in the same bosom? Is not the one fitted to supplant the other? Is not faith or confidence allied with courage, rather than with timidity or terror? Does not faith work by love, and is it not said of perfect love that it casteth out fear? What then can be the object of the fear in my text?—a fear, it seems, which might co-exist with faith—for while the apostle tells these Gentiles that they can only stand by faith, he bids them at the same time not to be high-minded, but fear.

To these questions a reply might be given from two contiguous verses in the Epistle to the Hebrews—the last verse of the third, and the first verse of the fourth chapter. The Israelites were kept out of their promised land because of unbelief; and let us therefore fear that we, for the same reason, shall fall short of our promised land. The fear is lest we fall away from the faith, lest we lose sight of its unseen objects, and so by an evil heart of unbelief depart from the living God. Nature is prone to forget the things of faith, and to lose all sight or sense of these in the objects of vision; and therefore is required to give earnest heed to these things, for fear she at any time should let them slip.† The man who, unable to swim, has fallen among the waves and had a rope thrown out to him, would know what it is to have faith and fear in contemporaneous operation within his heart; and in very proportion to his fearful distrust of himself, would he cling to the support that had been extended to him from above. The child who is beginning to walk, alike distrustful of his own strength, keeps firm hold on the nurse who leads him; and his faith and fear, so far from conflicting forces, work most harmoniously into each

* Romans, iii, 27; Eph. ii, 8, 9.

† Heb. ii, 1.

other's hands. And so the Christian, aware of there being no sufficiency in himself to withstand the temptations of an evil world, keeps fast and firm hold of that grace and sufficiency which he knows to be in God; and so the moral dynamics of the gospel will be found in perfect keeping with the machinery of the human constitution, with the laws and the working of man's moral nature.

The goodness and the severity of God, as brought into juxtaposition in the 22nd verse, would require a treatment which we forego for the present, and more especially as we have made it the subject of a distinct sermon.* We recur to the apostle's argument respecting the Jews.

* See Sermon XVI, in vol. i of my 'Congregational Sermons,' being vol. viii of the Series.

LECTURE LXXXVI.

ROMANS xi, 23—32.

"And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. 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! 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 is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

THE general objection to missionary work is comprehensive of Jews as well as Gentiles—"Go preach the *gospel to every creature.*" But the duty of labouring for the conversion of God's ancient people is furthermore laid on a distinct and special ground of its own. All that is said of them in Scripture serves to enhance the obligation of attempting, in every possible way, to find access among them for the doctrines and dispensation of the New Testament. This is an employment whereof we are told that the good of it will come back with double interest upon ourselves. Or rather, and without putting it into this selfish form, we learn from the Bible that the Christianity of Jews will be followed up by a mighty enlargement in the character and state of Christianity throughout the world—so that in labouring for this, we become in a peculiar manner the fellow-workers of God, and instruments in His hand, for prosecuting and carrying forward to its fulfilment one of the highest objects of His administration. It were the most germinant of all our missionary enterprises—or the one most prolific of a rich moral blessing to the great family of mankind. The full return of the Jews will be the riches, we are told, of all other nations (ver. 12;) and by entering therefore on this peculiar walk, we may well be said to enter on the highest department of missionary labour, and in which we most harmonise both with the designs of Providence and the schemes of prophecy. The procedure of the first apostles in this respect might serve perhaps as a model

for the apostolical work of our present day. They carried forth the gospel to all nations—yet beginning at Jerusalem. And into whatever city they entered, it was their general practice first to seek out the Jews—entering into their synagogues, and reasoning first with them out of their Scriptures.* And when Paul arrived a prisoner at Rome, the first thing he did was to send for the Jews. They seem still to have acted in the spirit of that charge which our Saviour while on earth gave to His disciples, when He bade them go first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Nay the apostles expressly alleged a necessity for this order—even that the word of God should first be spoken to the Jews before they turned to the Gentiles.† At that time the unbelief of the Jews was a stepping-stone to the faith of the Gentiles; and by their being first preached to, this unbelief came into open manifestation—which both served as an intimation for the apostles to desist, and seems not to have been without its influence on the new hearers to whom they then turned themselves.‡ But this period of Jewish unbelief is now drawing to a close; and by a sort of reverse law, it is the faith of that people which will now be the stepping-stone to a great and general expansion of Christianity among men. Surely then when the conversion of the Jews is so much more hopeful, the duty of preaching to them is not less imperative and at least

* Acts, xiii, 14; xiv, 1; xvii, 1, 2; xviii, 4, 5.

† Acts, xiii, 46; xviii, 6.

‡ Acts, xiii, 48.

greatly more attractive than before—and especially now that the ulterior good is arrived at by a medium so much more bright and beautiful, than that through which the first teachers of Christianity had to find their way ere they came into contact with the Gentiles. Theirs was a rugged path, from the rejection of the gospel by their own countrymen, to the proclamation of it over a world where it was yet unknown—And ours, on the other hand, we should feel an inviting path, from the reception of this same gospel by the children of Israel, to the spread and the revival of it among all nations. It is such a receiving as will be life from the dead (ver. 15.). Under all the views of it, the evangelisation of the Jews should rank as a first and foremost object of Christian policy.

And here it occurs to us, that the exceeding rarity as yet of Jewish conversion, so far from a reason for despairing of future success, should, if taken in connection with the whole history of the case, lead rather to an opposite conclusion. It is through our mercy that they at length are to obtain mercy—or through the medium of Gentile Christianity, that the light of the gospel is to find entry into the hearts and understandings of this ancient people of God. We, whether by our example or our exertions or both, are, somehow or other, to be the instruments of effecting this mighty change in the Jewish mind; and the question is, how have we acquitted ourselves in this capacity—or what has hitherto been our treatment of those, who have been thus devolved on our custody and care, and of whom we may be said especially to have been put in charge? Looking then to this matter generally and historically through a succession of ages, we find this treatment to have been the very opposite of that which is here prescribed to us; and that, speaking in the gross, we have not only neglected the apostolic rule, but have actually reversed it—So that, instead of warming these outcasts of the Almighty's displeasure by our kindness, or conciliating them by our respect, or inspiring them with confidence by our justice, or awakening their admiration of the gospel by our exemplification of its virtues and graces—we, in the great bulk and majority of our proceedings, have brought all the opposite influences to bear upon them, and done every thing we could to alienate and repel and put them to an impracticable distance away from us—Acting the tyrants and persecutors of a forlorn race, who have become the veriest objects or off-scourings of humanity in our hands. We know that at length their heart is to turn*

* 2 Corinthians, iii, 16.

to the Lord, when they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him as for a first-born. But to hasten onward this consummation, we should turn from the evil of our way towards them, and mourn over all the insults and the wrongs which for two thousand years have been heaped on this people of noble ancestry and of still nobler destination. It might be looked on as a strange inference to draw from our almost total want of success hitherto—that on this retrospect of Jewish obstinacy and hatred of the gospel for so many ages, we should ground the bright and hopeful anticipation, not of a few individual conversions as heretofore, but of their national return to Him who is the Hope and Saviour of all the ends of the earth. But the inference is more sound and legitimate than it may be at first taken for. We count on this change of result in the Jewish mind, because we perceive a change in the causality which is being brought to bear upon it. On looking back to the sullen inveteracy of Jewish prejudice for so many ages, we cannot but observe that the instrumentality wherewith it has been plied is not only not the same, but the very opposite to that which the apostle would have put into our hands—whereas on looking forward, we can perceive that a reverse influence is to be put in operation; nor can we deem the conclusion to be illogical, when we reckon on the effect being different just from the cause being different. It is like the promise of a first and hopeful experiment, and to which we address ourselves with all the greater confidence, that, instead of some gratuitous or hap-hazard trial in the hands of a projector, the very means are to be now set agoing, which are not only most fitted by nature to soften and disarm the antipathies of the human spirit, but which have been expressly sanctioned and enjoined in the oracles of a wisdom that is infallible. We speak not of the modern liberalism which but ministers to the secular pride and interest of this nation of aliens; and seeks for nothing further than their admission into courts and parliaments. We speak of the unutterable missionary longings now felt on their behalf; and of the efforts now making, not by single adventurers only, but by societies and whole churches, to recall these hapless wanderers, and entreat them by every moving argument to come within the limits, and be honoured as at once the highest ornaments and best-loved inmates of the spiritual family of God. There is doubtless a wide contrast, between our hopes of the future and our recollections of the past—but not wider than the contrast between our haughty, injurious, and oppressive treat-

ment of the Jews then; and the meekness, the gentleness, the perfect frankness and sincerity, the heart-breathing desires after their salvation, the earnest and affectionate persuasion, the unwearied, we hope the unconquerable kindness wherewith they will now continue to be assailed, in the face, it may be, of discouragements and insults—All to tell at length, we trust, with the omnipotence of Christian charity, giving forth the authentic exhibition of herself in the whole bearing and demeanour of the men who thus long and thus labour, not perhaps for their civil immunities and privileges, but for the glories of a higher citizenship, for their readmittance to the household of God, as the great and one thing needful—mightily to be striven, and mightily to be prayed for.

Thus as the apostasy of the Jews led to the calling of the Gentiles; so will the Christianity of the Gentiles, when fully and consistently proceeded on, lead onward to the effectual recalling of the Jews. But the succession of benefits and blessings will not stop here—for, by a further step in the progress will this conversion of God's ancient people to the truth as it is in Jesus operate by a mighty reaction, in the further extension and establishment of the gospel throughout the world. We have the traces, nay the distinct intimations of this, in more than one clause of the passage now before us—as in verse 12th, where we are told that the fulness of the Jews will augment the riches of the Gentiles; and in verse 15, that, the receiving of them will be life from the dead. We gather the same information from other Scriptures both of the Old and the New Testament—as when Isaiah tells us (lx, iii), that “the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising;” and that the abundance of the sea, and the forces of the Gentiles shall be converted and come unto Israel (lx, 5) whose seed shall be known among the Gentiles; and all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which God hath blessed (lxi, 9); for then will the Gentiles see their righteousness, and all kings their glory (lxii, 2). This reflex influence, if it may be so termed, of Jewish upon Gentile Christianity, is still further intimated by the Psalmist as follows—“Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion,” and “so the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.”* Hear also the prophet Jeremiah—“I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first, and cleanse them from all

their iniquity: And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, *which shall hear all the good that I do unto them.*”† That the fulfilment of these prophecies is still to come, we may well conjecture from such passages as Isaiah, xliii, 18, 19; Jeremiah, xvi, 14, 15; xxiii, 7, 8. But the conjecture advances to a certainty, by the quotation of the apostle in Romans, xi, 26—where he looks onward to the accomplishment as yet future of the glorious prediction of Isaiah in lix, 20—“And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob”—the undoubted reference of Paul, when he alludes to it as a thing *written*, that “There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

We have already tried in some slight degree, to explain how it was, or what the connecting influences were, by which Gentile Christianity followed in the train of Jewish unbelief; and again, we have also said a little on the operation which this Gentile Christianity, when rightly exercised and fully manifested, should have, in opening the eyes of the Jews, and so turning them to the faith. But there is still a third sequence in this progression of moral changes, whereof prophecy tells us that so it will be; and the curiosity of man prompts him, as in the other cases, to enquire, how it will be? And here too, we can to a certain extent meet the enquiry—for it appears pretty obvious, that a great national movement towards Christianity on the part of the Jews, and their actual adoption of a faith which they have so long held in detestation, must tell with mighty and decisive effect on the rest of the world. If the very existence of the Jews as a separate people be in itself the indication of a providence—a singular event in history, which demonstrates the part taken by Him who overrules all history in the affairs of men—how much more impressive will the evidence become, when this same people shall describe the actual evolution, which it was predicted they should do, more than two thousand years ago; shall, after the dispersions and the desolations of many generations, reach at last the very landing-place, to which the finger of prophecy has been pointing from an antiquity so high as that of the patriarchal ages. We know not if this splendid era is to be ushered in by palpable and direct miracle. We would not affirm this, but far less can we deny it. But should there be no such manifestation of the divine power conjoined with this marvel-

* Psalm cii, 13, 15.

† Jeremiah, xxxiii, 7, 9.

lous fulfilment, there will at least be such a manifestation of the divine knowledge, as will incontestably prove that God has had to do with it; and so as that history shall of itself perform the office of revelation, or men will trace the finger of the Almighty in the events which are sensibly passing before their eyes. And besides, we have reason to believe of these converted Jews, that they will become the most zealous and successful of all missionaries; or, like Paul before them, the preachers of that faith which they persecuted in times past, and once laboured to destroy.* It is said of a single Christian that he may be the light of the world.† How much more will be a whole nation of Christians—glowing in the full ardour of their new-born convictions with apostolic fervour; and the very fruit of whose conversion will tell with a hundred-fold greater effect than even that of St. Paul, as a testimony or evidence for the faith. Verily like him, their great prototype, they will pre-eminently and emphatically be the apostles of the Gentiles; and there will be a light to lighten these Gentiles, in the very glory of the people of Israel.‡ We must look to futurity for this great accomplishment—for, most obviously, it has not yet been realised. It will be “in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” This is all yet to come—else how could it be spoken, as an immediate sequence of its fulfilment—that “He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”§

But, after all, we are but attempting an explanation of the efficient causes in this process—which, though fully and satisfactorily made out, would still leave the final cause of the whole an unresolved mystery. We may be able to follow and understand every step of a mechanism which has been set up for the production of a given result—yet not understand the meaning of the result itself, and still less

the reason why such a process should have been instituted, rather than any other, for the purpose of making it good; especially if it be a process which involves in it the perdition, endless and irremediable, of the millions and millions more of many generations. The difficulty is aggravated a thousand-fold, when the Author and Originator of the whole is a Being of infinite power, but a power under the direction of infinite goodness and wisdom—prone as we are to wish, and therefore to imagine, that He may have will,—and by the energies which belong to Him, have also brought forth an instant creation of perfect light and perfect virtue; and secured it against all the inroads, by which either wickedness or woe could have ever entered. This is the mystery of God—not the glorious consummation of a regenerated world, but the deep-laid necessity for the evil which preceded it; and why it had to be reached by so long and dark and laborious a pathway, strewn as it were with the ruins of many successive ages. The origin of evil comes into view while we meditate on these things; and the difficulties of this transcendental question serve still more to beset and baffle our ambitious speculations.

It might be felt by some to alleviate, though most certainly it does not resolve the mystery, if we can state some analogy between the process laid down in this chapter and other parts or passages in the history of the Divine administration. For example, the apostle elsewhere tells us of the law having entered, that the offence might abound.* It looks inexplicably hard, that the law, or aught whatever, should have come directly from God for such a purpose—or that sin might be multiplied: But the difficulty seems to be at least mitigated, if not wholly done away, when the apostle further tells us, that “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”—a grace all the more illustrious, it is certain, from the magnitude and enormity of that guilt over which it triumphed. Nay we are told of another great moral design which was accomplished by sin being thus placed in connection with the law—“that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful”†—as if the worth and excellence of that which is good, and the exceeding deformity of that which is evil, were, by juxtaposition, brought into more bright and vivid manifestation. And the case before us looks like another specimen of the same thing—characteristic of the Divine administration; and in keeping with, or in the style, of its general policy. He had first illustrated the mercy of the gos-

* Galatians, i, 23.

† Matt. v, 14.—See much that is interesting on this whole subject in Bickersteth’s ‘Restoration of the Jews.’

‡ Luke, ii, 32.

§ Isaiah, ii, 2—4; Micah, iv, 2.

* Romans, v, 20.

† Romans, vii, 13.

pel, and all the more palpably, by its taking effect, at least chiefly and primarily, on the Gentiles, wholly given over to idolatry, and disfigured by all the atrocities of human wickedness—rather than on the decent, formal, well-seeming Jews, the professing worshippers of one God; whose vices, of more deep and subtle and spiritual a character, did not glare so on the eye of general observation. But these, in their turn, and after ages of seemingly hopeless alienation, during which they acquit themselves with all the despite and defiance and resolved hardihood of outlaws—on these, obviously reared by Providence for some of its high designs, shall we yet behold the second great illustration of gospel mercy; all the more enhanced, it is certain, by its breaking forth in the train of Jewish perversity and Jewish unbelief, at length giving way, after they had stood their ground and been distinctly persisted in for many generations. This is one undoubted effect of His having concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all (ver. 32). The one, so to speak, is set off by the other—like the effect of light and shade in painting; or when any object in nature is seen all the more strikingly and conspicuously because of the dark ground on which it is projected. In a school of virtue, one chief end were the enforcement of great moral lessons; and this perhaps were best effected by bringing out in boldest possible relief the evil of sin; and in all their beauty and brightness the characteristics of highest moral perfection, or, which is tantamount to this, the high and holy attributes of Him, in whom all perfection as well as all power have had their everlasting dwelling-place. Now providence is pre-eminently a school of virtue; and we may therefore expect that history, and in a more especial manner sacred history, where the manifestations of providence are seen in nearest connection with the designs of grace, will abound in such lessons. And accordingly, such is the manifest purpose of many revealed evolutions or passages in the history of the Divine administration—of God's dealings with the world. We have already noticed that a law was brought in, and for the purpose that sin might become (or might appear) exceeding sinful—like a foul blot on a tablet of resplendent purity. And though in the form of a question, yet it is no obscure hint which is conveyed, when Paul asks, Whether it might not be God's will to show His wrath, His righteous indignation at moral evil, and to make His power known—when He destroys those vessels of wrath which He had before endured with much long-suffering.* And in like

manner would we infer, that it is to exhibit the Divine character in another of its phases—even the riches of His glory, specified in Ephesians, i, 6, as the glory of His grace—when we read, that, also after much long-suffering it may be, the long-suffering which is termed salvation by the apostle Peter.* He heaps His choicest preferments and blessings on the vessels of mercy, and thus makes known the riches of His glory.† One main end of the Divine policy in the government and final destiny of men seems to be manifestation—that both heaven and earth might learn thereby the more to hate all evil, to love and admire all worth and goodness and true greatness, whether in themselves or as exemplified by Him in whom all greatness and goodness are personified. In harmony with this view, we read of the Lord Jesus being revealed with His mighty angels, on that dread occasion when the glory of His power and sacredness shall be displayed in the destruction of sinners; and the glory of His infinite love for the holy in the triumph and happiness of the saints.‡ And so His disposal of the church does not terminate in, but has an ulterior object to itself—even “to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.” There is evidently here a something pointed at beyond the immediate concern which men have in the Divine procedure—a reference to the distant as well as to the future; and our felt ignorance of this larger and more comprehensive policy should serve to humble and chasten and repress our ambitious speculations. Yet though we see but in glimpses, we cannot fail to discern in Scripture the traces of a constant respect to manifestation as one great drift or design of God's universal government—and that too the manifestation of contrasts, or of things made more striking and conspicuous in themselves, by being presented along with their opposites. So essentially and characteristically indeed is holiness a repugnance to moral evil, that some have been satisfied with this as a sufficient explanation for the enigma of its existence—that but for the reality, or at least the conception of evil, there could have been no exhibition of that jealous and invincible recoil from sin, wherewith perfect virtue must ever regard the opposite of itself. For our own parts, we can profess no absolute satisfaction with any of the solutions which have been proposed of these high mysteries. We look upon them all as hypothetical, and yet of use, because fully adequate to the work of silencing, and so placing in abeyance the infidelity alike hypothetical which has

* Romans, ix, 22.

† 2 Peter, iii, 15. † Rom. ix, 23. ‡ 2 Thess. i, 7—10.

been grounded on the questions wherewith they deal. The real and effective evidence for the truth of the Christian revelation is thus left uninjured; and while we gladly accept of these friendly explanations for all that they are worth, we cannot view them to be so complete, as to leave no sense of a difficulty yet unfathomable, and no room for the apostolic reflection—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

But we ought now to enter on a separate treatment of those few verses in the passage which might require any explanation. We must forbear the consideration of such prophetic views as are here suggested, and to which full justice could only be rendered in a distinct work.

Ver. 25. 'In part.' So great a part as to impress a cursory observer with its totality. It was not just this however—for a certain though very small proportion of the whole nation had been converted. Paul gladly avails himself of this, that he might be enabled to characterise the blindness only as partial; and so be allowed to soften, as his manner is, the representation which he here gives to those Jews whom he is addressing in this epistle of the unbelief of their countrymen.—'Until,' or 'during,' or 'while.' The season of Jewish unbelief will be that of Gentile conversion. We could not from this single verse infer, that, contemporaneous with the restoration of Israel, there was to ensue a remarkable enlargement of general Christianity in the world. This idea, however, might well be suggested by the expression—especially when taken in connection with other parts of the chapter and other prophecies of the Bible. Apart from these, the fulness might be understood to mean, not the great number who were to come in, but the whole number who should be converted, whether that number was great or small. The blindness was to

continue while the elect among the Gentiles were gathering,* be they few or many; or till all such of them as were ordained to eternal life should believe; or, more generally still, "until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled." This leaves the extent of conversion among the Gentiles undetermined; and also leaves us at liberty to judge, whether, while there is reason to believe that about the time when the Jews are brought in there will be a great enlargement in the general Christianity of the world—whether that enlargement is to precede the Jewish conversion, or the Jewish conversion is to precede the enlargement. We are inclined to believe that, looking to these two events in the order of cause and effect, they will have a great reciprocal influence on each other—or that there will both be an action and a reaction. If it be a likelihood, on the one hand, that Gentile Christianity, when purified in its quality and made larger in its amount, shall, both by the exhibition of its graces and the efforts of its missionary zeal, tell with great and sensible effect on the obstinacy of Jewish unbelief—the likelihood is not less, that when a movement is once made on the part of these heretofore resolved aliens to the truth as it is in Jesus, it will tend mightily to open the eyes of all nations, so as to impress millions and millions more in favour of that gospel, whose predictions shall then be so illustriously verified; and to which so impressive a testimony will be given, when its most inveterate, and long its most hopeless enemies, shall, after the lapse of many generations, look in mourning and bitterness to Him whom their forefathers had pierced, and, casting away their weapons of rebellion, shall fall down to worship Him.

But our further remarks on particular verses, we must postpone to the next lecture.

* Mark, xiii, 27.

LECTURE LXXXVII.

ROMANS xi, 26—36.

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." *

VER. 26. 'All Israel.' Some would interpret the clause thus—All of Israel who are to be saved. All of them who are ordained to eternal life. There is as much of force in these interpretations as to make it possible, nay we think even likely, that the meaning here of the word all, is not such an absolute and entire totality, as to include each and every one of the nation at the time of their predicted conversion. Yet something more must be conveyed by the term, than that merely all the elect were to be saved—for, whether many or few, this holds true of them in every age. The 'all' must be held to denote so general, as should amount to a national conversion; and as the 'part' in the verse foregoing, signifies some, though so very few as to make an insensible fraction of believers among the Jewish people—so the 'all' of the verse before us, signifies at least so many as should form a great corporate change from Judaism to Christianity, and so as to leave the unbelievers, if any, but an insensible fraction of the whole.

'Out of Zion.' The passage referred to is Isa. lix, 20—where the prophet represents the Deliverer as coming to Zion, while the apostle represents Him as coming from Zion. These two inspired men reveal to us a glimpse of one and the same process, though at different but perhaps nearly, if not altogether contiguous parts of it—the one stating a previous ingress of the Saviour to Jerusalem, the other a consequent egress in the prosecution of His great undertaking. The light of prophecy here, as in many other instances, but permits us to contemplate the event as a general reality, without enabling us to enter on very full or explicit details of it. Its still undoubted futurity, however, is manifest from this—its being spoken of in the language of prediction both in the Old Testament and the New; and a prediction which has not had the semblance of a fulfilment since the days of the apostles.

VER. 27. 'For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.'

The conversion intimated here is described in substantially the same terms in Jeremiah, xxxi, 33, 34, and in Hebrews, viii, 8—12; x, 16, 17. It consists of the same steps, and is attended with the same blessed results all the world over; and in every instance, whether of Jew or Gentile, who is turned to Christianity. The taking away of their sins in this passage seems a blotting out of the guilt incurred by their transgression of God's laws—as equivalent to what in the other passages is said to be a remembrance (in judgment) of their sins and iniquities no more. The turning away of their ungodliness is their sanctification, even as the other was their justification; and is equivalent to what is spoken of elsewhere, as a putting of those laws—from the condemnation of having broken which they were delivered—of putting these laws into their hearts, and writing them in their minds. The covenant with each individual believer is one and the same, in all ages and among all nations.

VER. 28. 'As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.' Their being enemies for the gospel's sake—points to the subservience of Jewish infidelity, as the instrument of diffusing Christianity through the world. We know that historically the rejection of the gospel by the Jews was followed up by its large and rapid furtherance among the Gentiles; nor can we doubt that this passage in the administration of God's providence had its deep-laid reasons, whether we fully comprehend them or not, in the counsels of the Divine policy.—Again their being beloved for the fathers' sake, points to the regard which God had for Abraham, and to the promise which He made this patriarch, even in the form of a reward for his faithfulness—that He would signalize his posterity, and make them a blessing to the nations of the earth.* This is analogous to other instances in the procedure of the Al-

* Gen. xxii, 16; Lev. xxvi, 42; Deut. iv, 37.

mighty's government—as when for the sake of David and other good kings, He continued His favour to Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah.*

And yet this final salvation of the Jews, though thus holding on the worthiness of their fathers, holds also on election, and so on the sovereignty of God. It is as touching the election, that they are beloved for the fathers' sake. To those who have made a profound study of this arduous topic, there will appear no discrepancy between these two things; and indeed their perfect harmony is often as obvious to the wisdom of a plain Christian, as it is to the man of philosophic discrimination. There is no incompatibility whatever between the order of an administration being fixed, and fixed from all eternity, and yet its being a moral administration. Whether a process be absolute and irreversible is one question. What the special terms of that process are, or what the footsteps in it which follow each other, is another. It is the latter question which determines the character of the process; and should the former question be resolved in the affirmative, this, so far from changing or giving uncertainty to the character of the process, just rivets and makes it all the more sure. Give me a process, all the parts and connections of which are bound together by an adamant necessity; and this hinders not but that in the laws and tendencies and particular sequences of such a process, we may read both its own character and the character of Him who has ordained it—and all the more distinctly and surely, if the process be indeed unalterable. If in any human government, the deed of virtuous patriotism were generally followed up by the acknowledgment of a public reward—this might serve to characterise it as being on the whole a virtuous government; and surely it would not dilute, but rather stamp and confirm this character the more, if, instead of being thus followed up *generally*, it were so followed up *always*. In like manner, if, under the divine government, goodness were always followed up in the long run by enjoyment; and righteousness, though even after a series of discouragements in the way of trial, by happiness and honour; and holiness by heaven; and, in a word, the regeneration of every creature into a state of perfect excellence, by his secure and immortal well-being—no one could question the title of such a government to the highest moral reverence, and a title all the more firmly established, if these several effects followed in the train of their respective causes with the unex-

pected constancy of an order that never changed. We are aware of certain transcendental difficulties, which we forbear to grapple with; but assuredly the task of harmonising the character of an administration as being of perfect moral goodness, with the characteristic of its strict and rigorous and irrevocable necessity, is not one of them—even though a necessity settled and ordained in the counsels of the Almighty from everlasting. And thus particularly might the future and final salvation of the children of Israel be viewed both as the fruit of a primeval decree of election, and as at once the fruit and the reward of the obedience of Abraham. The first does not supersede the second; nay the second is one of the stepping-stones along which the first is carried, and will at length be made good. Nay it will require another great stepping-stone, ere the decree is consummated—a work of grace in the hearts of Abraham's children; their turning to the Lord, that the veil which now blinds them might be taken away;* their deep and mournful penitence, and that worked in them by the Spirit of God;† and lastly, their biding not in unbelief, and their ungodliness being turned away.

Ver. 29. 'For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.' That is, repentance on the part of God. What He hath resolved, he shall certainly fulfil. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" His original purpose, and promise too, respecting the children of Israel, in His own good time, will be accomplished; and the necessary gifts will then be imparted, as well as the necessary calling brought to bear upon them for carrying it into effect. This calling, as being in execution of the decree of election, must, of course, be internal and efficacious—as distinguished from the ordinary and outward calling, such as that wherewith they were plied at the time of the Saviour, and which then proved ineffectual, the things belonging to their peace being hidden from their eyes. At the calling of our text, their eyes shall be opened, and they shall behold Him whom they have pierced, and say Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.‡

Ver. 30, 31. 'For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.' It is obvious, as we have

† 1 Kings. xi, 13, 36.

* 2 Cor. iii, 16. † Zech. xii, 10, 11. ‡ Matt. xxiii, 39.

already said, that there was a connection, and that too in the way of promotion and subserviency, between the unbelief of the Jews and the Christianity of the Gentiles. This is again affirmed in the verse before us; and a sort of parallelism founded on it, between the respective changes already experienced in part, and to be completed afterwards, on these two great divisions of the human family. What the Gentiles had been in times past when they believed not, the Jews were now. The Gentiles passed out of their former unbelief, and obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jews. The Jews will pass out of their present unbelief and obtain mercy, not through the unbelief, but through the mercy bestowed upon the Gentiles. We can see how the grace of God is magnified by a mercy bestowed on men in a previous state of rebellion and apostacy. Its display is all the more illustrious, in that it is shed forth on men in a state of resolute hostility or of deep and settled alienation, rather than on men in a state of expectancy and desirousness of the blessings from heaven which they need; and so it serves to brighten and enhance the character of Him, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor ways as our ways—that His mercy should thus descend on places the darkest and most repulsive, whether on the depravity of the heathen world or on the obstinacy and perverseness of the children of Israel.*

The analogy between the two cases of the Jews and Gentiles, is, that each shall at length have obtained mercy—making transition thereunto from their own previous state of unbelief. The distinction is, that the Gentiles arrived at their blessing through the unbelief of the Jews: The Jews will arrive at theirs through the mercy before shown to the Gentiles. One can perceive how the Jews might have been confirmed in their arrogant, exclusive, and unsocial spirit, had Christianity sprung up amongst them, and taken possession of their nation under the direct and immediate influence of our Saviour's teaching, the Author and Finisher of our faith. It might then have come forth upon the world as Judaism perfected, and in such a way, as, instead of humbling the Jews, might have inflamed still further their extravagant sense of superiority over all the other nations of the earth. But coming as it will through the medium of a previous Gentile Christianity, this strong national partiality, this fond and rooted prejudice of many ages, may at length give way—when, so far humbled as to take from us

that true religion in the attitude of recipients, which, otherwise, they might have conferred on us in the attitude of dispensers. It is thus, perhaps, that by a lengthened course of preparation, the training of a spiritual husbandry carried onward through a series of centuries, the world may come to be matured for the establishment within its limits of one great spiritual family—"where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all."

Ver. 32. There may be reason to believe from other passages and other prophecies in Scripture, that there remains to be yet revealed an infidel antichrist, and so a general falling away from the gospel among the nations of Christendom; but this is not one of these passages. The unbelief in which God hath concluded all, is first the unbelief of the Gentile world before the promulgation of the gospel, out of which they then emerged into Christianity; and second, the present unbelief of the Jews, out of which they also will emerge into Christianity when the time of their restoration comes. It is the present unbelief of the Jews which is spoken of in this verse; but it is the past, and not a future unbelief, of the Gentiles which is there spoken of. It is thus that the apostle adjusts and balances, and if I may so say, equalises the account between the Jews and Gentiles—a main topic with him, from the commencement and throughout the whole of his epistle. He had before spoken of their common vices. He now speaks of their common infidelity—that, after representing both as having fallen into one and the same abyss, he might reconcile both to one and the same method of recovery; and, along with this, establish the great doctrine of justification by faith, as the common and equal footing on which both are taken into acceptance with God. The whole of his argument, whilst intended to harmonise the two parties into one, is fitted also to humble each of them, and especially the Jews. Yet one cannot fail to perceive how studious he is of mitigating to the uttermost the painfulness of his demonstration—that he might "give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God, but please all men in all things, not seeking his own profit but the profit of many, that they may be saved." In the execution of this task, he acquits himself with a tact and a delicacy and an address altogether worthy of the most accomplished courtier—yet only with the skill of this profession, and not with its duplicity; for on the ground of principle, and when aught

* Romans, v, 8, 10.

of truth had to be defended or of error to be rebuked and put down, none more resolute in assertion or more fearless in remonstrance than Paul. This union of an uncompromising firmness with a delicacy the most sensitive, we had almost said the most tremulous, lest unnecessary violence should be done to the feelings of other men—we have always held to be a leading character in the mind and manner of this great apostle.

Ver. 33, 34. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord! or who hath been his counsellor?' It were well to discriminate the precise sentiment of that sublime effusion, wherewith the apostle here concludes and sums up the whole of this contemplation. We should say in the general, that they are the natural rather than any of the moral attributes of the Divinity, which have evoked it. It is not of His mercy that the apostle now makes mention; nor yet of His justice; nor yet of His unswerving truth or fidelity; nor yet of His holiness or dread antipathy to sin. They are His wisdom and knowledge, and the depth of the riches of these, which he celebrates in this place; and the unfathomable mystery, both of His counsels and processes; and lastly, the absolute and entire ownership, and therefore disposal or sovereignty which God has of creation—seeing that He is at once the origin and the end of all things. It is true that His judgments, if not His ways, stand related to the principles of His righteous administration—Yet here they are not spoken of as righteous, but simply and generally as inscrutable. The jurisprudence of a lawyer cannot be appreciated rightly, but by a reference to its moral character—which, indeed, is the most important element of all in the reckoning. But the very thing affirmed here respecting the jurisprudence of Him who is the great Lawgiver of heaven and earth, is, that in our present state at least it is not appreciable by us, that it is beyond our reckoning; and though a time be coming when the mystery of God shall be finished,* and we shall be enabled to say, not only "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty," but "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints," and "thy judgments are made manifest"—Yet now must we join the apostle in the utterance of our text—'How unsearchable are these judgments, and these ways how past finding out!'

In attending to what that specifically

was which called forth this high exclamation from the apostle, we cannot but feel that we are not altogether in a fit state fully to sympathise with him. The events which thus excited him to reflection have been too long familiar to us. And this rejection of the Jews, or admission of the Gentiles, or even reunion of both into one faith and one family—so long as but read of in prophecy, and not yet seen in living fulfilment—these as little move us, as do any of those great historical changes which have long passed over the world, and are now as current as household words in the pages of well known authorship. But we must not estimate from our indifference now, the effect which such a revolution then must have had, and especially in all the force and freshness of its novelty on a Jewish understanding—before the wonder and recency of the great passing changes had subsided; or men, with the education and prejudices of an Israelite, had recovered from the sensation of that violence inflicted on all their previous habitudes of thought and feeling, when, God abandoned His ancient people, and made proffer to all men of those blessings and distinctions which till now had been exclusively theirs. And there was something more in it than a reversal to excite surprise. There was an enlargement which must have served mightily to expand the mental perspective, particularly of those Christian Jews, who had just cast off the limitations that so fettered and confined the general understandings of their countrymen. It was a transition from the local to the universal. This enlargement of view from a country to a world in the economy of the Divine word, was fitted to awaken and amplify the mind of its admiring observers—just as a few centuries ago, when in the economy of the Divine workmanship, the mystery of these sensible heavens was laid open, and the human mind made its large and lofty transition from the view of a world to the view of a universe. Relatively to the state of previous conception at each of these periods, there is a striking similarity between them; and the respective discoveries, the one moral or spiritual the other natural, are fitted to beget a like sense of greatness—whether in the objects contemplated, or in the magnificent designs of Him whose government reaches to all ages and embraces all worlds. It was a mighty stretch at the earlier of these periods, when the view was carried forward from a single nation to the whole human family; and mightier still at the later of them, when carried forward from the earth we live upon to the vast, and for aught we know, the boundless assemblage of those suns

* Revelation, x, 7.

and systems which Astronomy hath unfolded. The mind of the apostle seems, in the passage now before us, to have fully shared in the first of these expansions, and even elsewhere to have bordered, nay actually to have entered on the second of them—when on this very theme of a one Christianity for Jews and Gentiles, he tells us of Him from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, and by whom all things were created, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; and then gives us to know, of this evolution in the government and history of the church, that it was meant as an illustration to the whole universe of the manifold wisdom of God.*

But these are reflections on the greatness rather than on the incomprehensibility of the King eternal and immortal—on the riches and extent of His creation, rather than on the mysteriousness of His government; and bespeak more the admiration of a magnificence beyond all our previous conceptions, than our wonder in the contemplation of depths and difficulties utterly beyond our present understanding. Now it is not mere expansion in the field of view which calls forth or exhausts the whole sentiment of this passage—as the adoption, for example, of a whole species, instead of but the people of a single nation, into one and the same spiritual family. It is not so much the magnitude of the result, as the rationale of the process, which engages and baffles the mind of the apostle; and which therefore he pronounces to be unsearchable, and past finding out. It is the selection of one household from a world left in darkness and alienation from God—it is the committal to them of the divine oracles, and the preservation amongst their descendants of the true knowledge and worship of the Deity—it is the history of this singular people, through whom was kept up the only remaining intercourse between heaven and earth; and which was finally broken off, after the dealing of many centuries, in the various forms of chastisement at one time and of mercy or endurance at another, till the perversities of stiff-necked and rebellious Israel could be no longer tolerated, and the things of peace and salvation were henceforth hidden from their eyes—it is contemporaneously with the rejection of the Jews, the call of the Gentiles just awoke from the profound lethargy of ages, during which the millions of unvisited and unblest heathenism were suffered to perish in their iniquities—and then, to close the enumeration, it was the prospect still at

the time of Paul, of another dreary nay a double millennium of exile and moral wretchedness for his own outcast countrymen, ere the goodly consummation should arrive, or the latter-day glory was to shine forth on a then happy and regenerated earth—These are the eventful changes in the contemplation of which the mind of our apostle seems to be labouring, as if the footsteps of a series which he felt himself unable to trace, or at least unable to account for. And certainly to us it does look inexplicable, that the same God who could will as we imagine into present effect, an instant and universal blessedness—that He should rather choose to compass the fulfilments of His wisdom and goodness by so lengthened, so laborious a pathway. The difficulty is a thousand-fold aggravated—when we think of the failures, the abortions, the woful and wide-spread degeneracies, lighted up by intervals few and far between of the good or the beautiful in the moral history of the world. We cannot but wonder at such a preparation being right or necessary, ere the secure, the everlasting empire of truth and righteousness shall be ushered in. And yet these are parts of a scheme, and of a scheme in progress, reaching forward to a great and glorious accomplishment, though by initial stages of darkness, depravity and disorder, the full meaning or effect of which we cannot comprehend. They are the deep-laid movements of a policy to us inscrutable; and as we have just borrowed an analogy from one of the sciences, we may here avail ourselves of another, and point to the yet hidden enigma of those successive creations which geology has unfolded, and which prove the developments both of animal and spiritual existence to be alike inexplicable. There is the profoundest mystery in both; and whether we try to explore the moral or the physical departments of His administration, it is good to feel the infinity of our distance from Him, whose way is in the sea, and whose path is in the great waters, and whose footsteps are not known.* “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?”

Ver. 35, 36. ‘Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.’ These verses strike at the root of that lofty pretension which it is the great aim of the apostle to overthrow—that of man having any rightful claim upon God, who is at once the origin and the end of all things. To Him we owe not all the objects of enjoyment

* Colossians, i, 16; Ephesians, iii, 10, 15.

* Psalm lxxvii, 19.

merely, but all our capacities of enjoyment. This is a theme too big for utterance, and more to be dwelt upon in thought than dilated on in language—the entire subordination of the creature to the Creator, of the thing formed to Him who hath formed it, by whose care it is that

we consist or keep together, and whose right hand upholds us continually. It is our part even here, and in the dimness of our present embryo being, to award Him all the glory. This will be the song of our eternity, when we shall see Him as He is, and know even as we are known.

LECTURE LXXXVIII.

ROMANS xii, 1, 2.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be 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.”

VER. 1. ‘By the mercies of God’—Those mercies of which he had just spoken as alike applicable both to Jews and Gentiles, whom he now addresses as the subjects of a common discipleship, and under the common title of brethren. The style of his address is eminently fitted to conciliate the men, with whom he had just been holding what at least one class of them might have felt to be a somewhat stern and repulsive argument. And his manner is, he omits no lawful expedient, by which to disarm the repugnance of his pupils to aught which might prove hard or distasteful in the reasonings which he employs; and so he stands before them, not in the attitude of a master to school them into submission, but of a friend and fellow-disciple, to supplicate their gifts and services at the altar of their common Christianity. At this part he makes the transition from doctrine to practice; and on the groundwork of those mercies which he had just demonstrated, tells them what the returns are which are expected at their hands. That gospel mercy which proclaims so full an indemnity for the past, is flagrantly misunderstood by those, who conceive of it as holding out a like full exemption from the toils of a future obedience—instead of which there cannot be imagined a more entire renunciation of an old habit and an old will, than what takes place, and takes place invariably, in the economy under which we sit. And there is no dispensation from it. The covenant of works began with service, and ended with reward. The covenant of grace begins with mercy and ends with service; and most certainly a service not short of the former, either in the universality of its range over the whole domain of our moral nature—or at length with every single disciple in the school of Christianity, in the tale and measure of his performances. And can any subordi-

nation be more complete than that which is proposed in these verses?—and proposed too on the ground of those mercies, or because of them (*therefore*), as the rightful and proper return to God for the benefits of this new dispensation. We are called on to present our bodies a ‘sacrifice’—not by giving them to be burnt, as were the slain carcasses of the Jewish offerings, but to present them ‘a living sacrifice;’ or, in other words, not by the extinction of our animal life, but by the utter mortification of all that is evil or forbidden in our animal desires, which, if not the death of the body, is at least the death of that which was formerly dear to it even as life itself. The voluntary surrender of that in which the chief enjoyment of life consisted, is a self-denial, or rather a self-infliction, which, if not equivalent, is at least analogous to a literal sacrifice of the person; and is thus denominated in various parts of Scripture. And certainly it may require a strength of resolution as great as that exhibited in the martyrdoms, whether of principle or patriotism. And accordingly we read of being “crucified with Christ,” of them that are His having “crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts,” of our being “buried with him in baptism,” of our “being made conformable unto his death,” of our putting off by a circumcision “the body of the sins of the flesh,” of our being “baptized into his death.”* There is nothing surely in these expressions, to countenance the immoralities or the indolence of antinomianism; and we may well understand how that, to be carried into effect, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force†. Truly it is not by a slight or easy process, by a listless seeking after life,

* Gal. ii, 20; v, 24; Col. ii, 11, 12; Phil. iii, 10; Rom. vi, 3.
† Matt. xi, 12.

that we shall make good our entry there-into, or work out our salvation; but by dint of a hard and laborious striving, so very hard and far above the powers of nature, that it needs the working of that grace which worketh in us mightily.*

It is no more a literal sacrifice that we are called to, than Paul's was a literal crucifixion, when he tells us that he was crucified with Christ. Nevertheless he lived. Yet, to signify the actuating power which thus enabled him to stifle and overbear the strongest and most urgent importunities of nature, he further says that it was not he but Christ who lived in him; and, still more to explain the principle or rationale of this great achievement, he lets us know that his life (for the crucifixion he underwent did not, as in the case of the Saviour, imply any surrender of this life) that the life which he lived in the flesh was a life of faith on the Son of God—and he adds, "who loved me and gave himself for me." Let us in like manner take the same firm hold on the sure mercies of David—the identical mercies of our text; and on the strength of this confidence, or faith which overcometh the world, we shall accomplish the same victory and make good the same sacrifice which it was the incessant labour of his life to perfect in the sight of God. Let the grace of Christ rule in our hearts, and then sin will no longer have the dominion over us. If we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh; but keep under our bodies and so bring them into subjection, keep them in sanctification and honour, keep them with that holy guardianship which is due to the temples of the Holy Ghost—and finally, to complete the surrender, or merge our will wholly into God's will, we shall not be satisfied with one act of self-denial; but, making it the symbol and earnest of a universal obedience, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we shall do all to the glory of God. The supremacy ascribed to Him at the end of the last chapter is universal; and, in keeping with this, the submission laid upon us at the commencement of this chapter is universal also.

And this is a sacrifice which may well be called 'holy'—a term properly expressive of separation. The best and indeed the prescribed way of keeping down the appetencies of the body, is to keep at a distance from the objects which excite them. And thus it should be our prayer and our endeavour to turn away our eyes from beholding vanity; and we are told not to look upon the wine when it is red; and we are bidden to refrain

our foot from the path of sinners, and to refrain our tongue from evil and eschew it. The policy of the Christian is first to flee the temptation of alluring objects when he can, and then resist it to the uttermost when he can not. He does the first when he sets no wicked thing before his eyes,* or rather avoids it, passes not by it, turns from it, and passes away.† He does the second, when in such circumstances as that he cannot withdraw, but may at least withstand—as when he sits to eat with a ruler, and considers diligently what is set before him; and puts a knife to his throat if he be a man given to appetite. The world we live in is a world full of temptation to those distempered, or as the apostle terms them, these vile bodies; and it is only by a strenuous avoidance and a strenuous resistance together, that we can maintain a holy separation from the objects which would otherwise lord it over us, and bring us under the dominion of those evil affections which war against the soul.

'Acceptable unto God.' There is a certain rigid and overstrained orthodoxy, which would banish this term altogether from the doings or the services of men; and has thus, we fear, done a world of mischief to practical religion. It is most true, as they contend, that the perfect obedience of Christ is the only ground of our meritorious acceptance with God—the only consideration on which the rewards of eternity can be challenged or claimed for us as rightfully our due. But this is no reason why acceptance, nay acceptance with God, should be so utterly dissociated as some would have it to be from the obedience of man. On this subject the Bible is far more free and fearless than are many of our sensitive theologians. It can tell us to walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing; and of the value which He has for our personal virtues, as, for example, a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price; and of the love He bears to the possessor of good moral qualities and habits, as when it says that God loveth a cheerful giver; and of the chief importance which it assigns to the services of our new obedience, making these the end or terminating object of our Saviour's death, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works; and of the real substantive effect or virtue that there is in an endeavour for adding to our treasures in heaven, or to the rewards and joys of our eternity, as when it bids us be steadfast and immovable and always

* Luke, xiii, 24; Col. i, 29.

* Psalm ci, 3.

† Proverbs, iv, 15.

abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour in the Lord shall not be in vain: And, in one word more, of its incessant demand for the right conduct of every disciple, and for the graces and accomplishments of a right character, as shining forth throughout all the gospel, and in each of the epistles. Now we cannot say of all or any part of this, that it is expressly denied by our evangelical Christians. Nay rather, it in words is expressly admitted by them; and it has a place in the formularies of every Protestant church; and is harmonised by theologians into a consistency with the great doctrine of justification by faith—for they tell us, and tell us truly, that it forms no part of this justification, and that if our services or sacrifices be acceptable at all, they are only acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, in whom alone it is that we can find acceptance either for our persons or services. All this is very distinctly laid down; and yet with many a mind it does not countervail the effect of those denunciations which orthodoxy has launched forth on the presumption and vanity of human works. Such is the evil of fierce controversy, that, after all the attempts to correct or to qualify its previous fulminations on good works, there is still in many an anxious and agitated spirit, a general fear of them. So much has been said respecting the danger which there is of arrogating a merit because of our good works, that we almost feel as if there was a merit in renouncing them—could almost wish them undone, because of the hazard incurred in the doing of them. It is thus, we apprehend, that, as the compound result of all the arguments and asseverations which have been uttered in defence of the true system against the heresies of gainsayers on the subject of our acceptance with God—a freezing interdiction has been laid by them on the activities of the Christian life. Surely it is a precious encouragement on the side of gospel obedience that God is highly pleased with it, though he will not admit it as forming our right to the inheritance of heaven—just as the father of a family on earth may be delighted with the services of his children and their efforts to do his will, though it be not these which constitute their right, their legal, forensic, and challengeable right to a place and a maintenance under the parent's roof. Let us dismiss, then, the chilling fears of a misplaced and mistaken orthodoxy on this subject; but enter with all alacrity on the path of duty, and in the full sense of a complacent smile from the upper sanctuary to cheer us on. In betaking ourselves to this walk, let us break

through the fetters which an artificial theology may have laid upon it; and resolutely, yea hopefully do the work of obedience, whether we can rightly assign or not the place which it holds in a regular and well-built system of divinity—trusting in the Lord and doing good—giving ourselves up to the practical and prescribed labour of Christianity; and this cheerfully, courageously, and with the comfort of knowing that our labour in the Lord shall not be in vain.

'Which is your reasonable service.' Perhaps a reasonable, in contradistinction to a ritual service—the one applied to the living sacrifice of our own bodies, the other to the sacrifice of animals under the Jewish law. Not that it is not altogether reasonable to do a given thing, simply because it is the will of God. But there are certain things of which we see the reasonableness, prior to and apart from the voice of any express revelation; and others again in which there would have been no reasonableness, had it not been for the distinct and positive injunction of them by authority of the great Lawgiver. There would have been no reason, for example, in the prescribed form of the tabernacle, or in the prescribed offerings of the Hebrew ceremonial as laid down by Moses, had it not been for the things showed to him or the things told to him on the mount. There is an analogy between what we now say of the 'reasonable,' and what might be as well said of the 'right.' An observance may be right in itself, or only right and the matter of obligation, because made the subject of a positive or statutory enactment on the part of God. It is truly a most right thing that we should do what He hath commanded, though solely on the ground of the commandment. But the thing thus commanded may, anterior to the commandment, have a primary and inherent rightness of its own. "Children," says the apostle, "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right"—not right only because God had commanded it, for this might be alleged of every precept which cometh out of His lips; but, separately from this consideration, having a proper and independent rightness of itself. And in like manner, as a service may in its own proper character be right, so may it in its own proper character be reasonable; and this applies pre-eminently to the service of the text—that is, the presentation of our bodies unto God as a living sacrifice. For not only is He Lord of the body, and its rich and bountiful Provider, and the Upholder for every instant of its complex and curious workmanship by the word of His power; and what more reasonable than that the thing which so thoroughly

and in all its parts subsists by Him, should in all things be subject to Him?—But let us think of the effect, if, instead of our bodies being made by us a sacrifice unto God, we should come under the degrading, the brutalising influence of its vile affections, and so become slaves of the body, the wretched bondsmen of one or other or all of its tyrant appetites—when the intervals of a worthless enjoyment should be filled up by the languor, the remorse, the disgust, and self-dissatisfaction, wherewith remaining conscience, so long as it keeps alive exercises the unhappy victims of sordid indulgence and excess. Or should conscience die, and so the man sink into the animal, let us but think of the moral ruin which ensues, when the master-faculty is put out; and all that is distinctive of a superior or spiritual nature is obliterated; and the hopes of eternity are extinguished, while perhaps the dark imagery of terror, as the only badge and relict of an immortal capacity, might still continue at times to haunt and agonise him; and the Spirit of God takes His final departure from that foul and loathsome tenement, which, under another regimen, might have become a glorious temple of the Holy Ghost; and the abject devotee of those pleasures which he can no longer resist though they now pall upon him, and present him with but the mockery of enjoyment, renounces for ever that service which he would have experienced to be perfect freedom, had he only yielded up his members to be instruments of righteousness—and thus barter irrecoverably away from him the light and the liberty of God's own children. That truly is an unreasonable service, by which Reason is disposed from her supremacy; and all the objects of a rational and immortal creature are given up in exchange for those short-lived pleasures of sin, which are but for a season.

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.' 'And be not conformed to this world.' The sacrifice of our corporeal affections, involves in it this bidden nonconformity. We should then not fashion ourselves according to our former lusts.* The grossness of Paganism made the nonconformity between Christians and those who were without all the more palpable in these days. And accordingly when the disciples of Jesus Christ entered on their new course—resolving no longer to live the rest of their time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God; and reckoning that

the time past of their lives should suffice them to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when they walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries—then did the unconverted, the world as contradistinguished from the church and lying in wickedness, think it strange of these Christians that they ran not to the same excess of riot with themselves, and so spake evil of them.* The distinction may not be so glaring now-a-days, nor force itself so necessarily and irresistibly on the eye of the senses. But the enormities of the heathen world in these days, and of which we read in the descriptions both of the New Testament and of profane authors, were as little scandalous then—as the gayeties and the amusements and those various companionships from which all sense of God and all the conversations of godliness are excluded, of the festive and fashionable and general society of our modern world can possibly be now. The distinction is the same, though its insignia be different. There is as wide a difference of spirit still between the children of light and the children of this world, whatever reforms or refinements of manner and external decency the latter may have undergone. The distinction is not the less real, that it is perhaps more latent and lurks now under the subtlety of a disguise which serves more to humanise all, and so seems more to assimilate all. And it requires now as deep and radical and searching an operation to effect the indispensable change, or translate the one character into the other, as it did in those days when the apostle, addressing those of his own disciples, who at one time were fornicators, or idolaters, or adulterers, or effeminate, or abusers of themselves with mankind, or thieves, or covetous, or drunkards, or revilers, or extortioners, said—“And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”† This was the process of separation from the world then, and it is the process still—though it be a world now less revolting in its general aspect, and having on it a fairer face of civilisation and social morality. The same mighty agent is needed for the work of regeneration in all ages; and the same total revolution of spirit and character must be achieved on every son and daughter of Adam, ere they can inherit the kingdom of God.

'But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.' This single clause proves the magnitude of the transition. In order to our being not conformed, we must be

* 1 Peter, i, 14.

* 1 Peter, iv, 2—4.

† 1 Corinthians, vi, 9—11.

transformed—and that not by a superficial amendment, but by a renewal, and, more decisive still, a renewal in the very interior of our system—a change not merely on the outward walk, but a change in the central parts of our moral nature, or at the place of command and presiding authority, and where the main spring of every deed and every movement lies. Some would have the body in the first verse, on the principle of the part for the whole, to signify the entire man. But this is unnecessary; and we should beside lose the impressiveness of a distinct reference to each of the two great departments in the human constitution, which we obtain when passing on to the second verse, we find the subjection of the mind provided with an express and authoritative lesson, even as in the first verse is the subjection of the body to the will of God. It is thus that the whole of the living and willing and intelligent mechanism is not only mended, but is virtually though not literally and in substance, made over again. The carnal mind is changed into the spiritual; and we are led to glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God's.*

It is remarkable that this should be the subject of a precept, or that we should be as good as bidden to transform ourselves. It is not more remarkable, however, than that we should be told in Ezekiel, to make us a new heart and a new spirit.† The solution is found in this—that for every precept, we may be said, under the economy of grace, to have a counterpart promise. And accordingly by the mouth of the same prophet, God, in His own person, sends forth this gracious proclamation—“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.”‡ And what we have to do between this precept on the one hand and this promise on the other, how we must turn ourselves for the purpose of making them good, is distinctly intimated in a following verse of this chapter—“I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.”§ In other words, we have to seek and pray for the offered blessing. It is by ‘the mercies of God’ that Paul conjures us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. To these mercies we should make our confident appeal; and as these form the subject of his invocation, when he delivers to us the seemingly impracticable charge of

renewing ourselves and transforming ourselves, so our faith in these forms our very instrument for the achievement of the task which he puts into our hands.

But this is not all. Even in the high and transcendental matter of our regeneration, we have a something to do as well as to pray for. Indeed the apostle, in the passage now in hand, tells us thus much, when in the preceding verse before he had bidden us be transformed by the renewing of our minds, he tells us how to dispose of our bodies—that is, keep their every appetite under restraint, even though it should be with such a violence to our inclinations as might amount to the feeling of a most painful sacrifice. And so also the prophet Ezekiel in the place already quoted, and before he had bidden his countrymen make them a new heart and a new spirit, lays it in charge upon them to cast away from them all the transgressions whereby they had transgressed.* But most significant of all is that saying of Hosea, when he complains of the people, that “they will not frame their doings to turn unto their God.”† Amid such explicit testimonies as these, the trumpet surely cannot be said to give an uncertain sound. We can neither pray too earnestly, nor work too diligently; and if it be asked, which of these should have the precedence,—better far than any metaphysical adjustment is the sound practical deliverance, that we can neither pray nor work too soon. On the one hand, we should make haste and delay not to keep the commandments.‡ But on the other, the cry of our felt helplessness can never ascend too early. The aspirations of the heart and movements of the hand should begin and keep pace together. Paul’s first question at the moment of conversion was, What wilt thou have me to do; and his first recorded exercise is, Behold he prayeth. Let us dismiss the idle question of the antecedency between these two things. Let there be no self-indulgence in praying, for thus should we be antinomians; no self-sufficiency in doing, for thus should we be legalists. It is not by sitting still in the attitude of a mystic and expectant quietism, that we shall carry our salvation. But neither is it by activities, however manifold or boundless, without a constant sense of dependence upon God. From the very outset His helping hand must be sought after. He not only puts His Spirit within us; but He causes us to walk in His statutes.§

‘That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.’ The man who lives in and is led by the

* 1 Cor. vi, 20.
† Ezek. xxxvi, 26, 27.

‡ Ezek. xviii, 31.
§ Ezek. xxxvi, 37.

* Ezek. xviii, 31.
† Psalm cxix, 60.

‡ Hosea, v, 4.
§ Ezek. xxxvi, 27.

Spirit of God, will come to know, in the new and heaven-born desires of his own regenerated heart, what the will of God is. That fruit of the Spirit, which is in all righteousness and goodness and truth, must be best known in these its various characteristics and excellencies, by him who is the bearer of it. When God putteth His law into the inward parts of men, and writes it in their hearts—then they need not to be taught of others, saying unto them, Know the Lord, for all who are thus enlightened know Him from the least even to the greatest.* They surely

* Jeremiah, xxxi, 33, 34.

know best the laws and lessons of the Holy Ghost, who are the immediate subjects of His teaching; and even they who see their good works recognise in them the lineaments of that divine image in which they are created—and so, on looking to the righteousness and the true holiness of those whose light thus shines before men, discern in these virtues the very will and character of God, and are led thereby to glorify their Father who is in heaven.*

* Ephesians, iv, 24; Matthew, v, 16.

LECTURE LXXXIX.

ROMANS xii, 3—8.

“For I say, 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 hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”

VER. 3. ‘For I say, through the grace given unto me.’ the particle ‘for’ establishes a connection between the present and the preceding verse, and which I think might be made out in this way—Paul had just as good as said, that, by being transformed through the renewal of our minds, we should be enabled to prove or discriminate or ascertain what the will of God is. We should be “renewed in knowledge.”* We should not only be made right in our wills, but right in our understandings also. Indeed the one righteous is a sort of guarantee for the other—He that willeth to do God’s will shall know the doctrine of Christ; † of Him who pre-eminently and indeed exclusively is the Teacher of the things of God, seeing that no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. ‡ it is thus that he who wills aright shall be made to know aright, and more especially to know the character and will of God. Now this rectification of the will, and consequently of the understanding, is done by a renewal of the mind, which itself is an operation of divine grace; and so there is a peculiar significance and connection in Paul telling the Christians of Rome, when proceeding to unfold the will of God for the regulation of their conduct, that what he was going

to say was through the grace given unto him. He had just acquitted himself throughout the foregoing chapters of this epistle as a teacher of truth; and he now tells them how he came by his qualifications for discharging the office on which he was about to enter of a teacher of righteousness. He was on the eve of giving forth so many practical lessons—a list of particulars respecting the will of God—which he through grace was enabled as their apostle to reveal; and which they, if indeed his genuine disciples, would also through grace be enabled to recognise, as those very lessons of righteousness which proceeded from God, and had in them the character and seal of the upper sanctuary. Between him and them, there would be the tact and sympathy of a common understanding. They would hear his voice. If gifted with spiritual discernment,* their eye would see and acknowledge the rightness of what their teacher set before them. † They would not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. ‡ In knowledge and in all judgment would they approve § the things that are excellent; || and so filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, ¶ would both teacher and taught give proof

* 1 John, iv, 1.

† Isa. xxx, 20.

‡ Eph. v, 17.

§ Δοκιμαστέον.—The same is the original word for “prove” in Romans, xii, 2.

¶ Phil. i, 10.

‡ Col. i, 9.

* Col. iii, 10.

† John, vii, 17.

‡ Matt. xi, 27.

to their common discernment of the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

'To every man that is among you.' He comprehends all in the advice which he offers; but with the special design, we have no doubt, of reading the lesson which they stood most in need of, to those in the church, who, like Diotrophes, loved to have the pre-eminence—whether they were boastful Jews* who still retained somewhat of their old leaven, or arrogant Gentiles who boasted against the branches.† It was precisely the lesson, which, if it but took them all in, was the most fitted of all others to hush and to harmonise the discordant elements of the society whom he was addressing.

'Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly.' This may be regarded either as a general dissuasive against pride, and we shall not go astray though in part we so understand it; or, it may be viewed as having a special reference to the temper and conduct of the various ecclesiastical functionaries—each signalised by his own distinct gift, and holding his own distinct office in the church. The following context clearly proves that this latter object too was in the mind of the apostle, which in no way precludes our looking to it in the former light also as a morality of universal application. We cannot but think, however, that, in the direction here given, the case of the church's office-bearers, if not chiefly, was at least fully in his eye. He wanted them in particular not to think highly of themselves, lest they should aspire to such offices as they were not fit for. What he desired was, that each should be satisfied with his own special gift and his own calling—just as he received it from that Spirit who divideth to every man severally as He will.‡ He would have each to keep by the part assigned to him, without taking upon him, and still less without despising or undervaluing the part which belonged to another. The next clause presents a consideration eminently applicable to this understanding of the matter.—'According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.' The very consideration that it is God who determines for every man his place, should not only make the man satisfied to keep within it; but, if a place of honour, it should lead him to bear meekly and modestly the distinction thus conferred upon him by a higher hand. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" And then it is but given in measure—as if in contradistinction to Him who was the great Pattern of humility, and to whom it was given without measure.

The expression—every man's *measure* of faith—implies that the faith of each was limited; which it might be, either in degree, as the general faith which makes one a Christian is stronger or weaker with different individuals; or in kind, as some special faith, the exercise of which was followed up by a forth-putting of some one or other of the special gifts or endowments of that period. Thus there was the faith of miracles, which enabled one man to work them;* and a faith having respect to a different object, which empowered another to prophesy, or a third to speak tongues, or a fourth to interpret them, or a fifth who was qualified by his peculiar faith for his peculiar office which might have been the discernment of spirits, or some one or other of those numerous diversities which in that age of preternatural manifestations made part of the full complement of a Christian church. Each man had his own sort of faith, and, appropriate thereto, his own sort of function. Believest thou that I, the Lord of these various administrations, am able to do for you *this*?—And according to these their several faiths, was it severally done unto them. It might well have humbled them to consider, that, not only were the gifts of one and all received by them, but the preceding and preparatory faiths proper to each gift were respectively dealt out to them. God dealt out to every man his measure of faith; or, understanding it in its more special and restricted sense, God gave to each of these privileged men that particular faith which led or opened the way to him for his particular acquirement. And the very same consideration ought powerfully to tell in the humbling of all spiritual pride—for it holds true of the general faith, the faith by which we are saved, that, not only is the salvation a gift (by grace are ye saved;) but the very faith is not of ourselves, it being the gift of God.† And indeed, in the exercise of faith, from the very nature of it, all is fitted not to exalt but to humble—for the greater our faith, the greater is our self-renunciation; and the more singly, as well as more strongly, do we draw and depend on One who is higher than ourselves. It is thus that the loftiest in faith is necessarily the lowliest in self-distrust or self-abasement. It is altogether an act of self-emptying, the very opposite of arrogance or self-elation; and is clearly so viewed by the apostle, when he checks the boastful disposition of his converts, by the consideration that thou standest by faith, and therefore be not high-minded, but fear.‡

Ver. 4, 5. 'For as we have many mem-

Rom. ii, 17, 23. † Rom. xi, 18. ‡ 1 Cor. xii, 11.

* Luke, xvii, 6.

† Ephesians, ii, 8.

‡ Matthew, ix, 28, 29.

§ Romans, xi, 20.

bers in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.' Now follows the context which determines the more special of the two meanings assigned to the preceding verse—as bearing, though not an exclusive, at least a very distinct reference to the office-bearers of a church—namely, that each keep within his own particular sphere; and no one thrust himself into the duties, or usurp the office of another. As in other Scriptures,* he here avails himself of the human body as a figure, by the various members of which he would illustrate the mutual helpfulness of the church's several functionaries to each other, as well as the indispensableness of each to the well-being and perfection of the whole—they being one body in Christ the Head, and in virtue of their common relation to this one body, being every one members one of another. The same is expressed otherwise in 1 Cor. xii, 27; and signifies the mutual subser- vency and use of the parts to each other, as well as their harmonious adjust- ment into one system. And upon this analogy does he ground his lesson of the confusion and disorder that would ensue, did each encroach on the proper business of the other—as if the foot were to at- tempt the work of the hand, or any one member were to undertake the functions of any of the rest. And his two-fold di- rection is, that each should abide by his own duties, while he maintains the utmost deference for the place and performance of the others—being at once helpful to all and doing honour to all. It is thus that they would best demonstrate their being in Christ—and that not by an ostensible or merely economical, but by a vital and personal and real union. We can never overrate the vast importance for Chris- tianity of such a unity as this among a church's members and church's office- bearers. This is powerfully manifested in our Saviour's prayer†—that all His dis- ciples might be one, even “as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: *that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*” It is further worthy of observation, that to save the heats and the heart-burnings incidental to the complex and economical structure of a Christian society, the description of its mechanism is similarly followed up by the apostle in his Epistles to the Corin- thians and the Romans—there by a glo- rious persuasive to charity, and here by a series of verses, which together make up the brightest tablet of the social moral- ities ever presented to the world. In his

representation too of the same thing to the Ephesians, it is the grand lesson of love—which forms the main end and bur- den of his argument.

But before proceeding to the enforce- ment of this lesson, either in its general form, or in its various applications, as set forth in the last half of the chapter on hand—let us first follow the apostle in his enumeration of the diverse acts or offices, which in his days appertained to a Christian church, and must of course have been of beneficial operation in sub- serving the designs of this great moral institute. But before entering on the ex- position of the verses where these are specified, we would remark on the great number of distinct services which were laid each on a distinct set of office-bear- ers in apostolic times, coupled with this maxim of church government which seems generally to have obtained at that period—even that each distinct function- ary should keep by his own distinct func- tions, as if these were enough for all his energies. This subdivision of employ- ment, and that too in the proper work of a Christian church, was greatly proceeded on, and that too in the best and most pro- sperous and efficient period of its history, when it had just come fresh from heaven upon the world, and drew direct, or at first hand, from the fountains of inspira- tion. But the principle which was so much respected then, we grieve to say it, is signally traversed in the present day. One might well have imagined, that in that season of extraordinary and preter- natural endowments, the Spirit of God could have overborne the varieties of na- ture; and, without respect to the separate talents and dispositions of each mental constitution, could have fitted one man for the discharge of many offices. But this is not His method; and, instead of overbearing, He imitates the variety of nature—dividing to every man severally as He will: And so we behold in the spectacle of a primitive church, the econ- omy of a complex and variegated service made up of many offices—not accumu- lated on one man, but parted with a right and proper adaptation among many of- fice-bearers, where each laboured in the task he was fitted for, and meddled not with the employments or the services of other men. Surely now, and in this far less gifted age, it is all the more neces- sary to consult the special ability of each for the special work in which, whether by nature or grace, he is most qualified to excel. We should suit the objective to the subjective—a great lesson, and as well in the business of the church as in the business of general society. In this matter a wise Christian policy, or sound-

* 1 Cor. xii, 12; Eph. iv, 15; v, 30. † John, xvii, 21.

policy of the church, is at one with the policy of the world. We should, as much as possible, humour, even as the Spirit Himself does, the constitutional varieties of taste and talent among men—a maxim this, which has been signally traversed in our present day—when ministers are made men of all works; and each, more especially if he have earned an eminence for something, has many things laid upon him; and so is drawn away from his own favourite, which, generally speaking, if permitted to keep by it without molestation, would to him be the far most productive walk of Christian usefulness. What makes it all the more ruinous is, that rarely indeed is one man eminent in more than one thing; and the sure way therefore of degrading him from eminence to mediocrity, is to bustle and belabour him with more than one thing. In the time of the apostles, the work of the Christian ministry was broken down into manifold departments; and we then beheld the goodly spectacle of a well-going church, having its business conducted and carried forward by means of a well-stocked agency. The tendency now is in an opposite direction—to abridge and economise, and thus mutilate and impair to the uttermost the original machinery of a Christian church. And so not only have many of its primitive offices been lost sight of and fallen into desuetude; but the few remaining office-holders, on whom the whole burden is devolved, instead of operating each with intense efficiency and power of observation on his own separate employment, is forced to generalize and do all slightly, or to neglect and leave much undone. And no wonder, therefore, at the complaints of our having lighted on a day of small things, and among the pigmies of a slender and superficial generation.

Ver. 6-8. 'Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.' Whether ours be the gifts of Providence, or of what is properly termed grace—that is, whether they have been conferred on us by nature, or more especially through the channel of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the very same lesson is applicable to both. It is alike our duty to consecrate them to the service of God and the good of mankind. They alike proceed from Him—for what hast thou, O

man, that thou didst not receive? And far better, both in the church and in society, that each should be provided with his own sphere of labour; and that it should be the kind of labour for which, by his specific endowments, be they of genius or habit or grace, he is best adapted. But let us look to the matter ecclesiastically, and with a strict reference to the promotion of Christianity in our respective neighbourhoods; and we shall come nearer to the main object of the apostle, who recognises the difference between the gifts of one man and another, as due to the grace that was respectively given to each of them. This does not necessarily limit our view to the varieties of official service—though these be included in it, and indeed form the cases of chief consideration. Still the lesson of these verses is a lesson for the members of a church as well as office-bearers—it being alike the duty of all to lay themselves out for the cause of religion, and that according either to the opportunities which are without, or to the talents and capacities which they feel to be within them. But let us attend to what these services particularly are, as specified and enumerated in the verses before us.

'Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.' In the following induction of the gifts 'differing according to the grace' given, we may remark, that there are none of those extraordinary powers which the apostle specifies in the wider enumeration of his Epistle to the Corinthians, where he tells of the "diversities of gifts" which are by the same Spirit.* There is not one of the functions spoken of here, which might not to a certain extent be discharged by Christians in an individual or private, as well as in an official capacity. So that while we have no doubt the apostle had chiefly in his eye the officials of the congregation, the lessons which he gives are of catholic application, and might be appropriated by all. To prophesy was without question the professional employment of a distinct class of office-bearers in those days—"And he gave some, prophets."† It is well known, however, that prophesying in Scripture is not restricted to the foretelling of what is future. In this passage there is no cognisance taken of any miraculous office. The prophesying here spoken of is tantamount to ordinary preaching. In the Scriptural sense of the term, any man of God is a prophet, whether he be endowed with the preternatural knowledge of coming events or not—simply if he

* 1 Corinthians, xii, 4.

† Ephesians, iv, 11.

be an instructor in the things of God; and that whether the instruction in which he deals be instruction in doctrine or instruction in righteousness, or is comprehensive of both. Here we think it used in its generic sense; and that these its two species are particularised afterwards under the heads of teaching and exhortation.

And these prophets are called on to exercise their vocation according to the proportion of faith. We cannot think that by this is meant what theologians term the analogy of faith. This clause we hold to be of the same force and import with the final clause of the third verse—‘according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith’—that measure, in fact, which regulates both the kind of gift and the degree of its exercise. The same qualifications then may be applied, not to the office of prophecy alone, but to each of the offices that are mentioned afterwards. And if instead of offices we regard them as duties, certain it is, as we said before, that they are competent to the members of a church as well as to its office-bearers. That private Christian acts as a prophet in whom the word of Christ dwells richly in all wisdom*—when out of the abundance of a heart thus charged, his mouth speaketh.† He believes, therefore he speaks;‡ or, agreeably to the expression before us, his utterance is in proportion to his faith. It is not for clergy alone sure to monopolise this branch of Christian usefulness—a usefulness not confined to the pulpit, but which might spread and be multiplied amongst the social parties of every neighbourhood, when they that fear the Lord speak often one to another.§ It is not for ministers alone, but the duty of every man so to season his speech, as that it should be always with grace.¶ It is surely not to ministers alone that the apostle says—“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.”‡ As little then does that which immediately follows apply exclusively to ministers, but is intended for all—Let what proceedeth out of your mouth be good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

‘Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering.’ ‘Ministry’** we hold also to be a generic term, like prophecy in the verse which goes before; and comprehensive of the two things which come afterwards under the heads of giving and showing mercy. The great lesson, however, Let each mind his own business, is still kept up and carried out to all the departments

of official, and in all the instances, we might add, of general service. The lesson primarily and specially directed to the church officers is applicable to every man. “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”* Looking again ecclesiastically and not generally to the matter, the ministry in this verse may be distinguished from prophecy in the one before—as that which properly appertaineth to “the outward business of the house of God.”†

‘Or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation.’ The apostle now returns on the prophetic office, and specifies two distinct branches of it. The faculties of teaching and exhorting may be combined in the same individual; and indeed in these days, they are best laid upon one person, the ordinary minister of a congregation. Yet the two faculties are so far separate, as in other times to have given rise to separate functions; and accordingly, in the machinery of more churches than one, have we read both of the doctor and the pastor as distinct office-bearers. The one expounds truth. The other applies it, and presses it home on the case and conscience of every individual. The didactic and the hortatory are two distinct things, and imply distinct powers—inso-much, that, on the one hand, a luminous, logical, and masterly didactic, may be a feeble and unimpressive hortatory preacher; and, on the other, the most effective of our hortatory men, may, when they attempt the didactic, prove very obscure and infelicitous expounders of the truth. Both are best; and we should conform more to the way of that Spirit who divideth His gifts severally as He will, did we multiply and divide our offices so as to meet this variety. It were more consonant both to philosophy and Scripture, did we proceed more on the subdivision of employment in things ecclesiastical.

‘He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity.’ If the duty here specified be regarded as a function in the hand of a functionary, it is that of a deacon or distributor of the church’s arms. The word in the original for simplicity has been variously interpreted, and made to stand for a great many different virtues. Its proper signification is singleness; and wherever its place or connection determines its meaning to some one of these virtues, it will mean that virtue in a state of purity; and as free from the alloy of any corruption, or the influence of any principle adverse to, or different from itself. Thus in

* Col. iii, 16. † Matt. xii, 34. ‡ Psalm cxvi, 10.
§ Mal. iii, 16. ¶ Col. iv, 6. †† Eph. iv, 29.

** *Διακονία*.

* 1 Peter iv, 10.

† Nehemiah, xi, 15.

2 Cor. viii, 2, there can be no doubt of its meaning a strong and single-hearted liberality; in 2 Cor. i, 12, a single-hearted conscientiousness—and that too in the midst of distracting forces; in Eph. vi, 5, a simple devotedness to the will of Christ; the same in Col. iii, 23; in 2 Cor. xi, 3, an entire and undivided credence in the doctrine of Christ; and the passage before us, a singleness of aim on the part of our deacon to do aright the duty of his calling—a oneness of purpose to fulfil the end of his appointment, which was not the satisfaction of the poor for the sake of his own popularity, but so to deal with them in the office of a distributor, as might best subserve the good of the poor, or be most conducive to their real and substantial well-being. Such simplicity as this might lead him to a large distribution of money or not, according to circumstances. Its aim is not the greatest possible amount of liberality, but the greatest possible benefit of those who are the objects of its care. That Christians in general have a part in this rule is quite obvious. They are called to be willing to distribute, and ready to communicate, and to consider the poor, and to open the bowels of their compassion towards them. What the office-bearers are required to do for the paupers of the church, all are required to do as they have the opportunity and the call for the poor of society at large.

‘He that ruleth, with diligence.’ There seems to be interposed here a function not exclusively confined to the business either of prophecy or deaconship, but which may extend to all other ecclesiastical business, and has been specially applied to the discipline of the church. It is true that of the ruling elders some there were who laboured in word and doctrine; but in modern practice they who owned this title have had chiefly to do with matters of discipline. And were but the territory of a parish, with its population, rightly parcelled out amongst them—did they but take cognisance of the moral and religious habits of their respective families—would they but prosecute their weekly or periodic rounds of visitation, and do their uttermost in stimulating the education and the economy and the temperance and the church-going and the family worship of all the households within their charge—In this high walk of philanthropy, there is ample scope for as much diligence as they can afford to expend upon it: But along with this, by the Divine blessing on their la-

hours, the amplest encouragement, in that most delightful of all employments, the prosperous management of human nature—to be followed up in God’s good time by that most delightful of all rewards, the elevated morals and piety of those neighbourhoods over which they expatiate. Here too, it is evident, that the Christian usefulness which might be achieved by the elder of a church, lies within the reach of all in a greater or less degree; and that it is the duty of all, thus to lay themselves out for the furtherance of religion in the world.

‘He that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.’ There was an official channel provided for this species or modification of benevolence too in the ancient Christian churches. It formed a distinct office from that of deacon or almoner, whose business it was to act as a dispenser among the poor of the charities of the faithful. Besides these, there were those whose part it was to officiate among the distrest from other causes than that of mere poverty, as the afflicted in any other way, and especially the diseased. They were distinct too from those “elders of the church,” of whom we read in James, and who were sent for by the sick to pray over them, or in the discharge of a spiritual duty. The visitors of whom we now treat had the charge rather of a temporal ministration—attending the sick at their own houses, to whom they gave the comfort of their presence, and the help of their personal services. For the better execution of this trust, there was appointed an order of deaconesses, who officiated then very much as do the sisters of charity in later times. It was quite an appropriate lesson for them that what they did they should do with ‘cheerfulness’—or with perfect good will and a congenial liking for the task, that, from their very smiles and looks of kindness, the objects of their care might derive a happiness in sympathy with their own. This too is obviously a lesson for all; and is as applicable on the walk of general philanthropy as within the economy of a church. Whoever has leisure for such services of humanity, would do well to study this advice of the apostle—though primarily designed by him for the office-bearers of an ecclesiastical community. The goodly equipment of offices in the ancient church for all sorts and varieties of well-doing, carries with it a severe reproach on the meagre, stunted, and parsimonious apparatus of modern times

LECTURE XC.

ROMANS xi, 9—13, 15, 16.

"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. . . . Rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."

THOUGH the apostle may be regarded in the few last verses as addressing himself in a more especial manner to the few office-holders of a select society—yet certain it is, that the instructions which he gives them are based on the soundest principles of a general ethics, that had a permanent and universal application; and wherewith he now breaks forth on a field as general, as are the principles themselves which he had just been urging and enforcing on the occupiers of a narrower sphere. No one can question that in what follows, they are not rules limited to but a few cases or situations, but the wide and catholic moralities of the species in which he deals, of the same extent and compass with humanity itself, or in every way as general as Christianity herself is general. We may therefore omit henceforth the consideration of the church's office-bearers, and feel that they are now those duties of unexcepted obligation which men owe to their God and to each other wherewith from this time we have properly to do.

Ver. 9. 'Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.' 'Let love be without dissimulation.' Or, as we have it in other Scriptures—let ours be "love unfeigned."* The spirit of this direction is the same with that which the apostle, a few verses before, had laid upon the deacons—"Let him who giveth do it with simplicity." There is the frequent semblance both of faith and love without the reality of either; and so he speaks too of unfeigned faith.† He elsewhere speaks of the sincerity of our love.‡ The charge here given is tantamount to that of the apostle John—"Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."§

'Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.' I think with Calvin, that it is not moral good in the general, or moral evil in the general, which is here intended; but that good which springs immediately from love to one's neighbour,

and that evil which springs as immediately from the opposite affections of hatred, malice, or revenge. It is the same good and evil as that spoken of in the last verse of this chapter—where the apostle tells his disciples to overcome evil with good—that is, to meet the persecution and the injustice of enemies, not with the maledictions of anger or returns of vengeance, but with blessing and kindness and peace. The good which he bids them cleave to in the one verse, is that which he also tells them not to quit their hold of in another, but to keep by and wield as the instrument of a great moral victory. And the evil which in the first of these two places he bids them abhor having any part or performance in themselves, is the very evil which he tells them not to retaliate, should it ever be inflicted on them by others.

Ver. 10. 'Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.' The words in the original convey more strongly and specifically the affection of our text, than has been adequately rendered in our translation. The being kindly affectioned is expressed by a term which means the love of kindred, or by some called instinctive; and which at all events is far more intense than the general good liking that obtains without the pale of relationship between man and man in society. It is an affection distinct from, and in general greatly more tenacious and tender, than that of ordinary friendship. And, to stamp upon it a still greater peculiarity and force, it is added that Christians should be kindly affectioned one to another with *brotherly love*—an affection, the distinctness of which from that of charity, is clearly brought out in the enumeration of virtues or graces made by the apostle Peter.* And to brotherly kindness add charity—the same with brotherly love in the original; and as distinct from general love or charity in the moral, as the magnetic attraction is from the general attraction of gravity in the material world. This more special affinity which

* 2 Cor. vi, 6; 1 Pet. i, 22. † 1 Tim. i, 5; 2 Tim. i, 5.
‡ 2 Corinthians, viii, 8. § 1 John, iii, 18.

* 2 Peter, i, 7.

binds together the members of the same family; and even of wider communities, as when it establishes a sort of felt brotherhood, an *esprit de corps*, between citizens of the same town, or inhabitants of the same country, or members of the same profession, and so originates the several ties of consanguinity or neighbourhood or patriotism—is nowhere exemplified in greater force than among the disciples of a common Christianity, if theirs be indeed the genuine faith of the gospel. It is in fact one of the tests or badges of a real discipleship. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."* It gives rise to that more special benevolence which we owe to the "household of faith,"† as distinguished from the common beneficence which we owe "unto all men"—and which stood so visibly forth in the first ages among the fellow-worshippers of Jesus, as to have made it common with observers to say—Behold how these Christians love each other.

'In honour preferring one another'—each leading the way in acts of respect and courtesy—the contest being which shall render the other the greatest deference and honour. "Let each esteem other better than themselves."‡ This would remove one of the greatest obstacles in the way of mutual affection—the great lesson of our passage, as it is the great lesson of the evangelic morality throughout the New Testament. Self-preference and jealousy of each other's reputation, have in all ages of the Christian church been the greatest provocatives to that envying and strife which are opposed to the meekness of the wisdom that is from above. Hence in a very great degree the unseemly contentions of ecclesiastical men, which have ever proved the worst hindrances to the adoption of measures for the good of Christianity. This love of power and of pre-eminence has in all ages been adverse to the objects of a sound and disinterested ecclesiastical patriotism. It might be traced even to apostolical times. Paul seems to have been sensible of its presence among the chief men of the council at Jerusalem, and to have felt the necessity of protecting himself against it. And so before he would submit his question to a public assembly, he took care by a round of previous attentions to propitiate those of them who were of reputation, by communicating with them privately, lest by any means he should run or had run in vain. He with a most justifiable wisdom went first to those "who seemed to be somewhat"—it might have been perhaps for the purpose of obtain-

ing counsel and information; but the further purpose seems to be insinuated of gaining them over by the homage beforehand of his recognition and respect. And even should we discern in this policy of our great apostle, the offering of a little incense to the personal vanity of those on whom he waited—we see nothing in this but the marvellous identity of human nature at all times and in all places of the world; or that the leaders and men of consequence then should be of the same affections with the men of consequence now—the ecclesiastical somewhats of the present day.*

Ver. 11. 'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.' The word here translated 'business,' is the same with that in which in the 8th verse is translated "diligence." Its proper and primitive signification is 'speed,' and hence the affection which prompts to speed—or earnestness, intenseness, the desirousness of a heart set on some particular object, and therefore setting one busily to work for its accomplishment; and thus the fervency of spirit in the next clause may be looked to as the animating principle of that diligence in business which is here inculcated—even as in the case of Apollos,† who "being fervent in the Spirit," did in consequence speak and teach diligently the things of the Lord. But whether we retain the word business, or render it into any other of the relative terms, there is no mistaking the sense of this first clause, which is not to be slothful but diligent; and that whatever the business may be, if an expedient and a lawful one. The question whether it be a sacred or secular employment which is here referred to, will not embarrass him whose honest aim is to leaven with the spirit of the gospel every hour of his life, and every work which he puts his hand to. The man who studies to observe "all things whatsoever" Christ hath commanded him,‡ will still feel himself religiously employed when following the precept—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."§ He will see no difficulty in making the advice here given to be of universal application, who aspires to a conformity with the sayings—"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"—"Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Neither in the absence of any express utterance from Scripture itself, will he be careful to determine, whether it be the Spirit of God or the spirit of man that is spoken of in the next clause—if suffi-

* 1 John, iii, 14. † Gal. vi, 10. ‡ Phil. ii, 3.

* Galatians, ii, 6.
† Matt. xxviii, 20.

† Acts, xviii, 25.
§ Eccl. ix, 10.

ciently indoctrinated by Scripture at large in the truth, that all right fervency in the spirit of man is from the Spirit of God alone—is the product of fire from the sanctuary, and not of his own kindling.* It is thus that in practical Christianity there is a conjunction of prayer with performance; and the disciple striveth mightily according to the grace that worketh in him mightily.

‘Serving the Lord.’ There is a different reading adopted now by the most learned of our Bibles; and that because of the number and authority of those manuscripts which present the Greek word for “time.” We should then understand the direction to be—‘Do diligently each work in its own season’—or, ‘Let each hour be busily filled up with its own proper employment.’ We should have given our assent to this emendation, but for the word ‘serve,’ which in the Greek implies subjection, and in the most entire and submissive form; and in which sense it stands in far more suitable relation to a living superior, and most of all to Him who liveth and is Supreme. It were apposite enough to speak of suiting the time, but not of submitting to the time—whereas nothing can be more appropriate than that in all things we should submit ourselves unto the Lord.

Ver. 12. ‘Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.’ There are some commentators who endeavour to run a thread of continuity throughout the various precepts of this chapter; and so to force a dependence of one upon another contiguous to it, as would perhaps somewhat pervert the obvious meaning of certain of these rules. Instead of supposing that each rule suggested its fellow, and that they all follow each other, like the terms of a series on the principle of the association of ideas—it seems to us the better theory, that they are also in part suggested to the mind of the apostle by his direct view of the exigencies of that society which he was addressing; and that therefore we behold in these precepts as much and as little of the miscellaneous, as there was of the miscellaneous at the time in the chief temptations and circumstances of the Romish Christians. Now in the first instance, they were exposed to jealousies and contentions from within, to meet which we have one class of charges—mutual respect, and mutual cordiality; and more especially the duties of office-bearers, whose part it was to refrain from all lordly contempt or usurpation of the work of other functionaries, and each to keep rightly and assiduously at the appropriate business of his own calling.—

* Isaiah, i, 11.

And then in the second instance, they were exposed to persecution from without; and hence another and a distinct set of charges—hope, and patience, and prayer, and sympathy for the afflicted among their brethren, and succour to those of them who were spoiled of their goods; and, most of all, meekness and forbearance and unquelled charity under all the provocation and injustice that were heaped upon them.

‘Rejoicing in hope’—and that even in the midst of tribulations.* This must have been the hope of glory in another life—the only hope which could rejoice the hearts of those, of whom Paul says, that if in this life only they had hope, they were of all men the most miserable.† Theirs was a hope which reached beyond the grave—the hope of those who walked by faith and not by sight, or who looked beyond the things which are seen and temporal to those which are unseen and eternal. It was this which made all their afflictions light unto them—the contemplation of that exceeding great and eternal weight of glory, which was to follow their present trials, and for the full enjoyment of which these trials were fitted to prepare them.‡

‘Patient in tribulation.’ The very same hope which ministers joy in the bright prospects of the future, ministers patience under the sufferings of the present. Even Jesus Christ, “for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross.”§

‘Continuing instant in prayer.’ For though hope will elevate and sustain in the midst of adversities; yet the hope of unseen realities on the other side of death requires to be itself sustained by a power that is above nature—else nature gives way. We are made to “abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.”|| It is thus that the faith and fortitude of the Christian are alimented by constant supplies of light and grace from above, and which supplies are kept up by instant prayer.¶ For this purpose we must pray and watch for the Spirit with all perseverance.Ⓜ Prayer is not confined to the occasions of its set and formal utterance. It might alternate in brief and frequent aspirations with the familiar business of life. Nay it may exist as a prayerful disposition in the heart, or in the form of a perennial tendency upward and heavenward; and he who owns such a disposition, whether he have the power and opportunity of sending forth articulate supplications or not, may be said to pray without ceasing.

* Rom. v, 2, 3; James, i, 2.

† 2 Corinthians, iv, 18; v, 7.

‡ Romans, xv, 13.

§ 1 Cor. xv, 19.

|| Hebrews, xii, 2.

Ⓜ Ephes. vi, 18.

Ver. 13. 'Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.' The view of the church of Rome as a suffering and persecuted church might well have suggested these rules also—not but that they are of permanent and universal obligation, but that there was a more pressing and peculiar call for them in these days of violence—when the very profession of Christianity exposed them who held it to the loss of their substance, or to be dismissed from the service of their employers. And the word is expressive of something more than a simple giving. It means to give with a fellow-feeling, and as if the case of the sufferer was one's own. It is our duty to give unto all, if it be for their good, as we have opportunity. But here the apostle speaks of giving for the necessities of the saints—of giving therefore with that special sympathy which he enjoins in another form, when he bids his disciples rejoice with them who rejoice, and weep with them who weep. The common danger of these times disposed men all the more readily so to give, as if they had all things common.

'Given to hospitality.' And this too is far from being a local or merely occasional virtue—though doubtless there was a more urgent occasion for its exercise in these days. The proper sense of hospitality is kindness to strangers, or to those who were at a distance from their own home—a wholly different thing from the conviviality which opens one's house to festive parties made up of acquaintances from the immediate neighbourhood. This was the common lot of Christians in those days—often scattered abroad by persecution,* and dependent both for food and shelter on the compassion of their brethren in the faith. Let it not be imagined, however, that this is a duty confined to any one period, or called forth by the extraordinary circumstances of the church during the first ages—a common expedient this for diluting the peculiar morality of the gospel, or blunting the force and application of its most authoritative precepts. There is here an obligation laid on Christians of all times as indelible as the record which contains it—distinct, however, from that expenditure on the enjoyments of the social board, which now forms almost all that is known under the name of hospitable—as distinct as the feasts enjoined by our Saviour to the poor and the helpless are from the merry companionships, that alternate or pass in rounds from house to house, among the children of fashion and luxury. Not that we would utterly pro-

scribe these reciprocal convivialities of the middle or higher classes—burdensome though they often are, and wearisome to an extreme from the entire destitution, whether of the intellectual or the spiritual, in the conversation of our every day parties. Our religionists might in a great degree be protected from this latter annoyance, were they but consistent with themselves; and did they aim at an entire, instead of a partial Christianity. Had they more of openness and intrepidity in their talk—when they sit at the same table, did they meet together on the footing of a society of immortals—would they speak of the country whither they were going, and of the character which prepared for it—A goodly number even of their present society might be amalgamated into a conformity with their own spirit, while the rest might be scared away from those resorts, in the atmosphere of which they could not breathe with congeniality or comfort. There would thus be brought about a thing mainly wanted in our day—a broader line of demarcation between the church and the world. It might seem a paradox, but is not the less true, that it is easier to be an altogether than an almost Christian.

Ver. 15, 16. 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.' Passing over at present a verse which regards the deportment of the persecuted Christians to their enemies, we, in the next two verses, still find the apostle occupied with the matters of that internal morality which should subsist among themselves, or with the directory of their conduct to each other.

'Rejoice with them that do rejoice.' He, a few verses before, had bidden them rejoice in hope; and certainly it is well that Christians, for their mutual encouragement, and to uphold the steadfastness of their faith, should speak often together of that heaven which is the home of their common expectations. But beside this, the sympathy of congratulation seems to be recommended in this clause, even as the sympathy of pity forms the subject of the next. A sincere happiness in the happiness of others, argues not merely the strength of our affections, but our freedom from envy towards them.

'And weep with them that weep.' There is a charm in the fellow-feeling of others, distinct altogether from the pleasure we have in any material benefit that we might receive from them. This last is provided for in a foregoing verse, under the heads of 'distributing to the necessity

* Acts, viii, 1, 4; xi, 19; James, i. 1.

of saints,' and being 'given to hospital-ity.' But to complete either the code of charity, or the happiness of that society over which it reigns, it is indispensable that the moral should be superadded to the substantial or physical; for certainly apart either from gifts or services, there is enjoyment, and that of the highest order, both in the mere exercise of kind and brotherly affection on the one hand, and in being merely the object of such affection on the other—whether it be that of sympathy with the prosperous, which heightens the felicities; or of sympathy with the afflicted, the ills of humanity. It is thus that independently of all aid from the hands, there comes a direct and most precious contribution to the happiness of the species from the hearts of men—and that by instant transition, in the play of their reciprocal emotions from one spirit to another. The apostle was no stranger to the balsamic virtue, as of some hidden essence or elixir, which lay in this more ethereal part of well-doing. In these days it operated with all the speed and force of a pulsation, throughout the widely extended community of the faithful. "Whether one member suffered, all the members suffered with it; or one member was honoured, all the members rejoiced with it."*

The three clauses of the 16th verse serve, we think, to qualify and determine the meaning of each. The general lesson of the 15th is, that all, and more especially if saints or members of the same Christian society, should, if in like circumstances, be alike sharers of our sympathy. And we are inclined to view the general lesson of the 16th, as being, that these same parties, as all members of the Christian church, should at least in far the highest and noblest distinction of which humanity is capable, have the like place, or be alike sharers in our estimation. We do not regard them as meaning that we should all think the same things,—that we should be of one ortho-

* 1 Corinthians, xii, 26.

doxy, or of one opinion in matters of doctrine or theology; but that whatever the diversities of our rank or station might be, we should, on the ground of our common Christianity, hold each other in equal or like estimation. The original presents a counterpart between the 'each other' of the first clause, and the 'yourselves' of the third, which coupled in each with the same radical word, impresses the idea that when taken together, they signify that we should mutually hold each other in the same estimation, and not confine our estimation to ourselves.* If in Phil. ii, 3, we are told that in lowliness of mind each should esteem other better than themselves—in this place, and to our minds it gives the precise sense of the passage, we are told that each should esteem other at least as good as themselves. And in keeping with this view, we are disposed to think that in the middle clause they are not men of low estate to whom we are bidden condescend, but low or humble things that we are bidden be content with. Do not aspire after high things, but consent to be evened with low things. Honour all your fellow-Christians, and that alike on the ground of their common and exalted prospects. When on this high level, do not plume yourselves on the insignificant distinctions of your superior wealth or superior earthly consideration of whatever sort. Rather let the rich rejoice in that he is made low; and thus let the monopoly of honour, or self-respect, give way to the respect of each other. We do not lose the benefit of the precept in our version—"conscend to men of low estate"—by our substitution of things for men. He who for the sake of the gospel can put up with low things, with poverty and all its humble accommodations, will not refuse to associate with Christian men, who are lovers and followers of the gospel, because of their poverty.

* Το αυτο εις αλληλους φρονουντες, and Μη γινεσθε φρονιμοι παρ εαυτοις.

LECTURE XCI.

ROMANS xii, 14, 17—21.

"Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not. . . . Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 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. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

THE apostle does not satisfy himself with pressing home upon his converts the duties which they owe to each other; but in the verses now read, teaches them

further how they should walk towards them who are without—and this, as Christians at that time formed a suffering and outcast society in the world, was tantamount to telling them, how they should conduct themselves to enemies who heaped upon them all sorts of injury, even to the length, if they could have achieved it, of their extermination. The subject therefore of the passage before us, is the right treatment, not of friends, but of adversaries—that great peculiarity in the ethics of the gospel, which conflicts most perhaps with the natural tendencies of the human heart; and by which it is most distinguished from all those moral systems which are of merely human origin.

This brings us to the consideration of what has often been advanced in argument, though not so much by speculative infidels as by worldly men, against what they deem to be the utterly romantic and impracticable morality of the New Testament—as if it were so transcendently above the powers of our nature, that it were altogether hopeless to think of realising it in practice. It is not so much for a controversial object that we propose to meet this alleged difficulty, as for the purpose of doing away a certain mistaken sense of it in the minds even of honest and aspiring disciples, who are bent on the perfection of gospel obedience, but yet are paralysed in their efforts to attain it, by the felt impossibility of such precepts, or of such performances rather, as are here enjoined by the apostle; and had indeed been prescribed, and in still higher terms, by the Saviour before him, who bids us not only do good to our enemies, but even love our enemies—not only to render them acts of beneficence with the hand, but far more arduous achievement, to mould our hearts into such a union with foes and persecutors, as to bear a positive regard or affection towards them—Thereby aggravating ten-fold the hardships of the Christian obedience, just as it is all the more difficult to command the sensibilities or emotions of the inner, than it is to command the movements of the outer man. It is obvious that we shall not succeed in disposing of this objection to the morality of the gospel, but on the strength of such considerations as might serve not only for the adjustment or satisfaction of a speculative difficulty, but for the practical guidance of those who are pressing onward to the things which are before, through every obstacle in the work and walk of their sanctification.

For this purpose it is not enough to tell us in the general, that what is impossible with man is possible with God—for that

with Him all things are possible. Neither is it enough to tell us of the Spirit given to our prayers, that He might help our infirmities and enable us to do all things. Nothing can be more true and nothing more important than these announcements; and indeed they may be said to form the reasons of the apostle John for his assertion, that the commandments are not grievous—even that whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; or, as he expresses it elsewhere, Greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world—greater is the Spirit of God than the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience. All this is most true; but then we are not to imagine of the Spirit, that in making man the subject of His operations, He thwarts or overbears the laws of man's moral machinery. He does not make inroad and innovation on the order and working of the human faculties. In particular, He does not repeal the affinity which obtains in the way of cause and effect between the view of a certain object in the mind, and the counterpart feeling or emotion awakened thereby in the heart. He does not thus traverse the fitnesses of things. For example, did He wish to fill the soul with a sense of beauty, it would be by sights or images of beauty, and not by sights or images of deformity. Did He wish to excite our compassion, it would not be by turning our thoughts on a scene of enjoyment, but on a scene of distress. Did He wish to disarm us of our anger, it would not be by causing us to dwell in memory on the injustice that we had suffered, but by the power of other considerations—fitted, and let me add, naturally fitted, to call forth other and better sensibilities. And so if He wanted us to love, even to love an enemy, it would be by the presentation to our notice of an object proper to be loved; and most certainly that object never can be moral turpitude—so as that we should look on the enemy who has evinced fraud or falsehood in the dealings that we have held with him, with aught like the love of moral complacency. These are still very general explanations; but general as they are, we hope it may appear already, that it is not a mere theoretical explanation on which we are now to enter—but such as might help to set you on the right way for carrying the precepts of our text into accomplishment, and direct you aright for this purpose what you are to do and how you are to turn yourselves.

Our first remark then is, that the apostle in these verses, does not, immediately or expressly at least, enjoin how we are to feel towards enemies and persecutors, but what we are to do for them. It is action, not affection that he here speaks of—

not the dispositions of the heart, but the deeds of the hand; and if it be a more practicable thing that we should compel ourselves to right bodily performances—than call up right mental propensities—this might alleviate somewhat our dread of these precepts, as if they were wholly unmanageable or incompetent to humanity. Before then taking cognizance of what should be the inward temper of Christians to those who maltreat or oppress them, we would bid you remark that the outward conduct to them is that which forms the literal subject-matter of the commandments here given. The disciples are in this place told, that, whatever the inward risings of nature might be against those who injure and oppress, they are to utter no imprecations, but blessings upon their head—praying for those who spitefully use them: And that however nature might incline them to resent, they are at least not to retaliate—recompensing to no man evil for evil: And that, hard as it may be under their cruel provocations, to keep unruffled minds and feel peaceably, they, as much as in them lies, are to live peaceably: And that, however nature might prompt the desires of vengeance, they must wholly abstain from the deeds of vengeance—leaving these to Him whose rightful province it is, and who hath said that He will repay. Nay they are wholly opposite deeds which we are called on to perform—to feed our enemy if he hunger, and give him drink if he thirst—So that while it may not be the tendency of nature so to desire, our bidden obligation is so to do—for in so *doing* thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Finally, we are not to be overcome of evil; but if his treatment of us have been evil, our treatment of him must be good. In short, these various duties are set before us, more as virtues of forbearance, than as so many virtues of forgiveness; and to understand the distinction between these, the one should be looked to as bearing more of reference to the heart, and the other to the conduct. Forgiveness to be complete must be cordial, or rather if not cordial, it is not forgiveness at all. One can imagine forbearance from all retaliation by the hand, even while the heart tumultuates and suffers all the agitations of a fierce internal war under the brooding sense of wrong. This distinction perhaps might serve to allay in some degree our fear of being laid in this passage under a wholly impracticable requirement—seeing that in its first and most obvious aspect, it speaks not so much of the inward will that we should cherish towards enemies, as of something more

under control, our outward walk and conversation towards them.

But we must not disguise that acts, when but looked to in themselves, and apart from the affections which may have prompted them, like mere bodily exercise, profit but little. Grant that the duties here set before us, when viewed literally, are nothing more than deeds of forbearance. Yet we must not forget, that in every Christian virtue there is a spirit as well as a letter, and that according to the moral estimate of the gospel, the letter without the spirit is dead. And indeed on this very lesson of forbearance, it is well that we can refer to the express quotation of “forbearing one another in love,”* There is something more then enjoined on the followers of Jesus, than a resolute abstinence from those deeds of hostility by which an injured man seeks to retaliate upon his adversary. He must not have the feeling of hostility against him. It is not enough that he worketh no ill. He must have the charity of love that worketh no ill; and not only that worketh no ill to his neighbour, but it must be in the spirit of love that he worketh no ill to his enemy. But to come at once to the duty in all its extent and all its arduousness, the distinct requirement laid on us by the Saviour is, that we should love our enemies. If ere we can make this out, we must make war with the most urgent propensities of nature—it is a warfare from which there is no discharge; and the question still remains, not only by what power (for this can be answered generally, and with the most perfect doctrinal or theological soundness, by replying, the power of the Spirit) but, more than this, by what process, by what series of mental exercises on the part of the disciple, is the high spiritual achievement carried, of love, real inward cordial love, even to our deadliest enemies, to those who hate and calumniate and oppress and betray us.

To allege the doctrine of the Spirit in a merely general and unintelligent way, will not suffice for this explanation. It is no function of His to obliterate or confound the distinction between one virtue and another; and should we confound them in our thoughts, this might land us in a difficulty from which even He, so long as the misunderstanding continues, may not extricate us. That He can extricate us is a thing most certain—that He will extricate us is a thing to be hoped and prayed for. But then His very first step will be so to enlighten us in the knowledge of God’s will, as to remove this misunderstanding—so as that we shall

* Ephesians, iv, 2.

not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. To be fully equipped for the work of obedience, it seems indispensable that, in the language of the apostle, we should be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding—for then only shall we walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Even to begin aright the work of obedience, we must begin with knowledge—for ere we can do our duty, we must surely be first made to know what it really is; or ere we can rightly address ourselves to the work of practical Christianity, we must know what the things are which God actually requires of us. To make this plain by an example, let us recur to the two virtues already spoken of—those of forgiveness and forbearance. By forbearance I understand that we abstain from all retaliation on an enemy, whether he repents or not—whereas forgiveness, as I understand it, presupposes repentance. It is true that in many places of Scripture, forgiveness is enjoined briefly and absolutely, without any express notice of repentance as the condition or necessary accompaniment thereof. But then one part of Scripture qualifies another; and as to be spiritually wise we must compare spiritual things with spiritual—so to be scripturally wise, we must compare scriptural things with scriptural. If thy brother trespass against thee rebuke him, and if he repent forgive him. This establishes the need of repentance in him whom we are required to forgive; and in so doing it alleviates our sense of difficulty—just as in another case, when we are told by one evangelist that they who *have* riches shall hardly enter the kingdom of God, there is a certain sense of relief from a feeling of the unattainable and the hopeless, when told by another evangelist, that they who *trust* in riches shall hardly enter that kingdom—a distinct and additional relief from that which we experience in the general announcement of both evangelists, even that though impossible with men, it is possible with God. It is a great matter to be precisely informed both of the actual thing to be done, and of the circumstances in which, as a duty, it is required of us. Now in the grace of forgiveness there is something more than an abstinence from revengeful deeds, or even from revengeful inclinations. Forgiveness from the heart implies more than this—not only that we should forget the injury, but that we should have the same feeling towards its author, be restored to the same state of mind in regard to him, as if the injury had never been committed. That the forgiveness be complete, that it be perfect and entire wanting nothing, we should look on him,

not merely with the same sense of security, but even with the same moral complacency as if he were a faultless man—viewing him just as we should have done, that is, with the same confidence and esteem, as if the offence had been blotted altogether out of our recollection, or as if he himself had never been an offender. Now to feel thus on our part, we should hold repentance upon his part to be wholly indispensable—or that repentance is as indispensable to forgiveness, as the element of light is to vision. The Spirit, in the working of miracles, might cure a man of his blindness, but we never expect that He will enable him to see in the dark; and no more should we expect that He will enable us to rejoice over the resolutely and contemptuously impenitent—just as we might rejoice, after we had fully readmitted him to friendship and respect, over the sinner who hath repented. We might abstain from the acts of retaliation, even under all the provocations which in the state of his hardihood and defiance, we suffer at his hands. But this is forbearance only—not forgiveness. To have the full affection of forgiveness, such a forgiveness as the father of the returning prodigal extended so promptly and freely to his son, the hardihood must be dissolved and done away, the defiance be no longer persisted in. There is a difference between forbearance and forgiveness; and in adaptation to this, there is a counterpart difference between the objects of these two virtues. And the whole difference seems to lie in this, that the one has not repented—the other has, or at least stands with the profession and the aspect of repentance before us. We do not think that even the Spirit, who is given to help our infirmities, ever helps or enables us to forgive in any other circumstances than these. His great office is that of restoring us to the likeness of God, or making us perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. Now though He be a God ready to forgive, His forgiveness is only to the penitent. Under the economy of grace, the forgiveness of the Sovereign and repentance of the sinner are never separated. And on this footing also are we required to forgive one another, to forgive as God does—so that repentance in every instance is presupposed, when called on, as we are by the apostle, to forgive our fellow men, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

Now the like explanation applies to the duty of forbearance, or to all the duties of the passage now before us, which too might be done, we apprehend—not with that violence to our moral nature which is figured by many, and which leads them

to view a performance as impracticable—but done sweetly and spontaneously and in the spirit of love. One can image a fixed, resolute, and dogged abstinence, if I may so call it, from all the deeds of retaliation—even under provocations and insults the most galling to nature which can be thought of; and this were forbearance in act, or literal forbearance. But in these circumstances to forbear in love, is that which looks so hard of execution, so incongruous with the very frame and constitution of the heart, as shall amount to a moral or mental impossibility. If the Spirit, in acting on the possessor of this heart, do not overbear its mechanism or the law of its workings—then to do away the sense of a difficulty insuperable, when called on to forbear one another, though even our deadliest enemies, in love, something more would require to be said, than merely that what we cannot do of ourselves the Spirit can do in us and for us—something more specific than the bare generality, that though with men it is impossible, with God all things are possible.

And so we have always deemed it a great alleviation of the felt and the feared difficulty, when, attending to the distinction between various kinds of love, we come to understand what the love of forbearance really is. There is no assurance, however strong, of aids and influences from on high, which would ever make us believe it possible, that we should love the man, who in hatred to ourselves does with all falsehood and cruelty inflict upon us every species of wrong, with the love of moral esteem or moral complacency. To suppose for a moment that the Spirit, in effecting the work of our renovation, would so change our nature as to make us love our enemy thus, were just as great an outrage on the possibility of things, as to suppose that He would change the nature of virtue, would turn evil into good and good into evil. That we should be required to take into our esteem the man who stands palpably before us in the character of a treacherous friend or a blood-thirsty persecutor, is just as conceivable as that we should be required to love the iniquity which God hateth—an achievement this no more to be attempted or thought of, than to hate the righteousness which God loveth. And likeness to Him is the great object of that regenerative process which, under the economy of the gospel, we are made to undergo—so as to make it very sure, that when we suffer from the hand of an enemy, whether he be the calumniator who falsely and ungratefully asperses our name; or the wily practitioner in business or in law, who has designs

upon our property; or finally, the blood-thirsty persecutor who lays violence upon our persons—Then we need not try, for really we are not bidden, to love that man with the love of moral complacency.

Still we are required to love even such a man, and if not the love of complacency, what love is it! There is a love distinct from this, even the love of kindness—which when felt towards one in distress, is modified into the love of compassion. Of its operation in the breast, apart from the love of moral esteem, we have a high example in the breast of the Godhead—when He so loved the world, as to send His only-begotten Son into it. What then precisely was that love of which the apostle speaks, when he says—“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins?” It could not be the love of moral complacency, for it was love to a world lying in wickedness. It was the love of compassion, and of compassion on creatures arrayed in enmity and lifting up the cry of rebellion against Him. Because of their wickedness it could not possibly be the love of complacency; but because of their wretchedness it was the love of pity: And the enquiry is—Whether, while there is a like impossibility in our regarding with aught of moral esteem a dishonest or a spiteful adversary—whether still there might not be a something about him fitted to engage our sympathies on his behalf, so as not only to restrain our hand from all mischief against him, but so as that we could not find it in our heart to do him harm—nay so as to make it abundantly possible that we should both pity and should pray for him.

And now that we have got clear of this impracticable element, for we really cannot love morally a wicked adversary—the thing with man is impossible, and though with God all things are possible, yet this most assuredly is an impossibility over which even His Spirit will not help us—but now that this difficulty has been set aside, and it is granted that in the case of a deceitful and malicious enemy, there is nothing in his character because of which we can love him morally—still might there not be something in his state because of which we can love him kindly, love him compassionately? It might be true that we cannot at present forgive—for as yet there might be no symptom of repentance on his part; but in the career of a resolved impenitence may he be fully set, either on the artifices of a hostile policy or on the cruelties of a hostile violence against us. And it

might also be true, that *in his present state* we can find nothing to compassionate—for he might be prospering in his way, and in the hey-day of success be rejoicing in his iniquitous triumph over us.

But though there be nothing palpable to the eye of sense which can move our pity, it is for the Christian to look onward and with an eye of anticipation to the things, which, if he be not preventively visited with the spirit of repentance, shall happen to him shortly—to the agonies of his coming death-bed, when, a helpless and a prostrate creature, all triumph shall be gone—Or to the still more awful day of his last reckoning, when he shall stand a naked and a trembling culprit before the dread judgment-seat—Or, looking on him in the light of eternity to the never-ending period of that vengeance, which it is for God alone to minister, and from which therefore He bids us refrain our own hand. Did we but realize all this, then should we find, that though we cannot yet forgive, yet even now might we forbear, and that in the midst of cruellest provocation—forbear in love too, for though to the tyrant or the tormentor the love of complacency might be impossible, yet is it possible to love even him with tenderest compassion, as we behold in perspective the sentence and with it the tremendous sufferings which await him.

Thus at all times, and even in the worst imaginable case, might the love of forbearance and pity be practicable; and there are even cases, though not of conscience or resolved iniquity, yet of blind infuriated violence, in which an outlet is given for the higher love of forgiveness. There are cases of ignorance. It was on this ground that Paul obtained mercy though a persecutor, because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief. This too was the palliation which Peter alleged for the murderers of our Saviour—"And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers"—"for had they known it," it is said elsewhere, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." It is in striking accordance with this—and it serves to establish on the highest authority the need of certain prerequisites in the objects of forgiveness—that our Saviour prays thus amid the agonies of His crucifixion—"Father, forgive them, for *they know not what they do.*"

But the duties of our present text are those of forbearance; and though it should be forbearance in love, yet is there no incompatibility between the object and its counterpart emotion. For we are expressly bidden look forward to the vengeance which awaits our persecutors, when we are bidden abstain from all ven-

geance ourselves; and there is no such incompatibility, we repeat, between the sight of a creature in torment and our love of pity, as there is between the sight of a creature doing palpable iniquity, and our feeling as complacently towards him as we should towards an innocent or deserving man. The requirement here laid upon us inflicts no jar, or felt infraction on any law of our nature. True, it calls for a strenuous effort; but this is mainly and properly an effort of consideration, which as being on things future and unseen, is an effort of faith. It is the effort of a mind looking forward to the day of retribution, to the dread realities of a coming judgment and coming eternity. That in the strength of this faith we can forbear and love and pity and pray for even our deadliest enemies, and are thus enabled to lay an arrest on the most urgent propensities of aggrieved and suffering nature—is a glorious verification of the power ascribed to faith in the New Testament. It is in truth our great instrument by which to achieve the sublimest moralities of the gospel. For not only doth it work by love, but overcometh the world. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is not overcome of evil, but gains the noblest of all victories over a world lying in wickedness, by overcoming its evil with good.

We must now quit the general argument; and finish our lecture by a very few explanatory remarks on the two or three verses of this passage which seem to call for them.

In the 17th verse it may appear somewhat out of place, as not altogether in keeping with the subject-matter of the other precepts, when the apostle tells his disciples to provide things honest in the sight of all men. But the truth is, that nothing is more graceful in the eyes of others than the grace of forbearance; and nothing more fitted to engage the sympathy of by-standers, than a mild and patient demeanour under injuries, more especially if it be the obvious effect of conscience and not of cowardice, not a pusillanimous surrender of oneself to the insolence of oppression, but an act of obedience to the high behests of principle. It is thus that in early times, the Christian religion was indebted for much of its progress to the gentleness of converts under persecution; and so among the other sustaining forces which upheld in the breasts of these devoted men, the charity that endureth all things, was there, the exalted motive of adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour, that it may find a growing esteem and readier acceptance in the world.

In the 18th verse it is evidently supposed that it might not be possible even

for the best of Christians, and that it might not lie within the capacities of his moral system, to live peaceably with all men. He must first be pure and then peaceable; and till the first object is secured, it is his part not to acquiesce but to contend earnestly. And then as to what lies in him, let me state, by way of one example, that it is not in him to look complacently on moral evil. He cannot though he would; and neither will the Spirit help him to this, or put this in him. And thus he might forbear, though he cannot justify—even though his enemy should seek for more than toleration, should seek an express approval or vindication at his hands. This he cannot do with truth or honour, and therefore will not do at all; and hence a contest which he cannot heal, or one case among others which could be named in which peace is impossible.

In the 19th verse we are told to give place unto wrath—not to our own wrath, for this we are forbidden, just as elsewhere we are forbidden to give place unto the devil. We must not give range or licence to any resentful feelings of our own: but the meaning is—either that we give place to the wrath of our enemy, not resisting but rather giving way before him: Or, that we leave the matter to God, and do not preoccupy by any vengeance of ours, that vengeance which it is for Him alone to inflict—and so commit ourselves to Him who judgeth righteously.

And lastly, by heaping coals of fire on the head of an enemy, we should understand, that in returning him good for evil, and persisting in this till we shall have heaped our kindnesses upon him—it will either melt his spirit into another and a gentler mood; or, failing this, it will aggravate his condemnation.

In conclusion let me observe, that persecution may again revisit these lands; or though not, that still in ordinary life, under the domestic roof, or amid the familiar dealings of human society, there is ample scope for the wrongs and the heart-burnings of most grievous injustice, and therefore full and constant opportunity for the exercise of those virtues which are here prescribed to us. By the sacrifice of our natural interests, or what is still more difficult, as being at times well nigh uncontrollable, by the sacrifice of our natural resentments, we prepare the way for those highest of all conquests in the world, the conquests of principle.—We set forth the graces of personal Christianity, and exhibit it to men both in the most sublime and the loveliest of its aspects. It is not when we are buffeted for our faults and take it patiently, but when we suffer for well-doing and take it patiently—it is then that the glory of religion is advanced upon the earth. Then it is that we are both acceptable to God and approved of men.

LECTURE XCII.

ROMANS xiii, 1—7.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 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: 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. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.”

THERE are certain speculatists in social and political philosophy, who would measure the duty of subjection by what they are pleased to imagine the right of sovereignty, and would make the one depend upon the other—so that there shall be no incumbent loyalty on the one side, unless there is a legally constituted government on the other. And thus to make out the obligation of subjects, they would go back on the theory of an original compact, and carry us upward to the first construction of society, and tell

us of rights elective and rights hereditary; and on the basis of certain juridical dogmata, would assign how much or how little it is that the individual members of a community owe in the way of allegiance to the actual rulers, who, whether rightfully or not, yet really and by actual possession and exercise bear authority over them. It has long appeared to us, that the Bible cuts short all this reasoning, in that while it defines the duty of the subject, it does not define the nature or composition of

the government to which that duty is owing. It does not say that we should be subject to the powers which were rightly originated or have been rightly constituted, but subject to the powers that be. It is not the kind of character of any government, but the existence of it which invests it with its claim on our obedience, or at least which determines for us the duty of yielding subjection thereunto. Its mandates should be submitted to, not because either law or justice or respect for the good of humanity presided over the formation of it, but simply because it exists. It is true that the apostle affirms of those powers to which he requires our subjection, that they are ordained of God; but this is merely because they are the powers that be, and in the sense that whatever is ordained of God. It is He who overrules all history; and to His sovereign will do we refer the rise and continuance of all the actual dynasties in our world—although in their establishment, fraud and force and barbaric cruelty, and that wrath of man which He so often makes to praise Him, may have been the instruments of His pleasure. It is thus that the duty of our text is of universal application, whatever be the country, and amid all the political diversities which obtain on the face of our globe—inso-much that the Christian who lives in Turkey or China or under any of the iron despotisms of the East, is as much bound to obedience by this unexcepted law of the New Testament, as if his lot were cast in those more favoured regions of civilisation and equitable rule, where all the caprices and the cruelties of arbitrary power are unknown.

And to this order of actual power in the world, there seems a perfect analogy in the order of this world's property. No one thinks of remounting to a distant antiquity—so as to take a view of its origination, or to ascertain in how far justice presided over the first distribution of it, and conducted it onward through its successive descents and exchanges to the hands of its actual occupiers. What is true of the powers that be, holds also true of the properties that be. The same defence is rendered to both of them—and that too in the utter ignorance of every other claim than actual existence or actual possession. Such is the strength indeed of this felt possessory right, that both law and nature do like obeisance to it; and many thousands are the estates seized upon in days of marauding violence, the boundaries of which are as sacred from encroachment, as if they had been fixed in an assembly of righteous sages, or by the awards of a judgment-seat. It is better

that the embers of long past injustice should be extinguished, or the wrongs of other centuries be forgotten—than that they should so fester and be kept alive, as to perpetuate and accumulate the heart-burnings of the world, or unsettle the present order of society. It is thus that both our subjection to the actual powers, and our acquiescence in the actual properties which are upon the earth, seem to rest on the same foundation of divine wisdom—whether as put forth in the lessons of revelation, or as manifested in that constitution of humanity which God hath given to us.

And let it not be said, that by this doctrine of an entire unconditional passiveness, oppression and injustice must at length have unlimited sway upon the earth. God hath provided a security against this in the reactions of outraged nature. But still it is nature which both prompts and executes the resistance; and not Christianity, the disciples of which in their simple, self-denying, and elevated walk of duty, but act in the spirit of their high calling, when they abandon this and many more such offices to others; or when, in the language of our Saviour's injunction, they leave the dead to bury their dead. And God will not leave them to suffer for their meekness and forbearance even in this world, but will gloriously accredit every promise and every declaration which He has made in their favour. It is a manifold experience, we believe, in private life, that the humble and the patient and the long-suffering, as if shielded by an invisible defence against all violence from without, do walk more safely and more prosperously than others through the world; and on a large scale too will the same experience be verified—inso-much as to be found both morally and historically impossible, that a tyrant shall long bear the rule over a Christianised nation.

It is hoped that by these preparatory remarks we have anticipated the necessity of entering much into detail upon the verses of this passage.

Ver. 1. 'The powers that be are ordained of God,' because not only with His permission, but by His providence in the sovereign disposal of all things, they have been established in the world.

Ver. 2. 'Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.' The lesson of our last lecture graduates into the lesson of our present one by a nearer and more natural transition than a cursory reader may apprehend. You were then told to resist not persons, you are now told to resist not powers. The one non-resistance

was a duty, even when assailed by unlawful violence; and how much more then is the other non-resistance a duty, when the mandates of a rightful authority are brought to bear upon us—for in every country, the authority in force at the time being, or the authority of its actual recognised government, is the ordinance of God. The existing property and the existing power are both of them the ordinances of God, who, in the progress of events under His own absolute direction and control, hath determined for every man the bounds of his habitation. It were by the violation of one commandment, if we encroached on the property; and it were the violation of another to resist the power. There is a certain metaphysical jurisprudence which hath mystified, and would attempt to subvert, both of these obligations. But Scripture is alike clear and alike imperative with each of them; and its dictates, we are persuaded, will be found best to accord with the real philosophy of human nature, as well as with the peace and good order of human society.

Ver. 3-5. '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: 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. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.' The apostle speaks not only of the proper design, but we are persuaded also of the general and actual effect of all government. We believe that in every land, the institution, even when administered by the most hateful of tyrants, is productive of good upon the whole. It is true; that in the career of savage and ambitious despots bent on personal aggrandisement; and in whose hands crime is the familiar instrument of conquest, whether over the thrones of other nations or the liberties of their own—it is most true, that in their career we read of little else than of those sufferings and sad disorders which history has so often recorded in characters of blood. Still in every such economy, we mean of laws with power for the enforcement of them, we hold that there is an immense preponderance of good to society—insomuch that the worst of governments will bear to be contrasted with a state of anarchy. Like every other property or power, whether of mental or material nature, it is in the hands of wicked men, occasionally, nay often perverted from its own proper and beneficent end—yet notwithstanding

this, and apart from this, it, in its own essential character is a pre-eminent blessing to the world. Amid all its conspicuous aberrations, we must not forget the many thousand benefits, which, beyond the reach of sight or of calculation, it works in each little vicinity and throughout the mass and interior of every nation, in the maintenance of peace and equity between man and man—a mighty interest this, which it is never the policy of any government to contravene; and seldom, if ever, the wish even of the most capricious and blood-thirsty tyrant, whose ambition would in no considerable way be subserved by the dissolution of all the social ties in that community over which the providence of God has placed him. Let but the controlling and regulating power wherewith he is invested cease from its operation; and the vast importance of such a power for the general well-being would soon be felt, after that society had fallen to pieces, and without a king or without a government, each man did that which was right in his own eyes. Verily law or government is the minister of God for good; and, in the great bulk and majority of their doings the administrators thereof are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. If then we have just been taught in the former passage to resist not evil, when assailed by the unbridled violence of evil men, how much more should we abstain from the resistance of that which is good, even of that government under which we live, and which is God's own ordinance—and whose function it is to protect us from evil. For, generally speaking, rulers are not as individuals often are—who, at the instigation of envy or avarice or hatred, may at times do grossest injury to the righteous. The loyal and peaceable have nothing to fear from laws which they do not offend; but if ever brought before the judgment-seat, to be taken cognisance of by these, will obtain sentence of acquittal or justification at their hands. They are the evil, the criminal, who need to be afraid—for the very design of a civil government in society, which is at once the effect and evidence of God's moral government in the world,* is to repress and punish all such. His institution will not be frustrated, or fail of that express purpose for which it has been set up among men, which is not only to protect the innocent, but to execute vengeance on the evil-doer—being armed with the power of the sword to fulfil the resentment which it feels against the disobedient. Did our attention stop short at the secondary ordinance, did we look no higher than to the

* See Butler's Analogy.

judge or the magistrate—even then, to shun their wrath, we should yield subjection to government and law; but when we rise upward from the earthly to the heavenly Sovereign, and with the apostle view the authority that is beneath as an emanation or deviation from the authority of Him who ruleth over all—then will our subjection be rendered, not alone from fear towards man, but also from conscience towards God.

Ver. 6, 7. 'For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.' The apostle now passes from the institution of law in the general, to the institution of tribute, and which he here singles out as part and parcel of the same, and as therefore too coming directly from God—the payment of which, therefore, we should not only render as a thing of force that we must do, but as a thing of conscience that we ought to do. It is a lesson greatly needed in this our day—that the payment of our taxes should be held as much a matter of principle and punctuality as the payment of our debts. Indeed it is regarded by the apostle as quite on the footing of a debt, being included by him in the general precept of Render unto all their dues. It is a lesson altogether worthy of strenuous and repeated enforcement from the pulpit—from which there ought to be exposed and denounced with all fidelity, the shameful laxity which obtains in this department of moral obligation. It is a most befitting topic for the ministrations of a clergyman; and it were well could he lay open with a vigorous and faithful hand, the frauds, the concealments, the dexterous and unprincipled evasions which are often practised to the injury of the public revenue—and by men too who acquit themselves honourably and with perfect fairness of all their private engagements. There is a hebetude of conscience on this subject which needs the quickening of an earnest and solemn and scriptural representation. This were not to secularise religion; but, what is mainly wanted, it were to sanctify the business of human life. Whatever can be fixed upon as a test of religious sincerity, must be deemed peculiarly valuable, both by the minister who feels it his business to hold up, and that in all its features and details, a true picture of Christianity to his hearers; and also by all honest disciples, who, intent on their own personal sanctification, press onward to the high object of standing perfect and complete in the whole will of God. That is a fatal

error which would dis sever the social from the sacred; or which looks in the great amount of them on the moralities of human conduct, though specified and prescribed in the Bible, merely in the light of so many week-day proprieties. It is now high time that Christianity should stand forth in another aspect, and that another exhibition of it should be given to the world—not as a system of cabalistic dogmata, but as a pervading and living principle, which takes ascendancy over the whole man, and graves upon the tablet of his character all that is lovely and honourable and virtuous and of good report. This is the way to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things—not to dissociate religion from morality, but to impregnate morality with religion, and make it out and out the guide and the sovereign of all our actions. We are aware that a certain feeling of the strange and even of the ludicrous is often awakened, when such topics are handled graphically and experimentally in the pulpit, as purloining, and eye-service, and fair-dealing, and the full and regular payment of taxes—or when men of various conditions are plainly spoken to on the duties of their respective callings, as household servants or field-labourers or artisans or men in the walks of business, when severally addressed on the virtues of the shop and the market and the exchange and the counting-house. Now all this proceeds on an utter misconception as to what sort of thing Christianity is; and because of which we forget that godliness has to do with all things—insomuch that ere a disciple can be perfected into a complete man of God, he must be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. He must be a good family man, and a good neighbour, and a good member of society; and finally, to return on the observations which the apostle here lays upon his converts, he must be a good subject, in which capacity he will pay custom or tribute with cheerfulness, and reverence his superiors, and award his comely and complaisant homage to station and rank in society—and, giving fear to whom fear is due, will first and foremost, in the words of another apostle, "fear God;" and honour to whom honour, he will follow out the injunction of the same apostle, to "honour the king;" and will obey magistrates; and live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. This is the way of making his light shine before men—so that seeing his good works, they may glorify his Father who is in heaven.

A government in the discharge of its ordinary functions is a great blessing to society; and it is upon this consideration that the duties of the passage now under

review are grounded and enforced by the apostle. But a government may depart from its proper and ordinary character; and, instead of a protector, may become a tyrant and a persecutor. It may abuse its powers. The sword of justice in its hands, it may wield as an instrument of iniquitous violence—turning it from its own righteous purpose, as an instrument of vengeance on rebels and murderers. Instead of this, it may become a murderer itself, and bathe its feet in the blood of the innocent. And the question is, What is duty towards a government in this new attitude and style of acting; and when, no longer a minister to them for good, it becomes an executioner of wrath on the peaceable and the praise-worthy—the terror and scourge of the righteous?

This question has already been answered in the chapter immediately before our present one—where we are told to bless them which persecute, to give place unto wrath, to avenge not ourselves. And it has not only been answered didactically in the Bible, but has been answered historically and by example during three long centuries of persecution—beginning with the Author of our faith, and continued onward to the reign of Constantine. If when the hand of a private individual inflicted outrage and injustice upon them, they were commanded to forbear all retaliation—this forbearance was still more imperative when it was an injustice which came from the hands of the magistrate. And accordingly, in those ages of martyrdom we have a bright verification of the meek and passive moralities—of the virtues which belong to a state of sufferance—so strenuously recommended by the apostle. And it was not only in the feebleness of their infancy, when the Christians formed but a very little flock, amid the overwhelming majorities that abode in the ancient faith, whether of Jews or Gentiles—it was not only then, that they gave themselves quietly up to torture and death, as if in imitation of their great Master, who was led like a lamb unto the slaughter—But even in the strength and maturity of their manhood, when they far outnumbered their adversaries and could have taken the power of government into their own hands—even then do we read of their weathering in meek endurance the last and bloodiest of those great persecutions which they had to undergo. They might have risen against their enemies, and achieved over them the victory of force—but, still more glorious, their's was altogether the victory of principle; and it serves for our admonition, on whom the latter ends of the world have come. Should the fires of persecution be again lighted up in our land—in the holy

discipline of God, should this be again brought to bear upon us, as at once the test and the exercise of our Christianity—after such an example, and still more with such a lesson as the apostle has recorded for our guidance in the foregoing passage, we should know how to acquit ourselves. We should, for conscience toward God, endure the grief and suffer wrongfully. We should take it patiently. We should commit ourselves to Him that judgeth righteously. We should leave to Him the cause of our redress, and that work which is exclusively His own, the work of vengeance. If we want to obtain a like conquest with our predecessors in the church, then not overcome of evil ourselves, we should overcome the evil with good.

Still in the very passage from which we have borrowed some of these expressions, there is a limitation imposed on our duty of 'living peaceably with all men.' This is only if it be possible and as much as lieth in us. Now we have already stated in what circumstances it might not be possible to yield a pacific acquiescence in the will of a private individual—so that if he is resolutely bent on our compliance with it, a rupture between us is wholly unavoidable. We could not, for example, give up our conscience into his hands, or renounce a profession or a principle which we conceive to have been laid upon us by the authority of God. And thus it was that the apostles' converts could not have given up their Christianity at the bidding of friends or relatives—a fertile cause of dissension in these days; and so as to verify the forewarning of our Saviour, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." And if they would not submit in this matter to a relative or neighbour, they could as little submit in it to a magistrate. They could not belie their own faith, or say of what they did believe, that they did not believe it. There is the same impossibility here which is even affirmed of the Godhead, when it is said of Him that He cannot lie, and that it is impossible for God to lie. If the faith of the gospel was indeed in them, then it lay not in them, nor was it possible for them to abjure that faith. Nay, as if to aggravate the moral impossibility, they could not, at the bidding of the highest power on earth, make the denial of Christ, but in opposition to an express bidding from the highest power in heaven, by which they were required to confess him before men—even when delivered up to councils and brought

before governors and kings for a testimony. And what had thus been laid upon them by precept, they exemplified in practice—as when called before the rulers of Israel, and straitly threatened and commanded not to teach or preach in the name of Jesus, they replied, “Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot,” and here is their express allegation of its not being possible for them to live peaceably with all men, “we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” And so with boldness they continued to speak, “not as pleasing men but God”—and this under the necessity which was laid upon them, for woe was upon them if they preached not the gospel.* To the superficial it might appear an anomaly, nay a contradiction, that the same Christians who were charged with the duty of resisting not evil, should nevertheless have resisted so sturdily upon this occasion; and it seems to deepen still more the inconsistency, that it was a resistance to the mandates of those rulers, who, as the powers that be, were ordained of God—so that whosoever resisteth them resisteth the ordinance of God—and shall receive to himself damnation. But theirs was not a withholding of fear where fear was due. It was but the subordination of a lower to a higher fear—the fear of him who was able to kill the body, to the fear of Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. They did not resist the inflictions of the earthly power on their persons and properties, and all on earth which belonged to them. These they submitted to the absolute disposal of the rulers of this world; and it may serve perhaps the object of a right discrimination in this matter of resistance—if in the following verse where the term is introduced, it be considered what precisely that was which Christians are there spoken of as resisting. The apostle in the Hebrews tells his disciples that they had not yet “resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” This was wholly different from the resistance of war, when the soldier strives against those who are seeking after his blood; and, for the deliverance of his own life would embroil his hand in the blood of an enemy. This is one way of resisting unto blood; but it is altogether distinct from, nay opposite to, the resistance unto blood which Christians were often called to in these days. The object of their resistance was not to save their own blood by shedding the blood of their enemies. It was not against this that they strove, or against their enemies that they strove. The precise object of their striving was against sin—the sin of

renouncing their profession, and thus denying the Lord who bought them. This at all hazards they behoved to resist. Against this, and this alone, they strove; and as to their lordly persecutors, instead of striving against them, they placidly and submissively gave themselves up unto their hands.

And thus too at this moment, the Church of Scotland—submitting to the civil power in all that is civil; and only refusing her obedience, when that power assumes an authority over things sacred. Many are not able, perhaps not willing, to discriminate in this matter; and so, at their hand, she suffers the obloquy of being a rebel against the laws—and this because one of the subordinate courts in our realm, has transgressed her own limits, even as the sanhedrim or supreme court of Judea did theirs, when they forbade the apostles to preach any more in the name of Jesus. It is a great and a vital cause; and has led to a contest which is not yet terminated, and perhaps only begun. Heaven grant an apostolic wisdom, as well as an apostolic boldness, on the part of her ministers—that they may acquit themselves rightly of all which they owe both to God and to Cesar; and so that, while faithful to their Master in heaven, their loyalty to the powers which be on earth may, in all that is possible, and as far as lieth in them, become patent and palpable to all men. Meanwhile, in the eyes of some she may wear the aspect of a refractory member in the body politic, more especially in an age when the principles are forgotten on which our Non-erastian Church is based—principles which at one time the sustained and at length triumphant controversy of several generations, had made as familiar as household words, even to the peasantry of our land. O Lord, may Thy grace and Thy guidance be with the present majority of our Church—so that whether they shall achieve a victory or sustain a defeat, Wisdom may yet be justified of all her children. If theirs be the victory, let it become manifest, O God, that a rightly administered, and withal an established church, in the full possession of her spiritual independence, is the great palladium, not of freedom alone, but of stability and good order in the commonwealth. But if it seem good unto Thee that it shall be otherwise, and that defeat and disappointment shall be theirs—we will not let go our confidence in the final and everlasting establishment of Thine own divine supremacy over the nations—when, after it may be the fearful period of a wasteful and wide-spread anarchy, the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

* 1 Corinthians, ix, 16.

LECTURE XCIII.

ROMANS xiii, 8—10.

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. 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. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

'Owe no man any thing.' This precept of the apostle, limited within these few words, may signify one or other of these two things—either to leave not our debts unpaid; or, higher, and many would say more scrupulous still, never get into debt. The clause now quoted of our present verse may be looked to as a repetition of the clause in that verse which goes immediately before it—"Render unto all their dues"—what is due, (*debitum*, debt,) being the same with what is owing. And in this form too it admits of both the interpretations now given—either let every debt be at length cancelled, or let no debt ever be contracted. Never let it become a debt—Be in no man's books. If he be an individual with whom you are dealing, pay the moment that you buy. Or if it be the government, and so the liability is not a price but a tax, pay on the day that it becomes due. According to the usages of society, the injunction in this latter or more rigorous meaning of it is far from being generally adhered to. Perhaps it may not at all times suit the conveniences or even the possibilities of business, that each single transaction should be what in familiar phrase is termed a ready-money transaction. Perhaps even in the matters of family expenditure, it might save trouble, instead of paying daily and in detail, to pay at certain terms; and so with the consent, nay even the preference of both parties, is there often a running of accounts, and a discharge or settlement of these periodically. We shall not therefore insist very resolutely or dogmatically on this rule of the apostle, in the literal or extreme sense of it. Perhaps it were an over-sensitive casuistry, a sort of ultraism in morals, to urge the unexcepted observance of our text in the very terms of this its second interpretation. There can be no doubt, however, that in the first interpretation of it, it is a matter of absolute and universal obligation. Though we cannot just say with full and perfect assurance, that a man should never in any circumstances get into debt—we can feel no hesitation in saying, that, once in, he should labour most strenuously and with all his might, to get out of it. I will not therefore be so altogether intolerant and peremptory, as to give it forth in the style

of an aphorism or dictation—that he should never become a debtor to any man, be it for a single month or even single day. Yet will we proclaim it as a very high and undoubted ethical propriety—that each man, if in business, should so square his enterprises to his means; or, if in whatever else, should so square his expenditure to his income, as to be at all times within the limits of sufficiency or safety—so that, should the computation at any time be made, and were the settlement of all reckonings and claims whatsoever to take place at the moment accordingly, it be found of him at the very least, that in customary phrase he was even with the world, and so as that he could leave the world and owe no man any thing.

But though unwilling to press the duty of our text in the extreme and rigorous sense of it—yet I would fain aspire towards the full and practical establishment thereof, so as that the habit might become at length universal, not only of paying all debts, but even of making conscience never to contract, and therefore never to owe any. For although this might never be reached, it is well it should be looked at, nay moved forward to, as a sort of optimism, every approximation to which were a distinct step in advance, both for the moral and economic good of society. For, first, in the world of trade, one cannot be insensible to the dire mischief that ensues from the spirit often so rampant, of an excessive and unwarrantable speculation—so as to make it the most desirable of all consummations that the system of credit should at length give way, and what has been termed the ready-money system, the system of immediate payments in every commercial transaction, should be substituted in its place. The adventurer who, in the walks of merchandise, trades beyond his means, is often actuated by a passion as intense, and we fear too as criminal, as is the gamester, who in the haunts of fashionable dissipation, stakes beyond his fortune. But it is not the injury alone, which the ambition that precipitates him into such deep and desperate hazards, brings upon his own character—neither is it the ruin that the splendid bankruptcy in which it termi-

nates brings upon his own family—These are not the only evils which we deprecate—for over and above these, there is a far heavier disaster, a consequence in the train of such proceedings, of greatly wider and more malignant operation still, on the habit and condition of the working classes, gathered in hundreds around the mushroom establishment, and then thrown adrift among the other wrecks of its overthrow in utter helplessness and destitution on society. This frenzy of men hasting to be rich, like fever in the body natural, is a truly sore distemper in the body politic. No doubt they are also sufferers themselves, piercing their own hearts through with many sorrows; but it is the contemplation of this suffering in masses, which the sons and daughters of industry in humble life so often earn at their hands, that has ever led me to rank them among the chief pests and disturbers of a commonwealth.

But again, if they who trade beyond their means thus fall to be denounced, they especially in the higher and middle classes of life, who spend beyond their means and so run themselves into debt, merit the same condemnation. Perhaps they who buy on credit, certain of their inability to pay, as compared with those who borrow on speculation, and though uncertain of its proceeds, yet count on the favourable chances of success, so as that they shall be able to pay all—perhaps the former are distinctly the more inexcusable of the two. But without entering on this computation, we can imagine nothing more glaringly unprincipled and selfish than the conduct of those, who, to uphold their place and take part with their fellows in the giddy rounds of the festive and fashionable world, force out a splendour and luxury which their means are unequal to; and thus either build or adorn or entertain in a style so costly, that it must be done not at their own expence, beggared as they are by extravagance, but at the expence of tradesmen and artificers and shopkeepers, whom they hurry onward to beggary with themselves. I do not need to expatiate on a delinquency so grievous and undeniable as this. But you will at once perceive, how both the rage of speculation, prompted by what the apostle calls the lust of the eye, in the work of making a fortune; and the rage of exhibition and excess, stimulated by the pride of life, in the work of overspending it—the one sowing the wind, and the other reaping the whirlwind—how both of these would be effectually mitigated and kept in check, were all men to act on the sacred prohibition of “Owe no man any thing.”

But lastly, there is another application

of this precept, to me the most interesting of all—because of all others the application, which if fully carried out, would tell more beneficially than any other on that high object of enlightened philanthropy, the greatest happiness of the greatest number; and so make a larger contribution than any we have yet specified to the well-being of a then happy and healthful society. What I advert to as a thing of pre-eminent worth and importance is, that men in humble life, our artizans, our mechanics, and labourers, should be effectually taught in the art of owing no man any thing; and learn to find their way from the pawn office to the savings' bank—so that instead of debtors to the one, they should become depositors in the other. That it is not so, is far more due to the want of management than to the want of means; and it needs but the kindness and trouble of a few benevolent attentions to put many on the way of it. It is this which, among other objects, makes it so urgently desirable—that every town should be broken up into small enough parishes, and every parish into small enough districts; and an official superintendent be attached to each, who, in perfect keeping with his character as a deacon, might charge himself with the economics of the poor, and tell them how so to husband their resources, as to save themselves from a sore and heavy burden, which often presses on them like an incubus that they never can shake off—we mean the debt usually contracted at the outset of a family establishment, and which keeps them in a state of difficulty and dependence to the end of their days. It is not to be told how soon and how easily by a few cheap and simple and withal friendly advices, the whole platform of humble life might come to be raised, and the working classes be guided to an enlargement and sufficiency, which, save by dint of their own sobriety and providential habits, can never be realised. Though we cannot offer here the scientific demonstration of this great and glorious result, we may at least be suffered, as an act of homage, to make this acknowledgment in passing—that, in the practical department of Christianity, only second to our admiration of its perfect ethical system, is the admiration we have ever felt, and the unbounded confidence that we repose in the sound political economy of the New Testament.

‘But to love one another.’ The apostle here speaks of love as a debt, as a thing owing. He would have it to be our only debt; and that this alone is what we should still continue to owe, after having so acquitted ourselves of all other obligations, as to owe nothing else. The point

to be remarked upon is, that the apostle should speak of love as a debt at all, as a thing that we owe—thus placing in the same category the duty under which we lie to love one another, as the duty to pay up the price of that which we had bought, or the sum that we had borrowed from him. It is certainly not so regarded in the light of natural conscience. We should never think that we did the same injustice to a neighbour by withholding our love from him, as we did to a creditor by withholding from him the payment of a debt. In that play or reciprocation of moral feeling and moral judgment which takes place between men and men in society, those two things are not so confounded. It is true that should God interpose with the commandment that we should so love, we owe every thing to Him; and would therefore, on its being intimated to us as His will, owe love to those who are around us, and love to all men. But we at present speak of our natural sense of justice as it decides and operates irrespectively of God's will in the community of human beings; and are considering how it would pronounce on the matter of obligation—between the duty of paying an ordinary debt, and the duty of loving.

Now we must be conscious of a wide diversity in our moral sensation, if I may so term it, of these two things. I feel that I have a right to the payment of that which is owing to me; and that for the exaction of it I might bring the fear and the force of law to bear upon my debtor. I have no such feeling of a right to his love; and did I assert or prosecute such a right, did I try to seize upon the man's affections in the same way that I might seize upon his goods, did I prefer a claim to his heart, and for the making of it good put either fear or force into operation—there would soon be found an element wanting, and which made this attempt at the compulsion of another's love to be altogether a thing most outrageously and ridiculously wrong. The question still remains then as to any possible analogy between things which at the first blush of them appear so different; and how it is, that while in the most strict and literal sense of the word we owe a man the full value of all that we may have bought or borrowed from him—how it is, that with any propriety or by means of any figurative resemblance, I can be said to owe him my love also.

What gives the strongest impression of a reciprocity in this matter, and brings it nearest to a thing of mutual and equitable obligation is, that celebrated moral sentence of our great Teacher—"Whatever things ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." Now

we all would that men should love us rather than that they should hate us; and it is a precept which at once announces its own equity, that what we should like from men, we should do to men. If we wish them to love us, it seems a selfish and unequitable thing, that we should not love them back again; or that we should not be willing to give them that, which we at the same time are abundantly willing to get from them. We do not just say, that, even on this principle, the obligation to love others is placed on the very same footing with the obligation to pay our debts—yet if on this principle we do not strictly and literally *owe* them our love, the moral sense of all men will go along with me when I say, that on this principle we at least *ought* to love them. Surely if we should like all men to love us, it is nothing but a fair and legitimate moral conclusion from this, that we in return should or ought to love all men.

Now I would have you attend to the two terms, the *owe* and the *ought*. They have a common origin; and though not absolutely identical, this of itself demonstrates, if human language be at all the interpreter of human feeling, a certain affinity betwixt them. And accordingly they do substantially resemble each other thus far, that both of them—the payment of what we owe to others, and the love we are required to bear them—that both of these are duties. But though generally, and to this extent, they are alike—still there is a difference between them; and on looking narrowly into it, we shall find what the difference is. In the one duty, the payment of debt, there is not merely an obligation upon the one side, there is a precise and counterpart right upon the other—it being not only my duty to pay what I owe to a creditor, but his right to challenge and enforce the payment. In the other duty, the love of a neighbour, it might be my obligation thus to love, but not necessarily his right to demand it of me. That there are other such duties, will appear still more clearly from this example—the duty of forgiveness. Here there may be an obligation, and most certainly no corresponding right—an obligation on my part to forgive the offender, while it were a contradiction in terms to say of him that he hath a right to be forgiven. The distinction is quite familiar to ethical writers; and they have had recourse to a peculiar nomenclature for the expression of it. In the one case, as with the virtues of truth and justice, where there is both a duty on the one side and a counterpart right upon the other, they are termed virtues of perfect obligation. In the other case, as with benevolence, whether in the form of mercy

or hospitality or almsgiving or a kindness and courtesy beyond the general habits or expectations of any given neighbourhood—these, though all of them virtues in themselves which serve to grace and exalt the giver, yet for which no right or claim can be alleged by the receiver—these are but the virtues of imperfect obligation.

This leads us to observe, that there are two distinct regimens, and both on the side of morality. There is the regimen of fear and the regimen of conscience. Each might be brought to bear upon man at the same time, when the duty to be performed is one of perfect obligation—which it is not only right for every moral agent to observe; but in which also there is, counterpart to this, the holder of a right, who might by legal enforcement compel the observance of it, whether it be for the payment of a debt or the fulfilment of a promise. On the side then of one and the same virtue, there might both be the coarser regimen of fear, and the finer regimen of conscience—the one put into operation by a government within the breast, which tells of the right and the wrong, and, by the force of principle alone, persuades to the former, and restrains from the latter—the other put into operation by the government of a country which institutes a law, and ordains its penalties against all the aggressions of injustice. One could imagine a virtuous society where conscience was omnipotent and universal—in virtue of which the government of principle might have perfect and unlimited sway, and so the government of law might be dispensed with. And there are many individuals, whose honour and integrity are full guarantees for their punctual discharge of all the equities of social life; and of whom therefore it may be said that the law is not needed for such righteous persons—of which indeed they often give proof, by the admirable way in which they acquit themselves also of the generousities of social life, those virtues of imperfect obligation, wherewith the law of the heart alone hath to do, and the law of the state or of the statute-book has, or ought to have no concern. But though the law of conscience be sufficient for these, it needs, in the actual state or character of humanity, and for the effectual regulation of the commonwealth at large—it needs to be supplemented by the civil and criminal law of the country. And accordingly both influences might tell at once on the same individual. Both considerations are pressed by the apostle upon his converts—and this by the way proves that the distinction on which we insist is not a

vain one—when he says, “Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath but also for conscience’ sake.”

It is well that you should keep hold of this distinction between a lower and a higher regimen—the regimen of fear, and the regimen of conscience—as it might prepare you for understanding another regimen, even higher than that of conscience; and lead you along to another distinction—we mean the distinction that we now announce between the regimen of conscience and the regimen of love. In every exercise of the conscience, there seems a balancing between the right and the wrong—a comparison of opposites, grounded on the knowledge both of good and evil, whereupon, in virtue of its sense of rectitude, it enjoins a preference for the one, and an avoidance of the other. Now this work of comparison on the part of a moral agent, might as unnecessary be dispensed with—if in doing what is right he always did that which he liked best; or, in other words, if the taste and affections did of themselves prompt, and at all times, that very conduct, which, had the arbitration of conscience been required, it would have pronounced to be our righteous and incumbent obligation. It might seem hard to say that conscience in this case would be superseded—yet there is a certain sense in which it would be true—for it is obvious enough, that if we abandon ourselves to our own heart’s desire, and that desire was ever, spontaneously and of its own full accord, on the side of that which is most righteous and best, the office of conscience, at least for the purposes of guidance or regulation, would then be uncalled for. And however difficult it might be to say that love would supersede conscience, we need go no farther than to our text for decisive instances of love superseding the commandment. For certain it is, that if we thoroughly loved a neighbour, loved him as we do ourselves, we could no more inflict pain or violence upon him than upon our own persons—no more rob him of his property than cast our own into the fire—no more deceive him by a falsehood than willingly give ourselves up to the wiles of an imposter—no more wish aught desirable thing of his to be ours, than we should aught of ours to be either abstracted or destroyed. To a man thus actuated the prohibitions of kill not, and steal not, and lie not, and covet not, were altogether superfluous—nor would his conscience need at all to ruminate, on the rightfulness, either in respect of matter or authority, of any of these commandments. What under the regimen of conscience would be a thing of obedience—the very

same, under the regimen of love, would be a thing of inclination. Love would be an equivalent, nay a greatly overpassing substitute for law. Under its simple and spontaneous impulse, there could be the working of no ill. Of itself it would do the work of all the commandments. Where such an enlargement takes place upon the character of man, the will might with all safety be left to take the place of conscience. The law of God would be his delight; nor could there be any hazard of disobedience at the hands of him, the delight of whose heart lay in the fulfilling of the law.

Now the question comes to be, Which is the higher moral state—that of him who loves his neighbour as himself, and in virtue of this affection would abstain from doing him any evil; or of him, who without this affection, but in virtue of the commandments, and under a sense not only of their authority, but their rightness, would alike abstain from doing him any evil? Were it because of their authority alone, then the obedience might proceed from an apprehension of the threatened penalties, or be a forced obedience under the regimen of fear. Were it because of their rightness, then would it be a higher, for now a duteous obedience, under the regimen of conscience. But what we ask is, Whether, when not because he thinks of the commandments, but because he realizes the saying in which they are briefly comprehended, even loves his neighbour as himself—whether, when it is because of this that he kills not and steals not and lies not and covets not—whether it be not now a still higher, being now a willing obedience under the regimen of love? When he has gotten so far as that love supersedes law, has he not reached a higher stage in this moral progression from one degree of excellence to another?—and were this consideration thoroughly pondered and pursued into all its consequences, might it not serve to elucidate an else mysterious passage of the Bible—where we read that the law was not made for a righteous person, for a person thus far refined and exalted in his principles and feelings—but for those in the ruder or more rudimental and initiatory stages of their moral discipline; and who for the restraint or regulation of their conduct needed that the coarser appliances of law, its obligations or even its terrors, should be brought to bear upon them? It is thus we might understand the apostolic averment—“That the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers,

for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.” To this purpose serveth the law. “It was added because of transgressions.” Every commandment in the decalogue, with the exception of the fifth—for we do not except the fourth, which tells us *not* to work upon the Sabbath—is of a negative or prohibitory, rather than of a prescriptive character. It tells us not of the things which we are to do, but of the things which we are not to do; and most certainly they are such things, that if the moral dynamics of love to God and love to man had full operation in our heart, we should have no wish for the doing of them.

And yet, as already hinted, we should feel it a hard and difficult thing to say that love might supersede conscience; and so as that the element of moral rightness, or the consideration of what we ought or of what we owe, might never be present to the mind—merely because there reigned an affection there, which formed a sufficient and a practical security for the observance of them. We apprehend that if destitute of the conception or knowledge of the moral character of actions, as right or wrong, we should want an essential feature of that resemblance to the Godhead, the restoration whereof is one great object of the economy under which we sit*—even His admiration of the one and His abhorrence of the other, so that like Him we may love righteousness and hate iniquity. It is true that Adam was interdicted in paradise from the tree of knowledge of good and evil—and therefore that, apart from this knowledge and by the spontaneous tendencies of his own perfect nature, he may have been kept close to the one and altogether clear of the other. But instead of this there was one commandment laid upon him—and by the way a negative one, or not a bidding but a forbidding—even that he should *not* eat of this tree. It was on his transgression thereof that his eyes were opened; and his conscience we have no doubt, his sense of good and evil and of the difference between them, would then come into vigorous play. But we must not therefore imagine that in the process of man's regeneration this sense of good and evil behoves to be extinguished. He will be “renewed in knowledge;” and as a proof that, though heaven be that holy place into which sin doth not enter, yet that the knowledge or conception of sin will be there, is evident from this, that holiness will be there; and what is holi-

* Colossians, iii, 10.

ness but the fearful and determined recoil of perfect moral excellence from all that is opposite to itself!—a property of such high estimation, that some would vindicate the origin of evil on the principle that it afforded a scope for the display and the exercise of holiness. However this may be, certain it is that the love or charity of heaven will not supersede there the conscience or moral sense, which takes cognizance both of the good and the evil—as manifested both by the song of the redeemed to Him who washed them in His blood, and by their intelligent ascriptions to Him who sitteth on the throne of Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty; and Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints;

At all events, there seems to be a progression, an ascent by successive stages from a lower to a higher discipline, in the moral education and moral history of our species—whether we comprehend or not the various footsteps of it—As when the

spirit of bondage gives way to the spirit of adoption, or the oldness of the letter to the newness of the spirit; or as when the terrors of the law are succeeded by a delight in the law; or as when the commandment, formerly graven on tables of stone, comes to be graven on the fleshly tablets of the heart; or as when the law fulfils but the office of a preparatory schoolmaster for bringing men to Christ, or guiding them onward to their higher lessons of the gospel; or finally, as when the supremacy of law makes place for the supremacy of love, even of the charity which never faileth, but abideth and reigneth everlastingly in heaven, after that the means and the preparatives for this great consummation have all vanished away.

“I'm apt to think the man
That could surround the sum of things, and spy
The heart of God, and secrets of His empire,
Would speak but love; with him the bright result
Would change the hue of intermediate scenes,
And make one thing of all theology.”

LECTURE XCIV.

ROMANS xiii, 11—14.

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. 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. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

VER. 11. ‘And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.’ Some commentators would refer the nearer salvation of which the apostle here speaks, to the destruction of Jerusalem, as standing somehow or other connected with a great enlargement to the professors of Christianity. Others again would refer it to the expected second coming of our Lord—in which it is thought that even apostles were not yet so far instructed or inspired, as to be free from the then prevalent imagination that he would shortly revisit the world—nay make His appearance before the present generation had passed away. Without deciding on either of these interpretations, we hold it a sounder, or at least a safer application of the advice here given; to understand the nearer salvation of every disciple, as signifying the greater nearness of his death—seeing of that event, that it is indeed a great salvation to all who fall asleep in Jesus, for with them to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. When the verse is thus apprehended, it becomes a

great and universal lesson, for Christians of all ages, which carries its own obvious recommendation along with it; and is in harmony with many similar injunctions delivered in other places of Scripture—as, Brethren, the time is short, and let us not therefore abuse the world; or Let us work while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work.

‘And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep.’ The clause of ‘knowing the time’ seems to strengthen one or other of the more special interpretations of this verse—as referring to the knowledge of a something which the Christians of that period had been made to see in the light of prophecy or inspiration, whether the rightly anticipated destruction of Jerusalem or the then misunderstood reappearance of our Saviour. We however shall still keep by the more general meaning that we have already assigned to this verse—understanding it thus, that it is now high time to bestir ourselves, and make diligent preparation for that blissful eternity which is so fast approaching; for that this is the great work to be done, and there remains

but little, yea a rapidly lessening time for the doing of it.

But how comes it that Christians should be called upon to awake out of sleep? Are they not already awakened? Did they not at the first outset of their discipleship yield obedience to the apostolic call of "Awake, O sinner, and Christ shall give thee light?" Has not every believer already passed out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel; and why then should he be so urged, as if he had yet to shake himself from the sleep of carnality or spiritual death, or to arouse him out of the lethargy of nature?

It is because of the constant and cleaving earthliness which continues to subsist even after regeneration; and which, though weakened and under process of extinction, is not wholly exterminated while we remain in the body—it is because of this that we need to be reminded even of the incipient calls, and that we need to be put on the incipient duties of the Christian life. Thus it is that to be kept from lapsing into unbelief, we must hold fast the beginning of our confidence; and lest our love should wax cold, we must remember the strength of it at the outset of our discipleship. In a word, we must be ever recurring to the exercises of our first faith, our first love, our first obedience; and more especially should awaken out of sleep, or keep awake, amid the opiates of sense and of a deceitful world.

Thus understood, it is the charge of the apostle, that we should open our eyes to the realities of that unseen world, to which we every day are coming nearer. What he teaches in this verse is the wisdom of considering our latter end, to which we are hastening onward. In order to meet the salvation which then awaits us, our distinct aim should be to perfect our holiness; or to give all diligence that we may be found without spot and blameless; or so to run as to reach the prize of our high calling, and be presented faultless before the presence of God. The salvation here spoken of is the salvation that we are called upon to work out—a task from which we are not the less exempted, though it be said that God works in us.* We are justified on the moment of our believing; but our sanctification is the business of a lifetime. For there is a life of faith as well as a birth of faith;† and it should be our care that ere this life is finished‡ its object should be fulfilled; which is, that we stand perfect and complete in the whole will of God.

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.' The imagery of this verse requires the same explanation as did that of the preceding. It is true that the proper night of the soul—the moral night—is anterior to conversion; and that when this event takes place, the soul passes out of darkness into marvellous light. And accordingly the true disciples of the Lord Jesus are said to be no longer the children of night, but the children of light and of the day. "Still it is true that so long as we abide in this world, ours is but a state of comparative darkness—for here though we see it is but through a glass darkly; and that it is only in the next world where we shall live in the full light of the risen day, when we shall know even as we are known. The soul of a saint on earth, still in twilight obscurity, has not yet made its conclusive escape from the region of darkness; and not till ushered into heaven, or among the cloudless transparencies of the upper sanctuary, will it in God's light clearly see light; Such then are the night, and such the day spoken of in our text; and it is because this night is far spent, and this day is at hand, that we are called on to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light.

There are works of darkness which shun the light of day, or would shrink from exposure, even in this world—such as the deeds either of shameful dishonesty or of shameful licentiousness. There are other works again, which, though alike condemned in the eye of Heaven, we should not here on earth call works of darkness, such as the overt acts which transgress no social law, yet bespeak a heart of deep irreligion, and utterly devoid of all sensibility to the sacredness or authority of God's spiritual law—as when His Sabbaths are secularised in convivial parties; or, in the intent prosecution, whether of the amusements or the business of life, decisive manifestation is given forth of a preference for the creature over the Creator, for the things and interests of time over the things and interests of eternity. These last, as being the mere fruits of nature's carnality, and springing universally forth of the habits and affections of natural men, we should not call works of darkness—for they are exhibited daily and without a blush in the face of society—not however because not utterly worthless in themselves, but because done before the eye of spectators, who have no perception of their deformity, done on the theatre of a world which has been rightly denominated the land of spiritual blindness and spiritual death. But if seen in the light of the divine law, and placed

* Phil. ii, 12, 13.

† Gal. ii, 20.

‡ 2 Tim. iv, 7.

before the rebuke of the divine countenance, they will then be recognised as works of darkness, and ranked as they ought with the worst atrocities of human wickedness. And accordingly on the great day of manifestation, and when the principles of a higher jurisprudence are brought to bear on the characters of men, many, the most esteemed and honourable among their fellows, will awaken to shame and everlasting contempt. Ungodliness will then appear in its true estimate, as the great master-sin—being indeed the seminal principle of all misrule and anarchy in creation; and therefore to be exiled and put forth into everlasting darkness, as a thing unfit to be seen on the open panorama of a harmonious and well-ordered universe.

Yet it might subserve a practical object, to view apart from each other those grosser offences which are usually stigmatised as works of darkness; and those more subtle delinquencies of the heart and spirit, which are universal as the species, and none therefore are at pains to conceal, because none are ashamed of them. It might help to distinguish between the incipient and advanced duties of the Christian life. At the very outset, nay anterior to their conversion, though with a view to it, nay in the aim of carrying it or bringing it to pass, we should call on all men to abandon their drunkennesses and dishonesties and impurities, or what themselves would all understand and admit to be works of darkness. This is a voice which should be distinctly and audibly given forth at the first call of the gospel, or first sound of the trumpet which it lifts in the hearing of all men. It is a work often done in fact at the bidding of natural conscience, or on the still lower impulses of prudence and calculation—as when, to use a familiar phrase, the profligate, making a pause in his career, turns over a new leaf, or becomes, in the worldly sense of the term, a reformed man. Such a reformation is often achieved without Christianity; but on the other hand, there can be no Christianity without such a reformation. And it is a reformation which should be peremptorily demanded of all enquirers at their very entrance on the way of life—as being an indispensable part, or even preliminary, of that movement by which men pass out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel. Else they are not framing their doings to turn unto God.* They are not turning unto Christ, if they are not turning from their iniquities.† It is thus that the moral character of gospel teaching should be vindicated and made

palpable in the eyes of all men; and so as that they might recognise it to be something more than what they often apprehend it to be—the mere teaching of a cabalistic orthodoxy. Instead of which it is pre-eminently a practical system—striking at once at the evil habits, while its higher aim is to regenerate the evil hearts of men—So that in commanding them everywhere to repent and turn unto God, it charges them, at the first and earliest outset of their religious earnestness, to do works meet for repentance.*

But there are other and higher graces more distinctive of Christianity, and serving more specifically to signalise and separate the children of light from the children of this world; and which are altogether beyond the reach of unaided nature. There are certain things which nature, by the sheer force of her own resolute and sustained purposes, might be able to cast off; but there are certain other things which nature in her own strength cannot possibly put on. She may of herself cast off many of the works of darkness; but of herself she cannot put on the graces and virtues which serve more specially to characterise and adorn the children of light. Thus to array herself, she needs other instruments than those which natively and originally belong to her—an instrumentality which is here significantly termed the armour of light, because, in the utter inadequacy of those implements or faculties which we ourselves possess, we require the use of other tools, other instruments of action than these, that we may have power to walk as children of light and of the day; or, which is tantamount to this, that we may have power to become the children of God.†

Still to cast off the works of darkness is to throw aside a great obstruction, which if suffered to remain, would prove a fatal impediment to the access of all spiritual and saving light into our minds. It may be nothing more than a mere shaking of the dead bones, ere the Spirit of life is blown into us—that mere awakening of the sinner, which is previous or preparatory to the act of Christ giving him light.‡ It is an essential step, however, in the process of our regeneration. There is a something to cast off, as well as to put on. The former we should give our immediate hand to. The latter we should give our immediate and earnest heed to. And it may perhaps help to elucidate the singular expression, ‘armour of light’—if we attend to the manner in which, under the economy of the gospel, the power of a believer to serve the Lord Christ is made to

* Hosea, v, 4.

† Acts, iii, 26.

* Acts, xxvi, 20. † John, i, 12. ‡ Ephesians, v, 11—14.

stand allied with his perception of the truth as it is in Jesus. It is in the right views of his understanding in fact, that his great strength for obedience lies. And accordingly we read of his being sanctified by faith, of his being renewed in knowledge, of his receiving power to become a son of God on the moment of his believing in the name of Christ. But our best explanation perhaps of the armour of light, which in the verse before us we are called to put on—is to be had in Paul's description of the armour of God, which in his Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians we are also called to put on; and where we learn that the main furniture of a disciple, and by which he is equipped for the work and warfare of Christianity, lies in such acts and acquisitions as are altogether mental, nay chiefly intellectual—as having our loins girt about with truth, and our taking the shield of faith, and our putting on for a helmet the hope of salvation, and our having a constant respect unto the word, with prayer for the Spirit, that in the clear element of His manifestations we might be enabled rightly to discern and to make the right application of it—To which word therefore, we in the language of Peter, should give earnest heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts.

Before quitting this verse, it is well to remark, that as even the most advanced Christians are required to be constantly holding by and keeping, in exercise their first faith—so there is a call upon them too to be ever practising at their first obedience. For they too are still beset with their old temptations—insomuch, that if not vigilant and jealous of themselves, they may be precipitated back again into the most enormous and disgraceful works of darkness. The injunction therefore to cast off these is not yet superfluous, although Paul here addresses himself to men who had long embraced the truth and had long walked in it. There is room for the utmost strenuousness even to the end of our days—lest we should fall short of heaven; or, at all events, lest we should fall short of that rank in its blessedness and glory which we might have otherwise attained. Nay there is a most grievous misunderstanding of the gospel, if we be not as diligent and watchful and painstaking, as if overhung by the risk or the possibility of losing heaven altogether. There was nothing in the orthodoxy of Paul that relaxed his self-discipline, and this too under the apprehension lest he himself should turn out to be a castaway. With these views we can imagine nothing more urgent or impressive than the considera-

tion in our text, that the night is far spent and the day is at hand. In particular, it should tell most emphatically on those who have now entered the vale of years, and may now regard themselves as walking on the shores or along the brink of eternity. And if the righteous scarcely be saved—where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?—an appalling thought truly, and most of all to such as him of whom Hosea speaks*—“Yea grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not:” “And they do not return to the Lord nor seek him for all this.” These premonitory symptoms of a dissolution, and so of a reckoning at hand, fail to alarm them; and so they go on in nature's torpid infatuation, when they should be lifting this fearful cry—“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

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.’ The term honest is now of different meaning from what it was at the time that our translation was executed. It then signified that which is seemly, decent, reputable. It bore an especial regard to the aspect of our doings, and so we are called on to provide things honest in the *sight* of men. It is according to this, the proper and original sense of the word, that we are here bidden to walk honestly *as in the day*—that is, so as that our whole conduct shall bear exposure, and be sustained as respectable and right, though lying patent to the observation of all our fellows in society. There was a mighty stress laid by our apostle on appearance—on the creditable bearing of his disciples—on their character, not absolutely and in itself only, but on their character in the eyes of the world—Insomuch that, all sensitive and alive to the honour of his Master's cause, he wept over those professors who gloried in their shame, and through whom the way of truth was evil spoken of. It was obviously not as an end but as a means, that he so valued the good report of his converts—even that their light might shine before men, and men might of consequence be won to the gospel by their conversation. Thus also Peter, in warning his converts against fleshly lusts, adds—“having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”†

It is with this view that he first warns them against those vices which most shun the light, and are peculiarly unfit for ex-

* Hosea, vii, 9, 10.

† 1 Peter, ii, 12.

hibition in the face of others—the vices of low and loathsome dissipation—drunkenness and impurity—of so offensive a description, that it was held a sore aggravation of their wickedness who practised them, if they counted it a pleasure to riot in the day-time. They are vices of inherent turpitude in themselves; but it evinces a higher degree of moral hardness, when it was a turpitude in which men could glory—and highest of all, in an ostensible disciple of the Lord Jesus, who could thus bring disparagement and disgrace on that sacred cause which he was bound by every tie of gratitude and sincerity to adorn.

It is not, however, the object of Christianity to conceal vice, but to exterminate it—not to give its disciples but the face and appearance of virtue, but to give them virtue in substance and reality—and so as that they shall glorify the Lord with their soul and spirit, as well as with their bodies. And it is worthy of remark, that, for the achievement of this great moral change, it proceeds—not in the style of an ascetic—that is, not in the way of excision, but in the way of substitution—Or, in other words, when it calls for the sacrifice or the expulsion of one affection, it is by replacing it with another—and not by an act of simple dispossession, leaving the heart in a state of desolation and dreariness. Even the disposition to mirth it does not propose to extinguish, but rather provides with the outgoing of a kindred exercise—Is any merry let him sing psalms, making melody in his heart unto the Lord. We can fancy it to be another exemplification of the same design, another specimen of the same reigning character—that when it charges the disciples not to be drunk with wine wherein is excess, it follows up the admonition, by telling them to be filled with the Spirit; and so to exchange the maddening influence of a mere animal excitement for another influence, glorious and elevating too, and fitted, though in a higher and holier way, to transport the soul above the cares of a present sordid and earthly existence. And as this holds true of the rioting and drunkenness, it holds alike true of the habits or practices which are specified immediately after—a thought suggested to us by the proximity of the advice given a few verses before, where the apostle subordinates all virtue to the law of love, and would supplant all vice by the same law. And certainly there is a high and holy and heavenly affection of love, which, if present and predominant within us, would most effectually overrule, if not eradicate those evil affections which war against the soul. The love of the Father is directly and

specifically opposite, we are told by the apostle, to the lust of the flesh.* So that, if the love of God were but admitted into the bosom, and had ascendancy there, it would not only cast out fear,† but would cast out, or at least keep down lust also. When called to abandon lust, it is by means of the sweetest and softest affection of which nature is susceptible—and that affection directed too to the best and the noblest of all objects. Did we love God with all our heart, there would be no room in it for those base and foul and unhallowed imaginations, which in the expressive language of the prophet, turn it into a cage of unclean birds. Under such a regimen, instead of being frightened from the indulgences of nature as by the scowl of an anchorite, we are gently yet irresistibly weaned from them as by the mild persuasions of a friend; and we feel it to be in beautiful accordance with this, that the apostolic dissuaves against licentiousness are so often couched in terms of so much endearment and tenderness. “Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you.” “Set your affection on things above, not on ‘things on the earth.’” “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.”

He concludes his enumeration of those works which are unfit for the light of day with strife and envying—which in another place he ranks among the works of the flesh.‡ They belong to the malignant, and not as the former to the licentious vices of our nature—but like these too are of such a character, as to shun the observation of general society. This holds especially true of envy, of which all men dislike the exhibition; and which therefore is left to eat inwardly on him who is actuated thereby, because ashamed of showing it. Every strife, when it breaks forth in outrageous expressions, soon becomes too much for the sympathy of our fellows; and so restrains at least its utterance, or its deeds of open retaliation, for the sake of decorum. There is a grossness in resentment, as well as a grossness in impurity—both of which require to have a veil thrown over them, even from this world's toleration; so that

* 1 John, ii, 15, 16. † 1 John, iv, 18. ‡ Gal. v, 20, 21.

over and above the spiritual propriety of denouncing and denominating all sins as works of darkness, there is a natural or social propriety in affixing this denomination to the latter as well as the former of the sins enumerated in our text.

Ver. 14. 'But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' 'But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.' This figurative expression is more readily conceived by us as bearing application to the imputed righteousness of Christ, rather than to the graces of His example. That everlasting righteousness which he hath brought in, is viewed by us under the image of a garment, wherein we are invited to appear before God, clothed upon as it were, or invested with an order of merit, won not by ourselves but by the Captain of our salvation; and because of which, God looks upon us, not in our own characters, but in the face of His anointed. There is undoubted truth in all this—yet it hinders not the application of the very same phrase, the putting on of Christ, to the adornment of our persons with those identical virtues which made Him to be chief among the sons of men, and altogether lovely. Such a representation, beside that it is correct doctrinally, harmonises with the Scriptural expression of it—as when called to put on the new man, to put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. And thus too, "Be clothed with humility."

And we confess our exceeding value for that view, which puts our sanctification on the same footing with our justification, in that it subordinates both to our faith in Christ. We feel it to be a truth inestimably precious, that our personal holiness is a thing received by us, and from the hands or at the giving of another—just as our judicial acceptance is. It would mightily speed onwards our practical Christianity, did we habitually look unto Jesus as the Lord our strength, as well as the Lord our righteousness. The greatest lesson we have to learn in the school of preparation for heaven, is the efficacy of believing prayer for grace to help us in every time of need—that we might not only have His propitiation to shield us, but His power to rest upon us. Then should we know what it is to strive mightily according to the grace of God working in us mightily. The mystery would come to be resolved, because then experimentally realised, of the utmost diligence in performance along with the utmost dependence in prayer—a happy and fruitful combination, mysterious to the general world, but not to the fellow-workers with God, because by them

exemplified and carried into effect. The active and the passive of this conjunct operation work most prosperously into each other's hands; and the experience of the apostle, who when he was weak yet was he strong, reflects while it explains the beautiful saying of the prophet—that in quietness and in confidence ye shall have strength. A reposeing confidence in Christ gives efficacy to prayer, and by the gratitude which it awakens, gives impulse to all the springs of obedience. Creature perfection, says old Riccalton, lies in the habit of bringing our own emptiness to the fulness that is in Christ Jesus.

'And make not provision for the flesh.' 'Provision.*' The word implies a forecasting of the mind; and the prohibition therefore is against all deliberation or devising of means or expedients for the gratification of our lusts. These base affections of our nature may be excited even involuntarily, on the sudden suggestion or unforeseen presentation of the objects which awaken them. Even then it is our duty to shun these objects, to turn our sight and our thoughts from vanity, and so to flee the lusts which war against the soul. But a far greater depravity than thus to feel them, is it to go forth upon them. One should be ever on the watch lest he is surprised into temptation; but it evinces a greater height and hardihood of profligacy to seek after it, and when, so far from a defensive vigilance against the inroad of evil desires, there is an aggressive vigilance in quest of methods or opportunities for their indulgence. He is a confirmed and advanced learner in the school of wickedness, who can thus in his cooler moments bestow care and calculation on such an enterprise, and in short make a study of the likeliest methods for securing to himself the enjoyment of unhallowed pleasures; and this is the *pronoia*, the unholy *providence*, if it may be so termed, on which our text lays its interdict.

But it is not against all *pronoia*, all respect to things future, even though the futurities of this life, that the Bible warns us. Some might think so, because of such texts as "Take no thought for your life." "Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat." "Take no thought for the morrow."† Take no thought, *merimna*.‡ Not *pronoia*, but *merimna*—which latter word does not properly mean thought, but anxious thought; and is accordingly better translated so in the following places. "But I would have you without *carefulness*"§—not without thought, but without careful-

* Προνοια.

† Matthew, vi, 25, 31, 34.

‡ Μεριμνα

§ I Corinthians, vii, 32.

ness. And the same word is also thus rendered in Philippians, iv, 6—"Be careful for nothing." We are not therefore to imagine, that because told not to be careful or not to be thoughtful for to-morrow, we must take no thought of to-morrow at all. True, it were highly criminal to make provision for to-morrow's lusts. But it is not unlawful on that account to make provision for to-morrow's necessities. Nay, there is another part of the Bible in which we are told that it were highly criminal not to make such provision. The pronoia of our text were criminal, but not the pronoia (the word there too) of the following verse—"But if any *provide* not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*" We should not have adverted thus minutely to the original Greek, or

* 1 Timothy, v, 8.

introduced it at all into a popular exposition of Scripture—had not our quotation from Matthew been one of those very few passages in holy writ, where the emendation of our present version is of any real popular or practical importance.

'To fulfil the lusts thereof.' Although there is no word for *fulfil* in the original, but is supplied by the translators—yet, as it is rightly supplied, we might here remark on the difference between the feeling of a lust and the fulfilment thereof. To feel a lust implies the presence of sin in us. To fulfil a lust implies the power of sin over us. The one is the sad evidence that sin still dwells in our mortal bodies. The other is the far sadder evidence that sin has still the dominion over them. When made, not of our own seeking but by surprise, to feel an evil desire, it is our part to flee from it. But greatly worse than to feel is to follow it; and worst of all is to provide for it.

LECTURE XCV.

ROMANS xiv, 1—16.

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. 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. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 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. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. 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. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of."

THE church at Rome was made up partly of Jews and partly of Gentiles; and one great and obvious design of this epistle, as might be seen in various passages from the beginning to the end of it, was to reconcile them so far as that they should be brought to one mind—if not in all matters of opinion, at least in mutual affection, which, when there happen to be diversities of sentiment or practice, cannot possibly be sustained without mutual forbearance. Their common faith, while implying a full agreement in certain great and essential principles, did not supersede the diversities here spoken of; and the object of Paul was not that in these they should cease to differ, but that in these they should agree to differ. He did not vainly attempt by a stern decree

of uniformity to harmonise their understandings, so as that they should think alike; but he did attempt, by the mild persuasives of gospel charity, the far likelier fulfilment of harmonising their spirits, so as that they should feel alike in their love and benignant toleration of each other. Paul was pre-eminently and characteristically a peace maker—up to the limit within which peace was at all practicable, or in as far as the high demands of principle and purity would allow—for beyond that limit none more unyielding, and none more uncompromising than he. It was only as far as lay in him, or as far as it was possible, that he lived peaceably himself, or would recommend others to live peaceably with all men. He was first pure; and it was after

he had provided for this high interest—it was then that he was peaceable.

This beautiful combination, this blending together of truth and charity, is more fully and intimately seen by us, as we pass in detail over the successive verses of this truly catholic and enlightened chapter.

Ver. 1, 2. 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.' Who is meant by him that is weak in the faith we learn from the second verse, where we are told that the weak man was he who ate herbs—leaving us to infer, of course, that the strong man was he who believed that he might eat all things. He who was strong in the faith that Christ had fulfilled for him all righteousness, and left him nothing but the law of love would in very proportion to the force of this conviction, feel exempted from the scrupulosities of a mere formal or external observation; and not only assert, without compunction or fear, but also live in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free. It was easier, however, for the Gentile to do this than for the Jew, who had to overcome the prejudices of his early education and make a conquest over his yet lingering sensibilities on the side of what he had been taught to look upon as right and religious in other days.

For the genuine exhibition then of a strong and enlightened conscience, we should look not so much to the Gentile converts as to those Jewish disciples who did not judaise. And to them too should we look for greater tenderness towards those more sensitive of their brethren, who felt themselves not able to surmount the native partialities wherewith the recollections of their birth and of their hereditary worship had inspired them. They would all the more readily sympathise with feelings in which they themselves had shared—though with a struggle they had got the better of them. They could make greater allowance for these their brethren in the flesh than could others; and this is not the only example of first-rate men, the highest in strength and intellect, being at the same time the most generous in their indulgence to the infirmities of others. Paul, himself a converted Jew, and who now regarded as superstitious that which he formerly held as most bindingly and inviolably sacred—he nobly interposes to throw the shield of his protection over those kinsmen and countrymen of his who had embraced the gospel, yet could not altogether and conclusively quit the dear associations which had begun with their infancy, and were strengthened along the successive stages of

youth and manhood, till they had become babes in Christ, and continued babes or were still in the childhood of their Christianity, at the time when his epistle to the Romans was penned. We conceive that they would be chiefly the Gentiles who despised such. Paul, and those of the Jews who like him had had experience of the trial, would we imagine, with a fellow-feeling for the doubts and difficulties which themselves had mastered, view their weaker, but still their conscientious brethren, with respect and tenderness.

Accordingly in arbitrating between the weak and the strong, it is on the side of the weak that his first apostolic deliverance is given. He bids them be received but not to doubtful disputations—to be recognised on the footing of their common brotherhood in all the great and essential principles of Christianity; but not to be harassed with contentious argumentation about those matters of indifference, which with their yet abiding prejudices, were not of indifference to them. If they had not the understanding to be convinced of the nullity, because now the expiration of the Mosaic ceremonial—or at least if they could not attain such a strength of conviction as to displace their feelings on the side of certain Hebrew observances to which they still so fondly and tenaciously clung, it was not the part of their brethren to overbear these feelings, or even to annoy them with vexatious controversies, at once endless and unfruitful. These are what the apostle in his other writings characterises as vain janglings, and foolish questions, and contentions, and strivings about the law, which were unprofitable and vain. What he inculcates, instead of these, is a discreet silence, and meanwhile a respectful toleration—in the confidence, we have no doubt, that with mild and patient forbearance, all would come right at the last. He felt as if the important gospel truths which they laid hold of, would, by their own direct influence, dispossess the mind of all its Jewish absurdities and trifles. Seeing that at least the foundation on which they rested was sound, he trusted that the wood and hay and stubble would at length be consumed.* This is in perfect keeping with his treatment of the disciples in other instances. They agreed in all that was essential, else they could be no disciples of his; but they did not therefore agree in all things. He knew however that they were in the faith, and so under the teaching of the Spirit; and he trusted more to this than to the efficacy of any disputatious argument. And accordingly, instead of attempting to force them all pre-

* 1 Corinthians, iii, 11—15.

maturely into one way of thinking—he, on certain matters of inferior moment, left them very much to themselves, as he did those Philippians who were not yet perfect in all their views—Telling them, that “if in any thing ye be otherwise minded God shall reveal even this unto you.” Meanwhile he was satisfied if, with all their differences and shortcomings in things of lesser consideration, his own paramount charity took but full possession of them. “Nevertheless whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” This was admirable and exquisitely good management—the same indeed with that of our Saviour, who refrained from putting new wine into old bottles; and, instead of dogmatising His apostles either into truths or observances which they were not yet prepared for, spake to them only as they were able to bear it. It was in this spirit that Paul treated his Jewish converts; and he wanted all who were alike enlightened with himself to treat them in the same way.

There are other general lessons enveloped in this passage; but, before expatiating any further on these, let me prosecute a little longer our examination of particular verses.

Ver. 3, 4. ‘Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. 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.’ The apostle, in his even-handed manner, deals alike with both parties. After having told the strong that they should not despise the weak, he tells the weak that they should not condemn the strong. Let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth. In the state of his conscience, it were a profane thing in him to eat—for this would be to eat what he still thought was forbidden. But let him not judge others who do not think so in the same way. Let him not look upon them as profane persons, though they should eat what he would religiously recoil from. God has received, or taken them into acceptance. It is likely that they had some palpable evidence of this acceptance in the visible and extraordinary gifts of that period—conferred on some of those, who, in the full use of their Christian liberty, looked on all meats as alike: And so they might make out the same conclusion for themselves that Peter did respecting the Gentiles of the household of Cornelius, after that they had received the Holy Ghost. Have a care then, lest, in refusing fellowship with these, you withstand or contravene the judgment of

God. It is not improbable that these extraordinary gifts were shared alike by both parties—a lesson therefore to both of mutual respect and toleration. At all events, they had the express authority of the apostle, who, in the first verse, bade the strong receive the weak; and, in the third verse, tells the weak that God had received the strong. And it is thus that he would guard the one party against contempt of their fellows, and the other against censoriousness.

Ver. 5, 6. ‘One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 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.’ The same lesson is extended to days, respecting the observance of which there obtained a like diversity of sentiment. The apostle brings the same enlarged and enlightened casuistry to bear on both.* He wanted each man to act in conformity with his own persuasion, whatever that persuasion might be—only he wanted each man to be fully persuaded in his own mind. He did not care so much about what the persuasion specially was in such matters, as that the conduct should be agreeable thereto. He therefore forbore himself, and would have his disciples to forbear also, from all argumentation between the right and the wrong persuasion in these matters; but held it imperative that as the persuasion, which he wanted to be as thorough and decided as possible, so ought in all consistency the performance to be. The persuasion might be wrong, but this were only an obliquity of intellect. But if the performance were not as the persuasion, this were far more grievous—a moral obliquity—sin against the light of a man’s own conscience—the dereliction of what he thought to be his duty towards God. To think in one way of God’s will and act in another, were to renounce the authority of His will—an abjuration of the principle of living unto God—Whereas men might think diversely of that will, and yet the will of God be alike respected; or the principle of living unto Him be alike retained and alike proceeded on by all. Paul generously grants the benefit of this fair and liberal allowance to both parties in this controversy, whether of

* For our views in greater fulness on the usuality of meats and days, and certain other cognate questions—see seven Sermons, from the xii to the xvii, of the second volume of our ‘Congregational Sermons,’ being the ninth volume of the Series.

meats or of days. The Lord may be alike the object of regard with him who observes the day and with him who observes it not—or with him who eateth and him who eateth not. In the hearts of both these His supremacy may be alike felt and recognised; and there may be a like devotedness to His service in the lives of both.

Ver. 7, 8. 'For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.' Paul, as his manner is, stops at the passing suggestion which had occurred in the course of his argument—to render homage, by the way as it were, to the principle which it embodied. That principle is the entire surrender of the creature, in all his desires and doings, to the Creator who gave him birth. It is our part to make ourselves wholly over unto God. All true Christians, whether the observers or not of meats and days, are alike in this; and cannot possibly be otherwise without the forfeiture of their discipleship. Each real convert liveth unto God, and not unto himself; and each man dieth unto God, and not unto himself. We think that there is a difference between these two clauses, which, however minute in expression, is worthy, in respect of substance and meaning, to have perhaps a greater stress laid upon it than is usually done. It is 'none of us,' who liveth to himself; but it is 'no man' who dieth to himself. None of us, none of the household of faith, no real Christian, but who liveth unto God and not unto himself—for at the commencement of his new life he made a voluntary dedication of himself unto God; and the constant, while throughout the voluntary habit of this life, is to yield himself up in all things unto the will of God and not unto his own will. Whereas universally no man dieth unto himself. When he dies it is not by a voluntary act of his own; but at the decree of God, to whose absolute disposal of him, whether at death or after it, he must helplessly and passively give himself over. When it comes to this, then it is true of every man without exception, that he can have no choice, but is wholly in the hands of God—if not a Christian to be judged, and consigned by Him as a vessel of wrath to the place of everlasting condemnation; and if a Christian to be judged by Him, but that in order to his preferment as a vessel of mercy in the realms of everlasting blessedness and glory. It is only, however, the dying of the Christian that is of a piece with his living. If with him to live is Christ with him also to die is gain, or

Christ still, whom to win he counts all things but loss. It is he and he only who both lives unto the Lord and dies unto the Lord—so that whether he live or die, he is the Lord's—it being his great aim, and that of all genuine disciples so to labour, that, whether present or absent, whether living or dead, they may be accepted of Him.

Ver. 9. 'For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.' One naturally enquires here how it is, that the death and resurrection of Christ stand connected with His right of dominion or lordship over both the dead and the living. That His death in particular, gave Him a rightful sovereignty over the living, is otherwise expressed by the apostle in the following passage—"If one died for all, then were all dead; and he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." It is indeed a most rightful thing, that as He poured out His soul unto the death for us, we should give up our souls in absolute and entire dedication to Him. By His death He purchased us, and made us His own. We are His property, as bought with the price of His blood;* and therefore it is our part to glorify the Lord with our soul and spirit and body, which are the Lord's.—And again, as to the effect of His resurrection, we are told that Christ is the first fruits of them who slept—that because He liveth we shall live also—through death He destroyed him who had the power of death; and so, in virtue of the power wherewith He is now invested over heaven and earth, He can, in behalf of His captives in the grave, open for them the door of their prison-house, and make them sit together with himself in heavenly places, even around that throne of exaltation to which He has Himself been raised—and this "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." In this and many other Scriptures, there is enough of harmony with the verse before us—to explain the dependence here stated between, on the one hand, the lordship of Christ over both dead and living, and His own death and own revival, upon the other.

Ver. 10-13. '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.

* 1 Peter, i, 19.

For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.* The consideration stated in these verses is so very obvious, and put so clearly and conclusively, that it requires no lengthened illustration on our part. It had indeed been already put—in the fourth verse—'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.' It really does not belong to us—it is not ours—thus to be judging and censuring one another. Speak not evil then one of another, and judge not thy brother—for thou thyself art but a doer of the law, and not a judge. Your business with the law is to obey it, not to judge out of it. Who art thou then that judgest another?† The reason given by the apostle last quoted, for not reckoning with, and not grudging against one another, is, that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and that the Judge is at the door.‡ The habit of sitting in judgment on each other, so prevalent not only in the world at large, but in the professing religious world, is a peculiarly dangerous one—because it peculiarly exposes us, and that in the way of reaction or recompense, to the judgment of God. And accordingly we are told to judge not "that we be not judged;"‡ and that if we will judge others, we must not think that ourselves shall "escape the judgment of God;"§ and finally, that we should abstain from this practice, lest ourselves "be condemned."|| But the consideration urged here is not properly the danger of it, but rather, if I may so speak, the impertinence or the presumption of it. It is intruding on the office of another—an office wherewith He and He alone has been invested; and which it is competent for Him only to discharge. In the language of the Psalmist—when we thus venture on a function so sacred and so lofty, we really are meddling with a matter too high for us.¶ It is really not for us, who ourselves are to be sisted at the bar of judgment, thus to usurp the place of its tribunal, and take the judgment upon ourselves. This is the exclusive office of Him, before whom every knee is to bow and every tongue to confess; and our right place is that of them who do this homage, not of Him who receives it. This sort of judgment therefore, the judgment of others, is not within

our province—although there be another judgment which Paul does allow us to exercise, and which indeed he himself exemplifies—the judgment not of another's character, but of our own duty—the duty, not of pronouncing on what others are, but of performing what we owe to them, and owe them too in this very matter. No doubt he tells us authoritatively what this duty is; but he leaves us at liberty to form our own judgment in regard to the real truth and principle of the question, and to act accordingly. We are free to judge, whether we should eat or not; but he lays it down as our clear and imperative obligation not to eat, if thereby we are to put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in our brother's way. None more tolerant than Paul in things doubtful or insignificant—yet none more peremptory or uncompromising than he, when once the light of a clear and great principle breaks in upon him. Himself the strongest of the strong, he was yet the most indulgent of all men to the infirmities of the weak; nor can we imagine a more rare and beauteous combination than was realised by our apostle, who, without disturbance either to his enlightened conscience or manly understanding, could eat freely of all sorts of food—yet would eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest it should make his brother to offend.*

Ver. 14-16. 'I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of.' Paul here asserts his own right of judgment on the absolute merits of the question, and tells us the result of it—even the persuasion, nay more positive than this, the knowledge that no meat was unclean in itself. He further tells us, that he was so persuaded by the Lord Jesus—yet so unessential was this persuasion, so unimportant the point in question, that the same Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, did not interdict him from allowing to others the liberty of thinking differently. And accordingly at the very time of giving forth the sentence, and on the highest of all authority, that there is nothing unclean of itself, he yet leaves others at liberty to esteem any thing unclean. We are not sure, if anywhere else in Scripture, the divine authority of toleration is so clearly manifested; or so distinct a sanction given to a certain amount

* James, iv, 11, 12.

† James, v, 9.

‡ Matt. vii, 2.

§ Romans, ii, 3.

¶ James, v, 9.

¶ Ps. cxxxi 1.

* 1 Corinthians, viii, 13.

of liberty in opinion—even though it should be branded as latitudinarianism by those strainers at a rigid uniformity, who, as appears from this whole chapter, might carry their intolerance too far. Even at the expense of absolute, though not, it would appear, of indispensable truth, were men allowed to think of meats that they were unclean—and this in the face of the apostolic delivrance that they were not unclean. But while Paul suffered them to think so, he made it imperative, that, if they thus thought, so also should they act. They were at liberty to think any particular meat unclean; but, so thinking, they were not at liberty to use it. This would have been to sin against the light of their own minds—to trample on the high prerogatives of conscience, which, even though mistaken, does not therefore forfeit the supreme authority which belongs to it.

‘But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably’—or better and more impressive to the English reader—now walkest thou not in love. We are aware of nothing more attractive or amiable than the way in which Paul lets himself down to the weak; or than the flexibility of his accommodation to the harmless peculiarities even of the perverse and erring—all the more engaging in that when the slightest inroad was offered upon essential principle, none more resolute or inflexible in withstanding it than he. The explanation of these two different, though by no means opposite or inconsistent aspects, in the mind of our great apostle, seems to be this. He, on the one hand, a strong man himself, could be all respect and indulgence to the weak; and he pressed upon others strong as he was, the duty of being alike respectful and alike indulgent. But should these weak, on the other hand, not satisfied with this full allowance to themselves of their own peculiarities, impose these peculiarities on others as essential to salvation, and thus derogate from the sufficiency and the power of what Paul had all along and most zealously contended for as the alone ground of our acceptance with God, even the righteousness of Christ made ours by faith—then what he most freely and generously conceded to the infirmities of others, he would not, even by the minutest fraction, yield to their intolerance. The one he could do, for this were but an exercise of pity. The other he could not do, for this were a surrender of principle. And thus it is that acts of seeming contrariety in the life and ministry of Paul admit of being fully harmonised. When he circumcised Timothy for example, and purified himself along with the four men who had a vow upon

them for the accomplishment of certain rites prescribed by the law—these things he did under the influence of the first consideration, “because of the Jews which were in these quarters,” as we read in one place; and in the spirit of charitable accommodation to “the many thousands of the Jews which believe,” as we read in another. Paul was quite satisfied that on all such questions, the Gentiles should let alone the Jews; and that the Jews, on the other hand, should let alone the Gentiles. But when the Jews, not content with a toleration for themselves, turned upon the Gentiles, and would compel them “to live as do the Jews”^{*}—then it was that the influence of the second consideration came into play. And so the same Paul who circumcised Timothy,† and purified himself according to the ritual of Moses,‡ and that because of true brethren, who advised this deference to the Jews that he might not grieve or disturb their consciences—would not suffer Titus to be circumcised,§ and that because of false brethren, who would have made this deference to the Jews an occasion for bringing the Gentiles into bondage. To them he gave place by subjection, no not for an hour, and this for sake of “the truth of the gospel.” Nay, when Peter gave way in so far to this scheme of compulsion, Paul withstood him to the face—and this again for “the truth of the gospel.” A generous and voluntary compliance with Jewish scrupulosity is one thing; a forced compliance with Jewish intolerance is quite another. Paul would have yielded the former, because he felt for those which were of the circumcision, and is therefore to be applauded. Peter would have yielded the latter, because he “feared them which were of the circumcision,” and is therefore “to be blamed.” We can never sufficiently admire the honourable and consistent way which our great apostle found out for himself, when pressed with difficulties on the right hand and on the left. When holding question with those of his countrymen who were burdened with their own weak and wounded consciences, Paul knew how to be meek and harmless as a dove. When holding question with those of his countrymen, who, intent on judaising the whole Christian world, would have laid the burden of their ritual upon others, and thus infringed on the great doctrine of justification by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law—then Paul knew how both to be wise as a serpent, and bold as a lion. As the exhibition of a well-balanced mind, there are few

* Galatians, ii, 14.

† Acts, xvi, 3.

‡ Acts, xxi, 26.

§ Galatians, ii, 3, 4.

things more admirable than this: Nor, after Him who is the great Pattern of all righteousness, is there any scriptural character in which the best qualities of our nature are more gracefully and harmoniously blended; or where the noble conjunction of truth with mercy, of firmness with gentleness, is more conspicuously realised.

It is on the side of tenderness that he appears at present; and in behalf of a distress wherewith he of all others could most readily and delicately sympathise—the distress of an afflicted conscience. Let not thy brother be grieved with thy meat. The mere spectacle of what he deems to be a profane violation is fitted to give him pain. Or if brought into a state of ambiguity on this question of meats, between the influence of his own Jewish education, that would lead him to abstain, and the influence of Christian example, that would lead him to indulge—the very conflict is painful. But worse than painful, it might come to be destructive, should the authority of this example overbear him into a premature compliance against the light of his own conscience, not yet satisfied. In the one way you grieve, in the other you would destroy him—destroy him whom Christ died to save. Surely a little self-denial on our part is not too much to maintain the safety of the object for which Christ gave Himself up unto the death.

‘Let not then your good be evil spoken of.’ He is addressing himself to the strong; and the good he here means, their especial good, was the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. This liberty was liable to be perverted and abused in various ways. For example, they had to be warned not to use this

“liberty for an occasion to the flesh.”* And it is added, “but by love serve one another.” Now they were violating this love, if to please themselves they were either grieving or hurting the consciences of their brethren. And so there was a limit or a discretion to be observed in the exercise of this liberty—a liberty which ought never to be indulged, either for the gratification of their own licentiousness, or in opposition to that love which they owed to others.

And the reason given in our text supplies another limitation. They should not unnecessarily expose this good to be evil spoken of—even though the evil should be spoken of it falsely, or undeservedly. We learn from 1 Corinthians, x, 30—that the eating of certain things, such as what had been offered unto idols, was liable to be thus spoken of; and so along with the liberty of the gospel, the gospel itself was slandered, and Christianity made to suffer at the hands of its own friends. It should be felt enough surely, if this liberty minister peace to our own consciences; and it is a most unthankful return on our part, if we so parade it before the eye of others—as to excite prejudice and calumny thereby against the truth that is in Jesus. We might well surely deny ourselves somewhat for the good of the church and the advancement of godliness among men. “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, 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.”

* Galatians, v, 13.

LECTURE XCVI.

ROMANS xiv, 17.

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

‘Joy in the Holy Ghost.’ In the high and hidden walk of a Christian’s experience, there is much that looks very inaccessible to the eye of the general world. And it is evident, that just in proportion to their sense of its mystery and exceeding remoteness, will be their own hopelessness of ever realising it. They regard it as something of too recondit, too lofty a nature, for them to think of aspiring after. They have no fellowship with the

joys or exercises of a believer, no common feeling, and even no common understanding with Christ’s peculiar people, in ought that distinguishes this class of men from the rest of the species; and so they keep at a distance from these saintly and select few, just as they would from any outlandish society with whose tastes and gratifications they had no possible sympathy—either taking refuge in the thought, that it is all a fanatical imagination—or if it

be indeed a reality, that it is a reality which lies at so wide a separation from themselves, as to mock their every effort to lay hold of it.

It must be quite obvious, that in these circumstances it is most unwise needlessly to aggravate this impression which men have of the gospel, as of a hopeless and impracticable mystery—for this will only widen their separation from it the more. It is not for the friends of Christianity to give it more of a transcendental air and character than what natively belongs to it—for this would be to check the approaches of the yet uninitiated, who might thus be deterred from the enterprise of ever scaling those heights which seem so awful, or of penetrating those obscurities which seem to cloud the summits, or to gather and to settle among the deep recesses of experimental religion. Whatever can be made plain and palpable to the world at large, should be made to stand out in full exhibition before them; and nothing that is unnecessary or uncalled for should be said, which can augment their conception, either of the gospel as a thing that lies beyond the range of all ordinary apprehension, or of its disciples as of those who are kept together by some secret tact that is incommunicable to all other men—the spell of a magic or a masonry, that can only be known or guessed at by themselves.

We are sensible, however, that with every effort at the explanation of Christian truth, there will remain on the minds of all who are not Christians an impression of its mystery. The distinction will still be kept up between the children of light and the children of this world; and the former will appear to the latter as if they spoke in an unknown language. There will be little community of thought or of feeling betwixt them; and however desirable to make the most of any right approximation that is at all possible, yet we are not to expect but that, in the whole cast and habitude of their understandings, the two societies of the church and the world will ever be widely apart from each other.

These are the first reflections which our text has given rise to—for we are not aware of any that is more removed beyond the limits of all common and earthly experience. We even fear that among those who profess a stricter and more serious Christianity, this joy in the Holy Ghost is seldom realised; and that however much it may be in harmony with their doctrinal speculations, they have little or no experimental feeling of it. This is a topic on which, if they have any doctrine at all, it is at least a doctrine that has outstript their experience. They can-

not speak of this joy as a thing that is personally and practically their own. They cannot specify an occasion of their history that has been at all brightened by it. They have no distinct imagination of what it is; and altogether it is even to them that matter of strangeness and of secrecy which they do not recollect ever to have shared in. They would like to know about it—for as yet, we doubt not, the conceptions of many even of these are vague and unsatisfactory; and therefore, to help the understandings even of the zealous and declared orthodox upon this topic, as well as to reconcile to the uttermost those who look upon our faith as little better than that of mystics and visionaries, we should like that as much of elucidation as possible could be shed upon a theme that is either now-a-days very little thought of, or regarded in the light of a wild and fanciful illusion.

It may perhaps tend to a certain degree to dissipate the mystery, if you advert to a distinction which I shall now propose to you. Joy in the Holy Ghost may be either a joy in His directly felt presence within you; or it may be a joy in the work which He has done within you. Now the first of these conceptions is far more mysterious than the second of them. We shall not now enquire, whether His presence, as a visitor or indweller, is ever felt directly—whether he is ever recognised to be in our hearts by any immediate feeling or immediate perception—whether, in short, the first conception is ever realised in the experience of any Christian below. Instead of knowing Him to be present in the way of contact or of His immediately felt and perceived residence within us, His presence in the soul of the believer may only be inferred, not from His contact with the human spirit, but from His work upon the human spirit. And so this joy in the Holy Ghost might mainly resolve itself into joy because of the truths which He has revealed to the eye of the understanding, and joy because of the virtues which He has impressed upon the character.

Let us take these two in order—dwelling very briefly on the first; and reserving our chief attention for the second of these particulars.

I. First then, there is a joy felt in the belief and contemplation of the truths impressed on our conviction by God's Holy Spirit. Thus far the joy is not some mistaken afflatus which you can give no account of. You can distinctly tell what it is. There is a palpable thing which the Spirit has enabled you to lay hold of. He has taken of the things of Christ and showed them unto you. More particularly, He has shed a clearness on

the efficacy of the atoning blood; and though He has let you know that you are a very great sinner, He has also let you know that Jesus Christ is a very great Saviour. That truth to which you were aforesaid blind, He, by opening your eye, has made you to see; and it is such a truth as you cannot but rejoice in. He has caused you both to see a truth, and to hear a tenderness, in that gospel voice which issues from the mercy seat; and as surely as when the hostility of the best and powerfulest of your earthly acquaintances is turned into friendship, you cannot but be glad—so surely will you feel a gladness, so soon as made to behold, that the God who challenges iniquity and cannot bear it in His presence, has become God in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, and not imputing unto them their trespasses. The man who is tost and distracted because of the dangers and the fears which encompass him, when freed from these and so translated into peace, vividly feels a joy along with it. Now this peace is of the Spirit's working, just because the truth from which the peace did emanate is of the Spirit's teaching. He teaches it through the word, by opening our eyes to the reality of Scripture. And so the joy which is felt because of the first ingredient of Heaven's kingdom that is specified in our text, even because of the peace into which the sinner has been translated—this joy may be regarded as entering into the third ingredient of that kingdom, even joy in the Holy Ghost.

II. But secondly. There is a joy in the Holy Ghost because of the virtues which He has impressed upon the character. Here too there is something tangible, that furnishes, as it were, a material for our joy. The Holy Ghost works virtue in the character of him upon whom he operates; and joy in this virtue is joy in the Holy Ghost. Here is another abatement then, on the supposed mystery of this affection: and though we cannot go along with those who term themselves rational Christians, and would expunge all mystery from the doctrines of the gospel—yet we hold it most undesirable that any of its truths should be enveloped in greater mystery than properly belongs to them; and, on the other hand, most desirable, that all should be made as plain to the understanding, as the actual state of revelation, and the possibilities of human knowledge and comprehension will allow. We are aware of one expedient which we cannot go along with, and by which it has been attempted to make the whole of that theology which relates to the visitation and indwelling of the Holy Ghost more palatable to the intellect of the natural man. The Holy

Ghost is the Spirit of God; and whether that Spirit take up its residence within our hearts or not—whether or not it abides substantively there—whether it be in us as an essence, or only as a quality—still it is thought by many enough to warrant the gospel affirmation, that Christians have the Spirit of God if they have barely the characteristics of that Spirit fixed and delineated upon their own moral nature. And so in the estimation of many to have the Spirit of God, is just to have a character kindred to that of God, just as in common language we may say of one man that he has in him the soul of Newton, if he have the like taste and talent for philosophy—or that he has the spirit of some great statesman, if animated by the same patriotism—or of some great warrior, if actuated by the same thirst for the hazards and excitements of the contest—And so to have the Spirit of God, is regarded as tantamount, not to having that very Spirit within the receptacles of your bosom, but to your having a spirit there which is like unto His—and thus to have the Holy Spirit only designs you to be a holy creature, or that you have within you the spirit of holiness.

Now certain it is, in the first instance, that this view of the matter tends to alleviate the mystery, and reduces the doctrine of God's Spirit being in man to a something, which those of merely secular or literary habits of conception can easily understand. If by having the Spirit of God within us, there is nothing more meant, than that our spirit is kindred to that of God—there is in this affirmation nought of that miraculous sort of aspect which provokes the incredulity of nature. It is simply assigning to our mind the character which it happens to possess; and it must moreover be admitted, that whether a similarity between our spirits and that of God be the whole doctrine or not—this similarity is allowed by all to be the undoubted effect of that inhabitation by the Holy Ghost of man as His dwelling-place, and man as His temple which many, and we think soundly and scripturally, do contend for. The great object in fact of the Spirit's descent upon earth, and of His assuming as the place of His occupancy this one man and that other, is to impress upon them the very image and character of God. He bloweth where He listeth, but the design of it is to inspire every one whom He so listeth with the very virtues of the Godhead—and so there is one view according to which this joy in the Holy Ghost is really not at all unintelligible nor ought it to stir up that incredulity which a feeling of the marvellous and the incomprehensible so often brings along with it. It is

simply that direct joy which we have in the possession and the exercise of virtue. Joy in the Holy Ghost is the joy that naturally and constitutionally as it were, attaches to the spirit of holiness. If it be not pleasure in the immediate fellowship of God's Spirit—it is at least pleasure in its fruits, all of which are sweet unto the taste, and have in them what may be called a moral fragrance that ministers delight to the higher senses and faculties of our nature. There is an instant gratification to the heart in its own aspirations of love and purity and heaven-born sacredness; and if these indeed come from the Spirit, then it is a gratification in what He hath done and wrought upon us, and this is joy in the Holy Ghost. We may not be able to recognise His direct presence in our bosoms; but if we rejoice in the virtues which He hath implanted there, then it may truly be said that in Him we rejoice. And thus there may be many who have realised this affection, and yet perhaps have hitherto conceived that they were strangers to it; and just because they were looking for something else. They have perhaps been thinking all along, that joy in the Holy Ghost was a felt and conscious delight, from fellowship with a visitor within of whose personal agency and indwelling they had some mysterious access to know—otherwise than by the fruits of his operation, otherwise than by the graces and virtues which he imprest upon the character. Now should it so happen, that He is only known by His fruits—should the presence of God's Spirit in the soul, instead of being a matter of direct consciousness, be only a matter of inference from the graces and the virtues that be engraven upon the soul, then when rejoicing in them we may in fact be rejoicing in the Holy Ghost. There are some, we are persuaded, who have experienced this affection without knowing it. They have breathed a holy and a heavenly delight in prayer. They have felt a lofty and ethereal transport in the contemplations of sacredness. They have experienced how good a thing, it is to draw near unto God, and in the beatitudes of intercourse with Him as their Friend and reconciled Father, they have often tasted upon earth of those very beatitudes which shall be perfected in heaven. They have had the dawn upon their spirits even here of that ecstasy which lies in an affection for the Godhead; and in the outflowings of a kindred love towards their brethren of the species, they have also felt that there is a native and most exhilarating joy. Now during the whole of this experience they may not have adverted to the Spirit as at the time dwelling and operating within them;

and in the very moment when they were rejoicing in His work, they may not have been at all sensible that they were-rejoicing in Himself. Nevertheless it is even so. There is a joy in the Holy Ghost which is not more inexplicable than the joy that every Christian feels in the play and exercise of his good affections—in the good-will that moves him kindly towards one—in the gratitude that draws him in loving regards and services to another—in the virtuous triumphs of temperance or purity, when the eye has closed itself against some ensnaring temptation, or when a victorious resistance has been made to it—in the fervour of those more saintly and celestial exercises, when the soul enters into communion with its God; and just as the eye delights itself with all that is graceful or engaging in the scenery of nature so is the spiritual eye regaled when it expatiates over the graces of that moral imagery which stands revealed on the character of the Godhead. It is thus that there may be a joy in the Holy Ghost even when He is not thought of in His personality, or in the power of His influence upon the human spirit. It is a very possible thing to be under an influence, and at the very time when the influence itself is not at all the object of contemplation. The mind may in truth be busied with other objects. It may be thinking only of God or of man or of duty; or of those precious truths on which hang the salvation of the sinner, and his obligation to a life of sacredness—and the only delight whereof it may be conscious, is the delight that it has in entertaining these, and in feeling virtuously of these. Yet still, it may be true that it is both the Holy Ghost who hath introduced him to a luminous view of the objects, and who hath awakened in him all the good and corresponding emotions; and so, while to all sense he is occupied with virtue alone, and the joy that is felt by him is therefore a joy in virtue—yet nevertheless it is the Spirit that has originated and sustains the whole; and his joy in virtue is joy in the Holy Ghost.

According to this view of it then, joy in the Holy Ghost is joy in holiness; and it appears by our text to be one ingredient of the kingdom of heaven. By partaking of the Spirit of God, we are made to partake in the virtues of the Godhead; and the joy in question is a joy in these virtues. It is just such delight as the Eternal Himself has in the view and in the conscious possession of His own excellence—that primeval delight which cometh out of the inseparable union that obtained from everlasting between goodness and happiness—realised by the Mind of the Divinity, and reproduced in the

minds in which He has stamped the likeness of His own character. There may be no way of recognising the power of an agent within your heart, but by the effects of his agency. There may be no way of ascertaining that the hand of a worker has been there, but by his handiwork; and all the pleasure which many a Christian feels in the Holy Ghost may be nothing more than the pleasure that is felt in those moralities of the heart, into which he has been renewed, and which are the traces of the Spirit's operation. If you want to ascertain whether ever you had the joy of our text, it is surely indispensable that you fix and determine what sort of thing it is. You may otherwise be led upon a wrong track of enquiry; and droop into despondency because you have not met with an evidence that is no where to be found. In regard to the Spirit of God, you neither hear His voice, nor do you see His shape; and you cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. But you may know Him by His fruits; and if these fruits do indeed regale your moral appetite for goodness and righteousness and truth—if obedience be the fruit; and you feel that in this obedience, as in the keeping of the commandments, there is a great reward—if gladness have sprung up in your heart along with the graces of the new creature—if you have ever tasted that to be in a holy is to be in a happy frame; and that to breathe in a religious atmosphere is of itself to breathe in an atmosphere of purest delight—This perhaps is all the evidence that you have a warrant to look for; and instead of expecting a joy in the Holy Ghost analogous to that which one has in personal intercourse with a friend—instead of beholding any direct manifestation of His presence within you, you may never on this side of time be admitted to see more than the marks of His performance upon you—And we repeat, that if you have ever felt a joy in the meekness and the godliness and the love and the temperance and the purity which it is His office to impress upon the soul, this may be joy in the Holy Ghost—this may be the very joy that you are in quest of.

And by urging this upon you, I have another object in view than to guide you aright in the pursuit of evidence. I should like to take an opportunity now of expounding to you the real essence of heaven's blessedness. This joy in the Holy Ghost is an ingredient of the kingdom of heaven; and you cannot be too pointedly or repeatedly told—that what constitutes your happiness there, is that which has constituted the happiness of the Godhead from all eternity. I want you to separate in thought the main and

characteristic enjoyments of paradise from all those secondary or subordinate enjoyments wherewith we fancy it to be peopled; and again to assure you that the ecstasy of these ethereal abodes lies not in heaven's music, or heaven's splendour, or any adaptation between the materialism of heaven and the glorified senses of those who are admitted to its transports and its triumphs. The joy in the Holy Ghost which will be enhanced and perfected there, and of which we have a foretaste here, is the joy which God Himself has in holiness. He delights in His own Spirit, in its graces, in its attributes, in all the beauteous and venerable characteristics which belong to it; and by imparting to us of this Spirit, He gives us the very materials of that delight which constitutes His own essential and unchangeable happiness.

In other words, the joy of heaven is mainly and substantially speaking, a moral, a spiritual joy; and if the greatest happiness lie in the enjoyment of what we most love, then the best definition that can be given of the happiness of immortality, is that it consists in the enjoyment of righteousness by those whose nature it is supremely to love righteousness. To them the most delicious harmony by far is that moral harmony which they feel to be within their own heart, where righteousness hath taken up its secure and everlasting possession; and to them the most glorious of all splendour is that splendid righteousness wherewith, among the angels and saints and hosts both of the redeemed and the unfallen, they are every where encompassed. But chiefly will they have joy in the city of the living God, because God Himself is there; and the light of His manifested countenance will be the light thereof. It is because of the worth and the goodness and the moral grace and grandeur that radiate direct upon their view from the aspect of the Divinity—it is because of the high and the holy perfections of virtue which sit enthroned in the place where His honour dwelleth—it is because of the sympathy which through the Spirit given to us is felt in our own bosom with the virtues of the Godhead, and the love wherewith He rejoices over those creatures on whom He hath impressed the lineaments of His own holy nature, reflected back again, by them on that primary excellence from which all their holiness is derived—It is because of these moral elements that the joy of paradise is full. All there have a godlike virtue, and therefore it is that their happiness is godlike.

And it would at once purify your thoughts of heaven, and deliver the work of your preparation for it from all taint of legalism, could you but clearly under-

stand that the great object of the economy under which you sit is to make you like both in character and in enjoyment to God. Just think what it is that forms His motive to righteousness. Just make out a distinct reply to the one question—whether is God righteous because of a law of righteousness that is over Him, or because of the love to righteousness that is in Him? He it is obvious, is under no law, and is responsible to no jurisdiction. Any act of virtue in Him is not an act of deference to any authority—nor is it in submission to the control or the cognisance of any superior. When He does what is right, it is not because He is so bidden, but because to his taste there is a beauty and a beatitude in rightness. The virtue that is observed as a thing of commandment, is of a character wholly dissimilar and distinct from the virtue that is indulged in as a thing of native and spontaneous delight. Now God is not the subject of a commandment. All that He does is not of constraint from without, but of choice from within: and when righteousness, from a matter of constraint becomes a matter of choice, it instantly changes its whole nature, and rises to a higher moral rank than before. It is impossible that God can be at all moved by the authority of a law, or that the fear of its reckoning or its vengeance can have any weight upon Him. And so we, in proportion as we are like unto God, are dead unto the law—that is, dead to a sense of its threatenings—dead to all feeling of compulsion—delivered from every impression of a superior standing over us, and overbearing our own pleasure by His resistless prerogative and power. But the same God whom it is impossible to move by law's authority, moves of His own proper and original inclination in the very path of the law's righteousness. And so again, we in proportion as we are like unto God, are alive to the virtues of that same law, to the terror of whose severities we are altogether dead. We are no longer under a schoolmaster. Our obedience is changed from a thing of force into a thing of freeness. It is moulded to a higher state and character than before. We are not driven to it by the rod of authority. We are drawn to it by the regards of a now willing heart to all moral and all spiritual excellence. It is upon a well of living water being struck out in the heart of renovated man—it is upon the entrance there by the Holy Ghost—given unto all who receive the Saviour—it is upon His operation by which we are made to delight in the very moralities, and so to taste the very joys of the Godhead—it is upon that transformation by which the spirit of bondage is cast out, and succeeded by the spirit of

adoption and of glorious liberty—It is thus that the joy of my text arises in the disciple's bosom; and while even here it forms an ingredient of heaven's kingdom, it is also the best presage of that eternal heaven which is awaiting him.

Such views, if more cherished and more proceeded on, would do away every imagination of an antinomianism in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The end of that gospel is not to set aside human virtue, but altogether to purify and to raise it. It is to set aside an old economy, by which virtue was prescribed; but under which it became an ignoble thing, and gathered upon its whole aspect a taint of mercenary sordidness. And it is to substitute a new economy in its place, under which virtue, so far from being expunged, is animated by the very spirit and brightened into those very hues of loveliness wherewith it is irradiated in the sanctuary of the Eternal. It is to exalt the selfish and low-born morality of earth into the sacredness of heaven; and not to extort the offerings of reluctance and fear, but to inspire at the very time that it bids the services of an affectionate and willing obedience. I do not ask, if you ever rejoiced in the Spirit of God felt as if personally alive and present in your bosom. This is a test of your discipleship, to which I fear that few if any of this, and very few of any congregation whatever, could respond. But I ask, if you ever rejoiced in the law of God, felt to be that pure and righteous and elevated thing which the Psalmist professed to be his delight and meditation all the day. This is a test that I do insist upon; and if not a joy in the direct feeling of the Spirit's presence, it is at least a joy in the fruit of the Spirit's power. It is all the length to which I feel warranted to carry my explanation; and a length to which, if there be any here present who has practically come, we can at least promise to him the blessedness of the man who delighteth greatly in the commandments.

In our first head, we spake of the joy that is felt on our believing the truths of the gospel, and more especially the truth of God's reconciliation to us in Christ Jesus. We are glad because of peace betwixt us and God; and peace is one ingredient of heaven's kingdom mentioned in our text. In our second head of discourse, we spake of the joy that is felt on our acquiring the virtues of the gospel. There is an immediate delight in righteousness or virtue, that accrues by a law of moral nature to the possessor of it; and righteousness is another ingredient of heaven's kingdom mentioned in our text. Joy in the Holy Ghost, which is the third ingredient, may be regarded by

some as joy in the two former; and called joy in the Holy Ghost, simply because peace and righteousness are the work of the Holy Ghost. But additionally to the joy which the mind has in these effects of the Spirit's operation, there must, after experience of these effects, be a distinct joy, when the mind takes cognisance of them in connection with their cause—when the Christian can trace the virtues which he has been enabled to exercise, to the source from whence they emanate—when he finds, that in proportion to the fervency and faith of his prayers for the Spirit of all grace, he is actually made rich in the graces and accomplishments of the new creature. There is a joy in the very investiture of these moralities; but a further and a distinct joy in the consideration of who it is that has put them on. When the Christian reflects on himself as a temple of the Holy Ghost—when he thinks of being so signalised—when enabled thus to judge, that God walks in him and dwells in him; and upon this evidence that He has put a law into his heart making him to love it, and written it in his mind making him to understand it—There is elevation in the very thought; and though it may not be joy in the directly felt presence, yet it may be joy in

the inferred presence of the Holy Ghost. To arrive at this, my brethren, you have to entertain the truths of the gospel, even until you come clearly to see and firmly to have faith in them. You have to cultivate the virtues of the gospel, even until they become the main delight and exercise of your lives. You have to pray that the eye might be made clearly to apprehend the one; and the heart to be more and more smitten with a love for the other, and a sense of their supreme obligation. You are to persevere in asking even till you receive, and in seeking even till you find, and in knocking even till it be opened to you; and, however remote and recondite the acquirement may appear to you now—yet, if you will just set out in good earnest from the humble elements of Christian scholarship and go on unto perfection, you will, from a joy in the truth and a joy in the virtues of the gospel, arrive at a distinct joy in the fellowship of Him who hath manifested these truths, and moulded you to these virtues. You will pass on to the higher stages of the Christian experience, and be at length emboldened to say that the Spirit of God witnesseth with our spirits, that we are indeed His children; and hereby know we that we are in Him, even by the Spirit which He hath given to us.

LECTURE XCVII.

ROMANS xiv, 17—23.

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. 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. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

WE recur to the 17th verse in this lecture, simply because of the immediate reference made to it in the verse which follows—‘He that in *these things* serveth Christ’—serveth Him in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost—These things are both acceptable to God and approved of men. The circumstance of their being approved of men, as well as acceptable to God, plainly enough intimates that the social is blended with the sacred in the services here specified. The righteousness of our text includes more than the righteousness which is made ours by the faith that is well-pleasing to God, but also the righteousness that is good and profitable to men. The peace comprehends in it more than that peace

of God which passeth all understanding, keeping our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus; but also the pacific virtues of the blameless and unoffending citizen, who does all that in him lies to maintain concord and good-will in his neighbourhood. Even the joy, though primarily it be that joy in the Lord which is the strength and alimant of the spiritual life—yet as being the opposite of moroseness, or of sullen and infectious gloom, is fitted to have a gladdening influence over the daily companionships of that believer who serves his God, not in the spirit of fear, but in the spirit of love and peace and a sound mind. In all these ways may the virtues of the 17th verse realise the two-fold property ascribed to them in the 18th.

They may at once be acceptable to God and approved of men.*

Ver. 19. 'Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.' In this pacific spirit, the spirit of conciliation and charity, let us follow after the things which make for peace—not after the vain questions which minister strife rather than godly edifying, but after the great and undoubted objects on which all the real disciples of Jesus are sure to coalesce, and to strive for with one mind and one soul. The things on which they agree are not only far more numerous, but of greatly surpassing importance over the things which differ—provoking each other to love and to good works—exhorting one another daily, while it is called to-day—assembling together in meetings of fellowship and prayer, for their mutual confirmation both in the faith and holiness of the gospel—uniting in their schemes of Christian philanthropy, the combined prosecution of which in our day has led to many a delightful re-union of spirit among professing Christians; and given rise to so many periodic festivals of a common cause and common charity, in which all might rejoice—These be the things that make for peace; and within the limits of essential principle, will cause all sectarian diversities to be forgotten.

'And things wherewith one may edify another.' Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.† Let us live, not peaceably only, but profitably with each other. He had before told his converts—as far as possible, and as much as lay in them, to live peaceably with all men. He was obliged to lay these qualifications on the advice he gave them—for purity is a higher object than peace; and as it is our first duty to profit men, rather than please them, it might often be impracticable to labour for the convenience of saints, without stirring up the enmity of unconverted nature. But whatever danger there may be of exciting the displeasure of the unregenerate in our attempts to convert, there is far less danger of incurring the wrath or hostility of disciples in our attempts to edify—only provided however, that we keep by the things which make for edification. We cannot answer for that unanimity which is so desirable, if Christians will be so pragmatical and injudicious, as to be urging their own small and senseless peculiarities on the acceptance of others. Would they only keep by what is great and essential, seldom or

never would any real Christians at least fall out by the way. They are the vain janglings about words of no profit, which minister to wrath rather than to godly edifying; and often the very reason why the things which men follow after make not for peace, is because they make not for edification. Surely there is good and worthy cause here, why a disproportionate stress should not be laid upon trifles. A most important, nay a vital interest may hinge upon it. Our Saviour's prayer* would intimate that the progress of Christianity in the world, its further and larger acceptance among men, depends most materially on the ostensible unity of those who are already Christians. They are the divisions of the religious world which have proved so fatal to the growth of religion in society. Zeal is a good thing, but only when expended on a good and adequate subject. It is not to be told what mischief has been done by needless controversies—both within the church, among Christians themselves; and without, in restraining the operation of that good leaven which might otherwise have leavened all the families of the earth. Christ's prayer on earth for His disciples was, "that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

Ver. 20. 'For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.' Do not for the sake of meat destroy the work of God—a reiteration of what he had said before in ver. 15—'Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.' For if any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy. It is true that that which entereth into a man defileth not a man; and as far as the effects of the mere material entry of any sort of food into the stomach are concerned 'all things are pure.' God hath now abolished the distinction between clean and unclean meats; and what He hath cleansed, that call not thou common or impure. The evil thing lies not in the eating, but in the eating with offence. It is the offence, and that alone, which constitutes the evil. There is no evil that results from eating, if no spiritual injury is sustained by it. But there does accrue a very great spiritual injury, if not to yourself, at least to your brother—if you so eat as to make him fall.

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.' In opposition to what he denounces as evil in the preceding verse,

* For a larger exposition of this verse, see the second sermon in our volume of 'Commercial Discourses'—being the sixth volume of the Series.

† 1 Corinthians, xiv, 12.

* John, xvii.

he tells us what is good in the present one—a good which he nobly exemplified himself, when he said that he would not eat flesh while the world standeth, lest it should make his brother offend. He would not grieve him by stirring up weak and anxious scrupulosities in his mind. And, what is worse than merely grieving, he would not seduce him into an act of positive transgression, by causing him to outrun the light of his own conscience—which he would do, if, through the power of imitation, he tempted him to eat that which he saw himself eat, before that he was fully convinced of its lawfulness. The good or the evil all hinged, not on the thing in itself, but on the effect it was calculated to have, or actually had, on the practice of others—which practice was in them sinful, if it traversed their own principles. It is thus that our eating might prove the putting of a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in a brother's way.

Ver. 22. 'Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.' It is obvious that Paul had a greater respect for him whose conscience was free of these difficulties, and of the consequent distress that ensued from them. The man who felt himself at liberty, had on these questions at least the spirit of power and of a sound mind,* which in one of his addresses to Timothy he opposes to the spirit of fear. But to complete the description of that which he commends, we must add the spirit of love also; and this would lead us to look not only at our own things, but at the things of others. It is very well for himself that his conscience does not trouble him—so that whether he eateth or eateth not, his own peace with God might remain unbroken. It is a happy thing for him that he condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth. This is so far good; and were self one's only concern, there might in this matter be the indulgence of an unbounded liberty. But there are other interests at stake; and he is bound by the obligation of God's second great law to look at these. More especially is he bound not to give offence, in a thing not of obligation but of indifferency, so as to pain his brother's feelings, or gall him in a matter on which he is sore or weak; and still more not to place a stumbling-block before him, over which he might fall by running against the light of his own convictions—for though the strong man may eat, because, believing it to be lawful, with him to eat is a matter of indifferency—the weak man may not

eat, because if he do, believing it to be unlawful, then it would prove that with him to sin were a matter of indifferency—'Hast thou faith?' is a question which does not refer to the faith that is unto salvation—but to clearness in the matter on hand—Art thou clear and confident as to the lawfulness of eating what by the law of Moses was forbidden? They who are not clear, but stand in doubt, have not faith in this matter, though they may have the faith which is unto salvation. He who has the faith, who is fully persuaded in his own mind that to eat is allowable—let him have it to himself before God. There is no call upon him to parade it before others—so as either to hurt their religious sensibilities, or to harass them with doubtful disputations.

Ver. 23. 'And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' For, 'he that doubteth,' the translation would be as correct in itself and more accordant with the apostle's reasoning, if we read 'he that discerneth and putteth a difference between meats.' It is so given in the margin of some of our Bibles. The judaizing Christian did something more than doubt the lawfulness of eating what was forbidden by the Mosaic law. He had the positive conviction of its unlawfulness. For him then to eat would be to sin, not in the face of a doubt, but, worse than this, in the face of an absolute and affirmative conviction. It is proper, however, to observe, that even to do that of which one doubts, or is not sure, whether it be lawful or no, has in it a certain, though it may be a less degree of moral hardness. It is to incur the hazard, if not the certainty, of falling into a transgression; and to brave such a risk, argues a weak feeling of religious obligation.

At the same time, it is further proper to remark—that whereas the word damnation, in the common acceptation, means the future and everlasting punishment of the wicked—the proper and original meaning of it is condemnation—marking therefore the blameworthiness of the act to which it is applied—but not implying necessarily the final and irreversible ruin of him who has committed it. The same observation holds true of 1 Cor. xi, 29—'He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (judgment) unto himself.' This mitigation of the sense will not make any real Christian less careful of offending.

'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin' This here is not the universal proposition which some would make of it. It does not mean that every action of an unbeliever is sinful, because he wants that

* 2 Timothy, i, 7.

justifying faith, without which there can be no acceptance either for his person or his services. This may be true, but it is not the truth contained in this passage. As we said before, the faith here spoken of is a faith limited to a particular point. The man has not the belief that to eat certain kinds of food is lawful; and if he eat of them notwithstanding, to him it is unlawful.

We are not to imagine of this chapter, that the subject of it has now gone by. There are principles here of universal and abiding application—lessons of standing authority, the obligation and importance of which remain to this day; and though the casuistry of Jewish meats may seldom or never be in practical demand amongst us—yet is there a certain other casuistry, which gives rise, as before, to the distinction between weak and strong; and which still continues to exercise, and sometimes to perplex the consciences of enquirers.

In separating, as our great apostle did with inimitable skill, the clear from the doubtful—there is one obvious consideration which ought never to be forgotten. Each man is still his brother's keeper. We are all responsible to a certain extent for the Christianity of other men; and though there be many indulgences, which, viewed singly and in themselves, the light and liberty of the gospel would allow—yet are we bound to abstain from them, if our example otherwise would inflict a moral injury upon any of our fellows. Let me notice, as a case in point, the literalities of Sabbath observation. There are certain imaginable freedoms on that day—an evening walk—an act of convivial intercourse with a pious relative or friend—a journey, a visit, or, written message in reply to some call of greater or less urgency, but the necessity of which, or the mercy of which, admits of being interpreted variously. Many will be found to contend for the innocence of these; and perhaps some undoubted Christians there are, who might occasionally give in to them, without violence to their own consciences, or even any damage done to their own spirituality. But there might be others looking on of a different habit and education, who could not share in these liberties, without a shock on their religious feelings; or it may be such a stress on the inner man, as might seriously derange and put out of joint the whole structure or system of their religious character. They may have been precipitated into an imitation which yet sat heavy on their consciences—condemning themselves in that to which the example of another may have emboldened them; and in which circumstances, therefore, more especially if the danger of an issue

so lamentable was known, the example ought not to have been given. It is thus, we apprehend, that an English Christian would acquit himself during his temporary residence in one of the retired parishes of Scotland. He would conform to our standard of Sabbath observation; and in the exercise of a right delicacy and discretion, would refrain here from liberties which might be comparatively harmless in or around his own dwelling-place. He would not, for instance, if made aware, scandalise the domestics of any of our families, by superadding the instrumental music of the drawing-room to the worship of Sabbath even—though, possibly with him a usual accompaniment, it might minister to the devotion of his own feelings, and so add to the perfection of the service. Would that this principle had been more respected ere the fearful experiment now in progress of railway desecration had been so recklessly gone into; and which, if persevered in, threatens to speed beyond all calculation the religious degeneracy of our beloved land.

As a further exemplification of the principles unfolded in this chapter, we might instance those numerous questions, of shade and degree, which have been raised about conformity to the world; or, more explicitly, about the share which might be lawfully taken in this world's companies or this world's amusements. Amid the difficulties, perhaps the impossibility, of advancing any strict and literal solution that shall be applicable to all cases, there is one thing unquestionable—and that is the concern which all ought to feel for the moral safety of others beside themselves. Grant of the strong Christian that he may pass unscathed through the festive parties of the ungodly, and perhaps even leave the savour of what is good in the midst of them; or grant that without injury to his own spirit, he may lend his occasional presence to certain of the haunts of public or fashionable entertainment—it must not be forgotten that many are the weak Christians, who, if led to the premature imitation of his example, would inevitably perish among the surrounding contaminations of an atmosphere which they could not breathe in and yet live. There can be no mistaking here the application of Paul's heroic and truly high-minded example. He would not eat flesh while the world standeth, should it make his brother to offend; and neither ought we to enter the ball-room or theatre while the world standeth, if it make even the very weakest of our brethren to offend. It were making an unlawful use of our Christian liberty to do even that which is lawful—

should it precipitate others to do the same things, if either with a deleterious effect upon their characters, or if beyond the concurrence and bidding of their own consciences.

And if in things doubtful or indifferent, it be the duty of any Christian to deny himself for the sake of others, how much more imperative is the obligation under which he lies to refrain from the example of all that is clearly and undoubtedly wrong. It is not to be told what enormous mischief has been done by the infirmities, and still more by the sins of those who have attained a name and eminent reputation in the Christian world—and this in the way of tempting others to relax the strictness of their lives, because concluding that they too are surely within the limits of safety, though with the same amount of carelessness and sinfulness which they see to be in those whom all have agreed to acknowledge and admire. The pernicious consequences of even an occasional slip, and still more of a sinful habit, in professors of high standing, are truly deplorable; and such as to lay them under a deep responsibility for the souls of others as well as their own souls. Their fall might involve the fall of many. Because of their misconduct the spirituality of many might wax cold. Their mere follies or faults of temper might serve to lower the standard of practical Christianity in their neighbourhood. Even their wrongness and waywardness in little things may cast a soil on the profession of the gospel; and when, instead of a small, a great moral injury is done—how dreadful the penalty. For woe to the world because of offences. It were better for a man that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea—than that he should offend one of Christ's little ones.

There is another, and we think a most legitimate inference, to be drawn from this passage. It is that Christians should either cease to differ—or, if this be impossible, that then they should agree to differ. We of course exclude such differences, as, relating to what is vital and essential, imply that either one or other of the parties is not Christian—disowning, as they do, some weightier matters, whether of doctrine or of the law. There is a territory within which controversy is not only permitted but enjoined; and so we are bidden to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. And there is another territory within which controversy has had the interdict, and that of sacred and scriptural authority, laid upon it; and so we are told to avoid foolish and hurtful questions, and to indulge not in vain janglings, and to refrain from doubt-

ful disputations: And we hold it a mighty reinforcement of this lesson by the apostle, that our Saviour should have rebuked His disciples, because they forbade the man who worked miracles yet followed not after themselves—saying, Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us. It may be difficult to assign in theory the limit between these two territories—yet, with a stronger and more general charity in the religious world, we feel persuaded that it were not so difficult to conform to it in practice. The treatise which should undertake to define and set forth the line of demarcation, might very possibly give new impetus to the whirlpool of debate—being itself the brooding or fermenting cause of new controversies. This is a very likely result, whenever the subject is introduced or started anew on the field of argument. Yet we despair not that on the field of action, or in the real and actual administration of the church's affairs—many of the stoutest and fiercest differences both of the present and former ages will at length fall into desuetude—so that all Christians might be at length brought to be of one mind; or, if not, that it shall at least be patent to the eyes of the world, that they are all of one spirit. We are aware of liberalism, that it is a term recently devised to express a spurious liberality, or this virtue carried to a hurtful and unprincipled excess. And we are also aware that latitudinarianism is generally employed in a stigmatical or bad meaning—else we might have said that there is a wholesome latitudinarianism. For example, we cannot imagine how one should read in moral fairness the Epistle to the Romans, or still more perhaps the Epistle to the Galatians—and yet, if he refer to these scriptures at all, should reject the doctrine of justification by faith alone—So that to recognise as Christians those who deny this article, we should hold to be liberalism. Again, there are other differences, on neither side of which has the Bible left any such express or authoritative deliverance, as would lead us to pronouncement of one or other of the parties, not only that they are in the wrong, but fatally in the wrong. We should rank among these differences many questions of meats and days and priestly vestments, and many points both of church order and church government—So that to recognise as Christians those of the Episcopalian or Independent or Methodist or Baptist persuasions, we should hold not to be liberalism, but right and genuine liberality. Paul exemplified both these methods of dealing with controversies and disposing of them—Bold and resolute and uncompromising in all that was essential—

Yielding and generous in all that was not so ; and, however strong and free from all scrupulosity himself, yet deferring with the utmost tenderness to the honest and conscientious scruples of other men. He thus acquitted himself of two most important services—the one as an intrepid soldier, the manly defender and guardian of the church's purity ; the other as a discreet and wary counsellor, who knew both how to judge charitably, and to arbitrate wisely, for the church's unity and peace.

And unless we follow this high example, we do not see, how the blissful consummation of that unanimity in the Christian world, of which our Saviour speaks as the stepping-stone to a universal Christianity through the world at large,* is ever to be arrived at. Surely for the fulfilment of this sacred object, it were well that in the confessions of different churches, articles of faith, viewed as articles of distinction or separation, should not be unnecessarily multiplied ; and we would further submit, whether it is not a most unwarrantable hazarding of this high and precious interest, to speak of the exclusively divine right of any form whatever of ecclesiastical government. It is thus that certain strenuous advocates, both of Presbytery on the one hand, and of Episcopacy on the other, have been heard to affirm, that they will never consent to the loosening or letting down of a single pin in the tabernacle. This tenacity of theirs we should all the more readily understand—if the specific information of each and every pin were really to be had in Scripture. But in the absence of this, we do think that there might be a great deal more of mutual toleration. It has been well said, that, while it is our duty to be wise up to that which is written, we should not attempt to be wise above or beyond it ; and so too, while it is our duty to be inflexible up to that which is written, it is surely not our part to be inflexible beyond it. We feel confident, that with the use and right application of this principle, there is immense room for the abridgment of the church's controversies. Let us hope that the movement is upon the whole in this direction ; and that, even amid the fits and fermentations of this busy period, the Christian world is now

heaving towards this better state of things —when the war of opinions shall cease ; and both truth and charity shall walk hand in hand. Heaven grant, that this perspective of brighter and happier days may be speedily realised.

And let us not be afraid lest, when controversies shall cease, men will therefore sink down into the ease and indifferency of liberalism. The tension of the mind will be fully kept up—only in another direction, and in a better way. If Christians will not then strive so much for the mastery in argument, they will be differently and far more profitably employed—in provoking to love and to good works. They might not be so intent on the work of judging each other, because far more intent on the exercise of judging themselves. Christianity will not be so much agitated as a question of opinion between man and man ; but far more sedulously prosecuted as a question between God and their own consciences. There will still be ample room for zeal and strenuousness—for an ardour that will burn with as pure and bright a flame, if not so fiercely as before. Ere the church militant shall become the church triumphant, we might still have to fight the battles of principle and of the faith with them who are without ; but let us hope that our internal wars will cease, by the differences among ourselves being healed. And let us not imagine that because there will then be the repose of mutual charity and peace, there must therefore be the indolence of quietude. The struggle to be uppermost on the field of championship, will then give way before a kindlier and more generous emulation—the struggle to be foremost in the zeal for the glory of God, and for all the services of Christian philanthropy ; and this too without the heart-burnings of rivalry or envy. For they will be all the readier in honour to prefer each other—when they shall have become more alive to their own shortcomings than to the perversities or defects of their fellow-men. Even now, and notwithstanding the manifold yet chiefly incidental controversies of our day, men in theology are looking greatly more to the points of agreement, and less to the points of difference—the promise and preparation, let us hope, for a long millennium of peace and prosperity to the Christian world.

* John, xvii, 21, 23.

LECTURE XCVIII.

ROMANS XV, 1—13.

“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. 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: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. 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. 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.”

IN the two first verses we are told what is the duty of the strong towards the weak—which duty is an obvious practical inference from the principles laid down in the foregoing chapter. It was that they should please their neighbour and not themselves. And yet Paul himself was in one sense any thing but a man-pleaser. In his epistle to the Galatians, he appears in wholly another character; and so tells us there—“Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”* And in a former part of this Epistle to the Romans, he says to the commendation of those who had not gained the approval of the Jews by submitting to circumcision, that their praise was not of men but of God. This difference between Paul at one time and Paul at another lay altogether in this. He never sought the praise or pleasure of men as an end; but he often sought it as a means to an end. He sought it when he could serve Christ by it. It would not have served Christ, but the contrary, had he given in to the judaizing Christians in the Church of Galatia; and, in compliance with their demand, laid the rite of circumcision on their Gentile brethren—and this too on the ground that it was necessary for their salvation. He, had it been placed on the same footing, would also have resisted their abstinence from meats—but not, when, without the concession of any such vital principle, this abstinence subserved the peace or extension of the Christian church. When these high objects were to be gained—then this thing of indifference became a thing of duteous obligation; and then not only were the strong taught to bear the infirmities of the weak—but every one was taught, not to please his neighbour, but to please his neighbour for his good to edification. Thus did Paul seek to please men in all things—because not seeking his own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved.†

Ver. 3 ‘For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.’ And here this matter of not eating flesh, in itself a perfect trifle, is made to rank with a virtue of the very highest order—the imitation of Christ. The quotation here given is from Psalm lxix, 9—the first part of which verse is applied by the apostle John to our Saviour; and the latter in this place by the apostle Paul. There was no pleasure in those reproaches of men, which were borne by our blessed Lord in the work of seeking after and saving them—when He endured the contradiction of sinners, and despised the shame of it. But a still more emphatic application of these words to Jesus Christ is to be found in that vicarious sacrifice which He underwent for the sins of the world—even those sins wherewith so much reproach and dishonour had been cast upon God. The burden of all this was made to fall upon the head of our blessed Saviour, who indeed took it upon Himself; and, by magnifying the law, took off indignity from the Lawgiver. Truly He pleased not Himself, when under the heavy load of the hour and the power of darkness, His soul became exceeding sorrowful, and He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Surely if Christ thus bore the sins of the wicked, we might well bear the infirmities of the weak.

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.’ He had just quoted from the Scriptures; and, to enforce the lesson he had just drawn from them, he comes forth with a general testimony to the worth and the estimation in which these writings ought to be held. It is true, that they are only the Scriptures of the Old Testament which are here alluded to—or such as were written aforetime—or, immediately, for the instruction of those

* Galatians, i, 10.

† 1 Corinthians, x, 33.

who lived many centuries back; yet distinctly and universally, for the instruction of the men of all ages. This is only one out of many places in the New Testament, where the 'Scriptures,' though but consisting then of the Hebrew sacred writings, have a power and a sufficiency ascribed to them which now-a-days we are apt to overlook. It is the illustrious testimony of Paul himself that they are able to make us wise unto salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus.* There is a glory and a virtue in these elder Scriptures, which should not be lost sight of. It were well that we made ourselves familiar with the high aspirations given to them by the Psalmist of old; † and still better with the attestations in their favour by Him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith—as repeated by His apostles after Him, and from which we assuredly gather that they were written, not for the men of bygone periods only, but also for our admonition on whom the latter ends of the world have come.

'That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope'—through the comfort which they directly give, and through the patience which both Scripture examples and Scripture exhortations are fitted to inspire. The connection of hope with comfort is quite obvious—seeing that hope is the best and likeliest of all topics for ministering consolation to those who may at present have much to bear; and also of hope with patience—seeing that patience worketh experience, and experience hope. The pertinency of this whole consideration to the argument which the apostle is now holding, will appear more distinctly if we recollect, that when he asked the dissentient parties of the church that he was addressing to give up their controversies, they were carrying their differences so far as to refuse one another the hopes and privileges of their common salvation. There were judaizing teachers, we know, who taught that except men were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved. ‡ And it would seem as if from the apostle's reasoning, that at least the weak brethren, were apt to look on their opponents as so many reprobates who had forfeited their claims to a blissful immortality; and also that the strong brethren made too little account of the spiritual well-being, and so the ultimate safety of their adversaries, in this contention—wounding their consciences, and perhaps caring not although destroyed by their meats, those disciples should perish for whom Christ died. The great object of

the apostle was to convince them that the question now so keenly agitated need not affect the everlasting condition of either party; that both might alike stand unto God and be alike accepted of Him; and that, after having passed through the ordeal of the last judgment, both might be admitted to life everlasting with Him who is Lord of the dead and the living. He therefore bids them cherish both for themselves and others the hope of their common salvation—looking on each other as heirs and expectants now, and to be partakers hereafter of the same glorious inheritance—when they shall ever be at rest, and all their partial and temporary differences here will be lost and forgotten in the reign of an endless and universal charity. Here they speak, and understand, and think, as children; but there, where they shall have attained to manhood, and all shall have become strong, they will put away the childish things—the trifles of their present vain and fruitless controversy.

Ver. 5. 'Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus.' 'The God of patience and consolation'—the expression varied here from comfort to consolation, though not in the original—where the reference therefore to the very terms of the last verse is all the more distinct in the ascription given to God, as the God of patience and comfort—or as the giver of these graces, which He is, when He strengthens us "with all might according to his glorious power unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."* We are here reminded of what is said of God the Father in 2 Cor. i, 3, 4—"The Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us all in our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." The sympathy of a common hope, begetting the sense of a common interest, would in every good and Christian mind, beget also the fellowship of a common or mutual charity, and so make them "like-minded one to another;" and it is added, "according to Christ Jesus," or after the example of Christ Jesus—even the example which he had already quoted in the third verse. The patience and comfort, it might have been said, though from God, are nevertheless through the Scriptures—the one being the Source of all our graces, the other their channel of conveyance. And the like-mindedness of this verse has certainly in it as one ingredient at least, that of which in Philippians, ii, 2, this

* 2 Tim. iii, 15. † Psa. xix, cxix, &c. ‡ Acts, xv, 1.

* Colossians, i, 11.

like-mindedness is said to consist—even in having the same love, of one accord, of one mind—under the influence of which spirit nothing would be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind each would esteem other better than themselves.

Ver. 6. But it is evident from this verse, that the like-mindedness here does not lie exclusively in this fellowship of a mutual charity one for another. It points also to the common direction of their minds towards one and the same object—that object being the glory of God. They may differ in certain observances; but what he wants of them is that they shall agree in this. Let him that regardeth the day regard it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord let him not regard it. In like manner, let him who eateth, and him who eateth not, agree in giving God thanks, and in giving God glory. This they should do with one mind; and, he adds, with one mouth. With our mind we must think the same things, ere with our mouth we can speak the same things. Were we then more slow to speak of the things on which we differ, and more ready to speak of the things on which we agree, it would mightily conduce to the peace and unity of the visible church. The members of the church at Rome differed in regard both to meats and days; and Paul as good as enjoined silence about these, when he bade them receive each other, but not to doubtful disputations. But, on the other hand, he bids them join with one mouth, as well as one mind, in giving glory to God. “Nevertheless whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”*

‘Even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ This is the peculiar aspect in which, as Christians, we regard God. Did we but view Him as the God of Natural Theology—apart from Christ, and out of Christ—there might be a fearfulness toward God, but no fellowship. It is our looking to Him, and so trusting in Him, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—it is this, which, specifically and characteristically marks our entrance on the religion of the gospel. Then begins our fellowship with the Father and with the Son—the best of all preparatives, according to the apostle John, for our having fellowship one with another.† And so it follows in

Ver. 7. ‘Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.’ He winds up his argument on this topic, by re-echoing what he had said at the outset of it. He bids

them receive one another, even by bearing one another. Surely if Christ made our sins no obstacle in the way of our reception, and that too at the time when we were enemies, we should make their infirmities no obstacle to the reception of those who are our brethren—weak brethren, they may be; but it will make us all the liker to our Saviour, who was meek and lowly in heart, if we bear ourselves with a peculiar gentleness towards them, seeing that we are required not to strive, but to be gentle towards all men.* He had compassion on them who were out of the way; and far more grievously out of it, than those erring or over-scrupulous disciples, in whose behalf and for whose indulgence Paul is now pleading. Surely if Christ adopted us into God’s family, we should adopt one another into our fellowship. And ‘to the glory of God’ too. He effected peace on earth in the way that brought glory to God in the highest. He reconciled us sinners unto God—yet so as to exalt His authority, and make all the glories of His character stand out in brighter manifestation than ever, to the eyes both of angels and of men. He received and recognised us as the children of His own Father, and so as His own brethren; but on such a footing as nevertheless redounded to the vindication and honour of the divine perfections: And it was indeed a signal triumph over difficulties insuperable to all but He—when out of such materials as the guilty aliens of the human race, both Jews and Gentiles, He gained such large accessions to the spiritual household of the faithful. Let not us impair this household, or narrow its limits—whether in reality, or in our own imaginations—whether by offences, on the one hand, as when we wound the consciences of the weak, and perhaps destroy those for whom Christ died; or by our intolerant and exclusive sectarianism on the other, as when we say that without certain ceremonial observances men cannot be saved. Let us not thus defeat the sacred policy of Him, who opened the door of admission for the world at large. Let Gentiles give up their contempt, and Jews give up their bigotry; and as Christ received both, let both receive one another. Let us do nothing to break off this fellowship; or to mutilate that church, by which is shewn to the universe the manifold wisdom of God.† It is therefore well added—that we should receive each other ‘to the glory of God’—for it were indeed a diminishing of His glory, thus to abridge the extent and entireness of that great temple, the materials whereof are gathered out of all nations

* Philippians, iii, 16.

† 1 John, i, 3, 7.

* 2 Timothy, ii, 24.

† Ephesians, iii, 10.

and of which Christ Himself is the chief corner-stone.

Ver. 8-12. '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: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. 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.' As he draws towards the close of his epistle, he seems as if to redouble his strenuousness for the fulfilment of its main object—which was the establishment of a common understanding between Jews and Gentiles—a full settlement of all the unhappy differences betwixt them. To effectuate this his favourite design, on which it is obvious that his whole heart was set, he puts forth all his powers of persuasion; and he evidently feels that his chief attempt must be to soften the prejudices of the Jewish understanding—or that his most necessary, as well as hardest task, was to propitiate and reconcile the minds of his own countrymen, all whose partialities had been violently thwarted by the free admission of Gentiles into the church, and more especially when accompanied with the indulgence of being exempted from the obligations of the ceremonial law. We can fancy as if it were in the spirit of his own characteristic policy, and to appease the wounded vanity of the Jews, that in the 8th verse he sets forth Jesus Christ Himself as being in His own person the direct minister of the circumcision—whereas afterwards he puts himself forward as being the humble minister under Christ for the conversion of the Gentiles. Certain it is that our Saviour, while on earth, very much restricted His ministrations to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But the great instrumentality employed by our apostle, and which he most wielded for gaining over the Jews, was a plentiful quotation of their own Scriptures. This was precisely what our Saviour Himself did, when, to do away another of their national antipathies, even the revolt which they all felt in the notion of a crucified Messiah—He argued from Moses and the Prophets, that Christ ought to have suffered these things, expounding "in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." And thus too Paul has recourse to a scriptural demonstration; and brings both psalms and prophecies to witness that the truth of God was as much committed to

the admission of the Gentiles within the pale of gospel mercy, as to the fulfilment of the promises made on behalf of the Jews in the ears of those patriarchs from whom they had descended.

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.' Having thus merged the distinction between these two classes, he makes them both the objects of a common invocation—and this in one of the most pregnant and precious verses of the Bible. The God whom he thus calls upon is designed by him 'the God of hope'—just because He is the Author of this grace, making us to 'abound in hope'—even as a little before He is called the God of patience and comfort, because He works in us these graces also—strengthening us "with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."

There are certain weighty lessons enveloped in the brief but emphatic sentence now before us, and some of which we shall slightly touch upon.

Our first remark is founded on the comparison of the 4th and 13th verses—whence we are made to perceive the identity of that effect which is ascribed to the Scriptures on the one hand, and to the Holy Ghost upon the other. In the first of these the apostle directs the attention of his disciples to the things 'which were written aforetime,' that through the Scriptures they might have hope. In the second, he prays for the same disciples, that they 'may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.' The respective functions of the Word and Spirit are thus brought into view; and more especially this important truth—that, though perfectly distinct from each other, their joint operation on the soul of man issues, not in two different results, but in one and the same result. The reason is, that the one is the agent, and the other the instrument, of one and the same service. And so the word of God is called the sword of the Spirit.* It is that which He works by. When He enlightens, it is by opening the understanding, to understand the Scriptures; and when He impresses, it is by giving the influence and power of moral suasion to the lessons of Scripture. It might help perhaps to alleviate the mysteriousness of certain passages in the Bible—if the comparing of spiritual things with spiritual, we understand to be the comparing of scriptural things with scriptural, and the things of the Spirit were regarded as the things of Scripture spiritually discerned. We should

* Eph. vi, 17.

then be at no loss to harmonise the saying that we are born again of the Spirit,* with the saying that we are born again by the word of God.† And as both co-operate in the work of our regeneration, so both co-operate in the production of each special grace that belongs to the new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The joy and peace here spoken of are both to be understood subjectively—or in the sense of mental affections, wherewith it is the prayer of the apostle that his disciples should be filled. It is not the joy which there is in heaven over a sinner that repenteth, but the joy felt by the sinner himself when he comes to have the faith of the gospel. Neither is it the peace which there is in the heart of the Godhead towards us, when, on our acceptance of His Son as our Saviour, His purposes of wrath and vengeance against us are turned away. But it is the peace which enters our own hearts, when, visited by the sense of forgiveness, or by the conviction that God hath ceased from His anger, we cease from all our disquietudes because of it. And more than this. Not only are we relieved from the terrors of a coming vengeance, but also from those sensations of disquietude which might else have agonised us, amid the vexations or vicissitudes of the life that soon passeth away. Because of the glorious prospect beyond it, we are calm—even when beset with tribulation; or are not troubled as other men. This peace of our text is of a more negative character than the joy of our text; yet it too admits of degrees—the strength of it being rightly estimated by the magnitude of those trials, under which we maintain the serenity of our spirits notwithstanding. In the world, our Saviour tells us, we shall have tribulation; but in Him we shall have peace: And, as a proof that it admits of being increased and strengthened, it is said in one place to be a peace so great that it passeth all understanding; and it is spoken of by Isaiah as the privilege of God's reconciled children, that they will delight greatly in the abundance of their peace—a peace of such depth and stability, that it is conceived of by the same prophet, as flowing through the heart like a mighty river—the surface of which might be ruffled by the passing wind that blows over it, while all is stillness, all is tranquil and beyond the reach of disturbance within and below.

There is as great a complexional variety in the experience of Christians, as there is in the natural temperaments of men. It is because of this constitutional difference, that while the faith of the gos-

pel works joy in the heart of one man, it works peace in another. And so we read of death-beds of ecstasy, and also of death-beds of calm and settled assurance—the latter evincing, it is possible, as strong a degree of faith, though unaccompanied by the raptures of a lively and overpowering manifestation.

And what is worthy of our special notice is, that both the joy and the peace may be felt in the direct exercise of believing. They may flow, and flow immediately, from the faith of the gospel—without ought to intervene between them. Those would throw a sad obscuration on the freeness of the gospel, and greatly embarrass the outset of an enquirer who is groping for an entrance on the way of salvation—who insist that ere joy or peace can be felt, there must be some subjective ground of experience on which to sustain it. There can be no doubt that the subjective in Christianity does minister both joy and peace to the believer—as when Paul rejoiced in the testimony of his conscience; and John could tell that when his heart condemned him not, then had he confidence towards God. But when one principle is admitted, must it always be at this expence—the exclusion or extinction of another equally legitimate, and equally indispensable to the Christian state and the Christian character? There are a peace and a joy in the subjective—or on our finding what good things have been worked in us by the Spirit of God. But distinct from this, and I should say anterior to this, there are also a peace and a joy in the objective—or on our believing what good things have been spoken to us by the word of God, and to be felt immediately on our giving credence to them—A peace and a joy which emanate directly from the sayings of Scripture; and such sayings too as are addressed, not to disciples only, but to yet unconverted sinners also. Would not the man whom we had injured, and of whom we had good reason to be afraid—did he stand before us with an angry or menacing countenance—would not he be the object of our dread and disquietude, and this simply on our view of the objective!

And on the other hand, did his countenance bespeak a readiness for peace and pardon, would not terror give way to confidence—and that simply too on our view of the objective? And does the Lawgiver make no such exhibition of Himself in the gospel of Jesus Christ, as when He looks compassion on the children of men, or sets forth His own Son as the propitiation for the sins of the world? But there are sounds as well as sights of encouragement, words which are the direct bearers of comfort to the soul, a proclamation of

* John, iii, 3, 5.

† 1 Peter, i, 23.

amnesty as well as a flag of amnesty; and which, as coming from without, are objective things external to ourselves, and, apart from ourselves, fitted to light up an immediate gladness in our bosoms, did we but open our eyes or our ears to them—as surely as when the wise men from the east saw the star over Bethlehem, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy; or as surely as the shepherds who first heard the proclamation of good-will from the sky, and saw the babe in the manger, glorified and praised God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. We cannot well imagine how any tidings should be designated tidings of great joy—unless they had the property of making joyful, simply and immediately on our believing them—and this without any thought bestowed upon ourselves, or subjective regards cast downwardly or inwardly on our own spirit, or on the state of our own hearts and characters. It is thus that there are a peace and joy in believing what we read of God, and of God in Christ, in our bibles—as when He swears by Himself that He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that all should come unto Him and live; or beseeches us to enter into reconciliation; or assures us that whosoever cometh unto His Son shall in no wise be cast out; and that if we so come, our sins, though as crimson, should become as wool, though as scarlet, should be made whiter than snow. The ministers of the gospel are the heralds of a universal proclamation—a proclamation of mercy, in the believing of which there are instant peace and joy.

But neither would we exclude the subjective as being a ground of peace and joy also. Nay we will admit that there must be a certain harmony between the objective and the subjective at the very outset of our Christianity. The same heavenly Teacher and Saviour who says, Come unto me all and I will receive you, says also, He who cometh unto me must forsake all. There are here both an invitation and a declaration. I cannot imagine, notwithstanding the perfect fullness and freeness of the one, how any man could come confidently or rejoice in the faith—if in the face of the other, he was not honestly desirous of forsaking all sin, and making an entire surrender of himself to the will of Christ. If at all conscious of this reservation or of this duplicity, it will make him incapable of clearly or confidently believing—or, in other words, an evil conscience will darken faith. But this does not preclude the importance, nay even the necessity, of setting forth in full presentation before the eye of the mind the objective truths of

Christianity, the objects that faith must have to rest upon; and the fruit of this on all truly earnest enquirers, or in other words, on all good and honest hearts, will be peace and joy. And this whether they be looking inwardly on their hearts or no. Nay you must give them time to look outwardly on the tidings from heaven ere they can rejoice; and in virtue of their hearts being good and honest (a goodness and honesty which abide, and stand them in stead, even when they are not looking inwardly)—in virtue of this singleness of eye, and singleness of purpose, will their whole bodies be full of light;* and they will see clearly outward these objects of vision, because within them there is a clear medium of vision. And there is a counterpart to this in them who want singleness of eye, or whose hearts are full of duplicity, and so of darkness;† and to whom therefore the objects of faith, bereft of all luminousness, might be preached or presented but in vain. Still it is our duty to preach at a venture—that to the good and honest it might be the savour of life unto life, although it should be the savour of death unto death to all other hearers. In the simple exercise of believing they will have hope—the hope as yet of faith only, and not till afterwards the hope of experience. But the stronger the faith is, and the hope founded upon it—the brighter will the experience be, and the hope also which is founded upon it. These two will work like conspiring influences, which keep pace together, and work into each other's hands. For the more vigorous the faith, the more vigorous also will be the obedience. The faith and the good conscience will thus grow with each other's growth, and strengthen with each other's strength—whereas if we cast away our good conscience, of our faith we shall make shipwreck.

And it is the Holy Ghost who causeth us to abound in both—in the hope that cometh directly from the objective, by taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto us; and in the hope that cometh reflexly from the subjective, by working in us those personal graces, whence men take knowledge of us, and we may also take knowledge of ourselves, that we are indeed the disciples of Jesus. He is alike the author of the hope that springs from the inherent and of the hope that springs from the imputed righteousness—of the one when experience worketh hope by the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost given to us;‡ of the other, when through the Spirit we wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

* Matt. vi, 22, 23.

† Matt. vi, 23.

‡ Rom. vi, 5.

LECTURE XCIX.

ROMANS xv, 14—23.

"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. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, 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. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; 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 first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath 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 unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. 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; 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; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

VER. 14. Paul, in drawing towards the close of his epistle, seems, with the characteristic delicacy which breaks forth in many other passages, to feel that he must apologise for the freedom of his exhortations. The likeliest thing to it in any of the other apostles, is when Peter tells the disciples to whom he writes, that he addresses them, not to inform as if they were ignorant persons; but to stir up their pure minds in the way of remembrance—and this though they already knew the things of which he was reminding them, and though they were established in the present truth.* And so Paul, as if to soften the effect of his dictations—and this though his manner was the farthest possible from that of a dictator—tells his converts of his persuasion that they were filled with knowledge and goodness; and that though he took it upon him to admonish them, he was sure nevertheless that they were able to admonish one another. The truth is, that neither the greatest knowledge, nor the greatest goodness, supersedes the necessity of our being often told the same things over again. Men might thoroughly know their duty, and yet stand constantly in need to be reminded of their duty. The great use of moral suasion is not that thereby people should be made to know, but should be led to consider. And thus our Sabbaths and other seasons of periodical instruction, are of the greatest possible service, although there should be no dealing in novelties at all—though but to recall the sacred truths which are apt to be forgotten, and renew the good impressions which might else be dissipated among the urgencies of the world. Whether then an apostle should write, or a

minister should substantially present the same things, it ought not to be grievous, because it is safe.* He speaks but as the helper of his congregation, and not as having dominion over them.† He is but an instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is, not merely to teach what is new but to recall what is old—to bring all things to remembrance.‡ It is true that they might already have received the gospel, and that in the gospel they stand—Yet they shall have believed in vain, unless they keep in memory that which has been preached unto them.§ In keeping with this, Paul says in the 14th verse that he writes, not to inform but to put in mind.

VER. 15, 16. 'Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God. 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.' Still further to conciliate their toleration for his advices, he tells them of the large warrant that he had received from God Himself, and by which he was fully authorised to act the part of their instructor. Instead of being dissatisfied, they might well have felt most grateful for the distinction conferred on them by the message of an ambassador invested with such powers and credentials from heaven. At the same time, the special designation of himself, which he here intimates, of Apostle to the Gentiles, while it excused the liberties which he took with them, might help to

* 2 Peter, i, 12—14; iii, 1.

* Philippians, iii, 1

† John, xiv, 26.

† 2 Corinthians, i, 24.

§ 1 Corinthians, xv, 2.

mitigate the discontent of his other and more impracticable disciples the Jews—inasmuch as it explained and justified his peculiar zeal for their privilege of exemption from the servitudes of the Mosaic ritual, in behalf of those who had been given to him as his own peculiar charge. That he had the Jews in his eye, and was still laying himself out to propitiate their favour, seems probable from the sacrificial style in which he describes the service that had been put into his hands. He represents himself as the minister of Christ*—in which office he does the work of a priest with the gospel,†—his offering‡ being the Gentile converts, who, anointed by the Holy Ghost, were made acceptable thereby, even as the meat-offering of the Jews, which had oil and frankincense poured upon it, arose with a sweet savour unto the Lord.

Ver. 17. 'I have therefore whercof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.' Paul's object in glorying was not to magnify himself, but to constrain a willing and wholesome submission to the lessons which he gave forth, in his capacity as steward of Heaven's high mysteries. His glorying was all through Jesus Christ; and the things of which he was the dispenser did not pertain to him but to God. His functions were wholly ministerial; and nothing can exceed the perfect humility as well as wisdom wherewith he discharged them. All that he arrogated to himself was the office of a servant, though it was a service so honourable and so signalised, as would above measure and unduly have exalted many other men.

Ver. 18, 19. 'For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.' There is a peculiarity in the mode of expression here, which may perhaps be ascribed to the sensitive repugnance of our apostle to aught like the assumption of superiority over other men. There can be no doubt that he was pre-eminently, though not exclusively the apostle of the Gentiles—Yet he will not say that he will dare to speak of the things which Christ had done by him, but that he will not dare to speak of the things which Christ had not done by him—thus modestly recognising the contribution of other men's labours in a cause, where he himself had been the chief

labourer; and far the most powerful instrument in the hand of God for its success and advancement in the world. This could not be disguised—so that after leading his readers to understand that there were others who shared along with him in the great achievement of making the Gentiles obedient through mighty signs and wonders, and leaving them to imagine how great this share might be—he could not avoid the direct statement of his own apostolical work, in that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum he had fully preached the gospel of Christ.

'Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.' It is not likely that Paul would have made mention at all of these miracles, had they not been wrought at Rome as well as in other places along his apostolical tour, where churches had been planted by him. At all events, he in epistles to other churches, does appeal to the miracles which had been wrought in the midst of them. For example, in the free and fearless remonstrance which he held with the Galatians, he puts the question with all boldness—"O foolish Galatians!"—"he that ministereth to you the Spirit and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"* And in the enumeration which he makes of the powers conferred on various of the church office-bearers, he tells the Corinthians that to one is given by the Spirit of God the working of miracles; and, more specifically still, to another the gifts of healing, and to another divers kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.† And again, in another epistle to the same people, he says, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."‡ In this respect he tells them that they were not inferior to other churches; nor is it probable that he would have written of these miracles to his converts at Rome, had they been in this state of inferiority to others.

There cannot then be imagined a more satisfactory historical evidence for these high and undoubted credentials of a divine mission, than we are able to adduce for the miracles which abounded in the primitive churches, and for those in particular which were worked by Paul's own hands. He indeed, in common with the other apostles, possessed the endowment in a degree that might be called transcendental—insomuch as, beside having the gift of miracles, they had the power, by the laying on of their hands, of conferring this gift upon others.‡ Now whatever

* Λειτουργίος.

† Ἱερουργῶν.

‡ Προσφορα.

* Galatians, iii, 1, 5.

† 1 Corinthians, xii, 9, 10.

‡ 2 Corinthians, xii, 12.

§ Acts, viii, 18, &c.

exhibition might have been made of such things at Rome—certain it is that for miracles both at Corinth and in Galatia, we have testimony in such a form as makes it quite irresistible. Here we have, in the custody of these two churches from the earliest times, the epistles which they had received from Paul—the original documents having been long in their own possession, while copies of them were speedily multiplied and diffused over the whole Christian world. In these records do we find Paul in vindication of his own apostleship, and in the course of a severe reckoning with the people whom he addresses, make a confident appeal to the miracles which had been wrought before their eyes. Had there been imposture here, the members of these two churches would not have lent their aid to uphold it. They would not have professed the faith which they did in pretensions which they knew to be false, and that for the support of a claim to divine authority now brought to bear in remonstrance and rebuke against themselves. We might multiply at pleasure our suspicions of Paul, and conjure up all sorts of imaginations against him; but no possible explanation can be found for the acquiescence of his converts in the treachery of the apostle, or rather of their becoming parties to his fabrication, if fabrication indeed it was. One can fancy an interest, which he might have in a scheme of deception; but what earthly interest can we assign for the part which they took in the deception, knowing it to be so? Or on what other hypothesis than the irresistible truth of these miracles, can we explain their adherence to the gospel, and that in the face of losses and persecutions, nay even of cruel martyrdoms—but over and above all this, the taunts and cutting reproaches to the bargain, of the very man who could tell them of the miracles which themselves had seen, as the vouchers of his embassy from God; and threatened, if necessary, to come amongst them with a rod, and make demonstration in the midst of them of his authority and power? Had there been deceit and jugglery in the matter, why did they not let out the secret, and rid themselves at once and for ever of this burdensome visitation? The truth is, that the overpowering evidence from without, and their own consciences within, would not let them. There is no other historical evidence which in clearness and certainty comes near to this. And whether we look to the integrity of these original witnesses, men faithful and tried; or to the abundant and continuous and closely sustained testimony which flowed downward in well filled vehicles

from the first age of the apostles—we are compelled to acknowledge a sureness and a stamp of authenticity in the miracles of the gospel, not only unsurpassed but unequalled by any other events, the knowledge of which has been transmitted from ancient to modern times.

Ver. 20, 21. 'Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but, as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand.' Not that Paul would have withheld the benefit of his instructions from those who were already Christians, if they came in his way. But what he strove for and sought after, was to enter on altogether new ground—deeming it more his vocation to extend and spread abroad Christianity, by the planting of new churches—than to build up or perfect the churches which had been already founded. There seems to have been an emulation in these days among the first teachers of the gospel, which betokens that even they were not altogether free from the leaven which Paul had detected in his own converts, when he charged them with being yet carnal.* There was something amongst them like a vain-glorious rivalry in the work of proselyting—insomuch that the credit of their respective shares in the formation of a Christian church was a matter of competition and jealousy. Our apostle wanted to keep altogether clear of this, and to be wholly aloof from the temptation of it—as indeed he himself intimates in 2 Cor. x, 15, 16, where he tells us that he would not boast of other men's labours, or in another man's line of things made ready to his hand. Certain it is, that while he refrained from building on another man's foundation, he experienced no little disturbance from other men building on the foundation which he himself had laid—and these not only the false teachers, but even men who were true at bottom—yet would, like Peter at Antioch, have laid some of their wood and hay and stubble thereupon.

The prophet from whom Paul here quotes, had the Gentiles chiefly in his eye; and to be their apostle was his peculiar destination.† This, however, was not a mere arbitrary appointment; for we read that he was chosen to this office, because of his peculiar qualifications. He was a wise master-builder who could lay well the foundation.‡ He had the talent beyond other men to begin at the beginning—or to lay down what he himself

* 1 Corinthians, iii, 4. † Acts, xxii, 21.

‡ Ἀρχιτεκτων; 1 Cor. iii, 10.

calls the *principles* of the doctrine of Christ.* No one could excel him in the admirable skill wherewith he made his first outset, when reasoning with those to whom the doctrine of Christ was as yet a perfect novelty; and such being his *forte*, if we may thus express ourselves on such a subject, we cannot wonder that it was also his favourite walk to speak unto those who had not yet seen or heard the truth, and address himself to those who had no previous notice or understanding of it. We meet with manifold traces of this distinct and distinguishing power in our great apostle—the power of taking up a right vantage-ground whence to date his argument, or on which to rear his demonstration in behalf of the gospel. We can discern the faculty of which we now speak, in his speech before Agrippa and his address to the people of Athens. But it was a faculty which availed him in his converse with Jews as well as Gentiles—the former in fact often standing at as great, and in some respects a greater distance than the latter from the first rudiments, or as he himself terms it, the first principles of the oracles of God. It is obvious that thus to commence aright with any one, respect must be had to his special state or habitudes of mind—so as to fit in the initial consideration with the initial prejudices or tendencies of those whom he was addressing. We have repeated exhibitions of this in the history of Paul—of the judgment wherewith he took a right point of departure; or set up a right starting-post, when his object was to find an access and an acceptance into the minds of men for the truth of Christianity—As with idolaters, when he reasoned with them out of their own superstition; or with scholars, when he reasoned with them out of their own literature; † or with Pharisees, when he reasoned with them from the tenets of their own sect; ‡ or with Israelites in general, when he reasoned with them out of their own scriptures. But the amplest memorials of this rare and remarkable gift, in the most gifted of all the apostles, are his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and most of all his epistle to the Hebrews—in all of which he lays himself out more expressly, it is true, for the Jewish understanding; but in that way of skilful opening, as well as skilful adaptation and approach, which showed that he stood the highest of all his colleagues as an accomplished tactician in the warfare of minds—or who best knew how he should address himself to this work of laying siege, as it were, to men's understandings,

and this for the achievement of a victory over them—And so could be all things to all men, that he might gain some. No wonder then that his delight and his preference was to put himself to the task he was best fitted for—whether to make a first encounter with Jewish prejudices, or as a pioneer in the wilderness of heathenism. To express it otherwise, if there was one stage in the process of the spiritual manufacture which he liked better to deal with than another, it seems to have been the first stage of it; when he had to deal with the raw material, or with minds in the greatest possible state of rudeness and alienation from the gospel of Jesus Christ—whether by grossest ignorance as with barbarians; or by contempt and bigotry, as with Jews upon the one hand, and yet unconverted Greeks upon the other.

Ver. 22-24. 'For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; 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 first I be somewhat filled with your company.' It is obvious, that in the multitude of such engagements, he could not be so frequent in his attentions or visits to the churches that had been already formed. And it is accordingly on this ground that he apologises for his lengthened absence from the Christians at Rome. 'For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.' He had had a great desire for many years to make out a visit; and states this in the next verse, in order that they might accept of the will for the deed. He pleads the hindrance of his incessant occupation in those regions where Christ had not been before named; and it is interesting to note what it was that released him from this hindrance. It was because that now he had 'no more place in these parts.' Paul might come to know, by a direct intimation from the Spirit, that God had no more work to do in these parts—even as we read in the book of Acts of his being bidden go to some places and restrained or hindered from others.* It is not to be supposed that Paul filled up the various regions which he had visited with the preaching of the gospel—though he might have left a church in each of the larger towns, as a centre of emanation whence others might propagate the religion of Jesus Christ through the countries around them. And even where he preached with little or no suc-

* *Αρχη*; Heb. vi, 1.

† Acts, xvii.

‡ Acts, xxiii, 6.

* Acts, xvi, 6, 7; xviii, 9, 10; xix, 21.

cess, he might be said to have no more place in that part—no more, for example, at Athens, although he left it a mass of nearly unalleviated darkness—just as our Lord's immediate apostles might well be said to have no more place in those towns that rejected their testimony, and against which they were called to shake off the dust of their feet, and then to take their departure—fleeing from the cities which either refused or persecuted them, and turning to others. The way in fact of apostles or ministers, the outward instruments in the teaching of Christianity, is the same with the way of the Spirit, who is the real agent in this teaching, by giving to their word all its efficacy. He may visit every man; but withdraws Himself from those who resist Him—just as the missionaries of the gospel might visit every place, and have fulfilled their work even in those places where the gospel has been put to scorn, and so become the savour of death unto death to the people who live in them. Yet we must not slacken in our endeavours for the evangelisation of the whole earth, although the only effect should be that the gospel will be preached unto all nations for a witness, and the success of the enterprise will be limited by the gathering in of the elect from the four corners of heaven.

It is a matter of unsettled controversy whether Paul ever was in Spain, or was able to fulfil his purpose of a free and voluntary journey to Rome—his only recorded journey there being when taken up as a prisoner in chains. At the beginning of the epistle he tells them of his prayer; and here expresses his hope of again seeing them in circumstances of prosperity, when, after a full and satisfactory enjoyment of their society, he might be helped forward by them on his way to the country beyond. Let me here notice in passing, how accordant the movements both of Paul beyond Judea, and of our Saviour and the apostles within its limits, as described in the Gospels and Acts—are with the abiding geography of towns and countries still before our eyes. It is in itself a pleasing exercise to trace this harmony of Scripture with the known bearings and distances of places still; and even serves the purpose of confirmation as a monumental evidence to the truth of Christianity.

Ver. 25–27. 'But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath 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 unto

them in carnal things.' Paul however had an intermediate duty to perform, ere he could fulfil his purpose of a journey to Rome. He had to go to Jerusalem with the produce of the charities of the faithful, gathered in Macedonia and Achaia for the necessities of the poor and persecuted Christians in Jerusalem. This very collection is referred to in several other places;* and the comparison of scripture with scripture is also a pleasing and confirmatory exercise. This is not the first time that such an exertion of liberality had been made for the destitute brethren in Judea, as we read in Acts, xi, 30; xii, 25. The truth is, that the Jewish were sooner the objects of persecution than the Gentile Christians—the effects of which seem to have been first felt by the lower classes—deprived in all likelihood of their custom and employment, in consequence of the ill-will conceived against them by those on whom they wont to depend for the means of their subsistence. It was for their relief that the wealthier converts who were beyond the reach of any immediate suffering from this cause, made the generous surrender of all their property.† This resource appears to have been at length exhausted, when the appeal in their favour was at length carried abroad over the Christian world at large. The charity at home, however, nobly did its part, ere the charity at a distance was called for or drawn upon.

'And their debtors they are.' He here accredits the Jewish Christians generally and nationally, as being the dispensers of the gospel to the Gentiles—though properly they were but the teachers and apostles who came forth of Jerusalem that were entitled to the honour of this consideration, and to a grateful return because of it. It is in this more proper and restricted sense that he pleads for the right both of himself and Barnabas to a livelihood from the church at Corinth.‡ But it is not unnatural, when any signal benefit has been conferred by the members of a certain community, to feel as if an acknowledgment were due on that account to the whole collective body of whom they form a part; and Paul avails himself of this disposition when pleading for the poor saints of Jerusalem, because of the blessings which had emanated from Jerusalem on all the churches, though the great majority of these poor saints had personally no hand in them. It were well if we of the present day felt similarly to this. It is true that they are not the Jews who are now in the world to whom we owe our spiritual privileges as Christians; but still let us indulge the thought of a

* 2 Cor. viii, 4; ix, 13. † Acts, iv, 34–37. ‡ 1 Cor. ix.

gratitude being due to them, because of the mighty benefits that we have received from their ancestors, from men of their nation in other days, from the prophets and apostles of old, who bequeathed to us the oracles of God; and who in dispensing the word of life among the nations, were chief instruments for the fulfilment at length of the promise made to their great ancestor—that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. It is a reproach to Christians that this consideration has not operated more powerfully in favour of the Jewish people—so as to have made them the objects of a far higher benevolence, both in things spiritual and temporal, than they have ever yet experienced at our hands.

‘For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.’ The comparison in respect of magnitude and worth between spiritual and carnal things, is still more distinctly made in 1 Cor. ix, 11—where the apostle speaks of the right which he and Barnabas had earned to a maintenance from their hands. In this matter too there is great room for the condemnation of professing Christians—because of their gross practical insensibility to the rule of equity here laid down; and which is strikingly evinced throughout Protestant countries in particular, by the extreme feebleness and defect of the voluntary principle for the support of ministers of religion. It is in virtue of this, that the instructors even of large and opulent congregations, have often so pitiful and parsimonious an allowance doled out to them; and if so wretched a proportion of their own carnal be given in return for spiritual things to themselves, we are not to wonder at the still more paltry and inadequate contributions which are made by them for the spiritual things of others. The expence of all missionary schemes and enterprises put together, a mere scantling of the wealth of all Christendom, argues it to be still a day of exceeding small things—a lesson still more forcibly held out to us by the thousands and tens of thousands at our own doors who are perishing for lack of knowledge. There is a carnal as well as a spiritual benevolence. That the carnal benevolence makes some respectable head against the carnal selfishness of our nature, is evinced by the fact, that so very few are ever known to die of actual starvation. That the spiritual benevolence falls miserably behind the other, is evinced by the fact of those millions and millions more in our empire, who, purely from want of the churches which ought to be built, and of ministers who ought to be maintained for

them, are left to wander all their days beyond the pale of gospel ordinances—and so to live in guilt and die in utter darkness. Verily in such a contemplation, it might well be said even of this professing age—Are ye not yet altogether carnal?

Ver. 28. ‘When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.’ To seal here is to make sure or to consummate. When I am conclusively done with this business, when I have brought the fruit of Christian liberality which has been put into my hands to Jerusalem, and delivered it to the apostles there for distribution among the poor saints—then will I come by you into Spain.

Ver. 29. ‘And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.’ There are manuscripts in which the word ‘for gospel’ is omitted, and where nevertheless a complete sense is retained—‘I am sure that when I do come, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ.’ Of this one thing, or main thing, he was sure; but there are certain other things of detail and circumstance in this whole anticipation, of which he is not so sure. In chap. i, 10, 11, he speaks of his prosperous journey to Rome as but a prayer and thing of longing desirousness; in i, 15, of his preaching there as but a purpose; in xv, 23, of his future visit to them as an earnest wish; in xv, 24, of his journey to Spain as being yet a contingency, and his seeing the church at Rome in his way as no more than a confident expectation; lastly, of his coming to them on his road to Spain as a determination: And, to crown all, as a certainty and absolute certainty—that when he did come, or if he should come, he would come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, or blessing of Him who was the Author and Finisher of the gospel. It marks most strikingly the shortsightedness of men, even of men inspired on certain occasions and for certain purposes, as contrasted with the counsel of that God which alone shall stand—it most emphatically tells of His ways as not being our ways—that the hopes, nay the prayers of an apostle, reinforced by the prayers which he requested from his people for a prosperous journey to Rome, were all frustrated—So that, instead of a joyful procession to his friends in the world’s metropolis, he came to them as a criminal in fetters, a captive in the hands of unbelievers. It is thus that the things of which he was only hopeful or desirous were disposed of; but the thing of which he felt assured had its fixed accomplishment. He did come to Rome fully charged with spiritual blessings, and which he fully and freely de-

livered to the people there. "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him—preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

Ver. 30—33. '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; 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; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.' He seems to make appeal here to that love in their hearts which the Spirit worketh—the love more especially which Christians who have passed from death unto life bear in their hearts for each other; and under the promptings of which it behoved them to pray for the safety of him who was their spiritual father. His request for such a prayer implies a sense of danger in the mind of the apostle—an apprehension fully warranted by his knowledge of the deadly hatred borne him by the Jews; and against which he in this very journey took the precaution mentioned in Acts, xx, 3. It is perhaps not so easy to explain why he should stand in any doubt of his service being accepted by the saints at Jerusalem. But many of them too were jealous, and did not like his partiality for the Gentiles—nay, it was possible, might have disdained the receiving of any charity at their hands. On this matter therefore, as on every other, he

desired to relieve his carefulness by making his requests known unto God,*—both from his own mouth, and through the mouths of his interceding brethren. It is worthy of being noted, that the next object, his coming unto them with joy, he asks to be prayed for with a submissive reference to the will of God. It may be regarded as the sample of a conditional as distinguished from an absolute prayer. We know of certain things which expressly and at all times are agreeable to the will of God, and for these we might pray without any qualification—as for our knowledge of the truth, and our growth in the divine life, and our final salvation; and generally for all spiritual blessings. For temporal blessings we might pray also; but, with the exception of daily bread, and things absolutely needful for the life and the body, respecting which we have the declared will and promise of God—for all other blessings of an earthly description, we should pray with a salvo, laying our wants and wishes before God, while subjecting them withal to God's good pleasure. The things of this class when prayed for, may or may not be conceded to us; but at all events, as the fruit of this believing intercourse with Heaven, the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus†—even that peace which is the subject of the apostle's closing benediction, and of which no tribulations or adversities can deprive us.‡ And therefore with an unflinching amen could he pray—'The God of peace be with you all.'

* Phil. iv, 6. † Phil, iv, 6, 7. ‡ John, xvi, 33.

LECTURE C.

ROMANS xvi.

"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 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. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. Salute Urbane our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. Salute Hierodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord. Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. 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. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. Timotheus my work-fellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. I Tertius, who wrote

this epistle, salute you in the Lord. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen. 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, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith; to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

THIS whole chapter, filled with the salutations of respect and cordiality—not only from Paul direct to his correspondents, but from the friends and companions who were with Paul to those whom he was addressing—evinces how much Christianity is fitted to promote the interchange of such feelings between man and man. We are here presented with the forms and homages of our own modern politeness, animated by the spirit and sincerity of the gospel—forms which, though but in themselves the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision, are yet befitting vehicles for the best and highest of our mutual affections, after that the breath of life has been infused into them. Altogether we hold this chapter to be a singularly valuable document—as proving how capable the usages of a Christian church are of being amalgamated with the graces, and the amenities, and the complimentary expressions of the every day intercourse that takes place in general society.

Ver. 1, 2. 'I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.' And here too we are presented with another most useful indication—the employment of female agency, under the eye and with the sanction of an apostle, in the business of a church. It is well to have inspired authority for a practice too little known and too little proceeded on in modern times. Phebe belonged to the order of deaconesses—in which capacity she had been the helper of many, including Paul himself. In what respect she served them is not particularly specified. Like the women in the Gospels* who waited upon our Saviour, she may have ministered to them of her substance though there can be little doubt, that as the holder of an official station in the church, she ministered to them of her services also. They to whom she was commended by Paul were to receive her as becometh saints or with all that respect and delicacy which were due to a Christian female; and also to render her all that assistance which her business, not here specified, might require at their hands.

Ver. 3, 4. 'Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 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.' Aquila and Priscilla must at this time have been at Rome. They had formerly been at Corinth, where Paul was their guest, and then at Ephesus, whither they accompanied Paul, and where he left them*—to which place they afterwards returned, if we may conclude from the salutation sent to them from Rome by Paul, in his letter to Timothy,† when he was bishop of the Ephesians. Both at Corinth and Ephesus they had been the helpers of Paul in Christ Jesus—his helpers, we presume, chiefly in things temporal—at least not in spiritual things, as they had been to Appollos, when they expounded to him the way of God more perfectly. Our great apostle did not require this at their hands—yet may they have been of most important use to him even as the ministers of holy things, in refreshing and confirming the souls of his disciples. And here it should be remarked, that Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, is joined to him in this work seeing they are both represented in the book of Acts as contributing to the further instruction of Appollos, even after that he had signalised himself by his might in the scriptures, and his eloquence in speaking the things of the Lord. Much more then might she be qualified to officiate as a teacher of her own sex, and more particularly of children. We cannot think then that the service of females in the Christian church was restricted to the mere office of deaconesses, who ministered to the sick and the destitute. They also laboured in a higher vocation; and should be enlisted still in the business of a parish, as most invaluable auxiliaries in dispensing both religious comfort and religious instruction, within such spheres as might with all fitness and propriety be assigned to them. In particular, they will be found the most efficient of all civilisers among the families of a now outlandish, because heretofore neglected population—and this whether as the visitors of sewing and reading, or as themselves the teachers of Sabbath-schools—Or in the former capacity as the patronesses of week-day and common, and in the latter the direct agents of Christian education.

It appears that Aquila and Priscilla had exposed their own lives to jeopardy for the safety of Paul's. The special occasion on which this took place is not

* Luke, viii, 2, 3.

* Acts, xviii, 18, 19.

† 2 Tim. iv, 19.

certainly known. There is abundant evidence of their having both had a will to have braved this hazard at any time for the sake of their beloved apostle. And we can be at no loss to imagine a way in which this might have been brought to the proof, when we read of the insurrection at Corinth against Paul,* where Aquila and Priscilla both were; and whence they accompanied him to Ephesus, where they probably were also, at the time when such a fearful outbreak was made upon him in that city by a riotous and enraged multitude. Whatever the occasion was on which they thus signalled themselves, it must have been some signal deliverance or service to Paul of which they were the instruments, that called forth so memorable an expression of gratitude, not alone from Paul individually, but probably and with open manifestation from all the churches.

Ver. 5-15. 'Likewise greet the church that is in their house.' It would appear from this, that in these days, Christian congregations met and had their religious services done to them in dwelling-houses. It was the practice for Aquila and Priscilla to have a church in their house elsewhere too—as here in Rome, and also in Asia, whence Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians, and sends the church there a salutation from the church held in the house of these devoted followers of our Lord.† We have traces of the same practice in other places of the New Testament. "Salute Nymphas and the church which is in his house."‡ "Paul unto Philemon, and to the church in thy house."§

Then follows a list of salutations, in the course of which some brief notices are given as if casually and incidentally, yet which are by no means devoid of interest.

As when he salutes Epenetus, he signifies him by an epithet—*well-beloved*—which marks him out as an object of the apostle's special and superlative affection. It is like the love which one has for a first-born—he having been the first of Paul's spiritual children in Achaia. It is true that the house of Stephanas is elsewhere termed the first-fruits of Achaia.|| It is possible that Epenetus may have been of the household of Stephanas, or at all events may have been converted at the same time, or time of the first conversion which took place in Achaia under Paul's ministry. Some critics find an explanation in the circumstance that there are Greek manuscripts which present us with "Asia," instead of Achaia.

We also gather from this enumeration

additional evidence for the agency of females in these days—as of Mary, who bestowed much labour—as well as Tryphena and Tryphosa, who laboured; and Persis, who laboured much in the Lord. This may have been the labour of mere deaconship—as that of Stephanas was at the time when he was the bearer of a supply for the apostle's wants, and of whose family it is said that they addicted themselves to the ministry* of the saints. It may however have been more than this—a ministration in spiritual as well as temporal good things. The passage before us scarcely allows of any specific determination on this point. To labour in the Lord gives no decision. To assist the disciples of Christ in things necessary for the present life is part of that labour in the Lord which shall not be in vain. "In as much as ye have done it unto one of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." We may here add, that in the 6th verse there occurs a variation of reading—some manuscripts bearing that Mary bestowed much labour 'among you,' instead of 'on us.' That is, she may have been helpful to the members of the church, whether spiritually or temporally; or in the latter of these two senses, may have been helpful to Paul himself.

Ver. 7. We have no taste for ascertaining that which the Bible has left uncertain, and on which ecclesiastical antiquity throws no light whatever. Why supersaturate the world with conjectures on matters which have no ground of evidence to stand upon?—as whether Andronicus and Junia were man and wife; whether Junia was not Julia, or if she was a woman at all; whether they were claimed by Paul as of kin to himself, because Israelites, or because of still nearer affinity; whether they were of note among the apostles, because, being converted before Paul, they might have been of the seventy disciples; and lastly, what the occasion of their imprisonment along with the apostle. Enough for us the generalities of Scripture, which are at the same time of themselves sufficiently interesting.

Ver. 8. 'Beloved in the Lord.' This expression denotes a purely spiritual relationship, as distinguished from the natural relationship adverted to in the preceding verse. The two verses together suggest the two distinct grounds on which one might be the object of affection. Both might be united in the same person; and this reminds us of what Paul says respecting Onesimus, that he should be received by Philemon as a brother beloved, "both in the flesh and in the Lord." It is pleasing to observe the former of these two

* Acts, xviii, 12-18. † 1 Cor. xvi, 19. ‡ Col. iv, 15.
§ Philemon, i, 2. ¶ 1 Corinthians, xvi, 15.

* Διακονία.

affections thus legitimised by the apostle—or the sanction given by him to the natural as well as spiritual love—to the love of friendship and relationship, as well as that love of Christians which is emphatically termed the love of the brethren, and is singled out by St. John as an evidence of our having passed from death unto life.

Ver. 9. 'Our helper in Christ.' This expression, even in our English Bible, powerfully suggests that the help given by Urbane to Paul was in his apostolic work. But the original fixes this more surely. He was the fellow-worker* of the apostle.

Ver. 10. 'Approved in Christ'—or found. He was one of those whom Paul here distinguishes by the special proof which he had given of his discipleship.

Ver. 11. 'Which are in the Lord.' This adjunct to the household of Narcissus, and not of Aristobulus, would imply that only a part of Narcissus' family had been converted—whereas all of the other household had been turned to the faith. We may here observe, that Paul confines these salutations only to brethren in Christ—though none more courteous than he to them who were without. His were not common letters, but written for the use of the churches.

Ver. 13. 'Chosen in the Lord.' Elect—it is not said beloved, as with many of the others. The two expressions harmonise. They who are loved now were loved before the foundation of the world. They who were loved then, are loved even unto the end.

'His mother and mine.' The mother of Rufus by birth, of Paul by affection—a claim of relationship by which he delicately and beautifully propounds the love that he bore to her. Rufus is understood to have been the son of Simon, who was compelled to bear the cross of our Saviour.† We may close these remarks, by observing that these names are not without their use—in clearing up certain points, or at least furnishing ground for certain plausible conjectures, both in the evangelic and in ecclesiastical history. As an example of the latter, there is no reason for doubting the testimony of the ancients—that the Hermas to whom Paul here sends his respects, is identical with the apostolic father of that name, whose works have come down to us. For specimens of the help which these names afford, in establishing certain connections and references—so as to harmonise some of the distant places and passages of the New Testament, and thus elicit a confirmatory evi-

dence for the truth of the evangelic story, see Dr. Paley's 'Horæ Paulinæ.'

Ver. 16. 'Salute one another with an holy kiss.'—The customary method of salutation in these days—exchanged, however, only between those of the same sex. It is remarkable that, by the testimony of Suetonius, an edict was published by one of the Roman emperors for the abolition of this practice among his subjects—perhaps in order to check abuses, for the prevention of which our apostle enjoins that it shall be a holy salutation. It is a custom adverted to in other places of the New Testament.*

'The churches of Christ salute you'—Those churches probably to whom he had made known his purpose of writing to the church at Rome—whose faith was spoken of throughout the whole world.† We might well imagine the satisfaction which would be spread abroad among the disciples everywhere, when they heard of the progress which Christianity was making in the metropolis of the empire; and with what cordiality they would send their gratulations to the believers there.

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.' Paul recurs to the topic of his unceasing earnestness and desire—the peace or unanimity of the church. He had just finished a long series of salutations, and enjoined them to exchange these tokens of mutual affection with one another—when, as if the more strikingly to mark his adverse feeling towards the authors and promoters of dissension in their society, he points them out as men, with whom, instead of the signs or interchanges of regard, they were to hold no fellowship. He who before had told them whom they were to receive, now tells them whom they are to reject or 'avoid.' The doctrine which they had just learned from him was that of forbearance, one for another, in the matter of certain Jewish observances—the doctrine of that charity which endureth all things, save that spirit which is hostile to its own, and wherewith it must ever be at antipodes. For them who caused divisions, such as the judaizing teachers who would have forced their own burdensome ritual on all the converts; or for them who caused offences, such as those Gentile believers, who, in the wantonness of their liberty, cared not to insult and to wound the consciences of their weaker brethren—for neither of these could our apostle feel the slightest complacency or toleration. They

* Συμπεπτος.
* Mark, xv, 21.

* 1 Cor. xvi, 20; 2 Cor. xiii, 12; 1 Thessalonians, v, 26;
1 Peter, v, 14. 1 Romans, i, 8.

were marked men in his estimation—no-torious in the sinister sense of the term: And it strongly evinces the value that he had for unbroken concord in every Christian society—when, in point both of reckoning and treatment, he puts these disturbers of the peace on the same level with those profligates whom he would cast out from the attentions of all the brethren.*

Ver. 18. '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.' He obviously refers here to the judaising teachers—because to them who deceived the hearts of the simple, that is, of the scrupulous or weak, who refrained from meats, and attached a religious importance to the eating of herbs.† There were false teachers in these days, to whose inroads the earlier churches stood peculiarly exposed. They practised on those of a tender conscience, making a trade as it were of their superstitious fears; and made unhallowed use of the ill-gotten ascendancy which they obtained over them. Their object, as the apostle here tells us, was not to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but to make out a lazy and luxurious livelihood for themselves—and that at the expense of those, whom by good works and fair speeches they had deceived. No wonder that the noble, manly, disinterested Paul, and withal so jealous as he was for the maintenance of the pure truth of the gospel, should, on so many occasions, have protested with such vigour and vehemence against them. It is of such that he seems to speak in Philippians, iii, 18, 19, where he denounces the enemies of the cross of Christ, "whose God is their belly;" and in Gal. vi, 12—where he tells of those who "desire to make a fair show." They were the trouble-makers of whom he desired that they should even be cut off‡—the perverters of the gospel of Christ, who preached another gospel, and whom he pronounces to be accursed.§ These deceivers were specially of the circumcision, who subverted whole houses, and taught things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.|| We can quite imagine them to be of that sort who entered into houses and led captive silly women.¶ Our knowledge of such characters and such doings furnishes a clue to the explanation of other passages. They were of such imposters that Peter speaks, and who seem to have taken a most shameful advantage over their dupes or victims—"beguiling unstable souls"—given to "covetous practices"—

"sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while feasting" with the deceived—and "speaking great swelling words of vanity."* And so also Jude, in exhorting the disciples to whom he wrote, that "they should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints," describes to us the men against whom that contest had to be maintained—"men crept in unawares," and "who run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward"—who having insinuated themselves into the society of the faithful, feasted among them without fear—who with their mouths spake great swelling words, and flattered men for their own advantage.†

Ver. 19. 'For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.' What he had before said of their faith, he now says of their obedience, that it was spoken of everywhere. He is anxious therefore that they should not tarnish their fair fame—for certain it is that from the ready and general intercourse which subsisted between Rome and all parts of the empire, the story of their degeneracies would as speedily go abroad as did that of the virtues and graces by which they adorned their profession of the gospel. He rejoices in the praise which they had earned from all the churches; but proportional would be his grief should they ever forfeit the reputation which they had acquired. He does not express, however, the same doubt or diffidence of them which he did of the Galatians—yet for their greater security he cautions them to be 'wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.'

This last injunction is analagous to that given by our Saviour to those disciples whom he sent forth as "lamb in the midst of wolves." "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." But though analagous, it does not seem to be identical. The apostles of our Lord needed the wisdom of the serpent for their protection from the wiles of their skilful and practised adversaries, who knew, for they had made a study of it, how best to circumvent and distress their victims. And they were harmless as doves, because they neither felt the disposition, nor had ever cultivated the art of malice. It is thus that men might be wise in one thing and simple in another; and the application of these qualities to the case before us seems to have lain—First in ability to discriminate what was really and essentially good from that which but claimed

* See 1 Cor. v, 11. † Rom. xiv, 2. ‡ Gal. v, 12.
§ Gal. i, 7, 8. ¶ Titus, i, 10, 11. † 2 Tim. iii, 6.

* 2 Peter, ii, 13, 14, 18, 19. † Jude, 4, 11, 12, 16

or pretended to be so, in virtue of which they cleaved to the one and rejected the other—Secondly in abstaining from all fellowship, and so having no knowledge of their ways, with those deep and mischievous designers who could so sophisticate and so counterfeit evil as to make it pass for that which was good—imposing on their deluded followers, by a show of will-worship and zeal for the law, to the utter subversion of the gospel of Christ. By the first they were men in understanding—‘proving all things, and holding fast that which is good.’ By the second they were children in malice—strangers to its will, and therefore unskilled in its methods or its ways.

Ver. 20. ‘And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.’ A good many manuscripts, and even a warrantable translation of the received reading, would authorise our turning this clause from a prophecy into a prayer—‘May the God of peace bruise Satan under your feet shortly.’ The reference by the apostle to the great adversary of human souls was very naturally suggested by the view he was then taking of those false teachers, whom he elsewhere designates as the ministers of Satan transformed into angels of light. And the terms in which the prayer or prophecy is couched, is precisely such as would be suggested by the prediction in Genesis, iii, 15, “It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” He is the great author of all confusion and controversy in our churches: And the achievement proper to the God of peace, or to His Son, who came to destroy the works of the devil, would be to trample them under foot, and so evolve harmony and order out of all the disturbances by which he retards, though unable to prevent, the final establishment of the triumph of Christ over all His enemies. The invocation for His grace to be with them comes in most appropriately—seeing that this is indeed the great instrument of Satan’s overthrow—the Spirit who is at the giving of Christ, being the alone victor over the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience—the spirit of him who is the god of this world. “Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.”

It is not unworthy of notice that this Epistle to the Romans seems to have had three distinct conclusions. The first is at the end of the 15th chapter, where the last verse is quite in the form of a valedictory invocation; but, just as if before the letter had been sent off, there had occurred time enough for the subjoining of

something more, we find the apostle adding the salutations of the 16th chapter, from the first to the sixteenth verse. As he had recurred to the letter for the purpose of sending these salutations, he is revisited while in the act of penning or rather of dictating them, with that desirousness which he felt so strongly for the peace of the church at Rome: And this occasions a prolongation of the letter from the 16th to the 20th verse, which he concludes with a second farewell salutation—‘The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.’ After this, and with the benefit of a further allowance of time ere the messenger was despatched, there seems to be a second postscript of more salutations which occupy three verses, from the 20th to the 24th—where a third valedictory, the last of all, concludes the epistle.

Ver. 21–23. Here follow the salutations, not from Paul himself to the individuals whom he names—these he had finished already; nor yet from the churches at large, which also had been given; but from certain Christian friends who were with him, and were desirous of sending through him their respects to the whole church at Rome.

In the 21st verse, there occur two remarkable scriptural names—Timothy, who by the consent of all is he to whom he addressed the two epistles; and Lucius, who though regarded by some as Lucius of Cyrene, is, by far the greater number of critics, and with more probability, reckoned to be Luke the Evangelist, author of the Gospel and Acts, and the fellow-traveller of Paul. We leave the question undecided, whether the kinsmen here mentioned were nearer relatives, or only Israelites, whom the apostle elsewhere calls his kinsmen according to the flesh.

In the 22d verse Paul suspends his dictation, and lets his own amanuensis interpose a salutation for himself to the church at Rome. In his first epistle to the Corinthians he also suspends his dictation; and, taking up the pen himself, writes—“The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand.”

‘Gaius mine host, and of the whole church,’ mentioned in the 23d verse, is with good reason conceived to be the Gaius of Corinth whom Paul had baptized;* from which city this epistle was written. Paul was at that time an inmate of his house; and he takes occasion to make honourable mention of his hospitality to Christians at large—a frequent and most useful virtue, being much called for by the exigencies of the times. Erastus the cham-

* 1 Thessalonians, v, 21.

* 1 Corinthians, i, 14.

berlain, or city treasurer of Corinth, is an example, that though not many of wealth or high station, yet that some such had become obedient to the faith. As we have just stated that this epistle was written from Corinth, we might give a specimen of the way in which this is reasoned out—or of the kind of data on which such a conclusion is supported.—Paul commends Phebe, who seems to have been sent with the epistle, to the church at Rome. She was a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, and a few miles distant from it. Then Gaius is the host of Paul;* and Gaius was baptized by Paul at Corinth.† Then Erastus is chamberlain of the city, which he does not name. It must have been a well-known city therefore; and in all likelihood this capital of Achaia. Lastly, Erastus, we are told in 2 Tim. iv. 20, abode at Corinth—though probably often absent from it, as to all appearance he was a fellow-helper of Paul, and at times accompanied him in his travels.‡

Ver. 24–27. ‘The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. 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, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.’ The final benediction of Paul comes at last, and closes the epistle. It begins with a repetition of the same which he had already given in the 20th verse—imploping upon them all the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. What remains is in the general an ascription of glory to the Father of our Lord—but it is of such a complicated and parenthetical structure, as to require some attention for unravelling the several topics which are involved in it.

‘To him that is of power to establish you.’ This clause is suspended in Paul’s own frequent and characteristic way, by the interposal of other matter suggested at the time; and which if removed would connect immediately the words now given with those of the 27th verse. ‘To him that is of power to establish you to God only wise,’ &c. The contiguity only, not the connection, of these two clauses, is broken up, by what comes between them. ‘To him that is of power;’ or as Jude says in his closing benediction—“To him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless.” To

establish a man in the faith is to make him stand fast therein—so that he shall not fall, or “fall away.”* It is well thus to connect our perseverance with the power of God. He who hath begun the good work, can alone confirm and perfect it. It is by a perpetual reference therefore, in prayer to Him, and for the strengthening influences of His Spirit, that grace is alimanted in the heart. Let him who thinketh he standeth, thus take heed lest he fall. Let him work out his salvation with fear and trembling, because sensible of his own weakness, and so having no confidence in himself. Yet let him mix with his trembling mirth—because rejoicing in the Lord Jesus, and looking upward to that God who alone worketh in him to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

‘According to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.’ May He establish you in the truths and principles of that system which is agreeable to, so agreeable as to be identical with my gospel or with the gospel which I preach, and which Christ also preached—Paul thus affirming his doctrine and Jesus Christ’s doctrine to be at one.

‘According to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began,’ or kept secret in ancient times.‡ He had before said—according to ‘my gospel;’ and when he now says—according to ‘the revelation of the mystery,’ he but substitutes one method of expression for another—The subject-matter in both being the same, only amplified or expressed otherwise. This gospel was ‘kept secret,’ or held back in silence from the earth;—there having been little or nothing said of it to the earlier generations of our species.—It has been made a matter of discussion what the mystery here spoken of precisely is. Some would have it specifically to be the calling of the Gentiles, and for countenance to this their explanation of it, would refer to Ephesians, iii, 9, and Colossians, i, 26. We have no doubt ourselves, that generally it is the subject matter of the gospel.

‘But now is made manifest.’ That which was profoundly hidden before is now made manifest—first in a dimmer and lesser degree by the prophets to the Jews; and afterwards in the fuller light of gospel times made known to all nations. We are not to wonder that the revelation made to the prophets should be spoken of as only made now. At the time when this revelation was first given its meaning was little known even to the prophets through whom it passed. Though ministered by

* Rom. xvi, 23. † 1 Cor. i, 14. ‡ Acts, xix, 22.

* Hebrews, vi, 6.

† Χρῆσις αἰωνίου.

‡ Ἐπισημῶν.

them it was not unto themselves but unto us.* It had been given in words to the world centuries before the appearance of our Saviour—yet was only made known for the first time to the disciples of Emmaus, when he opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures—beginning with Moses and the Prophets. What our Saviour did in person to these disciples upon earth, He afterwards did to believers in general by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, and whose office it is to make the sure word of prophecy obvious to their view, by causing the day to dawn and the day-star to arise in their hearts. The gospel might well have been said by the apostle to be manifest by the Scriptures of the prophets only now—for only now were these Scriptures made manifest.

‘According to the commandment of the everlasting God made known unto all nations for the obedience of faith.’ To perfect the revelation of the gospel, the work of apostles had to be superadded to that of prophets. The gospel had been witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets—when it lay in enigma till cleared up by the more explicit statements of those who were commissioned to go and preach it unto every creature.

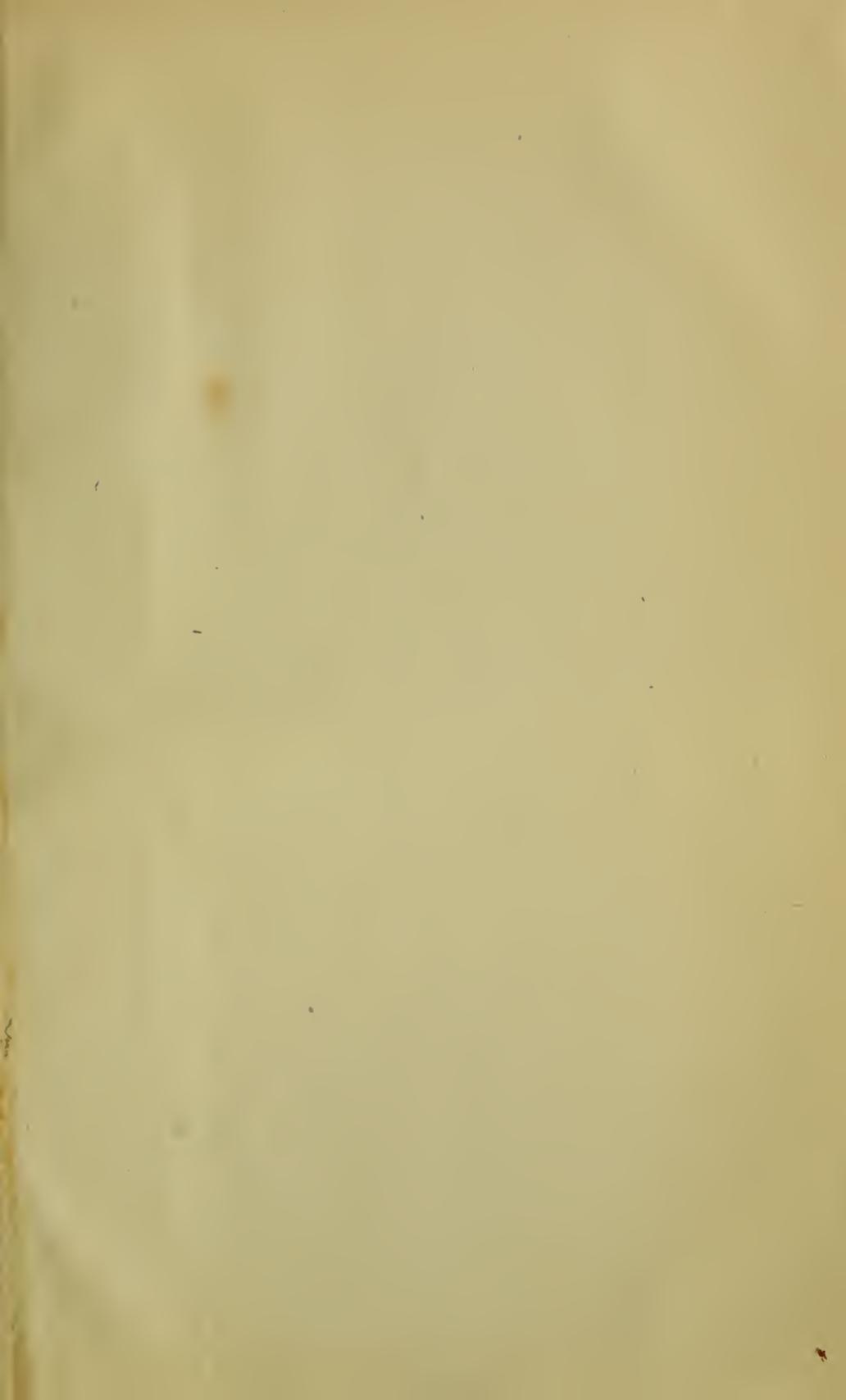
These three verses (23, 24, and 25) might be rendered thus.—‘Now to Him who is able to establish you in the discipleship of my gospel, which is nothing else than the gospel of Jesus Christ Himself—or in the discipleship of that revelation whereby there has been divulged the truth that was before hidden, and kept back from men in the earlier ages of the world; but is now made manifest, both by the prophetic writings which we in these days have been made more fully to understand—and also by the proclamation of the same agreeably to the commandment of the everlasting God, amongst all nations, for the purpose of obtaining their submission to the faith—To Him, the

only wise God, be glory for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’

We may be assured that there is nothing misplaced or inappropriate in the epithets employed by the apostle; and more especially those which he applies to the Divinity. In particular, when he applies different epithets to Him at different times, there must, we apprehend, be a discriminative reason for his so doing. In the 26th verse he denominates Him the everlasting God; and in the 27th, the God only wise. The epithet everlasting seems to have been suggested to the mind of the apostle, when he had in view the different and distant ages at which God had His different dealings with men from the beginning of the world—as keeping them in ignorance at its earlier periods, and at length in due time making known the scheme of His salvation. He, the King Eternal, who knows the end from the beginning, knows what is best and fittest to be done at each of the successive stages in the process of that great administration whose goings forth have been of old, and whose issues are from everlasting to everlasting. And He is denominated the only wise, that we, the short-lived creatures of a day, might learn to receive with unquestioning silence all the intimations which He has been pleased to have given us. In particular, it should reconcile the Jews to the termination of that economy under which they had hitherto lived, and under which they had vainly arrogated to themselves an exclusive and ever-during superiority over the rest of the species—whereas it appeared that the middle wall of partition was now to be broken down; and that their fancied monopoly of the divine favour was but a temporary evolution in the history of the divine government. And so he concludes his epistle, by calling on both parties in the church to which he writes it, to unite with him in the one ascription of glory to the Father through the Son; and that verily a glory which shall never end.

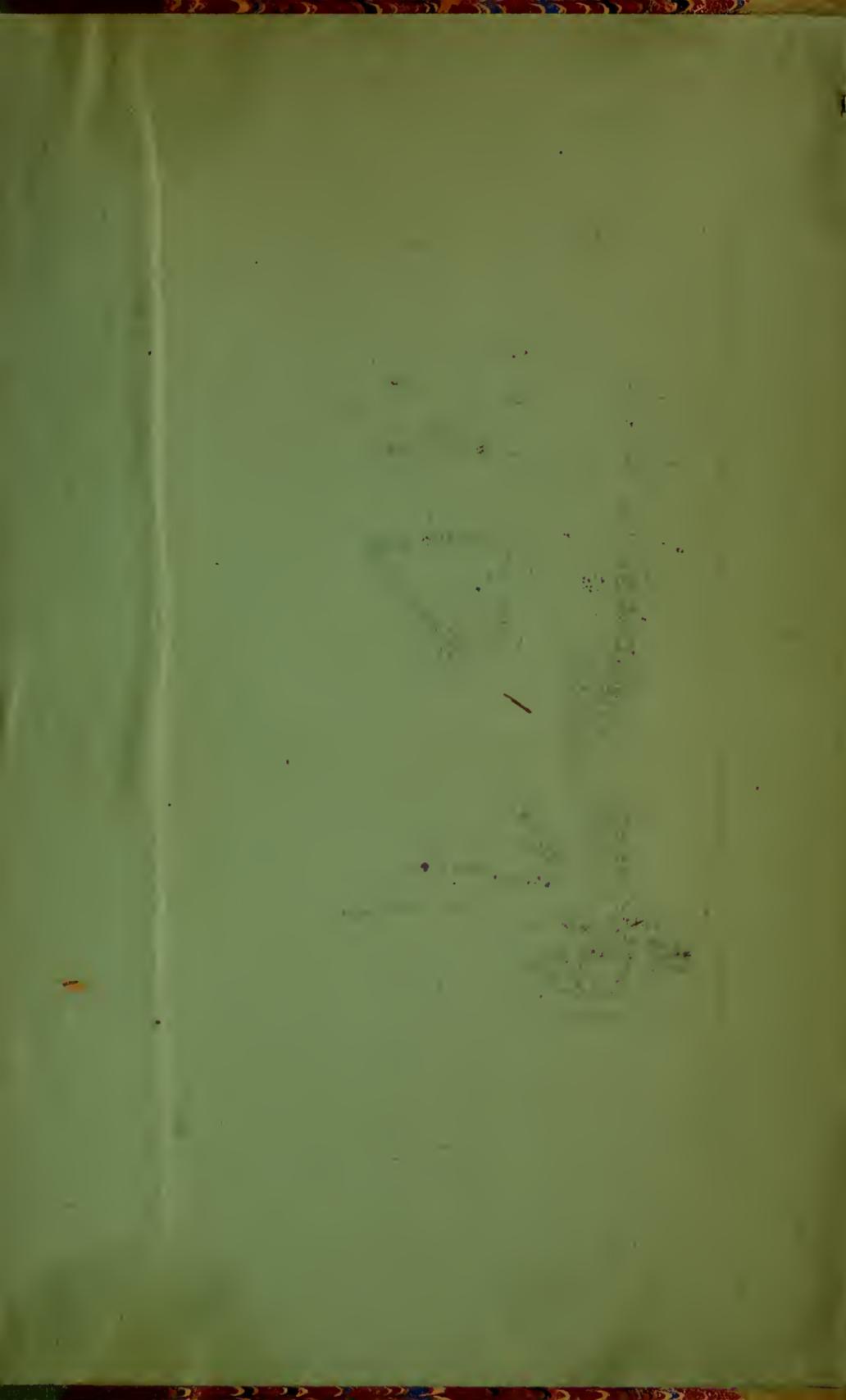
* 1 Peter, i, 12.





Date Due

Q 1 '37	MAY 18 1937		
Je 1 '38	MAY 18 1938		JUN 1 2002
Je 1 '38	MAY 18 1938		FEB 1 2002
Je 1 '38	MAY 18 1938		MAY 18 1938
M 1 '39			
F 10 '39	OCT 3 1939		6/15/02
D 4 '39	MAY 23 1939		
Ja 8 '40	MAY 9 1940		MAY 10 2002
D 9 '40	MAY 9 1940		
FACULTY	FEB 6 2001		
	MAR 8 2001		
	APR 1 2001		
APR '51	JUN 16 2001		
JA '53	JUL 2 2001		
FE '55	AUG 2 2001		
...	...		
...	OCT 2 2001		
...	NOV 4 2001		
FACULTY	NOV 1 2001		



BS2665 .C438 1843
Lectures on the Epistle of Paul, the

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00013 8927