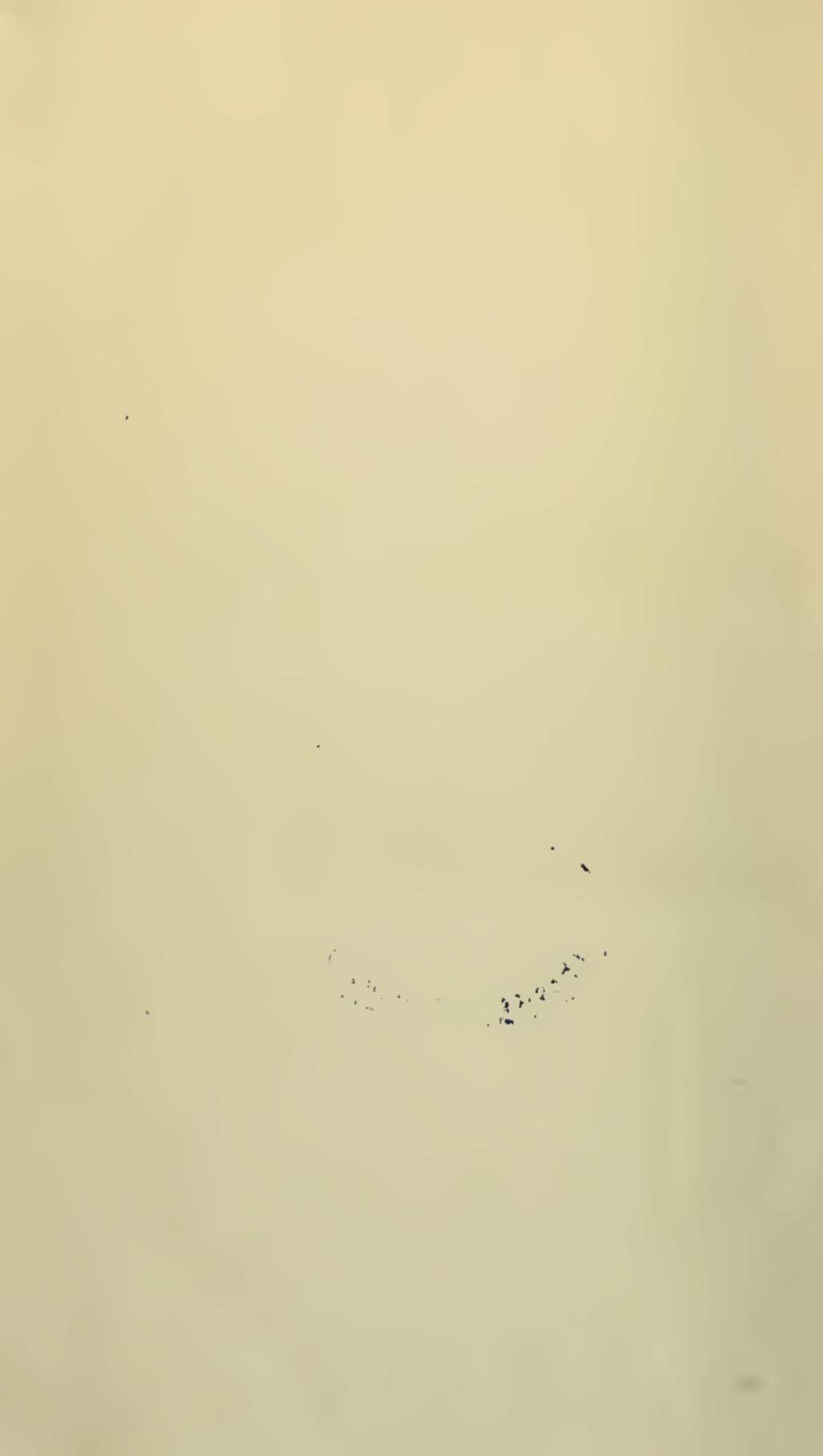




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Lectures on religion

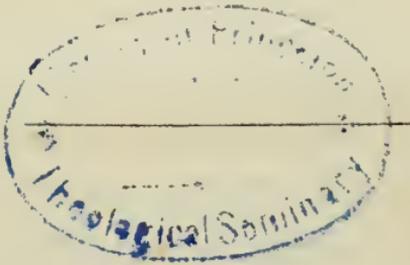


LECTURES ON RELIGION.

BY
✓
JOHN BURDER, M. A.

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

1 *Thess.* v. 21.



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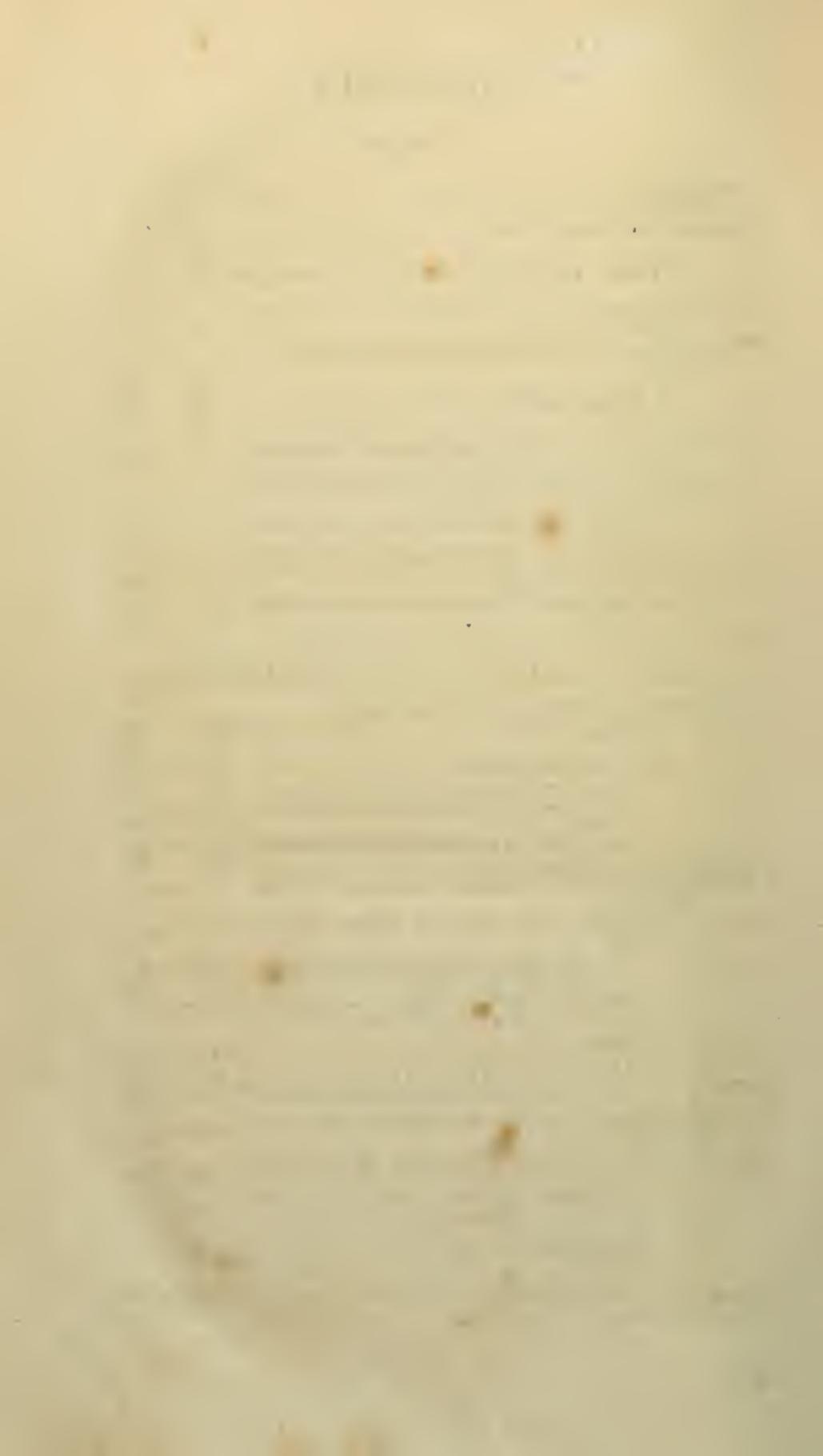
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PREFACE.

THE opinion is extensively prevalent among those who content themselves with vague notions on the subject of piety, that there are as many different religions in the world as there are classes of religious people; a sentiment which is somewhat confirmed by the manner in which the names and tenets of the various sects are exhibited on the pages of Theological Dictionaries. The consequence of this opinion is that when men are exhorted to worship God and to prepare for the invisible state, they plead, in vindication of acknowledged negligence, the supposed difficulty, amidst such a Babel-like tumult of conflicting dogmas, of ascertaining what ought to be rejected and what believed.

The Author of the following Lectures conceived that some benefit might accrue

from a systematic arrangement of the sentiments of mankind on the subject of Religion. He has accordingly taken THE GOSPEL, which is in the first place *assumed*, and afterwards *proved* to be true, as the basis of such a classification ; exhibiting all the modes of faith and worship which it was deemed important to notice, in the relation which they respectively bear to the Religion of Christ. He hoped, by this method, not only to evince the substantial unity of the Christian Church, notwithstanding the distinctive names which its several portions bear ; but also to force the various forms of error out of their usurped position of rivalry to the Gospel, and to compel every one of them to furnish its quota of testimony to the excellence of that Religion, which, like the Holy Book whence it is derived, “has God for its author, truth for its matter, and salvation for its end.”

It has long been the sedulous endeavour of the Writer, not merely to derive his sentiments generally from the word of God, which all believers in divine revelation profess to do ; but, as much as possible, to adhere to that precise view of Christian doctrine which is therein con-

tained. His aim is to contemplate truth in its native simplicity, and in the mutual connexion and dependance of its several parts; avoiding each of the opposite faults of taking aught from it, or adding aught to it.

The narrowness of the limits which the Author thought it right to prescribe to himself, has exposed him to the hazard of being occasionally superficial. It is hoped, however, that nothing of vital character has been omitted. Those doctrines have been investigated most fully which seemed most to require elucidation; while care has been taken, that, however brief the statement of any truth might be, the bearing which it has on Christian feeling and practice, should not be overlooked. The object proposed was not to describe the circumstantial of Religion, but rather to prove that the Gospel is unquestionably true and supremely good, demanding the serious attention of every individual of the human race. It has accordingly been the Author's endeavour, not more on account of the circumscribed limits of the work than for the sake of its express design, to throw into the shade matters of inferior importance, and to give due prominency to leading facts and doctrines. If he has been

at all successful in the execution of his plan, the impression which these Lectures will make on the reader's mind, will be just the opposite to that which is apt to be produced by the perusal of such a list of multifarious creeds as Religious Dictionaries set forth. The Author is desirous it should be seen that there are not those insurmountable obstacles which some persons picture to themselves, in the way of finding out the True Religion.

It is generally acknowledged that the number of treatises *of competent yet moderate length*, having an object in view similar to that which is herein proposed, is not too large; nor is there any publication, so far as the Author's limited reading extends, exactly on the plan of this volume. Adam's Religious World Displayed, is better calculated to *exhibit* error and truth, than to confute the one and establish the other. Dr. Olinthus Gregory, in his excellent Letters on Christianity, a work from which some valuable thoughts have been transferred to these discourses, observes a method somewhat resembling that which is here adopted, yet considerably different, as the reader will perceive on comparing the two tables of contents. But the Author can scarcely ac-

quit himself of presumption in naming these Lectures in connexion with that masterly performance.

The present publication aspires to no higher honour than that of being *an Introduction to the Study of the Christian Religion*, chiefly for the use of those who are not disposed to take their opinions upon trust, but who, at the same time, have not the requisite leisure and inclination to read through many books on any subject, and would be particularly disheartened by the sight of a ponderous volume on Theology. Should any such persons by means of this preliminary treatise, which is placed, as it were, in the portico of the Temple of Truth, be happily induced to enter the interior of that sacred edifice, they will be at no loss to meet with other and abler guides, to conduct them around its magnificent area, and assist them to explore its hidden beauties.

By the Congregation with whom the Author has lived in uninterrupted friendship, and among whom he has laboured, not altogether, he trusts, without success, during fifteen years; these Lectures, lately addressed to them from the pulpit, and now presented

to them in a more permanent form, will be valued, he is well persuaded, notwithstanding imperfections obvious to the critical eye, as a memorial of many happy seasons which they and he have spent together, in converse with their heavenly Father, and in meditation on the truths which it is the object of these pages to illustrate and defend.

May it be the privilege of every one of the Congregation, of their Pastor, and of every Reader, to obtain an inheritance in that better world, where the fragments of knowledge which can now be gathered from sermons, books, and study, shall be exchanged for the sublime conceptions of "the saints in light!"

So prays their sincere Friend and willing Servant,

JOHN BURDIER.

Stroud, Dec. 22, 1825.

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LECTURES ON RELIGION.

LECTURE I.

Jan. 11, 1824.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE NATURE OF RELIGION; THE MARKS BY WHICH TRUE RELIGION MAY BE DISTINGUISHED FROM FALSE; AND THE STATE OF MIND WHICH IS NECESSARY FOR THE SUCCESSFUL INVESTIGATION OF TRUTH.

JOHN vii. 17.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.

I ENTER this evening on a series of lectures, the subject of which is RELIGION. A more *important* subject, certainly, cannot engage the attention of mankind; nor is it possible to find one in itself more *interesting*, for it is surrounded with all the grandeur with which God and immortality can invest it; and therefore, if at any time it prove distasteful, the cause must be found either in the unworthy manner in which we, its advocates, exhibit it, or in the corrupt state of their hearts to whom it is presented. Perhaps there is no subject on which more numerous errors exist. Some persons affirm that there is no such thing as true religion; others who admit that possibly there is, doubt whether it be practicable to find it; others think that one religion is as good as another; and many act as if

they believed that the subject was altogether undeserving of any serious regard. To show the fallacy of these opinions and at the same time to answer the honest inquiries of those who, though well affected towards the truth, are not in possession of all the information they desire relative to it, are the combined objects of this course of Sermons. The questions to which I am desirous that these Lectures should furnish satisfactory replies, are such as these: "What is religion?" "How may I know that the various religions which differ from our own are false?" "How may I know that our own is true?" "Among the variety of creeds maintained by professing Christians how may I find out the best?" and, "What must be believed, felt, and done, to authorize me to regard myself as possessed of personal piety?" The selection of the subjects to be introduced into the course, as well as their arrangement, has been regulated, to the best of my power, by a regard to the objects in view, as above explained. As a year appeared to be a suitable period, during which a series of discourses of this nature might last, and twice in each month a proper degree of frequency for their delivery, I resolved to limit the number of Lectures to *twenty-four*. On a subject so extensive as religion, it would have been easier to expand the series into double or treble the length than to observe the specified limit. My endeavour has been to admit no subject that was not essential to the plan, and to omit none that possessed that character. The same rule I shall aim to keep before me in the discussion of each particular topic; without, however, being so presumptuous as to imagine that no deviations from it will appear.

I am far from wishing it to be supposed that every idea which may be exhibited in these discourses will be the product of my own mind. On most of the topics able treatises are extant, and several within my reach, of which it would be inexcusable not to take advantage. While however justice

demands such an acknowledgment, I may at the same time be allowed to add that I shall not make a servile use of any one's thoughts. I wish to treat the ideas of other men not as an artist uses a picture of which he is to make an exact copy, but as he uses the colours with which he intends to execute a performance of his own; not as the substitute, but as the materials for thinking.

And whereas persons of sceptical mind are very apt to impute the religious views of religious people to the prejudices of education, I think it important to state that the supposition in a great number of cases, and if I mistake not, in my own case, has no foundation in truth. What we might have been without a religious training, can be known only to the Omniscient. Very possibly we might have been among the most irreligious. But it is one thing to acknowledge that a religious education has been the *occasion* of our becoming religious, (which, however, in many instances, is not the fact,) and another thing to suppose that our having been so educated is now the *reason* of our being religious. If among my hearers there are any persons who say that they require strong evidence for every proposition which they are desired to believe, it may be satisfactory to them to hear that in this particular they and we are of the same turn of mind. Hence it is that we give no heed to one half of the rumours, domestic, social and political, which constitute the news of the day. Hence, too, we find ourselves unable to place full reliance on not a few of the statements which have crept into ancient history. Want of adequate evidence is, in both cases, the cause of our doubting. But the same principles of belief which compel me to be sceptical where the proof is scanty, compel me also to believe where the proof is complete. For this reason, as I shall attempt to show more fully hereafter, I am a religious man.

Persons who are unfriendly to religion sometimes

insinuate that the testimony given in its favour by public advocates is to be received with suspicion, inasmuch, as, being paid for their work, they are interested witnesses. If I address any who harbour such an opinion, it may be well for them to be reminded that the pecuniary compensation which is made for religious services seldom amounts to a sum large enough to induce a man falsely to profess himself the friend of Christianity, even were he capable of acting so basely. When from the amount received there are deducted the sums given back to the cause of religion, not only in those direct contributions in which a man in public office is expected to set the example, but also in those numerous charges which such a one incurs from the part which he feels himself obliged to take in various undertakings of a philanthropic nature, (to say nothing of labour, anxiety, and time, which are more than money,) when, I say, from a professional income which in very few instances is itself large, these deductions have been made, no man who possesses a grain of candour will imagine that the love of money can have any influence in inducing a person to take upon himself the office of a Christian Preacher, except a man's circumstances were such as to present no other prospect of maintenance. For the most part, if a Minister of the Gospel be not altogether incompetent to the duties of his office, he might secure to himself a much larger portion of emolument by applying himself to some secular pursuit. Such a person is a loser and not a gainer, in worldly matters, by the interest which he takes in the concerns of religion. The supposition, therefore, of his being an interested witness in its behalf is altogether imaginary.

While my desire is that these lectures may prove acceptable and useful to all, I shall have the welfare of the younger part of the congregation particularly in view. It can, therefore, hardly be necessary for me to ask, that as far as circumstances

allow, they would give me their regular attendance; nor need I ask that they would hear me with candour and thoughtfulness. It gratifies me not a little to believe that they will regard my instructions as the advice of a friend whose strong desire it is to guard them against the errors and vices by which they are surrounded, and to lead them to form just and exalted views of the religion which came from heaven and conducts man thither.

I would not forget, however, and intreat that you may not forget, that the success of the undertaking depends altogether on God. Life and health, both as to the speaker, and as to the hearers, are at his disposal. And from Him must come that holy influence without which, means of instruction far superior to any which the speaker has it in his power to afford, would prove inefficient. Let me beseech you, then, my beloved friends, to join with me in thus addressing the great Benefactor: "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children, and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." *Psalms* xc. 16, 17.

The first part of the title of this Introductory Lecture is, *The Nature of Religion, including a statement of the marks by which True Religion may be distinguished from False*; and to these topics allusion is made in the words of our Saviour which I have selected for a motto: "The doctrine," of which he speaks, is the doctrine he taught concerning himself, concerning his heavenly Father, concerning the Holy Spirit, concerning a future state, concerning human duty, and concerning the way of Salvation; it is in a word, his religion, *the religion of Christ, the religion of Truth*.

And when the Saviour says that certain persons "shall know this doctrine to be of God" as opposed to a scheme of human invention, it is intimated that there are marks by which its true cha-

racter may be ascertained. There is a third topic also exhibited in the text as closely connected with the former, which is too important to be overlooked : *viz.* the *disposition of mind* which an inquirer after truth must cherish in order to success ; “ If any man *will do his will*, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” What, and how important this temper of mind is, will be considered in a later stage of the discourse ; but it may be well, even now at the very outset, to notice the strong encouragement which is here given to an honest inquirer. Let no such person harbour the disheartening supposition that his attempt to investigate truth may probably be of no avail. Let him, on the contrary, set out this evening with the animating persuasion that success is certain. “ The author and finisher of our faith ” warrants this confident hope, when he says, as in one text, *whoever is minded* (as the words may be read) *to do the will of God*, shall discern the doctrine to be true.

I. A few remarks are to be offered explanatory of the
NATURE OF RELIGION.

Religion comprehends *a due regard to God*, a due regard to *virtue*, and a due regard to *immortality* : but if asked, which of these views of religion I consider to be the most characteristic, I reply, the *first* of them, because that necessarily brings the others after it. He who lives in the fear of God, lives also in the practice of morality, and in the expectation of living for ever ; inasmuch as that Great Being whom he reveres has commanded the one and promised the other : and inasmuch also as a right temper of mind towards God leads the subject of it, as matter of course, to obey his injunctions and to give heed to his promises. Religion, then, I would define to be A DUE REGARD TO GOD.

Religion, according to this view of it, *takes for granted the being of God*, and a conviction of the

fact. I have not thought it important to devote a lecture to the contemplation of the proofs of the divine existence, on account of their being both so obvious and so rarely called in question. Indeed, to deny that there is a God, implies, so far as the intellect is concerned, so deplorable a perversion of mind, that to argue with one who maintains such a notion, would appear to be a hopeless task. To him who refuses to admit the first principles of reasoning, all proofs are equal, that is, nothing. That every thing must have a cause, and, which is the same, that every effect must have an adequate cause, is entitled to be regarded as an incontrovertible axiom. That the above proposition is an *axiom*, self-evident, requiring no proof but that which itself supplies, is apparent from the fact that all human beings, with the exception of atheists, reason and act upon it from the earliest dawn of intellect to the last moment of life; and that atheists themselves reason and act upon it on all occasions except when they argue respecting the Being of a God. It is plain that *the universe either made itself, or was made by another*; and that nothing can make itself is equally plain. Things are passive in *beginning* to be. To suppose that any thing can act before it exists, is a manifest absurdity; and yet this absurdity must be believed by those who maintain that any creature, the first man for example, was his own creator. And if any one say that things, originally, neither created themselves nor were created by another but came by *chance*, the reply is that, in the sense intended, there is no such thing as chance. The common meaning of the word chance is quite different from that of which I now speak. When we say that a traveller, *by chance*, came to a part of the road where an accident had happened, we mean only that the man did not arrive at that place, at that time, with any particular design on his part; we do not mean that there was no *cause* for his

getting there when he did. On the contrary, every body knows that very sufficient causes may be assigned for his so doing; *viz.* his having set out at such an hour, and his having travelled by such a road, at such a rate. The word chance, in that instance, means, *not the absence of a cause*, but merely *the absence of design*. In other cases chance means, our *inability to ascertain the cause*. Thus a man may say that while travelling along the road, a bird, *by chance*, flew close by him. In this instance, as in the other, the meaning is *not* that there was *no cause* of the bird's flying near the man. The bird may have taken that direction in pursuit of food, or, to get out of the reach of a bird of prey. Chance, when applied to such an incident, simply means that *we are unable to assign the cause* of its occurrence.

But *chance*, when made to take the place of God, bears a sense quite different from either of the meanings described, and a sense which is manifestly absurd. "All things," some persons have said, "have come by chance." I ask what is this chance? Has it personal existence, or has it not? If it have personal existence, it must have certain properties; what are those properties? If chance has been the cause of all other existences (which is the supposition advanced) then it must possess the attributes of power and wisdom in an inconceivably great degree; so that on this supposition it becomes another name, though not a good name, for *God*.

But all must of course allow that chance has no actual being, but is merely an abstract idea. If then it has no existence itself how could it have been the cause of other beings? It is plain that to say the universe came into existence by chance, is only another way of saying that it came into existence *without any cause* at all, a statement which carries its own refutation on its front.

Nor will it avail any thing to say that possibly things *never had a beginning*, but were always as

they are now ; for this statement involves an absurdity, and like the supposition respecting chance, is only another mode of affirming that there may be an effect without a cause. Go back in your imagination as many millions of generations as you please : you must suppose creatures to have had a beginning sometime. Every being, whether it exist now, or existed a million ages ago, must either have been produced by another, or have produced itself. To say that it produced itself is to say that *nothing produced something*, for every creature before it begins to be is *nothing*. The only alternative is that it was produced by *another* ; and the *original producer* of all things must be an *independent and eternal being*.

That a race of dependent beings, such as we and all creatures are, never had a beginning, is not merely inconceivable, but is plainly impossible. That the *first* cause never began to be, is indeed a truth which we cannot fully comprehend, but which at the same time is so far from being incredible, that the contrary supposition is absurd. These few remarks may suffice with regard to the being of God.

The character of God, as unfolded in the revelation he has given of himself, we shall have an opportunity of contemplating in subsequent lectures devoted to that purpose. At present it will be sufficient to observe, in the general, that those beings and events which prove his existence, also exhibit his wisdom, power and goodness, and show that the creatures whom he has formed are the objects of his care and the subjects of his government.

This is the Glorious Being to whom religion has constant respect, and a due regard to whom constitutes its very essence.

That some regard is owing to God by his intelligent creatures will scarcely be denied by any who believe in his existence. Supreme excellence surely

calls for veneration: benefactions involve obligation; and a right to command on one side is inseparable from the duty of obedience on the other.

Hence we say that a *due regard to God has respect to the whole range of human thought, feeling and action*, and accordingly includes the endeavour to form just conceptions of him, the exercise of proper affections towards him, and the doing of those things which he enjoins.

1. A due regard to God requires us to *endeavour to form just conceptions of him*.

With this view a Pagan is bound to look with an attentive eye on the numerous pieces of divine workmanship by which he is surrounded, and a Christian is under obligation, for the same purpose, to look into the *word* as well as the *works* of God. Whoever remains ignorant of God, or continues to be the subject of erroneous and therefore dishonourable thoughts of him, in consequence of neglecting diligently to avail himself of the means of information which are within his reach, is chargeable with the same guilt, (the same, that is, in nature, but far greater in degree,) with that of the man who allows himself to entertain mean and unworthy suspicions of a friend, a benefactor or a parent, because, either through idleness or prejudice, he is unwilling to take the trouble carefully and candidly to investigate the truth.

2. A due regard to God includes *the exercise of proper affections towards him*.

Justice has reference to *character* and to *benefits*, as well as to goods and money. Every one allows that it is unjust to take away from another what belongs to him, and to refuse to give him that to which he has a just claim; and all men whose opinions are worth regarding also acknowledge that to hate the virtuous, and to feel no gratitude for benefits received are, as clearly, violations of the rule of equity. If then it be admitted that to hate the imperfect virtue which is found in human beings, and

to slight the small favours which man confers on man, are instances of injustice, what shall we think of hatred cherished against unalloyed excellence, and of ingratitude towards Him whose blessings are as numerous as the moments of our life?

3. A due regard to God, includes *the doing of those things which he enjoins*.

The great first cause must of course be the governor of all other beings. The perfection of his nature qualifies him to enact laws which are invariably just and good, while the relation which subsists between his creatures and himself invests him with paramount authority. His will, therefore, in whatever way it may be made known, must needs be the law by which their conduct is to be regulated. The truth of this statement, which scarcely requires proof, may be shown by adverting to the consequences which would result from the denial of it. Let us put the case thus: The rule by which conduct is to be guided must be either the will of man, or the will of God. But the will of man is liable to *fluctuation*; human beings sometimes approve certain modes of action which at other times they disapprove. It is clear, therefore, that the will of such beings cannot form a proper *rule* of conduct, since a rule must be constant and unchanging. Besides, it is undeniably certain that the human will is sometimes inclined to what is *wrong*. Observation and experience concur in adducing an overwhelming accumulation of evidence of the fact; and that which may be wrong, can never be a safe and proper guide. Some men love to practise honesty, but others are inclined to fraud, and some men are occasionally inclined to the one and occasionally to the other. Now if the inclination of man be a right rule of conduct, the consequence follows that it is right for one man to be honest and for another man to be dishonest; and right also for a third person to be sometimes honest and sometimes dishonest. Every one sees that this would be to confound the

distinction between right and wrong; and, consequently, that for a man to profess to make his inclination the rule of his actions is, correctly speaking, to have no rule at all.

The only *rule* of conduct is the *will of God*, which, being the will of an all-wise, perfectly good, and unchangeable Being, is always agreeable to the eternal principles of equity, and is therefore perfectly just, and invariably the same.

The absolute *perfection of the divine mind* whence this law emanates, and the *relation* which God bears to us as the Being from whom we received life, and by whom our life is sustained, combine to prove that a due regard to him includes the doing of those things which he enjoins.

And this appears to be a fit place for exhibiting the *unity of religion*, or the *essential sameness of true religion* throughout all the modifications which it may assume. The sentiment is not seldom advanced, that if a man have *some sort of religion*, it matters little what that religion be; an opinion which recommends itself by its apparent candour, and still more by the convenient apology which it affords for neglecting to pay any serious regard to religious truth. Indeed, if that opinion be well founded, all such attention to religion is unnecessary. That you may be convinced of the error of this sentiment, I request you to meditate on the *nature of truth* and on *the character of God*. "Truth," says Dr. Watts, "is the conformity of one thing to some other which is made the standard or rule of it. So a picture is said to be true, when it is conformable to the face and figure of the person. So a copy of any writing is true, when it is conformable to the original. So a narrative or history is true, when it describes matters fairly as they were transacted, and tells the circumstances just as they are." From this view of truth in general, we may learn what truth is in reference to religion; *True religion is such a regard to God, as is conform*

able to his character. If the Deity were both *holy* and *unholy*, or sometimes the one, and sometimes the other, then both a holy and an impure religion might be equally proper in themselves, and equally acceptable to him; but since he is perfectly and unchangeably *holy*, it is evident that no religion can be true that is not pure, since no other can be conformable to his character.

Again: If the Deity were both *benevolent* and *malevolent*, or sometimes the one and sometimes the other, then, both a religion which encourages men to seek their own welfare and that of others, and another religion which allows self-torture and revenge, might be equally proper in themselves, and equally acceptable to God; but since God is *love*, it is plain that no religion can be true except such a one as teaches men to promote their own, and each others happiness.

Once more: If God's doings with regard to man were *variable*: if he were sometimes the *preserver* of his creatures and sometimes *unmindful* of them; or if he were sometimes their *governor* and sometimes *not their governor*; then both a religion which should teach the necessity of *constant regard* to him, and one which should require only *occasional* regard to him, might be equally good: but since God is *always the benefactor and always the governor* of his creatures, no religion can be true except the one which inculcates the propriety of a regard to him which shall be *invariable and constant*, corresponding to the unchangeable nature of the relation which he sustains towards us.

From these considerations it appears that *true religion*, in its great features, *must be the same in all ages and countries*. True religion, however, may admit of various *modifications in non-essential parts*. Whatever does not affect our forming just conceptions of God, our cherishing proper affections towards him, or our doing the things which he enjoins, must be classed among the non-essentials,

within the range of which a thousand little variations both of opinion and of practice may find a place.

Thus is a medium course marked out for us between *Latitudinarianism* on the one hand and *Bigotry* on the other; between the extreme of confounding error with truth, and that of elevating points of doubtful origin and utility to a level with "justice, mercy, and the love of God." These principles have been kept in view in the selection of the subjects of these lectures. No topic is introduced on which, it is supposed, that there can be any considerable difference of opinion among those who, being sincere lovers of truth, use the appointed means for its attainment.

Here it may be worth the while to state, in passing, that in our conception of the matter, *man, considered as accountable to God*, and, *man, considered as a member of civil society*, are two views of human nature which are perfectly distinct from each other, though very often confounded even by those who might be supposed to know better. When we insist on the importance of truth in religion, and venture to designate those systems which are essentially untrue as no religion at all in the proper sense of the word, we are charged with holding intolerant notions. But to this charge we plead not guilty, with the fullest conviction of innocence. My considering a neighbour to be living, as the scriptures express it, "without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world," interferes not in the least with my acting towards him as a neighbour. Whether he be or be not a real christian, is a most important question, but it is a matter between him and God. He is not accountable with regard to his religious principles, either to me or to any man. So long as he conducts himself as an orderly member of the community, he is entitled to his full share in all the advantages of civil society, just as much as if his religious views were perfectly correct, and his piety unquestionable.

II. We proceed now to investigate THE MARKS BY WHICH TRUE RELIGION MAY BE DISTINGUISHED FROM FALSE.

That there is an essential *difference* between true and false religion has been made, I hope, sufficiently apparent. By what *criterion*, then, may the one be distinguished from the other.

In religion *two parties* are observable, *God* and *Man*. Religion then should be *suitable to both*; it should be conformable to the nature both of God and of man. It must honour Him, and benefit us.

These are the marks laid down by the excellent Bishop Beveridge, in his "Private Thoughts upon Religion, written in his younger years," as the title page of the book informs us, "for the settling of his principles and conduct of his life." These marks, I apprehend, if honestly and diligently used, will not mislead. In no religion except the true, can they be found, and in it they certainly are found.

I venture to propose a criterion of truth in religion, which is so far from being inconsistent with the marks just mentioned, that it is inclusive of them. It is however, as I conceive, more simple and comprehensive, and one to which no man can object as a criterion, how differently soever may be the practice of men with regard to the use of it: I mean, *The agreement of Religion with matter of Fact*.

Truth and Fact can never be opposed to each other, but in every case, so far as they have any connexion, must agree. Truth is the relation which subsists between facts, and in metaphysics as in mathematics, the relation subsisting between two or more things, must, of course, correspond with the nature of the things themselves. That system accordingly, which no facts oppose and which many facts corroborate, is entitled to be received as true.

Let us then glance at such of those facts in human nature as have any connexion with religion.

We are to enter more at large on the examination of the evidences of the truth of christianity some time hence; all that is now necessary is to show that the criterion proposed is a safe and good one.

1. We know that mankind are *intelligent* beings. This is a fact relative to the whole human race, which is questioned by none. Since then, man is a rational creature, it may be expected that a true system of religion will recognise and be suited to this his character. Hence, if any system shall be observed to abound in senseless ceremonies and foolish pageants, with little or no food for the *mind* of man, it may be presumed, without hazard, that such a system has no claim to be considered *true religion*, how well soever it may be adapted to purposes of juvenile recreation. On the other hand, if a system presented to our examination is found to be calculated to employ, improve, and enrich our minds, there is, so far, a presumption in its favour, as being in this respect, at least, adapted to human nature.

2. A second fact relative to our whole race is that man is a *corrupt creature*, prone to violate, and having in reality often violated the rules of goodness, the laws of God. If then any scheme of religion overlook this fact, and treat man as if he were a sinless being, we may reasonably suspect that the said scheme is not true. But if, on the other hand, there is a system of religion which fully recognises this fact, and throughout all its parts regards man in his real character, making provision for his wants as a sinful creature, it is reasonable to believe that such a system is true.

3. It is an undeniable fact that *evil doing*, of which we are so often guilty, is the *source of much inconvenience and pain*.

The universal experience of mankind evinces that sin and misery are related to each other as cause and effect. If then any system of religion should evidently be calculated to make men worse and con-

sequently more wretched, it cannot be imagined to wear the character of truth ; but, if on the contrary, it be evidently and eminently adapted to improve the human character, and thereby to make men happier ; and if, as to all those who do justice to it, it actually does make men better and happier, we have good ground to conclude it to be true and divine.

4. It is a fact that mankind are *prone to neglect that regard to God*, in which, we have seen, the essence of religion lies, and which, it also appears, is absolutely due to God. A system of true religion may be expected to have a bearing on this fact, while such systems as are false may leave it unnoticed. Whatever creed is shown to be the most effectual in bringing mankind actually to yield that homage to God, in which true religion consists, may be set down as truth ; whereas those systems which uniformly leave man, as they find him, practically unmindful of God, may be pronounced defective and erroneous.

The facts already mentioned respect human nature in every age. The relation which a system of religion bears to those facts constitutes the *internal evidence* of its truth. But there is another large class of facts which must be noticed ; the events, namely, with which we are made acquainted through the medium of *history*. By means of authentic narratives, we know or may know, most of the principal facts which have occurred in the world in former ages. Now whatever system of religion be not a thing of yesterday, must also have a history connected with it ; that is, certain facts relative to the origin and progress of the system, and relative to those who have espoused it and promoted it, must have taken place in past years ; and of these facts we shall expect to find a fair proportion on record among the other transactions of ages that are gone. Such, every one in the slightest degree conversant with history, knows to be the case. The history of the

religions of mankind makes no inconsiderable part of the *general history* of our race; and *one* of those religions, at least, besides making a part of general history, has also a *history of its own*. Historical fact, therefore, forms another criterion by which true religion may be distinguished from false.

Every system of religion will be either *confuted* or *confirmed* by being brought to this test.

Whatever system is contradicted by well authenticated facts is false. Whatever system is found so linked together with, and, as it were *dove-tailed* in undoubted facts that those facts cannot be admitted to be facts without involving the truth of the system in question, must, of necessity, be received as true. The relation which religion bears to history constitutes the *external* proof of its truth.

On these principles it will be our business to examine the religious systems which are put down in the syllabus. Fact is the touch-stone by which we propose to try them. That which cannot bear this trial we will pronounce to be spurious; that which can bear it, we will consider genuine. And, happily, the undertaking proposed is not of the nature of an experiment never made before. It has been made a thousand times already, and in every instance the result has been the same. No religion but one has been able to bear the trial; but the religion of the Bible has come forth as gold.

It has been proved to be adapted to man as an *intellectual being*, bringing to his mind *truth* its appropriate aliment, truth of the noblest and most ennobling kind, and truth which can be but very partially and imperfectly obtained from any other source. It approves itself to our choice as taking cognisance of that lamentable fact that man is a *sinful being*. It meets man in this his real character and provides him those very blessings of pardon and purity; which the fact of his being a sinner proves that he greatly needs. It also recognises the fact that *sin is productive of suffering*, and accord-

ingly, it alleviates his woe by correcting his depravity. Equally observant is the religion of Christ of man's being *prone to neglect the homage which he owes to God*; this system is eminently fitted to bring him back to the service of his Maker.

Lastly. Its truth is confirmed by ten thousand well authenticated facts in the history of mankind, and is contradicted by none.

These are merely outlines of argument, which are to be filled up hereafter; they are now introduced for the sake of giving a general idea of the nature of the evidence by which the truth of the gospel is established.

III. Having investigated the nature of religion, and ascertained the marks by which True Religion may be distinguished from False; it remains for us to consider THE DISPOSITION OF MIND WITH WHICH THE INQUIRY AFTER TRUTH MUST BE PURSUED, IN ORDER TO SUCCESS. "If any man," said the Saviour, "will, *i. e.* is minded or determined, to do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

1. A sincere desire to obey the will of God is favourable to success in the pursuit of truth, inasmuch as *it induces a man to make a diligent use of the means of knowledge which are within his reach.* Suppose two men to be informed that in a certain piece of land golden ore was to be obtained if duly sought after. Both these men express a willingness to find the gold, but they differ in this important respect, that the one has but a feeble desire to add to his wealth, while the other being poor, and knowing himself to be poor, does very earnestly wish to gain the treasure. Both commence the operations prescribed; but some time and labour being required, the former, having been actuated rather by a spirit of curiosity than a thirst of gain,

either quickly gives up the pursuit, or continues it only occasionally and languidly. The other, stimulated by a sense of want, perseveres day after day in his work, and at length succeeds. He obtains the precious ore; and, in it, an ample compensation for all his toil. Just such a difference is there between the languid desires, half hearted prayers, and feeble, and occasional efforts of the man who makes religion his plaything; and the earnestness and diligence of the man who desires to know, in order that he may do, the will of God. In religion as in commerce, it is "the hand of the diligent that maketh rich." "If thou seek for wisdom as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." *Prov. ii. 1---6.*

2. A sincere desire to do the will of God is favourable to success in the pursuit of truth, because *it removes from the mind that prejudice which is the greatest obstacle in the way of success.*

Nothing is more common than for men of licentious life to consider a love to religion as the offspring of prejudice; while the fact is that hatred to religion ought rather to claim prejudice for its parent. No prejudice is so strong as the love of sin. He who wishes to gratify the corrupt desires of the heart, must of course, be greatly prepossessed in *favour* of any scheme which seeks either to destroy or to diminish the guilt and danger of evil-doing; and must be equally prejudiced *against* a scheme which represents every deviation from the line of righteousness as being both disgraceful in itself and alarming in its consequences. Such a man looks at truth with a diseased eye, and through a mist: no wonder if its lovely colours and fair proportions are not distinctly seen. Such a man comes to weigh the evidences of truth with a pair of balances on the one side of which Vice has previously placed a weight, so immensely great that no possible accumulation of proofs can turn the

scale. On the contrary, the man who is desirous of doing the will of God comes to the contemplation of truth with a clear eye and in a pure atmosphere, and sets himself to the task of weighing proofs and objections with just balances and a steady hand. Such a man "shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

3. A sincere desire to obey the will of God ensures success in the pursuit of truth because *it is connected with the blessing of God.*

The promise of the Saviour in the text is most satisfactory and animating. You who are conscious of such a desire as the text describes, have reason to conclude from this authority, that the blessing of God is already with you, and shall be with you for ever. That desire after obedience which God has imparted to you will lead you to follow every intimation of his will. You will therefore, see the propriety and highly value the privilege of looking up to him daily for his guidance while you daily look into his word. "Show me thy ways O Lord," you will say, "teach me thy paths, lead me in thy truth and teach me. Open thou my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. What I know not, teach thou me. Make me wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

LECTURE II.

Jan. 25, 1824.

FIRST DIVISION.—FALSE RELIGION.

ERRONEOUS SYSTEMS OF RELIGION WHICH ARE
OCCASIONED BY IGNORANCE OF THE TRUE.

I COR. X. 20.

The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to Devils (or Demons), and not to God.

IN the preceding lecture, which was designed to be introductory to a series of discourses, I endeavoured to show that Religion consists in a due regard to God, including of necessity, a like regard both to virtue and to immortality.

As God is the object to which religion has constant reference, it was deemed proper to make a few remarks on the divine existence. The supposition that there is no God was shown to be absurd. Next, we considered the homage which is due to the Supreme Being. It was observed that to endeavour to form just conceptions of the Creator, Benefactor and Governor of mankind, to exercise proper affections towards him, and to do those things which he enjoins (in which particulars the essence of religion was considered to consist) is the manifest duty of every human being. From this view of the nature of religion it was inferred with certainty, that true religion, although it may admit of various modifications in non-essential circumstances, must be substantially the same in all ages and countries; that as there is one, so there can be *but one true religion.*

It was presumed, therefore, that there must be

some *mark* or marks by which the truth may be distinguished amidst the crowd of pretenders with which the world is filled. The criterion proposed was the *agreement of religion with matter of fact*. Several leading facts and classes of facts relative to the character, the state and the history of mankind, were, accordingly, adduced, and it was proposed that that system of religion which should be shown to agree with those facts, having its truth expressly confirmed by many of them, and being contradicted by none, should be regarded as the true religion. In this stage of the discourse a digression was made to Christianity. It was observed that the investigation of truth proposed in these lectures was not of the nature of an experiment never yet made. It had been made a thousand times, and when honestly conducted, the result had been uniformly the same. No religion but that of the Christian Scriptures had stood the trial; that and that only bearing the impress of truth. In conclusion, our inquiries were directed to *the temper of mind* in which such investigations should be pursued. It was shown that a sincere desire to obey the will of God, that is, a love to the truth and a determination to act according to it, insures success, inasmuch as such a disposition indicates the absence of that moral prejudice which is the greatest barrier in the road to truth; prompts a man to make a diligent use of all the means of information in his power; and is connected with the seeking and obtaining of the blessing of God.

Having given this brief recapitulation of the topics discussed in the last lecture, I proceed to observe that as there can be but one true religion, and as there are in the world very many systems of religion between some of which a manifest contrariety is discernible, it follows that we may expect to find one of those systems to be true, and that the rest must needs be false. This idea forms the basis of the PRIMARY DIVISION of the series of

lectures; THE FALSE AND THE TRUE being the two genera under the one or the other of which every system must of course find a place. I have determined to examine the false first, both wishing that the most important topics should be contemplated last, and judging that the taking a short tour around the regions of error may render the blessed land of light the more welcome and precious.

Every false religion which exists or has ever existed belongs to one of the following classes: Either it is occasioned by ignorance of the truth, or it is directly opposed to the truth, or it consists in a partial reception of the truth, or it is distinguished by corrupt additions to the truth. These various forms of error we purpose to consider separately. The subject of this evening's lecture is, *False Religion occasioned by ignorance of the True.* And, oh my brethren, what a scene is before us! Six hundred millions of our fellow creatures people the region of gloom, desolation and death, on which we have set our feet! We must not, we cannot enter without a solemn feeling. Triumph over the folly of these heathens, and pride at our own superiority would be cruel and wicked. These people are, in religion, what idiots and maniacs are in civil life, and with some such emotion as would throb in the breast of a lover of mankind, on a visit to a lunatic asylum, should we, this evening, make the tour of the pagan world.

It is not necessary, nor would time permit, that I should present even the barest outline of every modification of heathenism. It will be sufficient for me to select such a number of authentic facts, mostly, though not altogether, of recent date, relative to a few of the Gentile nations, as may serve to illustrate THE OBJECTS AND THE NATURE OF THEIR WORSHIP. As these instances will be taken both from the lowest, and the highest in the scale of civil society, from the rudest and the most learned, the most savage and the most refined

Heathens, they will serve as samples of the whole; and will furnish, I hope, within a small compass, a correct and tolerably adequate idea of the principal features of Pagan religion.

My intention is not to enter on the subject of Heathen *morals* any farther than it may be forced on our attention by its connexion with their religious rites. But the few facts which, in this way, will come under our notice, will suffice to show that false religion and vicious conduct are inseparable companions. Neither is it essential to our subject that particular mention should be made of the notions entertained by Heathens respecting *a future state*. It may be sufficient to observe that some of them are altogether ignorant of immortality, and that none among them have correct ideas concerning it. The Chinese and Hindoos, who constitute together about one-half of the Pagan part of the population of the globe, hold the doctrine of transmigration. They believe that the soul of man, at death, enters the body of some other animal; and that in the course of ages, many such changes of abode are experienced; but as this opinion is not compatible with just ideas of personal identity, it scarcely deserves to be considered as the belief of an immortal state.

I. We are to contemplate THE OBJECTS OF HEATHEN WORSHIP.

Scarcely has any nation been found to have so few religious thoughts of any kind as the Hottentots. Mr. Kitcherer, who resided for several years among them as an instructor, assures us, that they have (or rather, *had*) no ideas of a Supreme Being.

The only object for which they manifested a religious reverence was an insect, called the *Mantis*, or the *Creeping Leaf*. A converted Hottentot, on being asked whether he had ever worshipped the Mantis, replied, holding the insect in his hand,

“Yes, a thousand times. Whenever I saw this little creature, I would fall down on my knees before it and pray that he would give me a good master and plenty of thick milk and flesh. I did not then know that I wanted any thing else. I was as ignorant as the oxen. If I saw this insect in the wagon-road, or in a footpath, I used to take it up as gently as I could, and place it behind a bush, for fear a wagon should crush it, or some man or beast should tread it to death. If a Hottentot by some accident, killed or injured this creature, it was considered certain that he would be unlucky all his life-time, and would never be able to shoot an elephant or a buffalo afterward.” It is hardly necessary to add that the poor Hottentot did not finish his narrative without expressing ardent gratitude to the true God for having remembered himself and his degraded nation in their low estate.

From Africa let us proceed to the ISLANDS OF THE SOUTH SEA. Here, happily, we are called on to contemplate not idols which *are* now, but only such as lately were worshipped.

The *Taheitans*, like the ancients, had two sets of deities, national and domestic. The chief God of the nation was called *Oro*, the appearance of which is thus described by the Missionaries who saw it in the year 1803: “This image of their god is nothing more than a piece of hard wood, about six feet long, without any carving, wrapped in sundry cloths, and decorated with red feathers. Into this log of wood the natives confidently affirm that *Oro* enters at certain times.”

How pleasant is it to know that this log of wood, now no longer an object of worship, is reduced to its proper station, having become a piece of furniture in the kitchen of a dwelling-house.

The *household-gods* of the Chief of Otaheite have also for some years past, ceased to be venerated, and are now the appropriate occupants of the glass cases of a Missionary Museum in London.

These despicable idols bear but little resemblance either to the human or to any other known form, and convey scarcely any idea whatever of an animated being; and "were we not certain of the facts (observes Mr. Marsden of New South Wales, who made the remark while the images were on his table) we could not believe that any human beings could place their salvation in these wretched images, and offer sacrifices to avert their anger."

"Search the annals of the world," says Dr. Wardlaw, in an excellent Missionary Sermon delivered soon after these Taheitean gods were brought to England, "I question whether you will find a more affecting and humbling exemplification of human imbecility than that which is afforded by the history of idolatry. It matters but little whether the images themselves be the objects of divine worship, or whether they be only the representations of such objects; for what sort of deities must they be that are conceived to be 'like unto gold or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device?' and, especially, what sort of deities must they be of which images so ridiculously fantastic, so monstrously uncouth, so frightfully distorted (as the Taheitean idols) are considered by their worshippers as the appropriate and worthy representatives?" Those who have themselves served such vanities, and have been brought to a knowledge of the true God, are the first to own their former folly. It was to impress on the minds of British Christians the humbling lesson of human weakness and infatuation, that Pomarre sent to this country the deities of his house, 'to show them', in his own simple phrase; 'what foolish gods Taheiti formerly worshipped.'"

Most of the natives of SOUTH AMERICA have some notion of a Supreme Being, whom by way of eminence, they call the Great Spirit; and whom they also consider to be good, but they believe that there are inferior deities of a malevolent temper, and to them they pray.

The Aborigines of EAST AND WEST FLORIDA believe in the existence of two Supreme Beings of contrary character, one good and the other evil. They pay no regard to the good Being, as they have no fear of his doing them harm; but bend their whole attention to the malevolent spirit, in order to propitiate his favour. "The things which they sacrifice, they sacrifice to Devils and not to God."

The least surprising of all the various species of idolatry is the worship of the *Sun*. That luminary, being at once the most glorious and the most beneficial of all visible objects, forms one of the fittest emblems of Deity.

Probably the worship of the Sun was the most ancient, as it is the most plausible mode of idolatrous homage. The Sun from being justly regarded as an *emblem* of Deity, would come to be considered as his *representative*, and, at length, as *God himself*. And such is the aversion of man to what is spiritual and holy, and such his proneness to degeneracy in every thing which relates to God and goodness, that when once it was admitted that *any one* material object, however glorious, could be *divine*, the transition would be easy from the worship of noble things to such as were meaner, till at length homage would be paid, as in Africa and Taheiti, to an insect, and a log of wood.

The worship of the Sun prevailed, and probably prevails still, among the native inhabitants of PERU. The Moon and the Stars as co-operating with the Sun in benefiting mankind, were considered to be entitled to secondary honours.

The Aborigines of NEW ENGLAND not only believed in a plurality of gods, the creators and governors of the several nations of the world, but made deities of every thing they imagined to be great, powerful, beneficial or hurtful. And although they conceived, that there was a God superior to the rest, a good Being and the source of good

to themselves, they also, like the inhabitants of Florida, imagined there was another power of malevolent temper, very much independent of the good God. Of this evil being, to whom they gave a name answering to the word *Devil*, they stood in greater awe than of the good God, and worshipped him more. "The things which they also sacrificed, they sacrificed to Devils rather than to God."

As near an approach to the knowledge of the true God as was, perhaps, ever made by persons not absolutely possessed of that knowledge, is seen in the history of GREENLAND. One of the Moravian Missionaries, (a class of men with whose name we associate all that is Christ-like) being once in company with some baptized Greenlanders, expressed his wonder that they could formerly lead a life so void of reflection. Upon this, one of them answered as follows: "It is true, we were ignorant heathens, and knew nothing of a God or a Saviour; but thou must not imagine that a Greenlander never thinks about God. I used to say to myself: 'My canoe with its tackle does not make itself; man makes it. Now the meanest bird has far more skill displayed in its structure than the best canoe, and no man can make a bird. But there is still greater art shown in the formation of a man than in any other creature. Who, then, made man? Every one proceeded from his parents, and they from their parents; but some must have been the first parents; whence did they come? Certainly there must be some Being who made all these things; a Being that always was and can never cease to be. He must be inexpressibly more mighty and more knowing than man. He must be also very good; for every thing he has made is good and useful for us. Ah, did I but know him, how would I love him and honour him! But who has seen him, or who has ever conversed with him? None of us poor men. Yet, there may be men who know something of him. Oh, could I but speak with them!'"

What a severe rebuke does the sound argumentation of this poor Greenlander convey to the men who, amidst all the means of knowing God which science and revelation afford, profess to be unable to find him, either in his works or in his word. And how severely, too, does this man's desire after God reprehend the impiety of those who, although they admit that "He is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him," willingly continue "without God, without Christ, and without hope." Surely that Greenlander when he so spake within himself, was "not far from the kingdom of God."

We do not wonder to hear him say, in the conclusion of his address to the Missionary: "As soon as ever I heard you speak of this Great Being, I believed it directly with all my heart, because I had so long desired to hear it."

The doctrine concerning God taught by Confucius in CHINA about 500 years before the Christian Era, contains much that is true and important; but how lamentably ignorant in matters of religion the inhabitants of that vast empire now are, notwithstanding all their secular knowledge, is evident from the following facts.

On the 13th of May, 1818, a storm suddenly arose at *Pekin* which darkened the heavens and filled the air with sand and dust. The Emperor was excessively alarmed, and, conceiving it to be a divine judgment, called on his ministers of state to investigate the causes; at the same time, reprimanding his astronomers for not having previously informed him when the hurricane was to take place. The mathematical board reported to his Majesty their opinion, that if such a hurricane continued a whole day, it indicated discordant counsels between the Sovereign and his Ministers, and also great scarcity of grain. They further reported that if the wind blew up the sand, moved the stones and was accompanied with noise, inundations were to

be expected. If the descent of dust continued but an hour, there would be pestilence in the South-west regions and disease in the South-east. A royal Gazette was afterwards published declaring that the Sovereign had sent his sons to fast, to pray and to offer sacrifices to Heaven, to Earth, and to the God of the wind.

Dr. Morrison, the learned and indefatigable Missionary, states that the Chinese are wedded to their idols: a stock or a stone, a clay image or a picture, they will consecrate as the representation of Deity, and fall down and worship it. The poor, the sick, the distressed, the dying, the unfortunate and the prosperous, all have respect to idols of their own forming.

Dr. Milne, his worthy co-adjutor, who has since entered into his rest, has recorded in his journal, the following conversation which he had with his Chinese assistant in literary pursuits. "I expressed my sorrow," says Dr. Milne, "that the Chinese should worship so many Gods. He answered, that formerly, when meritorious men died, they became gods, and 'hence it is,' said he, 'that we have so many.' I asked, 'What is the use of worshipping graven images?' He replied, 'In China, all approve of it; we do not worship the images themselves, but the God who resides in them.' I observed, 'They have eyes but they see not; ears but they hear not; none can see God, and how can any one make the form of Him?' 'True,' said he, 'we do not see God, we do not know whether he hears our prayers or not.' Then looking wildly around, he added, pointing with his finger, 'We look here, and there, and there, for God; and cannot see him, and therefore it is that we make images, that we may have some visible thing to fix our eyes upon.' 'But,' said I, 'is there not one Supreme God?' He answered, 'We worship *Zeen*, (that is, the visible heavens). I remarked that heaven could not make itself. 'No,' said he, 'we worship the chief of

the seven stars.' 'Who made the stars?' I asked. 'The living God,' he replied; and then went through a long chain of reasoning relative to the revolutions of the air, by which the Chinese think that all things were formed."

Thus confused were the ideas of even a learned Chinese. Among the literati in China, a species of refined atheism prevails, and among the people at large idolatry as gross as in other heathen nations.

We now come to HINDOSTAN, respecting the religion of which we have abundant and authentic information, particularly in the valuable work of the late much lamented Mr. Ward of Serampore, who, at the close of his book, gives the following concentrated view of the Hindoo notions of God.

"The object of worship, among all the Hindoos is the same. They believe that there is one God; so completely abstracted in his own essence, however, that in this state, he is emphatically '*the unknown*,' and is consequently neither the object of worship, of hope, nor of fear. They believe that he is even destitute of intelligence, and remains in a state of profound repose; but that at times, he assumes what is called his energy, which energy, it is said, exists separate from God; and that when united to energy, he is possessed of qualities and creates worlds. These qualities of God, they believe, are impressed, more or less, on every form of existence. Next, God becomes individuated, and takes possession of every form of matter: the same God exists, says Krishnu, in the reverend Bramhūn, perfected in knowledge, in the dog, and in him who eateth of the flesh of dogs."

They believe that this divine energy exists in very different degrees in different beings; the gods, the giants, the bramhūns, and the ascetics are supposed to possess the largest share of it. From this notion have arisen both the superstitious veneration of eminent men, and their deification when dead.

The total number of Hindoo Gods has been estimated at 330 millions.

We now enter on a brief contemplation of the NATURE OF HEATHEN WORSHIP. This, we may expect to find to correspond, in some measure, with the ideas entertained of the objects of worship.

They who consider the Supreme God to be un-mindful of human affairs, will not think it necessary to offer any worship to him; accordingly with the Hindoos, the one God is an object of speculation only, and *there is not a single temple erected to his honour throughout the whole of Hindostan.* "The things which they sacrifice they avowedly sacrifice to demons and not to God." They who dread the power of the gods; and wish to gain their favour, may be expected to perform, with that view, such services as they conceive will be acceptable. They who suppose that the superior powers are malevolent, will be ready to inflict on themselves and others such tortures as may be deemed necessary in order to escape more fearful sufferings.

It would be wrong to affirm that every act of Heathen worship is irrational. The *ancient Mexicans*, if travellers have not given unduly favourable accounts of their character, were accustomed to present such homage to the Sun as may put to shame many an avowed worshipper of the true God. They offered, we are told, to the Sun a part of those productions which his genial warmth had called forth from the bosom of the earth and raised to maturity. They sacrificed, as an oblation of gratitude, some of the animals which were indebted to his influence for nourishment. They presented to him choice specimens of those works of ingenuity which his light had guided the art of man in forming. But the Incas never stained his altars with human blood; nor could they conceive that their beneficent father, the Sun, would be delighted with such horrid victims.

Such is the pleasing picture of Mexican piety

drawn by Professor Robertson, in his History of America. We must remember, however, that it was not taken on the spot; and pleasing as it is, it bears the marks of being, in some degree, a fancy piece. It is probably rather a narrative *founded on facts*, than a plain statement of what actually came under the observation of eye-witnesses.

Certain it is that our Missionaries, who, from being among the Heathen, and from frequently conversing with them on religion, are the most competent historians of Pagan piety, have met with *no nation*, and with but *very few individuals* who have been desirous of acting up to the little light they had. Excepting then a few happy instances in which, according to the knowledge possessed, petitions and thanksgivings of a rational character have been offered by Pagan worshippers, the great mass of Heathen rites and ceremonies may be characterized as either *unmeaning, licentious or cruel*.

It will be proper that a few examples under each of these particulars should be adduced, taken, some from one country, and some from another.

1. Many of the religious rites of the Heathen are *without meaning*.

I do not thus designate all their festivals, music, dancing, and processions, because these may be supposed to indicate joy and gratitude at the presence or contemplation of the Gods; nor do I thus denominate their ablutions, since the application of water to the body is a very natural emblem of the purification of the mind.

I am aware, too, that there may be attached to religious rites a recondite meaning, which is known only to the initiated. It is difficult, however, to suppose any distinct and rational ideas to be connected with a considerable proportion of the following ceremonies which form a part only of the daily duties of an Indian Bramhūn:

Going to the Ganges and sitting in silence, he must rub himself all over with mud; then, de-

scending into the river, breast-high, with his face toward the east or north, he must repeat certain incantations, by which in his imagination, all other sacred rivers will flow into that in which he stands. He must afterwards again repeat many incantations, and perform *moodra*, that is, twisting his fingers into several curious shapes, then dividing his hair behind, and bringing it into his hands before, he must stop his ears with his thumbs, cover his eyes with the first three fingers of each hand, and his nostrils with his two little fingers. He must then immerse himself three times; then, with his hands joined, throw up water to his head: then repeat other incantations: then, taking up water with his joined hands, he must offer it three times to the Sun; then, washing his body, and repeating certain prayers, that he may ascend to some heaven, or receive some temporal good, he must again immerse himself in the water. After this, he must ascend to the side of the river, and having taken up some earth in his hand, and diluted it with water, he must put the middle finger of his right hand into the clay, and with it draw a line betwixt his eyes up to the top of his forehead; then, draw his first three fingers across his forehead; make a round dot with his little finger in the centre on the top of his head, another on the upper part of his nose, and another on his throat; then with his first three fingers, he must make marks across his breast and arms; then make dots on his side, and another on his back. After this, he must take up water in his right hand three times and drink it.

How directly opposed are such ceremonies to a "reasonable service?" And as these unmeaning rités form a part of the religion of the learned Bramhúns, it is not necessary to quote examples from less polished nations.

2. Some Heathen rites are *licentious*.

As it was difficult to repress a smile at the recital of Pagan ceremonies, so would it be impossible

to subdue the emotion of shame were the whole truth, or even anything approaching to the whole, to be told relative to the present topic. Duty does not require that either the speaker should undergo the pain of reciting, or the audience the pain of hearing a recital of the vile and execrable rites which bear the name of religion in Heathen temples. "Deeds so abominable," says Mr. Ward, "are performed, that the Bramhūn who gave me the account could repeat them only in part."

It is well known that impure rites were sanctioned by the Religion of ancient Greece and Rome; and who can wonder at this, while many of their deities were the patrons of vice: Mercury was a thief, Venus a prostitute, Bacchus a drunkard, and Jupiter an adulterer.

3. Many Heathen rites are *cruel*.

Here we enter a "field of blood." The people in some parts of India frequently offer their children to the goddess Gunga. When persons have been long married without offspring, it is common for them to make a vow to that goddess that if she will bestow on them the blessing of children, they will devote the first-born to her; not as Hannah dedicated Samuel by causing him to be set apart to the service of God and the good of his countrymen, but in a way more congenial to the supposed character of the demon worshipped. If after this vow, a child is born, it is nourished till it has attained the age of three, four, or more years, and then, on a day appointed, it is taken by the father or mother into the river to be offered to the goddess. The poor little creature is encouraged to go farther and farther into the water, till it is either carried away by the stream, or pushed into it by its inhuman parents, who abandon the child from the moment that it floats on the water; and if no one be at hand more humane than they it infallibly perishes.

Most persons have heard, and all ought to hear

of the sacrifice of human life which till lately was annually made in honour of *Juggernaut*.

The following is an extract from the letters of the late Dr. Buchanan, whose name will be embalmed in the grateful recollection of the future population of India, when such abominations as those which he here describes, and of which he was an eye-witness, shall have been annihilated by the religion of Christ. "At twelve o'clock this day (June 18, 1806) the Moloch of Hindostan was brought out of the temple, amidst the acclamations of hundreds of thousands of his worshippers. The idol is a block of wood, having a frightful visage, painted black, and a distended mouth of a bloody colour. The throne of the idol was placed on a stupendous car or tower, about 60 feet in height, resting on wheels; and to the car were attached six long cables, by which the people, thousands in number, pulled it along. After the tower had proceeded some way, a pilgrim announced that he was ready to offer himself a sacrifice to the idol. He laid himself down in the road, before the tower, as it moved along, lying on his face, with his arms stretched forwards; and he was crushed to death by the wheels. A shout of joy was then raised to the god, and the people threw money on the body of the victim, in approbation of the deed."

Two days afterward Dr. Buchanan writes thus: "The horrid solemnities still continue. Yesterday, a woman devoted herself to the idol. She laid herself down in the road in an oblique direction, so that the wheel did not kill her instantaneously; but she died in a few hours.

"And this, thought I, is the worship of the Brahmins of Hindostan, and their worship in its sublimest degree! What then shall we think of their private manners and their moral principles? For it is equally true of India as of Europe; if you would know the state of the people, look at the state of the temple."

The venerable Dr. Carey observes that idolatry destroys more persons than the sword, yet in a way which is scarcely perceived. The numbers who die in their long pilgrimages, either through want or fatigue, or from dysenteries, and fevers, caught by lying out in the air and want of accommodation, is incredible.

“It is difficult,” says Mr. Ward, “to form an estimate of the number of Hindoos who perish annually the victims of superstition;” and he expresses his fears that any reasonable conjecture would appear to many to be highly exaggerated, and intended to prejudice the public mind against the Hindoos as Idolaters. He observes that he wished to feel and avow a just abhorrence of Idolatry, and to deplore it, as one of the greatest scourges ever employed by the Almighty to punish nations which have rejected the direct and simple means which nature and conscience supply of knowing himself; but that he would use no unfair means of rendering even Idolatry detestable: with this assurance, he presents the following as the most correct conjecture he was able to give of the number of victims annually sacrificed to the Indian gods.

Sick persons whose death is hastened by exposure on the banks of the Ganges.	500
Children immolated by their parents . .	500
Persons drowning themselves in the Ganges, or buried, or burnt alive . .	500
Pilgrims perishing on the roads, or at sacred places	4,000
Widows burnt alive on the funeral piles of their husbands	5,000
Total . .	<u>10,500</u>

A dreadful number, but, in the opinion of many competent judges, much below the fact.

Until a few years ago *human sacrifices* were offer-

ed in the *South Sea Islands*, and this horrid worship once prevailed to such an extent in *Mexico* that twenty thousand persons are said thus to have perished at the dedication of one temple.

But time would fail me to tell of all the self-inflicted tortures, and of all the cruelties practised by man on man, and even by the nearest kindred on each other, under the notion of doing service to superior beings, and of procuring blessings to themselves. What are the leading features of those systems of religion which prevail in lands where Christianity is unknown, may be gathered from the rapid survey we have been taking. It is quite unnecessary that we should enter on an examination of such religions as these with a view to ascertain their *truth* or *falsehood*. It would be a waste of time to make a formal use, for such a purpose, of the *criterion* of *truth* laid down in the preceding lecture. For modes of worship such as these are perceived, at a glance, to be at variance with all the essential attributes of the true God, and to be as directly opposed to the best interests of man. We seem, therefore, on the present occasion to be in a condition much resembling that of a jury before whom a cause has been opened, the facts of which are so plain as not to admit of the shadow of a doubt on the mind of any one of them. Without leaving the place of audience, scarcely waiting to consult one another, or to be asked for their verdict, they cry out at once, Guilty, guilty. Equally instantaneous and unanimous must be the verdict of all honest minds as to the *Falsehood* of *Pagan religion* throughout all its known varieties. In one respect, however, our province this evening is widely different from that of a Jury and still more from that of a Judge. We are neither called upon nor authorised to pronounce on the *degree of guilt* attaching to individuals, still less to award the amount of *punishment*. One thing we know, that the "Judge of all the

earth will do right," and that "the servant who knew in part only his Lord's will, but did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with (comparatively) few stripes." No one supposes that the Heathen will be punished for neglecting to believe in that Saviour of whom they never heard. They will be punished for violating those precepts which they knew or might have known. If there be individuals among them whose ignorance of God is attributable not to any culpable negligence on their part, but solely to the scantiness of their means for attaining the knowledge of God and of duty, we may safely leave the allotment of their final condition, (where it must be left,) in the hands of him who is righteous in all his ways as well as holy in all his works. But when we reflect on the grossness of the ignorance and the apparent love of vice which prevail among the Heathen at large, it is impossible not to entertain painful forebodings relative to their future state. And with this view of their condition agrees the language of the divine record, which represents both Jews and Gentiles to be guilty before God, and, without the knowledge of salvation by Christ, to be in danger of eternal perdition.

How plain and how urgent, then, is the duty of making them acquainted with "the only true God and with Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent." Even without an express command this duty would be obvious, as necessarily growing out of the second branch of the law, (to say nothing of the first,) "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." But the great Lawgiver of mankind has not left this duty to be *inferred* merely, he has laid an express injunction on his servants to go out into all the world, and, like heralds, to proclaim to the whole creation, the glad tidings that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief.

During the last thirty years, zeal for the spread

of heavenly truth among the benighted nations has been diffusing itself far and wide throughout the whole Christian Church, and already the weapons of this holy war against Ignorance, Sin and Death, "though not carnal, have been mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." The chariot of the Prince of Peace (how different from that of Juggernaut!) is rolling on through the earth; while life, and not death, marks its triumphant course. We are sanguine enough to hope that if our children shall have occasion to portray the horrid features of Pagan religion, it will be their lot to delineate a monster that shall then have ceased to breathe.

Meanwhile, let us not lose sight of our obligations to the Almighty, for having appointed the bounds of our habitation where the true light shineth. The best of books, the book of God, is ours, wherein we learn all that we have need to know of God, and of the way of worship which he will accept; wherein we learn how to obtain consolation under the sorrows of time, and a happy immortality beyond the grave. We still delight to chant the hymn of our childhood:

"I would not change my native land
"For rich Peru, with all her gold;
"A nobler prize lies in my hand,
"Than East or Western Indies hold."

But let us not forget that where much is given, much will be required. You know that "the Gods of the Heathen are vanity and a lie," and that "Jehovah made the heavens." But are you daily, with the heart, "worshipping and serving the Creator?" Or, is it true that God is not in all your thoughts? and that the world, in some form or other, has the homage of your heart? You know that "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to Devils and not to God," and that by one sacrifice alone can human guilt be expiated. But have you beheld

“the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world?” You abhor the bloody and impure deeds of the Heathen; but is it true that you, with all your knowledge of what is right, and all your advantages for doing what is right, are living a life of profligacy, of drunkenness, of fornication or of whoredom? Remember that “the servant who knew his Lord’s will and acted not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.” Fly, then, while yet you may, from “the wrath to come.”

LECTURE III.

Feb. 8, 1824.

MODERN JUDAISM.

ROM. xi. 25.

Blindness in part hath happened unto Israel.

WE come, this evening, to the consideration of a religion which differs widely from the systems we contemplated in the last lecture. In them we found but here and there a grain of truth buried among heaps of the grossest errors. We saw little in Paganism which bore the semblance of piety except a general conviction of the existence of powers superior to man, and of some homage being then due; but as to the real attributes of God, and the nature of the worship which would be honourable to him and advantageous to man, we observed, in every quarter of the Heathen world, ignorance so deplorable as to bring to the mind an immediate and assured conviction that Pagan opinions and practices have no sort of claim to the character of true religion.

In Judaism, on the contrary, we shall meet with much important truth. Ancient Judaism was unmingled truth; and even in the Judaic religion of modern times, sadly as it is degenerated, we shall discover enough to convince us of its high origin, while at the same time, we shall see the system to be encumbered with errors so fundamental as to warrant our denominating it a false religion.

We shall notice first the *religious books* whence the Jews derive their sentiments, and secondly, the *sentiments* they derive from those books.

Among the publications which I have consulted in order to obtain the requisite information on these topics, I am bound to acknowledge myself chiefly indebted to Mr. Allen, whose work on Modern Judaism, though not voluminous, contains almost every thing relative to that religion which needs to be known, so as to supersede the necessity of repeating that laborious search through masses of ancient documents which he has accomplished, and the result of which he has given us.

I. We are to notice the Books which the Jews regard as the Source and STANDARD OF THEIR FAITH.

Here it is necessary to mention a fact which, were it not familiar to our minds, would appear exceedingly remarkable; *viz.* that the great body of the Jewish possess and regard as sacred some of the very same Scriptures which constitute the standard of truth in the Christian church.

Those holy writings which were penned before the coming of the Messiah, and which collectively, bear the name of the Old Testament, are now in the hands of the Jews, and portions of those books are "read in their synagogues every sabbath day."

The table of the sections of the law and of the prophets which are appointed to be read in their religious assemblies, includes the whole of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, and portions of Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others of the prophetic books.

Those copies of the holy Scriptures which the Jews possess and publicly read, in their original language, the Hebrew, agree remarkably with the copies which Christians use; the variations observable bearing no proportion either in number or in importance to the points of agreement.

The Jews, with all their faults, have been scrupulously exact in maintaining the integrity of the

sacred text; and the various readings are to be attributed to those occasional inaccuracies in transcribing, which without a constant miracle could not have been prevented.

In the last century all the Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament which could be obtained from all parts of Europe were carefully compared together, and none of the variations discovered were found to affect either any point of doctrine or any precept for conduct.

These Scriptures, the Jews, in common with Christians, consider to have been written by men who were divinely and supernaturally assisted to make known the will of God.

And with good reason do they hold this sentiment; for

1. The *authenticity* of those books is identified with the records of their own history, and their own history is inseparably connected with the records of other nations, respecting which there is no dispute. It is not more certain that a people called *Romans* dwelt two thousand years ago in a land called *Italy*, the capital of which was *Rome*, than it is, that at the same time a people called *Jews* dwelt in a land called *Judea*, the capital of which was *Jerusalem*; and that the people called Jews are their descendants.

Nor is there any historical fact more indubitably certain than that at that remote period, and before it, this extraordinary people possessed the very same holy writings which they now have.

For the last 1800 years the books in question have been in the possession of two distinct classes of people, Jews and Christians, who have been mutual checks on each other with regard to the integrity of the sacred text. If, during that space of time, Christians had been wicked enough to attempt to alter the Old Testament, the Jews would have hindered the accomplishment of their design, and if Jews had made the attempt, Christians would

have prevented it. Thus we have the strongest possible evidence that for 1800 years the Jewish people have had the same holy writings which are now in use.

Again : those writings contain so many distinct notices of facts in the history of the Jews, with which facts the Jews were always familiar, that had not the writings in question been authentic in reference to facts, inaccuracies would have been at once detected, and on that account the books would not have been received into the number of true, much less of *holy* writings. Thus far we have considered the Jewish Scriptures merely as authentic and true. But I remark,

2. That with their *authenticity* their *divine authority* is indissolubly connected. The writers of those books declare that they were invested with authority from heaven, and accordingly they not merely advise, but in the name of God they command ; and many of them were empowered to perform such preternatural deeds as proved that God was their helper. Take, for an example, the first and greatest of their prophets, Moses. It is plain that "no man could do the miracles which he did except God were with him." Hence it was reasonable to reverence him as an inspired prophet. Thousands of people witnessed his miracles, and the miracles themselves were of a nature so palpable and obvious as to preclude the possibility of deception ; while anniversary memorials of some of them were instituted immediately afterwards to serve as constantly-recurring certificates to succeeding generations of the miracles having actually taken place ; that by this means, in conjunction with others, they "who had not seen might believe."

Omitting, then, many other proofs of the divine origin of the Jewish religion, the rapid glance we have taken of the subject is sufficient to convince us that those Scriptures which are its source will bear to be brought to the criterion of *fact*.

Most happy would be the result could the Jews of the present day be universally prevailed on to regard and practically to treat the holy Scriptures as the source of their faith, to the exclusion of the productions of fallible men; but unfortunately for that people, there are *Other Books*, possessing no claim to a divine origin, which are held by them in extreme veneration.

Some of those books are called *Targums*; these are, what that Chaldee word denotes, interpretations or expositions of holy Scripture, and are written in the Chaldee language. The most ancient of the Targums now known are that of *Onkelos* on the *law*, and of *Jonathan Ben Uzziel* on the *prophets*. Jonathan Ben Uzziel is generally believed to have composed his Targum before the birth of Christ. He was a disciple of Hillel, one of the most eminent of the Jewish doctors.

The Targum of Onkelos is rather a version than a paraphrase. Both these works have been held by the Rabbies to be of equal authority with the holy Scriptures. Yet it is to be observed that the Jews have never confounded these writings with the holy Scriptures, neither do they confound with the holy Scriptures the books of the Apocrypha; and, by the way, it is much to be lamented that among Christians, the Apocrypha should be so often united with the Bible; since it is certainly no part of it.

A work called the *Talmud* is also held by the Jews in high respect. The word Talmud signifies learning, wisdom, doctrine; and the production which bears that title consists of two parts, the *Mishna*, which denotes a *repeated law*, and the *Gemara*, which means a *supplement or commentary*.

“The Jews acknowledge *two laws*, which they believe to have been delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai; of which one was immediately committed to *writing* in the text of the Pentateuch, and the other is said to have been handed down from generation to generation, for many ages, by *oral tradition*.”

They say that Moses on receiving the law which he wrote down, received also from God an *explication* of that law which he did not write down, but repeated several times before many of the people, and particularly in the hearing of Aaron, Joshua, and the elders, till it was well fixed in their memory.

They further state that the men who received that instruction from Moses told it to their junior contemporaries, and they in their turn to others, till the days of Rabbi Jehudah, who collected all the traditions and arranged them in a book entitled the *Mishna*.

This book, consisting chiefly of aphoristic sentences, and therefore admitting of considerable variety of interpretation, was found to be scarcely intelligible to the generality of readers. Learned men accordingly employed themselves in explaining its difficulties; and about a century after the *Mishna* was written Rabbi Jochanan, president of a school in Palestine, collected the various opinions of the learned relative to the *Mishna*, and made them up into a book called the *Gemara*, or commentary; which added to the *Mishna*, forms what is denominated the *Jerusalem Talmud*.

Many of the Jews, however, particularly those in *Chaldea*, were not satisfied with this production, and in process of time, Rabbi Ashe undertook to make another collection of interpretations of the *Targum*, which collection bears the name of the *Babylonian Gemara* and, together with the *Mishna*, forms the *Babylonian Talmud*.

We have therefore noticed three sets of books which the Jews hold in veneration:

1. *The Holy Scriptures* of the Old Testament;
2. *Commentaries* on the Scriptures, called *Targums*;
3. *Explanations of Commentaries*, called *Talmuds*.

Some of their Rabbies have not scrupled to extol these commentaries, and commentaries on commentaries, above the holy Scriptures themselves.

Thus *Rabbi Isaac* cautions his readers against too high an estimation of the *written law*. "Do not," says he, "imagine that the written law is the foundation of our religion, which is really founded on the *oral law*." And in the rabbinical writings such a caution as the following is often given: "My son, attend thou to the words of the *scribes*, more than to the words of the Law." "To study the Bible," says a Talmudical Treatise, "can scarcely be deemed a virtue; to study the Mishna is a virtue that will certainly be rewarded; but to study the *Gemara* is a virtue never to be surpassed."

No attentive reader of the New Testament can fail to notice the striking coincidence there is between this language and the practice of the Jews in our Saviour's time. "Full well," said he, "ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your traditions."

Besides the above mentioned commentaries, the Jews have certain books denominated *Cabbala*, a term applied to those *mystical* interpretations of the Scripture, and *metaphysical speculations* which are found in many Jewish authors, and are said to have been handed down by tradition from the earliest ages.

The *Cabbala* includes also a system of *magic* consisting in a superstitious use of the Scriptures, and especially of the names of God, in order to heal wounds, extinguish fires, and perform other wonderful exploits.

The evidence of the divine authority of the *holy Scriptures* of the Jews rests, as we have seen, on incontrovertible facts; but in vain shall we look for such evidence in favour of their commentaries and other books, highly as they are venerated. Tradition, unsupported by any authenticated facts, is the insecure basis on which they are built; while the contents of these books, unlike those of the holy writings, plainly indicate their authors to have been men who were endued with no supernatural aid.

Before the subject of Jewish books is dismissed

it must be mentioned that there is a small sect of Jews, called *Caraites*, living in the East, who profess to adhere to the *letter* of Scripture, and reject all the interpretations, paraphrases, additions, and constitutions, of the Rabbies.

It is supposed that this sect took its rise, or at least became known as a separate people, in the 6th century, at the time when the Talmud was composed, which the Caraites resolutely refused to admit as a rule of faith.

These people are comparatively few, and are regarded with great aversion by the Jews at large. But on account of their excellent resolution to adhere to Scripture only, they seem to have a peculiar claim on the attention of those who long for the day when all Israel shall be saved.

II. We are to notice the RELIGIOUS OPINIONS of Modern Jews.

The celebrated *Maimonides*, a learned Jew who lived about 700 years ago, furnished his brethren with the following summary of the doctrines of Judaism, in thirteen articles; which he calls foundations or roots of the faith.

1. I believe with a perfect faith that the Creator (blessed be his name) is the Creator and governor of all creatures; and that he alone has made, does make, and will make all things.

2. I believe with a perfect faith that the Creator (blessed be his name) is only one in unity to which there is no resemblance; and that he alone has been, is, and will be our God.

3. I believe with a perfect faith that the Creator (blessed be his name) is not corporeal, nor to be comprehended by an understanding capable of comprehending what is corporeal, and that there is nothing like him in the universe.

4. I believe with a perfect faith that the Creator (blessed be his name) is the First and the Last.

5. I believe with a perfect faith that the Creator (blessed be his name) is the only object of adoration, and that no other being whatever ought to be worshipped.

6. I believe with a perfect faith that all the words of the prophets are true.

7. I believe with a perfect faith that the prophecies of Moses our master (may he rest in peace) are true; and that he is the father of all the wise men, as well of those who went before him, as of those who have succeeded him.

8. I believe with a perfect faith that the whole law which we have in our hands at this day, was delivered by Moses our master; (may he rest in peace!)

9. I believe with a perfect faith that this law will never be changed, and that no other law will ever be given by the Creator, (blessed be his name.)

10. I believe with a perfect faith that the Creator (blessed be his name) knows all the actions of men, and all their thoughts; as it is said, "He fashioneth all the hearts of them, and understandeth all their works."

11. I believe with a perfect faith that the Creator (blessed be his name) rewards those who observe his commands, and punishes those who transgress them.

12. I believe with a perfect faith that the Messiah will come, and though he delays, nevertheless I will always expect him till he come.

13. I believe with a perfect faith that the dead will be restored to life, when it shall be ordained by the decree of the Creator; blessed be his name, and exalted be his remembrance for ever and ever.

"Whosoever," says Maimonides, "shall believe these fundamental articles to be true, enters into the bosom of Israel, and is entitled to receive from us all those demonstrations of brotherly love and good will which God has enjoined us to show towards each other; and, however many and great sins he may have committed from mental infirmity, after he shall have been punished for them in this world, he shall

participate in the happiness of the world to come. But if any man shall deny one of these fundamental articles, he is fallen from the bosom of Israel, has denied a foundation of the faith, and is to be esteemed a heretic, an epicurean, and a destroyer of plants; wherefore we are bound to persecute him with every odium and injury, according to the Psalmist: ‘Shall not I hate him, O Lord, that hateth thee?’”

In which quotation we may observe that the learned Jew has failed to distinguish between hatred of the *character* and hatred of the *person* of wicked men. The strongest aversion to their impiety is quite consistent with fervent desires for their happiness.

Individuals among the Jews have objected to some of the articles in the creed of Maimonides. These articles, however, have been approved by almost all the Rabbies for the last five hundred years. They have been publicly adopted as the creed of the Synagogue, and have been inserted in the prayer-books as fundamentals, which all Jews are expected to believe, and are required to repeat every day.

Although it is probable that the main design of the compiler of that Creed was to express *disbelief* in some of the peculiarities of the *Christian* system, most of the articles are capable of a good interpretation, accordant with the truths taught in the word of God.

That there is one God, an almighty, all-wise and good Being, and that he alone is the proper object of religious adoration, that creed most explicitly declares. In former ages, we learn from Scripture history, the Jews were exceedingly prone to follow the idolatrous customs of Heathen nations. On account of their idolatry God permitted the Chaldeans to carry captive to Babylon the flower of their nation; and never, since their return from that captivity, have they been guilty of worshipping idols.

Of some highly important truths of religion, no

mention whatever is made in the above creed, and among those *omissions* must be ranked its total silence respecting the *forgiveness of sins*. It not only affirms nothing concerning the means of forgiveness, but does not even state whether forgiveness be attainable.

Maimonides touches on the subject in the observations subjoined to his creed, but in the creed itself he passes it over without notice.

Now, that man is a *sinful being*, is a fact so undeniable and important that the total omission of reference to it in a creed which professes to embrace the most essential articles, is strange indeed. Yet it must not be supposed that the Jews have no ideas on the subject of forgiveness. Their opinions on this head were described by one of their number a few years ago in terms to the following effect, which the writer wished to be understood as expressing not his own opinion merely, but that of his nation at large. He states, that with the Jew a perfect conformity to the law of Moses will ensure his salvation in the next world; and that for every violation of the divine precepts, whereby eternal life should seem to have been forfeited, no other atonement or expiation is required by the Almighty than sincere repentance. Here again we observe a remarkable coincidence between the religion of the Jews of our own day and that of those who lived in the first age of the Christian church, respecting whom the apostle Paul declares in the chapter preceding that from which our text is taken, that "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

This notion, however, *viz.* that nothing besides repentance is necessary for obtaining the pardon of sin, is in direct contradiction to the doctrine maintained in the Jewish prayer-books, and solemnly professed by every individual who unites in the prescribed services.

In the daily morning service contained in the *Spanish* and *Portuguese* Jews' prayer-book, a long and minute account of several piacular sacrifices which cannot now be offered is preceded by this prayer: "Sovereign of the universe! thou didst command us to offer the daily sacrifice in its appointed time; and that the priests should officiate in their proper service, and the Levites at their desk, and the Israelities in their station. But thou hast said that the prayers of our lips shall be accepted as the offering of bulls. Therefore let it be accepted before thee, O Lord our God, and the God of our ancestors, that the prayers of our lips may be accounted, accepted, and esteemed before thee, as if we had offered the daily sacrifice in its appointed time, and had stood in our station."

In the *German* and *Polish* Jews' prayer-book, part of the morning service is as follows: "May it be acceptable in thy presence, O Eternal, our God, and the God of our ancestors, to compassionate us, to pardon all our sins, to forgive our iniquities, and to grant us remission for all our transgressions, and that the holy temple may speedily be rebuilt in our days, that we may offer in thy presence the continual burnt-offering, *that it may atone for us*, as thou hast commanded in thy law."

Here they recite the first eight verses of the 28th chapter of Numbers, and the eleventh verse of the first chapter of Leviticus, as containing the law of the daily morning and evening sacrifices; and proceed thus in their prayers: "May this recital be as acceptable to thee, O Eternal, our God, and the God of our ancestors, as if we had offered the continual burnt-offering in its due season." "Sovereign of the universe! whilst the holy temple was standing, if a man sinned, he brought an offering, and made an atonement for himself; but now, because of our iniquities, we have neither sanctuary, nor altar, nor offering, nor priest to atone for us; there is nothing left us but the commemoration of

them. O may that be our expiation, and we will render the prayers of our lips instead of offerings."

These extracts from their forms of devotion plainly teach that something besides repentance is necessary for obtaining the pardon of sin. They agree with the great truth which pervades the whole of that ritual according to which their pious ancestors regulated their worship; which truth, as every true Christian knows, is also in a remarkable manner recognized in the way of forgiveness revealed in the Gospel; *viz.* "that *without shedding of blood there is no remission.*"

The *inconsistency* observable between the acknowledgment in those prayers that atonement is necessary in order to the pardon of sin, and the opinion above cited that nothing is requisite for that end but repentance, glaring as that inconsistency is, is not more so than that of many who profess and call themselves Christians, who, while they every week declare themselves to be miserable sinners, who have left undone what they ought to have done, and done what they ought not to have done, and are therefore dependent altogether on the mercy of God, through Christ, do not scruple to assert that a man's good works are quite sufficient to secure his salvation. Thus possible is it, both in the Jewish and in the Christian world, for the heart to reject what the lips profess.

Among the *omissions* observable in the creed of Maimonides must also be noticed its total *silence* respecting those commentaries called *Targums* and *Talmuds*, which have been briefly described.

It must not, however, be hence inferred that no regard is paid to those compositions. The contrary is apparent from the words of some of their Rabbies already quoted.

To enter into a minute description of the absurd romances which the books in question contain, would comport neither with the limits nor with the design of this lecture. If my object were to amuse

you, and to render the Jews ridiculous in your esteem, it would not be difficult to select such passages as would effectually accomplish both those purposes. Scarcely are any of the Hindoo fables more extravagant than some of the stories which are to be found in the Talmud.

As a specimen, however, of the rabbinical manner of interpreting scripture, I may observe that the Rabbies consider the word *cattle*, in the text, "the cattle upon a thousand hills," to mean one enormous beast, which, they say, eats up all the grass upon a thousand hills. One Rabbi says that this animal swallows, at one draught, as much water as the river Jordan yields in the course of six months. The Talmud speaks of a fish three hundred leagues in extent; and a grave commentator on the Talmud says that this fish served Leviathan for food only one day.

Excellent as the *moral precepts* in the book of the Jewish law are, there are means by which they may be made "of none effect."

Far from representing a conscientious observance of every precept to be necessary, one of their teachers states that the observance of any one precept will entitle an Israelite to future happiness, and that God, willing to justify Israel, multiplied the commandments with this design; so that, as it is scarcely possible but that every Israelite should be found observant of *one* at least out of *so many* precepts, every Israelite might easily obtain happiness. How far this opinion prevails among modern Jews I have not the means of knowing.

But it is time we should now proceed to the consideration of that *greatest* of all the *errors* and *sins* with which modern Jews are chargeable, their *rejection of the true Messiah*.

Here let us ask what sort of evidence of the Messiahship of one laying claim to that character could the Jewish nation reasonably expect or desire. I answer ;

1. It would be reasonable to expect, that in the multitude of predictions of future events which God formerly gave to the Jewish nation, so important an event as the *coming of the Messiah* should have a place.

2. That something should be foretold relative to the *time and circumstances* of his coming.

3. That something should be said concerning his *character and actions*.

4. That his character and deeds when he actually came, should be such as to *prove his divine commission*.

Let us now see how these expectations have been met, in reference to our Saviour Jesus the Christ.

1. The Jews themselves unanimously agree that a *Messiah was foretold*; and consequently, they ever have expected that a Messiah should come.

2. The *time and circumstances* of his coming were foretold; and with that time and those circumstances, the time and circumstances of the coming of Jesus agree.

As to the *time* of the Messiah's coming, the patriarch *Jacob*, under the influence of the spirit of prophecy, as the Jews themselves allow, predicted that the "Sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh came." The most famous teachers among the Jews admit that Shiloh means the Messiah.

Now it is a fact, that till after the coming of Christ, the Jews retained some degree of political power, though it was frequently suspended and curtailed; but it is equally undeniable that, a few years after that event, "The Romans came and took away both their place and nation," and that never since that time have they possessed either Sceptre or Lawgiver.

Again, *Daniel* foretold that 70 weeks, which in the prophetic dialect means weeks of years or 490 years, should elapse from the time of the proclamation of the edict to rebuild Jerusalem to the time when Messiah the prince should be cut off.

At that juncture the death of Christ did actually occur. Daniel further declared that shortly afterwards "the sacrifice and the oblation should cease;" a prediction which every one knows to have been fulfilled, by the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem a few years after the death of Christ.

As to the *circumstances* of the coming of Christ; *Isaiah* had foretold that the Messiah should enter the world as a child, but that that child should be conceived by supernatural means, so that though human, he should be at the same time both holy and divine.

Micah foretold that his coming should take place in Bethlehem of Judah; and both *Isaiah* and *Malachi* declared that he should be preceded by an illustrious prophet like Elijah, who should "prepare his way." All which came to pass as we know. As to the last of these circumstances, particularly the great body of the Jewish nation admitted that John was a true prophet, and yet with a lamentable inconsistency, refused to believe the plain and unequivocal testimony which he gave to the Messiahship of Jesus. They received the herald, but rejected the Sovereign to prepare whose way that herald came.

3. Something was foretold respecting the *character and life* of the Messiah.

Here it is proper to observe that there are *two classes of predictions* on this topic. In some, as for example in the 72nd Psalm, Christ is represented as a *Sovereign*, not only wise and kind, but possessed both of extensive and of lasting empire. In others, as in the 53rd chapter of *Isaiah*, he is described as "rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," who at length dies as a sacrifice. From this apparent contrariety has arisen the notion entertained by some Jews that there shall be *two Messiahs*, one, a Sovereign, the other, lowly and afflicted.

But what wilful blindness must that be which refuses to see, that in the character and life of Jesus

each of these classes of predictions is exactly fulfilled; and since no Messiah but such a one as Jesus is could exhibit the fulfilment of predictions apparently so contradictory, the evidence thence arising to the truth of his Messiahship is peculiarly strong.

The greater number of Jews, however, having no adequate notion of their depravity, sin, guilt, and danger, and consequently not feeling their need of a Spiritual Deliverer, either overlook or explain away that pathetic description of a suffering Redeemer, which Isaiah has given, and interpret literally instead of figuratively the glowing picture which David has portrayed of Messiah as a Prince; and thus, like their ancestors 1800 years ago, they are vainly looking for one who shall redeem Israel from temporal distress, and raise their nation in wealth and honour above all nations of the earth.

4. It would be reasonable to expect that the Messiah, when he actually appeared, should *exhibit his credentials*, by so speaking and acting as became his exalted office.

And in this respect all reasonable expectations were fully answered. "Never man spake like this man," was the spontaneous exclamation of those who heard him. And his deeds were answerable to his words. By a touch or a word he healed diseases which were to human skill incurable. He cast out demons from those who had been tormented with them. He so multiplied a small portion of food, without the use of means, as to feed five thousand persons with a few loaves and fishes. He even restored the dead to life. Nay, after having himself submitted to a violent death, he restored himself to life.

Well did the Saviour say, that if men "would not believe Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

If *adequate* evidence of truth fails to produce

conviction, it is not likely that any additional evidence will avail. For the reason why *adequate proof* does not convince is found in the corrupt state of the affections, which remain equally corrupt after that proof is doubled.

Totally without excuse then, was the unbelief of the Jews who lived in the days of Christ and his apostles, and equally inexcusable are the Jews of our day who continue to reject him; since, although they have not, as those men had, the opportunity of seeing his miracles, they have, in common with their brethren of the Gentile world, the opportunity of consulting those records of the transactions of the Messiah, and of his servants, which bear marks of authenticity so numerous and decisive that the man who refuses to admit them ought, to be consistent, to deny that it is possible that any history can be so constructed as to be worthy of belief. The proofs of the authenticity of the New Testament are also calculated to strike the mind of a candid Jew with peculiar force, from his being already convinced of the divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures; between which and the New there are so many points of coincidence, that whichever be first received, the other cannot be rejected, except on principles which would require that the former be rejected also.

This refusal to believe in Christ, the peculiar feature in the religion of moral Jews, cannot be deemed a slight offence against the Majesty of heaven.

From the very same authority whence emanated the law on Sinai, has come the command to repent and believe the gospel. It is of Jesus that God the Father has said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." It was of Him that the first Lawgiver of Israel said, "Whosoever will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people." And Christ himself said to the

Jews, "If ye believe not that I am he (that is, the Messiah) ye shall die in your sins."

The most cursory view of the state in which the Jewish people have been from the time when as a nation they first rejected the Messiah, to the present day, may convince every one who believes in the word and providence of God, that they are under his frown. No nation on the face of the earth has endured such reproach and sufferings as have fallen to the lot of the Jews since the above-mentioned period. Before that time they had, in successive ages, killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent unto them as God's messengers, but the climax of their iniquity was the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus. Then "wrath came upon them to the uttermost."

We are not indeed rashly to suppose that they who endure peculiar sufferings are thereby proved to be sinners above all others; but when the word of God connects, in any particular case, as it does in this, sin and punishment, as cause and effect, we are in no danger of mistake. Moses foretold, that in case of disobedience to God, Israel should become "a proverb and a bye-word among all nations whither God should send them." How remarkably are these words fulfilled at this very day. No people but the Jews are scattered among all nations of the earth, without a home, as they are. Nor is any other nation, that I am aware of, "a proverb and a bye-word."

I speak not of the *fairness* of that proverbial and reproachful use of their name. I am well satisfied that there are honest Jews; but I speak of the thing as matter of fact which none can deny, that the word *Jew* is in ordinary language used as a synonyme for a *cheat* and a *rogue*; and *to jew* a person, every one knows, means to *act fraudulently* towards him. How exactly are the words of Moses fulfilled!

A most evident *mark of the degeneracy* of their

religious character is seen in the extreme irreverence which is manifested in their *public worship*. This is matter of remark with all who have frequented their synagogues; in which, while some are praying, others are talking, and some transacting business; and so that they take care to turn round towards the desk and sing out their responses at the proper times, they seem to think they do all that is necessary. With what emotions of holy indignation and shame would such men as Moses, Elijah, Samuel, or David behold the scene exhibited in the worship of their degenerate children! But notwithstanding all this, compassion and not hatred is the feeling we should cherish towards them. The sins with which they are chargeable are committed against God, and not against us, and if it were otherwise, "vengeance would still belong unto him." Soon may the time come when every species of persecution directed against the children of Abraham shall cease, and they shall be permitted to enjoy all the privileges relative to property as well as personal liberty, which are possessed by their brethren of mankind in the several countries in which they sojourn! Surely every man who understands the principles of that spiritual kingdom which the Messiah has set up in the world, will add his hearty Amen to this request.

But, most of all, when shall the time come that "the *blindness* which in part hath happened to Israel" shall be *removed*. When shall they be convinced that "he who should come, has come, and that it is vain to look for another!" When shall they say one to another, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and of whom the prophets did write; we have found the Messiah." "Behold the Lamb of God!" Shall this glorious consummation ever be realized? Yes, we believe that it will. "Blindness in part hath happened unto Israel, *until* the fulness of the Gentiles be brought in, and then all Israel shall be saved;" and

“ what shall the receiving of them again into the church of God be but life from the dead ?”

At this very time pleasing indications are visible of the approach of the day when “ the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in,” and consequently of the day when the blindness of Israel shall be removed ; of which latter event encouraging prognostications are also derived from the recent conversion of some of the descendants of Abraham, the spread of a spirit of inquiry among others of them, and the increased interest which the Christian church of late years has manifested in this, as in almost every other object of piety and benevolence.

But O, my brethren, who bear the Christian name, forget not that now as formerly, “ they are not all Israel who are of Israel.” To own that Jesus is the Messiah will avail you nothing, unless you personally “ come to him that you may have life.” You acknowledge that he is a prophet. Are you daily sitting at his feet to hear his word ? You acknowledge that he is a Priest. Do you lay your hand on the head of the atoning sacrifice which he has offered ? You acknowledge that he is a King. Are you manifesting a practical regard to his laws ? Happy will it be for us if we can individually say with an appropriating faith, “ We have found the Messiah !”

LECTURE IV.

Feb. 22, 1824.

MOHAMMEDANISM.

REV. ix. 1—11.

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breast-plates, as it were breast-plates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails:

and their power was to hurt men five months. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.

THE disciples of Mohammed, whose religion is the subject of this lecture, and whose devastating wars are understood to have been predicted in the prophecy just read, are found in the Eastern and Southern regions of the globe; in Turkey, Russia, Tartary, Arabia, Egypt, India, and other neighbouring countries; and amount in number to about one hundred and fifty millions, about one-sixth part of the population of the earth; a circumstance which alone would entitle their religion, whatever be its character, to a separate place in a series of discourses which professes to notice all the principal systems of faith and worship which exist among mankind.

My intention is, first to describe the NATURE OF MOHAMMEDANISM, and then to give a short sketch of its HISTORY; and under each of these heads, we shall meet, if I mistake not, with facts well calculated both to establish our faith in the Christian revelation, and to put us on our guard against that perverse use of truth which paves the way to error.

Two of the leading tenets of the religion now under consideration, are, that THERE IS ONE GOD, and that MOHAMMED IS HIS PROPHET.

The unity of the Godhead is maintained in the most explicit manner; and the worship of images and of any being besides God is strictly forbidden. Herein Mohammedanism and Paganism widely differ, and herein also Mohammedanism and Christianity agree; for although we believe, as will be more fully shown in the Fifteenth Lecture, that the mode of the Divine existence comprehends a three-fold distinction, this three-fold distinction by no means inter-

feres with the essential unity of God ; and the reason of our regarding it as lawful and right to pay religious homage to Christ, is his possessing divine attributes in addition to his human nature. So that with regard to the important points that there is but one God, and that none but God must be worshipped, the belief of Mohammedans and that of Christians are the same.

But as soon as ever we leave this tenet and advance to the consideration of the other which is associated with it, namely, that Mohammed is the prophet of God, we perceive their faith and ours to be directly opposed to each other.

To this man, his followers believe God to have granted a special revelation of Divine truth. KORAN, that is, the reading, or what ought to be read, is the name given to the book which contains those supposed revelations. Al Koran, or, the Koran, being therefore the Mohammedan Bible, claims an early notice in this discourse.

This book, written in the ancient Arabic language, was translated some years ago into English by Mr. Sale. An analysis of its contents is given by Mr. Charles Mills, in his highly interesting history of Mohammedanism, a publication from which a large proportion of the facts stated in this lecture have been borrowed.

The Koran is allowed, by competent judges, to be written in an elegant style, and to contain many beautiful and sublime passages. The power and majesty of God are described in strains of lofty eloquence, and many of its moral precepts are benevolent and just ; but its eloquence often degenerates into bombast and rhapsody, while its moral code is far from being pure throughout. Its best parts are evidently borrowed from the Holy Scriptures.

It may be well, however, to enter, rather more minutely, into a description of its contents. It has been already observed that the followers of Mohammed are worshippers of ONE GOD. The Koran

declares that God is holy, infinite, and eternal, every where present, and acquainted with the secret thoughts as well as with the actions of mankind.

All this is good and useful; but on the subject of the DIVINE DECREES the Koran is far from being unexceptionable. The subject is confessedly difficult, and one on which, it must be allowed, that even some Christians have expressed themselves in unguarded and dangerous terms. The difficulty which attaches to the subject does not consist so much in knowing what is true respecting it, as in ascertaining the agreement of different truths with each other; and from unsuccessful attempts to discover that agreement have arisen the most egregious errors. It is well, we may take occasion to remark, by the way, to ascertain both the *extent* and the *limits* of our intellectual faculties. It tends greatly to the increase of our knowledge that we should push our inquiries on every important subject as far as either revelation or reason affords clear light; but in theology, as in natural science, there are boundaries beyond which all is obscure, and the attempt to penetrate which, instead of adding to our stock of solid information, is rather likely to be the occasion of our losing some portion of the knowledge which we possessed. Men of uncommon penetration and of unusual soundness of judgment may doubtless with safety advance farther than others in difficult investigations; yet even these highly-gifted individuals seldom meet with a measure of success in such inquiries which can be deemed proportionate to their pains.

There are *two truths* in reference to the subject of divine decrees which deserve to be regarded as incontrovertible *axioms*, *viz.* that all things are fore-known to God, and that man is, notwithstanding, a voluntary agent. To deny the former is to question the omniscience of God, and to deny the latter is to take away the accountability of man.

Since therefore the denial of the truths in ques-

tion leads necessarily to consequences so impious, dangerous, and absurd, the truths themselves may be considered as absolutely certain. But many people are not willing to regard any two or more propositions to be true, how unquestionable soever may be the evidence on which those truths severally rest, unless they are also able to ascertain the agreement of such truths with one another. And if, either from the difficulty of the subject, or from the weakness of the inquirer's abilities, or from the scantiness of his information, or from all these causes combined, it happens that he is unable to see how the truths in question can be reconciled with each other, he resolves most unwisely and unphilosophically to abandon one of them.

By this means have some persons been led to deny the divine foreknowledge of events, and others, the voluntary nature of human actions. The Mohammedans are remarkable for the latter error.

It is observable that those *Christians* who abuse the doctrine of the divine decrees are chargeable with this fault chiefly, if not wholly, in reference to *religious concerns*. It is not unusual for men who profess their belief in the word of God to allege, as the reason of their neglecting the means of salvation, that if it be God's pleasure that they shall be saved nothing can prevent it; and that if it be his pleasure that they should perish, nothing can save them. Yet these men, though fatalists in religion, are not fatalists in the affairs of human life. If they are hungry, they are not unwilling to eat; if they are sick, they are not unwilling to use means for regaining health; and if they were in danger of being burnt to death by their house being on fire, they would unquestionably avail themselves of a ladder which a kind neighbour might place against the window of their bed-chamber.

All this is highly inconsistent with their religious principles; and if their conduct in regard to religion be right, their conduct in regard to this life

is wrong. God as certainly foreknows whether or not they shall be satisfied when hungry; whether or not they shall recover when sick; and whether or not they shall be saved when their house is in flames; as he has decreed whether or not they shall inherit everlasting life. In the latter case as well as in the former he has decreed *the means* they shall use for obtaining good, as well as the good they shall obtain.

The Mohammedans apply the doctrine of fatalism to the concerns of the present life. Their leader used to encourage his followers to fight without fear, and even desperately, by assuring them that the time, the manner, and the circumstances of their death were unalterably fixed without reference to their actions, and that consequently neither would the most hazardous exploits hasten, nor could the most cautious conduct retard their departure from the world.

So extensively does this fatalism prevail among the disciples of Mohammed as to be productive of consequences exceedingly pernicious. Some of the countries where that religion prevails are often visited by the plague; which is permitted to carry off thousands and tens of thousands of people without any effort being made to stop its progress, from the persuasion that since the ravages of that terrific visitation are all according to the will of God, to use means for the removal of the evil would be to act the part of rebels against him.

It appears, however, that while some professing Christians abuse the doctrine of the divine decrees in reference to religious matters, the Mohammedans, for the most part, do not fall into this error; for PRAYER TO GOD is strictly enjoined in the Koran, and is universally practised. Five times in the course of every day; namely, in the morning before sun-rise,—at noon,—immediately before sun-set,—in the evening after sun-set,—and again just when the night has commenced, the

cryers from the minarets, or summits of the mosques, are commanded to proclaim to the people that the hour of prayer is arrived. The Musselman (another name for a Mohammedan) whether he be at home or in the public walks, on hearing that signal, immediately utters a short prayer, turning his face towards Mecca. Ministers of state suspend the transaction of public business, and prostrate themselves on the floor. The tradesman forgets his dealings with his customer, and turns his shop into an oratory; and so prejudicial in its consequences is the suspicion of irreligion, that even libertines neglect not attention to these external rites. Twice or thrice in the course of the day, these devotions are performed in the mosque, the place of public worship; where some people called Christians might learn useful lessons by observing the gravity and decorum of the Turks in the exercise of their devotion. Persons of every rank and degree cast themselves indiscriminately on the carpeted floor, seeming to exhibit, by this voluntary sacrifice of worldly distinctions, their belief in the equality of all mankind in the sight of the Creator.

The Sabbath of the Mohammedans commences on Thursday evening, when an appearance of festivity is given to the cities by the illuminated minarets and colonnades of the mosques. At noon on Friday, every kind of employment is suspended, and the people repair to the temples, where prayers are read, and discourses, chiefly on moral subjects, are delivered.

Various ceremonies are prescribed, for the due performance of prayer, of which one of the principal is the washing of the body, as affording an image of internal purification. The Koran enjoins men not to attach too much importance to outward rites, declaring that "it is not righteousness to turn the face towards the east or west, but that righteousness is of him that believeth in God, and the last day, and the angels, and the Scriptures

(meaning the Koran) and the prophets; who giveth money for God's sake unto his kindred, and unto orphans, and the needy, and for redemption of captives; who is constant in prayers, and giveth alms; and of those who perform the covenant which they have covenanted, and who behave themselves patiently in adversity and hardships, and in times of violence: these are they (saith the Koran) who are true, and these are they who fear God."

One of the most important acts of religious worship in the opinion of a Mohammedan is the performance of the PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA. The temple in that city was used before the time of Mohammed as a place of Pagan worship, and was by him dedicated to the worship of God. So necessary a point of practice is the pilgrimage to that city deemed, that according to a tradition of Mohammed, he who dies without performing it, might as well die a Jew or a Christian. So great is the veneration in which the place is held, that a single view of its sacred walls is considered as meritorious as the most careful discharge of duty for a whole year in any other place. Various frivolous ceremonies, borrowed from Paganism, constitute the ritual prescribed for pilgrims who visit Mecca.

ALMSGIVING is enjoined by the Koran, as is evident from the passage lately cited. The Mohammedan law requires that a man should give away a tenth part of the property which has been for a twelvemonth in his possession, and it is recommended that besides this, voluntary donations to the poor should be made. The above law, however, is not much regarded, and the practice of charity is chiefly, as it should be, optional.

FASTING is also commanded. "O true believers," says the Prophet, "a fast is ordained for you, that you may fear God; during the month of *Ramadan* shall ye fast, in which month the Koran

was sent down from heaven. Therefore, let him among you who shall be at home in this month, fast the same month; but he who shall be sick, or on a journey, shall fast the like number of other days."

During that consecrated period no food is to be taken from the rising to the setting of the sun: at night refreshment is allowed. A violation of this fast subjects the offender to the charge of having become an infidel and an apostate, and the deposition of two witnesses to the offence, renders him obnoxious to death; though, of course, a punishment so unreasonably severe, is not often inflicted.

The importance, both intrinsic and relative, which the Mohammedans attach to the three duties of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, is thus described by one of the early Caliphs. "Prayer," said he, "carries us half-way to God; fasting brings us to the door of his palace; and almsgiving procures admission."

It has been already remarked that many of the MORAL PRECEPTS of the Koran are excellent. The following may be quoted as specimens. "Show kindness unto parents, and relations, and orphans, and the poor, and your neighbour who is of kin to you, and also to your neighbour who is a stranger, and to your familiar companion, and to the traveller, and to the captives, whom your right hand shall possess; for God loveth not the proud or vainglorious, who are covetous and recommend covetousness unto men, and conceal that which God of his bounty hath given them." "If there be a debtor under a difficulty of paying his debt, let his creditor wait till it be easy for him to do it." "O true believers! observe justice when ye appear as witnesses before God, and let not hatred towards any one induce you to do wrong."

One of the greatest blemishes in the moral

code of the Koran is the express sanction which it gives to Polygamy. It is true that this practice was tolerated among the Jews ; but it was not commended. It was so common in the East that it would have been difficult if not impossible to suppress it at once ; but the general tenor of the Jewish law is decidedly in favour of the usage, which the equality of the numbers of the sexes, and a regard to the happiness of families would of themselves show to be right without a positive precept ; namely, that one man should have one woman for his companion. The practice of having more wives than one, which never generally prevailed among the Jews, entirely ceased after their return from the Babylonish Captivity ; and in the New Testament, Polygamy is not only not commended but absolutely forbidden. Mohammed, on the contrary, allows his disciples each to have four wives. Herein as well as in some other of his laws, it has been well observed, the Arabian Prophet has shown his shortsightedness, notwithstanding all the cleverness which he is acknowledged to have possessed. The practice of polygamy would never be permitted by the founder of a religion intended and adapted for all mankind. Nature and policy are united against it. It is one of the characteristics of the Christian Scriptures that all its precepts both moral and religious are friendly to the happiness of man, and are adapted to human nature in every climate and in every age. This is what we might expect in a revelation from the Omniscient Creator of man ; and it constitutes one figure in that broad seal of Heaven which is stamped on the Bible of the Christian, but for which we look in vain in the Bible of the Turk.

The Arabian Prophet took care to secure for himself a much wider range of voluptuousness. The Koran represents God as thus speaking to Mohammed : “ O Prophet, we have allowed thee thy wives unto whom thou hast given their dower, and

also the slaves which thy right hand possesseth, of the booty which God hath granted thee, and the daughters of thy uncle and the daughters of thy aunts, both on thy father's side, and on thy mother's side, who have fled with thee from Mecca, and any other believing woman, if she give herself unto the prophet, in case the prophet desireth to take her to wife. This is a peculiar privilege granted unto thee above the rest of the true believers." In another part of the Koran, Mohammed is thus addressed, in reference to an oath he had taken not to marry a certain woman whom he had debauched, from the obligation of which oath he was afterwards desirous of being freed:—"O Prophet, why holdest thou that to be prohibited which God hath allowed thee:—God hath allowed thee the dissolution of thine oaths, and God is thy Master and he is knowing and wise."

Who can avoid contrasting with these licentious indulgences of the Koran, the unyielding morality taught by the true prophets of God; of whom some were indeed chargeable with great faults, but instead of pretending, like Mohammed, that they had a special licence for doing wrong, were most ready to acknowledge with shame and sorrow that they had exposed themselves, by their offences, to the just anger of God. Of this we have a striking example in the 51st Psalm.

Another great blemish in the morality of the Koran is the permission which it gives to its disciples to cherish implacable HATRED TOWARDS ALL WHO PROFESS NOT THE SAME RELIGION. With grief it must indeed be acknowledged, that the same spirit has been manifested by many who have borne the Christian name; but at the same time, it may with confidence be asserted, that such a temper finds no sanction in the Christian's Bible. On the contrary, "good-will to men," not excepting those who are most hostile both to the Christian himself and to his religion, is most plainly inculcated as

the duty of every disciple of Christ. It is true there are passages in the Koran which might put bigotry to shame; but it is no less true that there are others which represent the persecution of Infidels as an essential branch of pious zeal. The truth is that the early part of the Koran was written when Mohammed possessed no worldly power, and when therefore it suited his purpose to recommend liberty of conscience; but that the latter part of the Koran was written after he had become a powerful prince, and when, therefore, no longer wanting toleration for his own benefit, he became unwilling to allow it to others. And while this circumstance sufficiently accounts for the contrariety which is observed in the Koran respecting the point in question, the very fact that such a contrariety of instruction exists in the same book manifestly proves that it did not proceed from the source of truth.

On the momentous subject of THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS the Mohammedan, like the modern Jew, is enveloped in ignorance and error. The Koran does indeed touch on the subject of divine mercy, but is extremely indefinite in its statements of the nature and exercise of that mercy. Mohammed makes mention of Jesus Christ, but only under the character of a Prophet like himself, or rather inferior to himself. No where does he exhort his followers to "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The words Redeemer and Redemption, which bring thoughts so full of consolation to the man who knows his own character as guilty in the sight of God, have no place in the Koran. Its author has taken away the Lord, and in his stead has substituted imperfect obedience, and imperfect repentance, with the performance of sundry ceremonies. It is, therefore, a religion neither safe for man, nor honourable to God.

And although Mohammed does maintain the unity of the Godhead, he cannot be supposed really

to honour God by concealing and practically denying that three-fold distinction in the divine Being, which God himself has revealed as actually appertaining to himself; since those descriptions of God cannot but honour him most which most exactly represent God to be what he is; and those descriptions of God must come nearest to what God is which best agree with what God has declared that he is.

Nor will God accept the praises of any who vilify and blaspheme the character and mission of the Son of God. It is the will of the Father that "all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father," and "he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent him."

We shall now notice the opinions of the Mohammedans relative to THE FUTURE STATE.

They believe that two angels enter the tomb of a deceased person, and ask him the name of his Lord, of his religion, and of his prophet; to which questions the faithful answer "God is my Lord; Islam (another name for Mohammedanism) is my religion, and Mohammed is my prophet;" after which, they are permitted to enjoy happiness: but they who are unable to give that answer immediately become wretched.

They believe that there shall be a resurrection of the dead and a universal judgment; when men and angels will appear before God. The first transaction of that day they suppose will be the condemnation of all Infidels (among whom they reckon Jews and Christians as well as Idolaters) to everlasting torments. The doom of unbelievers having been thus sealed, the trial of the Mohammedans will begin. The Angel Gabriel, they say, will hold a balance, large enough to contain both heaven and earth, one scale of which will hang over paradise, and the other over hell; and in this balance the actions of the faithful will be weighed.

They whose good actions shall outweigh the bad, will receive a favourable sentence; and they whose bad actions are heavier than the good, a sentence of condemnation. Both parties will then have to pass over a bridge of steel, finer than a hair, and sharper than the edge of a sword, beneath which is the gulf of hell, and at the other end of which is paradise. Wicked Mohammedans will fail in the attempt to get to heaven by this difficult passage, and will fall headlong into the yawning abyss, where they will remain in a sort of purgatory till these sins are burnt or purged away; but the virtuous Mohammedans, under the guidance of the prophet, will pass over the bridge in safety, with the swiftness of lightning, and will reach the groves and gardens of the seventh heaven or Paradise, where palaces of marble and all kinds of worldly luxury await them. The inhabitants of that place will be supplied with every sort of food which they may desire; with animals to ride on, adorned with the richest trappings; and with silken garments of the utmost magnificence; besides which there shall be allotted to each individual seventy-two women in addition to the wives which he had in this world. The Mohammedan paradise combines with all this licentiousness, (strange intermixture!) the happiness arising from the contemplation of God.

How mean is such a heaven, compared with "the inheritance of the saints in light," revealed in the holy Scriptures! It is true that material objects most splendid and valuable are used as symbols to assist our conceptions of the heavenly state; none of those objects, however, are connected with licentiousness, and it is obvious to the most cursory observer, that the descriptions in which such images are introduced are figurative and not literal. The delights, on the contrary, which constitute the Mohammedan paradise are those of an epicure and voluptuary; and, it is plain, are intended to be

understood in a literal sense. Such a heaven would be unworthy of man even as an intellectual being, and to the man who is "renewed in the spirit of his mind," would yield no satisfaction. Happily a nobler paradise is set before the Christian, and the path which leads thither clearly marked out by him who has said, "I am the way."

" Pure are the joys above the skies,

" And all the region peace ;

" No wanton lips, nor envious eyes

" Shall see or taste the bliss.

" Those holy gates for ever bar

" Pollution, sin, and shame :

" None shall obtain admittance there,

" But followers of the Lamb."

This last topic is closely connected with **MORALS**. The views which people entertain relative to the nature of the happiness which awaits them in another world have no inconsiderable influence on their conduct in the present state. Prone as mankind are to seek too eagerly after earthly good, it is not wonderful that spiritual and just conceptions of heaven should not have all the influence which is desirable in refining and elevating the affections ; but when, as in the Mohammedan Creed, the very heaven which is looked for as the perfection of goodness and of bliss is earthly and grovelling in its character, and religion is thus made to inflame instead of subduing the passions, what can be expected, but the general prevalence of a slothful, voluptuous, selfish temper, inducing men to act as if they believed that the gratification of the senses was the chief and only good.

How exactly this agrees with the Turkish character I need not stay to prove. Towards the production of that character, a relaxing climate may do something ; but a sensual creed doubtless does more.

I now proceed to exhibit an outline of the **HISTORY OF MOHAMMEDANISM**.

You have seen, in the religion itself, notwithstanding some acknowledged excellences, defects so glaring as to convince you that its origin was not divine; and the history of this religion will confirm you in such a conviction.

Mohammed, the founder of the religion which bears his name, was born at Mecca in Arabia, A.D. 569, of an ancient and highly respected family, although not at that time wealthy. To this family belonged the hereditary honour of guarding that temple at Mecca, of which mention was made above. Mohammed was distinguished, in his youth, for a strict attention to such devotions as were practised by his countrymen, who at that period worshipped the sun, the moon, and the stars. His character was then conspicuous for frugality and charity; and every year he used to retire for a season to a cave in Mount Hara in Mecca, for the purpose of fasting, meditation, and prayer. By this mode of life he not only increased the natural enthusiasm of his own mind, but also acquired the reputation of an eminently devout man. When about forty years of age, he began to profess himself to be a prophet. To his relations, whom he had prevailed on to accompany him to the cave, he one day pretended that on the preceding night the Angel Gabriel had appeared to him, and had proclaimed him to be the apostle of God. His first converts were Kadajah his wife, Waraka a kinsman of his wife, Ali a cousin of Mohammed, and Zoid his slave. At the end of three years from the time of his first declaring himself to be a prophet, he had made but fourteen proselytes. He continued to give both private and public instruction relative to God, to religious duties, and to himself as a prophet; but the people called aloud for *miracles*, which he did not even pretend to perform.

Here let us pause a moment to notice the con-

trast that is observable, in this particular, between the Mohammedan and the ancient Jewish, and between the Mohammedan and the Christian religions. The Jewish and the Christian were both introduced by supernatural deeds, so numerous, and attested by so many witnesses, that none but the most bigoted and unreasonable could doubt either the divine agency exerted in those deeds, or the divine authority of the instruction which was so attested.

But Mohammed, though unable to work miracles, was well able to frame *romantic stories* of journeys to heaven, and of interviews with superior beings; and these stories were suited to the taste of the Arabian people, who even then delighted in the marvellous. Accordingly, he declared that he had been conveyed on a white beast during the night from the temple of Mecca to that of Jerusalem; that with his companion Gabriel he successively ascended the seven heavens, receiving and repaying the salutations of the patriarchs, the prophets, and the angels, in their respective mansions. Beyond the seventh heaven Mohammed alone was permitted to proceed. He, however, was allowed to advance within two bow-shots of the throne, and declared that he felt a cold which pierced him to the heart when his shoulder was touched by the hand of God. He then held a conversation with God; after which he descended to Jerusalem; and remounting his beast, returned to Mecca.

Every one will remark that in proof of the truth of this profane romance we have nothing whatever beyond his own word.

By degrees, the adherents of Mohammed increased. To those who had been accustomed to worship idols, the doctrine which he inculcated concerning God approved itself by its superior reasonableness; while, as we have seen, there were

certain points in the morals which he taught, and in the heaven which he promised, well calculated to gain the affections of the corrupt heart.

At length, when his disciples had become sufficiently numerous, and he had been allowed by the inhabitants of Medina to enter on the combined offices of Priest and King of that city, he resolved to make use of the sword for the further extension of his power. Accordingly he pretended that the Angel Gabriel had commanded him to propagate his religion by warfare. His first military efforts were directed against the people who had opposed and persecuted himself and his followers.

To his soldiers he held out the most flattering inducements : four-fifths of the spoils taken in war were to be divided among them ; the female captives were to be given up to them ; and a crown of martyrdom was promised in the event of their falling in battle. "The sword," says Mohammed, in the Koran ; "the sword is the key of heaven and of hell ; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent under arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting and prayer ; whoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven ; at the day of judgment his wounds shall be resplendent as vermilion, and odoriferous as musk ; and the loss of his limbs shall be replaced by the wings of angels and cherubims."

In various successive battles the army of Mohammed was victorious ; till at length the city of Mecca became subject to him. The sword and the doctrine of the prophet then made a rapid progress through the surrounding territories ; and Mohammed became one of the most powerful monarchs of his time.

After his death, his successors spread their conquests and religion over considerable portions of Asia, Africa, and Europe.

The rapid and extensive spread of the Mohammedan faith has been sometimes adduced not only as an argument in its favour, but as a paral-

lel fact with the rapid and extensive spread of Christianity.

But the cases are evidently quite dissimilar, particularly in two most important points:

1. Christianity opposes all the corrupt propensities of human nature.

Mohammedanism, as we have seen, favours the indulgence of some of the strongest of those propensities.

2. Christianity instead of being supported, was violently opposed by the civil power.

Mohammedanism was propagated by the sword.

The miseries with which the establishment of the Mohammedan faith was accompanied, with several other circumstances relative to that subject, are figuratively described in the passage from the book of the Revelation which was read for the text. It is generally understood that the emblematical imagery of the fifth trumpet predicts the rise and progress of Mohammed and his successors, as reigning over the Arabians or Saracens, and introducing that false religion which filled the world with darkness and distress.

The *time* when these errors and miseries began is set forth under the symbol of "a star falling from heaven to earth," by which is supposed to be meant the defection of the Western Church from the truth of the gospel. "The mystery of iniquity," which had long been working, burst forth in its principal enormities about the same time with the appearance of Mohammed; and the almost universal prevalence of false doctrine in Christendom evidently prepared the way for that impostor. This was the black smoke arising out of the abyss, by which the sun and the air were darkened, and from which the army of locusts issued. Mohammed could not have succeeded in an age of light. But the falling star having opened the bottomless pit, out of that pit, through the smoke which pro-

ceeded from it, arose the locusts. That these locusts are to be understood in a figurative and not in a literal sense is sufficiently obvious, and that they are intended to denote the Arabian armies of Mohammed and his successors appears from the following points of resemblance. Locusts are numerous and destructive: so were those armies. The locusts were "like unto horses prepared unto battle:" the Arabians have in all ages been famous for their horses and horsemanship; and it is well known that their strength consists chiefly in cavalry. "Their heads were, as it were, crowns like gold." This is evidently an allusion to the turbans worn by the Arabians, who boast of having those ornaments for the common attire of their heads which among other people are considered as crowns and diadems. "Their faces were as the faces of men and they had hair as the hair of women." The Arabians accordingly wore their beards as men, while the long hair of their heads was flowing or plaited, like that of women. "Their teeth were as the teeth of lions, and they had breast-plates, as it were breast-plates of iron;" the former of those images denoting their strength in offensive, and the latter, in defensive means of warfare. "They had stings in their tails like scorpions," in reference to the poisonous and deadly effects of their doctrine.

The "five months" during which their ravages are described as lasting are thus interpreted on the principles laid down by Sir Isaac Newton. Anciently each of the twelve months, into which the year was divided, consisted of thirty days, and in prophetic language, a day is the symbol of a year. Five months are therefore one hundred and fifty days, that is, years, which was actually the period during which the chief ravages of the Saracens continued; *viz.* from the year 612, when Mohammed began to preach at Mecca, till 762, when the Caliph Almansor built Bagdad, and called it the City

of Peace ; from which time the Saracens became a settled people.

To enter at large on a *refutation* of the system of religion, which has this evening passed under review, is not necessary. Numerous proofs of its falsehood, which we need not stay to recapitulate, have presented themselves, as we went on. We have seen it to be alike deficient in point of internal and of external evidence. Let us long and pray for the period when this and every other Antichrist shall vanish from the earth. That such a period will come we have strong ground to believe ; and both from prophecy and facts we have reason to conclude that it is not far distant.

Meanwhile, since through the kindness of God we possess a holy book which has "God for its author, truth for its matter, and salvation for its end," and which, in each of these views is essentially different from the Koran, and incomparably superior ; let us see to it that we profit by the sublime instruction which that book affords. Are there not many who while they profess to admire the purity of Christian morals, are pursuing a course of licentiousness which would far better agree with the Koran than the Bible ? Are there not many who while they allow that the gospel of Christ alone points out the way to Heaven, are deferring from year to year to walk in that way ?

It is not improbable that, in the day of retribution, not a few who have borne the Christian name will be found to sustain a degree of guilt greater than that of many of the followers of the Arabian Impostor.

Remember that it will avail you nothing to profess the faith of Christ, unless with the heart you believe on him "to the saving of the soul."

LECTURE V.

March 14, 1824.

DEISM.

TITUS i. 16.

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him.

A DEIST or Theist, according to the literal meaning of the term, is a believer in God; and in this sense, therefore, every Christian is a Deist. But in the use of words we are to regard not so much their etymological import as the meaning which they now commonly bear; and in this view a Deist is one who believes in the existence of a Deity, but does not receive that revelation of the divine will which Christians believe that God has given. My object this evening is to show that Deism, or the religion of a Deist, is a false religion; false, not of course, in every respect, but in some important and essential particulars. The method I purpose to pursue is, first, to notice that prominent feature in Deistical religion, its rejection of Christianity; and then to consider what Deism is in itself; in other words, what Deism rejects, and what it maintains.

In a country like this, where Christianity is clearly taught, and commonly received, it is evident that any religion which is opposed to the Gospel, must take its principal characteristic from that very circumstance. This is almost the only thing in which all Deists are agreed. In other matters, as we shall see presently, wide differences exist in the creeds of the various sects of Deism.

Even here, too, there are diversities as to the degree of respect or hatred which is entertained for the Christian faith. But all Deists, not excepting those who speak the most honourably of Christianity, refuse to regard the Holy Scriptures as an authoritative revelation of truth from God to man. This, therefore, as the leading feature of Deism, demands an attentive and leisurely examination.

I. We are to contemplate Deism, with regard to its *rejection of Christianity.*

It is plain that if there are facts sufficient to prove that the religion of the Bible is true, there are facts sufficient to prove that every one who rejects that religion acts an unreasonable part. The same evidence which warrants the faith of the Christian also reproves the unbelief of the sceptic. Consequently, the Tenth and Eleventh Lectures, in which it is proposed to exhibit the proofs of the divine authority of the Christian religion, will evince the folly of Deism in rejecting that religion, just in proportion to the degree in which the immediate design of those lectures shall be accomplished.

It is my wish to anticipate as little as possible, what will then be advanced; but it will not be possible on the present occasion to avoid touching on topics which may again be noticed.

My plan is to set out with certain facts as data which every Deist will allow to be fair and equitable, and from those data to prove the irrationality of rejecting the gospel.

The first fact which I use as a datum is simply this, that *the Christian religion does exist in the world.* On this point there is of course no dispute. Every one knows that there are extant certain writings called the Holy Scriptures, and that millions of the human race have received the religion which those scriptures teach. Every one also is willing to allow that whatever now is, once began to be.

Christianity now exists, and sometime or other it began to exist. When did it begin, and how did it begin? We call on the Deist to give us an authentic history of Christianity. Either he can or he cannot give us such a history. If he say that he is unable to give an account of the origin of the gospel, we reply that we can give him a history of its origin, bearing unquestionable marks of authenticity. That history he is bound to receive, since, by his own confession, he is not able to produce another by which its claims to belief might be invalidated.

We further contend that whoever, whether Christian or Deist, should write a history of Christianity on those principles which regulate the compositions of all historians of credit, that history would inevitably tally with the account which the Holy Scriptures present of the origin and progress of the gospel.

Here let it be observed that the order in which the historian would proceed for the purpose of ascertaining, for the satisfaction of his own mind, the truth or falsehood of the early facts of the gospel, would be just the reverse of the order he would observe in writing a history. In writing a history of any thing a man would set out at the beginning, and come down, age after age, to his own time; whereas in the attempt to ascertain whether any history were true, especially whether the early part of that history were true, his method would be to begin with his own day, the facts relative to which he already knows, and then go back, age by age, till he should arrive at the period in question.

We shall suppose that a man, desirous of ascertaining the truth, should adopt this plan in reference to the religion of Christ. He begins with his own day. He looks around him and observes that this religion does now prevail in the world. He glances his eye over the history of the former century, and finds that the same religion prevailed then. He

goes back to the days of Queen Elizabeth and of Henry VIII. and observes that in this country at that period a considerable change took place in the opinions of the professors of the Christian religion, but that the religion itself, as contained in the holy books, was not altered. He then makes his way through what are called the dark ages, and finds that the origin of Christianity was prior to that time. He comes at length to the days of Constantine, when religion was taken under the protection of the state. From Constantine he goes back to those Roman Emperors who flourished during the first three centuries of the Christian era. He observes that during that period Christianity was often persecuted by the civil power and opposed by unbelievers, both which circumstances prove the existence of Christianity at that time. At last he arrives at the spring-head of the river, up the stream of which he has been long ascending, and finds it impossible to assign to Christianity any other date and origin than what are attributed to it by the united voice of the gospel narratives, and of sacred and profane history.

Now let an impartial man, whether Christian or Infidel, enter on such an investigation as the one just described, and write a history of Christianity as the result of his inquiries, and I repeat it, that history will agree with the New Testament in the account it will give of the origin of the Christian faith.

It is not enough, therefore, that we maintain that there is sufficient proof to justify the Christian's believing the gospel history to be true: that proof is so abundant and clear as to warrant our charging the Deist with great irrationality in refusing to admit it. What opinion should we form of that man's judgment who should question whether it were true that Julius Cesar invaded Britain, and that after his time Tiberius Cesar was emperor of Rome; and that under him Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea?

And yet it would be as reasonable to question the reality of these things, as to doubt whether the facts related of Jesus Christ and his apostles be true.

Deism, then, we contend is a false religion, because it rests on the *denial of facts* which, according to the strictest rules of evidence, are incontrovertibly *true*. Many Deists, indeed, admit the reality of the leading facts of the gospel history, while, with strange inconsistency, they refuse to regard the religion to be true and divine which rests on those facts as on an immoveable basis.

2. I propose to show the falsehood of Deism in this its primary characteristic, its rejection of Christianity, by referring to *the acknowledged excellence of the gospel*. On this topic, the evidence adduced shall be given altogether in the language of sceptical and deistical authors.

LORD HERBERT, the first and purest of our English free-thinkers, calls Christianity the best religion, and acknowledges that all its doctrines, ordinances, precepts, and sacraments, aim at the establishment of those very articles of belief in which he makes all religion to consist.

DR. TINDAL, who wrote against divine revelation, also owns that Christianity itself, stripped of all additions that policy, mistake, and the circumstances of time have made to it, is a most holy religion.

But one of the fullest testimonies in favour of the Gospel given by any sceptical author, is found in the writings of the celebrated LORD BOLINGBROKE. That distinguished opponent of revealed religion has expressed himself in the following language of encomium on the excellency of the Christian faith. He asserts that no religion ever appeared in the world whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind. He declares that no system can be more simple and plain than that of natural religion as it stands in the gospel. Speaking of baptism and the Lord's supper, he says, "No institutions can be imagined

more simple, nor more void of all those pompous rites and theatrical representations which abounded in the religious worship of the Heathens and the Jews than these two were in their origin. They were not only innocent but profitable ceremonies, because they were extremely proper to keep up the spirit of true natural religion, by keeping up that of Christianity; and to promote the observation of moral duties, by maintaining a respect for the revelation which confirmed them." He acknowledges that the system of religion which Christ published and the Evangelists recorded, is a complete system adapted to answer all the purposes of religion natural and revealed. "It contains," he remarks, "all the duties of natural religion, it enforces them by asserting the divine mission of the publisher, who proved his assertions at the same time by his miracles; and it enforces the whole law of faith by promising rewards and threatening punishments." He afterwards repeats that "Christianity, as it stands in the gospel, contains not only a complete but a very plain system of religion." "It is, in truth," says he, "the system of natural religion, and such it might have continued, to the unspeakable advantage of mankind, if it had been propagated with the same simplicity with which it was originally taught by Christ himself." He allows that the gospel is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity. He acknowledges (in words which exactly suit our present purpose) that "supposing Christianity to have been a human invention, it had been the most amiable and the most useful invention that was ever imposed on mankind for their good."

Yet, notwithstanding this just eulogium on Christianity, Lord Bolingbroke, in other passages, speaks in terms of such disparagement of revealed religion, that he must, of necessity, be classed among its enemies.

Here and there are individuals who profess to be-

lieve, and hesitate not to affirm, that the religion of the Bible is highly injurious to the temporal welfare of mankind. Such a sentiment is, however, held in contempt by the majority even of those who refuse to submit to the authority of divine revelation; and the opinion of the excellence of the gospel which Lord Bolingbroke has expressed in the above cited passages, prevails, we apprehend, very generally, among the most respectable sceptics of the present day.

But in what a strange predicament does the admission of such a sentiment involve those who maintain it! This part of the creed of such a Deist may be thus expressed: "I believe that there is a Supreme Being, who at first created and still preserves and governs the inhabitants of our world. I believe that God delights in the virtue and happiness of creatures, and approves of every thing which is necessarily calculated to promote their virtue and their happiness. I further believe that Christianity is more adapted to promote virtue and happiness than any other system of religion or philosophy ever known. And yet I do not believe that Christianity came from God."

Sceptics may talk about the credulity of Christians; and doubtless, many persons bearing the Christian name have been chargeable with that weakness; but where shall we find an example of credulity more palpable than the belief that God loves virtue, that Christianity is better adapted than any thing else to promote virtue, and yet that Christianity has not God for its author?

The only way of getting rid of the difficulty is by denying altogether the providence of God, and asserting that the world, though created by the Almighty, is left to take care of itself; that whatever good man enjoys he receives not from God, but obtains by his own ingenuity, or by that of his fellow creatures, and that consequently we are indebted for Christianity not to God but to the men who first taught it.

But this supposition brings after it two most inconvenient inferences :

1. It robs God of much of the glory due to him as the great *Benefactor* of mankind.

Such Deism as could allow of the supposition that God, though the Creator, is not the giver of good to man, would approach very near to Atheism, and would most probably lead to it.

2. The supposition that Christianity owes its origin to the ingenuity of *men*, involves the absurd tenet that the same men can be very good and very bad at the same time. Falsehood, according to the Christian code of morals, and according to every just code, is a great crime; yet, if the men who first taught Christianity were its inventors, they were guilty of this crime, for they uniformly declared in the most solemn terms, that the religion they taught was not their own invention, but was communicated to them by the supernatural influence of God. This, then, is the state of the case according to the supposition in question. The men who invented the religion of the gospel were very good men, since none but such men could have found out a system so pure and benevolent; and yet these same men were very bad men, since none but bad men could be guilty of such wilful, deliberate, and persevering falsehood. In such strange inconsistencies and absurdities are they involved who refuse to acknowledge Christianity to be a religion revealed by God to man. But if this religion be indeed of God, then no religion which is opposed to it can be true; and Deism, therefore, in this its primary characteristic, namely, its rejection of the gospel as an authoritative rule of faith, worship, and practice, is wholly untenable and essentially wrong.

The ingratitude and guilt of Deists in rejecting the Holy Scriptures are aggravated by the consideration that whatever is good in their system has been received from that very book which they reject. To ascertain what man can do in religion without divine aid, we must go back to the days of

ancient Greece and Rome. In the gross ignorance and error on religious subjects which prevailed in those countries, enlightened as they were in other matters, we may see what unassisted reason can do. Deists of the present day owe all their superiority above the ancients to the information which has been derived from the Holy Scriptures; while, with inexcusable ingratitude, they depreciate the book to which they are so greatly indebted. They are like persons who, having climbed up to a high place, throw down the ladder by which they ascended, and then falsely boast of their wonderful skill in reaching so great an elevation without assistance.

II. I proceed to consider *what Deism is* in itself.

That the abettors of this system act an unreasonable part in rejecting the religion of the Christian Scriptures, has been, I trust, already proved. We are now to see what sort of religion such persons would have us to substitute in the place of Christianity.

The observations to be made under this head belong to one or other of the three following propositions :

1. Deism has no standard of truth ;
2. It affords no certainty of immortality ; and
3. It gives no stability to morals.

Should it be objected to this view of Deism that it exhibits that religion rather negatively than positively, I answer that such a view of Deism is the most correct that can be taken, that religion being much more distinguished by what it is not than by what it is. I proceed to substantiate the charge.

1. *Deism has no standard of truth.*

Notwithstanding the diversities of opinion which prevail among those who profess the Christian faith, there is a book acknowledged by them all to be the source and standard of religious truth. Some indeed who wish to be considered disciples of Christ scru-

ple not to deny that book to possess such attributes as are essential to an authoritative revelation of the divine will ; but it is worthy of remark that these are the very persons who differ most widely in sentiment from the generality of Christians, and appear to occupy a sort of neutral and disputable territory between Christianity and Deism. Among those who agree in acknowledging the Holy Scriptures to be the rule and the only rule of faith, the varieties of opinion, though numerous, are confined to non-essential topics ; nor can the widest departures from truth which have obtained in the Christian world be considered as proving the want of a standard of truth ; they are imputable to the neglect of it. The possession of such a standard is of unspeakable utility. Among Deists, however, no such thing can be found. There are names in high repute among them, such as Herbert, Bolingbroke, Hobbes, Shaftesbury, and Hume ; but no publication of any one of them has acquired such a reputation as to entitle it to the name of the Deist's Bible ; and that the writings of these authors collectively cannot be regarded as constituting such a Bible, is plain from the circumstance that they differ most widely from one another.

If it be said that every one's own reason is the standard of truth, the reply is, that whatever deserves to be considered as a standard must be invariably the same, like truth itself. Such the Bible is, but such what is called reason is not. Reason viewed abstractly, that is, understood to mean what is reasonable, is the same thing as truth ; but reason, in the sense intended, that is, as denoting every man's own opinion of what is reasonable, is a thing just as various as mankind are numerous. What one man thinks to be reasonable, another declares to be quite the reverse ; nay, cases often occur in which a man deems a thing reasonable one day, and unreasonable the next. It follows, therefore, that the faculty of reason in man, though highly to be valued and diligently to be used and improved, has no claim

to be regarded as a standard of truth. Deists, therefore, since they reject divine revelation, have no standard.

The consequence is precisely what might be expected. Among Deists, discrepancies of sentiment exist on the most important points of what is called natural religion.

On this account it is impossible to exhibit in one view the deistical creed. All that can be done is to give an outline of a few among the many creeds of Deists.

LORD HERBERT proposed the following articles as comprehending all that is essential:

- (1.) That there is one God ;
- (2.) That he is chiefly to be worshipped ;
- (3.) That piety and virtue is the principal part of his worship ;
- (4.) That we must repent of our sins, and that if we do so, God will pardon them ;
- (5.) That there are rewards for good men, and punishments for bad men in a future state.

LORD SHAFTESBURY objects to the last of those five articles, declaring, that nothing can be more fatal to virtue than the weak and uncertain belief of future rewards and punishments; and further says, that, if the belief be strong, it will cause men to neglect the interests and duties of the present life, the duties they owe to their friends, their neighbours and their country. So that according to this writer, the belief in a future state of retribution, be that belief weak or strong, is injurious to good morals !

MR. CHUBB plainly intimates that he looks upon God as having nothing now to do with the good or evil which is done among mankind. He supposes that man's natural abilities or endowments of body or mind, their fortunes, situation in the world, and other circumstances or advantages by which one man is distinguished from another, are things which depend entirely upon second causes,

and in which Providence doth not interpose at all ; so that all agency of the Almighty, in disposing, governing and overruling second causes, is, by his scheme, absolutely excluded. Agreeably to this, he discards all hopes of divine assistance in the practice of what is good.

LORD BOLINGBROKE avows a similar opinion.

Many Deists consider the worshipping of God, in the way of prayer and praise, to be unnecessary ; and some do not scruple to represent repentance for sin as also superfluous !

2. *The religion of the Deist has no certainty of future happiness.*

It can neither give the assurance that man will exist for ever, nor can it speak with certainty as to the means by which he may attain happiness, on the supposition that there is a future state.

(1.) *It cannot give the assurance that there is a future state.*

From the nature of the human soul, and from the present state of mankind, strong ground for entertaining the belief that man is immortal may be derived, but no certainty. The man who rejects divine revelation cannot be confident that he shall survive the dissolution of his bodily frame.

(2.) If such a man think it probable that he shall exist after death, still *he cannot tell by what means he may attain immortal happiness.*

Should he say, there is no danger of man's not being happy in a future world, supposing there is such a world, we ask on what ground is the opinion entertained? Does he rest his hope on the goodness of God? If he does, it is important for him to remember that justice as well as goodness belongs to God. The providence of God proves that he is displeased with wickedness and that it is not inconsistent with the goodness of God that wickedness should be punished. God does punish wickedness in the present world. Though good men often suffer much distress, and bad men some-

times enjoy a large measure of prosperity, it is plain that a connexion exists between doing right and being happy, and between doing wrong and being miserable. This connexion between vice and suffering God has established.

If then God sees fit oftentimes to punish wickedness in this world, who will venture to affirm that he will not punish it in the world to come? Many Deists believe that God will recompense evil-doers hereafter; and no man can prove that he will not.

Let it further be observed that every man is in a greater or less degree an evil-doer. No one has done his duty; and there are few persons, if any, who have not occasionally, at least, some consciousness of guilt. Under the burden of such a consciousness, where is the Deist's relief? Nothing better than opinion and supposition. He trusts in the goodness of God; but whether or not the justice of God may require that a sinful being, such as he is, should be punished, he cannot tell.

And so clear are the proofs of the divine authority of the religion of Christ, that there are but few of its opponents who get beyond scepticism with regard to it. They have doubts of its truth, and those doubts they cherish; but few unbelievers feel confident that the gospel is not of God. Nor can they forget that *if the gospel be true*, their hope is altogether fallacious; and their state most alarming. Deists are neither sure that there is a future state, nor do they know by what means future happiness may be secured, even if there be such a state.

How inferior, on both these points, is Deism to the Gospel! "By the gospel, life and immortality are brought to light." A state of purity and happiness is set before the eye of the Christian, and a way to that felicity is marked out, in which even guilty man may securely travel.

3. *Deism gives no stability to morals.*

MR. HOBBS asserts, "that the natural condition of man is a state of war, a war of all men against all men: he says that there is no way so reasonable for any man, as to anticipate, that is, by force and wiles to master all the persons of others that he can, so long as he sees no power great enough to endanger him. He declares that civil laws are the only rules of good and evil, of justice and injustice, of honesty and dishonesty; and that antecedently to such laws every action is in its own nature indifferent; that there is nothing good or evil in itself, nor any common laws constituting what is naturally just and unjust; that all things are measured by what every man judgeth fit, where there is no civil government, and by the laws of society, where there is one."

Principles like these are too absurd to require to be confuted; and are quoted to show into what extravagant errors, even on the plainest and most fundamental points of morals, men may fall who reject the authoritative standard of truth and duty.

It appears that there are *two ways* in which Deistical religion is *injurious to good morals*; the one is by its robbing mankind of the standard of duty, the other by its taking away some of the most powerful motives to the performance of duty.

Of the former a remarkable specimen has just been exhibited from the writings of Mr. Hobbes. Many Deists, doubtless, would not acquiesce in those immoral views; but that the tendency of Deism, generally, is to lower the tone of morals, cannot be questioned. Thus, Mr. Hume does not scruple to represent self-denial and humility as quite useless and not worthy of the name of virtues. Lord Bolingbroke supposes modesty and chastity, as having no foundation in nature, but to be owing to human vanity. He recommends polygamy and speaks very lightly of adultery. "Mr.

Hume asserts adultery to be a slight offence when known, when secret no offence at all." Such are the morals which some would have us substitute in the place of that pure and benevolent code, in which every virtue is commended and every vice condemned.

But a still greater injury to the cause of morals results from Deism, by its diminishing the motives to good conduct.

The persuasion that the Creator of mankind observes every action and every thought, and that the consequences of present conduct will be eternal, must necessarily operate to deter men from vice, just in proportion as such a persuasion is strong and habitual. A remarkable admission of this evident truth is found in the writings of Mr. Hume. Speaking of the general belief of a divine existence and of a future state of retribution, he says, "Whether this reasoning (about God and futurity) be just or not, its influence on their life and conduct must be still the same. And those who attempt," continues he, "to disabuse them of such prejudices, may, for ought I know, be good reasoners, but I cannot allow them to be good citizens and politicians; since they free men from one restraint upon their passions, and make the infringement of the laws of equity and society, in one respect, more easy and secure."

Lord Bolingbroke also observes that the doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future state has so great a tendency to enforce the civil laws, and to restrain the vices of men, that though, as he pretends, reason cannot decide for it on principles of natural theology, she will not decide against it on principles of good policy. His Lordship goes so far as to say that if the conflict between virtue and vice in the great commonwealth of mankind were not maintained by religious and civil institutions, the human life would be intolerable.

From these concessions of Lord Bolingbroke and

Mr. Hume we may argue both the wickedness of the men and the falsehood of their system.

We argue *the wickedness of the men*. They own that the morality of mankind and consequently their happiness, is essentially promoted by the assured conviction of a future state of retribution, and yet the great drift of their writings is to destroy that conviction. We should think but ill of the men who should combine to throw down the banks by which the river or the sea is kept off from the low lands, and who should thereby expose the inhabitants to the miseries and dangers of inundation. Similar, but far more atrocious, is their guilt who aim to destroy the fences by which the bad passions of mankind are restrained; which passions, but for those restraints, would occasion a desolation far more deplorable than any eruption either of rivers or of the sea.

Such men as Lord Bolingbroke and Mr. Hume, were, by their own confession, chargeable with the guilt of knowingly injuring mankind in their most valuable interests.

But we infer, secondly, from the concessions of these writers, *the falsehood of their system*.

Truth and virtue are necessarily connected, and so are falsehood and vice. Virtue is truth. Truth of sentiment is the conformity of our thoughts with actual facts and with the relations which things bear to one another. Truth of conduct is the agreement of our actions with facts and with the relations which things bear to one another. For instance, it is a fact that God is an infinite and perfect Being: it is a fact that man is a rational and voluntary agent: it is a fact that God sustains towards man the relations of sovereign, benefactor, and lawgiver. The recognition of these facts and relations, in theory, is truth of sentiment; the recognition of them, in practice, is truth of conduct, that is, virtue. Thus intimately associated, or rather identified with each other, are virtue and truth. It follows that whatever moral system is true

in theory must necessarily be productive of virtue in conduct, just in proportion as it is practically regarded; and that whatever system can be proved to be necessarily injurious to good morals is, by the very same reasoning, proved to be false. Deism, then, is proved to be false by the acknowledgment of its most distinguished supporters; since they own that one of its leading features, namely, the weakening of the general belief of a future state of retribution, is of dangerous tendency to the cause of morals.

These observations respecting the immoral effects of scepticism are not merely abstract reasoning; they have been dreadfully confirmed by facts which occurred in a neighbouring country a few years ago. "The enormities which disgraced the French revolution were nothing more," observes a celebrated modern author, "than the removal of that restraint against which Lord Shaftesbury wrote, and the reduction of Mr. Hobbes' principles to practice. It was but tracing the peculiarities of Deism to their atheistical conclusion, and introducing them into active operation throughout the relations of society. Voltaire, and others of continental celebrity, pushed the principles of former sceptics to the extremity which they finally reached, but which even these rash theorists did not live to witness. The scholars went beyond their masters, but still their scholars they were. Then it was that that text met with a dreadful commentary, 'While they promised them liberty, they themselves were the servants of corruption.'"

I shall now briefly inquire into the *causes* of Deism, and then conclude with a few practical remarks.

The *causes* of Deism or scepticism may be arranged under three heads, as being *Circumstantial*, *Intellectual* and *Moral*.

1. *Circumstances* relative to a man's education and the society in which he moves, have been, in

many instances, partly at least, the occasion of Deism.

It has been the unhappy lot of some persons seldom to behold Christianity in its native simplicity and purity, but to observe it incumbered and deformed by human traditions and inventions; it has also been their lot to witness cases of insincere profession of Christianity, instances in which persons under the mask of religion have promoted their own views and interests, and have thus dishonoured the cause which they professed to esteem. Thus has an impression unfavourable to truth been made on their minds. Most extensively and fatally did such a prejudice prevail in France previously to the troubles just adverted to. Popery and Religion were thought to be the same thing, and from the alliance which existed between Popery and Tyranny, Religion and Oppression were also deemed inseparable. An effect somewhat similar is produced in those families and societies where a profession of religion is associated with superstition in belief and wickedness in conduct.

But although circumstances like these may give *occasion* to scepticism, they can never be considered as affording a sufficient *apology* for it, especially in a country like our own. The Holy Scriptures, the only standard of Christianity, are open to every one who can read, and very numerous are the places of instruction where, every Lord's day, genuine Christianity is plainly taught. By the use of such means, with the blessing of God obtained by prayer, prejudices may be dissipated and knowledge of real Christianity obtained.

2. The causes of scepticism are partly *intellectual*. Among the rejecters, as among the friends of divine revelation, there have been persons of various degrees of natural talent. Some men of great endowments of mind have doubtless been found in the ranks of Infidels. Yet their unbelief was no proof of their mental ability, nor is any large portion of

intelligence necessary to qualify a man for being a sceptic. As it is easier to discern an imaginary blemish in a work of art than to execute a superior work, so is it far easier to raise objections against truth than to see the force of the arguments by which such objections are shown to be futile. Some of the weakest minds are those which are most subject to doubting. Such a habit of thought evinces much instability of judgment. A well-regulated mind is one which *denies* when there is no evidence, *doubts* when the evidence is *uncertain*, and is *sure* when the evidence is adequate. Habitual scepticism, on the contrary, always either denies or doubts, and by thus confounding things which are different, discovers infirmity of judgment.

3. The principal causes of scepticism are *moral*.

Some persons, especially in younger life, are induced from a love of distinction to avow disbelief in truths generally received. It seems to them manly and noble to differ from other people. Yet, to seek distinction by forsaking God, truth, and duty, indicates no real greatness.

In not a few instances, a *disinclination to the strict morality of the gospel* forms the principal objection against it. A superficial glance at Christianity suffices to convince a man that no genuine disciple of Christ can be allowed to live according to the corrupt desires of the human heart; and on this account the gospel is unpalatable.

The profligate and abandoned dislike even those moral precepts which are essentially necessary to the good order of civil society; and even persons of decorous conduct disapprove of that constant regard to the state of the heart which personal religion includes, so that both parties are disaffected to the morality which Christianity enjoins.

The enmity of others is chiefly directed against that *humility* which a reception of the gospel demands. Many are unwilling to become, in the proper sense of the phrase, disciples of Christ. They

wish to come to Christ rather as disputants to discuss points of doctrine with him, than as scholars to learn implicitly from him. Others cannot bear the thought of renouncing dependence on their own good deeds, and of supplicating the favour of God as creatures who have no claim on his regard. In these ways do pride and the love of sin operate to make men dislike the gospel.

Of the effects of prejudice in temporal affairs no one can be ignorant. Let an individual or a system be looked on with ill-will, from whatever cause, and immediately that object or system is surrounded with a mist by which every thing relative to it is obscured and distorted. So it is in religion. When once a man, from any of the causes specified, has contracted a dislike of the gospel, the unhappy consequences are, that he eagerly receives any suggestion which is calculated to strengthen his aversion; while he either wholly neglects or very slightly regards arguments, be they ever so clear and forcible, by which his objections might be obviated, his aversion changed into love, and his scepticism into the assurance of faith.

I conclude with a few words of *expostulation* and of *counsel*. First, on the supposition that there may be individuals present who have been tempted, occasionally at least, to lean towards the Deistical creed, I would offer a few words of expostulation. Allow me to request you calmly and candidly to compare together the religion of the Deist and the religion of the Christian. Can you, on such a comparison, say, "I prefer Deism?" Are you prepared to avow, that Deism is more calculated than the gospel to encourage pious and reverential thoughts of God, to give consolation under the sorrows of life, to promote goodness of character, and to impart at death the hope of a happy immortality? No, I am willing to hope you are not prepared to make an avowal so contrary to plain matter of fact. I shall suppose you are a parent and have a beloved

child at the point of death. What kind of death would tend most to alleviate your grief at the loss of one whom you so much love? Would it be agreeable to you to hear your child employ the last hours of life in avowing a rejection of the word of God, or to hear the expression of a good hope of a glorious immortality through faith in Jesus Christ? The question shall be answered by an authentic anecdote, related in Dr. Dwight's Travels in America.

“Colonel Allen, of Vermont in Connecticut, was an avowed Deist, and the author of several works against the Christian religion. But how little faith he possessed in his own tenets in the hour of danger and of death is evinced by the following fact. While reading some of his own writings to a friend who was on a visit to his house, he received information that his daughter was at the point of death. His wife was a pious woman, who had instructed the daughter in the principles of Christianity. When the father appeared at the bed-side, the daughter said to him, ‘I am about to die, shall I believe in the principles you have taught me, or shall I believe in what my mother has taught me?’ On hearing this question the father became extremely agitated, and after waiting a few minutes, replied, ‘Believe in what your mother has taught you.’” And probably most sceptical men, in similar circumstances, would give a like answer.

Finally, I would address a word of counsel to all present. Let me remind you that it is not enough to believe, speculatively, that Deism is a false religion, and that Christianity is true. There must be a belief not only in the general truth of revealed religion, but in those infinitely important truths which respect the author and finisher of our faith; and there must be a personal trust in Him as the only deliverer from deserved wrath. The leading design of God in the gospel is to make known to mankind a great and glorious salvation. Every one is a rebel against his maker, and on account of guilt

is subject to his just anger. From the final effects of that anger the rejecter of divine revelation will not escape by cherishing doubts of its reality. A mariner in danger of shipwreck, may by intoxication become insensible; but destruction is rather hastened than retarded by such folly. The threatenings of God, like his promises, will take their course. Nor will it avail any thing to know there is a refuge from the storm, unless we personally take shelter therein. O, then, my brethren and friends, listen to the kind solicitations of the Almighty. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

LECTURE VI.

March 28, 1824.

ERRONEOUS SYSTEMS OF RELIGION WHICH ARE
DISTINGUISHED BY CORRUPT ADDITIONS TO
THE TRUTH.

2 THESS. ii. 7, 8.

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who letteth (hindereth) will let (hinder), until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

THESE words describe the source, the progress and the termination of the corruption of the Christian Faith.

The principle whence this corruption sprang existed and was secretly operating even in the apostolic age. Scarcely twenty years after the ascension of our Saviour, his servant Paul informed the Christians in *Thessalonica* that the mystery of iniquity was already working; and about ten years afterwards, writing to the believers in *Colosse*, he exposed, more in detail, the manner in which that hidden principle of error and sin was exerting itself. He tells them accordingly, to “beware lest any man should spoil them,” or make a prey of them, “through *philosophy and vain deceit* ;” that is, by an empty and deceitful philosophy, “according to the tradition of men, according to the rudiments (or elements) of the world, and not according to Christ.”

From sound philosophy the cause of truth can have nothing to fear; but from a vain and deceit-

ful philosophy it has suffered much. Of this kind was the doctrine of the Platonists concerning *demons* or inferior deities, whom they represented as carrying men's prayers to God, and as bringing back from God the blessings prayed for.

Paul, at the same time, commands the Colossians not to allow any one to "judge them," or prescribe to them, in reference to *distinctions* between certain *kinds of food*, as if some sorts were forbidden; nor with regard to holydays, or new moons, or (Jewish) sabbaths, since such observances were not binding on the disciples of Christ. They had been for an appointed time shadows of good things to come, but Christ the substance or body being then in the Church, the shadows were no longer of use.

Paul also exhorts them not to suffer any one to beguile them of their reward, that is, deprive them of the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls, by *an affected humility*, and by the worship of angels. Some pretended that it was a mark of an humble mind to make use of angels or mediators, inasmuch as it indicated that the worshippers did not dare to rush into the presence of God in their own persons. Yet this was nothing better than an affected humility, since a mediator was actually appointed, by whom the guiltiest might approach to God without fear. To make use of angels as mediators was, therefore, to reject Christ, and thus to be deprived of that prize of eternal life which they and they only can expect who come to God by him.

In a word, the Apostle cautions the people against that undue regard to *the doctrines and commandments of men*, whether Philosophers or Jews, which would lead them away from the pure truth of the gospel.

But notwithstanding these repeated exhortations of Paul, the mystery of iniquity continued inwardly to work, and would have made a more rapid pro-

gress but for the *hindrance* to which the Apostle refers in the text, and by which he is understood to mean the civil power of the Roman Empire; but for which, ambitious prelates, availing themselves of errors and superstitions borrowed from the Pagans and the Jews, and more palatable to the corrupt heart of man than the simple truth and worship of the gospel, would have erected themselves, in very early days, into a spiritual dominion, such as was at length established in Rome, and the establishment of which occasioned the full revelation of the man of sin.

This ecclesiastical tyranny advanced by slow degrees. As early as the fourth century the Bishop of Rome held a distinguished place among his brethren, but as yet had not pretended to any direct dominion over them; and the Bishop of Constantinople was for a long time his rival in desire of supremacy. It was about the year 606 that Pope Boniface III. by flattering Phocas, the Emperor of Constantinople, obtained for himself the title of *Universal Bishop*; and from that time ignorance, superstition, and licentiousness spread rapidly over what bore the name of the Church. In the eighth century the Pope became a *Temporal Prince*, and thus uniting in himself supreme authority both in civil and sacred affairs, and acting as the patron of corruption, became the instrument of incalculable mischief, fully justifying the strong language used by the Apostle in predicting that period: "Then shall that Wicked one be revealed."

In the ninth century, the rivalry which had long subsisted between the Bishop of *Rome* and the Patriarch of *Constantinople* proceeded to an open rupture, and the professors of Christianity were from that time divided into two separate bodies, the *Roman and the Greek Churches*. In describing those systems of religion which are distinguished by corrupt additions to the truth, it will be expe-

dient to notice these distinct professions of religion separately.

I shall first give an outline of the *Greek Church*, and then enter rather more fully on a description of the *Roman*.

Were we to regard the extent of territory over which THE GREEK CHURCH is spread, it would be proper to devote a considerable portion of time to the consideration of its tenets; for it comprehends within its bosom not only Greece and the Russian Empire in Europe, but great part of Siberia in Asia, and many millions of the inhabitants of the countries on the East and South of the Mediterranean Sea. We shall, notwithstanding, treat the subject with brevity; a course of procedure which we are justified in adopting, on account of the comparatively small portion of error which the creed of this Church appears to contain.

In a church embracing so many distinct nations, it is not to be imagined that perfect uniformity of faith and practice exists. The Greek Christians, so called, in *Greece* and the adjoining countries, are sunk, for the most part, into a state of deplorable ignorance and superstition. The Greek Church in *Russia* exhibits a great superiority over its southern neighbours in knowledge and piety. Yet even in *Greece* facts have occurred which give reason to hope that the darkness is about to pass away, and that the true light which shone so early in that country will ere long shine again. Bible Societies have long been established at *Corfu*, at *Smyrna*, and at *Athens*; and many thousand copies of the New Testament in the modern Greek language have been circulated over the region where once Paul, Silas, and Timotheus laboured.

The first two articles of the political constitution, sworn to at Corinth, in 1822, by Greeks who had freed themselves from the Turkish yoke, were as follows:

“ 1. The established religion of Greece is that of the Orthodox Church of the East, but all other forms of worship are tolerated, and all their ceremonies and religious observances may be followed without the slightest hindrance.

“ 2. Christians of every persuasion, whether natives or residents in Greece, are by law Greeks, and enjoy equally all the privileges of Greek citizens.”

To the honour of the Greek Church it deserves to be mentioned, that amidst all the corruptions which have crept into it, the notion of doing God service by punishing his creatures on a religious account, has never made a part either of its faith or practice.

Relative to the state of the Greek Church in *Russia*, we enjoy the advantage of recent and authentic information, in the volume on that subject written by Mr. Pinkerton. They hold the doctrine of transubstantiation in a qualified sense, and pray for the dead, that God would have mercy on them in the day of judgment; they also practise the invocation of saints as intercessors with God. These are their most objectionable tenets, the last of which, especially, is an error of no small moment.

In their religious worship, too, there is much that calls for reformation. The service of their church, which is required to be performed three times a day, is so excessively long and tedious that in order to get through it in any thing like reasonable time, the priests and readers have acquired the habit of repeating the hymns and prayers so rapidly as to render them scarcely intelligible to the congregation. Thus the important purposes of divine worship are, in a considerable degree, frustrated, and the people are encouraged in the notion at once so common, so false, and so injurious, that religious services are rather mechanical than rational exercises.

In the Greek Church there is also a very undue veneration for holy pictures, holy garments, and puerile ceremonies. The robes of the officiating priests are required to be very costly and gay. Scarcely any rite or ordinance is performed in a church, whether by day or by night, without lighted candles or lamps. In many of the churches lamps or candles are kept continually burning before the picture of the Saviour, of the Virgin, or of a patron saint. Prayers are accompanied with incense, with which, in the course of the service, at stated times, the priest perfumes the worshippers. Crossing is also much practised in worship. Before and after meat, when about to pass a river, when passing by a church, when it thunders and lightens, the Russian makes with his finger the sign of the cross. The water to be used in baptism is also consecrated with many prayers and ceremonies.

In short, it must be acknowledged, that the Church in question is encumbered with no small quantity of superstitious rites and practices.

Yet, amidst all this rubbish of the "wood, hay and stubble," which human ingenuity has added to the gospel of Christ, it is some consolation to observe that *the fundamental doctrines of religion are retained*. The depravity and guilt of man, the divinity and atonement of the Saviour, and the work of the holy spirit are truths which the Greek Church has always held fast; in proof of which it may be sufficient to observe that it has adopted the Nicene Creed, nearly as it is found in the communion service of the Church of England.

There is one leading feature in the Greek Church, which must not be overlooked, *viz. the appeal which it makes to the word of God as the unerring rule*. The Greek Church, far from keeping the people in ignorance of the Bible, recommends its perusal, and in full accordance with such advice, many of its members have entered cordially into

the views of that noble association for banishing ignorance and error from the world, the British and Foreign Bible Society.

The improvement of a church which appeals to the Bible as the criterion of truth, which recommends its members to search the Scriptures, and enters zealously into plans for the spread of the Scriptures, cannot be hopeless.

We now proceed to examine the ROMAN CATHOLIC FAITH, a religion which has peculiar claims on our attention, from its antiquity, from the millions of our fellow creatures who profess it, among whom are not a few of our fellow subjects, and from the circumstance that three hundred years ago our forefathers professed it.

Let it not be supposed that, by placing Roman Catholic Faith among False Religions, I mean to intimate that it is *altogether false*. The title of this lecture expresses the opinion we form of the religion in question: it is "distinguished by corrupt additions to the truth;" a phraseology which implies the persuasion that it comprehends a large portion of truth. Such is undoubtedly the fact. The three-fold distinction in the Deity, of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ; the propitiation for sin which was made by the death of Christ; and the necessity of obedience to the will of God; are among the important doctrines of divine revelation which are incorporated in the Roman Faith. On these topics, and on many others connected with them, Roman Catholic divines have written and preached in a strain of pious eloquence to which it would be difficult to find any thing superior in the whole range of Protestant Theology. How far these salutary truths are neutralized, and how far the good fruits which they might be expected to yield, are blighted by the errors with which these doctrines are blended in the Roman Catholic pro-

fession of Christianity, will in some measure appear in the view about to be exhibited of the corrupt additions to the truth which are found in the principles and institutions of that religion.

Those who have leisure and inclination to enter more fully into the subject than is possible in one discourse, will do well to read Mr. Fletcher's Lectures on the Roman Catholic Religion, a work to which I have been under considerable obligation in the preparation of this discourse. Treatises on both sides of the controversy are innumerable.

It has been my object to compress within as small a compass as possible, a clear and sufficiently ample delineation of some of the leading tenets of Popery, with plain and scripture arguments for their confutation.

The *first* corruption of Popery which I shall notice, lies at the foundation of all other abuses, *viz.* the *setting up an authority in matters of religion, independent of the word of God.*

Protestant Christians regard the word of God as the sufficient and only rule of faith and duty. Roman Catholics allow that it is a rule of faith and duty, but they deny that it is *the sufficient and only rule.* They assert that the Church (by which of course they mean their own church) with traditions for its support, and the Pope at its head, is the judge of controversy, from whom all people ought to be willing to learn what is truth and what is error. The question with a consistent Roman Catholic, is, not so much, What saith the Scripture? as, What saith the Church?

Here I will give a quotation from a pamphlet published by Roman Catholic divines, Mr. Gother and Dr. Challoner, entitled, "A Papist misrepresented and represented." As it is my wish to represent and not to misrepresent, I am glad to have it in my power to adduce the sentiments of the people in question in their own words, as follows:

"The Papist truly represented believes that the

Church is not above the Scripture, but only allows that order between them as is between the judge and the law; and is no other but what every private member of the Reformation challenges for himself, as often as he pretends to decide any doubt of his own, or of his neighbour, in religion, by interpreting the Scripture. Neither is he taught at all to distrust the Scripture, or not to rely on it; but only to distrust his own private interpretation of it, and not to rely on his own judgment in the resolution of any doubt concerning faith or religion, though he can produce several texts in favour of his opinion. But in all such cases he is commanded to recur to the Church; and having learnt from her how they have been understood by the whole community of Christians in all ages since the Apostles, and what has been their received doctrine, in such doubtful and difficult points; he is obliged to submit to this, and never presume on his own private sentiments, however seemingly grounded on reason and Scripture, to believe or preach any new doctrine opposite to the belief of the Church; but as he receives from her the book, so also to receive from her the sense of the book; with a holy confidence that she who did not cheat him in delivering a false book for a true one, will not cheat him in delivering him a false and erroneous sense for the true one; her authority, which is sufficient in the one, being not less in the other; and his own private judgment, which was insufficient in the one, that is, in finding out the true scripture, and discerning it from all other books, being as incapable and insufficient in the other; that is, in certainly discovering the meaning of the Holy Ghost, and avoiding all other heterodox and mistaken interpretations."

The principal topics in the above passage are, the alleged necessity for a rule of faith in addition to the Holy Scriptures, and, the pretended fact that the Church of Rome furnishes such a rule. Let us examine each of these points:

1. *The Roman Catholics allege that there is an absolute necessity for a rule of faith in addition to the Holy Scriptures.*

This opinion is directly contrary to the testimony of the word of God. "Search the Scriptures," said Jesus to the Jews, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me: And ye will not come to me that ye might have life. Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me." In this passage it is evident our Lord declares that whoever duly searched the Scriptures would believe in him, and that whoever believed in him would have eternal life; and surely such a person, having found the Saviour and the way to Heaven, would need no additional rule of faith. If the Scribes and Pharisees, who pretended to be *the Church* in that day (in much the same way as other persons have pretended to be the Church since), if those men had come to one who, by duly searching the Scriptures, had found the Messiah, and by faith in him had obtained the hope and the beginning of eternal life, and had said to him, "Thou oughtest to have consulted us, and looked into the tradition of the elders, in order to find out whether Jesus is the Christ or not; it is a very rash and dangerous thing for thee, a private person, to form a judgment on such matters without us;"—the believer in Jesus might have replied; "You and your traditions either agree with the Scriptures or you do not. If you do not agree with the Scriptures, then you must be wrong, and to follow you would lead me into error. If you do agree with the Scriptures, then I do not want you, for I have them already, and am satisfied that through God's help, I have the true meaning of them, for in them I have found the Messiah."

It is true that the people to whom Jesus addressed the words just quoted were *Jews and not Christians*, but this consideration, instead of weak-

ening the argument, confirms it. For if, as is evident from our Saviour's words, the Scriptures of the *Old Testament* duly searched, were sufficient to lead a man to Christ and to eternal life, without the aid of any human interpretations superadded to them; then surely the Scriptures of *the Old Testament and the New together*, must be sufficient for that important end. Agreeable to this sentiment is another declaration of Christ formerly noticed: "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." In fact, the very description which the Scriptures give of the *last judgment*, involves a vindication of the right of private judgment, of which Popery would rob mankind. "Every one of us must give account of himself to God;" whereas, if a man is bound to believe the gospel in such manner as the Roman Church explains it, and because the Roman Church so explains it, it is the Church that is accountable for his faith, rather than the man himself. Nor has the Church any right to dictate to a man in matters of religion, unless she can make it plainly appear that she will indemnify him with regard to futurity. To this indeed, Popery pretends, but fails to make good its pretension.

2. Supposing there were need for a rule of faith, in addition to the Holy Scriptures, *where is the proof that the Roman Church is competent to furnish that rule?*

What is the Church, and what the proof of its infallibility?

Unless these questions can be satisfactorily answered, it will be impossible for any one to make out that the Church is competent to furnish an authoritative rule of faith, how much soever any should imagine such a rule to be needed. And these questions cannot be satisfactorily answered.

We are told by the members of the Roman Church that in all cases of doubt and difficulty, we should recur to the Church, and submit to her

decisions. It is important therefore to inquire who or what the Church is. Are we to understand by the Church, the Pope, the Cardinals and the Clergy, or any one of the Clergy whom we may have an opportunity of consulting? Or, are we to understand by the Church the decrees of councils in former times, or the books of religion in general use in the Roman Church, or all these things together? By the Church cannot be meant all these together, since the decrees put forth in some ages have been contradictory to those of other ages; neither can be meant by the Church all the clergy of the present day, since it will not be contended that they are all of the same mind in every thing. If by the Church be meant the books of religion in common use in the church, the question occurs, Where is the proof that those books contain truth without mixture of error? There can be no evidence of this unless it can be shown that their authors were divinely inspired; which is impossible.

In the quotation lately made from a Roman Catholic writer, it is indeed pretended that it is from that Church we receive the Bible, and that, therefore, from the same church we ought to receive the interpretation of the Bible. It is pretended that but for the authority of the Roman Church we should not know what are the genuine books of the New Testament and what are not. But the fact is that the authenticity of the books of Scripture is determined, so far as testimony goes, just in the same manner in which the authenticity of other writings is determined, *viz.* by the concurring testimony of contemporary and of succeeding writers. Among the writers who have thus borne witness in successive ages, to the authenticity of the books of the New Testament are to be reckoned many members of the Romish Church; but the testimony they gave is valuable as the attestation not of a church, but of trust-worthy individuals. And the greater number of the writers whose testimony on this subject has

most value, lived in the first three centuries of the Christian era, before the Roman Catholic Church, properly so called, existed.

Closely connected with the authority of the Church in matters of religion are *the infallibility and supremacy of the Pope*.

On the subject of his *infallibility*, indeed, Roman Catholics themselves are not agreed. The pamphlet formerly mentioned admits that the Catholic "is not obliged to admit the Popes to be infallible, this being a point never defined by the Church."

Let us dwell for a moment on the consequences to the Catholic cause which necessarily result from this admission.

1. If the Pope is not infallible, what opinion shall be formed of *the bulls or decrees* which he issues?

The stream will not be purer than the source. If the Pope may be mistaken, then certainly his decrees may be erroneous, and the whole Church may be commanded to receive as true what is false, and to practise as right what is wrong.

2. If the Popes have not been infallible, can it be imagined that the *Cardinals and Clergy* in general are *infallible*. No; it will not be contended that the inferior members of the Church possess an attribute of that distinguished character, which is not possessed by the head of the church.

What then, I ask, becomes of the boasted infallibility of the *Church*?

Whatever doctrines constitute the creed of the Roman Church, and the supposed rule of faith, in addition to the Scriptures, have been composed and agreed on by men, the most exalted of whom, Catholics themselves acknowledge to have been liable to error. Now, if *no one* of those men was free from liability to error, then they were not free from liability to error taken *collectively*, and consequently their doctrines may be erroneous, and for that very reason cannot be regarded as a sure rule: for such a

rule we must come back to the word of God, where alone we can find it.

The alleged *supremacy* of the Pope rests on no better foundation than his infallibility, though much more stoutly defended.

The doctrine of that Church on this point is that St. Peter was made head of the Church under Christ, that he was Bishop of Rome, and that the Bishops of Rome are his successors; and that therefore the Bishop of Rome for the time being is the head of the Church under Christ, and is Christ's Vicar on earth.

Now of those three suppositions on which the supremacy of the Pope rests, not one is supported by even plausible evidence.

1. St. Peter, say the Romanists, was made the head of the Church.

The text which they cite in order to establish this position is Matthew xvi. 13—19. especially these words of our Saviour: "Thou art Peter, (that is, a rock) and on this rock will I build my Church." The meaning appears to be: "Thou art called by a name which signifies rock, and agreeably to this thy name shall be thy office, for upon thee will I build my Church, by making thy preaching the laying of its foundations among the people." The Christian Church rests, in matters of doctrine, on the testimony of the apostles, of whom Peter was one of the most distinguished, and the first in order. But that no such superiority as that for which Papists contend, was conferred on Peter by these words of his master is most evident from *other texts of Scripture*, the meaning of which cannot be mistaken, and from *matter of fact*. On another occasion, Jesus said to his apostles; "One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren;" a declaration which quite forbids us to entertain the supposition that Peter was constituted the head of the apostles.

A fact is related in the epistle to the *Galatians*, which most evidently shows that Peter possessed no

supremacy. "When Peter was come to Antioch, Paul withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed," for having at one time eaten with the Gentiles, and afterwards, when certain Jews arrived, with drawing himself from the Gentiles. Now if Peter had occupied that high station among the apostles for which the Roman Church contends, Paul, who uniformly gave honour to those to whom honour was due, would not have presumed to pass on him that public censure. Indeed, Paul's having entered on the office of an apostle without Peter's knowledge, not having even seen that apostle until three years after he himself became an apostle, plainly indicates that no such authority as the Bishop of Rome now desires to exercise was vested in Peter.

The pre-eminence which Peter enjoyed was *in honour not in authority*. To him was given the key of the kingdom of heaven, that he might open the door of faith to the Gentiles. This he did, when he preached the gospel to the family and friends of Cornelius.

2. *There is no sufficient proof that Peter ever was Bishop of Rome.* The apostles were not bishops in the modern sense of the word. Their office required them to go from place to place, rather than to take the oversight of any one church or district. The Apostle Peter was for a considerable time at Jerusalem, and afterwards at Antioch. It is believed, on good authority, that he suffered martyrdom at Rome; but there is no proof that he resided there as Bishop.

3. If it were true that Peter was Bishop of Rome and also superior in office to the other apostles, still *it would be impossible to prove the continuance of that supremacy in the persons of succeeding Bishops of Rome.*

Christ indeed assured his apostles that he would be with them for ever; but not a word is found in any part of the New Testament in favour of the opinion that any one of the apostles was to have a

successor. The apostolic office began and ended in the apostolic age.

Thus futile are the grounds on which the Church of Rome has claimed the right of setting up an authority distinct from that of Christ, and a standard of truth distinct from his word. This claim is clearly a corrupt addition to the true religion, and has been the means of introducing and perpetuating many other corruptions, some of which it will now be proper to examine; and first, the doctrine of *transubstantiation, and the sacrifice of the mass.*

The members of the Roman Church are taught to believe that Christ, at the last supper, really gave his body and blood to the apostles; the substance of the bread and wine having been changed by his powerful words into his own body and blood. They also believe that the same thing takes place at every proper administration of the sacrament; that when the elements are consecrated by the Priests, those elements really contain the very body of Christ which was sacrificed, and his real blood which was shed; and that yet, notwithstanding this is done at many thousand altars, the body of Christ in heaven remains just the same. Roman Catholics are further taught to believe that to deny this doctrine, exposes to the danger of eternal pain.

This tenet is so utterly absurd that it scarcely needs to be confuted. The argument urged in its support is the *literal interpretation* of the words of Jesus, which are most clearly to be taken in a *figurative* sense. When he says, "This is the body," he means, "This represents my body, this is the emblem of my body." Of this mode of speaking there are innumerable examples. Christ, on another occasion, said, "I am the door," and at another time, "I am the true vine." It would be just as reasonable to understand these texts literally as the other. The wonder is that any human beings above the age of infancy have been found capable of entertaining so monstrous a fancy.

Roman Catholics are also taught that the Lord's Supper is not only the commemoration of a sacrifice, but is actually *the offering of a propitiatory sacrifice*, which they call *the Mass*, and by which they believe that the sacrifice of Christ becomes more efficacious than it otherwise could be in procuring for us the forgiveness of sins.

I need not tell those of you who are familiar with the scripture narratives of the institution of the Holy Supper, that the intention of it is not to offer a sacrifice, or to render more complete the sacrifice of Christ; but, by means of outward emblems to remind us of that sacrifice, to impress the important truths which are connected with it more deeply upon our hearts, and thus to assist us duly to commemorate the Saviour's death. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," and "by one offering he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified." To attempt to offer another sacrifice is to depreciate and dishonour the perfect oblation of Christ; and to put any trust in any other supposed offering, is to rest on a foundation of human device, in opposition to that foundation which God has laid in Sion.

This corrupt addition to the truth, though not so manifestly absurd as transubstantiation, is more dangerous; since that is a speculative error, while this affects Christian faith and experience on one of the most important topics of the gospel.

The Roman Catholic further believes that *our own works and sufferings are sufficient to atone, in part, for our offences*, so far as to remove or diminish the temporal punishment due on account of sin; and that the Pope has power to grant *indulgences*, or to give an assurance that, on certain conditions, certain sins shall not be followed with temporal punishment. Both these tenets are, assuredly, corrupt additions to the truth. The notion that *our sufferings or doings*, can, in any manner, atone for sin, is opposed to the great truth of the gospel, that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;"

and the notion that the Pope can absolve people from any punishment incurred by sin, is assigning to a man the power which belongs to God, since none can either forgive sins, or absolve from the punishment of sin but God only. It may be feared, moreover, that many of those who purchase indulgences, consider them to contain indemnification against the danger of eternal punishment.

The invocation of saints and the use of images are corrupt additions which Popery had made to the simplicity of Christian worship.

The subjoined quotation will show on what principles these practices are defended. "Catholics believe," says a Roman Catholic publication, "that the angels and saints in heaven pray for us their fellow-members here upon earth, and that God may be inclined to hear their requests made on our behalf; therefore we believe that it is good and profitable to invoke their intercession. Can this invocation be more injurious to Christ our Mediator than it is for one Christian to beg the prayers of another here upon earth?"

In this passage, we see that the principal argument used in defence of praying to created beings in heaven is the supposed resemblance between this practice and that of persons on earth praying for one another. But the cases are quite dissimilar.

1. It is acknowledged to be the duty of Christians on earth to pray both for themselves and others; whereas, though much is said of the inhabitants of heaven not the slightest hint is given of its being proper to pray to them, or to ask them to pray for us. There is but "one Mediator between God and man," and his intercession is so complete that it neither requires nor admits of any supplement.

2. When one Christian prays for another, he does so because he knows the condition of him for whom he prays. But how can the saints in heaven know the condition of all Christians on earth? Some knowledge of the church below the inhabitants of

heaven may have ; but *universal knowledge* is wanted in this case. Suppose, for example, a thousand Catholics in a thousand different places to be all praying to the Virgin Mary at the same moment ; how is it possible she can attend to them all ? If these thousand prayers were addressed to God, there would be no difficulty in concluding that they were all heard, since he is in every place ; if they were addressed to the Saviour, there would be no difficulty, since "all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him ;" but these thousand prayers addressed to a mere creature cannot all be successful, even if it could be supposed that one or two of them might be.

The practice of *reverencing images*, Roman Catholic divines attempt to defend by laying down several nice distinctions respecting different sorts of worship. But such distinctions are far too subtle for people in general to understand ; and multitudes of the Papal religion, it is to be apprehended, in the homage they pay to images, are guilty of a direct violation of the second commandment.

Let us now advert to the doctrine of *purgatory*. It is a part of the Roman Creed that, besides heaven and hell, there is a third place or state, called *purgatory* ; where souls departing this life who are pardoned as to eternal guilt or pain, but are chargeable with some smaller offences and liable to some temporal punishment, are purified and rendered fit for heaven ; and that these souls may be relieved by the prayers of their fellow-members upon earth, as also by alms and masses offered up to God on their behalf.

On the first of July, 1813, a society was established in Dublin, called the *Purgatorian Society* ; the object of which is the relief of souls in purgatory, by obtaining the shortening of the period of their imprisonment. The means by which this object is to be attained, are, chiefly the payment of a penny-a-week, which shall entitle the subscriber to have a kinsman in purgatory prayed for, and himself

when he shall be deceased. But it is expressly provided that a person in order to be entitled to the benefit of being prayed for after death, must have been a subscriber of six months' standing, and must have paid up all dues!

Surely if an enemy to the Roman Catholic religion had wished to render it contemptible, he could not have adopted a more effectual plan than that of recommending its members to frame and publish such a scheme.

There are three texts of Scripture which the Roman Catholics endeavour to represent as favouring the opinion of there being a middle and temporary state between heaven and hell; but these texts, when fairly interpreted, speak no such language. When our Lord (Matt. xii. 32.) declared that the sin against the Holy Spirit should not be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come, he means not to intimate that any sins not forgiven now could be forgiven hereafter; he so speaks in allusion to the error of those who maintained the certainty of the final happiness of every Jew. These persons thought that such sins of Jews as were not forgiven during life, would be forgiven at death, or at the judgment day. The Saviour, therefore, knowing that such was their opinion, and desirous of impressing on their minds a conviction of their extreme guilt and danger, does not content himself with simply declaring the sin in question to be unpardonable, but amplifies the statement in order to make it impressive to persons of their views on the subject of forgiveness. His declaration that the sin should not be forgiven, either in this world or in that which is to come, was nothing more than an emphatic declaration that it should *never be forgiven*.

In 1 Cor. iii. 15. we have those words, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

The case described is that of a man who rested

his hope on Christ, and was a real believer, but, in his way of teaching Christianity, resembled a builder who, having laid a good foundation, should place thereon unsubstantial, worthless, and combustible materials. The building being afterwards attacked by fire, every thing but the foundation is destroyed; in consequence of which the man suffers loss, though his life is not lost. So, if a man sincerely believe and teach the fundamental truths of the gospel, notwithstanding that, through ignorance, he superadd to those truths doctrines of no value, he himself is saved; but he is saved like a person who escapes through the fire. His life is preserved; but much of his property is gone. He loses that reward of grace which would have been allotted to him, had he built on the good and only foundation, gold, silver, and precious stones, instead of wood, hay, and stubble.

In the fire through which this man escapes, there is no allusion to an intermediate state between heaven and hell. It is not a fire of purification, but a fire of trial. The reference is to the scrutiny of men's characters and actions which will take place in the day of judgment.

In the first epistle of Peter iii. 19. the apostle speaks of Christ having preached to the spirits in prison; by which is meant spirits who were in prison not when Christ preached to them, but when Peter wrote respecting them.

From the Holy Scriptures nothing like proof of the existence of purgatory can be adduced. The argument derived from a passage in the apocrypha needs not to be noticed, because the book itself has with us no authority.

The uniform tenor of divine revelation is decidedly opposed to the opinion of there being such a state. This world, we are given to understand, is the only state of probation; and at death, the spirit immediately departs either to Heaven or to Hell. The righteous, when absent from the body, are, as

Paul expected to be, "present with the Lord," and are, as was promised to the malefactor on the cross, "with Jesus in Paradise," without delay. The wicked are, as Dives was, "in torments." The notion that the state may be altered after death, while it has no foundation in Scripture, is calculated to encourage men in that dilatoriness in religion to which mankind are of themselves too prone. That great pecuniary benefit to the priesthood accrues from it, cannot be questioned. But how lamentably do such gains resemble that traffic in the souls of men which the Mystical Babylon is represented in the Apocalypse as having carried on!

Such are some of the Corrupt Additions to the True Religion which are found in the Roman Church. From this survey,

Let us, first, look back with gratitude to the time when the Christian Church began to PROTEST, loudly and successfully, against such tyranny and error.

It is not pretended that the leaders of the Reformation were faultless. They were imperfect men; and had a task of no easy nature to accomplish. They were, to a considerable degree, triumphant; and the names of Wickliffe, Knox, Calvin, Luther, and many others, their illustrious associates, will be held in everlasting and grateful remembrance. Many sealed their testimony with their blood. But being dead, they yet speak. Their characters, their doctrine, and the fruit of their labours and sufferings still exist; and though we do not place images of these saints in our temples, we fondly cherish the remembrance of their heroic deeds. And we give thanks to God, who by their means rescued our forefathers and ourselves from the galling yoke of Papal Rome.

2. Let us exert our best efforts to *maintain, unimpaired, the religious freedom* which we enjoy, and to promote its spread.

I do not mean by this recommendation to encour-

rage feelings of rancour and revenge towards Roman Catholics. These are not the weapons which either become the cause of truth, or are likely to assist it. Among the members of that communion there are, doubtless, men of real piety and genuine kindness, whose personal religion is far superior to their professed creed, and who abhor the bloody deeds of their fathers. And if there are among them persons who, if opportunity offered, would renew the sanguinary scenes of former years, let us pity them, and pray for them, and teach them "a more excellent way."

The means which I would recommend as likely to be beneficial in the cause of Protestantism, that is, of Christian Liberty, are that we should ourselves *act on the great principles of the Reformation*, and that we should endeavour to *diffuse scriptural knowledge*.

1. If we wish to support the cause of the Reformation, let us endeavour to *diffuse the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*.

Ignorance is the best friend of Popery, and religious knowledge its most formidable opponent. That Church acts very consistently and prudently in forbidding the free circulation of the word of God. Let but Sabbath schools of a right sort be thickly planted in a country, the word of God freely circulated, and the gospel of Christ faithfully preached, and I should have no more fear of Popery spreading in that land than I should have of the multiplication of wolves and bears in a country filled with human beings. There are, we think, evident signs of the approach of the day when the latter part of the text shall be fulfilled. The Lord is about to consume that wicked one with the breath of his mouth, and to destroy him with the brightness of his coming. By this phraseology we understand not any individual in the Roman Church; but the system of corrupted Christianity personified. The meaning seems to be, that as darkness is dis-

pelled by the rising of the Sun, so the corruptions of the truth shall be dissipated by the lustre with which Christ shall cause the true doctrine of the gospel to shine.

2. *Let us take care to act on the principles which distinguish us as Protestants.*

I enter on delicate ground here, inasmuch as it is not possible, in consistency with truth and candour, to avoid alluding to the points at issue between the Established Church of England and Protestant Dissenters; and I have before me many much esteemed members of that communion. I trust I shall give no just cause of offence if I state my belief that the very same principles which justified the Reformers in seceding from the Roman Church, justify us in seceding from the English; those principles are, The sufficiency of the Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice, without the addition of any rule of human framing; and, The right of private judgment. But on these points it is not necessary to insist, since all liberal-minded churchmen admit their truth, and own that whoever is not satisfied with either the doctrine or discipline of the Church of England, has an undoubted right to separate from it.

But when we state our persuasion that we have as clear a right to dissent from the present religious establishment as the Reformers had to dissent from the existing establishment of those days, let it not be imagined that we wish to represent the Church of Rome and that of England as differing but little from one another. Quite the reverse. That the reformers did not purify the Church from all the abuses which had crept into it, cannot be matter of wonder to any who consider the circumstances in which they were placed. That in the Established Church of this kingdom there yet remain certain objectionable things relative both to its constitution and to its offices of devotion, is our firm conviction, and constitutes the reason why we voluntarily de-

prive ourselves of the superior honours and advantages which conformity might secure. Still we rejoice to own that the Church of England has cast off the most objectionable corruptions of the Romish Church, and has embodied in her articles, liturgy, and homilies, all the fundamental truths of the Christian Religion. And though we cannot conform to the National Church without doing injury to the peace of our minds, there is nothing in our principles to forbid a greater degree of intercourse with the members of that Church than the extreme rigour of its rules will allow them to have with any who are not within its pale.

Lastly. Let us be on our guard against that inward principle of error and wickedness whence Popery sprang.

There is in the heart of every one of us by nature "a mystery of iniquity" which will not fail to "work," according to the opportunities which the situation of each may afford. Little will it avail us to belong to a pure Church unless our hearts are purified by the Spirit of God. Let us not be satisfied, then, without possessing proof that we are born again from above. Daily implore the teaching and influence of the Holy Spirit. All the children of God, by whatever names they are distinguished, enjoy this privilege. They are taught of God, the glorious effect of which teaching is, that they come to Christ as their Saviour. "Whosoever," says Christ, "hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Such persons have "an unction from the holy one," by which all things essential are known. May it be our happiness thus to know the truth, that the truth may make us free.

LECTURE. VII.

April 11, 1824.

FALSE RELIGION, CONSISTING IN THE REJECTION OF SOME OF THE ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL.

2 JOHN 9.

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

WE enter this evening on an examination of the last of the four classes of Erroneous Systems into which it was considered that all False Religions might be distributed.

The first of those classes included the various forms of *Heathenism*, occasioned, for the most part, by *Ignorance of the Truth*.

The second class embraced *Modern Judaism*, *Mohammedanism* and *Deism*, systems which, though in many respects widely remote from each other, all agree in being directly *opposed to the Gospel*.

The third class was distinguished by *Corrupt Additions to the Truth*, under which head the *Papal Religion* occupied the most prominent place.

The fourth class includes those systems in which the truth is but *partially received*.

There are three aspects under which the Gospel may be viewed; in its connexion, namely, with doctrine, with practice, and with experience; and, consequently, there are as many ways in which the Gospel may be only partially received: some of its essential doctrines may be rejected; or, its practical

injunctions may be disregarded; or, there may be the absence of that personal attention to divine truth, without which the most orthodox creed is unavailing. Each of these three ways of receiving the truth partially will form the subject of a separate discourse, the first of them, that, namely, which relates to Doctrine, being before us this evening.

That all doctrines are not of equal importance is evident both from the nature of things and from Scripture. "Him that is weak in the Faith," saith Paul, Rom. xiv. "receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." One believeth that he may eat all things; another who, in this respect, is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth all kinds of food, despise him that eateth only of some particular kinds; nor let him that eateth only of some kinds of food, despise him that eateth of all kinds. For God hath received him. One man esteemeth one day above another, supposing that the Jewish fasts and feasts ought still to be observed; another esteemeth every day alike, believing the Jewish fasts and feasts to be no longer obligatory. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Let every man freely enjoy his own sentiment, and go on in his own way without impediment or censure. Let people who differ in judgment and practice in such matters still treat one another as Christians and associate with one another as Christians, just as amicably as if there subsisted among them the most perfect uniformity of sentiment. God hath received both parties, and therefore let both parties mutually receive one another.

The candid and catholic principles which the Apostle Paul has thus laid down in reference to *two variations of Christian practice* in his days, is doubtless applicable to *all such differences* among Christians in our day *as occupy the same low place* in the scale of importance. One man believes that the Episcopal mode of Church government is the

best, another prefers the Presbyterian, and a third the Congregational. One man believes that the only proper subjects of Baptism are adults, and that the only proper mode of administering the rite is by the submersion of the whole body; another believes that it is proper to administer baptism to infants, and that the application of water by affusion is preferable to the former mode; while a third is inclined to the opinion that baptism should not now be practised at all. On these points and on many others, let every one freely enjoy his own sentiment. These things enter not into the essence of religion, they affect not a man's state before God, and they ought not to keep Christians aloof from one another.

But while we contend that the Gospel has its *circumstantials*, we also believe that it has its *essentials*, without which it cannot deserve the name of True Religion.

The Apostle John takes this view of the matter in the text and context. He says that many deceivers were gone out into the world, who confessed not that Jesus Christ was come into the flesh. They affirmed that Jesus Christ had *apparently* come into the world, and had *apparently* suffered death, but that these things had not actually taken place. They affirmed that Christ was not a real man, but a man only in appearance, and, consequently, that he neither did nor suffered what he seemed to do and suffer. Now as this doctrine overturned the whole scheme of the gospel, and completely annihilated the atonement of Christ, converting the Gospel into a dream or illusion, the Apostle John did not scruple to pronounce it Antichristian, declaring that the men who held such a sentiment *had not God*; they possessed not the favour of God, since no one could come to the Father but by that very Saviour whose actual existence the people in question denied. He and he alone who abideth in the doctrine of Christ, hath both the Father and the Son. More-

over, the Apostle not only warned his friends against the error described, but exhorted them not to receive the propagators of it into their houses, nor to wish them success. He did not mean to forbid the exercise of kindness towards people in distress, whatever their errors and faults might be ; but he forbade believers to recognize such men as *Christian teachers*, since by so doing they would become partakers of their evil deeds.

And as in the case of the rule lately cited in reference to *the exercise of candour*, so in this laid down by John with regard to *the boundaries of candour*, it is our duty not merely to regard the particular instance adduced, but to consider whether there be not other instances to which the rule not only may but must be applied. The question now to be considered therefore is, *whether there may not be other errors equally subversive of the Christian scheme* with that particular error which John has specified. We shall be assisted in the determination of this important inquiry by adverting to the *reason* of the error in question being so pointedly condemned, namely, *its being destructive of the foundation of a sinner's hope*. The case is this: Man is guilty and corrupt. God has in great compassion devised a way for his obtaining pardon and purity. Christ is that way. He who believes in Christ receives the pardon of his sins, and is divinely assisted to do the will of God. But as both the grace that pardons and the grace that purifies are inseparably connected with faith in Christ, he who is destitute of faith is destitute of those blessings. He neither possesses the favour of God, nor does he acceptably perform the will of God. The man who denied that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh, denied the great object of faith ; and not having faith, had not salvation.

On this principle we contend that whatever error affects the ground of our hope, is to be regarded as a fundamental error ; and that system in which

such doctrine is found, is to be considered as anti-christian.

For let it be recollected that *faith* takes its character and derives its whole value from the *object* towards which it is directed. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life;" but faith supposes knowledge. The faith which ensures everlasting life is a personal trust in a known Saviour. The men whose sentiments John condemned, admitted, in a certain sense, that there was a Christ; but the sense in which they admitted the truth was so opposite to the fact, as to render their faith null and void. So in modern times, there are those who admit, in a certain sense, that Jesus is the Son of God; but that sense comes so far short of the scripture testimony concerning him, that their faith is not in a real but in an imaginary Christ; and the object of their faith being unreal, their faith and the consequences of their faith, must be of the same character. Although, therefore, such persons may fully allow that Christianity is of divine origin, and be by this admission distinguished from the avowed enemies of the gospel, yet if they reject any of those doctrines which constitute the very essence of Christianity, we are obliged to consider their faith as coming under the denomination of a false religion.

In this stage of the argument it will be expected that I should state what I suppose to be those *fundamental doctrines* of the gospel, the omission of which in a system, constitutes that system a false religion. I venture to offer the following statement, in which I am happy to think that I have the sanction of a great majority of the members of the Church of Christ of various names.

In giving such a statement, every one would adopt and should adopt his own phraseology, not requiring his brethren to subscribe to very words in which he thinks proper to express his views; while, at the same time, there is reason to think, from what we know of Christian Society, that if a

large number of believers in different parts of the world were requested each to give an outline of what each considers to be fundamental truth, there would be seen but little difference of sentiment, though the arrangement and the mode of expression would be as various as the individuals are numerous. The existence and perfections of God, and the reality of the revelation he has given, important as these tenets are, need not now be separately discussed, since they are necessarily implied in the sentiments about to be named.

The essential doctrines of Christianity have respect, we conceive, to the following topics :

The nature of the work of redemption which Christ has accomplished ;

The qualifications which he possessed for the accomplishment of that work ;

The necessity there was for such a work being accomplished ; and

The means by which man becomes possessed of the blessings resulting therefrom.

My main object now is not to establish these points ; that will be attempted in several lectures towards the end of the series. I am now to show the essential importance of such doctrines, and thence to deduce the falsehood of that system of religion in which they have no place. Meanwhile, some proofs of the truth of the doctrines in question will of course be exhibited.

- I. Among the essential doctrines of the gospel we place that which sets forth *the work of redemption which Christ has accomplished.*

All persons bearing the Christian name are accustomed to call the Messiah, Saviour and Redeemer. It is important, therefore, to know why he bears these titles ; what it is that he has done on behalf of man.

Here it is on all hands agreed that Jesus Christ has benefited mankind, by the pure and beneficent

doctrines which he taught, which doctrines he confirmed and illustrated by his own example. All allow that never man spake like this man, and that never man acted like this man. As long as he lived on earth, he went about doing good, and taught by his example even in his last and most acute sufferings and in his death; manifesting the most perfect resignation to his heavenly father's will, unabated kindness to his friends, and compassion for his very murderers.

None can tell the extent of obligation, which, on the score of good morals, the human race owe to Jesus Christ, both for the precepts and for the pattern which he has bequeathed.

Christ, moreover, rose from the dead, thereby giving to his people the pledge and exemplar of their resurrection.

Christ has, also, by his coming, freed the Jews from obligation to observe the Mosaic ritual, and has been the means of delivering Heathen nations from Idolatry, and of putting them in possession of the privileges of the Church of God.

At this point some persons stop. The above-mentioned particulars, comprise, they think, the whole of the work of redemption, and are the things which give to Jesus the names of Saviour and Redeemer.

If it be asked, what meaning is attached to the numerous texts of Holy Writ which speak of Christ as having "given his life a ransom for many," and as having "died the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," the answer shall be given in the words of one of the most celebrated of the modern defenders of the system in question.

"The Jews," says Mr. Belsham, "having been chosen by God to peculiar privileges, entertained a very high notion of their own dignity, and expressed themselves in most contemptuous language of the idolatrous Gentiles, who were not in covenant with Jehovah. Of themselves, they spoke as a chosen and a holy nation, sons of God, and heirs of the

promises. But the Heathens were represented as sinners, as aliens, as enemies to God, and the like. In allusion to which forms of expression, the converted Gentiles being entitled, equally with converted Jews, to the blessings of the New Dispensation, they are therefore said to be forgiven, reconciled, and saved, to be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

"The death of Jesus," he goes on to observe, "is sometimes called a propitiation, because it put an end to the Mosaic economy, and introduced a new and more liberal dispensation; under which the Gentiles, who were before regarded as enemies, are admitted into a state of amity and reconciliation, that is, into a state of privilege similar to that of the Jews. It is also occasionally called a sacrifice, being the ratification of that new covenant into which God is pleased to enter with his human offspring, by which a resurrection to immortal life and happiness is promised, without distinction, to all who are truly virtuous. Believers in Christ are also said to have redemption through his blood, because they are released by the Christian covenant from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and from the bondage of idolatry."

Let us examine this creed respecting Redemption, distinguishing what is stated therein respecting the Jews, what respecting the Gentiles, and what respecting both Jews and Gentiles.

1. It intimates that the Jews are freed from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and that therefore they are said to have redemption through the blood of Christ.

2. It intimates that the Gentiles are freed from the yoke of idolatry, and that on this account they are said to have redemption through the blood of Christ. It also represents the Gentiles as admitted into the enjoyment of the same privileges with Jews, on account of which they are said in Scripture to be forgiven, reconciled and saved.

3. In the gospel a resurrection to immortal life

and happiness is promised without distinction to all who are truly virtuous; and the death of Christ is called a propitiation, because it put an end to the Mosaic, and introduced this new and more liberal dispensation.

Having given this analysis of the creed, that you may have a distinct notion of its contents, I proceed to make a few observations respecting it. Some of its statements are unobjectionable; but in many other particulars it is chargeable, I conceive, with a gross abuse of language, is completely at variance with the testimony of Scripture, and is altogether subversive of the foundation of the hope of guilty beings.

1. The creed which I have quoted *is chargeable with a gross abuse of language.*

In order to substantiate this accusation it is sufficient to refer you to the meaning it attaches to the term *forgiveness*. Most people think that there cannot be forgiveness unless there is something to be forgiven, and that forgiveness always presupposes a fault or sin. The learned writer whose words I have cited thinks otherwise. He considers that people may be said to be forgiven even with regard to things which did not require forgiveness. For instance, he does not imagine that the Gentiles were chargeable with sin for not being allowed to enjoy Jewish privileges, and yet he does imagine that the Gentiles are said to have been forgiven on account of there being afterwards put in possession of those privileges. What is this, I ask, but to declare that people may be forgiven with regard to things, which, not being connected with blame, did not require or ever allow of forgiveness? The case may be thus illustrated: Suppose a Sovereign to reign over two distinct nations, one of which enjoys many privileges which the other has not. Suppose that at a given time the Sovereign should grant unto the inferior nation the same privileges which before had been restricted to the other; and that an historian of the transaction should describe it by

stating that at such a time the inferior nation was *forgiven*. Would not every reader suppose there had been some fault, some rebellion, some transgression? Would any one imagine that such an expression was used merely to denote the grant of privileges without any reference to offences? Certainly not; and the historian who should make such a use of words would be considered, to say the least, a most inaccurate writer.

Nor will it avail any thing to remark that in Scripture there is a very abundant use of metaphorical terms. It is granted; but forgiveness is not of that number; and for this very reason I have chosen to animadvert upon it. Forgiveness is a plain English word, not at all figurative, a word which every child understands. I should not have thought it desirable to dwell so long on this point, if this were the only example of such an abuse of language observable in the system in question. But the fact is that the perversion of the plain and obvious meaning of words is essential to that system, and runs through the whole of it. Let the instance adduced serve as a specimen.

2. The view of redemption now under examination is *completely at variance with the testimony of Scripture*.

“Believers in Christ,” says the writer just quoted, “are said to have redemption through his blood, because they are released by the Christian Covenant from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and from the bondage of idolatry.”

That this writer and the Apostle Paul are directly opposed to each other on this point will be made obvious by reading the whole of the text in the Epistle to the Ephesians, part of which is quoted in the above sentence. “He hath made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have *redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins*, according to the riches of his grace.”

With persons who cannot see the death of

Christ represented in that text as the medium through which the pardon of sin comes to man, it would appear to be a hopeless task to argue on the ground of Scripture testimony.

3. The view of redemption which we are now considering *is subversive of the foundation of the hope of guilty man.*

Having taken away the atonement of Christ, what do they propose to substitute in its place?

“In the gospel,” say they, “a resurrection to immortal life and happiness is promised to the truly virtuous.” Aye, but who are the truly virtuous? Virtue consists in conformity to the will of God, as made known in his commands, which commands require that we should love him with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. Now the word of God declares, and the conscience of every one who has any just knowledge of himself confirms the declaration with regard to his own case, that “there is none righteous, no, not one,” and that therefore “by the works of the law no flesh living can be justified.” To tell a man whose conscience is burdened with a sense of guilt, as every one’s conscience ought to be until relieved by a hope in the divine mercy,—to tell such a man that a resurrection to immortal life and happiness is promised to the *truly virtuous*, is saying nothing. “Be it so;” he would reply, “I am not truly virtuous: I have by no means fully and constantly obeyed the holy will of God; and I ask, therefore, What I must do to be saved?” And, happily for mankind, although the system which leaves out the atonement of Christ cannot answer the question, the Gospel can give the seasonable and reviving reply, “Behold the Lamb of God: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

II. Among the essential doctrines of Christianity, we include those which have respect to *the Qua-*

tifications which the Messiah possessed for accomplishing the work of Redemption.

Under the former head of discourse, a leading circumstance in the work of redemption was contemplated, namely, Christ's dying, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." It was necessary, however, that Christ, previously to his dying on behalf of man, should live a life of perfect obedience to the will of God, since that obedience of Christ, by which many are constituted righteous, regarded the whole of his heavenly Father's will, including what was to be done, and what was to be suffered.

With this view of the *nature* of the work of redemption, agrees the Scripture testimony concerning the *Qualifications* of the Saviour for its accomplishment.

1. It was necessary that the Saviour should be *Man*.

Obedience to the law of God makes part of the plan by which Christ was to benefit man; and suffering the penalty of the law constitutes another part; and it is evident that God, as God, cannot be subject to a law which was enjoined on man; neither can God, as God, be subject to suffering and death. Besides, as the scheme of redemption requires that the Redeemer should obey the law and suffer its penalty *as the representative of man*, it is evidently fit that the Redeemer should be of the same nature with man. Between angels and mankind there is not sufficient affinity to render it proper that an angel should become the representative of man, even if in other respects he were qualified for the office. These considerations show that it is fit that the Messiah should be a *man*. Yet, in one important respect, the Saviour must differ from all other men. All other men are sinful. They have, by birth, a nature prone to evil, and this proneness to evil shows itself in every human being, by actual

transgressions. Whereas, he who becomes the surety of man, must be himself perfectly free from sin. But,

2. The Messiah must possess a nature superior to man, a nature truly and properly *divine*. It is requisite that he, by his mediation, should honour the divine government in a degree sufficient fully to compensate the dishonour done to it by man's transgression. No obedience or sufferings of a mere man could effect this object; no, nor the sufferings of the most exalted creature whom God has formed. The people to be benefited by the death of Christ consist of innumerable millions, and consequently, if the interposition of any one being can effect their deliverance from deserved destruction, that one being must possess a degree of dignity and importance in relation to the Government of God at least equal to the importance of all those millions collectively considered. Such a being must occupy a rank higher than the highest in the scale of things created; he must possess the dignity of the Creator himself.

These two qualifications, we rejoice to be assured, meet in the person of him who bears the consolatory title, "The Saviour of the world." He who was "in the beginning with God and was God, became flesh and dwelt among us."

It was remarked before, that although our main object this evening is not so much to establish the truth of the doctrines referred to, as to evince the falsehood of the system which excludes them, yet that *some proof* of those doctrines would be adduced. In this part of the subject I am not aware that I could adopt any plan at once so edifying and so gratifying to those who love the truth as to give an *epitome of the Scripture testimony* respecting both the human and the divine nature of the Messiah, in the words of Dr. J. P. Smith, in his invaluable treatise on this important subject. The passage which I am about to read is the summing up of the

evidence previously adduced and examined. That the quotation may have its due weight, I wish it to be distinctly understood, that every clause in it relates to Christ, and that its author is not an empty declaimer, accustomed to use a multiplicity of words without any definite meaning; but that, on the contrary, every sentiment is supported by express evidence from the word of God, and every text of Scripture from which that evidence has been derived has been examined according to the most approved principles of sound criticism. The texts themselves are not now given, for want of time, as they amount in number to more than two hundred, but the most important of them will be introduced into the XVIIth Lecture. Those of you, however, who are familiar with the Scriptures will recollect many of them while the truths they contain are brought before you. And probably some Christians who are well established in the truth, are not fully aware of the overwhelming mass of evidence which the Scriptures give to the Deity of Christ.

“ The inspired writings have given us the history of a wondrous individual, the descendant of Adam, and Abraham, and David, the Son of Mary, who was born in a manner contrary to the ordinary course of nature, and whose character, conduct, and fortunes, with their effects through all succeeding time, have been the most remarkable that have ever engaged the attention of mankind.

“ His mind exhibited, beyond all parallel among mortals, the union of meekness and majesty. All his dispositions were the most lovely yet dignified. His whole moral character was the perfection of unalloyed and absolute goodness.

“ Yet his lot was poverty, contempt, and sorrow. Besides all outward distress, he was evidently the victim of some mysterious and inward cause of grief, the most agonizing and unparalleled. For these his sufferings there were reasons and motives

founded in consummate wisdom and the most generous philanthropy; and there were designs which reached forth to all the nations of mankind, to all times, and to the vast comprehension of the eternal world.

“The effects of his life and actions, and of his sufferings and death, can be measured only by the extent and duration of the supreme good. Of that good, he is the Teacher, Possessor, and Giver. Having triumphed over all the malignity of sin, and all the power of pain, he holds the empire of life and happiness, and is the Author of Eternal Salvation to all that obey him.

“With the declaration of these high powers and prerogatives, we find incidental intimations and direct assertions of his possessing another condition of being, superior to that in which he appeared among mortals, pre-existent, heavenly, and divine.

“In a sense peculiar to himself, he is the Son of God. His nature is perfectly known only to God his Father. He existed, and acted, before his human birth, before his earthly ancestors, before the world was brought into existence.

“Intrinsic worth and personal dignity are attributed to him, of such a kind and in such a degree as are not compatible with the idea of dependent nature. He possesses the peculiar excellencies of nature and attributes, which constitute the specific glory of the Deity. He is one with the Father, in will, design, operation, and even existence.

“To him are attributed those powers and properties which are most distinctive of the Divine Essence, and of which a created nature is necessarily incapable. A knowledge of the counsels and will of the Deity, not derived by communication, but original, natural, and intuitive; the possession of natural and essential life; the possession of the whole assemblage of holy beings as his own pecu-

liar property; absolute and infinite power; supremacy over the created universe; providential dominion and agency; unsearchableness; omnipresence; omniscience; parity in power with the Almighty Father; unchangeableness; eternity; absolute perfection; existence as one Being with the Deity.

“To him divine works are ascribed. The creation of all dependent nature, generally; and particularly, the being and well-being of the intelligent and holy universe; the bestowment of life, and the resuscitation from the state of death; the pardon of sin; the recovery of men from the extreme of moral ruin; the conferring of all spiritual and eternal blessings, the greatest possible enjoyment, the supreme good; the veiling of his own proper glory and the resuming of its manifestation; the relinquishment and resumption of his human life; the bestowment of divine influences, both ordinary and miraculous; the inspiration of the ancient prophets; the qualifications, mission, miracles, and success of the Apostles; the diffusion and efficacy of the gospel; the conduct of providential dispensations, in all the events of the present state, with regard both to the Church and individuals; the irresistible destruction of the Antichristian power; the protection and deliverance of his servants, in all their duties and difficulties, and from every possible danger and evil; a perfect intuition, control, and dominion over the minds and passions, the secret springs of action, and the whole conduct of men; the conservation of the universe; the resurrection of the whole human race; the adjudication of the eternal rewards of happiness to the righteous, and of just perdition to the ungodly; and the immediate communication of the pure and never-fading happiness of the heavenly state.

“To him are attributed the honours which are compatible with the Divine Being necessarily and exclusively. Legislative authority in matters of

moral obedience; to be the object of the unmeasured exercise of the devotional affections, of the most reverential homage, of religious obedience; and proper religious worship; and the same dignity is ascribed to his names as, in the usual style of Scripture, is ascribed to that of the Infinite Jehovah.

“He is not only designated by appellations which are peculiar to himself, and which convey the most exalted ideas of dignity, such as Son of God in a sense peculiar to himself, Image of God, Brightness of the divine Glory, Express Image of the divine Essence, and Sovereign of the whole Creation; but he is also denominated by those names and titles which are the most distinctive of the Divine Nature. The Most High; the Lord God; the true God; the only Sovereign and Lord; our God and Saviour; the God who is over all, blessed for ever.”

To oppose to such testimonies as these the texts of Scripture which represent Christ as a man, is absurd. That Christ was a man is not matter of debate. The point in dispute is whether he be not God as well as man; and we contend that the passages of Scripture which declare this to be the fact (the substance of which has just been given) are so numerous and plain, that belief in the Deity of Christ, and belief in the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures must go together; and so, in truth, they do; for the persons who deny the Deity of Christ, though they admit, in a sense, that the Scriptures are the word of God, make the admission subject to such qualifications and deductions, as are wholly incompatible with an authoritative rule of faith.

III. The essential doctrines of religion have respect to *the necessity there was for a work of redemption*, such as that which the Scriptures represent the Messiah to have effected.

If man be not an apostate creature, or if his sins be but few and trivial; or, if the principles of the divine government permit transgression to pass with but slight notice; then surely the plan of redemption by Christ was unnecessary. But if, on the contrary, man be very far gone from original righteousness; if his offences are many and heinous, and the principles of the divine government require that man's transgression should be followed by such marks of the displeasure of God as to give to the universe of intelligent beings a high opinion of the holiness of the divine character, of the justice of the divine government, of the utter hatefulness of sin, and of the excellence of well-doing; then certainly there will appear to be a necessity for such a method of salvation as the gospel reveals. If, indeed, it had been deemed proper that man should suffer the due reward of his deeds, then there had been no room for the interposition of a Redeemer. But if God, in his compassion, determine to rescue man from the consequences of his sin, then there appears a necessity for such an interposition, in order that, while his mercy is granted, his justice may not be tarnished; in order that, while the happiness of man is consulted, the happiness of all other rational beings may not be overlooked; whose happiness is inseparably joined with the cause of law, order, and good government.

Hence the connexion between the doctrine of human depravity and the atonement of Christ. The connexion is precisely that which subsists between danger and salvation, between hunger and food, between sickness and cure.

To deny the fact, therefore, that man is a fallen creature, chargeable with much guilt, or to extenuate the fact by representing his virtues as almost counterbalancing his crimes, is to deny a fundamental though humbling truth of religion; since it is the same thing as to say that the work of redemption was not necessary, man being not so guilty as to require it.

IV. Among the essentials of religion we include the doctrines which regard *the means of man's obtaining a personal interest in the blessings of redemption.*

A man is not saved, as matter of course, because there is a Saviour, nor because he does not dispute the fact of their being a Saviour, nor because he does not call in question the scripture testimony respecting the work which Christ has accomplished, and the qualifications which he possessed for its performance. There must be a *Personal Trust in Christ*, arising from the conviction of our need of salvation and from the knowledge of Christ as a Saviour adapted to our necessities. Our trust in him must not only be *real*, as distinguished from a mere assent to the facts related of Christ, as matters of authentic history, but not of personal importance to us, (of which nominal religion more will be said in the IXth Lecture,) but our dependence on Christ must be *entire*, in opposition to a confidence partly placed in him, and partly in our own goodness, our alms-giving, our repentance, or resolutions of amendment. The faith which is connected with salvation is a cordial assent to the words of Peter respecting Christ, that "there is salvation in no other, there being no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." The man in whose mind this faith has place also imitates the conduct of Paul, as described in the epistle to the Philippians. Whatever may be the endowments and possessions, moral or intellectual, temporal or spiritual, imaginary or real, on which he once valued himself; what things were gain to him, those he now counts loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, he counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, for whom he has suffered the loss of all things which stood in the way of his gaining Christ and being found in him, and having, not his own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.

He who thus believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life.

But in the means by which man obtains a part in the blessings of redemption, we reckon not only the faith which lays hold on Christ, and therefore on salvation, but also *that Divine influence* which produces and maintains faith in the mind.

So lamentable is the blindness of the human mind and the hardness of the human heart, that man has no just apprehension of his danger, and no adequate acquaintance with the provision made for his recovery, till "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." In the economy of redemption, this divine influence is communicated by the agency of the Holy Spirit, and is granted not merely at the commencement, but throughout every stage of the progress, to the very close of the Christian life. Hence believers are said not only to be "born of the Spirit," but "to live in the Spirit." Paul, writing to such persons, says, "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."

The holy influence of the Spirit, moreover, is imparted in proportion as it is desired and sought. "Your heavenly Father," said Jesus, "giveth his Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

Now, since the whole of the application to individuals of the benefits of redemption is effected by this sacred agency, we cannot but conclude that it ought to have a place assigned to it among the truths which constitute the very essence of Christianity, and that any system which excludes this agency is radically defective and false.

I am not accustomed to introduce into public discourses the names of the different parties in the professed Church of Christ, partly because I conceive it to be injurious to the cause of truth that persons should enlist themselves under the banners of

uninspired men, and partly because it is difficult to determine what names the several parties ought to bear, since the names they give to themselves are too complimentary, and the names which others give them are considered by the parties themselves to be unfair. On this occasion, however, it seems proper that I should deviate from my usual practice, and briefly point out the reference which the subject of the present Lecture bears to those denominations of professing Christians which exclude from their creed all or any of the doctrines we have been contemplating.

The adherents of *one* of the creeds which I have in view are *without a distinctive appellation*. They do not form a separate body, but are found incorporated with various Societies. The system in question is sometimes called *Pharisaism*, and its adherents are denominated *Legalists*; a term, however, which is not unfrequently though very unjustly applied to persons of very opposite views. The non-descript party of which I speak, consists of persons who, admitting the deity and atonement of the Saviour, rest their hope in part only upon him; thinking that Baptism did much towards their salvation; that their abstaining from gross sins, their sorrow for the sins they have committed, their performance of religious duties, and their charitable deeds, go a great way farther towards their justification in the sight of God; and that the design of the death of Christ was to make up the small deficiency with which possibly they may, after all, be chargeable. Most persons of this description have also views so exalted of the moral ability of man as to induce them to believe that the operations of the Holy Spirit are not now necessary.

Now since the apostle Paul, writing to the Church in Galatia, denominated the system of those who represented the observance of Jewish rites as contributing to justification equally with faith in Christ, "another gospel, and yet not another," not being worthy the name of gospel at all, I conceive we are

fully warranted to class the system in question among false religions; for between the system which Paul disowned and that which we last examined there is a very close affinity.

You are aware, however, that there are some other denominations in the Christian world, to which the present subject directly applies, particularly *the Arian*, and *the Socinian*, or *Unitarian*.

The former deny the Deity of Christ, but admit his atonement; the latter deny both his deity and atonement. Although we regard Socinians to be further removed from the truth than Arians, we cannot but consider the former to be the more consistent party of the two, as to their creed; since, if the divine dignity of the Redeemer be destroyed, the value of his atonement is lost. Hence, it is not surprising that many who set out with denying the deity of Christ, afterwards proceeded to give up the propitiatory sacrifice which he offered. They who refuse to admit the deity of Christ are not all of one mind with respect to his person. Some approach much nearer to what we deem the scriptural account of this important subject. It is no part of my plan to enter on nice metaphysical disquisitions. I content myself with delineating the prominent features both of truth and of error.

I need not give a statement of the opinions of the followers of Baron Swedenborg. Many of the follies by which they are distinguished are unconnected with essential doctrines. It may be sufficient to remark, for the sake of those who are wholly unacquainted with their creed, that although with regard to the deity of Christ, they are directly opposed to Unitarianism, yet in their denial of the atonement, they agree with that system. Believing, as we do, that the atonement is a fundamental truth of the gospel, we must consider every creed essentially defective in which it is not found.

Of the systems purporting to be Christianity, which have been just specified, *Socinianism* claims

our most particular attention, while some of the remarks about to be offered will also apply to the Arian scheme. Allow me here to call to your recollection the criterion of truth which I ventured to offer in the Introductory Lecture, in which it was proposed to bring different systems of Religion to the test of facts, and to approve or condemn them as they should or should not be found to stand this trial. The religions of which an outline has been on former occasions submitted to your view, are acknowledged to be so totally unsupported by proof that it was not necessary to make a formal use of the criterion proposed. It may be expedient on the present occasion to adopt a more particular course of procedure.

The first of the facts specified was that *man is an intelligent being*; and it was observed that a true system of religion may be expected to be adapted to man in this respect. On this point let it be allowed that nothing decisive can be affirmed either for or against the system in question. Its supporters indeed speak in very boastful terms of the superiority of their scheme of Christianity, with regard to rationality, above all others. But their "glorying is not good." The system which we embrace does contain truths, we most readily acknowledge, which are difficult of comprehension, and from which Unitarianism is free; but we contend that such is the peculiar nature of those doctrines, and so overpowering the evidence by which they are established, that difficult of comprehension though they be, it is far more consistent with reason to believe than to reject them. If it be reasonable to submit to evidence, the man who denies the deity and atonement of Christ can exhibit but very slender claims to the honour of being called a rational Christian.

If then it should be allowed that from the fact of man's being an intelligent creature, nothing can be gathered decisively subversive of the Unitarian

scheme; it may be safely affirmed that from this source nothing can be derived confirmatory of that scheme.

The second fact stated, was that *man is a corrupt and guilty creature*; and it was remarked that any system of religion which should overlook this fact, and treat man as if he were a sinless being, making no provision for the relief of those wants and necessities which a knowledge of his real character makes him to feel, might be suspected as untrue.

Here it is that we see the difference between the Evangelical and the Unitarian schemes. The gospel does fully recognise the fact of man's sinfulness, and exhibits blessings adapted to his fallen condition. Unitarianism admits but slightly and partially the fact itself that man is guilty, and proposes no adequate remedy for his spiritual maladies. The gospel offers eternal life to the guilty who feel and lament their sin and put their trust in him who died to save them. Unitarianism offers eternal life to those who do their duty; a character which belongs not to any human being.

It was also regarded as an undeniable fact that *evil doing is the source of much inconvenience and pain*, and that, consequently, whatever system should have a manifest tendency to *improve the human character*, and thereby to increase the happiness of man, would exhibit the marks of truth.

Here again let the Gospel and Unitarianism be compared with one another.

Thousands of the most abandoned creatures have been converted by means of the Gospel into holy and useful men. Are these moral victories found in the records of Unitarianism? I do not deny that many individuals of estimable moral character are among the professors of that creed; but I ask, is it a common thing for an immoral man to be made moral by the adoption of that creed? Among all denominations of Christians who admit the corruption and guilt of man, the deity and atonement

of Christ, and the reality and necessity of the influence of the Holy Spirit, such transformations of character are numerous; among Unitarians they are extremely rare if not altogether unknown. On this topic, Mr. Fuller's unanswerable treatise deserves an attentive perusal.

Lastly, it was stated to be a fact that *man is prone to neglect that regard to God in which the essence of religion consists*; and it was observed that whatever system is found to be most effectual in bringing mankind actually to yield that homage to God which is his due, may be presumed to be true. Is it usual to find among Unitarians a high degree of piety? Is it not a fact that the greater number of persons of that persuasion make serious religion the object of their scorn? Dr. Priestley, Mrs. Barbauld, and Mr. Belsham have allowed, in their publications, that there is an apparent want of serious piety among their friends; and Dr. Carpenter, one of the most respectable ministers in that denomination, has been very lately ridiculed by a writer in a Unitarian Magazine for avowing his belief that God gives blessings in answer to prayer. So much for Unitarian piety. In a word, we most fully agree with those writers who consider Unitarianism to be more allied to Deism than to Christianity. That this is not a libel on the system will appear in the following very remarkable words of the late Dr. Priestley, one of the most zealous promoters of Socinianism in modern times. Speaking of President Jefferson, of America, who had declared himself to be a Deist, and had rejected every notion of supernatural revelation, Dr. Priestley observes, "Mr. Jefferson is generally considered as an unbeliever; if so, however, he cannot be far from us, and I hope in the way to be; not only almost but altogether what we are."

If I were asked whether I consider the salvation of every one who entertains the sentiments which I have been confuting, impossible, I would answer, that my business is rather with things than with per-

sons, with systems rather than with individuals. Believing, as I do, that the word of God represents the belief of certain truths to be essential to real religion, I must consider the condition of those who reject such truths to be dangerous. But to assign to *individuals* their final doom is altogether out of my province. He alone who searches the heart knows the degree of guilt which attaches, either to the commission of bad actions, or to the maintaining of false doctrines; since the amount of guilt in cases which to human observation are exactly alike, may be in reality very different on account of circumstances not obvious to any eye except to that of the Omniscient. "To his own master every one standeth or falleth."

Meanwhile, let us rejoice that there is comparatively *so small a portion of fundamental error* in the Christian world. How insignificant do the greater number of the points of difference observable among Christians appear, when placed by the side of such variations as those which I have now noticed. With regard to all others, we can say, "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." And though we cannot associate with the parties in question as Christians, we are wholly unconscious of any angry feelings towards them; nor have we any reason to suppose that they cherish such feelings towards us. Both on their principles and on ours such emotions are forbidden. The preceptive part of the New Testament we hold in common, wherein we learn to treat all men as brethren, and, as we have opportunity, to do good to all men.

LECTURE VIII.

April 25, 1824.

ERRONEOUS SYSTEMS WHICH ARE MARKED BY
DISREGARD TO THE PRACTICAL PART OF
RELIGION.

JAMES ii. 17.

Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

THOSE errors which it is our present business to detect and confute, are summarily expressed by the term *Antinomian*, a word which signifies "against the law." Mr. Toplady, whom none suspect of having verged towards the opposite extreme in doctrine, thus defines and exposes the system which that term designates: "By Antinomianism," says he, "I mean that doctrine which teaches, that believers are released from all obligation to observe the moral law, as a rule of external obedience; that in consequence of Christ's having wrought out a justifying righteousness for us, we have nothing to do but to sit down, 'eat, drink, and be merry;' that the Messiah's merits supersede the necessity of personal, inherent sanctification; and that all our holiness is in him, not in ourselves; that the aboundings of divine grace give sanction to the commission of sin; and in a word, that the whole preceptive law of God is repealed and set aside, from the time we believe in Christ."

"This," observes Mr. Toplady, "is as contrary to sound doctrine, as it is to sound morals: and a man need only act up to these principles to be a devil incarnate. It is impossible that either the Son of God, who came down from heaven, to perform and make known his Father's will, or that the

Spirit of God, speaking in the Scriptures, and acting upon the heart, should administer the least encouragement to negligence and unholiness of life. Therefore, that opinion which supposes personal sanctification to be unnecessary to final glorification, stands in direct opposition to every dictate of reason, and to every declaration of Scripture."

It is gratifying to know that the opinion expressed by Mr. Toplady in the above paragraph, is in unison with the sentiments of the majority of those who profess the faith of Christ, among all the various denominations of the Christian Church, with one exception.

It is the peculiar happiness both of ministers and of private Christians in this part of the kingdom, that the errors in question are but little known among us. Here and there, however, individuals are found who incline to Antinomian sentiments, though they may not fully adopt them. It is proper, therefore, that Christians in general, and young converts in particular, should be put on their guard.

Besides this, it is to be observed that pharisaical persons, who rest their hopes of heaven on their good deeds, are very ready to imagine that to disregard the practical part of religion is an inevitable consequence of trusting in Christ alone for salvation. It is right, therefore, that the faith of the gospel should be vindicated from this calumnious aspersion.

ANTINOMIANISM is of two kinds, THEORETICAL and PRACTICAL. *Theoretical* Antinomianism consists in believing that certain persons may act in a manner contrary to the law of God, without danger or blame. *Practical* Antinomianism is the reducing of such principles to practice.

We shall first consider the last-mentioned kind of False Religion, namely, PRACTICAL ANTINOMIANISM.

It is to this that the Apostle James refers in the text. His censure is more immediately addressed to those who refused to give assistance to their needy and perishing brethren: "What doth it profit," he asks, "though a man say he hath faith, and hath not works; can faith save him?" (Such a faith as is unproductive of good works?) "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, 'Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled,' notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

Indiscriminate charity to every applicant is not required; but the words quoted plainly teach not only that it is the duty of Christians to relieve their necessitous brethren; but that the neglect of this duty is inconsistent with personal religion. True faith will save the soul; but the faith which is genuine is always operative; and where the fruits of faith are wanting, the chief of which is love, proof of the genuineness of faith is wanting also.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this," (that is, where pure and undefiled religion exists in the heart, this is the uniform effect of it in the life,) "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

The Apostle James notices, in other parts of his letter, various other transgressions of the holy law of God.

"If any man among you," saith he, "seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart," (namely, by supposing that if he avoid gross sins in conduct, it is not of much consequence what *words* he uses,) "this man's religion is vain."

"Hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons;" so as to give undue preference to any on account of their outward circumstances, favouring the rich, and unjustly treating

the poor. "If ye fulfil the royal law, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," regulating your conduct towards both rich and poor by that rule, "ye do well. But if ye have respect of persons," (if in a partial manner ye regard the external circumstances of men, and regulate your treatment of them thereby, and not by their character,) "ye commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors;" manifesting such a disobedience to the will of God as is inconsistent with the enjoyment of his favour.

Afterwards the apostle warns the people to whom he wrote, against censoriousness, hatred, and a worldly spirit.

"If ye have bitter envyings and strife in your hearts, boast not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish."

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses," (ye who in a spiritual sense are chargeable with this sin,) "know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world," pursuing secular honours, pleasures, and gains, to the neglect of religion, "is the enemy of God."

The Apostle James is not singular among the sacred writers, in representing wickedness of life to be irreconcilable with genuine faith. Since practical Antinomianism was the prevailing evil among the persons to whom his epistle was immediately addressed, we do not wonder to observe his main design to have been rather to show the necessary connexion between faith and works than to insist on the necessity of faith in order to salvation. Since, on the other hand, the prevailing error among many of the people to whom Paul wrote was to depend on their works for salvation, we are not surprised to find that his principal object in some of the epistles was rather to insist on the necessity of faith in order to salvation, than to show the connexion between faith and works. James, in the circumstances of

Paul, would have aimed at the object at which Paul aimed; Paul, in the situation of James, would have written as James wrote. The case may be thus illustrated: Suppose two patriotic men of the same principles in politics, to be situated, respectively, among people of quite opposite sentiments. The one lives among the abettors of tyranny and absolute power; the other among people who cannot brook any authority superior to themselves, and whose chief objection to the government of their country is, that they are not among the number of the governors. Of the two patriots thus situated, the former aims in all his speeches and writings to establish the natural and inalienable rights of man, and to show that the legitimate design of government is not the aggrandisement of a few, but the welfare of all. The other patriot, on the contrary, bends his utmost efforts to prove that government is essential to the well-being of society, and that the very end of government cannot effectually be answered unless the executive possess such a degree of power, as, without taking away responsibility, shall impart a superiority over the passions and tumult of a mob.

The probability is that violent partizans, on either side, will condemn the proceedings of each of these patriots. He who pleadest the rights of the people will be stigmatized as a democrat; and he who advocated the cause of law and order will be censured as an enemy to liberty. Yet their sentiments exactly coincide; and you have only to suppose the two men to change places; and, then, without any alteration of opinion, they will be found each to act on the plan formerly pursued by the other.

Such is the state of the case with James and Paul; the difference being that the patriots had to do with political affairs, that is, with the welfare of mankind considered as members of civil society, and subject to human laws; and that the apostles

had to do with religious affairs, that is with the welfare of mankind considered as candidates for immortality, and subject to the laws of God.

But while Paul, in some of his epistles, those particularly which are addressed to Rome and Galatia, had chiefly in view the establishment of the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, he never lost sight of the connexion there is between faith and practice. It would be difficult to find, in any part of Scripture, stronger declarations of the impossibility of a man being a true believer, and at the same time a wicked man, than the following, which occur in the epistle to the Galatians. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

The language of the Saviour, in the solemn description which he gives of the last judgment, expresses the same truth. All the people whom he represents as being on the right hand of the King, and as receiving a welcome into his kingdom of joy, are *good men*; and all the people whom he represents as being on the left hand of the Sovereign, and subject to his curse, are persons who were deficient in the essential attributes of the Christian character. The latter indeed are not described as having been grossly immoral. The sins laid to their charge are thus set forth by the Judge: "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me. Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting

fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." If then, the not having done good be sufficient to prove a man to have no part in the salvation of Christ; surely a life spent in the commission of wilful and actual transgression must exhibit proof at least equally decisive of the same deplorable fact.

Should any one be disposed to ask whether such declarations as the above are not contradictory to the statement that "he that believeth shall be saved; and that he that believeth not shall be damned;" we answer, No, by no means; the two statements are not contradictory, but merely distinct.

It is unquestionably true, that "he who believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life;" though "his sins have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow;" for "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." But it is equally true that the same principle of submission to God which discovers itself in an humble and cordial reception of mercy through Jesus Christ, will show itself also in a practical regard to God's holy law.

If a man truly believe in Christ, for the first time, just before his departure from the world, there can be but small opportunity for a change of conduct. In such a case, therefore, survivors can rarely possess an assured confidence of the happiness of the deceased.

Yet, supposing the faith of the man to have been sincere, as in the case of the thief on the cross, the want of good works, in such circumstances, will not invalidate his faith, nor hinder his receiving "the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul." He who searcheth the heart saw that there was in that man's heart a principle of obedience, although no scope, or but little scope was afforded for its exercise.

But when a man truly believes in Christ long before his death, opportunity is given for the manifestation of that principle of submission to the law of Christ with which true faith is inseparably joined.

Consequently, if, notwithstanding a man's professing faith in the Saviour, few or none of "the fruits of the Spirit" are visible; but instead thereof, "the works of the flesh," it is too evident that the man's apparent faith is dead, being alone.

There are *two characters* to whom it may be expedient that I should particularly address myself, before this part of the subject is finished; I mean, the *Humble Christian* and the *Presumptuous Professor*.

We have seen that wickedness will exclude from heaven; and the humble penitent, believing this, and being at the same time conscious that in many things he offends, may be ready to exclaim, "I have no part, I fear, in the redemption of Christ."

To draw the line throughout, between those faults which may attach to the character of a real Christian, and those sins which mark the unregenerate, is indeed a difficult task, and one which it is not necessary, on the present occasion, that I should attempt. But I will ask you two questions with respect to the transgressions of which you are conscious.

1. *In what manner do you regard your sins?*

Are you in the habit of apologising for them? Are you saying within your heart, "True, I am a sinner daily; but it is what I am to expect, and therefore I need not make myself uneasy about it." Or, are you accustomed, day by day, to confess your sins before God with grief and shame? Yes, if a true penitent, you are "ashamed and confounded, and will not open your mouth any more" in apology for yourself, even when your assurance is the strongest, that "God is pacified towards you for all that you have done."

2. *Of what kind are the sins which you commit?*

Are they acts of immorality, or are they sins of the heart, against which you perpetually watch and pray? An *immoral* Christian is indeed a contradiction in terms; but the best of men have had

cause to complain of inward corruptions. The genuine believer can scarcely fail to know, that amidst all the imperfections on account of which he mourns, he still cherishes a cordial love to the holy will of God, and a prevailing desire to fulfil it; and although he should doubt the fact himself, all who know him are sure that in his life are seen those "fruits of righteousness," which being also "fruits of faith," afford satisfactory evidence that his faith is sincere. "There is, therefore, no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

Possibly, however, I may be speaking to some persons whose confidence of safety is nothing better than *Presumption*.

You say that your hope is founded on Christ alone. That is well. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." But, my friend, you must be reminded, that Christ himself has laid down this criterion of character; "By their fruits ye shall know them." His servant Paul, acting on the same principle, has said, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." "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." Is it true that, notwithstanding your confidence in the Saviour, you are living in wilful sin? Is it true that you do not scruple to utter a known falsehood, or such an equivocation as amounts to the same thing, if there be a prospect of gaining advantage thereby? Is it true that you often do to others, in buying and selling, as you would be sorry that others should do to you? Is it true that you are seen every now and then reeling along the street through excess of drink? Is it true that you are an adulterer or a fornicator? Is it true that, although you behave well in the house of God, you are a terror and a curse to your own house, by the anger, fury, ill-will, and tyrannical conduct which you

manifest? Is it true that you make no effort for the eternal welfare of your relations? Is it true that you are in the habit of using words of blasphemy and profaneness?

If all or any of these things are found in you, I must, in faithfulness, remind you of our Saviour's words; "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Be thankful that you have not been cut off in your wickedness; and come without delay "to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy and find grace."

We come now to the examination of THEORETICAL ANTINOMIANISM.

With regard to the *leading sentiment* of the system, whence it takes its denomination, namely, *that believers in Christ are not under obligation to obey the moral law*; we shall first inquire into the *reasons* on which the opinion is founded; then notice the *consequences* with which it is connected; and lastly endeavour to show its *fallacy*.

The *reasons* on which the opinion is founded, consist partly of *false suppositions*, and partly of *unlawful inferences* from important truth.

It is a glorious truth that "Christ hath delivered us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us," and that we are "not under the law," as the Jews were before the coming of Christ, but "under grace." "The law was given by Moses, but the grace and the truth came by Jesus Christ."

But that we are also released from obligation to obey the moral law, is an *inference* as *unwarrantable* as it is dangerous.

This pernicious notion is encouraged by the tenet, that the *holiness* as well as the justifying righteousness of the believer is *not imparted, but imputed*. The abettors of this doctrine affirm that our sanctification is in such a sense in Christ, as not to be in

us. If the fact were so, it would follow that anxiety respecting personal holiness was altogether superfluous. But it is strange that any persons can fail to distinguish between things which differ so plainly as justification and sanctification. Justification respects our state before God, sanctification respects our own internal character. We are justified by faith in the righteousness which Christ, as our surety, has wrought out: we are sanctified by the influence of the Spirit of God upon our hearts. "Christ is made unto us righteousness," by our obtaining through his obedience unto death, acceptance with God; "Christ is made unto us sanctification," inasmuch as it is in consequence of our union to him that the sanctifying Spirit is granted to us.

Another erroneous tenet connected with the former, and which also contributes its aid towards delivering men from a sense of obligation to obedience, is, *that sanctification is complete at once, and not progressive.*

It is reasonable to suppose that if nothing can add to the holiness of a man, nothing can *diminish* it; and that, consequently, a Christian is as holy after committing some great sin, as he was before committing it.

But this opinion is evidently contrary to the truth. "He that hath clean hands," saith the wise man, "shall wax stronger and stronger." "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "Add to your faith," saith Peter, "virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." The apostle was writing to real Christians, who cannot be supposed to have been altogether destitute of these graces. His exhortation was intended to stimulate them to abound in these heavenly tempers *more and more*, that is, to

make progress in holiness. On the same principle, Paul prayed for the Christians in Thessalonica, that "the very God of peace would sanctify them wholly." They were already sanctified, but he desires that they may be more completely sanctified. Elsewhere, writing to the same people, he prays that God would make them to "increase and abound in love one toward another," and exhorts them, that as they had received of the apostles, "how they ought to walk, and to please God," that so they would "*abound more and more.*" Indeed, the innumerable exhortations in Scripture to diligence, watchfulness, and prayer, imply both the danger of going back in goodness, and the possibility and desirableness of pressing forward.

The *Consequences* which would result from admitting the sentiment, that believers are not under obligation to obey the law of God, are at once so fearful and so absurd as to bring with them a confutation of the doctrine whence they are deduced. Some of those consequences have been already stated; some others shall now be mentioned.

1. According to this sentiment, a Christian *may do whatever he pleases*, without the possibility of doing wrong.

Not being under obligation to obey the law, he is, in fact, "without law;" and "where there is no law, there is no transgression;" so that what would be sin in another man, will be no sin at all in him. There are, indeed, *human laws* from which he will find, to his cost, he is not released, if he see fit to violate them; but as to a divine law, there is none with which he has any concern. To tell lies, and to steal, would be wrong in another man, but in him would be quite harmless!

Such a sentiment as this needs only to be stated. To refute it would be superfluous.

2. The licentious opinion of which I speak, *supersedes all necessity of repentance and prayer for mercy*, with regard to the actions of believers.

It is proper that we should be grieved for what is wrong, and should pray for the pardon of it; but since, according to the tenet in question, the children of God never do wrong, it is quite unnecessary for them either to be sorry for any thing they do, or to pray that God would forgive them.

3. This pernicious doctrine also represents the *grace of the Holy Spirit to be unnecessary.*

The most pious need his blessed influence in order to keep them from sin, and to increase their goodness. But the people in question are considered as already completely sanctified, and as being in no danger of sinning, there being no law for them to transgress. Consequently, how much soever other persons may need the grace of the Holy Spirit; as for them, they are independent of such aid.

Probably there are those who, while they contend that the believer is not under obligation to obey the law, are yet unwilling to go the lengths above described. But whether the propositions just stated be not fair and inevitable inferences from the sentiment in question, let the candid judge. Let those who abhor these corollaries, give up the premises whence they are deduced.

The radical error of the system under consideration is the *rejection of the law of God as a rule of life* to believers. To this, therefore, our principal attention is directed. Some arguments in refutation of this sentiment have already been advanced; but it may be expedient to enter a little more particularly on the exposure of its falsehood.

1. Reflect on *the character of God*, and on the *relation which subsists between God and man.*

God is both a holy being and the governor of the world.

It is universally admitted that a parent has a right to give commands, as well as advice, to his child; and that it is the duty of the child to obey the parent's will. It is allowed that a master has a right to give commands to his servant, and that the

servant is bound to yield obedience. The obligation to obey, on the part both of the child and of the servant, is as lasting as the relation out of which the obligation grows. This obligation indeed is limited by the rules of propriety and equity. A human creature, being fallible and sinful, may give commands to a child or servant which are contrary to the laws of God; in which case the party commanded is freed, in that particular instance, from obligation to obey. When the commands of men, and those of God are opposed to each other, "We must obey God rather than men." But, with this limitation, the child is bound always to obey the father's will, as long as he is a child; and the servant, the master's will, as long as he is a servant. Then, and not till then, will the child be freed from obligation to obey, when he ceases to be a child; then, and not till then, will the servant be freed from a similar obligation, when he ceases to be a servant.

God is both our Father and our Master. We owe both the beginning and the continuance of our being to him; and we, with all created beings, are his property and his subjects. No one can put up a claim to sovereign and universal dominion in opposition to him; nor can any creature pretend to a share with him, either in the enactment or in the execution of laws.

The limitation which applies to the obedience of man to man, has nothing to do with the obedience of man to God. God's laws never can be contrary to propriety, since his will is the very standard by which the propriety of all other laws is tried. So long, therefore, as the relation between God and man continues, so long must continue man's obligation to obey.

It may be sufficient to confine our attention just now to the idea of *Government*. God is the master, man is the servant; therefore man is bound to obey the commands of God. Now, if there be any thing

which can destroy this relation between God and man; if there be any thing which makes God to cease to be a master, and man to cease to be a servant, it may be granted that man is released from obligation to obey.

Two separate causes have been imagined, by different persons, to effect this. Let us examine them.

(1.) It has been supposed that *man's depravity* destroys his obligation to obedience.

But they who entertain this imagination confound moral with natural inability. Man's inability to obey the law of God, consists in his dislike to that law, and his disinclination to obey; which disposition, so far from being an apology for disobedience, constitutes the principal part of the guilt of transgression. This corruption of human nature affects not at all the relation subsisting between the Supreme Governor and his subjects of the human race. Their duty to obey cannot be destroyed by their unwillingness to obey.

(2.) It is argued by some, as we have seen, that the *redemption of Christ* releases from obligation to obedience.

I ask, Does it destroy the relation which subsists between God and man? God is our Master. Does he cease to be our Master because he has redeemed us from the slavery of sin, of satan, and of death? Suppose a man to have a servant of very indifferent character, who should be taken captive by a slave-dealer and thereby subjected to much suffering and to the danger of death. Suppose, further, that the master out of pure compassion, and with a most costly ransom, should redeem his servant from that bondage, and should at the same time freely forgive all his former instances of misconduct. What should we think of this man, if, after being thus delivered, he should reason thus: "My master has rescued me from the thralldom under which I once groaned; and has pardoned my past misconduct: therefore I shall not consider myself under

any further obligation to obey his commands. I shall *choose* often to do what he wishes; but at the same time I shall hold myself at liberty to disobey his rules whenever I feel inclined." Should we not regard such reasoning to be as directly opposed to common sense as it is to moral principle? Not very dissimilar is the language of those who profess to be delivered by the blood of Christ from obligation to obey the commands of their Maker. Surely, the genuine effects of redemption on the hearts of the redeemed, is to make them feel more deeply than before the obligation under which they lie to yield obedience to their sovereign and gracious Lord.

Again, God is our Father. Suppose the Prodigal Son, in the parable, on being welcomed, beyond his highest hopes, to his father's house and bosom, should have reasoned thus: "My father has freely pardoned my offences; I can entertain no doubt hereafter of his affection for me; and therefore I need not consider myself in future to be under any obligation to act as he requires. I shall indeed do many things according to his will; but it is altogether at my option whether to do so or not. My father has no longer any right to command, nor am I bound to obey."

If a case like this were to occur in human society, it would be generally allowed that such ingratitude exhibited a character even more atrocious than the profligacy of the youth's former life, odious as that had been.

Yet this is not worse than the sentiment, that God's forgiveness of man's sin gives him a licence to sin.

Surely a parent's pardoning a disobedient son, instead of destroying the relation subsisting between parent and child, is calculated to make the latter feel more deeply than ever the endearing nature of that relation; and, consequently, to impress on his mind a sense of the duty connected therewith.

So long as God is God, and man is man, that

is, for ever, God will be related to man as his Governor, and man will be related to God as his servant, bound, as his servant, to do his will. So long too, will God be related to his redeemed people as their compassionate Father, and they to him as his children, laid under increased obligation to do his will by his undeserved forgiveness of their past transgressions.

2. Reflect on *the design for which the law of God was given.*

We can be in no danger of mistake in regarding that design as including *the glory of God, and the welfare of man.*

(1.) The law of God was intended to be a *declaration of his own glory.*

We discover therein God's love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity. All the precepts of his law are "holy, just, and good;" and we learn from them, both that it is his pleasure his creatures should be holy, and that he himself is holy. Whereas, if it were true that God could allow any of his creatures to transgress his law without blame, our views of God's holy character as seen in his law would be greatly obscured.

God is also honoured in his law, inasmuch as it exhibits his *authority* as the Sovereign Ruler.

A friend may advise; but a sovereign may command. A ruler who either does not enact laws, or grants permission to any of his subjects to violate the laws he has given, fails to exhibit that authority which all just governments ought to possess. Now, to suppose that God allows any of the subjects of his moral government to violate his laws at pleasure, is to suppose that those laws are, with regard to such persons, *virtually repealed*. Laws they may be to others, but not to them. And to be without a law, is to be *without a governor*, since it is by law that the authority of a governor is expressed; and by obedience to the law that the authority of the governor is acknowledged. Whoever, therefore,

affirms that he is not under obligation to obey God's will, declares, in fact, that *God is not his Sovereign*. And to suppose that the whole Christian Church is in this lawless state is to rob God of his glory as the Supreme Ruler with regard to all the thousands of human beings who are included in that Church. This is diametrically opposed to the design of God in giving a law to man, which was to glorify his own name.

Whatever sentiment manifestly and necessarily dishonours God, must be suspected as erroneous; if we "make void the law through faith," we may well fear that our faith is false. The faith of which I have been speaking is plainly chargeable with this consequence; but the faith of the gospel, instead of making void the law, "establishes it." What Christ did and suffered as our Mediator, exhibits, in a most striking manner, the authority of the law. Such precepts and commands are given by Christ and his apostles as fully prove that the law, as a rule of life, still maintains its place. The provision made in the gospel for the observance of the law, in the way both of *motive* and *influence*, leads to the same conclusion; while the manner in which all violation of the law, even on the part of professed believers in Christ, is noticed in the word of God also shows its perpetual obligation.

(2.) In the design for which the moral law was given, we recognise *the welfare of the governed*, as well as the honour of the Governor. The universal experience of all rational beings proves that an inseparable connexion exists between obedience and happiness. Holy angels, who perfectly obey the will of God, are perfectly happy. Devils, and damned spirits, who are constantly disobedient, are completely wretched. Man, while he continued obedient, was happy; and lost his felicity the moment he lost his innocence. The happiness of man in the present mixed state of being depends not so much on the circumstances of his outward condition, as on

the degree in which he complies with the holy will of God. Love, which is the fulfilling of the law, is itself happiness. The want of love, which is the violation of the law, is itself misery.

Now, no creature ever had the sanction of the Almighty for making himself miserable. Many of God's creatures have made and are making themselves wretched; but whenever they so act, they act not in compliance with God's commands, but in direct opposition to them. All his commands and threatnings, no less than his invitations and his entreaties, speak this uniform language; "Do thyself no harm."

Whereas the supposition that God has released any of his creatures from obligation to obey his laws, is to imagine an *extraordinary exception* to this universal principle of the divine administration. It is to suppose that the persons in question have a licence from God to make themselves wretched.

The strangeness of the opinion is the more apparent when we recollect that the people to whom this licence is supposed to be granted are *the peculiar objects of God's love*, and that this exemption from obligation to obedience is granted as a special mark of favour!

If a child should ask his father to allow him, unblamed, to do as he might choose, to play with edge tools, and with fire, or to sport on the brink of a precipice, and in a word, to be no longer under the restraint of paternal government; would it be deemed a mark of great affection in the parent to accede to the request? Every parent answers, "No, the more I love my child, the more explicit and strict will my injunctions be that he avoid whatever would do him hurt. Until I cease to love him, it is impossible that I should release him from obligation to obey my commands."

Thus it is with our Father in heaven. Could it be supposed that he had no regard to his own glory as the Lawgiver and Governor, still his love to his

people is so great, that for their sakes he would not release them from obligation to obedience. He knows, and they ought to know, not only that "his commandments are not grievous," but also that "in keeping them, there is great reward."

It will have been observed that the system under examination consists in a *partial reception of divine truth*. The people who espouse that system admit into their creed a part of the truth, and reject the rest. They admit that God is a Sovereign *Benefactor*, but they deny that he is as to themselves a Sovereign *Governor*. They receive Christ as a *Prophet* and as a *Priest*, and partly, but not fully, as a *King*. His regal office includes his ruling over his people, and his subjugation of their enemies. To the latter part of his kingly office they make no objection; but the former they reject. They are willing that he should defend them from their adversaries, but they are not willing to receive his commands as authoritative laws.

But Christ must be received in his entire character. When he "stands at the door and knocks," he is adorned with the insignia of the three united functions of Prophet, Priest, and King. The people of whom I speak profess themselves ready to "open the door" that Christ may enter; and are delighted to observe the emblems of his Prophetic and Sacerdotal offices; but when they see the crown and the sceptre, they hesitate, and are disposed to stipulate that Christ would be pleased to lay aside those indications of Sovereign Power before he enter in. Not so the genuine believer. In his eyes, Christ is most glorious when seen arrayed in all the dignity of his entire character. He rejoices to observe not only that which proves the Saviour to be the antitype of Moses and of Aaron, but that also which marks him out as the Son and Lord of David; and when Christ stands at the door and knocks, this man opens the door without reserve and without

terms; and the Redeemer enters invested with the ensigns of royalty, no less than with those which appertain to his prophetic and priestly functions. It is thus that Christ becomes unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

It is proper that, on the subject of Antinomianism, we should distinguish between those who follow out this pernicious heresy into its practical results; and those who although to a certain extent, they *approve the doctrine*, abhor the practice. There are persons of both these classes. There are individuals who have arrived at so dreadful a degree of hardness of heart, coupled with presumptuous confidence, as contentedly to live in known sin, yet indulging the fallacious hope of eternal life.

There are others, however, it must be confessed, who approve of the tenets justly denominated Antinomian, who, notwithstanding, are themselves moral and correct in their lives. Nor is this the only instance in which the natural effect of pernicious opinions is counteracted by opposing causes. Such opinions, however, are not the less to be shunned on that account. Were they universally to prevail, "perilous times" would indeed come. Few, if any, persons have embraced them without damage; where the grosser actions of immorality are not produced, a censorious, captious, proud, antisocial spirit, alike opposed to the welfare both of civil and of religious society, is usually the effect. The system in question is delineated by Mr. Robert Hall, in the following emphatic terms: "As almost every age of the Church is marked by its appropriate visitation of error, so, little penetration is requisite to perceive that Antinomianism is the epidemic malady of the present, and that it is an evil of gigantic size and deadly malignity. It is qualified for mischief by the very properties which might seem to render it merely an object of contempt,—its vulgarity of conception,—its paucity of ideas,—its

determined hostility to taste, science and letters. It includes within a compass which every head can contain, and every tongue can utter, a system which cancels every moral tie, consigns the whole human race to the extremes of presumption or despair, erects religion on the ruins of morality, and imparts to the dregs of stupidity all the powers of the most active poison."

Let us, however, be very cautious how we fix the charge of Antinomianism on individuals. It does not follow because a man is warmly attached to the doctrines of grace that therefore he is an enemy to the law of God. It does not follow because a man delights to expatiate on the privileges of God's people, that therefore he is averse to hear of the duties which devolve on them. The doctrines of God's sovereignty, of predestination, of election, of effectual grace, and of final perseverance, are held by many who yield to none in zeal for the interests of morality.

Let us at the same time guard against every thing which would lead us to the verge of the scheme under consideration. That system we have seen, is a partial reception of truth. Let it be our care, then, to *receive the whole truth*. The way to avoid one error is not to fall into the opposite. The way to avoid Antinomianism is not to slight the doctrinal part of religion. On the contrary, let every truth which God has revealed be received. Never let us lose sight of those glorious doctrines respecting Christ, and salvation by him, which constitute the very life-blood of the Christian religion. Let us not only assent to these truths, but let us frequently meditate upon them, that the "life we live in the flesh, may be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us." In the same manner let us treat those truths which relate to obedience. It is not enough that we merely allow that the law of God should be the rule of our life. We must dwell much on the conduct which

it prescribes; not contenting ourselves with generalities, but entering into an examination of particular precepts; comparing our hearts and our actions therewith; confessing and bewailing the sins we discover, and beseeching that God would give us grace to obey his will.

The gospel is the medicine of the soul, and in order to its being efficacious in restoring spiritual health to all the powers of the mind, and to the entire character, it is necessary not only that every prescribed ingredient should be used, but that the several ingredients should be mixed in due proportions. What these proportions are may be learned from the word of God, particularly from the discourses of our Lord and from the sermons and letters of his apostles. This proportionate use of truth, it becomes Preachers to observe in their public labours, and Christians in their private meditations.

The chief subject of the present discourse has been *the law of God*. There are *two reflections* of a personal and experimental nature, relative to that law, which suggest themselves.

1. If all mankind, without exception, and without ceasing, are bound to regard the law of God as a rule of life, *how enormous is the amount of man's transgression!* Are there any here who are resting their hope of heaven on their good works? Do, I beseech you, as you value eternal happiness, examine the foundation on which you build. Have you constantly and perfectly obeyed the will of God? Surely, you are not so ignorant and proud as to answer, yes. You must have a better righteousness than your own, if ever you are accepted in the sight of a holy and omniscient God; and happily for you who are conscious of your depravity and guilt, a better righteousness is prepared. "Surely," may you say, "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

2. We learn from the language of the New Co-

venient that it is God's method to *write his law on the hearts* of his people, as well as to forgive their sins. *Has this gracious design been accomplished in you?* Can you say, with Paul, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man," though "I find another law within me, warring against the law of my mind." Is it your daily prayer, "Teach me to do thy will?" And your constant practice to "watch and pray lest you enter into temptation?" Then there is reason to hope that God has both pardoned and sanctified you. How grateful should you be for that gospel which reveals blessings so inconceivably precious! "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!"

LECTURE IX.

May 9, 1824.

FALSE RELIGION, CONSISTING IN INADEQUATE
ATTENTION TO RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

JOHN xviii. 37, 38.

Pilate said to Jesus, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth. Every one who is of the truth, heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out —

IN the former discourses, an outline was given of the more remarkable of the various systems of religion which we consider to be false. Some of these were seen not even to be supported by the shadow of proof; others, though plausible, were not found to bear the test of examination. Some rested on suppositions not only destitute of evidence, but opposed to well-known facts. Others were grounded on the denial of facts, the proof of which is incontrovertible. In all, there was noticed either the omission of some essential truths, or the blending of gross error with truth. It was seen that religion, when contemplated in its pure source, the word of God, is a very different thing from any of them.

I doubt not but that the great majority of the audience have been of one mind with the speaker in most of these statements; and are thoroughly persuaded that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that view of the Gospel which bears the name of Evangelical, is the only system agreeing with

the word of truth, and suited to the character and state of man.

There remains, however, to be exposed, one mode of False Religion, the adherents to which are lamentably numerous; a religion which consists not in the belief of what is False, nor in the denial of what is True, but in an insufficient attention to the Truth. This sort of religion, I scruple not to call False, because it does not answer the end contemplated. If Religion comprehends, as will be generally admitted, a due regard to God, to virtue, and to immortality, then, whatever mode of religion fails to secure these objects, deserves not the name of Real. So that if the Religion of which I speak be not False, in the sense of *untrue*, it is at least False, in the sense of *vain*, empty, or useless.

Pontius Pilate, a Heathen, exhibited, in the transient attention he paid to the claims of "the Author and Finisher of our Faith," a specimen of the temper of mind whence this sort of religion springs. He asked, "What is truth?" He put the question to one who was himself, "the way, the truth, and the life;" who had come into the world for the express purpose of bearing witness to the truth, relative to his own spiritual kingdom, and who was ever ready to impart instruction. Most favourable, therefore, were the circumstances under which the inquiry was made. But Pilate, the moment the words had escaped his lips, left the place, and went on with the public business in which he was engaged. It is true that business was highly important; yet it demanded no particular haste. Nay, an answer to the question which he had proposed was necessary, not merely for his own individual welfare, but to assist him in performing conscientiously the awful function of judge. Had he waited for an answer, and regulated his own conduct thereby, he would not have been content to say, "I find no fault in this man;" but having ascertained the true character of the pri-

soner, he would rather have been crucified himself, than have proved the occasion of "crucifying the Lord of glory."

All this was permitted, that the compassionate purpose of the God of salvation might be answered; yet the folly and guilt of the murderers of the Son of God are not the less; and a more striking instance than that which the text presents is hardly to be met with, of the amazing guilt which may follow the neglect of waiting for an answer to the question, "What is truth?" For if there be an individual whose criminality exceeds that of most other men, surely it must be the man who, when the Jews cried out respecting Jesus, Crucify him, "gave sentence that it should be as they desired."

You, my brethren, are often saying, What is truth? Every time you open the Bible; every time you come to the house of God; and especially every time you come to hear discourses, the express purpose of which is to separate Falsehood from Truth, to confute the one and to establish the other; you are virtually saying, What is Truth?

Not a few among you have long known "the way of truth," and have been long walking therein. With many, I fear, the case is different. You go beyond Pilate, I allow. He waited not for an answer. You do stay for an answer. But you do not follow up the answer by such a procedure as is requisite; and with regard to the most important results of knowing the truth, your case and that of Pilate are but too similar. "He went out, and took no further trouble about the business." So do you. You go away, "One to his farm, and another to his merchandize," and gain no experimental acquaintance with "the truth as it is in Jesus."

As it was my aim in former discourses, so will it be now, to make Facts the ground-work of my appeal. But the facts now to be adduced will differ, both in their nature and in their source,

from many of those which were formerly adduced. Most of those related to other people *directly*, and to you chiefly in the way of *inference*. These will have to do almost wholly with yourselves. Those were necessarily brought from the testimony of other people. The proof of these will be found in your own consciousness. In the selection of those facts it was necessary to examine the credibility of the writers who have told them. On this occasion, I have only to ask that you will impose no restraint on your own conscience, but will allow that important faculty of your soul to give testimony with faithfulness and impartiality, whatever exposure of yourself to yourself that testimony may occasion.

There are *two considerations* which make me cherish the hope that this discourse, though it may not be remarkable for any thing novel or striking, may, with the blessing of God, produce some good impression on those for whose benefit it is designed.

1. One of the most desirable things in an audience is *preparedness of mind* for the subject to be discussed. "The preparation of the heart," in the noblest sense, "is from the Lord," but there is a certain correspondence between the object of thought, and the mind of the person thinking, which may be the result of circumstances, and which, though not independent on the divine blessing, is highly valuable as a means of good. May I not hope that by your previous knowledge of the subject of this evening's lecture, you are come hither, disposed to consider the matter in hand with a greater degree of sedateness and reflection than you commonly bestow on it. The more personal and experimental the subject is, the greater the importance of fixedness of thought.

Now, the present subject, as has been already stated, is almost wholly of this character. It is something, therefore, that it is on all hands understood, that our employment this evening is to distin-

guish “the form of godliness” from “the power thereof.” It is something for it to be known that the preacher has done his best, however imperfect that may be, to prepare a faithful delineation of that mode of False Religion which he has reason to think prevails to a lamentable extent in the visible Church, and includes not a few of the people to whom he is speaking.

2. The *place assigned to nominal religion* in the present course of Lectures is calculated, I hope, to give a just, as it doubtless is, to give a solemn and alarming view of the insufficiency of the religion in question to save the soul from eternal woe. The placing of persons who admit the truth of the gospel on a level with Jews, Mohammedans, Deists, and Heathens, would be deemed by some, I doubt not, a breach of candour. It is not, however, without due deliberation, that I have done this. Whatever religion, (whether the fault be in the system, or in the using of it) whatever religion fails to lead a man to God, to a state of acceptance with him, and of obedience to him, is radically wrong, and, being wrong, should be known to be so; and that it may be known to be so, should be called by its right name, and put in its right place, as I trust has been done in the present arrangement of subjects.

My principal fear has been, lest the examination of the subject should not be sufficiently strict; and lest, thereby, some should be led to flatter themselves that they are acquainted with “the power of godliness,” whilst they have only its “form.”

The plan I intend to pursue in this discourse is to attempt to give a sketch of the religious, or rather irreligious, life of the people who give some attention, but an inadequate attention, to the truth of God.

First, let a narrative be given of their manner of spending THE LORD'S DAY.

All the people in question do not spend the day alike. It will be proper, therefore, that a diary of each class should be presented.

There are those who consider the Sunday altogether as a day of *recreation*. With the origin of the Sabbath, and the intention of its being separated from common time, they do not trouble themselves. The light in which it suits their inclination to view it, is that of a day, constituted by Act of Parliament *a holiday*; a day on which shops and warehouses are closed, and an opportunity is offered for pleasure-taking or idleness.

If trade be particularly brisk, it is deemed no great offence to spend the hours of the Sabbath in worldly business; but in ordinary circumstances either idleness or pleasure is the order of the day. Which of these shall be chosen, depends much on the weather. If the atmosphere be charged with clouds, the day is spent at home. Sunday time being deemed of little value, the hour of breakfast is considerably later than on other days. Some difficulty is occasionally experienced in obtaining sufficient employment; but what with the preparation of food, and the eating of it, with the assistance of a newspaper, and the gossip of a neighbour, the day is somehow or other got through. It is felt, however, to be a dull day; as well it may be, so spent.

Of all delusions, surely, this is one of the most glaring, that such a man should suppose that he deserves to be called a Christian. Leaving out of consideration *the Command* to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy;" the case is this: Here is a man who believes that there is a God above him, and an immortal spirit within him; who owns that he has but little time on working days to regard God and his own soul; who has the opportunity of devoting a large part of one day in the week to the business of salvation; and yet does not improve those golden hours! What is the im-

pediment? His own want of heart in religious matters. What is the seat of religion? The heart. If religion be not there, it is nowhere. The man, therefore, who spends Sunday time in a worldly manner, shows that there is no religion in his heart; in other words, that he is altogether without religion.

There are *other persons* not chargeable with this utter disregard of Sabbath time, who yet cannot be said to spend it aright. They come to public worship sometimes; but a very slight impediment suffices to keep them away. A dirty road, or the very apprehension of a shower, neither of which would prevent them from travelling twice as far, if worldly gain or worldly pleasure were to be had, is sufficient to hinder their coming to the house of God. Do you not see that the reason of your acting so differently under similar circumstances, according as this world, or religion, solicits your attention, must be that your *heart* is in the one, and is not in the other. What I said of the more palpably irreligious, I must repeat to you; you have no real piety.

There is still *another* description of persons, whose treatment of the Sabbath, though less faulty than that of the two former, is not such as becomes a man who is in good earnest about his eternal welfare.

You, to whom I now refer, are regular in your attendance on public worship; but you do not connect *private worship* with public. *Before you come* to the house of prayer, there is no lifting up of the heart to God that he would grant the aid of his good Spirit to the minister, to your fellow-worshippers, and to yourself. Indeed, it is by courtesy, rather than in strict propriety of speech, that you can be denominated *a worshipper*; for if the term worshipper means *one who worships*, it is not applicable to you. While *public prayers* and thanksgivings are offered by one person in the

name of the rest, you rarely attempt so to accompany the speaker's words with your thoughts, as to make the worship offered your own. Sin is confessed and deplored; but you do not confess and deplore it. Petitions for the pardon of sin are presented; but no hearty Amen is formed within your breast. Thanks for the divine goodness are offered; but no gratitude is felt by you, except it be occasionally for some remarkable instance of God's kindness in your temporal affairs. Special reference is made in worship to the Saviour of sinners, and many and fervent are the requests sent up to the throne of Grace for a participation in the unspeakably valuable blessings of his salvation; but when these petitions are forwarded to heaven, you content yourself, as it were with hearing them read over; you never sign your name underneath: consequently, they are not your petitions.

So, during the delivery of the *sermon*, you are a "hearer only." If some fault be pointed out of which you are conscious that you are guilty, neither sorrow nor alarm are usually the effect of such knowledge. If some branch of experimental religion be described, to which you are conscious that you are a stranger; no prayer to God ascends from your heart, that he would be pleased, by the teaching of his Spirit, to supply the dangerous defect. If the glories of Christ, of redemption, and of heaven, be portrayed; no glowing emotions of admiration, gratitude, and hope, are kindled in your soul. The sermon is interesting or otherwise, in your opinion, not in the degree in which it was calculated to benefit yourself or others; but in proportion either as the subject discussed was in itself entertaining, or as the sermon was delivered in a lively, impressive manner. *To be pleased*, is your main desire; to be profited, is with you, to say the least, a secondary consideration.

Your language and your thoughts *after the service* is over, correspond with the temper of your

mind during its continuance. Immediately, you engage in conversation about worldly affairs, not merely in those few words of civility which are unavoidable when friends meet, but in long discussions about things which are altogether foreign to the topic to which the preacher had called your attention, and which he earnestly requested that you would make the matter of subsequent meditation, reading, and prayer.

A student at college, who is in pursuit of truth in any department of secular science, makes a point of spending some time at his desk after the public lecture is concluded, in order to digest what he has heard. The person who attends a theatrical exhibition does not think it worth while. The latter went avowedly for the sake of entertainment; and that object having been gained, there is no need for any further trouble. But the student attends lectures with a different design. He has a particular profession in view, and he is in pursuit of qualifications requisite for the honourable and successful discharge of the duties which it involves. The lectures which he attends may not all be very entertaining, some of them may be very dry. That has nothing to do with the business. His object is not to get pleasure, but to get instruction. Such being the end he has in view, he is not content with filling up his place in the lecture room, but is anxious to follow up the lessons there taught by private study. His progress is proportionate to the diligence exerted.

These two cases may illustrate the difference between "a hearer only" and a "doer" of the word of God. The hearer only has entertainment in view. His Sunday recreation is the hearing of religious discourses; and, therefore, like the spectator of a play, if strong emotions of any kind have been excited, he is very well pleased; and, when the service is done, his work is done. But the student of divine truth takes a very different view of

the matter. He also wishes to have lively feelings called forth; but these feelings he considers valuable, chiefly, in so far as they are likely to strengthen principles of permanent utility. He is preparing for eternity. This is an object of which he never loses sight. To be prepared, at death, to enter heaven; and, while on earth, to honour God, and to be of service to mankind, are the combined ends at which he aims. He values the Lord's day most highly, because it offers facilities peculiar to itself for pursuing these objects.

If he do not take notes of what he hears, at least he marks down on the tablet of his memory such truths as appear, either by their real or their relative importance, most desirable for him to retain. These he re-considers at his leisure; applying them to himself, and turning them into matter of devotion. No wonder that he should make that progress in knowledge, goodness, and comfort, for which the other may occasionally sigh; but after which he has never resolutely, humbly, and perseveringly sought.

The Apostle James thus contrasts these two characters: "If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer; he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

Let a Journal now be read of a nominal Christian's Life on a WEEK DAY.

There were some things in the discourses of the the Sabbath which the preacher strongly impertuned his friends to consider and practise in time to come; and since the way to remember any thing permanently, is to think of it repeatedly from

the time when it is first brought before the mind, taking care not to allow any long interval of forgetfulness to elapse; it might have been expected that this man would have paid some attention to the advice on the next day, at least, even if the impression had been allowed afterwards gradually to subside. But it was not so. He had almost forgotten the lesson of instruction before he retired to rest on Sunday night. By the time the Monday morning came, scarcely a trace of it remained.

But here we must distinguish between two men who are very *different* in some respects, though both come under the denomination used in the title of this lecture. They are both chargeable with inadequate attention to religious truth, but in different ways. The one is in the habit of violating the laws of morality; the other observes those laws, but is faulty in another view.

The former character coincides, in a considerable degree, with that described in the former part of the last lecture. Yet it must not be wholly kept out of sight on this occasion. You, my friend, to whom I now address myself, though you have no dislike, for the most part, to the truth which you hear, do not scruple in your daily business, to take an unfair advantage of your neighbour, and to utter a falsehood, whenever there is a prospect of gain. You are chargeable also, with some other wilful offences against the law of God, which I shall not now enumerate. Yet, because you are observant of the outward forms of piety, and are not guilty of the grosser acts of wickedness, you think that you should not be considered either as irreligious or immoral. Of the marks of irreligion which are about you, I have already spoken, and shall speak again. Let me now touch on the subject of your morality. What do you mean by a moral man? A man who practically regards the *whole* of the moral law, or one who regards only a *part* of it? If the latter be

a just view of morality, then certainly you deserve the honourable epithet after which you aspire; but if the former, you are immoral.

Besides, you must allow me to remind you that the conduct which a truly religious man pursues in his intercourse with the world, is something more than what goes by the name of moral. *Holiness* is the word which, in Scripture, is applied to that man's character: "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." Without holiness no man can be truly religious. A holy man is one *who shuns all evil, as evil*; and regulates his actions, not according to the maxims of the world, but according to the holy will of God.

If religious truth, instead of being occasionally worn by you as a holiday garment, were incorporated in your moral constitution, it would influence your conduct in all the business of life. Before engaging in any transaction of a dubious complexion, in point of rectitude, how alluring soever might be the prospect of gain, you would pause. If any proposed speculation be doubtful with regard to pecuniary advantage, *a prudent man* naturally considers the matter on all sides before he commits himself; in like manner, if a proposed transaction be doubtful on the more important ground of lawfulness, *a Christian man* naturally investigates the case with equal deliberation. If he find cause to believe that the action in question is not lawful, he says, "How can I do this wickedness and sin against God?" No such inquiries as these come into your mind; or if they do, they affect not your conduct. Hence you frequently transgress the precepts of the Almighty in your worldly calling, and thus give sad proof that his truth has no place in your heart.

But I now turn to the *other* of the two men whom I lately proposed separately to address. You, my friend, are in more danger of self-delusion than your neighbour, because your defects are

not so flagrant. You are upright in your dealings. You are honourable. You deserve and you possess the esteem of all who know you. Yet your morality is radically defective. You have little or no regard to God in it. Your aim is not to please and to honour him. Nor is this all; your attention to what is right is almost wholly restricted to one half of your duty, to the second table of the law. Your outward actions are good; but the habitual state of your *heart* is not good. Probably, you fall into a very common error, that of supposing that the character of the thoughts and affections is of little consequence. The occasion of this error is obvious. Human laws cannot take cognizance of thought; and hence the unwarrantable inference that divine laws do not. But the cases are quite dissimilar. Man cannot ascertain the thoughts of his fellow man, except as outward indications of thought are given. But "God looketh into the heart." Hence his laws have to do with the heart as much as with the conduct; and even more; since the heart bears the same relation to the conduct which the fountain does to the stream. It is worthy of remark, in this view, that the most comprehensive summary of human duty which the word of God contains, points to the *source* of good conduct rather than to good conduct itself. It runs thus: "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God supremely. Thou shalt *love* thy neighbour as thyself."

The claims which God has on man certainly must have respect to *the whole of man*; to all his voluntary movements; to every thing in which his will is concerned, whether it be acting, speaking, or thinking.

Now, my friend, the charge I have to bring against you; or, rather, the charge which God has against you, and which I wish you to bring against yourself; is, that "in the multitude of your thoughts within you," thoughts of God so seldom find a place; and that, when they do, they are accom-

panied in so small a degree with those sentiments of veneration, of humility, of admiration, of confidence, of hope, of gratitude, and of love, which thoughts of One who is so great and so good, who has been so kind to you, against whom you have been so rebellious, and who yet holds out such encouraging assurances, ought to awaken in your breast.

Does not the infrequency of your voluntary thoughts of God, and the general character of dullness which your few thoughts of him bear ; as contrasted with your many thoughts about the world, and the strong emotions which attend these thoughts, but too plainly evince that the first table of the law must be thus altered, to make it appear that you fulfil it ? “Thou shalt love (*the world*) with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength ?”

But O, remember the words of the Apostle John ; “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

This, your supreme love of the world, is a plain proof that you come under the denomination in question ; for had you paid a due attention to religious truth, particularly to those truths concerning God in which his compassion to the guilty is exhibited, his readiness to pardon and save them, your indifference and aversion would have given place to those pious feelings in which it appears that you are so lamentably deficient.

PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY are both tests of character. Let us, then, look at the man in each of these conditions, that we may see how far religious truth influences him in them.

I shall first suppose you to be in a *prosperous condition*. Your plans have been successful ; and though you may not “have all that heart could wish,” you have a larger share of worldly good

than falls to the lot of many who set out in life as you did. Allow me to ask you a few questions.

1. *To what are you accustomed to ascribe your success?*

To chance? to good luck? or to your own skill, industry, and economy? A truly religious man would refer it to God; and, whatever has been the means of his success, would regard both those means and the result of them, as attributable to the divine kindness; saying, "It is he who has given me power to get wealth."

2. *What is the principal source of your satisfaction in the contemplation of your success?*

Is it "The lust of the flesh?" that you now have it in your power to command a large variety of the gratifications of sense? Is it "The lust of the eyes?" Is it your principal delight, like that of the miser, to count over and survey your possessions, pleased with thinking how much you are worth, and how much more you are likely *to die worth*? Or, is it "The pride of life?" the ability to cut a figure in the world?

If religious truth had its due influence on you, your chief joy would spring from another source. While pleased with the condition of ease and comfort to which Providence has raised you, and still more pleased with the thought of being able to provide amply for "your own, and specially for those of your own house," you would be most delighted to think of the means which have been afforded to you of doing good to the bodies and souls of your fellow mortals.

3. *In what manner do you regard your prosperity in relation to your spiritual condition?*

Did you ever think of Agur's prayer; "Give me not riches, lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord?" Do you exercise a godly jealousy over yourself, lest Agur's words should be exemplified in you?—lest your temporal prosperity

should prove a hindrance in the way of your gaining "the true riches?" Such a fear habitually in the mind, accompanied, as it must be, by watchfulness and prayer, would be your preservative against the evil dreaded. But if you are a stranger to such fear, to such watchfulness, and to such prayer, the probability is that your prosperity is on the point of destroying you. And the absence of such views and feelings as have been described, argues the absence of religious truth as an inmate of the soul. If God have thoughts of mercy towards you, he will probably infuse some drops of bitterness into your now sweet and full cup.

ADVERSITY, though a school of instruction, does not, of itself, insure the effectual teaching of the scholar. See there a man in adverse circumstances who gives as decisive a proof as his more prosperous neighbour does of having never given his whole heart to religious truth. It is a part of that truth, that God is Just and Wise, and that man is guilty and unworthy. If that afflicted man believed this, he would not harbour such an imagination of God's dealing unjustly with him as he now indulges. It is a part of religious truth that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth; that he afflicteth for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness;" and that "affliction yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." If the man believed this, his sole object would not be, as it now is, to get rid of the affliction. Besides this, he would be anxious that those excellent effects, of which he has read and heard, might be produced in him. The want of such desires in such circumstances, proves that all the connexion which the man has with religious truth is outward, not inward.

But there is *one deficiency* in the man's life which applies to all days and to all conditions, and which is of such vital importance that though we

have already, more than once, glanced at it, it must have a more particular notice, I mean the neglect of PRIVATE DEVOTION.

“Enter into thy closet,” saith the Saviour, “and when thou hast shut the door, pray unto thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret, will reward thee openly.”

Personal religion is the actually making use of religious truth; and religious truth is revealed for the express purpose of being used, not of being merely looked at. There are many objects of thought which are purely speculative; but we greatly err if we suppose religion to be of this class. All religious truths are not equally experimental and practical; but all have a direct bearing on experience and practice; and some are of such a nature that we may as well not hear of them as not use them. The great truths of the gospel are to the soul what a place of secure shelter is to a man exposed to a most fearful storm; what food and medicine are to the famishing and the diseased. Of what avail would it be to the man, above whose head a storm is gathering which will overwhelm in destruction all who are exposed to its fury, to know that there is a place of shelter within reach; unless he timely betake himself thither? Of what avail would it be to a man, ready to perish with hunger, to know that “there is bread enough and to spare,” on a table at which he would be a welcome guest; unless he arise, and go and eat? Of what avail would it be to a man, on whose frame a fatal disease has begun its ravages, to know that there is within call a physician able and willing to effect a cure; unless application be actually made to him for aid?—Not more will it avail a man to be ever so well versed in Christian Theology, unless he truly “come to Christ that he may have life.”

Now, as religious truth is revealed for the express purpose of being used, so there is nothing in which a more direct use of that truth is made than

in *Private Devotion*. It is expedient that I should here specify *two or three* of the most *vital truths* of the gospel; and show in what way use is made of them in prayer; that by this method I may expose, to the conviction of their own minds, the irreligion of those who, notwithstanding the sort of attention they pay to divine truth, are living in neglect of retired worship.

A primary blessing of the gospel is the *forgiveness of sins*: unpardoned sin will bring after it eternal suffering. Even you, to whom I now more particularly speak, acknowledge that you need this blessing; for you own that you have often “sinned and come short of the glory of God.” You admit that the gospel alone discovers the means of attaining pardon. You know that faith in him who died to save sinners is essentially necessary. But you act as if you did not know that it is *in prayer* more than in any thing else that this faith is exercised. When God promises forgiveness to those who trust in his Son, the promise is not, that whether you ask for this blessing, or neglect to ask for it, you shall assuredly have it; but that if you “ask, you shall receive.” Yet you are living, day after day, without any fervent, persevering prayer, for this most necessary good. While you thus live, the glorious doctrine of forgiveness, and that glorious Saviour through whose death forgiveness comes, are nothing to you. Your mind may occasionally and even agreeably be employed on such themes; but you are making no use of them; and if you persist in such conduct, you will derive no ultimate advantage from them.

Be admonished to follow the example of the Publican in the parable, who, not contenting himself with knowing something about the doctrine of forgiveness, smote upon his breast and cried, “God be merciful unto me a sinner.” “This man,” said the Saviour, “went down to his house justified.” Then, and not till then, will you be justified, when,

like him, you make a similar use of the truth respecting the pardon of sin, by praying that you may have it.

A *second* great blessing of the gospel is the *holy influence of the spirit of God*, by which the mind is enlightened to discern the loveliness of divine truth, and its exact adaptation to the wants of man; and by which the faculties of the soul are so reformed and regulated, that the man deliberately chooses God as his chief good, and is made to hate and shun all evil.

How is this blessing to be obtained?—By sincere, importunate, persevering prayer, “If any man lack wisdom,” saith the Apostle James, “let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” “Ask,” saith the Saviour, “and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” You must not stay till you can settle all the difficult questions which may be started as to the connexion which subsists between the Holy Spirit’s work on the mind, and the actings of the human will. The practical question is, Do you desire the Holy Spirit’s aid? If you do, then ask for it; and rest assured that you shall have it. But remember that the prayer with which the promise of such blessings is associated is not an occasional petition. “Jesus spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint;” and, after delivering the parable, he added these words, to encourage perseverance in prayer; “Shall not God avenge his own elect who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.”

But you, my dear friend, are not accustomed to such prayer as this.

Is not then the charge substantiated, that YOU HAVE NOT HITHERTO PAID ADEQUATE ATTENTION TO RELIGIOUS TRUTH? Your conscience

pleads guilty; it tells you that you have not made that personal, experimental use of the vital truths of the gospel, without which religion cannot exist in the soul.

I must not think it enough however that the charge is admitted to be true. I must press on your attention the consequences to which you are rendering yourself liable. "Every one," saith the Saviour, "who heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

Various modes of religion have, on former occasions, passed under review, and you have felt yourself compelled by the force of evidence, to pronounce them False. But do you not see it to be possible that still greater guilt may attach to you, who, with all the helps and encouragements which a pure and gracious system affords, are still living a life of alienation from God? Surely those words of Jesus in which he upbraided the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not, should sink deep into your ears:—"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for, if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee."

Act not so cruelly towards yourself as to reply to these admonitions, in the language of one who,

like yourself, was in some degree, though not sufficiently, impressed with the solemn truths of religion; "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." A more convenient season never can come; and you are not sure that any other season will come. The short and uncertain space of your life on earth is the only possible time for paying that attention to religious truth on which salvation depends; and the boundless ages of eternity will be the period for reaping the fruits either of attention or of neglect. Beware, then, of treating religion as a matter of recreation. "*It is your life,*" *your eternal life.* Begin then, I beseech you, this night, this moment; for "how shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" "Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life."

LECTURE X.

May 23, 1824.

SECOND DIVISION.—TRUE RELIGION.

EVIDENCES OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN
RELIGION.

JOHN XX. 30, 31.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

HAVING, on former occasions, examined various religious systems more or less erroneous; we enter, this evening, on the investigation of the True Religion.

The fifteen discourses proposed to be included in this division of the course, are arranged under the four following heads:

First, we ascertain that the Bible, the source of religion, is true;

Secondly, we contemplate the leading doctrines of religion which the Bible contains;

Thirdly, we consider religious truth as transferred from the Bible into the character;

And, *Fourthly*, we notice the claims which the True Religion has on the universal attention of mankind.

The first of these subdivisions is to consist of five lectures; two to contain the proofs of the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and three to consist of answers to objections.

The greater number of my hearers are, I trust, well satisfied, before we enter on the subject, that the Bible is the book of God. For them, therefore, such a discussion as the present may not seem to be particularly desirable. But they will recollect the apostolic admonition, "Not to look at our own things, but every man also at the things of others." Rejoicing in being themselves established in the truth, they will rejoice still more if what they hear shall appear to be calculated to bring others, now wavering, into the same happy stability of faith. It may be expected, too, that while the immediate object of the discourse is to prove the truth of Scripture, there will be brought forward, in support of this argument, not a few of those facts and doctrines which deserve attention for their own sake.

In the text, three things are observable :

The nature of the deeds which Jesus is said to have wrought ;

The certainty that such things were actually done by him ;

And, *The design* for which a history of these transactions has been given, namely, "that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, we may have life through his name."

- The statement which the evangelist makes, in our text, with regard to the narrative he wrote, applies equally to the narratives of the three other evangelists; to the history of the acts of the apostles; generally, to the whole of the New Testament; and, in a considerable degree, to the whole of the Bible. One main design pervades all the parts of the sacred record; and the knowledge of this design is the key to the meaning of the Scriptures; that design is to make known to mankind the name of that glorious Personage by whom alone they can be saved. The writers of the Old Testament, having lived previously to the advent of the Messiah, speak of him as "He that should come."

The writers of the New Testament, having lived after that great event, speak of him as "He that has come." The latter, as might be expected, describe his person, character, and work in plainer language than their predecessors had used. But the same Messiah is found in both Testaments. In the old, we have the outline; in the new, the finished portrait.

The view which we are about to take of the proofs of the truth of the word of God, will be in accordance with these remarks. We shall consider the one object of the Bible to be, *the bearing testimony to the Messiah*; and shall notice other facts only so far as they tend to the proof or elucidation of this capital article of a Christian's faith.

Our first business is to inquire into THE NATURE OF THOSE SUPERNATURAL DEEDS AND EVENTS WHICH ARE RELATED OF OUR SAVIOUR IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Here it will be proper to give a short abstract of the memoirs of Jesus Christ, and of his apostles, contained in the sacred history.

At the commencement of the narrative, we find his approaching birth announced by a heavenly messenger. The Virgin Mary was informed that his conception should be supernatural; in order that he might be free from that unholiness of character which belongs to the whole race of man.

His birth was miraculously notified to shepherds near Bethlehem, and to Magi in a land east of Judea; who all found the event to correspond with that divine premonition of it which had been granted to them.

Before Jesus entered on his public ministry, John the Baptist, a man who was himself the subject of ancient prophecy, and who had been expressly designated as the Herald of the Messiah, bore testimony to his divine character; and Jesus having been baptized by John, received an attesta-

tion of his Messiahship from heaven, by means both of a supernatural appearance, and of a supernatural voice.

Christ soon after entered on his course of amazing and beneficent deeds.

First, at a marriage-feast, in Cana of Galilee, he, instantly and without the employment of means, changed a large quantity of water into wine.

At the same place, on a subsequent day, he instantaneously cured a nobleman's son, who was then at Capernaum; and who, the moment before Christ performed the cure, was apparently at the very point of death.

At Capernaum, on occasion of calling Peter, Andrew, James, and John, who were fishermen, to be his constant attendants, he gave directions which issued in the taking of a draught of fishes so miraculously great as to fill two ships.

In a synagogue of the same town he released a demoniac from the influence of a wicked spirit, by whom the unhappy man had before been dreadfully tormented.

Immediately afterwards, his help was sought and granted on behalf of the mother of Simon's wife, who was ill of a violent fever. The cure was so instantaneous and complete, that she immediately arose, and waited upon them.

In the evening of that day, "they brought to him all that were ill, and many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the evil spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick," without the use of means.

Time would fail to relate the numerous instances of miraculous cures which Christ effected. These were his ordinary actions. He also endowed his disciples with similar power.

Once, he supplied a multitude of four thousand men with a sufficient meal, by means of seven loaves and a few little fishes. And after the meal was ended, a quantity of fragments were gathered

up, more than equal to the original quantity of the provision. At another time, he fed five thousand men with five loaves and two small fishes; and twelve baskets-full of fragments were afterwards gathered up.

Sometimes, he restored dead persons to life. On one occasion, the corpse was being carried to the tomb, when Jesus, ordering the funeral procession to stop, commanded the dead man to rise up. The command was instantly obeyed. On another occasion the deceased had lain in the grave four days, when Christ uttered the authoritative words, "Come forth;" and he that had been dead came forth.

Christ himself, after having been crucified and laid in the tomb, arose from the dead, ate, drank, and conversed with his disciples; and, at length, ascended towards heaven in their sight.

After this event, a new series of wonders commenced. The disciples of Jesus, who, for the most part, had known no language except their mother tongue, became at once, without the process of learning, able to speak with ease and propriety in the languages of people of various nations, then assembled at Jerusalem.

These disciples also performed very many of the same sort of works which their master had done.

The power of thus speaking and of thus acting having been granted to them, according to the promise which Jesus had given before he left them, was a decisive proof to them, and is to us, of his having actually ascended to heaven.

Some time afterwards, a Jew, named Saul, while travelling in company with several persons to Damascus, on an embassy, the object of which was the persecution of the followers of Christ, was miraculously converted, and became forthwith a zealous and successful advocate of the Christian cause. This man also became immediately possessed of similar supernatural qualifications with the

other apostles, and long pursued the same course of miraculous action.

Such are a few only of the deeds and events attendant on the life of Jesus Christ, and of his appointed servants, the narrative of which is given in the New Testament. The whole number given in that book, are but a part of those which actually took place. The number put on record is, however, amply sufficient to answer the end designed; as will, I hope, be made apparent shortly. But I must remark, before this topic is dismissed, that whoever desires that the evidence arising from these facts should have its legitimate weight on his mind, must not be content with a bare outline of the history, but must leisurely and candidly read the narratives of the sacred writers.

The topic which next solicits attention is THE CERTAINTY OF THE FACTS AND EVENTS WHICH ARE RECORDED in the New Testament. They were intended to be SIGNS, plain and unequivocal marks of Jesus being the Messiah. Nor can any one doubt that if these things actually happened, Jesus is the Messiah, and the Christian Religion true and divine.

Before entering on the consideration of the proof that these things really did occur; I observe, as a preliminary remark, that *they cannot be deemed either impossible or improbable.*

1. THE MIRACLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ARE NOT IMPOSSIBLE.

“With God nothing is impossible;” nothing that does not involve a manifest absurdity; nothing which is not plainly opposed to that moral excellence which belongs to God.

The Scripture miracles are not marked by either of these characteristics.

They do not involve absurdity. It is *unusual* for a dead man to be restored to life; if it were not unusual, and that in a very high degree, it would

not be miraculous. But the idea of a dead man's being restored to life is not absurd; not a whit more absurd than the idea of a human creature's beginning to live who never lived before. The birth of a human being is, in itself, quite as wonderful as a human being's regaining life, after having lost it. The difference is, that the one event takes place according to the Creator's ordinary plan of acting, and that the other takes place *out of* his ordinary plan of acting. But the power which can effect the one is certainly equally competent to the effecting of the other.

Neither are the Scripture Miracles inconsistent with that moral excellence which belongs to God. They contradict neither his wisdom, his power, his holiness, his justice, his goodness, nor his truth. So far from it; the miracles were of such a nature as, in the most direct manner, to display his wisdom, power, and goodness; while, indirectly, they manifest his holiness, justice, and truth; inasmuch as they establish the certainty of that religion by which his glory is promoted in the world.

2. THE SCRIPTURE MIRACLES ARE NOT IMPROBABLE.

It has been alleged, by Mr. Hume and other sceptical writers, that *experience* is our only guide as to matters of fact; and that since miracles are contrary to what we constantly observe in nature, no testimony can be sufficient to warrant our believing them to be true. The laws of nature, say they, are known by uniform experience; and since a miracle is a violation of those laws, no proof of the truth of a miracle can be so convincing as is the evidence we possess of the invariableness of those laws.

This reasoning, though specious, is hollow, and has been often triumphantly refuted.

(1.) *It proceeds on the supposition that our knowledge of the laws of nature is complete, and is therefore incapable of correction or enlargement.*

Our acquaintance with the laws of nature is the

aggregate of the knowledge we have derived from personal observation and from the testimony of others. There are many natural phenomena which we have not ourselves witnessed, and of which, therefore, we can say nothing, "of our own knowledge." But since men, on whose testimony we can depend, assure us that they have observed such appearances; we believe the account they give us, and the phenomena in question become from the time we receive authentic information respecting them, a part of our knowledge respecting the laws of nature. Young students of nature often, and advanced scholars sometimes, meet with facts which are contrary to their previous experience. Yet they do not, on this account, distrust the evidence of their senses. Nature presents appearances in some parts of the earth, which in other countries are unknown. In these regions, the phenomenon of snow is common. There are parts of the world where snow has never fallen. An inhabitant of one of those countries, on being told, by an Englishman, that snow was seen in Britain, ridiculed the statement. On Mr. Hume's principles, this man's scepticism was perfectly justifiable; since such a thing as snow was contrary to his uniform experience. The unbelief of the savage with regard to snow, and that of the sceptic with regard to miracles, are both founded on the presumptuous and false supposition, that their knowledge of what is possible is so complete as not to admit of increase, or correction. Whereas, if credible witnesses inform us that certain events have happened, although such events may be out of the ordinary course of things, we are bound to believe them; and to add this information to the knowledge of nature which we previously possessed. The matter will then stand thus: we shall regard the laws of nature in the light of general rules; and miracles, as the exceptions to those rules.

(2.) *The objection that miracles are improbable, proceeds on a mistaken view of the laws of nature.*

The laws of nature are not rules which nature has imposed on itself, but rules which God has imposed on nature. A law of nature is a certain course of events which the Creator has determined that matter shall exhibit. But where is man's authority for asserting that this course of events shall never change? Surely no one will question either the Creator's *power* or his *right* to vary those laws of nature which he himself has ordained. His *power* so to act cannot be doubted, because he is *almighty*, and because those laws owe their continuance to his continued agency. Neither can his *right* be questioned. The laws of the natural world must not be confounded with those of the moral. The great principles of justice and truth which constitute the laws of the moral world have their basis in the very nature of things; and God cannot choose to alter them; because "he cannot deny himself." But the laws of nature have no necessary connexion with right and wrong. They spring out of the will of God, and by the will of God may be reversed, whenever he shall see fit to reverse them. The only question, therefore, is *whether there can ever exist a sufficient reason for the suspension of those laws.* And surely of this question God is the best, or rather, the only judge. No language is strong enough to portray the arrogance of the man who shall presume to tell his Maker that he ought never to allow the course of nature to alter. Besides, in this particular case, it is easy even for short-sighted creatures, such as we are, to see that there is a good reason for such an alteration being permitted to happen. The case is this. Mankind were sunk in vice, and ignorance. God saw it to be essential to their welfare that they should receive from him a revelation of his character and will. In order that this revelation might be known to be what it was, and might be treated accordingly, God saw fit that it should be accompanied with such signs as should prove it to have come from him. Of what description shall these signs

be? They must be either natural, moral, or both. They are of both these kinds. The moral proofs of this revelation being actually from God, are found in its excellent nature, and excellent effects. But then the perception of these proofs pre-supposes the revelation in question to have been carefully examined, and diligently used. It is desirable that the *first promulgation* of the revelation should be attended with such *outward*, sensible signs, as shall induce men to examine and use it; and these signs must of necessity be deviations from the ordinary course of nature. A man who declares that he is entrusted with a revelation from God, and performs such deeds as could not be performed without the supernatural help of God, shows, by those deeds, that his words are true.

Thus Christ and his apostles acted. Thousands of people, impressed with awe by the amazing things which they witnessed, heard attentively the message delivered; believed, and practised what they heard; and entered on a new life of faith, obedience, and happiness. By this means, the gospel widely and rapidly spread in the world. And surely the production of such an effect was reason enough for the temporary suspension of the course of nature.

Having thus endeavoured to show that there is no antecedent incredibility in the idea that miracles might be wrought in confirmation of the truth of a divine revelation, but rather, a strong presumption in their favour; we proceed to notice some of the PROOFS THAT THE MIRACLES RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURE REALLY DID TAKE PLACE.

This subject divides itself into two branches.

First, it must be shown that the miracles were of such a nature, that *they who witnessed them* could not doubt their reality; and, secondly, that the account we have of them is worthy of such credit, that *we also may be sure* that the miracles were actually performed.

First, it is to be proved that *the miraculous events recorded in the New Testament were of such a nature, that they who beheld them were fully assured that they were real, and were wrought by a divine interposition.*

No doubt, clever men have done wonders by *sleight of hand*; and the *imagination*, when strongly wrought upon, has done still greater wonders. But if we examine the miraculous deeds and events of the Bible, we shall find it impossible that they can be attributed to any such causes.

Many of the miracles wrought by the Saviour were done in *circumstances in which the imagination could have no concern.* He did not always require faith in the persons who were to be healed. He sometimes performed cures unsolicited, and on persons by whom he was not known. He cured persons at a distance, who were not aware of his intention before the cure was effected. He performed cures on children, and on demoniacs, who instead of desiring a cure requested him to leave them. These cures, too, were so thorough, decisive, and permanent, that the supposition of their being the effect of imagination is incredible. That a man, deprived of the use of his limbs might, by the force of imagination, obtain a temporary activity, is possible; but that a man, completely and from birth, blind, should in a moment gain good and lasting sight; that the deaf and dumb should acquire and retain the faculties of hearing and speaking; and above all, that the dead should be restored to life, by the force of imagination; are suppositions too absurd to require refutation.

Again: *Most of the miracles were public.* That five thousand men at one time, and four thousand at another, should *fancy* that they all together partook of a plentiful meal produced in their sight from a few loaves and fishes, while at the same time they only thought so, is incredible. It is im-

possible that such a number of people could be deceived in so plain a matter of fact.

It deserves also to be recollected that *many of the miracles were wrought in the presence of enemies*, who are always keen-sighted, and who would certainly have refused belief, had any room for suspicion been discoverable. But not being able to dispute the reality of the miracles, they had recourse to the hypothesis, equally irrational as it was blasphemous, that Jesus performed them by Satanic aid. This assertion proves that the bitterest enemies of Christ were unable to call in question either the reality, or the supernatural character of the facts.

The miracles of Christ, by their having been thus obvious to the senses; publicly performed; and wrought in the presence of enemies; are clearly distinguishable from a thousand pretensions to miraculous power which have been made by impostors and enthusiasts.

But there is one event relative to Christ, which must have a distinct notice, I mean *his resurrection from the dead*. The truth of the gospel might safely be made to rest on this fact alone, so important and so truly miraculous was it; so unequivocal and commanding are the proofs of its reality.

The evidence of this fact was unintentionally rendered more complete than it could otherwise have been by the suspicions of the enemies of Christ, and the precautions to which those suspicions gave birth. The Priests and Pharisees, recollecting that Jesus had formerly given some intimations of his rising again, obtained leave from the Roman Governor to appoint a military guard to watch the sepulchre. They also sealed up the entrance to the sepulchre. Early on the morning of the next day but one after the crucifixion, notwithstanding the large stone which Nicodemus and Joseph had placed at the mouth of the tomb; not-

withstanding the seal which the Priests and Pharisees had affixed to the same; notwithstanding the guard of Roman soldiers; the sepulchre was opened without human hands, and the glorious captive was no longer to be found. Christ had resumed the life which he had voluntarily laid down; and an angel had descended from heaven and rolled away the stone, "for fear of whom the keepers did tremble and became as dead men."

The incredible story which the enemies of Christ put into the mouths of the Roman Soldiers, was itself a proof of the fact of which it was intended to be a denial. They were instructed and bribed to say that the disciples of Christ came by night and stole away the body while they, the guard, were asleep; as if they could tell who came while they themselves were asleep, and as if Roman Soldiers could be proved to have slept on duty without forfeiting their lives! Besides, the disciples, so far from being disposed to pretend, without cause, that their master was risen, had no thought about such an event, and did not themselves believe that it had taken place, until the proof was so overwhelming that they could not resist it.

Ten separate times did Jesus appear to his disciples after his resurrection; sometimes to a few individuals, sometimes to "the eleven," and on one occasion to above five hundred brethren at once. At some of these interviews he ate and drank with them; at all he conversed with them; and more than once, he showed them, in his hands and feet and side, the very marks of the nails and of the spear by which his body had been pierced. By such "infallible proofs did Jesus show himself to his disciples after his resurrection," and by these means the most incredulous among them were thoroughly convinced. The reluctance which the disciples manifested to believe the fact is a circumstance much in favour of the evidence, inasmuch

as it shows that they would not be satisfied without the most decisive proofs.

It is important also to remark that *the apostles*, the appointed witnesses of the resurrection, *commenced the delivering of their testimony in the very place* where Christ had suffered death, and risen again; and within a few weeks of the time when those things had happened. Impostors would not have acted thus; none would have acted thus who were not aware that they were embarked in a cause which would bear the most rigid scrutiny.

In a word, it is incredible that, in such a matter, the apostles could either have been themselves deceived, or could have wished to deceive others. That they could not be themselves deceived has been already shown. What could make them wish to deceive others? The most usual motive to such conduct is *the love of gain*. This could not operate on them; not only because they were incapable of such baseness, but because there was no prospect of gain before them, had they been mean enough to desire it. *The love of fame* is a powerful stimulus to action. But reproach and not honour was before the eyes of the apostles. Poverty, reproach, labour, suffering, and, as to most of them, martyrdom, were their lot. Consequently, in publishing salvation to man through a crucified and risen Saviour, they could not be actuated by any base motive. They must have been quite sure that their doctrine was true, and that it was their duty to publish it; or flesh and blood would, doubtless, have shrunk from the task.

Now, whenever an adequate number of witnesses depose to a fact relative to which it is inconceivable that those witnesses could either have been deceived themselves, or could wish to deceive others; mankind uniformly admit the testimony.

Thus we act in the common affairs of life. On the same principle, lawyers, judges, and juries

proceed in courts of judicature; and thus we form our conclusions in matters of religion. If the testimony, which the apostles bore to the fact of Christ's resurrection, was not adequate to the purpose of producing conviction in every unprejudiced mind, what are commonly understood to be the rules of evidence are mere matters of fancy; and judicial proceedings are nothing better than games of chance.

We conceive it to be a mark of the special kindness of God that this most important fact—the resurrection of Christ—should be certified by proofs so unusually numerous, clear, and strong, as to enable the Christian, however doubtful he may sometimes be of his being “risen with Christ” in affection and destiny, to join without a suspicion in the triumphant language of Paul: “NOW IS CHRIST RISEN from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.”

Thus far we have considered the evidence of the miraculous facts of the New Testament, as it was calculated to affect those who either beheld those facts, or heard the testimony of the persons who had been eye-witnesses; and we have found reason to conclude that the evidence was most fully adequate to the purpose of producing an assured conviction.

We are now to contemplate these same facts *in relation to ourselves*; and it must be shown that the account which we have of them is worthy of such credit that *we also may be sure that the miracles did actually take place*, as recorded, and may consequently be as well satisfied, as the people were who lived at the time, “that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”

At present, it will be sufficient to regard the New Testament in the light of a *History*, and we are to consider what are the principal circumstances relative to an historical narrative which render it *worthy of belief*.

When the things related in a history are neither impossible, nor improbable; when the style and manner of the writer exhibit unequivocal marks of sincerity; when no other authentic narrative contradicts the history in question; and when many independent testimonies confirm it; we are obliged, on the principles of common sense, to regard it as true. It is not essential that all these proofs should meet in a narrative, in order to authorize our believing it; but when all these proofs do meet, we cannot choose but believe it. That all these do meet in the evangelical history, it requires no peculiar penetration to discover.

1. It has been already shown that *the facts recorded are neither impossible nor improbable.*

2. *The style and manner of the narratives exhibit all the marks of sincerity* which can be desired.

The style is removed to the utmost conceivable distance from high colouring and exaggeration; and herein it totally differs from that of the writers whose object is to amuse by the relation of wonderful stories. The evangelists have, indeed, amazing things to relate; but the marvellousness of the history arises altogether from the nature of the facts, and not at all from the manner of telling them.

These narratives are also remarkably free from all appearance of party spirit; and herein their manner differs widely from that which is usually employed by advocates, who aim to extenuate the faults, and to place in the most advantageous light the excellencies, of their clients. The evangelists make no attempt to conceal such facts as might tend to excite prejudice against the cause of the gospel; nor are they solicitous to set off to the best advantage the favourable circumstances which they relate. They scruple not to tell the meanness of their Master's origin, with regard to his human nature; the poverty both of *his* condition and of

their own; the small measure of countenance which he received from the great and learned; and the ignominious death which he endured; though they knew that these were things which made many of their countrymen despise his very name. In like manner, they spoke with freedom of the faults of the disciples of Christ, whenever faithfulness required the statement to be given. The treachery of Judas, the cowardice of Peter, the rage of James and John, the ignorance of all till after the resurrection of Christ, are narrated with as much plainness as if enemies had been the writers. And when they speak of their adorable Master, in whose character all excellencies met without a single failing, their method is not to write an eulogium, but merely to state facts, and leave their readers to form the comment. If it be possible for a book to exhibit satisfactory marks of honest intention on the part of the writer, those marks are seen in the gospels.

3. *No authentic history contradicts* the accounts contained in the evangelical narrative.

There were Roman and Jewish writers contemporary with the evangelists, and in the ages immediately ensuing; it will be shown shortly that these writers did more than afford a negative testimony; but it is important distinctly to observe that not one of them attempts to falsify the gospel history.

4. That history is *confirmed by numerous testimonies*, independent of the Scripture, and independent of each other.

An unbroken chain of historical proofs reaches down from the time of the apostles to our day. Of the eighteen centuries which this period embraces, there is not one age which has not produced writings, yet extant, which contain testimonials to the truth of the leading facts of the evangelical record. Of these writers, some were Christians, some Jews, and some Heathens. Our limits will

admit of nothing more than a few short extracts from some of them, and brief allusions to a few others. Those of the first ages only need to be mentioned.

IGNATIUS, who lived within 40 years of the ascension of Christ, frequently refers, in his epistles, to the gospels of Matthew and John.

POLYCARP, who had conversed with the apostles, introduces into his writings, quotations from Matthew, the Acts of the Apostles, and other books of the New Testament.

JUSTIN MARTYR, who lived about 100 years after Christ, has several distinct and copious extracts from the gospels and the Acts; and states that the memoirs of the apostles were read in his day in public worship.

IRENÆUS, who lived about 200 years after Christ, gives an equally decisive testimony as to the genuineness of the gospel history.

These persons lived in countries remote from each other; Ignatius at Antioch, Polycarp at Smyrna, Justin Martyr in Syria, Irenæus in France.

ANATHAGORAS, who lived at the end of the second century, and had been before his conversion an Athenian Philosopher, wrote an able defence of Christianity, addressed to the Roman Emperor.

TERTULLIAN flourished at the end of the second and beginning of the third century. It appears that there are more quotations from the New Testament in the works of this one writer, than there are from all the books of Cicero in all ancient authors.

After Tertullian, follow HIPPOLYTUS, ORIGEN, GREGORY, DIONYSIUS, CYPRIAN, and many others, down to the time of EUSEBIUS, who flourished about 300 years after Christ. Eusebius, who is accounted a very accurate historian, men-

tions by name all the books of the New Testament which are now received by the Christian Church, and informs us that they were received by the Church in his time.

Testimonials, unintentional but highly valuable, are given to the truth of the gospel, by several *Heathen writers*. It will be enough to refer to three well-known names, Tacitus, Pliny, and Lucian.

TACITUS says, that Christ, the author of the Christian name, during the reign of Tiberius, suffered under the Procurator Pontius Pilate. He also states that there was a great multitude of Christians in his day, not only in Judea, but even in Rome; on whom he says Nero inflicted the most cruel punishments.

PLINY THE YOUNGER, in a letter to the Emperor Trojan, writes that the Christians were accustomed to meet together, to sing hymns to Christ, as God. Alluding to their number, he observes that the superstition had spread through cities, villages and countries; and that many of every age, of every rank, and of both sexes, were infected with it.

LUCIAN, one of the chief magistrates of the Roman Empire, writes thus: "The lawgiver of the Christians persuades them that they are all brethren. They secede from us. They abjure the gods of the Grecians. They adore their crucified teacher, and conform their lives to his laws."

These three writers lived in the first and second centuries of the Christian era.

There is yet *another class of authors* which must by no means be overlooked, namely, *the professed opponents of Christianity* who lived in the early ages of the Church. JULIAN, PORPHYRY, and CELSUS are of this description. It deserves especial remark, that these men, though they wrote expressly against the gospel, *did not attempt to dispute the reality of the facts of the gospel history*. Now if the truth of those facts had been in

the least degree questionable, there cannot be a doubt that these writers would have endeavoured to disprove them; since this would have superseded the necessity of any further argumentation. The tacit admission of the reality of the facts, on the part of these early opposers of the gospel, is a convincing proof of the facts having been then deemed indisputable.

I conclude this part of the subject in the words of Dr. Olinthus Gregory. "I might safely challenge," says he, "the most learned man to adduce evidence of any thing like equal weight in proof of the genuineness of Cæsar's Commentaries, Pliny's Letters, Livy's Roman History, Tacitus's Annals, or any other pieces preserved to us from antiquity, and received without hesitation by all except madmen."

The *third* and last part of the text is THE DESIGN FOR WHICH THE GOSPEL HISTORY HAS BEEN GIVEN, namely, "that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, we might have life through his name."

Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of God." The miracles which he performed; his resurrection from the dead; the descent of the Holy Spirit, according to the Saviour's promise; the exact agreement observable between the predictions respecting him contained in the Old Testament, and the facts related of him in the New; all combine to prove him to be the true Messiah.

Much thankfulness do we owe to God, that he has been pleased to give us proof so ample of a fact so fundamental.

But there are two points of great importance which remain to be noticed:

The Blessing to be derived from Christ; and

The Means by which it is obtained.

The blessing is LIFE; life, in opposition to that legal death to which man as a sinner is exposed; and life, in opposition to that moral death in which,

as a corrupt creature, he lies. Life, which begins on earth in a state of acceptance with God and of spiritual activity, and is perfected in a better world; where it shall continue without interruption and without end. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son."

It is this which imparts an interest to the gospel history to which no other can pretend. "It is not a vain thing; it is our Life." Have you, my brethren, been accustomed to view the matter in this light? Or can you read and hear the narrative of what the Son of God did and suffered, with an indifference similar to that which might possess your mind while attending to an account of transactions in which you have no personal concern?

If you *feel* no concern in what relates to the Son of God, it is but too plain that you *have* no concern in him.

Consider, attentively, THE MEANS by which men obtain that life of which mention is here made.

It is *Faith*. Not that faith which consists merely in not denying the truth of the gospel history; but such a faith as leads a man to regard the facts and doctrines respecting Christ *in the connexion they have with his own eternal welfare*. This man, being acquainted with God, with the law of God, and with himself, knows himself to be a guilty creature, exposed to God's just and fearful anger, and utterly unable, "by works of righteousness which he has done," to recover the favour of his Maker, and save himself from eternal woe. Knowing this, he receives with joy the tidings of mercy made in His name who "came into the world to save sinners," and who "died, the just for the unjust, to bring them to God." He comes to God through Him. He comes daily to the Throne of Grace, that he may "obtain mercy and find

grace to help in time of need." He lives a life of faith on the Son of God who loved him and gave himself for him. And he shows his faith by his works. He "denies ungodliness and worldly lusts, and lives righteously, soberly, and godly in the world."

My brethren, be not content with any faith which falls short of producing such feelings and such conduct as these passages of Scripture delineate. Many it may be feared there are, who have no doubt of Christ being the Son of God; who, notwithstanding, do not "believe on him to the saving of the soul."

But let those who do "believe with the heart unto righteousness," take the encouragement which the words of the text, and many other such texts, afford. Observe the unembarrassed manner in which salvation is proclaimed. Life is represented as the constant companion of faith. Nor is this invaluable good restricted to believers whose faith is so strong as to rise to the absolute assurance of being saved. Nor are any other high attainments in Christian experience represented as essentially necessary. But it is simply *faith*, between which and everlasting salvation this indissoluble connexion exists. "He that believeth on the Son hath life; he (only) that believeth not shall not see life;" on him, and on him only, the wrath of God abideth.

LECTURE XI.

June 13, 1824.

THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 TIM. iii. 16.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

IN the last lecture a concise account was given of the supernatural events and deeds which marked the life of Jesus Christ, and of his apostles. The certainty that such things actually took place was then pointed out; and, lastly, the design for which a history of those things was written.

It was first proved that the miracles recorded could not be regarded either as impossible or improbable; and it was then shown both that the miracles were of such a nature that they who beheld them could not doubt their reality, and also that the account we have of them is worthy of such entire credit that we too may be assured they actually occurred. It was observed, that when the things related in a history are neither impossible nor improbable; when the style and manner of the writer exhibit unequivocal marks of sincerity; when no other narrative contradicts the history; and when many independent testimonies confirm it; we are obliged, on the universally acknowledged principles of judging, to regard that history as a true one.

It was proved that all these marks meet, and that in an extraordinary degree, in the gospel history.

In the present lecture, which is intended to be

a continuation of the same subject, I propose to introduce the following topics, and to observe the following order.

First, having already shown that the New Testament is a true history of actual facts, I shall aim at proving that it also contains *true doctrine*.

The divine origin and authority of the *New Testament* being thus established, we shall notice the proofs of the divine origin and authority of the *Old*.

We shall then contemplate the *internal evidence* of the truth of revealed religion.

We are first, to contemplate the proofs there are that THE NEW TESTAMENT CONTAINS DOCTRINE WHICH IS UNQUESTIONABLY TRUE.

By what means, let us here inquire, can any man become qualified to speak and write religious truth without any mixture of error ?

Not by the force of natural talent, however great ; not by means of study and meditation, however profound ; not even through the influence of ardent piety. No one of these qualifications, nor all of them conjoined, can raise a man above the condition of a fallible being, liable to error. For any one to become qualified to teach unquestionable truth, it is absolutely necessary that he should be under the inspiration of God ; that is, that he should be favoured with such an extraordinary and supernatural measure of divine aid, as will make him acquainted with all the truth which he needs either himself to know, or to tell to others ; and will effectually guard him against mistake, both in his own conception of things and in communicating his thoughts to others.

Such is the instruction which we conceive the sacred writers to have enjoyed. There is no necessity to ask whether every thing contained in the Scriptures were suggested immediately by the Spirit ; whether Luke were inspired to say that the ship in which he sailed with Paul, was wrecked on

the island of Melita; or whether Paul was under the guidance of the Spirit in directing Timothy to bring with him the cloak, books, and parchments, which he had left at Troas; for the answer is obvious, these were not things of a religious nature, and no inspiration was necessary concerning them. It is enough to maintain that the sacred writers were under supernatural influence with regard to all things which concern religion.

Again: many of the events relative to Christ recorded by the evangelists, had been witnessed by the writers themselves. All the aid, therefore, that they required as to these, was, that their memory should be rendered retentive. Many of the *doctrines*, too, which the apostles communicated, they had received from the lips of Christ; all the assistance which the apostles needed as to such doctrines was that they should be enabled distinctly to recollect what they had heard. But with regard to such truths as the apostles had not received from the lips of the Saviour, the case is different; as to these things, it was necessary that an immediate communication of knowledge should be made to their minds. Some also, of the *facts* related had not been witnessed by the relaters; with regard to these facts, too, the same assistance was requisite.

Without entering into a minute examination of different degrees of inspiration, it is sufficient to state that *the sacred writers enjoyed that measure of help which was necessary to qualify them in all cases to communicate to mankind religious truth, pure and unmixed.*

The proofs of this shall now be adduced, from *the declarations of the apostles* themselves, and from *the promise of their Lord and Saviour.*

Since the supernatural works which the apostles performed, showed that God was with them, and that they were really, what they professed to be, the messengers of God to their fellow-men, we are not only warranted but obliged to believe their

words. Under this impression, let the following declarations be received.

The Apostle *Paul* assured the *Galatians* that he had learned the gospel only "by the revelation of Jesus Christ." He said to the *Corinthians* concerning the things peculiar to Christianity: "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit. We have received the Spirit which is of God that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God; which things we speak in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. We have the mind of Christ."

Here are direct assertions that himself and his associates were divinely inspired. Again, Paul, writing to the *Thessalonians*, says, with regard to those who treated the apostolic doctrine with contempt; "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit." Despising the apostle's doctrine, could not have been the same thing as despising God, unless that doctrine had been unquestionably divine.

In like manner, the other apostles claim respect to the instruction which they delivered, on account of its being invested with divine authority. Thus, *Peter* said to the Christians to whom he wrote; "This second epistle, beloved, I now write to you; that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of our Lord and Saviour." *John*, for the like purpose, asserts; "We are of God; he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." For men to speak thus, who were conscious of being under the unerring guidance of God, was natural and just. In the mouth of uninspired men, such language would have been arrogant and unwarrantable in the extreme.

The very texts, which some have supposed to show that the apostle Paul doubted the fact of his own inspiration furnish in reality, proof of the con-

trary. In the seventh chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, he says, "I speak this by permission and not of commandment;" and again, "I have no commandment of the Lord, (namely, in that particular case,) yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." The subject on which the apostle here delivers his opinion was not a part of religious sentiment or practice; it was not a branch of Christian doctrine or duty; it was merely a question of prudence, arising out of the existing circumstances of the church, respecting which his sentiments had been asked. Paul, therefore, agreeably to request, gives them his advice, as a friend; but, at the same time, guards them against supposing that in delivering that advice he spoke with apostolic authority, lest their consciences should be shackled. But the apostle's declaration, that, *in this particular matter*, he spoke, "by permission, and not by commandment," strongly implies that *in other things*, in those, namely, of a strictly religious character, he did speak by commandment. A specified exception manifestly involves the existence of a general rule. Accordingly, *in the very same chapter*, when he had occasion to speak of what was matter of moral duty, he says, "I command, yet, not I, but the Lord."

2. *The promise which the Saviour gave to his disciples* proves that they were under divine inspiration. A few hours before his death, Jesus said to them; "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive. He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. He will guide you into all truth. He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."

There are two clauses in the above passage which demand particular attention.

(1.) The Spirit promised to the disciples was to *bring all things to their remembrance* whatsoever Christ had said unto them.

(2.) The Spirit would *guide them into all the truth*.

Here is complete inspiration. They were to have a distinct recollection of the discourses of Christ; and whatsoever truth Christ had not fully revealed to them, the Spirit was to make known. This promise, which began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, proves how fully authorised the apostles were to speak in positive terms of their being inspired, and shows how perfectly qualified they were to be the medium of divine communications of religious knowledge to mankind.

This supernatural guidance, promised and granted to the apostles, respects equally their *speaking* and their *writing*. It was indeed still more important that they should *write* truth than that they should preach it. An error in their preaching would have affected chiefly one place and one age; whereas an error in their writings would have misled Christians of all ages and countries. But the promise of our Lord, just quoted, was full security, both to them and to the church at large, against the occurring of so fearful a calamity. The promise was expressed in the most general and comprehensive terms; and conveyed an assurance that they should be preserved from error, both in their own minds, and in their communications of religious doctrines to others, whether by the tongue, or by the pen.

All the writers of the New Testament, except Mark and Luke, were apostles; these two were the friends and companions of apostles; Mark, of Peter; and Luke, of Paul; and wrote the evangelical narratives which bear their names under the sanction of those apostles respectively. Nor was supernatural influence confined to the apostles. Many other disciples were favoured with it; and among the rest, there is no reason to doubt that Mark and Luke possessed it.

WE shall now advert to some of the PROOFS OF THE AUTHENTICITY AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

I. It is undeniable that *the Jews, in our Saviour's time, and long before, had the same Old Testament Scriptures which we now have.*

The existence of Jews and of Christians from that time to this, is a decisive proof of the fact. Both Jews and Christians have uniformly appealed to the same holy writings of the Old Testament, though they have differed in the interpretation of those Scriptures. Their differences of opinion have been the best possible security against any designed alteration in the text taking place. If the Jews had been wicked enough to endeavour to alter the Old Testament in order to make it agree with their present sentiments, Christians would have immediately exposed the attempt. And if Christians had been guilty of such audacity and profaneness, the Jews would have interfered. But the fact is, that the Hebrew Bible, which the descendants of Abraham now have, is the very same, book for book, and word for word, which is sold in booksellers' shops among Christians. These facts vouch for the age of the Old Testament being not less than 1800 years. Then, with regard to the period antecedent to Christianity; it is to be observed, that the Old Testament Scriptures were "read in the Synagogues every Sabbath day;" that copies of them were numerous; that the Jews are known to have been careful, even to a superstitious degree, to avoid altering the text of Scripture; and that, for ages before the birth of Christ, there existed a distinct translation of the Old Testament in the Greek language, called the *Septuagint*. These considerations strongly show the improbability of those Scriptures having ever been materially altered, from the very date of their being written to our own day.

If we consider *the nature of the facts* recorded in the Old Testament, we shall see that *it is impos-*

sible to suppose that a record of them could have been received, had not the facts related actually occurred. Let us confine our attention to the history given in the book of Exodus. The transactions there recorded refer to the Jews themselves. It is stated, that the people, after having been for a long time in a state of slavery in Egypt, were suddenly delivered from their oppressors; were conducted in safety through the midst of the Red Sea; and, forty years afterwards, through the midst of Jordan; and that *memorials of these events were instituted at the very time.* The feast of the Passover, for example, was expressly appointed to keep up the remembrance of the supernatural protection enjoyed by the Israelites, when the first-born among the Egyptians were slain. Such a memorial as this, instituted at the time, and observed ever afterwards, is one of the surest evidences which subsequent ages can have that the event actually took place. The agreement of the history given in the books of Moses with numerous institutions of this nature observed among the Jews, is a strong proof of the authenticity of those books.

In fact, *the Jewish people themselves*, as they exist at this day, are living witnesses for the truth of the Old Testament. What was formerly said with regard to the origin of Christianity may be stated as to the origin of Judaism. I would ask any person who doubts the authenticity of the Old Testament to write a history of the Jewish people. No one doubts whether these people now exist; no one denies that there have been such people for many ages. Let us have then an account of their origin. Let us be informed whence they came, and whence they obtained their holy books, and religious institutions. It will be found impossible to write any credible history of the Jews which will not include all the leading facts of the history of the Bible, and which will not prove the authenticity of the Jewish Scriptures.

It is proper also to refer to the present condition of Palestine, or *the Holy Land.* The accounts given

by travellers, ancient and modern, who have visited that part of the world, agree, in a thousand particulars, with the statements contained both in the Old and in the New Testament, and afford innumerable proofs of the truth of those Scriptures.

I proceed to adduce proof of THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, from the references made to it in the New.

The following quotations of this nature, which are very few out of very many, I have arranged under four heads, as relating to the Prophets, to the Psalms, to the Books of Moses, and to the Old Testament in general.

1. *References to the Prophets.*

The Apostle Peter, says, 2 Peter i. 21. "Prophesy came not in old time by the will of man: but *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*" Again, 1 Peter i. 10—12. "The prophets inquired 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 (the Spirit of Christ which was in them) testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Heb. i. 1. "God, at sundry times and in divers manners, *spake* in time past to the fathers *by the prophets.*"

2. *References to the Psalms.*

Heb. iii. 7. referring to Psalm xev. 7. "Wherefore, *as the Holy Ghost saith,* To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Acts ii. 29—31. and referring to Psalm xvi. "Men and brethren," (said Peter,) "let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch *David*, that being a *prophet*, he seeing this before, *spake* of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in the unseen state, neither did his flesh see corruption."

3. *References to the Books of Moses.*

1 Tim. v. 18. "For *the Scripture saith,* Thou

shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn ;” referring to a precept in the book of Deuteronomy, and to that book as one of divine authority. Gal. iii. 8. “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, (Gen. xii. 3.) In thee shall all nations be blessed.” The Saviour uniformly refers to *Moses* as an undoubted prophet; and quotes his words as of unquestionable authority: *e. g.* John v. 46, 47. “Had ye believed *Moses*, ye would have believed me: for *he wrote of me*. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”

4. *References to the Old Testament Scriptures, generally.*

Luke xxiv. 25—27. “Then said Jesus unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at *Moses* and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the (Old Testament) Scriptures *the things concerning himself*.” ver. 44. “And he said to them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that *all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me*.”

Here is an attestation to the divine authority of the Old Testament, of the most positive nature, given by our Lord himself; and therefore not to be called in question by any who allow that Jesus was himself a true *Prophet*. He declares that it was absolutely *necessary* that whatever had been written in the law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning himself should be fulfilled. Those writers could have known nothing of the Messiah, hundreds of years before he came, had not God supernaturally instructed them. And had it been possible for them to say any thing beforehand of Christ, without divine inspiration, there

could have been no necessity for their words being fulfilled. The necessity of the case arose from the fact of the prophets having spoken under the guidance and in the name of God; whose perfections were therefore pledged to make good the things foretold. When the Saviour declares that "all things written" concerning him "in the law of Moses, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets **MUST BE FULFILLED**," he asserts what is precisely tantamount to a declaration that the law of Moses, the book of Psalms, and the writings of the Prophets, had been given *by inspiration of God*.

The same testimony respecting the Old Testament is given by the Apostle Paul in the text and context. It is of the Old Testament writings, viewed collectively, those Scriptures which were then universally received by the Jews, that he speaks; for, during the childhood of Timothy, no part of the New Testament had been written. Concerning those sacred books, he says, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture (the Old Testament, namely) is given by inspiration of God."

It is not necessary, in this course of lectures, that we should examine the claims of every separate book of Holy Writ. Our limits would be insufficient for such a purpose. Nor is it essential to the Christian system that every book of the Scripture should be proved to be of divine authority. If a man were to consider the Bible to consist only of the New Testament, and those parts of the Old on behalf of which a direct attestation is given in the New, he would have a Bible large enough to contain every doctrine of Religion; and attestations of this kind, as to a considerable number of the books, have been quoted in this lecture. But though I would not consider it essential to a genuine faith in the word of God, that a man

should regard as inspired every part of the Scriptures, without a single exception; I would advise persons to be exceedingly cautious how they reject any, the smallest portion, of what Christians in general consider to be Holy Scripture. Without entering on the examination of every book, it may be remarked, generally, that under the three titles of The Law, The Psalms, and The Prophets, the Jews, in our Saviour's time, were accustomed to include all the books of Scripture which were in their possession, which books, taken together, are called by the Apostle Paul, *All Scripture*; and that there is abundant proof that the Old Testament Scriptures of those days were, substantially, the same with those which are now in the possession both of Jews and Christians. Consequently, when our Lord refers to the "Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms," as books of divine authority, he does, in effect, put his seal on the books of the Old Testament, collectively considered; nor can the disciple of Christ desire any better proof of the truth of those Scriptures, than to observe the impress of his heavenly Teacher's signet thereon.

But before the subject is dismissed, it is right to advert to another evidence of the divine origin of the Old Testament, arising out of the coincidence there is between the predictions of that part of Scripture, and the facts recorded in the New Testament. On the subject of Prophecy, did time allow, I might direct your attention to Nineveh, to Babylon, to Tyre, to Egypt, to the destruction of Jerusalem, and to the dispersion and degradation of the Jews. But as a selection of predictions and events, by way of specimen, is all that can be attempted, I shall restrict myself to such as relate to one object alone, *the Lord Jesus Christ*; and of these only a small number can be given.

Every reader of the Old Testament has observed therein intimations and predictions, too numerous to be counted, of a glorious Personage who

should one day appear in the world, as the Benefactor of mankind; and every one who has read the New Testament has perceived that the facts related of Christ therein, agree exactly with those predictions. To some of these prophecies reference was formerly made, when we were treating on the subject of modern Judaism.

It was foretold, for instance, to Abraham, that in him, in his offspring, all nations of the earth should be blessed. Christ's appearing in the world as the descendant of Abraham was the fulfilment of this promise. In subsequent ages it was declared, that the Messiah should be of the tribe of Judah, of the family of David, and should be born at Bethlehem; all which circumstances we find were realised in the life of Christ. It was predicted in the cxth Psalm, that Christ should be both the "Son of David and the Lord of David;" two circumstances, apparently contradictory, but which proved exactly true in consequence of the union of the human and divine natures in the person of Christ. The time of Christ's coming was foretold both by Jacob and Daniel. Jacob predicted that the sceptre should not depart from Judah until the Shiloh came; and we learn from history that the sceptre departed from Judah very soon after Christ's coming. Daniel predicted that in seventy weeks (that is, in prophetic language, weeks of years, or 490 years) after the command to rebuild Jerusalem, Messiah the Prince should be cut off. And Christ was crucified 490 years after the issuing of such a command by Artaxerxes.

Both Isaiah and Malachi foretold that the Messiah should have a forerunner to prepare his way; a prediction which was fulfilled in the person and ministry of John the Baptist.

But among all the many prophecies respecting the Saviour no one is more easy to understand, or more deserving of attention than that which is contained in the liiird chapter of Isaiah. When the celebrated John Wilmott, Earl of Rochester, was

converted from being a violent enemy of Religion into a firm believer, this was the portion of Scripture which most powerfully affected his mind. Comparing it with the history of our Saviour's sufferings, he saw the fulfilment of a prophecy, written several ages before, and which the Jews, who blasphemed Jesus, still kept in their hands as an inspired book. He confessed to Bishop Burnett, that "as he heard it read, he felt an inward force upon him which did so enlighten his mind, and convince him, that he could resist it no longer; and that ever after he as firmly believed in the Saviour as if he had seen him in the clouds."

If the whole nation of the Jews had embraced the gospel soon after the death of Christ, and all their descendants, in subsequent ages, had been Christians, it might have been pretended that the liiird chapter of Isaiah had been written since the events alluded to in it happened. But the well-known fact, that from that time to this the majority of the Jewish people have rejected Christ, and have continued to expect a Messiah of a character quite different from that described by Isaiah; while, notwithstanding, they have always had this very chapter in their Bible exactly as we have it, is as convincing a proof as can be imagined, that the description of the Messiah contained therein, was certainly written long before the events referred to took place.

No person ever did appear in the world besides Jesus Christ, and we may confidently add that no one besides him ever will appear, to whose character and life that portion of Scripture can be applied. To Jesus Christ that Scripture is as exactly applicable as if it had been written after his death. And we feel assured that He alone who sees the end from the beginning, could have qualified a man to utter such predictions.

We now enter, rather more particularly, on a consideration of the INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF THE

TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, or the proofs of its divine origin which are seen in its very *nature*, viewed in connexion with the character, the state, and the wants of mankind.

In the *outward* evidence of the Truth of Religion there is nothing difficult to understand; the internal evidence, however, has certainly the advantage of being still more plain, and especially of including proofs for seeing which a Christian needs not look beyond his own heart.

Among the various points of view in which man may be regarded, the four following seem to be some of the principal :

He is a rational being ;

He is sinful ;

He is liable to distress and death ; and,

He is prone to neglect the service of God.

Let us see how the gospel is suited to him in each of these views.

On former occasions we have seen that systems purporting to be true religion were deplorably wanting in adaptation to mankind in one or more of these respects. We shall now with pleasure observe that in all these respects the Gospel is every thing we could desire.

1. *The Religion of Christ is well suited to man as a rational creature.*

(1.) *This Religion contains in it not a single absurd proposition* throughout all its thousands of declarations. It states many things relative to God, his government, and his methods of benefiting mankind, which cannot be fully understood. But it by no means follows that these statements are absurd. Sufficient cause may be found in the very nature of the truths in question as compared with the limited faculties of man, to account for their not being fully comprehensible, without supposing them to be at all contrary to reason. It is rather a presumptive argument in favour of divine revelation that it does contain declarations concerning the

nature and operations of God which cannot be thoroughly understood by man; this being just what it was reasonable to expect. If the question be asked, Why were such things communicated to mankind, if they cannot be understood? The answer is, They may be understood sufficiently for all practical and useful purposes, though not so thoroughly as curiosity might desire. The truths of which I speak may be *understood as matters of fact*; the *uses*, also, which the said truths are designed to answer, are both *intelligible and practicable*; the incomprehensibleness of the doctrines in question relates only to the *speculative* aspects under which those doctrines may be viewed. In this, there is nothing revolting to reason. Among the innumerable propositions which revealed religion includes, there is not one statement which may fairly be called absurd.

This cannot be said of any other system purporting to be religion. Look at the Mythology of the learned Greeks and Romans: look at the Theology of the learned Bramhins of India: and you cannot fail to see at once that there are hundreds of propositions concerning God and concerning alleged events, which are manifestly irrational, being, not above reason, which the truth may be; but absolutely inconsistent with reason, which truth cannot be.

(2.) As revealed religion contains no absurd propositions, so *neither does it enjoin any unmeaning or useless ceremonies*. Herein, as in the other particular, it is suited to man as a rational creature; and herein, too, it differs from false religions, and from corrupt editions of the true.

On this head I need not take up your time by recapitulating former statements. I need only call to your recollection the descriptions formerly given of the puerile rites of Pagan worship. In Christian worship, according to the platform laid down in the Scriptures, nothing puerile has place. Even

in the ancient Jewish worship, numerous as its ceremonies were, there was nothing unmeaning. Its "divers washings" were emblematic of the purification of the heart. Its eucharistic oblations were a sensible acknowledgment of God as the Benefactor of man; and its sin-offerings were designed both to remind men of their deserving death, and of God's intentions of mercy through the atonement which the Lamb of God should one day offer.

The Christian Dispensation is of a still more spiritual and intellectual character. They who consider *prayer* in the light of a mere ceremony, manifest a total ignorance of its nature. It is fraught with substantial advantage. Not only is it essential to our welfare from the connexion which God has instituted between our asking and his giving; but it has a powerful moral effect on the heart of the man who duly performs it.

In the Christian Religion, there are but *two symbolical institutions*—Baptism, and the Lord's Supper; neither of which is without meaning. The application of water in Baptism is a visible memento both of man's moral pollution, and of the efficacy of the grace of God to cleanse the soul. The use of bread and wine in the Holy Supper is calculated to bring to the mind a lively recollection of the sufferings and death of that Saviour, to whom we owe our hopes of pardon; and thus, by augmenting our confidence in him, and our love towards him, to make us both happier and better.

(3.) Whilst there is nothing either in the doctrine or in the rites of Christianity absurd and unmeaning, *there is much in that system of religion to enlarge, to refine, to elevate, and to gratify the mind.*

The Holy Scriptures contain descriptions of God, of the works of God, and of the designs of God, which are in the highest sense sublime. With regard also to a great number of otherwise unac-

countable facts in human nature and in man's present condition, the word of God traces things to their causes, to a degree immeasurably beyond what philosophy, not thus assisted, could possibly attain. A man may no doubt be a proficient in natural science, although unacquainted with the Bible; but a *moral philosopher*, deserving of the name, no man can be who rejects divine revelation. The knowledge which revealed religion includes constitutes so important a portion of the information attainable by man, that were we to suppose a person thoroughly acquainted with all other sciences, the want of this would be like the absence of a volume in an encyclopedia; the set would be quite incomplete without it. Nay, that particular volume would be wanting which could least of all be spared.

Those who have made it their business to observe the effects of religious knowledge on the minds of persons comparatively ignorant in other matters, have been astonished and delighted to witness the elevation it has given to the intellectual character. Not only has religion augmented the peasant's stock of ideas, but it has evidently improved his mental faculties. It has done the same thing for him which education can do; or rather, it has been education to him. At whatever age a man be first instructed in religious truth; whether or not that instruction be accompanied with the learning to read; such instruction is essentially *education*; and no one, so taught, can possibly in fairness be called an ignorant person.

Religion, too, has opened before mankind wide and pleasant fields of thought; so that even in solitude the religious man finds agreeable employment, and no longer is conscious of that vacuity of mind, which to irreligious and uneducated people, is inevitable.

Religion, therefore viewed merely as an *intel-*

lectual system, is well adapted to man as an intellectual being.

2. *The religion of the Gospel is suited to man as a guilty creature.*

There are but few persons who absolutely deny the fact of their being transgressors in the sight of their Maker. Yet it is to be feared that many have very inadequate conceptions of the number and magnitude of the offences which they have committed. They have very imperfect notions of the extent of human duty and obligation. Some restrict it to compliance with the laws of the land; others, to an observance of the customs generally practised by their neighbours; and many confine it to the duties which respect their fellow-creatures. But few appear to understand and to apply to themselves the view of duty given in that summary of God's law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; and thy neighbour as thyself." Let a man but know the extent of the demand which this law makes on his affections as well as on his conduct; on his motives, as well as on his actions; let him compare his character and life with that rule; let conscience faithfully perform its office, and as God's representative, pronounce the verdict of guilty; let the man who has thus heard the sentence of condemnation, have a due impression on his mind of that justice and power which belong to God, and which ensure the punishment of evil-doers; let the man anticipate the retribution, fearful and endless, which awaits the disobedient; and in the midst of these thoughts let him read those portions of Scripture which thus speak of our Lord Jesus Christ; "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have eternal life. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we

are healed. Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. His blood cleanseth from all sin. Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Let a man, I say, in the state of mind above described, read or hear such passages of Scripture as these, and then let him say whether there be not an evident *fitness in the religion of the gospel to meet his desires*. No sooner does the man believe the testimony of God concerning his Son, even though his faith may not as yet have reached to "the full assurance of hope," than he clearly sees that the religion of Christ is exactly what he wants. The gospel is as plainly adapted to supply his necessities, as bread is suited to satisfy hunger, or water to quench thirst. "He that believeth *hath the witness in himself*," that the gospel is true and divine.

All false religions illustrate, by contrast, the remarks just made. In every one of them an unsuccessful effort is made to obtain that which the gospel reveals, *viz.* a means of cancelling guilt. Among the Heathen, ceremonies, sacrifices, pilgrimages, and penances are so many substitutes for the atonement of Christ. Among persons who bear the Christian name, but neglect the vital truths of the gospel, abstinence from gross sins, and the performance of the outward rites of religion, are regarded in the same light. The language of all these observances is, "we need pardon, and we are endeavouring to obtain it." That which all false religions vainly seek for, the gospel makes known; and when a man, under the consciousness of guilt, becomes acquainted with this divine method of forgiveness; like the poor Hindoo who had long been seeking to obtain pardon by self-inflicted torture, he exclaims with joy, with more joy than the philosopher felt when he had discovered a long-sought truth in geometry; "I have found it, I have found it." It brings its

own evidence along with it, that it came from the God of justice and love.

Let those Christians, then, who cannot enter so fully as they could wish on an examination of the outward evidences of the gospel, rejoice that "he that believeth," be he ever so unlearned, "hath the witness in himself."

And let those who see no excellency in the gospel mark the reason. They have not that knowledge of God's law and of their own character which is necessary to render the gospel acceptable. He who knows himself will find the gospel exactly adapted to his wants.

3. The religion of Christ is suited to man, because *it is calculated to promote human happiness*. The principal means by which the gospel makes man *happier* is by making him *better*.

That the religion of the Bible is highly *moral* with regard to its *precepts* and *requirements*, all know. Even some who have refused to submit to the authority of revealed religion, have yet, as we have seen, acknowledged that a system of morals is no where to be found so equitable, benevolent, and pure, as in the Holy Scriptures. And although mankind, by their unassisted reason never did discover and never could have discovered such a system; yet that system, when revealed, commends itself to the reason of man as the most unexceptionable code of laws which can be imagined.

The *sanctions* which accompany these laws are as *commanding* as the laws themselves are good. An omniscient God is brought before the mind as the constant observer of every action, word, and thought. Eternal happiness is declared to be the inheritance of all who submit to God, and eternal sorrow the lot of those who live and die in a state of rebellion against him.

The religion of Christ, besides containing the most excellent precepts, invested with all the authority which the thought of God and of eternity can

impart, also includes the *promise of a holy influence* by which the love of evil is subdued, and the love of God and of goodness implanted in its stead. This blessing, it must surely be acknowledged, is eminently suited to the condition of man as a being inclined to evil. This renovating influence is enjoyed by all who submit their whole souls to the testimony of God; and is withheld from none who humbly and earnestly seek it. In proportion as this gift is granted, the heart becomes susceptible of love and gratitude towards God, urging the man forwards in the path of obedience by considerations so noble as to render the more terrific motives to duty needless.

Instances are innumerable in which the gospel, applied to the heart by the Spirit of God, has produced the most thorough, beneficial, and lasting moral change. The men who were before the slaves of almost every vice have become sober, just, benevolent, and pious. He, in whose heart this happy change has taken place, has an inward argument of the truth and reality of religion which no sophistry can refute. An unlettered Christian, who has been the subject of this regenerating influence, may say, in answer to the most plausible objections: One thing I know, that whereas I once loved wickedness, I now love goodness; that whereas I once disliked God and his service, the desire of my soul now is to the remembrance of him. You might as well try to persuade me that the sun in the heavens, the source of light and heat, fertility and joy, was the work of men's hands, as to persuade me that any power short of what is divine has produced this happy change. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation unto every one that believeth."

And where this thorough inward change is not effected, *important benefits*, notwithstanding, are produced. No man can compare the moral state of society in Greece and in Rome with that of England, without perceiving the decided superiority of the

latter above either of the others. For this superiority, we are chiefly indebted to the religion of the Bible.

Contrast the present condition of the inhabitants of Tahiti, and other islands of the South Sea, with their state twenty years ago, before Christianity was embraced by the inhabitants. The amazing improvement which has taken place is altogether owing to the religion of the Bible. No men, who are not the friends of revealed religion, would have *attempted* to effect such a reformation; and no means, except the diffusion of the truths of the Bible, could have been *adequate* to the purpose, had the attempt been made. The success which has recently followed missionary enterprises has added greatly to the mass of evidence, which before was large, of the adaptation of Christianity to the wants of man.

In our own country, it is a well-known fact, that an immense majority of the unhappy creatures who forfeit their lives to injured justice, are men whose minds have not been imbued with the truths of revealed religion. In a word, it is undeniable that the cause of good morals is inseparably connected with the cause of Christianity. And it deserves particular attention, that this is acknowledged by some who notwithstanding regard the gospel as untrue. There are people, as we have already seen, who own that to root out religion from society would be exceedingly dangerous, who yet consider religion to be an imposition. The unbelief of those persons is most inconsistent. It has been noticed before, but it is worth while to advert to it again. Let us for a moment look at their creed. They own that there is a God; they acknowledge that God is a good being, and consequently delights in goodness. They allow that the Christian religion is the best safeguard of goodness in the world; and yet they deny that this system had God for its author. How palpably absurd! If God was not the author of the

Christian religion, then, of course, man was its author. These people, therefore, believe that that which they acknowledge to be essential to the order and happiness of society did not spring from the supreme intelligence, but from an inferior mind; so that, according to this scheme, a creature has found out a better plan for securing the welfare of mankind than the Creator could discover! This is the belief of the men who admit that the sanctions of religion are necessary for restraining vice, but deny that the religion which reveals those sanctions is true and divine. If there be even the shadow of rationality in such a system, we confess we are unable to discover it.

But religion not only makes man happier by improving his character; it contributes to his comfort by mitigating his sufferings. It teaches him that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," and that "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." It stands to reason that the man to whose mind such truths as these are familiar, must experience a consolation unknown to others. Most people, indeed, when in affliction, feel the truth of this; either as being the happy possessors of the consolation, or as being consciously destitute of it. Too many forget that the way to have the joys of religion in affliction is to give the whole soul to its truths and duties before affliction comes. But the very circumstance, that *all people, with very few exceptions, perceive religion to be desirable in a time of sorrow*, evinces the truth of the proposition—that religion is suited to man as a being liable to distress. Whence, but from "the Father of mercies, has that system come, which is proved, by the general experience of our race, to be above all things calculated to impart resignation and hope under the various sorrows of life?"

But man is also *a dying creature.*

Let religion be contemplated in connexion with this fact, and then let the inquiry be made whether it be not adapted to the wants and wishes of man?

Does he desire to know whether or not he shall exist beyond the grave? Religion, and religion only, can give a decisive answer to the inquiry. Is he anxious to ascertain by what means he may obtain the hope of happiness after death? Religion, and religion only, can afford the requisite information. "Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." "The path of life" is so plainly revealed that "the wayfaring man cannot err therein," unless he "love darkness rather than light." The way is set open so freely that no doubt needs to be harboured as to his being welcome to walk therein; while the promise of divine guidance and protection is so encouraging, that he has no reason to fear that his journey shall not have a happy issue. As under the pressure of affliction, so also *in the near prospect of death, most men do homage to religion,* as suited to man, in this view of his condition. But this truth respecting religion is as true while men are in health, as it is when death appears to be nigh. It is true at all times. Man is a dying creature, and religion, and nothing but religion, is adapted to supply those exigencies of which his mortality renders him the subject.

4. The religion of the gospel is suited to human nature, because *it is calculated to bring men actually to pay that homage to God in which true piety consists.*

The proposition implied in this statement is, that men do not generally regard God as they ought; and this surely will be acknowledged by all. The profane use of the name of God in which many indulge, the wilful and habitual violation of God's commands which marks the conduct of thousands, the total

neglect of the worship of God in which many others of outwardly moral life persist from year to year, plainly show that if these people have any regard to God at all, it comes very far short of what he justly claims.

Let it be admitted that such is the fact as to mankind at large, and *the adaptation of the gospel to human nature* will be plainly perceived. To meet the necessities of man in this view of his character, a system is wanted which shall not only answer the purpose of a manual of devotion to such as are already pious, but shall be calculated *to reclaim the irreligious*, and to render them devout. Such a system is the gospel. "The goodness of God," therein discovered, "leadeth to repentance." The most impious and vicious are assured of the readiness of their offended Maker to pardon and bless them; and this, not at some distant day, and after the performance of hard services; but, instantly; as soon as ever the sinner becomes a penitent.

Such is the gospel *in theory*; and a countless multitude of facts prove it to be the same *in experience*. It is not the mere exhibition of the beauty of virtue; it is not the mere declaration of God's loving the good and pious; it is the publication of THE GOSPEL, the glad tidings that "Christ came to seek and to save the lost," and "died for the ungodly," that proves effectual in converting the profligate and profane into pious and holy men.

What shall we then say to these things?

That religion commends itself to our *reason* by numerous and unequivocal *outward proofs*; and to our *affections*, by the kind and benignant aspect with which it looks on human sorrow, by the many blessings, exactly adapted to our wants, with which it comes attended, and by its actually bringing us to do homage to our Maker.

If these things are so, *two inferences* are undeniable:

1. That *an unbeliever is the most irrational of all human beings*; inasmuch as he refuses his assent to truths which are supported by the fullest evidence: and,

2. That the man who admits the truth of the Christian religion, but *neglects to give his heart and soul to it*, is acting a part *not less foolish* and even *more inconsistent*; inasmuch as he is wilfully rejecting blessings which he owns to be of the greatest value and necessity.

LECTURE XII.

June 27, 1824.

ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

2 PET. iii. 15, 16.

Account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath 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 (or unteachable) and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction.

IN the last two lectures, it was proved, I hope, that the Holy Scriptures are true and of divine authority. This was shown both by external evidence, and by a consideration of the doctrine which the Scriptures contain.

Yet it is readily confessed that the word of God is not free from difficulties. The Apostle Peter intimates in the text, that not only in the writings of Paul, but in the other Scriptures, there are "things hard to be understood." He moreover informs us that these difficulties may be and are abused by unteachable and unstable persons, to their own destruction.

This discourse and the next are to relate to the difficulties which attach to the word of God. Objections relative to *doctrine* will be considered in the next lecture; in the present, we shall confine our attention chiefly to *facts und events*. The unloosing

of all knotty points will not be expected. One reason against attempting to execute so extensive a plan is, that there are highly satisfactory answers to certain objections, which from the very nature of the subject, cannot be understood by the majority of hearers. I think it better to confine myself to such as are intelligible to plain people. Another reason against attempting so much is, that I do not consider myself competent to the task. I do not pretend to possess any thing like that thorough knowledge of the Bible, and of science in general, which would be requisite. A third reason, of itself sufficient, is, that the space of one lecture would be altogether inadequate for the accomplishment of such a plan.

The method intended is, first to meet some PARTICULAR OBJECTIONS, and then to state certain considerations which may be applicable to the DIFFICULTIES OF SCRIPTURE, GENERALLY, whether specified in this discourse or not.

We begin with the narrative of THE CREATION, one circumstance in which, particularly, has called forth much ill-directed wit. I allude to *the creation of Eve*. Is it not strange, it is asked, that the woman should have been formed from the man? Not at all: in our view of the case. A very adequate reason is assigned for it. She was taken from him, and not out of the ground, *that she might be considered as part of himself*, and the object of his most cordial affection. All subsequent human beings have been related to each other by descending from the first two; but the first two could not have been related to each other by any other conceivable means, except that which God adopted in the creation of Eve. When God presented Eve to Adam, he doubtless informed him of her origin. Accordingly Adam said, "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. Woman shall she be called, because out of man she was taken." People are apt

to regard the transaction with some such feelings as those with which they would contemplate a surgical operation; but when we recollect that it was effected by the simple fiat of the Almighty, and that Adam was perfectly unconscious of it, all such feelings vanish. On the whole, though there is no possibility of restraining the ridicule of those who laugh at every thing, there is in reality nothing either ludicrous or incredible in the narrative.

The next thing we shall notice is the account given us in Scripture of THE FALL OF MAN.

Here two things are to be considered separately, the *fact* itself of man's apostacy from God, and the *circumstances* connected with his apostacy.

As to the *fact* itself of the first Parents of our race having apostatized from God; it is to be observed, that though the subject is by no means free from difficulty, there is much more difficulty connected with the denial of the fact than there is with the belief of it. We scarcely need the testimony of the word of God to convince us that we and that all our fellow-creatures are sinful beings. Provided only that we possess any correct knowledge of duty, conscience will tell us that *we* have transgressed; while observation and history combine to assure us that *all others* have transgressed also. The question then is, when did human beings first become sinful? It is hard to imagine that man was originally created corrupt. The least embarrassing supposition is that human beings were created holy, but afterwards became sinful. And since *all* mankind are corrupt, it is reasonable to suppose that this defection took place in the case of the very first human beings, the ancestors of all others; which is the statement given in the Bible.

There are those who consider the *circumstances* related concerning the fall to be almost entirely figurative. They understand the conversation between Eve and the serpent, and the subsequent appearing

of God, to mean, the enticements to sin which were suggested to her mind, her own reflections thereon, and the fear which she afterwards felt on recollecting the misery she had brought on herself by incurring God's anger. Such a supposition is doubtless inconceivably preferable to the rejection of the Bible on account of any difficulty, imaginary or real, which may attach to the interpretation of a particular passage. But if we adhere to the *more literal* meaning of the narrative, we shall see in it nothing incredible, when fairly considered. It is to be observed, that although in the history of the Fall written by Moses, no direct mention is made of Satanic influence, strong intimations of the exertion of such influence are given in other parts of the Bible; nor is there any thing in the Mosaic account inconsistent with the fact. Our Saviour says, that the devil "was a murderer from the beginning;" that "he is a liar, and the father of it;" and, elsewhere, that evil spirit is called the "serpent" and the "dragon," (a species of the serpent) in allusion, probably, to those very circumstances relative to the Fall which we are now considering. The fact appears to have been, that the Evil Spirit, desirous of tempting our first parents to sin, and observing that the serpent was the most sagacious of brutes, made use of that animal as an instrument for effecting his purpose. We need not suppose the serpent to have had any more knowledge of the import of the words it was made to speak, than birds have of the sounds they are taught to utter. Eve had already, it is probable, observed indications of the reptile's sagacity; a consideration which would tend to diminish the astonishment which we suppose she must have felt to hear it utter articulate sounds. Probably also, this occurred not long after the creation of Eve, who therefore might have been, as yet, imperfectly acquainted with the very limited nature of the

capacities of animals. The tempter might also cause the serpent to say, that formerly it had not been able to speak, but had acquired the faculty of speaking in consequence of eating of that very fruit which it recommended to the woman. Besides, whatever surprise Eve felt on hearing an animal speak, this could not make her distrust the evidence of her senses. The question whether a brute *could* utter articulate sounds, was not then to be discussed; inasmuch as it was an observed and undoubted fact that a brute *did* utter such sounds. That sort of philosophy which consists in questioning the possibility of the existence of what manifestly *does exist*, is not of so ancient a date as the time of Eve.

THE EATING OF THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT has been often represented as a trivial offence, not meriting so severe a punishment as that which followed. But they who thus speak, do not seem to be aware that abstaining from the use of that fruit was the *Test of obedience*, and consequently that the eating of the fruit is to be contemplated, not in the mere act, but in that insubordination to the authority of the Almighty which the violation of such a command involved. This sin appears the more atrocious when we consider that a free grant had been made of all the other productions of the earth; and that this alone had been prohibited, to remind man of his dependence on his Creator, and subjection to him.

In the CURSE PRONOUNCED ON THE SERPENT, there is nothing inconsistent with the statement given above of the agency of Satan in the temptation; for "while the words of the curse imply a visible punishment to be executed on the Serpent as the instrument in the temptation, the curse was in reality directed against the invisible tempter, whose abject, degraded condition, and base endeavours to find satisfaction in rendering

others wicked and miserable, might be figuratively intimated by the serpent's moving on his belly and feeding on the dust."

It has been asserted that the history of the UNIVERSAL DELUGE is incredible, since no stock of water could be found copious enough to overflow the earth. But this objection is founded on mere hypothesis. No one knows enough of the internal structure of the globe to be warranted to affirm that it contains not a reservoir of water amply sufficient for the purpose. And had there not been an adequate quantity previously, God, who created matter and regulates all its changes, could easily have called forth an additional supply.

That such an event as an Universal Deluge did actually happen, is rendered highly probable; not to say certain, by the fossilized remains of animals which are found in every quarter of the world. All the mountains of every kind, where search has been made, conspire to prove that the sea was once spread over their highest summits; for they are found to contain shells, skeletons of fish and sea-monsters of every kind. The moose-deer, a native of America, has been found in Ireland; skeletons of the elephant and rhinoceros, natives of Africa and Asia, have been dug up on the high grounds of Tartary and Siberia; crocodiles, chiefly of the Asiatic species, have been discovered in various parts of Europe; the gigantic mammoth, an animal exclusively belonging to the antediluvian world, has been found in Russia, North America, and Ireland. Trees of vast dimensions, with their roots and tops, have been found at the bottom of mines and marl-pits. That *some* violent and universal convulsion of nature once took place, is thus made evident; and since no credible history relates any such events besides the Deluge described by Moses, it is reasonable to refer the appearances in question to that as the cause. Had no mention been made of the Deluge in the Bible, the pheno-

mena referred to would have been regarded by sceptics themselves as affording pretty clear indication that such an event had actually occurred; while the omission of the fact, in the sacred history, would have been represented as a deficiency of so serious a nature as to throw suspicion on the whole book.

The story of ABRAHAM'S OFFERING UP ISAAC has been considered by some persons as connected with insuperable difficulty.

The principal point to be considered is, whether the patriarch could be fully persuaded that the command came from God. If there had been any reason to entertain a doubt on this head, Abraham would have been more than justified in refusing to obey. But we are assured that the patriarchs were fully able to distinguish with certainty between the mere suggestions of their own minds, and the supernatural communications of God to them; and that Abraham most certainly knew that the command was from God. Being assured of this, he was also persuaded that to execute the command was not only lawful but matter of duty. For though *man* may not take away the life of man, *God* may do so, whenever he sees fit; and what God may himself do, he may command man to do; and what God commands man to do, man may and must do. Without an express order from the Sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth, Abraham's taking the knife to slay his son would have been murder; *with* such an order, it was obedience. The holy patriarch, moreover, had such confidence in the faithfulness and power of the Almighty, that he believed no injury would ultimately accrue to Isaac from the act contemplated, but that God would, if necessary, "raise him from the dead."

We must also recollect, that, as the event proved, God never intended that Isaac should be put to death. He intended only that Abraham's faith should be strengthened and displayed by passing

through this severe ordeal. The intention was fully answered. His faith came forth as gold tried in the fire.

THE MASSACRES WHICH WERE ATTENDANT ON THE EXPULSION OF THE CANAANITES from their land, and the establishment of the Israelites therein, have been loudly complained of, as inconsistent with the justice and mercy of God.

In order to meet this objection, it will be expedient to distinguish between *the death of the Canaanites*, and the *agency of the Israelites* therein.

1. With regard to the *destruction of the Canaanites*, it is apparent, that instead of being contrary to justice and mercy, it was illustrative of both these attributes.

It was *just* as to the *Canaanites*; it was *merciful* as to *others*.

(1.) It was *just* with regard to the *sufferers*.

Death, come when it may, and to whomsoever it may, is always just. Human life is a loan granted by God without any specification of the period during which the loan shall continue. He who gave it has a right to resume the gift at his pleasure. He has always good reasons for terminating the life of man at the precise time when he sees fit to cause it to terminate. In ordinary cases, those reasons are concealed; but in this instance the reason is known. The people in question had arrived at a pitch of iniquity which has seldom been equalled and perhaps never exceeded. Their wickedness had been of long standing; and very long had the forbearance of their Creator been exercised towards them. Even in their punishment, there is more cause for admiration at the compassion of God in so long delaying the stroke of vengeance, than for wonder that at length he allowed it to fall. Besides, if any of the nations of Canaan had timely repented, they would have been favoured with exemption from the general massacre.

(2.) With regard to *others*, the destruction of

the Canaanites was *merciful*. It served as an awful proof to surrounding nations, and especially to the Jews, of God's abhorrence of wickedness in general, and, particularly, of a nameless vice, and of idolatry, the parent of vice. The Jews were repeatedly reminded that if they followed similar practices, they must expect a like fate. They were warned in such words as these: "Ye shall not walk in the way of the nations which I cast out before you: for they committed all those things, and therefore I abhorred them. As the nations which the Lord destroyed before your face, so shall ye perish."

But all this may be allowed to be true, and yet a difficulty may present itself as to the unoffending *infants* of the Canaanites. Why should they, it may be asked, have been involved in the general destruction?

This question may be partly answered by asking another; How could it have been prevented? Supposing it was proper that the parents should suffer for their sins, who could have taken care of the infants, even if their lives had been spared? Besides, though the death of an infant, and especially by violent means, is an event extremely painful to the observer; it is not, to the little sufferer, so immense a calamity as our feelings would lead us to imagine. The pangs of dying are soon over; by death, infants are exempted from many evils which they might otherwise be called to endure; and their departed spirits may be safely entrusted to the care of a just and compassionate God.

Nor was the destruction of those infants a singular event. It is a part of the plan of divine Providence that children shall share both in the good and evil which fall to the lot of their parents. Inconveniences are apparently connected with this arrangement; yet, is there every reason to believe that, on the whole, it is greatly conducive to the general good.

At all events, a man who believes that God orders the affairs of the world on principles of justice, even though that man be not a believer in divine relation, has no right to object to the event in question; since there are cases of equal difficulty in his own religion. When Catania, Lima, and Lisbon were destroyed by earthquakes, men, with their wives and their children, were all swallowed up. Why, then, do not they who object to the book of God because it relates the destruction of the infant Canaanites, object also to the book of nature, because it relates the destruction of the infant inhabitants of Lisbon. If the one was an infringement on the justice of God, such must have been the other. If a man find fault with the history of Israel, because it relates the destruction of the infants of Canaan, he ought, to be consistent, to object to the history of Portugal, because it relates the destruction of the infants of Lisbon. If a man reject the religion of the Bible, because it is connected with the former of these facts, he must also give up the religion of nature, because it is connected with the other. Bishop Butler, in his masterly treatise on “the Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the constitution and course of Nature,” has shown most clearly that a sceptic does nothing towards freeing himself from difficulties of this description, by rejecting the book of God.

2. I proposed to notice the *agency of the Israelites* in the destruction of the inhabitants of Canaan.

Here let it be observed, that so far as the character of God is concerned, it makes no difference, whether an earthquake or an army of men be the executioners of his purpose. If it be right for him to do any given thing, it is right for him to choose the way of doing it. The question of his justice is not at all affected by the nature of the instrument he employs.

But, it may be said, was not the employment of

the Israelites in such a work of destruction likely to make them fond of war? And would it not be considered as affording a sanction to invasion and conquest?

The answer is, that the Israelites were distinctly informed that they acted in this case as the agents of God's just displeasure on an abandoned people. Consequently, unless at any subsequent time they could prove that they had an equally express commission from God, it is evident that they would be no more warranted to make war on other nations than if this particular commission had never been given. For the same reason, their conduct in this instance could never be fairly interpreted as a model for other nations.

The destruction of the Canaanites by means of a people so expressly under the direction of Jehovah as Israel was, would afford a more evident proof of God's abhorrence of the vices and idolatry of the sufferers than an earthquake would have done. An earthquake might have been regarded as occurring by chance, or as produced by the Gods of the Heathen. The conquests of the Israelites would be more likely to be viewed as occasioned by the power of the true God, the God of the Israelites. Those conquests, therefore, would have the double effect of affording proof of the supremacy of Jehovah above false Gods, and also of his hatred of the practices to which the destroyed Canaanites had addicted themselves.

The ASS of BALAAM has been "a standing jest among unbelievers." That the narrative is to be understood literally seems to be evident from the words of Peter, who says, that "the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbad the madness of the prophet." The ass in this country is an object of contempt; but in the East the case is otherwise. Asses in that part of the world are larger and of a handsomer appearance, and persons of rank, as we learn from history, have not been

ashamed to ride on them. Our Saviour's riding to Jerusalem on the foal of an ass, though an act of condescension, did not in that country subject him to the ridicule of spectators. Still it must be owned that any brute animal's uttering articulate and appropriate words, was strange and miraculous. The observations made on a former occasion on the subject of miracles, apply to this fact. Notwithstanding that the formation of such an animal's mouth is ill adapted for speaking, there can be no difficulty in supposing that God might cause it to utter articulate sounds, if he saw sufficient cause for thus going out of the ordinary course of his conduct. Of this, God is the best judge. As in the case of the serpent, so in this case, there is no reason to imagine that the animal knew the meaning of the words uttered. Nor does the miracle appear to have been needless. The circumstance of a brute animal being made to speak to Balaam in words of reproof was well calculated to humble the proud prophet, and to check that vain-glorious boasting in which he might be inclined to indulge on account of his being made the instrument of communicating the knowledge of futurity to his fellow men. It might also serve to convince him that the inferior animals, though subject to man, and often cruelly treated by him, are not beneath the notice of God; and finally, that the mouth and the tongue are under God's direction, and that he who caused the dumb ass to speak contrary to its nature, could cause the prophet himself in like manner to utter blessings on Israel contrary to his inclination.

THE STANDING STILL OF THE SUN AND MOON, according to the prayer and at the command of *Joshua*, is an event which requires a few words of explanation. The supposition that the body of the Sun, or, to speak accurately, that the Earth continued absolutely stationary for several hours, would no doubt be attended with much difficulty,

as such an event must have deranged, for a while, the whole solar system. But there is no necessity for entertaining such an opinion. It is sufficient to believe that the *appearance* of the Sun, and the *light* of the Sun continued, without supposing the *body* of the Sun to have remained above the horizon. It is well known that the rays of light are capable of being *refracted*, that is of being turned out of a right line. It is a fact that without a miracle the Sun is actually seen, that is, the appearance of it meets the eye, after the body of the Sun is gone down. We conceive, therefore, the miracle to have consisted in this, that the rays of the Sun and of the Moon were bent in an unusual degree, so that to those who were in and near Gibeon, those luminaries seemed not to set, but appeared above the horizon all that night.

According to this view of the matter, the event in question, although a real miracle, would not at all disturb the course of nature, and none of the sad effects, which it is supposed must have resulted from the detention of the Sun and Moon, could take place.

Similar remarks are applicable to the retrogradation of the shadow on the Sun-dial of Ahaz.

Objections against the Scriptures have been raised on the CHARACTER OF DAVID.

1. It has been considered unaccountable that he and some other good men of ancient times should have had *several wives*.

That it was God's original intention that a man should have but one wife, is plain, both from the account given of the creation of the first two of our race, from our Saviour's comment on that passage, and from the general equality of the sexes in point of number. In the New Testament it is intimated, over and over again, that a plurality of wives is unlawful. Yet it cannot be denied that among the Jews, a plurality of wives, though not recommended, was tolerated. The practice had become frequent among

surrounding nations before the time of Moses; and the system of jurisprudence which that illustrious man was instructed to communicate, was not one of ideal perfection, which should be in all respects adapted to all ages and nations, but one as much approaching to perfection as was proper for the people for whose use it was given, considering their existing manners and habits. Every prudent legislator acts on the same principle. He considers not merely whether a contemplated enactment be in itself good, but whether the actual condition of the people affords any hope of its being obeyed. If there be cause to harbour a doubt on this head, his first object is to adopt some plan which shall bring the views of the people to accord with the measure which he has in contemplation. Then, when the people are prepared for it, he enacts the law. This seems to have been the method pursued by Moses with regard to a plurality of wives. Though he does not absolutely forbid polygamy, the general tendency of his regulations is to discountenance it. And the plan appears to have succeeded. Long before the time of Christ, polygamy had become discreditable; and our Saviour and his apostles give us plainly to understand that it is not allowed by the Christian code. It is accordingly, with great propriety, forbidden by the laws of our country. But although, on these accounts, no man of good moral character can now allow himself in the practice of polygamy, the foregoing considerations show that among the Jews the case was otherwise.

2. The character of David is chargeable with the crimes of *adultery and murder*.

Here I would make a remark which is applicable to the faults of other men, besides David, whose lives are recorded in the Scripture history. Let it not be supposed that any bad actions are vindicated from the mere circumstance that men whose conduct was for the most part blameless, are declared to have committed them. Those men are not held up as models of excellence; nor are their faults

palliated. It is a proof of the impartiality of the sacred historians, that they should so freely mention the failings as well as the virtues of the people whose characters they describe.

But, it may be said, is not David called "the man after God's own heart?" and does not this declaration seem to intimate that even adultery and murder were excusable in him?

That David is described as the man after God's own heart is true; but that the inference is thence deducible that God was not angry with him for his crimes is not true. The words in question were used by Samuel the prophet, in the presence of King Saul, just after the latter had been guilty of neglecting the duty with which, as the King, God had charged him. Under these circumstances, Samuel said to him: "Thou hast not kept the commandment of thy God; and thy kingdom shall not continue. The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people." These words refer to David rather as a sovereign than as a private man, and cannot be supposed to mean that every one of his doings, even in his regal capacity, would be blameless; they merely intimate that his official character should be, on the whole, agreeable to the will of God. And so it was. His reign was distinguished, for the most part, by obedience to God, and by the exercise of justice and mercy towards his subjects. To interpret the clause under examination to imply God's approbation of every thing that David did, would be as unreasonable as to say that when a man speaks of George the Third as having been a good king, he means to justify every public measure of his reign, and every action of his private life.

But with regard to the particular crimes of David to which we have adverted, there is no room for conjecture as to whether or not God was angry with him on account of them; for Nathan the prophet was sent expressly to charge home these crimes

on the king with all their aggravating circumstances, and to assure him that a large portion of domestic suffering would be his lot as the punishment of his offences. How faithfully Nathan executed his commission, and how severely the threatened punishment was inflicted, the history plainly tells. Fairness also requires that the consideration of David's guilt should be followed by the contemplation of his *repentance*. Instead of being angry with the prophet for his faithful words, he frankly confesses the sins which the man of God had laid to his charge, and deeply bewails them. The fifty-first Psalm presents to us the picture of David as a penitent; nor is it possible to conceive of expressions more exactly fitted to convey the idea of deep sorrow and anguish of heart at the recollection of sin committed, than those which that Psalm contains.

While adverting to David, we may notice THE IMPRECATIONS IN THE PSALMS; which, at the first view, appear to indicate a spirit of revenge.

The first consideration which deserves attention on this point is, that in the language in which the Psalms were originally written, the two forms of speech which are called by grammarians, the *Imperative Mood* and the *Future Tense*, are often used indifferently, the one for the other. Thus, it was much the same thing for a Hebrew writer to say, "*Let his habitation be desolate,*" as to say, "*his habitation shall be desolate.*" It is the opinion of good judges that most, if not all, the imprecations in the Psalms, might properly be rendered by the latter mode of expression; and that where, under such circumstances, we meet with the words, "*Let it be,*" we might generally understand the meaning to be, "*It shall be.*" In this view, therefore, the passages under consideration are to be regarded *not as vindictive desires* for the misery of the wicked; but as *declarations* of the misery which the writer knew was about to befall them.

2. *David was the subject of inspiration,* and as

a prophet, was empowered to imprecate punishment on evil-doers, in a way in which no uninspired man would be authorised to speak. What he said on the subject was not so much his own imprecation, as God's imprecation communicated through him. In this view, therefore, it matters little whether the form of speech which he used corresponds to "Let it be," or to "It shall be;" since he was merely the organ of the divine voice.

3. *David was a magistrate*, at the head of that mixed government which included both the temporal and spiritual interests of the people; and in this capacity, was authorised to denounce woes on wicked men; and might do so without any feeling of malice.

4. David on some occasions spoke *in the name of the Messiah* rather than in his own name. The enemies against whom he inveighs are the men who would oppose the reign of the Christ of God; on these men Messiah, in the person of David his typical predecessor, denounces deserved woes.

These observations may answer the two-fold purpose of showing that the imprecatory clauses in the Psalms are not incapable of explanation, and, that they are not given as patterns for imitation.

The last fact we shall notice is **JONAH'S BEING SWALLOWED UP BY THE FISH.**

It is said, that in the Mediterranean Sea, where this took place, whales are never found. But supposing no whale ever was seen there at any other time, this would be no reason why, in this one instance, a whale should not have been there. The Mediterranean is connected by the Straits of Gibraltar with all the other seas, so that at all events, the circumstance cannot be deemed impossible. Never perhaps but once did a whale advance far up the river Severn; yet we know that a few years since such a fish was actually seen as high up that river as Frampton-on-Severn.

But the gullet of the whale it is also said, is not

sufficiently large to contain the body of a man. To this it might be enough to reply that it is too much to presume that naturalists are acquainted with all the varieties of the whale species. Unless it could be proved that all the living things in the sea have been seen, no one would be authorised to affirm that no whale exists at all different from those which are known.

These remarks, however, are offered rather to show how frivolous are many of the objections advanced against the facts of holy writ, than as being necessary for the elucidation of the case before us, since the probability is that the fish which swallowed up Jonah was *not a whale*. In the Old Testament it is merely stated, that he was swallowed up by *a great fish*; what sort of fish it was, is not mentioned. In the English New Testament, it is indeed called a whale; but the Greek term so translated corresponds very much to the words, *a large fish*, and may mean any other large fish as well as a whale; and there is a sort of fish in the Mediterranean, called the Carcharias or Lamia, a species of the Shark, whose throat and belly are large enough to swallow and contain a man whole and entire. It is, therefore, extremely probable that it was a fish of this kind which swallowed Jonah.

In what manner *respiration* could be continued during three days, some consider to be a question involving the chief difficulty connected with the narrative. But may not respiration have been suspended as in a case of suspended animation, without injury to the vital principle? Or, supposing respiration to have continued, is it incredible that the Almighty could furnish the prophet, even in that situation, with an adequate supply of respirable air. It requires no great share of ingenuity to conceive of means by which this might be effected; but if no such means were conceivable by us, this would afford very insufficient ground for coming to the conclusion that divine wisdom and power were incom-

petent to the task. In no part of the miracle is there any thing contrary to possibility; and this is as far as we need to go in the explanation of such an event.

It may be added, however, that the late Mr. Charles Taylor, the learned editor of Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible, (a work which contains elucidations of very many otherwise obscure texts,) was of opinion that the Hebrew word translated fish may denote a certain kind of *ship* which, by the providence of God, was brought sufficiently near to the place where Jonah was thrown overboard, to rescue him from drowning. I confess that I prefer the more usual rendering of the term; but let those who have leisure to enter into an investigation of the case, judge for themselves.

Having examined the above particular objections to the Holy Scriptures, I proceed to adduce some considerations which may be applicable to OBJECTIONS GENERALLY, and will consequently include those which, for reasons before advanced, have not been specifically noticed.

Surely it cannot be deemed wonderful that difficulties should be found in the word of God. Consider the great subject of which it treats—GOD, his attributes, and his operations in the world. Consider the space of time which it includes—four thousand years in *history* of what has been, together with prophetic intimations of what shall be *to the end of time*. Consider, too, the *differences* which subsist between the *customs and manners* of the people whose history the Bible more particularly describes, and the usages which are prevalent in our age and country.

There are, for example, expressions in various parts of the Scriptures which to a modern ear appear *rude*, and others which seem *indelicate*. But the question is, whether they were rude and indelicate in the age and country when and where they were

written? certainly not. They were well suited to those times, and were not then considered as in the least degree infringing on the rules of decorum. In almost all old authors, not excepting even those who lived as recently as two hundred years ago, there are words and sentences which modern writers would choose to avoid. We need not stay to inquire whether *they* were too rude, or whether *we* are too delicate; it is enough to know that such a difference subsists between them and us. No author, either sacred or profane, can be justly blamed for adopting a style which was in common use among well-behaved people in his own times. On this principle the sacred writers are freed from censure, for having used language which to us seems indelicate.

Nor must we overlook the *difference* there is between *the productions of the earth, and the seasons of the year*, in the countries in which the Scriptures were written, and the phenomena of nature in these northern regions. A plain Englishman is puzzled by the expression, "The early and the latter rain," since in this country rain falls all the year round. But in Judea the common times for rain during the summer are, just after seed time, and just before harvest. There are innumerable other examples of the same kind. An inhabitant of Italy may understand many texts of Scripture better than an Englishman, because his country is more like Judea than England is; and travellers who have visited the East have explained a thousand passages of Scripture which before were unintelligible.

We must also remember the difference there is between *the religion of the Jews* and that of Christians. While the same essential truths are found in each, the mode of their exhibition in the two systems respectively, differs widely. The Jewish economy was typical and ceremonial; ours, on the contrary, contains plain truth expressed in plain words, without type, and almost without ceremony.

To infer, therefore, that any of the various rites enjoined on the Jews were unmeaning and useless to *them*, because they would be so to *us*, is to forget the different circumstances, with regard to religion, in which they were placed from those in which we are.

In order to understand many of the enactments of the Mosaic code, we must also be acquainted with the *physical, political, and moral condition of the Jews*.

It does not follow, because an individual reader of the Bible cannot find out the design or the use of any particular statute, that therefore it had no good design or use. Learned men who have directed their inquiries into this channel, have discovered many important advantages connected with particular Jewish observances which the generality of readers cannot be supposed to know.

We must also recollect the dissimilarity there is between ancient and modern times with regard to the use of *Proverbs and Metaphors*.

Every nation has its own adages. Nothing is easier to understand than a proverbial or metaphorical expression which is in use among ourselves; whereas a proverb, to which there is nothing analogous in our own language, may appear absolutely mysterious.

Thus, many an Englishman has wondered what our Lord could mean by saying that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." But expressions of this nature are not to be understood literally. They are not true, if so interpreted. The expression before us was, doubtless, a proverbial and hyperbolic mode of speaking in common use among the Jews, and was merely a strong method of asserting that such and such a thing was *extremely difficult*. To inquire, therefore, how a camel can go through the eye of a needle, is quite foreign to the purpose. The simple meaning is

that there is a difficulty in the way of a rich man's entering heaven which nothing but almighty power can remove.

It is well known that *metaphorical* language was, and still is, much more commonly used by the *people of the East* than it is by us. And although this fact has been grossly abused by some, who by means of it would explain away the very substance of divine revelation; yet it is undoubtedly true that the meaning of many texts of Scripture cannot be known unless attention be paid to the figurative nature of the language in which they are expressed.

The purpose which the sacred writers had in view, is another thing which demands particular notice. Their object was not to teach secular science, but religion; not to instruct mankind in such knowledge as might conduce to their worldly pleasure and advantage, but "to make them wise unto salvation." With regard to matters of worldly knowledge, they take things, for the most part, as they find them. When they have occasion to allude to the objects of nature in illustration of some higher theme, they use language which agrees with the state of knowledge relative to such objects which prevailed in those days. To have adopted a different plan would have rendered it necessary for them to have taught philosophy before they taught religion, and would have doubled the size of the Bible, without adding, in the least degree, to its value as the guide to heaven.

It follows from these premises, that if any allusions to natural things in the Bible should seem to be contrary to philosophy in the present advanced state of science, such a circumstance would be no disparagement at all to the authority of that book as containing unquestionable truth in matters of religion. It has often been found, however, that instances of supposed contrariety between the Bible and philosophy were imaginary, and not real; and arose from ignorance either of some text of Scripture or of some natural phenomenon. True philosophy

is constantly adding to the evidence of the truth of Holy Writ.

Another consideration to be borne in mind, respects *the languages in which the books of Scriptures were written.*

The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew tongue, and the New in the Greek; and doubtless many texts, which to us are difficult of comprehension, were quite plain to the people to whom they were first given. The most skilful and faithful translator is unable to convey, in every instance, the exact meaning of the author, without any shade of difference. Formerly, too, books were *not printed, but written*, and those who took copies would be liable, without a constant miracle, to make occasional errors in letters and words. By this means, it is probable, that some texts, the meaning of which was well understood at first, are now involved in difficulty.

While on the subject of *various readings and translations*, it is right that a few words should be said with a view to afford satisfaction to unlearned Christians. Nothing is more common than for persons who call in question the leading doctrines of revelation, to say with regard to this and the other text, "It is a mistake of an ancient transcriber; the proper word is so and so:" or, "It is a mistake of the translator; it should be rendered in such and such a manner." It may be satisfactory to serious and plain people to know, that although there certainly are texts to which such remarks as the above apply; *those texts bear no proportion, in point of number, to the texts respecting which there is no dispute.* Men who are fully qualified to pronounce an opinion on such subjects have declared that they never saw a translation of the Scriptures in any language, that was not so far correct as to contain all the essential truths of the Christian religion. No version of the Scriptures has been known from which an humble inquirer might not find the way that

leads to life. Then, again, with regard to the translation of the Bible in common use in this country, it is acknowledged by the learned, that although it is susceptible of improvement in particular passages, it is one of the very best translations of the word of God that any age or country has possessed. The state of the case in reference to translations is this: you may be mistaken as to the meaning of a particular text; but if you humbly, devoutly, and diligently use the word of God, comparing Scripture with Scripture, you will not be ignorant of any essential truth, or imbibe any fundamental error.

But what, let us now inquire, is *THE PRACTICAL LESSON to be derived from these observations, in reference to the difficult portions of the word of God?*

Suppose that I meet with a text of Scripture which I cannot explain, so as to make it agree with the perfections of God, with matter of fact, or with the analogy of faith; what inference shall I draw from this? Shall I conclude, on account of this inexplicable passage, that the book which contains it is untrue? Nothing could be more unwise than such a mode of arguing. Rather would I reason thus: "Here is a book which comes to me, attended with evidence of its truth, so various and so commanding, that I cannot refuse to believe it to possess divine authority. Yet here is a thing I cannot reconcile with truth and goodness. I must not, however, infer that it is really inconsistent with truth and goodness because I find it impossible to reconcile it therewith. The probability is, that the difficulty is not owing to a mistake in the writer, but to the insufficient acquaintance I have with the whole circumstances of the case. And I find this reasoning corroborated by matter of fact. I find that a few centuries ago, before certain travellers visited the East, many texts of Scripture were obscure

which are now well understood. And I recollect with regard to myself, that a few years ago, when I was younger and still more ignorant than I now am, I was puzzled by many things in the Bible which I now understand sufficiently well. Hence I conclude, that if my knowledge were greater, things which are still difficult would become intelligible. Meanwhile it may be of some service to me to be reminded of the circumscribed limits of my understanding and knowledge."

Let us now, finally, consider THE MANNER IN WHICH THE WORD OF GOD SHOULD BE READ, in order that the difficulties which it contains may not have an undue influence on the mind.

1. Allow me to recommend you to give the chief of your attention to those parts of Scripture which are at once the *easiest for you to understand, and most adapted to promote your edification.* The practice of always reading the Bible through from beginning to end, is not judicious. There are certain portions of the word of God which require a much more frequent perusal than others. The most unlearned Christian may find enough in the Scriptures which is easy and profitable, without perplexing himself with those passages which he has not the ability to understand.

2. Read the word of God *with a design in view, agreeing with the design for which it was given to man.* No wonder that "unteachable and unstable men," who never once took up the Bible with the view of learning the way to heaven, in order to walk therein, should be allowed to "wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction." Would you avoid their end; avoid their conduct. Take up the Bible with the desire to know your own character and state, and you will find your character and state faithfully, though kindly, set forth. You will find yourself represented to be, what you really are, a dying sinner, exposed to the anger of a just and holy God,

and to eternal pain as its fearful consequence. Read the word of God with a sincere desire to know how you may escape the punishment due to your offences; and you will soon discover the way of escape. You may find him of whom Moses in the law, and of whom the prophets, the evangelists, and the apostles have written, Jesus, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. You will find it to be "a faithful saying and worthy of your acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief."

Lastly, read the word of God with *humble dependence on divine instruction*. Intreat him who caused the Holy Scriptures to be written, and formed your mind, to favour you with that heavenly aid which he has promised to impart. "He giveth his Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

LECTURE XIII.

July 11, 1824.

ANSWER TO OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, RELATIVE TO THE DOCTRINES THEREIN CONTAINED.

ISAIAH lv. 8—9.

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

THE persons for whose benefit the present discourse is chiefly designed, are they who, although disposed to admit the divine authority of the word of God, find it difficult to reconcile certain doctrines of Scripture with their ideas of the fitness of things; and are sometimes tempted to doubt whether the book which contains them be really divine; or, if it be, whether the said doctrines really make a part of it.

On the difficulties which may be connected with such of the truths of the gospel as are to be investigated on subsequent occasions, I need not now particularly dwell. At present, it may be expedient to confine our attention to those points, chiefly, which, though they may be referred to in subsequent discourses, will not be discussed at any length.

A principal object of this lecture is to state some general principles, which may have the effect of showing that the difficulties which attach to the doctrines of divine revelation ought not to prejudice

our minds against it. If, therefore, the end of this discourse shall be answered, the persons whose good is contemplated in it, will be the better prepared for entering on that series of doctrinal discourses which after a while will commence.

The doctrines of Scripture are the doctrines of God; all of them had their origin in his mind, and all of them relate either to his nature, or to his doings. The doctrines of Scripture are "the thoughts and ways of God," which, as we are reminded in the text, are widely different from the thoughts and ways of man.

My intention, accordingly, is to point out THE DIFFERENCE THERE IS BETWEEN GOD AND MAN, and to show that this difference is SUFFICIENT TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DIFFICULTY WHICH IS CONNECTED WITH SOME OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE WORD OF GOD, without supposing either the said doctrines, or the book which reveals them, to be untrue.

There are two respects in which the disparity between God and man is observable.

God is unlike man in his own nature, and in the relation which he bears to other beings.

I. GOD IS UNLIKE MAN IN HIS OWN NATURE; particularly with regard to Eternity, Independence, Infinity, and Goodness.

1. God is unlike man in point of *Eternity*.

Man has existed only during a few revolving suns. There never was a time when God did not exist. To form an adequate conception of this truth is impossible; while to deny it would be absurd. It is useful to meet with a truth like this, confessedly certain, and yet confessedly incomprehensible. It points out to us our proper station with regard to our Maker. How great, in point of duration is God! How little is man!

2. God is unlike man with regard to *Independence*.

As all beings besides God derived their existence from him, so are all dependent on him for their continuing to be. Angels and men are immortal because God wills that they should be so; and for every particle of happiness they enjoy they are every moment indebted to his benignity. Of all beings, God alone is independent. He was what he is now, when no one besides himself existed; and were it proper that all other beings should return to their original nothingness, the nature of God would remain uninjured.

3. God is unlike man with regard to *Infinity*.

God is infinite in knowledge, infinite in wisdom, infinite in power. Man's nature is confined within very narrow limits in all these respects.

God is infinite in *Knowledge*. The words of the text which declare that "God's thoughts are not our thoughts," convey an important truth. Man's thoughts differ from God's thoughts in their *origin*, their *nature*, and their *number*.

Man's thoughts differ from God's thoughts in their *origin*.

Man enters the world without knowledge, and acquires it by slow degrees. God always possessed the perfect knowledge which he now has.

Man's thoughts differ from God's thoughts in their *nature*. Man's ideas are often very unlike the objects of which they are supposed to be the copies, and probably never agree exactly with those objects. God's thoughts always most perfectly correspond with things. With regard, for example, to *persons* and *actions*; we often think more unfavourably, and sometimes more favourably, than truth allows. Sometimes we cannot and sometimes we will not ascertain the right of the case. God always can, and always chooses to form a just judgment.

Man's thoughts differ from God's thoughts as to their *number*.

The most knowing man has but little knowledge compared with the whole extent of existences and of truths. God's understanding is infinite, comprehending all that has been, all that is, all that shall be, and all that might be.

God is infinite in *Wisdom*.

Men often conceive *bad projects*; the wicked through malice, and the good through inadvertence. The designs which God forms are always *the very best*, which, all things considered, could be formed. When human purposes are good, it often happens that injudicious measures are adopted for compassing the end in view. Sometimes means are used which are in their own nature *unsuitable*; sometimes means are used which, though not unsuitable in their nature, are *inadequate* in extent; and sometimes means are used which, by being much *more abundant* than the case requires, occasion an unnecessary expenditure and waste. The means which God employs to effect his purposes are always precisely adapted to the object in view; always suitable in their nature, and never either too scanty or too profuse.

God is also infinite in *Power*.

It is well for mankind that the wicked are not almighty. At the same time it is often matter of regret that good men have so little ability to carry their wishes into effect. God, however, is Almighty. With him all things are possible which are not in their own nature absurd or inconsistent with goodness.

Finally, God is unlike man in *Goodness*.

Moral excellence, infinite and perfect, belongs to him. Nothing like fraud, injustice, or vice, attaches to him. During all the endless periods in which God has existed, not a single evil action or sentiment has ever attached to his character. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty."

II. GOD IS UNLIKE MAN IN THE RELATION HE BEARS TO OTHER BEINGS.

God bears to all his creatures without exception, the relation of *Governor*; and he also bears to all, except the incorrigibly wicked, the relation of *Benefactor*.

1. God is the SUPREME RULER of all his creatures.

All rational beings, not excepting the most disobedient, are his subjects, under obligation, whether or not they feel and act accordingly, to obey his laws. Here, then, is a point of view in which God appears at an immeasurable distance above man. The authority which most men possess over their fellow-men is very small. The authority of even the most powerful monarch extends over a portion only of the inhabitants of this globe; with other rational beings, in the way of dominion, he has nothing to do. The authority, moreover, which the human monarch has over his subjects, is limited; whereas the authority of the Supreme Ruler both should be and cannot but be absolute. The considerations which prove that no one man ought to have uncontrolled power over his fellow-men apply not at all to the government of God. There are two considerations, to mention no others, which prove that no man ought to have such a measure of power.

(1.) No man can make out a *title* to it. No one man is raised so far above his fellows by origin or by endowments, as to render it fitting that he should be raised so far above them in station as to have uncontrolled dominion over their persons and property.

(2.) No man is *qualified* to possess absolute authority. That such a degree of power may be beneficial to those over whom it is exercised, (which is the acknowledged end of government,) it is requisite that the power should be accompanied by wisdom which cannot err, and goodness which cannot act injuriously. But it is obvious that no

mere man possesses these qualifications. Government is essential to the well-being of society; and government without power is a mere name. But it is evident that absolute authority should not be entrusted to any man; otherwise it is likely that what should be for the welfare of society will become a source of calamity. Of this, the history of the world furnishes numerous and sad proofs. It is the glory of our country that the power of the monarch is limited. This gives stability to the throne, while it secures the liberty of the people.

But if we advert to the character of God, and to the station which he occupies in the universe which he has made, we shall see, in a moment, that the arguments against absolute power as it regards man, have nothing to do with God. For,

[1.] There is so essential a difference between God and man, and the superiority of God above man is so immeasurably great, that the Almighty has a *clear and indisputable title* to be the absolute proprietor and ruler. Man is of yesterday, God from eternity; man was created, God is self-existent; man is dependent for all that he has, and even for existence itself on another. God is that other on whom he so depends. The title, then, which God has to possess absolute authority is unquestionable. In the very nature of things, he must have, he cannot but have, that power. It were as easy to suppose him to cease to exist, as to cease to be the absolute Sovereign of all his creatures.

[2.] It is equally plain that God is *qualified* for the exercise of such authority. Absolute power in the hands of a finite being might and probably would be used perniciously. The perfect wisdom and the perfect goodness of God are full security against any abuse of power. Wisdom which cannot err, and rectitude which can never act unjustly, are as inseparable from the nature of the Almighty as is his universal and uncontrolled dominion.

Let us, my brethren, digress a moment, if digression it be, to indulge in pleasing meditation on the combination of glorious attributes which compose the character of Him who is the Ruler over all. We see much around us, and we feel much within us which may excite alarm and grief. But how strong is the consolation, to be assured that he who governs the world is both just and wise, and that "his power no creature is able to resist."

There are *two doctrines* of Scripture on which the subject just contemplated may throw some light: namely, *God's permission of sin*, and the *punishment* which he inflicts on the wicked. The former of these indeed is not more a doctrine of *revealed*, than it is of what is termed *natural religion*. We do not need divine revelation to inform us that sin exists; and since it exists, it has of course been permitted to exist. Consequently, God's permission of sin is a doctrine appertaining as much to Deistical Religion as it does to the religion of the Bible. Let no one therefore suppose that by giving up the Scriptures he would get rid of this difficult subject. The truth is, that in the absence of divine revelation, he will find the subject of moral evil involved in still greater intricacy.

I profess not to explain this subject. Men very much wiser than we have any right to suppose ourselves to be, have acknowledged it to be beyond their reach, and have given it as their opinion that it is not fathomable by the human mind in the present state.

The words of an able writer in the *Eclectic Review* for 1818, (a work which contains many Religious Essays of a very superior order,) may here be cited, as being connected not merely with the topic immediately under consideration, but with the general subject of this discourse.

"There are topics," observes the writer, "of great

reputed difficulty, that, in truth are difficult only when we overstep the boundary with which an enlightened good sense would circumscribe our inquiries. Within this boundary there is hardly a path that deserves to be called perplexing; beyond it, all subjects are almost equally uncertain; and if one shall seem less so than another, it will be that which being the least exposed to the test and contradiction of experience, admits of our thinking ourselves informed, purely because we want the means of being apprized of our ignorance. When the superficial and the rash transgress the boundary to which we refer, they return laden with as many plausible fallacies, as many demonstrated and illustrated absurdities, as would employ a long life to confute. If the modest and intelligent follow in the same track, they will, most probably, encounter distressing embarrassments, which may leave them ever after hesitating in conduct, and unhappy in reflection. It is the property and distinction of a strong and sane mind, to ascertain with precision, this limit, and when ascertained, to stand firmly upon it, under seductive influences. A multiplicity of questions on the most interesting subjects may be proposed, upon which an individual thus endowed, so far from pretending to have an opinion, will be forward to acknowledge his utter incompetency for arriving at any satisfactory conclusion. But, at the same time, there is not one of them with respect to which he will not wish to have a clear idea of the nature and extent of its bearing upon known and practical principles. Nor is there, we imagine, a single subject within the range of thought, which, on any account, requires us, by a perpetual effort, to hold up, as it were, a screen between it and ourselves; or to prevent it, as by force, from ever being submitted to our contemplation. All that seems needful is, to keep in view the distinction between forming an opinion upon the question itself, and viewing it with a

steady eye, in the relation it bears to our conduct or feelings. In many cases, to attempt the former, betrays, unequivocally, the most vulgar presumption; designedly to shun the latter, is not less characteristic of a feeble and narrow understanding. To know all things is not the privilege of man; to think justly and wisely on every subject which is presented to the mind is the true glory of his intellectual nature."

On these judicious principles let us endeavour to proceed in the present instance. Where we cannot obtain a knowledge of the whole truth, we may at least avoid error; and this is all we aim at in our meditations on God's permission of sin.

There are *two associated errors* on this subject which we must shun; one is *the supposition that God is the author of sin*, the other, *the denial of the fact, that man is the author of his own sin*.

When people speak as if God's permitting sin were the same thing as causing it, they argue as if God were man: they overlook the distinction between man's private station, and God's public station, in the universe. If a *man* were to foresee a sin as about to be committed, and could prevent that sin, and yet were not to prevent it, doubtless he would be justly considered as chargeable with blame. But if any, on this account, contend that God's not preventing sin which was foreseen, makes him chargeable with it as its author, they not only speak blasphemously, but they speak ignorantly. It does not follow because it is the duty of man, a creature and a subject, to prevent sin foreseen, that therefore it is the duty of God, the moral Governor, to prevent sin foreseen. The stations which man and God respectively occupy with regard to moral government, are so immensely different, that no analogy can be traced between them; and all such arguing from the one to the other as is practised by those who maintain the tenet in question is altogether unwarrantable.

God only can possibly know in what cases it is proper he should exert his power to prevent his creatures from doing wrong; and in what cases he should leave them to follow their own inclination. Unless we could take the place of God as the supreme ruler, and see all persons and things as he sees them, we cannot be authorised to give any opinion respecting his proceedings as the Governor of the world, except in so far as he makes known to us the reasons of his conduct. This, in some things, and to a certain extent, he does; but not in all cases, and fully.

That although he has not seen fit to prevent the existence of evil, sin is, notwithstanding, the object of his aversion and displeasure, is plain, from a consideration of its contrariety to his character; its contrariety to his laws; the expressions of displeasure which he has uttered respecting it; the sufferings which are now connected with it; and the punishment which he has threatened to inflict in the future state on those who have committed it. All which things prove that in the proper sense of the words, God is not the author of sin. Whatever God does, he approves. This is essential to that consistency of character which is inseparable from perfection. Since therefore God has shown so many proofs of his abhorrence of sin, it is impossible to imagine that he is the author of it.

The other kindred error on the subject of sin, which we must and may avoid, is *the supposition that man is not chargeable with the sin which he commits.*

It is true that he has a corrupt nature, and is exposed to much temptation, both worldly and satanic. But neither of these circumstances destroys his accountability. The corruption of his nature consists in his being inclined to evil; and the temptations by which he is assaulted prevail against him, not by forcing him to sin against his will, but by strengthening his inclination to sin. And every

man's conscience, when allowed to speak without restraint, tells him that what he does voluntarily, he is accountable for.

Whatever speculative perplexity, then, may attend the subject of moral evil, the bearings of the subject on the character of God, and on the character of man, are sufficiently plain, and comprise all that we need to know about it, namely, that God is not the author of sin, but that man is chargeable with his own sin.

We proposed also to consider the doctrine of *Future Punishment* in connexion with that of God's dominion.

The word of God most plainly declares that they who live and die in a state of impenitence and unbelief, "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power."

This must be to every reflecting mind a solemn and affecting consideration. It is calculated to awaken anxious inquiry as to our own destiny; and happy would it be for mankind if it always did awaken such an inquiry; for then would those tidings of mercy which are published in the gospel be acceptable and welcome. The subject is, moreover, calculated deeply to affect the mind in relation to others; and happy would it be for mankind if the thought of future retribution, as awaiting the workers of iniquity, did more generally and powerfully affect the minds of men; for then would all who are themselves acquainted with the way of escape from deserved misery, manifest a degree of zeal and activity in the cause of truth hitherto unparalleled.

These two points, let it be observed, constitute all that is *practical* relative to the subject; and these points, as in the former instance, are perfectly intelligible. Those persons, surely, act most wisely, who restrict their inquiries chiefly, if not

wholly, to these practical views of the matter. What should we think of the man, who, when told that both his own house and that of his neighbour were on fire, should delay all effort for extinguishing the flames, or for getting out of their reach, until he had cleared up, to his full satisfaction, every difficult point respecting the origin of the calamity. Equally foolish is the part they act who spend their time in fruitless inquiries after incomprehensible points relating to moral evil, while they are not only neglecting to assist others to escape impending danger, but are themselves neglecting that great salvation without which escape is impossible.

If we advert to the station which God occupies as the Governor of the world, as contrasted with the place which we occupy as individual subjects of his government; and at the same time bear in recollection the amazing disparity there is, both in natural and moral attributes, between him and ourselves; we shall see, that while he must needs be qualified, *we must needs be unqualified to form any decisions on the subject of future retribution beyond what he has been pleased to communicate.*

Among the materials which would be requisite as data, to enable us to speak in positive terms on the subject of future punishment, are the following:

A perfect knowledge of the evil of sin:

Perfect knowledge both of the amount of guilt incurred by each individual transgressor, of the degree of suffering which each shall endure, and of the proportion which shall subsist between the one and the other: and

Perfect knowledge of the ends which punishment is designed to answer.

A little reflection will suffice to convince us that on no one of these points can we pretend to anything like the necessary information.

[1.] *We do not fully know the evil of sin.*

We do not fully know any thing; and on the subject of *sin* there is an obstacle of a very formidable nature in the way of our knowledge. We are ourselves sinful. We are so conversant with sin as committed by our fellow-creatures, and are naturally so much in love with sin ourselves, as to be strongly prepossessed in favour of it; and are therefore incapacitated for forming an accurate conception of its true character. Our giving an opinion on the subject of the evil of sin, is as if a number of persons should take upon themselves to pronounce a judgment on the qualities of an impure atmosphere, who had been born and bred in that very atmosphere, and had never breathed any other. It would not be surprising if such persons should contend that their native air was perfectly good. Holy angels, who have inhaled the pure air of heaven, would be better qualified to form a judgment on the question; but human beings, who have always lived amidst the noisome exhalations of sin, ought to confess themselves incompetent to the task.

[2.] *We do not know the amount of guilt which each individual has contracted; nor the degree of suffering which each shall endure; nor the proportion which subsists between the one and the other.*

We know, or may know, more of our own character than we can ascertain of the character of others; and yet it is but little we know of ourselves. It is probable that we have been guilty of many offences of which, through criminal inattention, we took no account. It is probable, too, that many things which we acknowledged to be faults were much more heinous in God's sight than they were in our own; so that, on the whole, there is reason to believe that we have a very inadequate conception of the total amount of our own guilt; much less can we have a full knowledge of the guilt of others.

Equally ignorant are we of the degree of suffering which each shall endure. The terms on which future punishment is set forth, lead to the

conviction that it shall be eternal, and also that it shall be great; but how great we cannot tell. One thing is most manifest, that the punishment of all will not be equal. We read that it shall be "more tolerable" for some than for others in the day of judgment; and that some shall be beaten with "few stripes" and some with "many stripes;" but how many stripes shall be laid on each we cannot tell.

Since we know neither the amount of guilt of any individual, nor the degree of suffering which each shall endure; it follows, of course, that we cannot form a judgment of the proportion between the one and the other; no words being necessary to prove that if the relation between two things is to be ascertained, the things themselves must first be distinctly seen.

[3.] *Neither do we fully know the ends which future punishment is designed to answer.*

We apprehend, *in the general*, that the design of punishment is just *the opposite of the effect of sin*; that whereas sin dishonours God, the punishment of sin will vindicate the honour of his law and government; and that whereas sin is injurious to the creatures of God, the punishment of sin will counteract the injurious effects which sin, if not followed by punishment, would occasion. Punishment, inflicted on offenders during their state of probation, we consider to be calculated to benefit themselves as well as others. Punishment, inflicted on offenders after their period of probation has terminated, is calculated, we suppose, to benefit *others*, though the sufferers be out of the reach of benefit. But how great the extent of this benefit may be;—how many millions of rational beings, human and angelic, will gain moral good from their knowledge of the punishment of incorrigible offenders;—how much good they will thence derive, by being led to see in a true light the dreadful malignity of sin, the strictness of God's holy law, and the indispensable necessity of well-doing in order to happiness;—and whe-

ther some other advantages, at present wholly inconceivable by us, may not accrue to the universe, generally, from the punishment of the finally-impenitent;—no mortal can tell.

On all these points it is impossible for us to acquire full information. We are not thoroughly acquainted either with the evil of sin, or with the guilt of individuals, or with the degree of their punishment, or with the ends which punishment shall answer.

Of no one of these particulars have we a thorough knowledge; and yet a complete acquaintance with them all is necessary to enable us to decide on the justice and expediency of future punishment; and in the absence of any one of these items of knowledge it is presumptuous, in the highest degree, for any man to affirm that the suffering predicted in the Holy Scriptures is either unjust or unnecessary. For the same reason, it would be unreasonable for any one to harbour a prejudice against the Scriptures on account of their containing threatnings of future punishment.

For a creature like man, so ignorant and so sinful, to take upon him to arraign the divine government because it includes punishment, is as if a little child should find fault with the jurisprudence of his native country, or as if a malefactor should rail at the law which consigns him to deserved suffering.

While man is confessedly ignorant on all the points above-named, *God must be acknowledged to possess the most perfect knowledge respecting them all.* Since, therefore, he fully knows what sin is, being alike incapable either of extenuating or of exaggerating its malignity; since he fully knows the exact amount of guilt which each one who shall be punished shall have contracted; and since he also fully knows the ends which punishment is adapted to answer; and is never disposed to inflict suffering without or beyond necessity; we may rest assured both that the future sufferings of the impenitent will

be *just* as to the individual sufferers, and *necessary* with relation to the moral government of God at large.

2. God also sustains towards man the relation of **BENEFACTOR**.

To the whole race of man he grants temporal blessings; to all men to whom his word comes, he freely offers eternal good; and many persons he actually puts in possession of that good.

It is on this last point, chiefly, that his procedure as a Benefactor is excepted against. "Why," some have presumed to ask, "does not God distribute spiritual blessings equally among all? We cannot," say they, "reconcile his conduct herein with our ideas of justice." Perhaps not; yet it does not follow that God's conduct in this matter is really inconsistent with justice. The probability is, that your ideas of justice, with regard to God's method of bestowing favours, have been formed on insufficient grounds.

When an objection of this nature comes from the lips of a man who believes in the being and providence of God, it is proper to remind him that the distribution of spiritual blessings is not the only department of the divine administration in which God acts on the same principle.

"The author of nature," observes **BISHOP BUTLER**, "in numberless instances bestows that upon some which he does not upon others, who seem equally to stand in need of it. Indeed he appears to bestow his gifts with the most promiscuous variety among creatures of the same species; health and strength, capacities of prudence and of knowledge, means of improvement, riches and all external advantages. And as there are not any two men found of exactly like shape and features, so it is probable there are not any two of an exactly like constitution, temper and situation, with regard to the goods and evils of life."

"If," remarks **DR. CHALMERS**, "revelation tells

us of one portion of our race being distinguished by the sovereign will of the Almighty for superior knowledge or superior privileges, it only adds one inequality more to the many inequalities which we perceive every day in the gifts of nature, of fortune, and of providence.”

But in order to our acquiescing in the plan which God pursues in the gospel economy, it is necessary we should bear in mind that all the blessings of religion are matters of *favour* and not of debt. *Grace* is the term by which those blessings are designated. Redemption in its *origin* was grace; and redemption in its *application* is grace also. No individuals of the human race can claim salvation or any of the blessings which accompany it, as matter of right; since man, being guilty, is unworthy. In this respect, all human beings stand on the same level. The degrees of their guilt may be various, but “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

Since, then, God was not under obligation on the score of justice, to grant salvation to any; it follows that they who do obtain salvation are favoured beyond what either they or any others could have claimed; while, on the other hand, they who do not obtain salvation are not wronged. All have as much as they deserved, and some have more. At the same time we are to recollect, that, with regard to all who hear the gospel, God signifies his willingness, nay his determination, to grant eternal life to every one who seeks it in the way prescribed; and that nothing but a criminal unwillingness to be saved in that way, opposes the eternal happiness of any such persons. The immediate design of the spirit of truth, in the introduction of the words of the text, seems to have been to encourage the return of penitent sinners. One of the many respects in which God's ways and thoughts differ from those of man, is the manner of his showing mercy. Men are often unwilling to forgive great offences;

God is willing to forgive the greatest. Men often forgive only in part; God forgives completely. Men often forgive reluctantly; God forgives willingly. These truths were published in ancient times; but are still more fully made known in the gospel, which declares, that "whosoever believeth in Jesus shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life." Besides, God not only makes such declarations as the above, but he employs methods of instruction, which are in their own nature calculated to promote men's spiritual good. It is by his appointment that his servants warn, exhort, invite, and intreat their fellow-men to "flee from the wrath to come," and "to lay hold on eternal life." God is under no absolute obligation to grant these means of grace; still less is he obliged to impart that supernatural influence which shall insure their efficacy. To some he grants that influence, and denies it to none who seek it. To others he does not grant it. Towards the latter he acts not unjustly; towards the former he acts with exuberant and unmerited kindness.

They who object to God's method of procedure in these things, forget that, in all that concerns the salvation of fallen man, God sustains the relation not merely of a righteous Governor, but of a *sovereign Benefactor*. In matters of justice, he never exercises sovereignty. He always gives to his creatures every good which on the ground of equity could be claimed; and never inflicts a pain which justice would forbid; but in the distribution of *gratuitous blessings*, (of which nature all the blessings of redemption are,) he may and he does exercise the prerogative of sovereignty; that is, as the late DR. EDWARD WILLIAMS well defined it, "a supreme right to will and to do whatever is not inconsistent with universal equity."

On the whole, it may be remarked, that *unduly elevated thoughts of man*, and *degrading thoughts of God*, lie at the *root* of objections to the most diffi-

cult doctrines of religion, both those which have now been adduced, and others which will demand our consideration on subsequent occasions.

If this be the root of the evil, the *means of counteracting it* will easily be found. Let me recommend to you, my dear friends, to ponder well the words of the text. Whatever imperfection may have characterized the foregoing illustration of the sentiment which the text contains, that sentiment itself must be allowed to be of deep importance, and to be full of useful lessons in reference to the conceptions we form of God, of his moral government, and of the principles on which that government, as it regards man, proceeds.

Imagine that you hear the voice of the Eternal himself declaring: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

And if you perceive rebellious imaginations against the Supreme Ruler still struggling within your breast, look up to his throne of grace, and intreat him for the sake of Christ to grant you that humble spirit, which so well becomes your character and the relation in which you stand to him. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves, therefore, to God."

LECTURE XIV.

July 25, 1824.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST RELIGION FOUNDED ON
THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO PROFESS IT.

MATT. xviii. 7.

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

NOTHING remarkable has occurred in the Christian Church since the beginning of the gospel, of which some intimation is not found in the word of God. Great opposition, for instance, has been made to the cause of Christ; but this was distinctly foretold, not only by the Saviour and by his apostles, but by the prophets who spoke of him many ages before his coming. Many who have professed faith in Christ have, by their opinions and practices, brought a reproach on the Christian name; but this was not unlooked for. The Saviour gave his disciples to understand that, considering the corruption of human nature, it could not be otherwise but that "offences" should come. The word in the Greek signifies a stumbling-block, some impediment in the road which either makes a man turn back or at least retards his progress. The Saviour predicted that such would be the sad effects of the hindrances which the wickedness of man would place in the way to heaven. "Woe unto the world because of offences!" And "woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" Most exactly has this prediction been fulfilled. "Offences" have indeed come in lamentable abundance, and truly deplora-

ble has been the result. A conviction that one of the principal sources of prejudice against real religion is the bad conduct of its professors, has induced me to give to the subject a greater degree of prominence than is commonly allotted to it.

Let us, first, examine those charges against Christianity which are founded on the *public evils* which it has been supposed to have occasioned; and then, such objections as relate to the character of *Individual Professors*.

First, we are to notice the EVILS OF A PUBLIC NATURE OF WHICH CHRISTIANITY IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN THE CAUSE.

One of the objections which we are called to meet may be considered as thus expressed: "CON- TROVERSY respecting articles of faith has often been conducted with passion and has ended in malice, and the parties engaged in it have agreed in nothing but in denouncing the vengeance of heaven on each other."

It is too true. But are you sure that the parties concerned were Christians? It does not follow that a man is possessed of true piety, because he knows something about religion, or feels deeply interested in some particular parts of the Christian scheme. And if these angry disputants were *not Christians*, it is surely most unfair to lay any part of their fury to the account of the gospel. All that can with truth be said is, that Christianity was *the innocent occasion* of quarrelling; just as any thing else, a question in politics or in philosophy, for example, might have been, and often has been.

There is good reason why *Philosophy* should not have occasioned so much angry debate as either religion or politics, *viz.* its being of a more *speculative* character, and not so immediately connected with the welfare of man. Yet even in philosophical discussions a very undue warmth of temper has often

been manifested, and ill-will has not unfrequently been the consequence. No one, however, pretends to lay the blame on philosophy. *Political* discussions, it is well known, have been so often conducted with anger approaching to fury, as to lead some persons to conclude that it would be better for society if all people were to dismiss the subject altogether from their conversation and their thoughts. Whereas, it is the very circumstance of civil government being closely connected with the well-being of society, which makes people enter into the subject with so deep a feeling of interest; and all that can fairly be said in the case is, that in consequence of the irritability of mankind, that feeling of *interest* which the subject naturally excites is apt to degenerate into *anger*. But that anger, to whatever lengths it may proceed, is surely to be attributed not to the subject discussed, but to the *persons* who engage in the discussion.

The case is the same with *religious controversy*. They who take part in it perceive that it involves the most important interests of the human race. To engage in the controversy then with *earnestness* is not only allowable but commendable. If earnestness should grow into furious zeal, let the blame rest on the men who manifest such a temper.

It was hinted above, that possibly some zealous combatants in religion may not have been truly pious, and that consequently religion is not in the least degree accountable for their conduct. And it must be added, that even if it were allowed that such persons were Christians, Christianity cannot be considered answerable for their anger, unless she have in some way, directly or indirectly, manifested an approval of their spirit. Now, let any one read the New Testament from the one end to the other with candid attention, and see if he can find either any precept which recommends such a spirit, or even any intimation that it may be indulged without blame and without danger. The Apostle James

speaks the mind of his Master and of all the apostles when, referring to cases among professed Christians in which blessing and cursing had proceeded out of the same mouth, he says, "My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

Let it not be supposed that no religious disputations are conducted in conformity with the excellent rules laid down by the Apostle James. A great deal more has been said on the subject of the angry disputes of Christians than facts have justified. It is no uncommon thing for controversy to be treated, both from the pulpit and from the press, in a manner which violates no one regulation of the law of kindness; but in which the confutation of what are deemed the most pernicious errors is blended with the utmost compassion and courtesy towards those who embrace those errors. It would be easy, were it proper, to substantiate this remark by referring to preachers and to authors, both among the living and the dead. Nay, I will go so far as to express my conviction that it is much more usual, in our day especially, to meet with instances of controversy conducted in a becoming spirit,

than it is to meet with those of a contrary character.

It is surely possible for a man to tell his opponent that he has embraced a dangerous error, without feeling any thing like ill-will towards the person of that opponent. Yet this seems to have been forgotten by some who have spoken of controversial writers. Some have been pleased to represent the mere exercise of faithfulness, by the phrases, "pouring out anathemas," and "consigning men to hell and damnation." Surely if one man believes another to be in a hazardous state, it is no breach of kindness to tell him so. Nay, in such a case, faithfulness and kindness are the same thing. To inform any people that we fear they are in the way to perdition is a very different thing from wishing them ill. On the contrary, it may be connected with a very earnest desire for their salvation. None will accuse the blessed Saviour of the want either of kindness or of courteousness, and yet he did not scruple to say to some: "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" and, "Therefore shall ye receive the greater damnation." Much depends on the very tone and manner in which such expressions are uttered. It is greatly to be lamented that, in consequence of certain awful terms, such as *hell* and *damnation*, having been much used by profane men under circumstances of rage and malice, which afford a lively image of the place of punishment of which these men so often speak, the words in question should have become associated in our minds with vulgarity and passion. But this is altogether an accidental association. Such words may be used with a solemn feeling wholly unconnected with any evil or unseemly temper.

But a charge against Christianity, of a still more serious character, is founded on the PERSECUTIONS which have been inflicted by Christians on each other, on account of differences of religious

sentiment. Angry words, it is observed, might have been overlooked; but what shall be said of the confiscation of property, the imprisonment of persons, the tortures and the violent deaths to which thousands of inoffensive and even meritorious members of society have been subjected by their fellow-christians, because they could not adopt the same creed and observe the same forms of worship?

The fact cannot be denied, and cannot but be deplored; but the vindication of Christianity from all censure on account of it is perfectly easy. Persecution has arisen chiefly from wickedness of heart, but partly from blindness of the understanding.

It has arisen, chiefly, from *wickedness* of heart. Men of tyrannical, overbearing temper, under pretence of religious zeal, have given vent to their pride and cruelty, by punishing those who dared to controvert their opinions and oppose their usurped authority. Such men would have acted tyrannically under any circumstances which should have given them the opportunity of so acting, even though they had never heard a word about the Christian system. Religion did not make them tyrants; but found them such.

But persecution has arisen, in part, from *ignorance*. At a very early age of the Christian Church these words of the Lord Jesus began to be overlooked: "My kingdom is not of this world;" and for many centuries the conduct of professing Christians who occupied stations of authority, plainly intimated that the distinction between civil and ecclesiastical matters was very obscurely, if at all, seen. Kings and Emperors, not content with using their power and influence for the suppression of vice and the encouragement of piety, seemed to think that they were doing God service by compelling their subjects to be religious; or rather, by *attempting* to compel them. To us it seems incon-

ceivably strange that it did not occur to those men that the seat of religion, being the soul of man, is quite out of the reach of brute force; and that since all truly pious feelings and all acts of genuine worship are the result of persuasion and conviction, no means can be of any service at all in the promotion of real piety which are not directed to the spiritual part of human nature; and moreover, that the employment of threats and of force, with a view to make men religious, is so far from being calculated to effect the end proposed, that it is almost certain to be productive of the directly contrary result, by exciting prejudice against a system in the propagation of which means so repulsive are employed.

The notion that civil pains and penalties might be lawfully inflicted on men for religious errors, was greatly encouraged by the supposition that the Jewish Theocracy was to be regarded as a model for Christian Princes. It was not sufficiently observed that the Mosaic Economy was designed to be local and temporary. Civil and religious things were then blended in a degree which we have no reason to suppose to be allowable under the gospel dispensation. The infliction of temporal penalties on *religious* grounds finds no countenance in the New Testament. The only punishment which Christ and his apostles authorise any Christian Church to inflict on heretical members are *reproof* and *expulsion*. Consequently, the cause of the gospel is not at all responsible for any of the many persecutions which stain the Annals of Ecclesiastical History. Had the genuine character of Christianity been thoroughly understood, and its precepts universally practised by men in power, not a single act of persecution had ever been committed.

As connected with the subject of Persecution must also be mentioned the devastating WARS which religion is said to have produced. For

the *avowed* purpose of promoting the cause of truth, many a bloody expedition has been undertaken, and tens of thousands of human beings have been the sacrifice.

But is it not most manifest that in a vast number of instances, religion has been used merely as a *cloak* to conceal projects of worldly aggrandizement?

A sovereign of ambitious views, desirous of annexing the adjoining territory to his own, and observing that the creed of the nation which he coveted differed from that of his own people, gladly availed himself of this circumstance, as furnishing him with a plausible though most unlawful pretext for invasion. The people whom he governed, being ignorant of the true character of religion, were easily persuaded that the contemplated expedition would be as pleasing to God as it promised to be lucrative to themselves.

In other cases the sovereign was himself the dupe of a superstitious and covetous priesthood, whose sole motive was to enrich the Church, or rather, themselves.

There may have been instances in which all the parties concerned, the People, the King, and the Priests, thought that they were doing God service.

All wars called religious must, it is presumed, have originated in one or other of the ways now specified, and the remarks which were just now made, in reference to persecution, are strictly applicable to the present subject, since a religious war is neither more nor less than persecution on a large scale.

Religious Wars must have arisen either from immoral dispositions, or from ignorance, or from the union of both. Now, immoral dispositions of every kind, including pride, ambition, covetousness, malice, and revenge, the usual sources of war, are, it is plain, most pointedly condemned by the Christian Code, how natural soever they may

be to the corrupt heart of man, and how commonly soever they may be indulged and vindicated by mankind. Instead of the True Religion being required to bear any part of the disgrace which covers the names of the men who undertook wars professedly on pious grounds, the fact is, that an honour directly the reverse of such a disgrace may be claimed on behalf of Christianity as matter of unquestionable right. It is mainly owing to the anti-ambitious, the anti-covetous, the anti-malicious, the anti-revengeful precepts and spirit of the gospel, both that the number of wars has been lessened and their ferocity softened. Whether wars will ever entirely cease is matter of doubt with many; but one thing is certain, that if the time shall ever come, as we believe it will, when the religion of Christ shall universally prevail, universal peace will ensue. "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, and shall learn war no more."

The sum of the whole matter is this: Whatever injuries have been inflicted, either on individuals or on nations, professedly on religious grounds, whether these injuries came in the shape of persecution or of war, reflect, in reality, not the slightest dishonour on the cause of true religion, inasmuch as such conduct is not only not sanctioned but is expressly forbidden thereby; and also because in proportion as Christianity is really understood and practised, the opposite virtues of equity, forbearance, and compassion abound.

We are now to examine those charges against the Religion of the Gospel which are founded on
THE FAULTS OF INDIVIDUAL PROFESSORS.

This is the point, if I mistake not, among the objections under consideration, which to many persons appears the most formidable. Persecutions and

Wars are matters of history, and angry controversies are only now and then witnessed; but the inconsistencies of professing Christians are matters of daily observation.

“There,” say the objectors, “is a man to whom God has given a superabundance of *wealth*, and who, moreover, pretends to be very devout; and yet he can suffer a poor neighbour, and even a relative, to be almost famished for want of the necessaries of life! Although he ‘fares sumptuously every day’ and is constantly making additions to his already ample fortune, and although, moreover, he professes to feel interested in the cause of Benevolence, all his charities, taken together, scarcely amount to a twentieth part of his income, whereas, if he pleased, he might give a tenth, and even a fifth, and have plenty left for himself and for all that belong to him.”

“There again,” say they, “is a *manufacturer*, who passes for a religious man, and yet see how he grinds the faces of the poor, so that, work as hard as they may, they are unable to procure food and raiment. Some of those very *work-people*, also, are just as blameable as their employer, in a different way, though, like him, they profess to be Christians; for they are ready to take every possible advantage of their master, and cannot be trusted for the value of a penny any further than they are watched.”

“And there is a *tradesman*, who, notwithstanding his profession of religion, is known to be addicted to falsehood, and is so far from being an honourable man, that you dare not even affirm that he is honest.”

“Look a little further,” they go on to say, “and you will come to a religious family, so called, where sad doings are witnessed. The husband and the wife, the parents and the children, are perpetually quarrelling; and so unreasonable are both the

master and the mistress in their demands, that the most industrious servants are unable to give satisfaction."

"In another house you will hear it said that such a person professing religion was once a *servant* in their family, but was so far from adorning her profession, that the master and mistress have never wished to have a religious servant since that time."

"Lastly," say the objectors, "there is a man who by office is a *teacher of religion*, and yet look at his conduct. Is it not well known that he is a drunkard, a swearer, and a covetous man, careless about the flock and anxious only after the fleece? And is it not perfectly evident that all the attachment he feels to religion arises from its furnishing him with a situation in which he gets a maintenance? Nor is this the only instance of the kind. We could point out twenty more at least within the circle of our own acquaintancé. What shall we think of religion if such men as these may be its teachers?"

It will be acknowledged that in the preceding statement of cases of bad conduct on the part of professing Christians, I have not attempted to disguise facts. I wish that the objection should be met by fairer means than disguise. Nor do I conceive that it will be at all a difficult task to offer such considerations as, to a candid and impartial mind, may prove satisfactory. But let us previously pause a few moments, that we may indulge in grief at the recollection, that such facts as these have really occurred and are still occurring. The words of the Apostle Paul, when writing to the Christians at Philippi, are well calculated to express our feelings; "Many walk, of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

Before we enter on the general subject, it may

also be right that a few words should be spoken relative to the *last case* specified, that of *teachers of Christianity* whose lives contradict their discourses. If this were the proper opportunity for such a discussion, it would not be difficult, we think, both to point out the cause of the evil, and to suggest a remedy; but as such topics would lead me to touch on controverted matters of Church Government, I forbear, choosing to adhere as closely as a regard to truth will allow to the rule I have prescribed to myself in this course of sermons, namely, to avoid disputed points of a non-essential character, and to dwell chiefly on those things in which all the true disciples of Christ agree. I shall not violate the above rule, however, by expressing the regret which pious persons of all parties feel that it should be so common a thing for parents to destine their sons "to the Church," without any evidence of their possessing those spiritual qualifications, in the absence of which the sacred office must be both irksome to the occupant, and worse than useless to the people for whose benefit it is supposed to be filled.

But in order to vindicate true religion from any obloquy which might be incurred from the conduct of such men, nothing more is necessary than to advert to the opinion which all men, religious or irreligious, entertain respecting them. I ask, then, *Are such ministers fit or unfit for their office?* There is but one answer to the question. Even their most intimate associates at the table and on the turf allow, that although they are undoubtedly men of education, polite in manner, and every thing that could be wished for in a jovial party, they are *not good ministers of religion*. Nay, many of these persons themselves own as much, and wonder at the imprudence of their parents and guardians in putting them into such an office.

Now this admission is all that is wanted for the entire vindication of religion, in every unprejudiced

mind, from all blame on their account. They are *not fit*, it is owned, to be ministers of religion. Why? Because there is a manifest *disagreement between religion and them*. Wherein does that disagreement appear? Religion consists much in a devotional spirit of mind. They have no relish for devotion. Religion requires a pure and holy life. They make no pretensions to such a life. The author of the Christian religion requires that its ministers should be mainly influenced by a regard to the honour of God and the eternal happiness of mankind. These men have no concern either for the one or the other.

These points of obvious dissimilarity between real Christianity and such teachers of Christianity, plainly show that so far from religion being answerable for their conduct, the fact is that it is *the absence of real religion from their hearts which makes them what they are*. Let but the religion they profess to teach be embodied in their character, and they will become every thing which could be desired. Unholy men of this description, therefore, instead of being regarded, as they often are, as spots which deform the face of religion, constitute, when rightly viewed, a dark back-ground, rendering the fair proportions of holy truth the more conspicuous.

Let the blame attached to the appointment and continuing of such men in office rest where it may, it is evident that the cause of pure religion cannot reasonably be required to bear any part of it.

On the *general subject* before us, namely, the Faults of Professed Christians, I submit the following considerations :

1. All are not Christians who say they are ;
2. The Faults of Christians are often greatly exaggerated ;
3. The Excellencies of Christians are too little regarded.

I. ALL ARE NOT CHRISTIANS WHO PROFESS TO BE.

The invitations which the Saviour has authorised his servants to publish are of the most universal and encouraging nature. No one, whatever his past character has been, who now desires to partake of the privileges which are included in a man's being a Christian, is forbidden to hope that his wishes may be fulfilled. When the gospel is represented under the image of a refreshing stream, the invitation to participate in its blessings is thus expressed: "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And when the blessings of the gospel are set forth by the symbol of a feast, the poorest and most unworthy are invited to come to the table. So that with regard to the willingness of God to receive every penitent sinner who comes to him in the name of the Mediator, there is no room for doubt. But it is one thing to be assured that God will receive you if you truly come to him by Jesus Christ, and another to know that you have actually so come to him. Coming to Christ and to God through him are neither more nor less than *Faith*; and this faith you are warranted to exercise the moment you discover your need of Christ, and therefore, of course, previously to your perceiving within you the evidences of true conversion. But if afterwards you wish to ascertain whether or not the faith which you think you have exercised be genuine, you are directed to look into your heart and life. Where faith is genuine, holy affections of the heart, and obedience to God in the conduct, will be the result. By these fruits the Christian will be known.

Now suppose a rich man professing faith in Christ to be proverbially covetous and uncharitable; what shall we say? Consult the Apostle JAMES: his words are, "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them; Depart in peace, be ye warmed and

filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone."

Suppose again, a manufacturer, a farmer, or a master in any other line of business, professing religion, to be in the habit of withholding from his servants the wages due to them; what shall we say? Consult the same apostle; "Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

Further: Suppose a man, professing to be a Christian, to be guilty, either through idleness or extravagance, of neglecting to support his family, what shall we say? The Apostle Paul will inform us, that "if a man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."

In a word; if a man, though he seem to be religious, be chargeable with any wilful and habitual sin, the Saviour tells us what judgment we must form concerning him, when he says; "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in Heaven."

From these and many similar texts we learn that it is a very possible thing for a man to have a good opinion of his own religious character, without being, in reality, a disciple of Christ. And no one can look into the visible Church without being led to fear that there are not a few individuals to

whom this remark applies. And in fact, the proper and the only way of vindicating the Gospel from the reproach which it would have to bear, if the immoral persons in question were considered real Christians, is to conclude, in conformity with the texts quoted, that they are Christians only in name, and have no other connexion with the religion of Christ, than that which is involved in an outward profession of Christianity.

If the inquiry be made why Christian Churches should allow any persons to belong to their communion who manifestly appear to be unchristian in their character, the nature of the answer must depend on the constitution of the Church to which reference is made. Some Churches are so constituted that although the more pious members might wish to exclude the immoral, they are without the power of so doing. And some Churches, it may be feared, who possess the power, do not manifest sufficient courage and decision in the use of it.

If it be further asked why those Churches which boast of a stricter discipline should retain dishonourable members in their communion, the answer is, that it often happens in religious as in civil society, that there is ground for very strong *suspicion* where absolute and sufficient *proof* is not attainable. Christian Churches act on the principles of British Jurisprudence, which are, we apprehend the principles of equity and common sense, that every man is to be treated as innocent till he is *proved* to be guilty. In very many instances, the grounds of suspicion may be strong, and yet from the peculiarity of the case, it may be impossible to adduce decisive evidence of guilt. Besides, some offences, such as avarice and covetousness, are not easily definable. A man may be known to manifest such an extreme love of money as cannot be reconciled with the supposition that the love of God also dwells in his heart, and yet it may not be possible to make out against him a charge of so

tangible a nature as to warrant the society of which he is a member, to pronounce upon him the sentence of exclusion. From these causes it sometimes happens that a man of very questionable character remains, till death, in communion with a Christian Church.

But to return from this digression. It has been made, I presume, sufficiently evident that it is possible for a man to make a profession of religion without being a truly religious man.

Let us now look at the bearing which this fact has on the subject of the present inquiry.

There are persons who pretend to possess such an acquaintance with the heavenly bodies as to be able to foretel the heat and cold, the wet and the dry weather of all the ensuing year. Their predictions, as might be expected, prove to be false as often as true. But shall we, on account of the absurdity of such pretensions, neglect, as either false or unimportant, the noble science of Astronomy?

There are persons who, making unfounded pretensions to an acquaintance with Medicine, destroy life almost as often as they restore health. Shall we, for this reason, declare that the whole of the art of healing is an imposition and without use?

There is in circulation a considerable quantity of base metal, made to resemble shillings and sovereigns, but in reality scarcely worth the trouble of picking up. Shall we or do we on this account say, "There is either no such thing as good money, or at least it is so difficult to distinguish it from bad, that we resolve to have nothing more to do with money as long as we live? What we have by us we will part with, and determine never to take any more?"—Such questions answer themselves. Not less, but infinitely more foolish is the conduct of the people, who, because there are counterfeit Christians, resolve to have nothing to do with Christianity. If money were not a precious

commodity no one would think it worth while to make base coin; and if religion were less valuable, counterfeit Christians would be more rare.

2. THE FAULTS OF CHRISTIANS ARE GREATLY EXAGGERATED.

Four causes, among others, concur to promote this exaggeration; Ignorance, Carelessness, the Love of Slander, and Dislike of Piety.

Ignorance is one cause. In many cases, people have not the means of attaining a thorough knowledge of the person or action which they condemn. They have heard, in a dispute for example, but *one side only* of the question; had they heard the statement of the other party, the whole case would have assumed a different aspect. The *motives* which led to the action are also usually unknown; and though good intentions will not make a bad deed a good one, an acquaintance with the motive will often prove an action to be justifiable which before seemed absolutely without defence. Often, too, it is taken for granted that the conduct in question was pursued with a full *conviction of its being wrong*; when, in truth, it arose from the person's having been at a loss to determine what course he ought to pursue.

It might be supposed, that where a man has reason to believe that his knowledge of the case is incomplete, he would be willing to suspend his judgment, and that he would prefer having *no opinion* to the entertaining of an erroneous one. Many people, however, have not patience enough for this. They must have an opinion, right or wrong, and that directly.

Carelessness is another cause of faults being exaggerated. Many people have unfortunately acquired the habit of *incorrect perception*. They seldom form an accurate judgment of any object, physical or moral, which comes in their way. Their memory and their narrations, are, of course, as in-

correct as their conceptions; hence, though they say something like the truth, they never give "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." You have only to imagine, what often happens, that the history of an action passes through the mouths of twenty people of this description, to account for the very usual phenomenon, of the narrative coming before you in a shape as unlike the fact whence it took its rise, as darkness is different from light, or evil from good.

The Love of Slander is another cause. People see that their comparative goodness rises or falls in the inverse order to that in which their neighbour's goodness is elevated or depressed. A moderately moral man seems an amiable character by the side of a rake or a villain; while, if placed against a consistent follower of Christ, his faults are rendered conspicuous. He has no desire to be really good, but yet he wishes to *seem* so; and it therefore suits his inclination better to bring down the reputation of his neighbour to his own level, than to strive himself to rise to the same point of moral excellence. And while this unworthy feeling makes a man eloquent in uttering slander, the same cause secures to him eager and attentive hearers.

Dislike of Piety is the last cause which I shall mention, as contributing to the exaggeration of the faults of Christians.

No one who looks into the world and into the Scriptures, can question the existence of such a temper. Thousands of people who approve, in general, of the Christian Religion, are yet not at all well affected to serious piety. To religion, so far as it regulates the conduct, they do not object. To religion, so far as it has to do with forms and outward observances, they do not object. But to religion, represented as having its seat in the heart, and as requiring a certain order of thoughts and affections and motives, they very much object. For such employment of the mind they have no relish; and they would

be glad to be able to believe that such a degree of attention to religion is not essential to the Christian character. Now, if it can be made to appear that the people who profess serious piety are not better than others who are contented with the average religion of their neighbours, it is considered that presumptive proof will be obtained of the non-importance of such piety. Hence the lynx-like look with which such persons survey the conduct of professing Christians; and hence the eagerness with which they catch at the slightest imperfections, and the zeal with which they circulate and magnify them.

Who does not know something of the effect of prejudice? But in nothing perhaps is its influence so common, and certainly in nothing are its effects so serious as in the judgments men form of religion and of its professors. It led the Jews in old time to call the master of the house "Beelzebub;" and it has led men in subsequent times to give the same name to those of his household.

From considering the operation of these combined causes, we feel quite sure that THE FAULTS OF CHRISTIANS ARE BOTH MULTIPLIED AND MAGNIFIED. Many a statement uttered concerning the followers of Christ has grown, in the telling, from a slight to an enormous offence, and many a fault imputed to such persons has been altogether without a foundation in truth. That real Christians sometimes act inconsistently with the holy religion which they have embraced, we do not deny. "The best of men are but men at the best." That religion makes men *better*, we maintain to be an incontrovertible fact; that it makes them *perfect*, we do not pretend.

3. THE EXCELLENCIES OF CHRISTIANS ARE GREATLY OVERLOOKED.

The same cause which induces men to exaggerate defects will of course lead them to conceal or disregard excellence. But, in addition to this, it

may be observed that we naturally pay more attention to circumstances which are *out of the usual and expected order of things*, than to those which appear to be matters of course. It is so with regard to the *seasons* and the *weather*. We retain a distinct recollection of the journies in which we were incommoded by extreme heat, or cold, or rain; while we think little of the much greater number of instances in which the weather was favourable for travelling. The case is the same with respect to the state of our *health*. As to most people, health is the rule, pain is the exception. Freedom from sickness may continue for months and years without being much considered; whereas an interruption of health makes a deep and lasting impression. People who are often indisposed are very ready to imagine that they have more pain than ease; whereas, with the exception of some very extraordinary instances, even unhealthy persons have ten moments of ease for one of pain. In these cases and in all others, what is *unusual* excites more attention and is therefore longer remembered than what is merely a thing of course.

Now, with regard to *Christian character*, if you will deduct from the total amount of imputed faults, first, those committed by men who are manifestly *Christians in name only*, and, secondly, the crimes which have been *falsely laid to the account* of Christians; (with both of which classes of faults, it is plain, Christianity has no concern,) after these necessary deductions have been made, I contend that *goodness* will be found to be the *rule* in Christian character, and *wickedness* the *exception*. It is expected, naturally and properly expected, that the disciples of Christ shall be holy, harmless, and benevolent. Consequently if any one who names the name of Christ does not depart from iniquity, the incongruity which is apparent between the system which he professes to approve and the practice which he adopts, excites immediate and universal attention; while *the hundred instances which the*

same society of Christians furnishes of persons who “adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things,” are scarcely thought of. If people would bestow as much pains in their endeavours to find out excellencies as they do in searching for faults, they would perceive that the Christian church, notwithstanding the noxious weeds which disfigure it, is by far the best cultivated and most fertile spot in this division of the moral world; and they would be delighted to see on every side the plants and the “fruits of righteousness” in a degree of abundance of which, at present, they have no conception. In every direction they would meet with rich men and poor men, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, whose very virtues, retired and unobtrusive as they are, constitute the reason of their attracting but little of the public notice; more especially because not a few persons of this description, by an excess of modesty, are deterred from making that open avowal of their faith in Christ which their Saviour requires from them. While the faults of hypocritical professors are unjustly laid to the charge of Christianity, the excellencies of these non-professing Christians are as unjustly withheld from the account of the gospel, to the credit of which they ought certainly to be placed.

Let me remind you, before I close the subject, that of the two views in which religion may be contemplated, namely, *in its reference to others*, and in its reference *to ourselves*, the latter is inconceivably more important than the former. To form a decisive judgment of the religious character of others is often impossible, and usually unnecessary. One thing we know, that religion as delineated in the word of God is all that heart could wish. In its precepts, no vice is sanctioned, no virtue is omitted. In its promises, there is the assurance of pardon to the guilty, of grace to the corrupt, and of eternal life to the dying. Let it be our concern, then, that this di-

vine religion may have an abiding place in our hearts. We may be saved without knowing whether this or that man is or is not a true Christian; but we cannot be saved without being true Christians ourselves. "Lord," said John to Jesus, concerning Peter; "and what shall this man do?" "If I will," replied Christ, "that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee; follow thou me." "Lord," said another, "are there few that be saved?" "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," was the reply, "for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able;" the time for admission being passed and the door for ever shut.

Finally; let those who bear the Christian name ponder well the important consequences which are associated with the character which they maintain. What solemn words are those contained in the text: "WOE TO THAT MAN BY WHOM THE OFFENCE COMETH." In all probability there is many an individual in the world of despair, who is thus upbraiding his companion in misery: "It was your bad conduct which brought me here. You were professedly a religious man, and yet you could lie, and cheat, and live a licentious life. I therefore concluded, without further trouble, that religion was useless and needless, if not absolutely false. Thus did I encourage myself in sin and unbelief till death arrested me and hell received me. It is true, that the inward cause of my arriving at that sad conclusion respecting the gospel, was the ill-will I felt towards God, and goodness, and things divine. I now see (though too late) that such a way of judging was as unreasonable as it was fatal. I now see that I made too much of the faults of professing Christians, and thought too little of their virtues. Still, your bad life was the immediate cause of the prejudice with which I viewed the people and the ways of God; and as long as eternity lasts, I shall

without ceasing torment you with the recollection that it was you that brought me here.”

Let the disciples of Christ, then, often reflect on the responsibility of their station, however humble it may seem to be. The mere possibility of your becoming the means of the final ruin of a relative, friend, or neighbour, makes you tremble. Your anxious wish is to save and not to destroy your fellow-men. Out of love then to your fellow-creatures, as well as from love to God and to yourself, avoid all sin : “ Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”

“ So let our lips and lives express,
“ The holy gospel we profess ;
“ So let our works and virtues shine,
“ To prove the doctrine all divine.”

LECTURE XV.

August 8, 1824.

THE MODE OF THE DIVINE EXISTENCE.

MATTHEW xxviii. 19.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

THE object of the last five discourses was to prove that the Holy Scriptures are the source of truth in matters of religion. With this view, the external and internal evidences of Christianity were exhibited, and several objections, relative to the word of God, to the sentiments which are thence deduced, and to the conduct of those who profess to form their religion on the model of the Bible, were answered.

We now proceed to inquire more minutely than heretofore into the nature of that system of piety which the Scriptures teach. We begin with GOD, as the great object to which religion has respect. In the next Lecture we are to contemplate the Divine Character. At present, our attention is to be directed to that mysterious peculiarity in THE MODE OF THE DIVINE EXISTENCE which, to avoid circumlocution, is commonly denoted by the term TRINITY.

The sentence which has been chosen for the text contains three distinct subjects :

The preaching of the gospel among the heathen;
The ordinance of Baptism; and,
The mode of the Divine Existence.

Consequently, this text may be viewed with reference either to missionary enterprises, or to Chris-

tian Baptism, or to the doctrine under consideration. It is, of course, for the last of these purposes I have now read it.

On the subject of that peculiarity in the divine existence which is usually called the Trinity, the following topics claim attention :

The nature of the doctrine ;

Its possibility ;

Its truth ;

Its importance; and

Our duty with regard to it.

And while we think on these things, and “give ourselves wholly to them;” may “the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all!”

I. We are to inquire into THE NATURE OF THE DOCTRINE.

That there is but ONE GOD is a fundamental truth of revealed religion. We are all, in the *proper* though not in the *applied* sense of the term, *Unitarians*; firm believers in the unity of the Godhead. That this is not inconsistent with the sentiments we hold respecting the Trinity, will, I hope, be rendered apparent as we proceed.

I shall give three definitions of the doctrine before us, agreeing together, and explanatory of each other.

First; If the doctrine were not matter of controversy;—if the whole body of professing Christians held what we deem scriptural views of it, I would content myself with describing it, as nearly as possible in the words of Scripture, to be, that *Jehovah is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*; or, reversing the order of the words, but expressing the same sense, that *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one Jehovah*. And here let me observe, although the remark may in some degree anticipate

the IIIrd topic of discourse, that the definition now given is in the words of Scripture, not indeed of one text, but of two texts, which, as they both relate to the same subject, namely, God, it is fair to embody in the same sentence. One of the two texts is that which I have prefixed to this discourse, where we have, associated, the name of "the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:" the other is, (Deut. vi. 4.) "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord;" or literally translated from the Hebrew, "*Jehovah our Gods (is) one Jehovah;*" the Hebrew word for God being of the plural number. Blend these two texts into one sentence, and you have the definition above given; *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, (are) one Jehovah.*" That sentence, in the mouth of a true believer, is sufficient to express the whole truth; but, since the doctrine before us is by some denied, and by others evaded, it may be proper to give a more explicit statement. I mean, then, by the doctrine of the Trinity, that *in the divine essence there are three distinctions, to each of which personal attributes are ascribed, viz. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.* To most persons the terms of the above sentence must be familiar; but as some are probably perplexed by words not used in ordinary conversation, it may be well to add another definition, which, though perhaps less accurate than the last, has the advantage of being more common and better understood by the majority, namely, "That there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

In giving any definition not entirely in the language of Scripture, we labour under considerable difficulty, arising from the want of appropriate terms. Although we cordially assent to the truth expressed in the words of the Assembly's Catechism just quoted, it is important to bear in mind that the word *person* is not to be taken exactly in its ordinary acceptance. Three persons, in common language,

are *three beings*, not merely in some respects *distinct*, but so completely *separate*, that their thoughts are different, their purposes may be hostile, and they have no necessary relation to each other. It is obvious, that such personality as this is not true of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Now, in every important inquiry, the next best thing to our making use of words strictly appropriate, is to know that the words we use are not strictly appropriate; otherwise, our conceptions will be as far removed from accuracy as the words we employ are. This caution demands the attention both of the advocates and opponents of the doctrine. The latter, either from ignorance or from a still less honourable cause, have argued as if the term *person* were used, in this controversy, in its customary sense; and, on this absurd and false supposition, have found no difficulty in making those who maintain the doctrine of our text to appear Polytheists.

Having stated what I conceive that doctrine to be, *I make no attempt at explanation*, fearing lest I should “darken counsel by words without knowledge.” The fact that there is a trinity in the divine nature, I hope in the IIIrd part of this sermon, clearly to prove from the scriptures of truth; but since it has not pleased God to reveal to us *the manner* in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one Jehovah, I conclude that either it would be impossible for us in our present state, to understand it, if revealed; or that, at least, the knowledge of it is not essential to our welfare. In all cases, and especially in such a case as this, *ignorance is better than error*. The scripture doctrine I hold to be, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, although so far one as to be one God, are, *in some sense, Three*; but how great the distinction is,—how far it resembles personality among creatures, I presume not to determine; contenting myself with the information the Scriptures give us, by which we learn that the distinction between Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit is such, that things are spoken of the Father which are not spoken of the Son and of the Spirit; that things are spoken of the Son which are not spoken of the Father and of the Spirit; and that things are spoken of the Spirit which are not spoken of the Father and the Son. So far, then, the Scriptures warrant us to carry the idea of *distinction*. On the other hand, the distinction cannot be so great as to intrench on the unity of the Godhead, since the same Scriptures plainly declare that there is but ONE JEHOVAH.

II. We are to consider THE POSSIBILITY OF THE DOCTRINE.

The propriety of making this a distinct topic of inquiry, and of placing it here, will appear, when it is recollected that a celebrated teacher of "that modification of Deism which claims to be regarded as Christianity," did not scruple to declare that he would not believe the doctrine in question, even though he should find it in the sacred Scriptures. Probably the greater part of those who impugn the doctrine acquiesce in this resolution; and it is clear that to persons in such a state of mind, the proofs of its truth, however numerous and convincing, will go for nothing. Previously, then, to the adduction of direct evidence, let us meet this objection.

I grant, that if by the doctrine of the Trinity were meant that there are *three Gods*, or that God is three *in the same sense in which he is one*, there would be ground for the objection.

I grant, too, that if it could be *proved* that the doctrine involved a real *contradiction*, the objection would be valid.

On either of these suppositions, the mind of a pious man would be brought into a most distressing state of conflict and uncertainty. On the one hand, in favour of the doctrine, would be God's own

word; and, on the other hand, against it, would be manifest inconsistency. But even in such a predicament, such a man would long hesitate, and examine much, and pray much, before he would absolutely deny its possibility; since he would not be able to divest himself of the persuasion that, after all, the contradiction which lay in the way of his receiving the doctrine as truth, might be not real but only apparent.

But although such a predicament may be imagined, it never can actually occur; what involves an absolute contradiction is *untrue*; but the Bible is the word of truth, and its author is the God of truth: it is certain, therefore, that no doctrine involving a *real* contradiction, can have place in that book.

In this part of the argument it is absolutely necessary that we should affix an accurate idea to the word *contradiction*. "What is a contradiction?" asks the eloquent and acute SAURIN: "What is a contradiction, with regard to us? *A contradiction is an evident opposition between two known ideas.* In order, therefore, for a man to be justified in denying that God can be *in one sense, Three, and in another sense, One*, that man ought to have a thorough acquaintance with the divine nature, a degree of knowledge which no mortal can pretend to. God only fully knows himself. If God then has declared that in one sense he is Three, and in another sense, One, that declaration ought to be enough for you and me. Unless we know God better than he knows himself, it is presumption to refuse to believe what he has declared respecting himself."

This reasoning of Saurin appears to us unanswerable.

You know that one man is not three men. The supposition involves a manifest contradiction. In what consists that contradiction? It is an evident opposition between *two known ideas, one man and*

three men. But are the ideas *unity* and *trinity*, when applied to *God*, as thoroughly known, as they are when applied to man? Certainly not. They are very imperfectly known. Then, if they are not thoroughly known, it is impossible to prove that they are contradictory, and therefore the objection against the doctrine in question, arising from its alleged impossibility, vanishes.

To imagine that there is in the divine nature such a degree of *simplicity* or unity, as not to allow of a three-fold manner of existence, is to form a supposition *wholly unsupported by proof*. On this point, I will quote, in an abridged form, a passage from that able divine, JOHN HOWE: "Whatsoever simplicity the ever-blessed God hath claimed to himself, or can by evident reason be demonstrated to belong to him as a perfection, we ought humbly to ascribe to him. But such simplicity as he hath not claimed; such as is arbitrarily ascribed to him by over-bold and adventurous intruders into the most profound arcana of the divine nature; such as can never be proved to belong to him, or to be any real perfection; such as would prove an imperfection, and a blemish; and such as is manifestly irreconcilable with his own plain affirmations concerning himself; we ought not to impose it upon ourselves, or to be so far imposed upon, as to ascribe to him such simplicity."

"For any thing we know, or have a right to assume," observes the candid and accurate DR. PYE SMITH; "For any thing we know or have a right to assume, this plurality of subsistencies in the Deity may be one of the *unique* properties of the divine essence, a necessary part of that Sole Perfection which must include every real, every possible excellence; a circumstance peculiar to the Deity, and distinguishing the mode of his existence from that of the existence of all dependent beings."

Enough, I hope, has been advanced to show that the alleged *impossibility* of the doctrine is

founded not in reason, but in presumption. That it is incomprehensible, we most readily admit. Though we understand nothing thoroughly, there are, doubtless, in the various objects of thought, degrees of intelligibility, and this is among the most mysterious. We are baffled in all attempts to form distinct conceptions of it. To an inquiring mind, accustomed to aim at the acquisition of clear ideas on every topic which comes before it, this circumstance calls for self-denial. Yet it is not startling; for if there be one subject in the whole range of human thought in which difficulty may be looked for, the nature of God is that subject. "Canst thou by searching find out God, canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?"—Canst thou expect it. As well mightest thou expect to hold the winds in thy fist, and the waters in the hollow of thy hand.

And let it be remembered that that peculiarity in the nature of God which is the subject of our present investigation is not the only circumstance relative to Deity which is beyond our conception. What attribute of Jehovah can we thoroughly understand? Think of his *Eternity*. It is an axiom in theology that God never began to be. Have you a clear conception of this truth? In the attempt to understand it, you go back in thought to a period far gone; to the creation of the world, and to ages before that era; but what is the result of your endeavours? After all, you have only a *negative idea* of the past eternity of God; you know what it is *not*; but a full comprehension of what it *is*, you have not, you cannot obtain.

And (to mention but one more attribute of Jehovah) who can conceive of *Omnipresence*. "Do I not fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" "No;" might an ignorant, presumptuous creature say: "I occupy but one spot of earth; I never saw a being which could be in more places than one at one time. I will not believe there is

such a being in existence." You would be shocked at the impiety and blasphemy of such a speech. But, we ask, is not an approach to the same impiety and blasphemy made by those who declare, in the face of God's own declarations, that because a Trinity in unity is impossible *with regard to man*, that therefore it is impossible *with regard to God*? We own that the impiety of the latter case is less gross than that of the former; but, in *principle*, they are, in our view, the same.

We do not hesitate to affirm that the positive denial of this doctrine, on the ground of its alleged impossibility, on the face of scriptural evidence of its truth, is as contrary to the dictates of sound reason, as it is those of piety.

Reason requires that, in every subject of investigation, due regard should be had to *evidence*, and to the specific nature of the evidence which, in any given case, may be looked for. In *Natural Philosophy* truth is obtained by *Experiments* obvious to the senses. In this department, reason requires that the evidence of the senses, derived from experiments sufficiently numerous and decisive, should be relied upon. In *History*, knowledge is derived from the *testimony of others*; and in this department reason requires that the declaration of such witnesses as had means of knowing the truth, and could have no wish to deceive, should be admitted as *truth*. In each of these departments, facts may be stated which we are at a loss to *reconcile with one another*. But if the evidence be strong, the fact is not hastily pronounced incredible. Very often, further acquaintance with the subject; knowledge of some other fact before concealed, removes the difficulty.

In *Religion*, and especially in that department of religion which has to do immediately with *the nature of Deity*, no evidence can be comparable, in point of value, with the testimony of God himself. Have we access to such testimony? We have.

The Bible contains it; and was given for the very purpose of conveying it. The authenticity, inspiration, and consequent authority of the Holy Scriptures are established by proofs so numerous and clear as to approve themselves to every mind, except where culpable inattention or wilful prejudice opposes a barrier to the entrance of light. On those proofs it is foreign from the present subject of inquiry to enter. The authority of the Bible in matters of religion has been already, I trust, rendered evident. My business is now with those who receive it as the word of God; and if I have at all succeeded thus far in my design in the present Lecture, the way is laid open to the reception of *scriptural evidence*. It has been, I hope, satisfactorily proved that there is *no antecedent incredibility* in the doctrine before us, but that, incomprehensible as it is, it is of such a nature, that if it shall be found that God has revealed it, we *may* and *must* admit it as an article of our belief.

Let us now proceed,

III. To examine what is said respecting it in the *Holy Scriptures*, by which examination its TRUTH AND CERTAINTY will be, I trust, established.

I have distributed the texts about to be adduced into four classes :

Such as relate to the Father ;

Such as relate to the Son ;

Such as relate to the Holy Spirit ; and

Such as relate to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, conjointly.

1. Let us notice some texts which relate to THE FATHER.

Of the many which might be quoted under this head, a very few will be sufficient; not because this branch of the doctrine is less important than the other branches of it, but because scarcely any one calls it in question. Yet, entirely to pass over

this topic, would seem to leave a chasm in the argument.

Take the following :

John i. 18. "No man hath seen *God* at any time ; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of *the Father*, he hath declared him."

John iv. 23. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship *the Father* in spirit and in truth."

John vi. 27. "Him (*i. e.* the Son of man) hath *God the Father* sealed."

Col. i. 12. "Giving thanks to *the Father*, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

James i. 27. "Pure religion before *God and the Father* is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

In these passages, as in a multitude of others, God and the Father evidently mean the same Being; a truth which almost all admit.

2. Let us notice some texts of Scripture which relate to THE SON.

While attending to the sentences about to be cited, under this head and the following, let it be remembered that there are two points to be proved, the *personality* and the *deity*, both of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ; that is, that they are *distinct*, and that they are *divine*. It will be seen that some of these texts establish the distinctness, and some the deity of the persons in the Trinity, while others prove both these truths at once, as is the case especially with the texts which will be quoted last.

The topics immediately before us at present, are, *the personality and deity of the Son of God*, and of these two points the former is almost universally admitted. It is, besides, commonly allowed that Jesus was truly *a man*. The point to be proved is that he is God as well as man. In the xviiith Lecture we shall have the opportunity of entering more fully

into this subject. A few texts only need now to be brought forward; and with regard to these texts I wish it to be understood that although I shall not trouble you with any difficult criticisms, I believe all these passages of Scripture to be genuine and fairly translated.

Psalm xlv. is acknowledged to be a prophetic description of *Messiah*; who, in the 6th verse, is thus addressed: "Thy throne, *O God*, is for ever and ever."

The prophet Isaiah predicted, (Isa. ix. 5, 6.) that *one* of the names of the *Messiah* should be, "*The Mighty God*." In Isa. xl. the office of the Herald who should go before *Messiah* is declared to be to *prepare the way of Jehovah*, to make straight in the desert a high-way for our God, because the *Lord God* was coming; and the

Evangelist Matthew (Chap. iii.) declares that this prediction was fulfilled when John Baptist prepared the way of *Jesus*; which is in effect, saying that *Jesus is Jehovah*.

John tells us (chap. i.) that the word which was "made flesh and dwelt among us, was in the beginning with God, and *was God*."

The Apostle Paul (Rom. ix. 5.) says of Christ, that he "*is God over all*, blessed for ever."

The Apostle John (1 John v. 20.) says of him, "This is the *true God* and eternal life."

The *Lord Jesus* says of *himself* (Rev. ii. 23.) "I am he *that searcheth the reins and hearts*;" which is undoubtedly the prerogative of *omniscience*, and is expressly claimed by *Jehovah*, (Jer. xvii. 9, 10.) as his own work: "I *Jehovah* search the hearts, I try the reins." And, in Rev. v. the very *same worship*, expressed in the very *same words*, is paid to the Lamb that was slain (*i. e.* *Jesus*, who died as an atonement for sin) which is paid to *God the Father*.

3. Let us notice some texts which relate to
THE HOLY SPIRIT.

In Acts vii. 51. Stephen, addressing the Jewish council says, "Ye do alway *resist the Holy Ghost*; as your fathers did, so do ye."

In Acts viii. 29. it is declared that "*The Spirit said to Philip, Go, and join thyself to this chariot.*"

Acts xiii. 2, 4. As certain prophets and teachers at Antioch "ministered to the Lord and fasted, *the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed into Seleucia.*" The Holy Spirit *commands* them to be set apart, and the Holy Spirit *sends them forth*. These are undoubtedly *real acts of a real person*.

In Acts xvi. 6, 7. it is declared, that "when Paul and Silas had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were *forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia*:" afterwards "they assayed to go into Bithynia, but *the Spirit suffered them not.*"

In Acts xx. 28. Paul, addressing the elders of the Church at *Ephesus*, reminds them that the *Holy Ghost had made them overseers* over the flock, that is, the church.

To these passages may be added, 1 Cor. ii. 10. vi. 19. compared with 2 Cor. vi. 16; 1 Cor. xii. Eph. iv. 30. with many others.

But these already cited are abundantly sufficient to show that the Holy Spirit is not an imaginary being, an attribute or influence of Deity, but that he has a real existence, since he is represented as *speaking, acting, forbidding, commanding, and appointing*.

4. Let us notice some texts which relate to the FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, CONJOINTLY.

Peter addresses his first epistle, (chap. i. 2.) to persons who were "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the *Father*, through sanctification of

the SPIRIT, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of *Jesus Christ*."

In the salvation of those believers, *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*, are distinctly named.

In Eph. ii. 18. Paul says, that "through *Christ*, we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access by one *Spirit* unto the *Father*." In those words, both *Christ* and the *Spirit* are declared to be concerned in the believer's acceptable approach to *the Father*. Here are *three* divine persons, each of whom is represented as taking a distinct part in the sinner's approach to God.

The verses I shall next quote are deserving of particular attention. They are, John xiv. 16, 26. xv. 26. xvi. 7, 8. "I will *pray the Father*," said Jesus to his disciples, "and he shall give you *another Comforter*, that he may abide with you for ever. The *Comforter, the Holy Ghost*, whom the *Father will send in my name*, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. When the *Comforter* is come, whom *I will send* unto you from the *Father*, even the *Spirit of truth*, which proceedeth from the father, *he shall testify of me*. It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the *Comforter* will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment."

If words have any certain meaning, here are undoubtedly *three persons*. *Jesus* prays *the Father*, and the *Father* sends *the Holy Spirit*. *The Father*, to whom the prayer is offered, is a person; *the Saviour*, by whom the prayer is offered, is a person; *the Holy Spirit*, respecting whom the prayer is offered, is a person; since he is spoken of *coming, testifying, receiving, showing, teaching, hearing, and speaking*; actions which are performed, not by an *influence* or an attribute, but by a living Being.

Most clearly then, in that passage, are mentioned, as *distinct*, the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Spirit*; and it was before proved that each of these is a divine person. There are, then, in Jehovah, the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Spirit*.

I shall adduce but *one more* passage, and that is our text, which, viewed in all its circumstances, is most convincing. "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the *Father*, and of the *Son*, and of the *Holy Ghost*." Who were the people to be baptized? People of the nations; the *heathen*, who, previously to their being taught Christianity, had been, for the most part, *idolaters*. What was the import of their baptism? In answer to this question no controverted points need to be introduced. It is admitted on all hands that when adult heathens receive Christian baptism, they renounce idolatry, and profess to worship the one living and true God. Now, suppose for a moment, that the *Son* were a mere man, and the *Holy Spirit* a mere influence, or a created being. Would not such an association be likely to mislead one just recovered from heathenism, and to make him continue an idolater, only changing the object of worship, substituting Jesus for Jupiter, and the *Holy Spirit* for Minerva? Indeed on the supposition now made, this text with similar texts, has actually misled the great body of professing Christians, including the most eminent for wisdom and goodness.

But the supposition is groundless. The baptized person is no longer an idolater but a worshipper of that God in whose name he is baptized, and the God in whose name he is baptized is, the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Spirit*.

It deserves to be noticed that in this formula, not only are the *Son* and the *Holy Spirit* associated with the *Father*, but that the very same phraseology is used respecting them as is used respecting the *Father*. The words, *in the name of*, apply to each equally. If Jesus were only a prophet of

God, and if the Holy Spirit were a mere creature, is it conceivable that their names would be thus associated with that of God? And if the Holy Spirit were only an attribute of God, why should *this one attribute* be specified, after the name of *God himself* has been introduced, which includes *every* divine attribute? No reasonable interpretation of the passage can be given, except that which regards THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT as constituting THE ONE JEHOVAH, possessed of a three-fold manner of existence. This peculiarity in the divine nature must then be received as a fact, supported by its own appropriate evidence, namely, the declaration of God himself.

IV. We proceed to examine THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS DOCTRINE.

This appears in two particulars :

In the importance of the redemption of the soul of man, and in the inseparable connexion this doctrine has with that redemption.

1. *Redemption* is of infinite importance, since man, the object of redemption, is an immortal creature. Between being redeemed and not redeemed, there is the same difference as between eternal happiness and eternal woe.

2. The importance of the doctrine appears in the inseparable *connexion it has with the redemption of the soul.*

Consult again, 1 Pet. i. 2. where believers are described as “elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”

The redemption of man is there represented as consisting of three parts:

The eternal choice of the Father ;

The sanctification of the Spirit ; and

The death of Christ.

And the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are represented as being all concerned in the work of redemption.

On the same principle, the Apostle Paul, taking leave of the Corinthian Christians, desires that "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God (*i. e.* of the Father), and the communion of the Holy Ghost, might be with them all."

Redemption, according to the view we take of it, necessarily involves the doctrine now under consideration. He who designed salvation must be God; he who gave himself a ransom for many must be God as well as man, or the ransom is without value; and he who by a holy influence enlightens the mind, purifies the heart, excites faith, and hope, and love, and preserves from falling, must be God. These are the several parts which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit take in the work of human redemption. Perfectly consistent with this statement is the well-known fact, that the greater number of those who deny the joint agency of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the work of redemption, deny redemption itself; assenting to it in words, but taking from it those qualities which constitute its very essence.

V. And Lastly, Let us consider WHAT OUR DUTY IS IN REFERENCE TO THIS DOCTRINE, with regard both to the inquiries we make into it, and the use to be made of it.

1. *As to inquiries concerning it*; seriousness, humility, and prayer are requisite.

Seriousness is requisite; for the inquiry relates to the nature of God, and is connected with that method of redemption, on which our everlasting happiness depends.

Humility is requisite. "God resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble." And this sufficiently accounts for the fact that whilst many men

who are distinguished for their mental endowments are ignorant of the gospel, many others far inferior in science and literature, are well acquainted with it. A man may be an adept in nine sciences, and yet only a novice in the tenth; provided that the tenth science be of a peculiar nature and quite distinct from the other nine. On the contrary, a man may be well versed in that one science, and yet be unacquainted with the others. The case is precisely thus with regard to religion and all other studies. Religion is a science, the most noble and the most ennobling of any; but it requires peculiar qualifications on the part of him who would successfully pursue it, of which qualifications one of the chief is humility. This humility, however, is not degrading to the character of man, but is perfectly reasonable and proper, being nothing more than a personal and practical regard to a truth which every one admits in theory, that God is wiser and better than man.

Prayer is also requisite; and the humility just adverted to will naturally lead to it. He who has a suitable conviction of his own liability to error will rejoice to hear the Apostle James saying, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." It is not wonderful that they who will not solicit the guidance of the Holy Spirit, should be left destitute of it.

2. Let us inquire into our duty respecting this doctrine with regard to *the use we should make of it.*

(1.) *In worship.*

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, being each divine, it follows that worship may be lawfully offered to each.

But, in the general, the Christian method, authorized by the far greater number of Scripture examples is, to offer worship to the Father, through the intercession of the Son, in dependence on the help of the Holy Spirit.

(2.) *In our thoughts* respecting these divine

agents, it becomes us to give to each the glory due unto his name. Let us cherish equal veneration, love, and gratitude to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one God of our salvation.

(3.) *In the language we use* respecting this doctrine, let us adhere as closely as possible to the Holy Scriptures, and take care not to substitute our own explanations of it, for the declarations of God. We cannot but think, that some of the strongest prejudices which exist against the doctrine, have arisen from men's confounding human explanations of the truth with the truth itself, as revealed in the word of God.

It appears to us, we confess, that among many Christians, a mode of representing the subject prevails which is not sanctioned by the only perfect model, the scriptures of truth; such a mode of treating it, as would lead an uninformed auditor to imagine that the speaker had in view, not a three-fold distinction in the Divine nature, but *three separate BEINGS*. The same remark is applicable to certain doxologies and forms of prayer which some Churches adopt. In a subject so far removed from the pursuits and conceptions of man, no words can be strictly appropriate. Doubtless, however, those must be the best which God himself has used. The more we confine ourselves to the use of Scripture phrases in our thoughts and language respecting this mysterious peculiarity in the Divine nature, the nearer to the truth are we likely to be, and the less likely shall we be to make others wander from it. Not only public teachers but private Christians should incessantly aim to conform themselves to the Scripture model, and make use, as far as possible, of "the words which the Holy Spirit teacheth," both in acts of worship and when engaged in the discussion of such subjects as these. Almost all the errors which prevail among those who bear or wish to bear the Christian name, may be referred to the one or the other of these two causes, either

the being unwilling to go as far as the Scripture goes, or being determined to go farther. As for us, let us regard this holy light as the Israelites in the desert regarded the pillar of cloud and of fire. Never, in our pursuit of divine truth, let us stop before it stops; never let us presume to move beyond the point to which it guides us.

Above all, let us anxiously seek to enjoy those blessings of pardon and holiness which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit concur in bestowing on every humble suppliant. This practical use of the doctrine is made by thousands who would be unable to enter into argumentative discussions respecting it; and where this practical use of the truth is made, it is not likely that the truth itself will be opposed. The best way to become acquainted with the Scripture Doctrine respecting the mode of the Divine existence, is daily to approach the Father through the Son, in reliance on the help of the Spirit; thus seeking those blessings on which our present and eternal welfare depend. In this way shall "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen."

LECTURE XVI.

August 22, 1824.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

JOHN i. 18.

No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

IF religion mainly consist in a due regard to God, the character of God, which is the subject of the present Lecture, must of necessity be one of the most important matters of religious inquiry; since the nature of that regard which we consider to be owing to God cannot fail to be regulated by the conceptions we form of the divine attributes.

And whilst no question more important than, "What is God?" can be asked; no question can be asked to which a more satisfactory answer is at hand. "No man," indeed, "hath seen God at any time." "He is a Spirit;" "He hath not flesh and bones, as we have;" and we have "neither heard his voice, nor seen his shape." But "the only-begotten Son," who, in allusion to the posture of the ancient Orientals at table, is described as being "in the bosom of the Father," and who is more intimately acquainted with God than the most favoured guest could be with the character of the friend on whose bosom he was permitted to recline; this only-begotten Son "hath declared" the Father's character in the most explicit and satisfactory manner.

To obtain an answer, therefore, to the question, "What is God?" our business is simply to listen to

the declarations of the Son of God; whether given by the mouth of the holy Prophets whom his Spirit inspired, or in his own discourses, or by the ministry of his Apostles. The discourses of Christ and of his Apostles relative to the divine character demand special attention, on account of the clearness and fulness by which they are distinguished. The Law which was given by Moses, and enforced by the Prophets, contained much of God; but “the grace and the truth came by Jesus Christ.”

In the various declarations respecting God which Jesus and his apostles have made, one view of the divine character is conspicuously prominent, namely, his *Love to guilty man*; his readiness to receive rebellious creatures into favour, and to bestow on them the most seasonable and the very best blessings.

THE LOVE OF GOD, then, as affording the most characteristic view of his character, shall engage our first and chief attention. The plan proposed, accordingly is, first, to collect from the declarations of Christ and of his servants proofs and instances of the Love of God to man; next, to contemplate the other attributes of God as they are seen in connexion with his compassion; then to compare the character of God as thus revealed in the gospel with his character as seen elsewhere; and lastly to engage in some practical reflexions on the subject in general.

I. Let us collect from the divine testimony, proofs and instances of THE LOVE OF GOD TO MAN, as it is seen in the *objects* towards whom it is exercised, the *blessings* which are granted, and the *medium* through which those blessings come.

1. The Love of God is observable in THE OBJECTS towards whom the divine goodness has been exercised.

The whole race of mankind are guilty in the sight of the Almighty, since "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." All men, consequently, are in the condition of rebels and traitors; who have no claim on their Sovereign for any favour, but who, on the contrary, if dealt with according to their deserts, would be condemned to endure for ever the effects of his just and awful anger. Love exercised towards such creatures must necessarily assume the form of pity, compassion, and grace.

Not only has God manifested his readiness to pardon his offending creatures; but the invitations and encouraging assurances which he has authorised his servants to publish respecting restoration to his forfeited favour, are expressed in terms so general and unlimited that no individual of the human race has cause to consider himself excluded, provided only that he be conscious of a strong and prevailing desire to return to God; for "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." Indeed the return of man to God is represented not merely as matter of *permission*, but even of *command*; and this with regard to every one to whom the word of God comes. "God commandeth all men every where to repent." And if every one is *commanded* to repent, every one who does repent is assured, by that very command, of a gracious reception. But there are *intreaties* as well as commands, and these intreaties are expressed in terms as unrestricted as the commands are. "Now, then," said Paul and his associates, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Still further to encourage the faith of the humble penitent, there have been put on record *instances* of the exercise of the divine compassion towards some of the *most guilty* of mankind. The

case of Saul of Tarsus, afterwards called Paul, deserves particular mention; and is thus stated by himself: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, (or as the *chief*;) Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

This view of the character of God, it has been already observed, is most conspicuously set forth in the word of truth; and it demands the fixed and grateful attention of every beholder. The certainty of the fact, that God will pardon and bless every one who comes to him in faith and prayer, fully justifies the sublime declaration of the Apostle John, that "GOD IS LOVE."

Before we advance to other topics, it may be useful to pause, and ask ourselves, whether we have ever duly regarded the blessed God in this light? The regard which is due to God will be considered more at large on a subsequent occasion; but must not be wholly passed over now, since the divine attributes can never be contemplated with advantage, if the concern we have in them be kept altogether out of sight.

Here, then, I must remind you, individually, that you have broken the laws of your Maker, and are, therefore, exposed to his dreadful displeasure; and that, if you continue till death subject to that displeasure, you must spend an eternal existence in woe. See, then, what inconceivably important consequences are connected with your reception of the divine mercy. If you had till this hour been doubtful whether God were disposed to exercise compassion towards the guilty, this is the view of the divine character on which you would be most anxious to receive full information. That information you have; let it, therefore, be your concern to

avail yourself of it; remembering that no contemplations of any of the divine attributes can afford you solid satisfaction, until you have obeyed the command, to be “reconciled to God.”

Let us now view the divine Love in ITS EFFECTS, that is, in the blessings which God is pleased to communicate to his guilty creatures.

The first and chief of these blessings is *his own favour and friendship*.

As all excellence centres in God, and all happiness flows from him, it follows “that his favour is life, and his loving-kindness better than life.”

“ For, O thou bounteous Giver of all good ;
“ Thou art of all thy gifts, thyself the crown ;
“ Without thee, we are poor, give what thou wilt ;
“ And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.”

Now, inexpressibly great as this blessing is, and totally unworthy as man is to receive it, it is notwithstanding bestowed upon man.

For, not only is the returning sinner freed from condemnation; he is also admitted into a state of cordial friendship with God. He is therefore described as being not merely pardoned, but justified, and even put into the number of God’s beloved children. “Behold,” said one of that number, “what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” And being sons, they are “heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” In a word, all that God is, is made over to the Christian, so far as this, that every divine perfection shall be employed on his behalf, according to his need. All this is included in the promise, which is made good to every believer, “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”

All other blessings are but so many parts of the great donation just mentioned. It will be proper, however, to specify a few of the most considerable

of them, as illustrative of the Kindness and Love of God.

Of these the *enlightening of the mind* may be first mentioned. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

As the capacity of acquiring knowledge distinguishes man from the brute, so does the nature of the knowledge acquired distinguish one man from another. The Christian is raised above others, by possessing the knowledge of Christ. Of all knowledge which is attainable by man, this is incomparably the most valuable. It is in itself the most noble kind of knowledge; it is the best adapted to improve the character; and is the most closely connected with happiness. It is in itself *the most noble*. Of all thoughts which can occupy the mind, just thoughts of the perfect and infinite Being must of necessity be the most sublime; and God, in the relation he bears to man, cannot be known aright, if Christ be unknown. "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is given in the face of Jesus Christ." This knowledge, too, is *the best adapted to improve the Character*. "Beholding as in a glass this glory, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory." The knowledge of Christ is, moreover, the most closely *connected with happiness*. It affords a consolation which nothing else can give under the trials of this life, and inspires the hope of a better world.

But this super-excellent knowledge is not the spontaneous produce of the human mind. It is the gift of God; and just in proportion to its value, does it discover the love of God to man.

Faith is the inseparable companion of true knowledge, and is, like it, not of ourselves, but "the gift of God." "All things," saith Paul to believers, "are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things pre-

sent, or things to come, all are yours, for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." Some conception may be formed of the value of faith, and consequently of God's kindness in bestowing it, when it is recollected that faith is the link which, by uniting the soul to Christ, puts a man in possession of all the blessings which are set forth in that glorious inventory of spiritual and imperishable goods. It is "the Lord also who directs our hearts into the Love of God;" and unspeakable is the blessing of being enabled so far to appreciate supreme excellence, and so far to appreciate God's many and great gifts, as to have the heart filled with admiration and gratitude towards him to whom these emotions, in their highest exercise, are due.

In a word, whatever temper or disposition is necessary to constitute a good and holy character, *that* God imparts to all who come "to his throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

At the same time that God said, in reference to the days of the gospel, "I will be to them a God; and they shall be to me a people;" he said also, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."

Contrast for a moment, man's natural state, as guilty, corrupt, and in danger of eternal death; with man's supernatural state, as pardoned, purified, and an heir of glory; and recollect, that the sole cause of his passing out of the one state into the other is the compassion of God; and bear in mind, at the same time, that this happy change of condition is enjoyed by all who do not obstinately refuse to accept of happiness in God's appointed way of giving it; and you will surely admit that the Love of God is unspeakably great.

This will further appear if we consider THE MEDIUM through which these great blessings

come to man. "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." This is God's "unspeakable gift," and the channel through which all other gifts come down to us.

"Our iniquities had separated between God and us, and had caused him to hide his face from us," nor was it deemed proper that blessings such as those which we have been contemplating, should be granted to an apostate race, except through such a mediation as should secure the Divine Government from all dishonour. It was judged by him who cannot err, that no such mediation could be accomplished except by the Son of God becoming the Son of man, and suffering and dying in the place of man.

That the Father should not only consent but ordain that such a series of events as are included in the mediation of Christ, should take place for man's benefit, affords the highest expression of divine love which we can conceive to be possible. The blessings of the gospel might indeed have been *intrinsically* of the same value, though they had come to us direct from the throne of God without passing through the channel of a mediation; but those blessings, under such circumstances, would not, by any means, have been equally expressive of God's love to man; their coming to us through Jesus Christ, shows that so far from their being things of course, there was an impediment in the way of their coming, occasioned by man's rebellion, which nothing short of a supernatural and most amazing interposition, the painful and ignominious death of God's beloved Son, could remove. In order, therefore, that God might grant other blessings in a way honourable to himself (and in no other way is it possible for God to grant any blessing) he first gave his "unspeakable gift."

Observe, then, my brethren, the character of God, as "He who is in the bosom of the Father,

hath declared him." See how conspicuously the kindness and love of God towards man has appeared, both in the unworthy character of man the *object* of that love; in the immensely valuable *blessings* which are given to man, and in that *greatest of all gifts* which is the *medium* of all others.

II. Let us contemplate SOME OTHER ATTRIBUTES OF GOD which are seen IN UNION WITH COMPASSION, in the Redemption of man.

Those divine perfections which appear to demand the most distinct notice are Holiness, Justice, Sovereignty, Wisdom, Power, and Faithfulness.

It has been well observed that "so obvious and intimate is the connexion between the HOLINESS and the JUSTICE of God, that they might, with accuracy, be regarded as two different modifications of the same glorious attribute; or rather, as the same attribute viewed in two different aspects. The Holiness of God is that rectitude of the divine nature, by which the blessed God necessarily loves that which is right, and hates that which is evil. The Justice of God is that same rectitude of nature, displayed towards the various orders of his creatures, in the moral government of the world."

Rectitude, as it exists in God, we call Holiness. Rectitude, as it is seen in the conduct of God, we call Justice. These two views of the divine character we may therefore contemplate together; and as Justice includes Holiness, we may direct our attention chiefly to the former.

Many ages before the days of the Messiah, it was declared by prophetic anticipation, in reference to his work, that "mercy and truth had met together, righteousness and peace had embraced each other." And most strikingly have those words been fulfilled in the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus.

Justice without compassion might have been

manifested in the infliction of merited punishment on all the workers of iniquity. Compassion without Justice might have been manifested in the forgiveness of iniquity without the vicarious death of a Mediator ; but in that death, and the justification of the believing sinner which results therefrom, Justice and Compassion are equally conspicuous.

The same love of rectitude on the part of God is also seen, in alliance with compassion, in *the sanctification* of all who are justified. Had the divine interposition on behalf of the redeemed merely secured their exemption from suffering, and left their character untouched, God's compassion might indeed have appeared in man's salvation, but not his love of holiness. But the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart of the believer is as essential a part of the covenant of grace as was the atoning death of Christ. All who believe in Jesus were "predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God;" and by special grace constantly communicated to them from the commencement to the close of their earthly pilgrimage, that conformation is effected. In this respect therefore, as in the former, God's love of rectitude is as conspicuous in redemption as his compassion.

SOVEREIGNTY is another attribute of God which is manifested in the salvation of man. On this subject I spoke at greater length in the xiiiith Lecture than on the present occasion is necessary. It was then observed that all things pertaining to redemption are matters of favour and not of debt ; in the distribution of which the Great Benefactor may and does act not on the principle of absolute universality, but of *selection*. There are inhabited regions of the earth, where the plan of redemption is yet unknown ; and there are, we fear, not a few among those persons who hear the word of truth, who live and die without "part or lot," in the blessings of the gospel. They, on the other hand, "who

hear the word of God and keep it," are in gratitude and duty bound to ascribe the difference between themselves and others to the sovereign grace of God, who having "chosen them in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, hath blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ."

He who contemplates these operations of the divine sovereignty with a devout and humble mind, will find the words of the Lord Jesus to be his most appropriate collect: "Even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight."

THE WISDOM OF GOD is also most admirably manifested, in alliance with compassion, in the salvation of man.

Benevolence might have prompted inferior beings to *desire* man's salvation. No one but "God only wise," was competent to devise the requisite means.

The Wisdom of God in redemption is apparent in *the constitution of the person of the Saviour.*

Christ by being man, became capable both of obeying the law in the same nature in which it had been violated, and also, of suffering the penalty of the law in man's stead. Christ, by being God, was capable of making an atonement for sin whose efficacy is sufficient for all who embrace it.

How justice and compassion are equally and together manifested in the work of redemption has been already shown. Equally admirable in that work is the wisdom which, in the person of Christ, laid the foundation for that united display of justice and of love. For by no method that we have ever heard of or can conceive of, except by the union of the divine and human natures in the Saviour, could that glorious result have been effected.

The wisdom of God also appears in the fact, that *the very same means are made to promote the welfare of man, both as to his state and as to his character.*

Viewed in all its relations and bearings, the

death of Christ is the most important event that ever came to the knowledge of mankind, and most strikingly does it exhibit the wisdom as well as the love of God.

The death of Christ, we have already seen, is the medium of man's forgiveness and eternal life. The death of Christ is also the principal means of his sanctification. The contrary might have been feared, and, by those who are but little acquainted with the gospel, is actually supposed. They imagine that it is a matter of course that the death of Christ in the place of the guilty, must render those who build their hopes on that foundation, negligent with regard to their conduct. But a few considerations will suffice to show that the death of Christ, instead of being of an immoral tendency, must necessarily be productive of holiness.

Every one who trusts in a dying Saviour has been the subject of *a change of mind*, so thorough and beneficial, as to capacitate him for receiving from religious truth those holy and abiding impressions which it is fitted to produce; and the death of Christ involves certain truths which, on a mind thus rectified, cannot fail to produce holy impressions and desires.

The death of Christ exhibits in the most striking manner *the malignity of sin*. Had not sin been inconceivably odious, such a ransom could not have been needful to expiate its guilt. The death of Christ shows to the believer *the obligations he owes to his deliverer*. He sees how much he is indebted to the love of the Father for the gift of the Son, and how much he owes to the Son for giving himself as a sacrifice for sin. In a heart under the influence of depravity, a sight of those obligations might be of no avail; but on a heart made right by divine grace the sense of obligations so great must be productive of fervent, abiding, and effectual desires after conformity to the holy will of God. The wisdom of God is peculiarly apparent, in having thus ordained

and brought it to pass, that the very same event should save the sinner from guilt and deliver him from the power of sin.

The wisdom of God in redemption further appears in this, that the gospel, whose main object is *to benefit man as an immortal being*, should at the same time be adapted more than any thing else, *to promote man's welfare in the present state*.

“Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.”

The benefits resulting in this life from the gospel are, as might be expected, most fully enjoyed by those who live under the full influence of that gospel. Yet even others participate in those benefits. No moral instruction has yet been discovered equally effectual with the religion of Christ to promote industry, economy, honesty, order, and comfort in civil society. So evidently is this true, that there are many persons who overlook the main design of religion in its reference to eternity, and who, notwithstanding, are zealous advocates for the propagation of Christianity, from a conviction of the temporal advantage which society reaps from it. This adaptation of the gospel to promote man's happiness in both worlds, is a manifestation of the wisdom as well as of the kindness of God. “It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

THE POWER OF GOD is also manifest in the redemption of man.

Divine power was seen in the *Person of the Redeemer*, both in what he did and in what he suffered.

The supernatural deeds which he performed proved him to be the Messiah, because they were evidently exertions of a power far beyond what man can put forth. And that *Christ did not sink under the load of his unparalleled sufferings* is attributable only to the omnipotence by which he was sustained.

Christ, by his *resurrection* from the dead, was also “declared to be the Son of God with power.”

The History of the Church, as well as the life of its founder, exhibits continued proof of omnipotence having been employed on its behalf.

That the cause of the gospel should even have *survived*, much more that it should have triumphed, as it did, in those days when its earthly friends were so few and weak, and its enemies so many and so mighty, is a fact which cannot be accounted for but on the admission that God was “in the midst” of his Church, and that therefore the church was “not moved.”

The Divine Power is remarkably evident *in the conversion of man to God*.

So deep-rooted is the depravity of the human heart, that no means, however suitable in their nature, can effect the desirable change, unaccompanied by Almighty energy. He who originally formed the soul of man can alone “take away the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh.” But nothing is too hard for Omnipotence to effect; and in unnumbered instances this new creating power has been displayed.

Lastly, we are to notice THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

The gospel is a collection of “exceeding great and precious promises,” which all display the kindness of Him who uttered them. But they would be of little value if any reasonable doubt could be entertained relative to their fulfilment. Happily there is no room for doubt; apt though we are to “stagger at the promise through unbelief.” “God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”

Not only are the love, the holiness, the power, the wisdom, and the immutability of God pledged

for the accomplishment of all that he has said; but the fact that all God's promises have thus far been fulfilled may well serve to strengthen our faith. A larger portion of God's promises has already been fulfilled than now remains to be accomplished. The great promise, inclusive of all the rest, was the Messiah. Four thousand years elapsed between the time of its being given and the time of its accomplishment. But "when the fulness of the time was come God sent forth his Son."

In like manner, every other gracious declaration which God has ever made either to his Church collectively or to individual believers, has been made good in its season. The language of the aged Joshua, on a review of God's conduct towards his people in the wilderness, is language to which the whole assembly of the redeemed in heaven and on earth are ready to add their Amen; "that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord their God had spoken concerning them."

Such is a brief view of the perfections of God, as they appear in that best mirror for reflecting them—the gospel of Christ. The most conspicuous attribute we have found to be the love of God towards apostate man. But in harmonious alliance with that love we have also distinctly seen Holiness and Justice, Sovereignty, Wisdom, Power, and Faithfulness.

III. We are to COMPARE THE CHARACTER OF GOD, AS SEEN IN THE GOSPEL, WITH HIS CHARACTER AS SEEN ELSEWHERE.

"The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," and it is in the gospel chiefly that that declaration has been made. Yet in the *Works*, in the *Providence*, and in the *Law* of God, something of God may be seen, especially when on these departments of the divine operation the light of revelation is thrown.

IN THE WORKS OF GOD which are obvious to our senses, much of the divine glory is manifest.

CREATION was necessarily the work of *Omni-potence*. A finite being may modify and alter what already exists, but the Almighty alone was competent to give being to that which did not exist before.

The vastness of Creation exhibits the amazing power of God. "Contemplate," says a modern writer, "the grandeur and extent of the earth which we inhabit. Think of its continents and its islands, its oceans and its rivers, its mountains and its valleys, its diversified productions and its immense population. Ascend, in your contemplations, to the planetary system, of which our earth, vast as it is, forms but one of the minor globes; in magnitude less than a millioneth part of that world of light around which it revolves, and from which it is distant nearly a hundred millions of miles. Think of the host of stars which twinkle in the firmament, and the thousands not visible to the naked eye, which the telescope has served to discover. Imagine these, as it is most reasonable to imagine them, to be the suns and the centres of the other systems of worlds." Lo, these are parts of his ways! Great indeed is our Lord and of great power.

And *the minute parts of creation* are scarcely less astonishing than the vast. There are insects so small that the unassisted eye is utterly unable to discover them, and yet in every one of those minute creatures there is a perfect organization and an actual principle of life. In every such little insect the power of the Creator is seen.

In the works of God his *wisdom* and his *goodness* are also as evident as his power.

Man, considered either in his corporeal structure or in his capabilities of thought and feeling, is the most remarkable of the divine works, and most amazingly illustrates the wisdom and the goodness of his Maker. The human eye is itself a world of wonders, and still more the human mind.

The adaptation of man to the earth, and of the earth, with its elements and its productions, to man, are plain proofs of inconceivable wisdom as well as of kindness. A large and sufficient portion of the produce of the earth is suitable for the purpose of nourishment. Other productions, such as many of the flowers and plants, as well as innumerable appearances in the clouds and sky, seem to be intended solely to please and delight us, and thus to raise our admiring eyes to the great and good Creator.

PROVIDENCE is the continuance in being of what Almighty power has created.

The Power and Goodness of God are consequently observable in the constant preservation of the life of whatever lives; for it is "in him that we live, and move, and have our being."

So much as this may be ascertained by the light of nature; but it is to the Son of God that we are indebted for the most explicit, instructive, and consolatory account ever given of the divine Providence. "Behold," said he to his disciples, "the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith."

Much of the divine character is also seen in THE LAW which God originally gave to man.

That law being manifestly "holy, just, and good," discovers the holiness, justice, and goodness of its author. The fact that in that law nothing is forbidden but what is wrong, and nothing prescribed but what is right, shows the rectitude of him from whom it came; whilst the inseparable connexion which subsists between obedience and hap-

pinness, proves that God's giving such a law to man as the authoritative rule of his life, was equivalent to his commanding man to use the best means of securing his own happiness.

And these remarks are applicable not merely to the precepts of the law, but to its sanctions; since the design of those sanctions is to render the law respected as it deserves to be.

The law of God, therefore, both in its precepts and in its sanctions, discovers both the holiness and the goodness of God.

Man's depravity and disobedience have neither abrogated the claims of that law, nor impaired its excellence.

ON COMPARING THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD as they are seen IN REDEMPTION with the divine character as it is manifested in THE WORKS, THE PROVIDENCE AND THE LAW OF GOD, two ideas suggest themselves: first, that in the character of God as seen in Redemption, there is *nothing contradictory* to those divine perfections which are observable elsewhere; but secondly, that in the former case there is a *peculiar manifestation* of the attributes of God in reference to the apostate state of man; which can no where else be seen.

1. There is *no contrariety* between those divine attributes which are seen in *redemption* and those which are evident in *other departments of the divine administration*; so far from it, there is a manifest *agreement*.

In the first Creation, the wisdom and the goodness of God are gloriously visible; in the *new Creation*, the same attributes are also most conspicuous. In the divine *Law*, God's love of holiness and desire to promote the true welfare of his creatures are evident; and the same divine perfections are also evident in the *Gospel*. In *Creation* and in *Law* it was plainly God's intention to manifest his own glory; and this intention is also distinctly observable in the

Gospel. The agreement which subsists between the character of God as seen in the Gospel and as visible by other means, is what might be expected from the immutability of the divine character, and is one of the many proofs that the Creator and Lawgiver of the world is the author of the gospel. But,

2. In the Gospel there is a *peculiar manifestation of the Character of God*, having direct reference to the ruined state of man, which manifestation of the divine character is at once the most important for man to behold, and is only visible in the gospel of the grace of God. In the absence of that part of divine revelation which most appropriately bears the name of *gospel*, it might be concluded that "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth;" but in what way both the justice and mercy of God may be honoured in the pardon of the guilty, the gospel alone can tell. This, therefore, is that view of the divine character which the Son of God, in his own discourses, and by means of his servants the apostles, has most particularly declared.

It now remains that we engage in some PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS on the subject which has occupied our minds.

1. We can surely be at no loss to determine what is THE CHIEF GOOD.

Let whoever will say, "who will show us any good?" the language of our hearts must be, if we know any thing of the true character of God, "Lord, lift thou up on us the light of thy countenance." What is honour, what is ease, what is wealth, what is life itself, compared with having "this God as our God for ever and ever, and our guide even unto death!"

O ye whose only anxiety respects what "ye

shall eat, what ye shall drink, and wherewith ye shall be clothed ;” see what shadowy happiness you are pursuing, while you are negligent of him who is “the giver of every good and every perfect gift.” Remember that the hour is hastening on when all good but the chief good will fail and forsake you. The time is at hand when honour, wealth, and pleasure shall be to you as if they were not. Then, “when heart and flesh shall fail,” and your earthly portion shall be lost, you will know, if not before, either the happiness of having, or the misery of not having, God for “the strength of your heart and your portion for ever.”

For remember that if God be not your friend, he is your enemy. Are you not alarmed at the thought of unerring Justice condemning you to eternal wo, and of Almighty Power being employed to put that sentence into effect? Oh, listen to the Saviour’s kind warning, when he says, “Fear not them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”

Just in proportion as the impenitent have cause to tremble, have *the righteous cause to rejoice*, at the contemplation of the divine character.

You may be in trouble; but he hath said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;” so that you may boldly say, “The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.” You will have to “pass through the valley of the shadow of death;” but even then you need “fear no evil;” since your ever-living and almighty Shepherd will be with you. “His rod and his staff, they shall comfort you.”

2. From this subject we may learn HOW TO ESTIMATE THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

The Character of God is not altered by man’s sin; but his *relation to man* is altered. In conse-

quence of man's rebellion, the Lawgiver has become the Judge; and the Judge has already pronounced and is about to execute the sentence of condemnation. It is the gospel alone which exhibits God as reconciled to man. Here we see the Judge blot out the sentence of condemnation and change the curse into a blessing. We feel, therefore, that the system of truth which imparts such knowledge of the divine kindness well deserves to be called, **THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED GOD.** In proportion as we venerate and esteem the divine character, must we value that revelation which shows us in what way those attributes which would otherwise have been in array against us are made to assume an aspect of love. We are, therefore, disposed cordially to join with Paul in the declaration: "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Finally: From the character of God, we may learn **THE NATURE OF THAT WORSHIP AND SERVICE WHICH HE REQUIRES.** "God is a Spirit; and we must therefore worship him in spirit and in truth." He is great and therefore greatly to be feared; he is good and greatly to be loved. "He has remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever." Let us then "enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. Let us be thankful unto him, and bless his name." And may our conduct as well as our devotions prove that we are sincere, when looking up to this glorious Being, we say, each for himself, "Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee!"

LECTURE XVII.

Sept. 12, 1824.

THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

JOHN i. 1, 14.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

ALL real religion points to God as its object. We therefore commenced our investigation of the principal truths of Christianity with a consideration of the doctrines which the Holy Scriptures teach relative to the mode of the divine existence, and the attributes which constitute the divine character.

If man were holy and obedient, he might approach his Maker with confidence, and might hold direct intercourse with him; but, in consequence of human apostacy and guilt, a medium of access has become necessary. "No man," saith Jesus, "cometh to the Father but by me." Hence, in religion, those doctrines which respect the Mediator are not inferior in importance to those which relate to the Blessed God.

One subdivision of the present series of discourses is accordingly appropriated to this department of religious truth.

We are to ascertain from the Scriptures,

1. Who the Mediator is;
 2. How he lived on earth, and why he died;
- and,
3. Where he now is, and what he is now

doing for those who are interested in his undertaking.

The object of this lecture is to inquire who the Mediator is; or, in other words, to describe THE PERSON OF THE CHRIST.

Our text informs us that the Messiah (here called The Word, from his possessing and communicating divine wisdom) was in the beginning with God, and was God; but that he was made flesh, (or became incarnate,) and lived among men.

Here are three important facts relative to the Person of Christ.

- I. That he is God;
- II. That he is Man; and
- III. That he is, consequently, both God and Man.

These truths we shall find to be confirmed by a great number of other passages of Scriptures, and to constitute a fundamental part of the fabric of revealed religion. The greater part of our time must be occupied by the first of the three facts just mentioned, *viz.* the Deity of Christ. The reality of his human nature is scarcely questioned; and the third circumstance is merely the combination of the two preceding.

Here I deem it proper to remark, as I did on a former occasion, that I shall not introduce a single text in proof of the doctrines I defend, without being well satisfied, both that such text really made a part of the original Scriptures, and that the words in which I read it are, so far at least as the present argument is concerned, a fair translation of such text.

The first and principal fact respecting Christ which demands our consideration is, that HE POSSESSES A NATURE TRULY DIVINE. Such Names, such Attributes, such Works are ascribed to him,

and such Homage is claimed for him and paid to him, as prove that he is GOD.

1. THE NAMES AND TITLES GIVEN TO THE SAVIOUR PROVE HIS DEITY.

(1.) Christ is called the SON OF GOD, in a sense evidently peculiar to himself, and indicating his possessing a nature super-human and divine, like that of God the Father. So the Jews understood the words, when they said to Jesus, on account of his laying claim to the title, Son of God; "We stone thee for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Christ confirms this their opinion of the divine dignity attaching to the words, Son of God, by his subsequent address to them, in which he vindicates the application to himself of a title implying equality with the Father, from the fact of his performing the works of the Father.

(2.) Christ is called GOD.

He is so called in our text: "The word was God." It is allowed that the term God is sometimes applied to beings inferior to the Supreme; but it is equally undeniable that whenever the term is so used there is something in the context which clearly shows that the Supreme Being is not meant; whereas the words connected with the text plainly evince that the Supreme Being is meant. Thus we read in the Psalms that "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; heruleth among the gods." No mistake can be made as to the import of the word gods in that sentence. It is evident that beings inferior to the Supreme are meant, since God is expressly said to rule over them. So, when Jehovah saith to Moses, "See, I have made thee God to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet;" the meaning plainly is that Moses should act with regard to Pharaoh as God's vicegerent. In this case, as in the former, there is no danger of the reader's being led into the supposi-

tion that the term God was intended to be understood in its highest import. Whereas, in the text, there are no restrictive words, nor in the context are there any restrictive circumstances, to induce us to assign to the term God any thing short of its most dignified signification. It is not said that the Word which was in the beginning with God, was a being over whom Jehovah ruled, nor that he was made a God for any specific purpose ; but that “the Word was God.”

Christ is also called God by the Apostle Paul, in Rom. ix. 5. where, speaking of his kinsmen the Israelites, he saith ; “Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.”

In Hebrews i. 8. the same name is given to the Messiah, in words quoted from the xlv. Psalm, for the very purpose of proving the Saviour’s dignity ; “Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.”

(3.) Christ is called JEHOVAH.

This is universally acknowledged to be the peculiar and incommunicable name of the Almighty, as denoting the eternal and independent nature of his being.

In Luke i. 16, 17. we have these words, descriptive of the office of John the harbinger of the Messiah: “Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias,—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Compare this language of the angel respecting John with the prediction which Isaiah had uttered concerning him. The words of the prophet are, “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness prepare ye the way of the LORD,” (that is Jehovah, as it is well-known that the English word LORD, when printed in our Bible in large letters is put for the Hebrew word, JEHOVAH,) “make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” We learn that these words were fulfilled in the ministry of John,

respecting whom the Evangelist Matthew says, "This is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, (Jehovah) make his paths straight;" "I am not the Christ," said John, "but I am sent before him.—That he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water."

The case is shortly this:

It was declared by Isaiah that a herald should go before JEHOVAH; it is declared by the Evangelist that this prediction was fulfilled when John went before JESUS. The unavoidable inference is that Jesus is Jehovah.

In Isaiah vi. the prophet thus speaks: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also Jehovah sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the Seraphim.—And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. Then said I, Wo is me! for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of Hosts."

Shortly afterwards we meet with these words, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

Now this sentence is quoted by the Evangelist John, (chap. xii.) in reference to the unbelieving Jews who lived in the days of our Saviour; and the sacred historian, after quoting those words, immediately adds, "These things said Esaias, when he saw *his glory*, and spake of *him*."

The words in question were uttered by Isaiah when he saw *the glory of Jehovah*. John tells us that they were uttered when Isaiah saw *the glory of Jesus* and spake of *him*. It is most manifest, therefore, that this mode of speaking of Jesus by John is the same thing as calling Jesus, Jehovah.

In Isaiah xlv. 21—25. we have this sentence: "I am Jehovah, and there is no God else beside me: a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in Jehovah have I righteousness and strength. In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

In Rom. xiv. 10—12. the Apostle Paul thus refers to the above-cited words: "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."

On comparing together those words of Isaiah and of Paul, we find the state of the case to be this: Isaiah foretells a time when the authority of Jehovah shall be universally acknowledged, and his salvation universally known. Paul foretells a time when all mankind shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ; in confirmation of which he quotes Isaiah's prediction relative to the universal acknowledgment of the authority of Jehovah. The argument is built on the assumption that he, to whom mankind shall thus pay deserved homage, shall be declared, by the very circumstance of such homage being paid to him, to be the future Judge of the world.

Now the Being who is in this manner represented as the present Sovereign and future Judge of the world, is called *Christ* by Paul, and *Jehovah* by Isaiah. Christ, therefore, is virtually called Jehovah.

2. Such ATTRIBUTES are ascribed to our Saviour as can belong to no being inferior to God.

(1.) Of this nature is the attribute of ETERNAL EXISTENCE.

“Before Abraham was,” said Jesus, “I am.” (John viii. 58.) “He is before all things,” saith Paul. (Col. i. 17.) “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” said Jesus to John, in the Apocalypse; “the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” This language, used by our Saviour respecting himself, is so remarkably similar to that which God uses respecting himself, in Isa. xlv. 6. that it is not to be imagined that Jesus would have so spoken, were not the same eternity attributable to him which is attributable to God the Father. The language of God in Isaiah is this: “I am the first, and I am the last: and beside me there is no God.”

All this corresponds with a prediction respecting the Messiah, uttered by Micah, in the following words: “Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

(2.) ALMIGHTY POWER is attributed to Christ.

“Unto us,” said Isaiah, (ix. 6.) “a child is born, unto us a son is given: and his name shall be called, *The Mighty God.*” In Matt. iv. 14—16. a part of the same prophecy is so clearly quoted in reference to the birth of Jesus, that no doubt can be entertained of the propriety of applying the above title to Him.

“We look,” said Paul, “for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working by which *he is able to subdue all things unto himself.*”

The ability to “subdue all things to himself” cannot be less than Almighty power.

But of this we shall meet with many more proofs when we come to treat of the *Works* of Christ.

(3.) Among the Attributes ascribed to him, OMNIPRESENCE must not be overlooked.

“Where two or three are gathered together in

my name," said Jesus, "there am I in the midst of them."

A finite being can be in one place only at one time; the infinite being is in all places at the same time. Omnipresence is the attribute which Jesus, in the words just read, asserts to belong to himself.

In like manner our Lord, addressing his disciples, shortly before his ascension, said to them; (Matt. xxviii. 20.) "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Some would render the clause thus: "to the end of the age;" but this is not a fair translation, and if it were, would not answer the purpose intended. Christ was not with his disciples to the end of the age, as to his bodily presence; for very soon after uttering those words, he ascended to heaven. The only way then in which he could be with them after his ascension, was by his spiritual presence. But the disciples did not always continue in the same place. Long before the expiration of that "age," they were scattered abroad; and as a finite spirit can be only in one place at once, were Jesus a finite being, he could not have made good his words. He might have been with Peter at one time, with James at another time, with John on a third occasion, and with Paul on a fourth. He might have been at one time with the church in Jerusalem, and at another time with the church at Antioch, and at another with the church at Corinth; but it is impossible that he could have been with all the disciples and with all the churches at one and the same time. Yet nothing short of this is what he promised in the memorable sentences lately quoted; both in that in which he declared that, where two or three are met together, there he is in the midst of them, and in that in which he declared that he would be with his disciples always, even to the end of the world.

(4.) OMNISCIENCE also belongs to Christ.

In each of the epistles addressed by our Saviour

to the seven Churches of Asia, there is this declaration: "*I know thy works.*" It is difficult to imagine that any being inferior to the Omniscient could be thoroughly acquainted, even with the *outward actions* of so many individuals, living in different places. But the following assertion of the Saviour, uttered in connexion with the former, is decisive: "All the churches shall know that *I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts*, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

It was not the outward actions only, of all those people, but the *inward thoughts* and intentions of their hearts that Jesus declared himself to know.

And the terms in which the declaration is expressed are tantamount to the assertion that he is the *only being* who possesses such knowledge: "*I am He that searcheth the reins and hearts;*" not, of course to the exclusion of God the Father; but to the exclusion of all inferior beings.

The proof of the Saviour's omniscience, as contained in these words, will appear still more clearly, if possible, by a comparison of this text with the language used respecting the omniscience of Jehovah in other passages of Scripture. Thus God says (Jer. xvii. 9, 10.) "The heart is deceitful above all things—*who can know it? I Jehovah search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to the fruit of his doings.*"

"Thou, even *thou only,*" (said Solomon in his prayer to Jehovah) "knowest the hearts of all the children of men." The words used in the latter passages concerning Jehovah, and those used by the Saviour concerning himself, are so exactly alike in import, that it is scarcely possible to conceive of any thing more undeniably evident, than that the attribute of omniscience which belongs to Jehovah alone, belongs to Jesus, and that consequently Jesus is Jehovah.

3. THE WORKS OF CHRIST next claim our attention.

The performance of MIRACLES is not of itself a proof that the agent is God, but only that the agent is supernaturally assisted by God; but the *manner* in which the miracles of Christ were performed was such as intimated his Deity. The apostles performed miracles *in the name of their master*. Christ performed miracles *in his own name*. They were anxious to prevent the people from supposing that the power to effect such deeds was their own. Had Christ been a mere man, like them, piety would have induced him to manifest similar caution; his not exercising that caution, but, on the contrary, performing miracles in such a manner as might naturally lead spectators to attribute the glory to Christ himself, shows that he knew that such glory really belonged to him.

In illustration of this remark, let a miracle performed by Peter be contrasted with a miracle performed by Christ. Peter, when about to cure a man who had been a cripple from his birth, thus addressed him: "*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk;*" and in the following manner did that apostle refer to the miracle soon afterwards: "Ye men of Israel, why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?"

One of the miracles of Christ was thus performed: "There came a leper to Jesus, saying, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean: Jesus answered him, *I will;* be thou clean: and immediately his leprosy departed from him."

Agreeably to the manner in which Christ wrought these supernatural deeds, is the language which his servants employ as to the *source whence they derived power* to perform miracles. Thus we hear Peter, at Lydda, saying to Eneas, who had been confined to his bed by palsy for eight years, "Eneas, *Jesus*

Christ maketh thee whole; arise: And he arose immediately."

And Paul, referring (Rom. xv. 18, 19.) to the signs and wonders which he had been enabled to perform, represents them all as deeds which *Christ had wrought by him.*

THE WORK OF CREATION is ascribed to Christ.

That work is attributed to him in the words connected with our text: "The Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. *All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*"

What meaning is to be attached to the term "world," is settled by clauses which follow: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." From these words it is plain that *the world which was made by him is the world into which he came*, namely the earth which we inhabit.

So, in Col. i. 16, 17. it is declared, that "by Christ were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

In Psalm cii. quoted in Heb. i. 10. we find these words applied to Christ: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands."

THE PRESERVATION OF THE WORLD is ascribed to the Saviour as well as its creation.

Thus, in a text lately quoted, Paul declares that "by him all things *consist*," that is, are held together, sustained, and preserved. Another passage describes the Son of God as "*upholding all things by the word of his power.*"

The management of the concerns of PROVI-

DENCE is also attributed to Christ by Paul, when he says, (Phil. ii. 19.) "*I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you.*" So, in his epistle to the Thessalonians, he prays that "God himself, and our Father, and *our Lord Jesus Christ* would direct his way unto them." In these passages Christ is evidently represented as ordering the events of human life.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD is ascribed to Christ.

"All power," said Jesus, (Matt. xxviii. 18.) "is given unto me in heaven and in earth." "Jesus Christ," said Peter, (Acts x. 36.) is Lord of all." "For this end," said Paul, (Rom. xiv. 9.) "Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living." And in the Apocalypse (xvii. 14.) He is called "the Lord of lords, and King of kings."

It is true, that in some of these passages Christ is represented as receiving this authority from the Father. And it is readily admitted that Christ, as Mediator, does receive authority from the Father, and is inferior to the Father. But this inferiority *with respect to office voluntarily undertaken*, by no means invalidates his equality with the Father, in regard to his divine nature. And it has been well remarked, that "Delegation cannot confer any ability for the discharge of the functions of the office delegated." Let it be granted that Christ's mediatorial authority to govern the world is a delegated right, whence, we ask, proceed his *qualifications* for that office? His qualifications for governing the world arise out of the divine nature which he always possessed, "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was."

Let us now contemplate the works which are ascribed to Christ in the NEW CREATION.

PARDON OF SIN is represented as coming not only through him as Mediator, but *from him* as the bestower of it.

A *created being*, duly authorized, may *declare* another's sins to be forgiven; but God alone can *forgive* sin. Such was the opinion which the Jews, in our Saviour's time, very properly held on the subject; and accordingly, when Jesus said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee," they said, "Why doth he thus speak blasphemies?" The principle they held was good; their error consisted in the application of it. Had Jesus been no more than a prophet, he would have spoken blasphemy in using such language. But being the Son of God, he was fully authorized thus to speak.

The Apostle Paul, recommending a forgiving temper to his friends at Colosse, (iii. 13.) reminds them of the forgiveness they themselves had received from Christ: "Christ," saith he, "forgave you."

The *introduction of individuals into the Christian church*, by means of that change of character which is called REGENERATION and CONVERSION, is asserted by Christ to be his own work. "Other sheep," said he, "I have, which are not of this fold: them also *I must bring*, and they shall hear my voice." (John x. 16.)

THE PRESERVATION OF PIETY in the soul of man is the work of Christ. "None of them," said he, "shall perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "My grace," said he to Paul, "is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy Spirit," said Paul to Timothy. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all," said Paul to the believers at Rome and at Thessalonica.

He who thus converts and preserves the souls of all believers must be God.

THE RAISING OF THE DEAD AND THE FINAL JUDGMENT are also to be accomplished by Christ.

It is not incredible that *God* should raise the dead, but it is absolutely incredible that any inferior being should effect such a work. Christ however will effect it. "The hour is coming," said he,

“when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. All that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth.”

Mankind having been thus raised from the dead by Christ, shall be *judged by him*, and shall receive from his lips their final destination.

“We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” “When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

To act as the Judge of the world requires a perfect acquaintance with the character of every individual of mankind; a degree of knowledge which cannot be less than Omniscience. Were Jesus only a man, his being appointed to this office of Judge would be absolutely unaccountable; but knowing as we do, that “he searcheth the reins and hearts,” the appointment occasions no surprise.

4. We shall be led to the same conclusion respecting the Divine dignity of Christ when we contemplate the HOMAGE which is claimed for him and paid to him.

This consists partly in the exercise of certain *affections* towards him, and partly in acts of religious *worship*.

CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST AND LOVE TO HIM, are demanded in a way which is utterly irreconcilable with the supposition of his being only a man.

Confidence in man is stigmatized in the Scripture as being both foolish and wicked. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." (Jer. xvii. 5.) Confidence in God, on the contrary, is represented as connected with true happiness. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."

Bearing in recollection these texts, observe the manner in which confidence in Christ is enjoined. "Ye believe in God," said the Saviour, (John xiv. 1.) "believe also in me."

Accordingly the Lord Jesus Christ is denominated, "Our hope;" (1 Tim. i. 1.) that is the object of our trust. "In whom," saith Paul to the Ephesian Christians, (i. 13.) "ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation."

The object of the believer's trust being *divine*, no fear needs to be entertained respecting the result of the confidence which is so placed.

LOVE TO CHRIST is also demanded in language which well accords with his divine glory.

"Grace be with all them," said Paul, "that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," or, incorruptibly. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." "Whom, having not seen," said Peter, "ye love." And Christ himself required that the love of his disciples to him should exceed their affection to their dearest relatives. "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me." No such demand as this is made on behalf of the most excellent created being. Admitting the divine glory of the Son of God, we do not wonder that we are required to love him so ardently; whereas, denying him to possess that glory, we shall be wholly at a loss to understand the propriety of such a requisition.

ACTS OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP also, having *Christ for their object*, have been performed by

inspired men; and similar worship paid to Christ by others is mentioned by the sacred writers, not only without the slightest intimation of its being unlawful but even with evident approbation.

Many of the acts of homage paid to Jesus on earth might fall short of what we understand by religious worship. Yet, considering how closely they bordered on such worship, it is not to be imagined that Jesus would have permitted them to pass unnoticed, had he not been conscious of deserving their highest homage. His apostles forbade such homage expressly on that ground. When Cornelius fell down at the feet of Peter and worshipped him, Peter raised him up, saying, "Arise, I myself also am a man;" and thus we cannot but believe Christ would have acted in similar circumstances, had he also been only a man.

When THOMAS the Disciple, after the resurrection of Jesus, said to him, "My Lord and my God;" Jesus uttered no expression to intimate displeasure at being so addressed; but, on the contrary, spoke to him in terms indicative of approbation. Jesus said unto him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

STEPHEN the Martyr worshipped Christ, when he thus prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

The Apostle PAUL worshipped Christ on several occasions; when, for example, he thus prayed for the Thessalonians: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work;" and, when he thus prayed for himself: "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me." It is quite evident from the words which follow, that by *Lord* in that petition, *Christ* is meant. The words which follow are these: "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of *Christ* may rest upon me."

“Calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” is praying to him; and this is a phrase of very frequent occurrence in the New Testament, as descriptive of the common practice of the disciples of Christ. Thus, *Ananias*, in reply to a command addressed to him by Jesus, concerning Saul of Tarsus, said, “Here he hath authority from the Chief Priests to bind all that *call on thy name.*” Hence it appears that among the Christians at Damascus, to call on the name of Jesus, was an ordinary act of worship. Paul thus commences his first letter to the Corinthians: “To the church of God which is at Corinth,—with all that in every place *call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord;*” whence it appears that among the Christians of that age, in every place, such worshipping of Christ was universal. In the book of the *Revelation*, the inhabitants of *Heaven* are described as paying religious worship to God and to Christ, at the very same time and in the very same words. The words are these: “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.” “Salvation unto our God that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

Such is the specimen which the limits of one discourse have allowed me to present, of the proofs which the sacred Scriptures give of the Deity of Jesus Christ.

First, we found that the titles, Son of God, (in a peculiar sense,) and God, and Jehovah are given to him.

Next, we ascertained that the attributes of eternal existence, almighty power, omnipresence, and omniscience are ascribed to him.

Thirdly, we perceived that the working of miracles by his own power; the communication to others of the power to work miracles; the creation of the world; the preservation of the world; the

management of human affairs; the government of the world; the pardon of sin; the conversion of the soul; the preservation of religion in the heart; the resurrection of the dead; and the final judgment, are all works which have been, or are to be effected by our Lord Jesus.

Lastly, we found that religious homage is paid to him, including both the exercise of the fullest confidence and the most ardent affection, and the performance of acts of real worship.

From this survey, we feel ourselves called on to unite with Thomas, in saying to Jesus, "My Lord and my God."

But CHRIST IS ALSO MAN. His divine nature never had a beginning; his human nature had. He who is called "the Word," who was in the beginning with God, and was God, was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Jesus was truly *a man*; he had a human body and a human soul, constituting a human being. There are two peculiarities, however, of the human nature of Christ which deserve to be noticed.

1. Although Jesus was descended from Adam, Noah, Abraham, and David, by *his mother Mary*, he had *no other earthly Parent*. It is true that the genuineness of the first part of the gospels of Matthew and of Luke has been disputed; but it is equally true that the ablest critics, after the most candid investigation, have proved the objections urged against those portions of Scripture to be altogether groundless and frivolous. We may therefore safely regard them as parts of the word of God. Thence we learn that the conception of Jesus was occasioned by a supernatural influence.

2. The human nature of Jesus was perfectly *free from sin*. There was in his nature no tendency towards sin; and in his life not a single evil action, word, or thought had place.

These two circumstances respecting the human nature of the Saviour were declared by the angel who foretold his birth to Mary. The angel said unto her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Since the Lord Jesus Christ is one person, and since he is, as we have seen, both God and man, it follows necessarily that his person includes THE DIVINE AND HUMAN NATURES UNITED.

We do not suppose the properties of the two natures to be changed. We do not consider the divine attributes of the Saviour to cease to be divine, nor his human attributes to cease to be human; but that such a union subsists between the Deity and humanity of Christ as to constitute one person. Of the precise nature of that union we must be content to be ignorant. "No man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father."

OBJECTIONS, plausible, though not substantial, are brought against this doctrine, as against every other.

Such objections to the scripture doctrine of the Person of Christ as relates to its *mysteriousness*, have been virtually considered already in the XIIIth and XVth Lectures.

Such objections to the doctrine as are founded on *texts of Scripture* which appear to oppose it, will be obviated by recollecting that although Christ, as to his divine nature, is equal with the Father, *with regard to his human nature and his mediatorial office, he is inferior to the Father.* Were we to admit that Christ is God only, and not man and Mediator, we should be wholly unable to understand those texts which speak of his inferiority to God. Were we to admit that he is man

only and not God, we should be equally at a loss to interpret those texts which set forth his divine dignity. He who is resolved to interpret the word of God with fairness, will find numerous texts of both the above classes. Let both be received.

This doctrine concerning the Person of Christ must be placed, as was shown in the VIIIth Lecture, among the *Fundamental Truths* of the Christian Religion.

The gospel, which reveals a way of salvation to a guilty and corrupt race, comprehends every important truth relative to the government of God; and in that gospel, Christ is all in all. According to our views of Christ, therefore, will our views of the gospel be; and according to our views of the gospel, must be our conceptions of the government of God.

The holiness of the divine character; the strictness of the law of God; the greatness of human guilt in the violation of that law; the greatness of the love of God in saving sinners; and the consequent obligations which man is under, on the score of gratitude, to obey the will of God; are among the important truths which the doctrine of the Saviour's Deity is calculated deeply to impress on the heart.

And besides this moral effect of the doctrine, we must remember that faith in Christ is essentially connected with salvation, and that faith in Christ pre-supposes knowledge of his Person. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Let me then ask you, my brethren, individually, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" You need not inquire, "Who is he, that I may believe on him?" An answer to this question has this evening been given from the word of God. I intreat you, then, seriously to put the question to

your own conscience, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

And if you have reason to fear that, up to this hour, you have been destitute of faith in him, let me beseech you to reject him no longer. Think of the inevitable and fearful ruin which will come on all who "neglect so great salvation." And meditate on the encouraging truth, that "him that cometh he will in no wise cast out." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

LECTURE XVIII.

Sept. 26, 1824.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

I PETER ii. 21—24.

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should walk in his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

IN the last discourse it was shown that our Lord Jesus Christ is a Divine Person, possessing the same uncreated glory with God the Father; and that he became man, taking the human nature into union with the divine. This is doubtless one of the most stupendous of all the preternatural events recorded in the word of God, and, we may be quite sure, was not appointed to take place without a design commensurate with the grandeur of the interposition.

What that design was, will be ascertained by contemplating the Life and Death of the Redeemer.

First: We are briefly to consider THE CHARACTER WHICH OUR LORD JESUS EXHIBITED while he dwelt upon earth.

A general view of the subject is given in those words of our text, "He did no sin." There has never existed an individual of our race, since the apostacy of our first parents, of whom this could be affirmed. "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not;" but Christ did no sin. He was tempted; but temptation had no effect on him. When "the Prince of this world came, he found nothing in him." "In him was no sin."

This is a glorious peculiarity in the Character of Jesus, and one which raises him high above all the sons of men.

But let us notice some few among the many virtues and graces by which the Life of our Saviour was distinguished.

LOVE TO HIS HEAVENLY FATHER was, in Jesus, a ruling and abiding principle; showing itself in his uniform and ready compliance with the divine law, in his entire resignation under all the sufferings through which he had to pass, and in his constant desire, both by obedience and by suffering, to glorify God.

"My meat," said he, "is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." "The cup which my heavenly Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" No wonder that the disciples, when they witnessed his devotedness to his Father's glory, remembered that it was written, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up." Jesus, addressing his Father, could say, with the most perfect truth, "I have glorified thee on the earth."

The Saviour's LOVE TO MANKIND was equally conspicuous.

The Benevolence of Jesus was beyond example. It was disinterested, laborious, and persevering; and was manifested towards enemies.

It was *disinterested*. "There is not an instance

in which Christ appears to have proposed his own private separate good, as the end either of his actions or sufferings. He lived and died for others." The present comfort, and, above all, the future happiness of the sons of men, as connected with the glory of God, were the sole objects at which he aimed, and in the pursuit of these objects he spared no labour or exertion. Peter has given, in few words, a most comprehensive view of the active kindness of the Saviour, by saying that "he went about doing good."

He was not merely not unwilling to do good when an opportunity of thus acting came in his way; but he travelled about on purpose to seek such opportunities, and it appears that he made these journeys on foot, and not without fatigue. On one occasion, Jesus being wearied with his journey, came near the city Sychar, in Samaria, and seated himself on Jacob's well. While his disciples were gone into the city to buy food, a woman came to draw water; and Jesus, notwithstanding his fatigue, willingly entered into an instructive conversation with her, nor would he partake of the refreshment which was presently brought, until he had improved to the utmost the opportunity which he found of speaking the word of life.

The Benevolence of the Saviour was also characterised by *perseverance*.

There were two things in his ministry which on most persons would have operated as dissuasives from exertion; namely, the small measure of immediate success which attended his labours, and the ungrateful manner in which those labours were requited.

Yet Jesus did "not fail, nor was he discouraged;" but prosecuted his work with unabated zeal.

The Benevolence of Jesus was moreover manifested *towards enemies*: "when he was reviled, he

reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not."

When he came within sight of Jerusalem, where he had been treated with so much neglect, scorn, and ingratitude, and where a plot for his death, as he well knew, was then forming and about to be accomplished ; instead of cursing the city, he wept over it, and spent every one of the few remaining days of his life in efforts for the good of its inhabitants. Even on the cross, while enduring the pangs of dying, he thus prayed for his murderers ; " Father, forgive them ; they know not what they do."

But whoever would be duly acquainted with the character of the Son of God, must read the New Testament Scriptures ; from the perusal of which every person of impartial mind will rise, exclaiming, Never man spake, acted, or suffered like this man. In moral excellence, as well as in divine dignity, he has the pre-eminence.

But let us inquire into THE PURPOSES which the holy character of Jesus, as manifested in his life and delineated in the Scriptures, is adapted to answer.

1. It affords a most admirable and useful PATTERN FOR IMITATION.

Thus the Apostle Peter speaks in our text : " He hath left us an example, that we should walk in his steps."

We see our duty in the Law of God ; but in the life of Christ we see the law actually obeyed ; and obeyed, in the most perfect and remarkable manner, in those very branches of good conduct which we are most apt to neglect.

The calm endurance of injurious treatment, and the forgiving of enemies, are duties to which human nature is so averse, that men are ready to conclude themselves to be under no obligation to ob-

serve them. Accordingly, to enforce these difficult duties, we have not merely precept, but the example of the preceptor.

Selfishness is the radical vice of human nature, and true Benevolence most rare. The contemplation of the life of Jesus is therefore calculated to be highly advantageous, inasmuch as it is absolutely free from Selfishness, and conspicuous for the noblest Love.

The utility of the Saviour's example will further appear, if we recollect the *intimate relation which subsists between Christ and his people*. Jesus, by that life and that death in which he furnished a perfect model of character, has "obtained eternal redemption for all them that obey him." He is, therefore, our gracious *Benefactor*, to whom we owe our best hopes. When, accordingly, he says to us, "Be ye followers of me," he speaks in language which not merely secures attention as proceeding from the lips of one who has a right to command, but which approves itself to the heart by the sense of gratitude which it awakens. We are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God;" and no one is entitled to consider himself a Christian who does not habitually study to copy the Saviour's example.

2. The Holy Life of Christ CONFERRED DESERVED HONOUR ON THE DIVINE LAW.

When any one acts in opposition to a Law, he, in effect, declares by such conduct that the law ought not to be obeyed; that is, that the law is not good, and consequently that he who promulgated it is deficient in equity or wisdom. In this manner has the Law of God been dishonoured by the sins of mankind. Hence it became necessary that the Mediator who was to deliver man from guilt and misery, should also do such honour to the Divine Law as might remove the undeserved imputations which man's transgression had cast upon it.

This important end is most fully answered by

the mediatorial work of Christ, chiefly by his Death, as will shortly be shown; but in part also by his Life.

The Life of Christ did honour to the Law of God by *exhibiting its superlative excellence*.

If an unprejudiced person be ready to exclaim, after reading the *precepts* of the Law, "It is holy, just, and good;" with still more warmth of feeling will he be inclined to pay it that merited tribute of approbation, after contemplating those precepts as they are embodied in the Saviour's character.

Not only the abstract excellence, but *the practicability of the law* has been evinced by the life of Christ. Christ's having, as a man, obeyed the will of God, proves that the only thing wanted to render obedience possible and even easy is that thorough holiness, or love of goodness, which the man Christ Jesus possessed, and which no man besides him has had since Adam first sinned.

Christ's obedience conferred the greater honour on the law by *its gratuitous character*, and by the *divine dignity* of him who so obeyed.

Although Christ became necessarily subject to the Law when he became man, his becoming man was altogether gratuitous. His entering on the work of Mediator was perfectly voluntary; and his obedience to the law, as Mediator, not having been required for his own benefit, is meritorious, and available for the justification of others.

The obedience of Christ, moreover, had in it a *divine dignity*.

In consequence of the intimate union which subsists between the divine and human natures of the Saviour, the dignity which appertains to his Deity diffuses itself over all the actions and sufferings of his human nature. Hence it is that Christ's obedience reflects immeasurable honour on the law of God.

On the whole, it appears that the obedience of Christ avails for justification by its producing an

effect, with regard to the law of God, which is just the opposite of that which man's disobedience produced. Man's disobedience has dishonoured that law; Christ's obedience has honoured it. The fact, that among all the millions of the human race not one is found who has perfectly obeyed those commands which the Creator gave them, might seem to cast a reflection on the excellence of the law; but the other fact, that the Son of God in human nature has yielded a perfect obedience to those very commands, removes the imputation of faultiness from the law and fixes the charge, where it should be, on man. Nor only has Christ's obedience the effect of clearing the Law from any suspicion of imperfection; it exhibits its positive excellence in the most conspicuous light. So perfect an exemplification of the holy precepts of the law did the life of Christ display; so entirely gratuitous was the act of his becoming subject to the law; and, so inconceivably great is the dignity imparted to his obedience by his divine nature; that we cannot but consider the honour conferred on the law by Christ's obeying it, to be even greater than could have accrued to it by the obedience of the whole human race.

3. The holiness of the Saviour's character was necessary TO QUALIFY HIM TO MAKE AN ATONEMENT FOR HUMAN GUILT.

He who is himself sinful can suffer only for himself. Christ's perfect freedom from sin, and thorough obedience to the will of his heavenly father, rendered suffering unnecessary for himself, and gave him the right to suffer for others. To prefigure the sinless purity of his character who should "give his life a ransom for many," it was required, under the ancient economy of religion, that the sacrificial Lamb should be "without blemish;" and for the same reason was it also enacted that the priest should offer a sacrifice for his own sins, before he offered one for the sins of the people. "Such a High Priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and

separate from sinners." Such a High Priest we have, whose great atoning sacrifice next claims our attention.

We proceed then to contemplate THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

Jesus was "by wicked hands crucified and slain." Judas, a pretended friend, delivered him up to the Jewish rulers, and these persons prevailed on Pilate, the Roman governor, to consent to his condemnation, notwithstanding that he found "no fault in him at all." Judas, the Jewish Rulers, and Pilate were just as guilty of a most atrocious murder, as they would have been, had no good resulted from the event. Yet all this was "according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," and designed to promote the eternal happiness of our fallen race.

The way in which, chiefly, the death of Christ is available for the benefit of man is thus stated in our text: "He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Having graciously taken on himself the character of our representative, as our representative he suffered and died; and by this means are we freed from the penal consequences which would otherwise have resulted from our sins. This is, in few words, what we understand the Apostle Peter to mean, when he says, that "Christ bare our sins in his own body on the tree."

But this doctrine respecting Christ's death occupies so prominent a place in the Christian scheme, and is at once so pleasant and so profitable a theme, that, as far as the limits of the discourse will allow, we shall dwell on it at some length.

That man is a sinner is generally allowed. That he cannot look for eternal happiness without being pardoned is as generally admitted. That God is disposed to forgive is also matter of almost univer-

sal hope. The question is, *On what ground may this hope be indulged?*

“God is so merciful,” say some, “that let men live as they please, there can be little danger of their being very severely punished.”

But how strangely inattentive are these people to the fact, that in proportion as they thus elevate the divine compassion they degrade the divine justice. Men speak not in this way of human governments. It is true, that they who by unlawful deeds have rendered themselves subject to punishment, may be found to extol indiscriminate and universal compassion, to the exclusion of all acts of penal justice; but the moral part of the community think differently, and would consider that country to be in reality lawless and without government, where pretended laws were not guarded by adequate sanctions.

God, our Lawgiver, Sovereign, and Judge, has given us commands which we have broken. To the violation of those commands he has affixed the penalty of death eternal; and consequently we, as guilty, are liable to that penalty, and have no reason to expect relief on the mere score of his mercy.

“No,” say others, “we have not sufficient reason to hope to enjoy exemption from suffering simply because God is merciful; for if all culprits should escape punishment we grant that the terms, Law and Justice, as applied to God, would be unmeaning, and the world would be in reality without moral government. We admit, therefore, that if a man live and die in a state of impenitence and continued sin, there can be but little hope respecting him. But then is not the case different with such as truly repent? May we not suppose that unfeigned sorrow for past sins, and the doing right for time to come will procure forgiveness, without the suffering of another in our stead?”

To this we reply,

1. That a case of perfect repentance and reformation has never occurred among all the millions of human offenders.

No one has reason to conclude that his sorrow for sin is as deep as the magnitude of his guilt requires; nor has any one undergone so thorough a reformation as not to be contracting fresh guilt.

The opinion which a man of wisdom and piety is led to entertain of his repentance and goodness is well expressed by Bishop Beveridge in these words: "I do not only betray the in-bred venom of my heart, by poisoning my common actions, but even my most religious performances also, with sin. I cannot pray, but I sin; I cannot hear or preach a sermon, but I sin; I cannot give an alms, or receive the sacrament, but I sin; nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my very confessions are still aggravations of them; my repentance needs to be repented of; my tears want washing, and the very washing of my tears needs still to be washed over again with the blood of my Redeemer."

2. If the repentance of a sinner were complete, it could have no efficacy sufficient to make amends for former transgressions.

To be sorry for past offences, and to do right for the time being, are at all times man's present duty; and are nothing more than his duty; consequently repentance and subsequent good conduct can furnish no surplus of merit to be set over against the delinquencies of former days, no sinking fund out of which past debts may be paid. Past transgressions would be still chargeable to the man's account in the book of Eternal Justice; and the fearful threatening, "The soul that sinneth shall die," would still remain unrepealed.

But what repentance could not do for man, the death of Christ has done.

To prove that the leading design of this great

event was to render the showing mercy to man consistent with the claims of God's righteous government, it will be sufficient to quote a few out of many passages of Scripture which refer to this subject.

"He was wounded," saith Isaiah, "for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "Behold the Lamb of God," saith John, "which taketh away the sin of the world." "The Son of man is come," saith Jesus, "to give his life a ransom for many." "Christ died for us," saith Paul; "Christ died for the ungodly. We are justified by his blood. We shall be saved from wrath through him. We are reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. He gave himself a ransom for all. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us. Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things."

These texts so plainly declare that Christ died in the place of the guilty, and that the guilty, who trust in him, are, in consequence of his death, rescued from misery, that it is not possible to conceive of any selection of words which could be more clear and decisive.

Having therefore proved from the word of God, that by the death of Christ an atonement for human guilt has actually been made, I proceed to answer some objections to the doctrine, and to show its adaptation to the end contemplated.

Among the objections urged against this doc-

trine none has a more palpably weak foundation than that which represents it as favouring the notion that God is a revengeful Sovereign, who delights to punish, and who was with difficulty pacified by the sacrifice of Christ. This cavil, has received, I trust, a satisfactory refutation in the last Lecture but one, in which the redemption of man, with all its happy consequences, was traced up to the Love of God as its fountain-head.

Not more plausible is the objection, that it is inconsistent with Justice that an innocent Redeemer should suffer for guilty persons who are to be redeemed by him.

Had a Redeemer been required, without his own consent, to suffer in the place of the guilty, the case would have been different; but it is most evident that Jesus voluntarily undertook and voluntarily persevered in the work of man's salvation.

But the only objection against the doctrine of the atonement which requires particular notice, is that which respects *the substitution of the Redeemer in the sinner's place*. There are persons who scruple not to affirm it to be inconceivable that suffering endured by one person can be considered, in the eye of Justice, as an equivalent for the punishment which others have merited.

Here let it be observed, that the great principle which is involved in the atonement of Christ is simply this, that in certain cases, IT IS NOT INCONSISTENT WITH EQUITY THAT ONE PERSON SHOULD RECEIVE GOOD FOR THE SAKE OF ANOTHER.

Certain it is that in the Government of God, as it is seen in the present condition of mankind, this principle has place. BISHOP BUTLER has satisfactorily established this point, and the following remarks of PRESIDENT DWIGHT are also well deserving of consideration.

“ No person who has observed the affairs of the

present world with attention can hesitate to admit that vicarious interference, to a great extent, producing in great numbers, both good and evil consequences, is a prominent feature of the providential system by which the affairs of this world are regulated. Children thus become rich, well educated, intelligent, religious, and everlastingly happy, by the agency of their parents; while other children owe, in a great measure, to the same agency, the contrary evils of poverty, ignorance, vice, and final ruin. Friends, by their interference, become the means of wealth, reputation, advancement, holiness, and everlasting life, to their friends; and rescue them from poverty, bondage, disgrace, profligacy, and perdition. Enemies accomplish all the contrary evils for their enemies; and by temptation, slander, fraud, and treachery, effectuate or those whom they hate, every kind of destruction. A great part of the business of human life, both public and private, is, in the strict sense, *vicarious*: the benefits or injuries rarely terminating in the personal good of the agent only, but almost of course extending to others."

This representation of the case is unquestionably just. It is evidently ordered by the Supreme Governor that, to a very considerable extent, men should receive both good and evil by the agency of others.

The distributors of rewards and punishments act, in numerous instances, on the same principle. If a man of rank be found guilty of treason, his descendants as well as himself pay the forfeit, in loss of titles and wealth. If, on the contrary, a man benefits his country "in Arts or Arms," his posterity are honoured and enriched for his sake. Nay, cases have occurred in which persons justly condemned for offences committed have obtained a mitigation, and even a complete remission of the punishment deserved, on account of their being

allied to men who had rendered very valuable services to the state.

These observations are introduced merely to show that the principle of doing good to one person for the sake of another is recognised both in God's dealings with men, and in men's dealings with one another.

Here let me again remind you that man's receiving forgiveness for the sake of the life and death of Christ is nothing more than *a particular application of this principle*. I grant that this particular application of the principle differs in point of magnitude, from every other instance in which it is recognised, as widely as eternity differs from time. Still the principle itself is the same; and if it be allowed to be justifiable and even commendable when seen elsewhere, what reason can be given why it should be reprobated here? None at all, unless it can be proved either that the *purpose* of Christ's taking the place of sinners is *not good*, or that, that purpose *cannot be answered*. If, on the contrary, it can be made to appear that the *design* for which the Redeemer bare the sin of many was unexceptionably and inexpressibly *good*, and that such design is fully *accomplished*, we shall see cause not only to acquiesce but even to exult in the doctrine of Christ's vicarious work.

For the understanding of this subject, it is desirable that we should form clear conceptions of *the design of punishment*.

We may rest assured that the infliction of *suffering* is not the ultimate end of penal visitations; it is merely a means leading to an end. God never punishes man for the mere purpose of seeing man in pain. Abhorred be the thought! In causing the guilty to suffer, God has ends worthy of himself, as a holy and righteous Being. Without presuming to comprehend all those purposes, we

may safely state that there are three points of view in which penal sufferings may be contemplated, namely, in reference to *him who suffers*, in reference to *him who appoints the suffering*, and in reference to those *who may become acquainted with it*.

1. *So long as the state of probation lasts, the intention of punishment is benevolent, even with regard to the sufferer.*

Suffering is calculated to do him good. But this design of punishment is restricted to the present state. The word of God gives us to understand that the condition of man is unalterably fixed when he quits the present world; that this is the seed-time and eternity the harvest.

2. *With regard to the Supreme Judge, who appoints punishment, the design appears to be, the exhibition of his character as a holy Being and a righteous Governor.*

3. *With regard to those who may become acquainted with the sufferings of the guilty, the design, we apprehend, is to inculcate the necessity and advantage of obedience to the will of God, by a display of the sad consequences which result from rebellion against him.*

So far as *the future state* is concerned, it appears that the *two last mentioned ends of punishment* comprise all that we can know respecting it. *The honour of God and the good of such of his creatures as are capable of being benefited* are, we humbly conceive, the reasons why the guilty are condemned to suffer eternal death. Our conviction is, that on the one hand, whatever punishment the all-knowing God sees to be necessary for the guilty to undergo, in order to vindicate the honour of his government and to promote the general good of his creatures, *that punishment the guilty must inevitably endure*; but that, on the other hand, whatever punishment God sees not to be required for his own

glory and the good of the universe, God will not inflict.

Hence it follows that if a method be practicable by which THE ENDS OF PUNISHMENT CAN BE SECURED WITHOUT THE ACTUAL INFLICTION OF PUNISHMENT, that method will approve itself to our reason as every way worthy of the God of wisdom and love.

This is precisely the method of pardon revealed in the gospel. Christ's dying in the place of sinners has so fully shown God's displeasure against sin, and consequently, the evil nature of sin, that the punishment of the sinner himself is no longer necessary. Such is the view of the death of Christ presented by the Apostle Paul, (Rom. iii. 20, 23—26.) "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified;—for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." The following clauses demand particular attention: "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 who believeth in Jesus.*"

The text just read is one of the clearest and most explanatory on the subject of the Saviour's atoning death any where to be found. Many passages of Scripture, as was lately shown, speak of Jesus as having died in the sinner's room and for the sinner's good; but this text particularly explains *the manner* in which the death of Christ becomes available on his behalf. It represents the object of the Redeemer's sacrifice as *two-fold*; namely, as having respect both *to God* and *to man*.

The object of the Saviour's death *with regard to man*, was *the remission of sins*.

The object of the Saviour's death *with regard to God* was *the declaration of his righteousness* in the remission of sins.

The Righteousness of God might have been displayed in the punishment of the sinner himself; but then Mercy would not have appeared.

The Mercy of God might have been exercised in the remission of man's sins without a propitiation; but then Righteousness would have been hidden.

But in the remission of sins for the sake of Christ's atoning death, both the Righteousness and Compassion of God are gloriously exhibited. "He is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

And not only does this method of forgiveness approve itself to our understanding as altogether reasonable; it is well calculated to excite our highest admiration. The following passages from a justly-celebrated discourse of MR. MACLAURIN, on *Glorying in the Cross of Christ* are worthy of the exalted subject.

"Here shine spotless justice, incomprehensible wisdom, and infinite love, all at once: none of them darkens or eclipses the other; every one of them gives a lustre to the rest. They mingle their beams, and shine with united eternal splendour: The just Judge, the merciful Father, and the wise Governor. No other object gives such a display of all these perfections; yea, all the objects we know, give not such a display of any one of them. No where does justice appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom so profound.

"The glories that are found separately in the other works of God, are found united here. The joys of heaven glorify God's goodness, the pains of hell glorify his justice; the Cross of Christ glorifies both of them in a more remarkable manner than heaven or hell glorifies either of them. There is more remarkable honour done to the justice of

God by the sufferings of Christ than by the torments of devils; and there is a more remarkable display of the goodness of God, in the redemption of sinners, than in the joy of angels; so that we can conceive no object in which we can discover such manifold wisdom, or so deep contrivance for advancing the glory of God.

“The like may be said of its contrivance for the good of man. It heals all his diseases, it pardons all his sins. It is the sacrifice that removes the guilt of sin; it is the motive that removes the love of sin: it mortifies sin and expiates it. It atones for disobedience; it excites to obedience; it purchases strength for obedience; it makes obedience practicable; it makes it delightful; it makes it acceptable; it makes it in a manner unavoidable; it constrains to it. (2 Cor. v. 14.) It is not only the motive to obedience but the pattern of it. It satisfies the curse of the law, and fulfils the commands of it. Love is the fulfilling of the law, the sum of which is love to God and our neighbour. The Cross of Christ is the highest instance of both. Christ’s sufferings are to be considered as actions: never action gave such glory to God, never action did such good to man.

“Thus we see how fit a mean the Cross is for promoting the best ends; for justification and sanctification.”

The doctrine of the atonement is more effectual than any truth besides in impressing deeply on the heart the highly important sentiment, “That it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God;” besides which, it excites love to God and to Christ. It represents the Creator as full of compassion, though of strict justice. The justice of God as seen in the atonement, instead of obscuring his love, serves only to enlarge our conceptions of it. We see that notwithstanding the obstacle, (formidable to any

one but God) which justice placed in the way of the sinner's happiness, God's love to man has been so great as to find means for removing it. When this love is distinctly seen, and the guilty creature can cherish that hope of mercy which the death of Christ is calculated to inspire, love to God springs up in his heart, and makes him ardently desire to yield obedience to God's holy will.

With this love to God, love to Christ, as the sinner's kind Deliverer, is inseparably connected; and this affection, whether the Father or the Son be the more immediate object of it, always leads to the abhorrence of evil and to the love and practice of good. Thus the purpose of Christ's redeeming love is accomplished; for "he gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead unto sin, should live unto righteousness."

Two very important *inquiries* relative to the present subject suggest themselves.

First: What persons are entitled to consider themselves actually interested in the obedience, sufferings, and death of Christ?

I answer, They and they only who have faith in Christ. "By him *all that believe* are justified from all things." "*He that believeth* shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Believing in Christ is trusting in him for salvation, and includes both knowledge and approbation of him, and of the work which he has accomplished for the guilty.

It has been already observed that the justification and the sanctification of the sinner are the objects of the Saviour's mediation; and a moment's attention may show us that neither of these can be accomplished without faith in Christ.

We have seen that the divine plan for effecting the justification of the guilty is one which fully secures the ends of justice. But this supposes that the pardoned man is acquainted with that plan, approves of it, and directs his thoughts to it. It is plain, that were a man permitted to obtain forgiveness through Christ *without any perception of God's method of justification*, the righteous intention of God in the appointment of the atonement would be unanswered, *as to him*. In the view of such a man, nothing would be observed in God's forgiving sin but mercy. In the mind of such a man, God's righteousness in the remission of sins would be altogether unknown.

Not only so; but the rejection of Christ on the part of those who hear of him manifests *an unhumbled mind, with regard to God*. They who will "not submit to the righteousness of God," give sad proof that they have no just apprehension of their own state as rebels against God, and no just sentiments of grateful submission in reference to God's way of saving and blessing the guilty.

It is manifestly fit and even necessary, that guilty creatures, on receiving pardon, should possess a spirit and temper corresponding with their situation. Such is faith, without which, therefore, there can be no salvation.

But the *sanctification* of Christians is also an object for which Jesus died.

The death of Christ, both impresses on the mind the importance of obedience to the will of God, and excites in the heart strong desires after obedience; but, without that personal regard to the atonement of Christ in which faith consists, no such considerations and desires can have place in the mind. We cannot wonder, therefore, that faith in Christ should be made essential to a participation in the blessings of his redemption.

The Second Inquiry suggested by the subject be-

fore us is, What persons are encouraged to put that trust in Christ with which consequences so glorious are connected?

This is a question which very often occurs to an awakened and but partially-instructed mind; and it is not at all unlikely that, among those who have listened to the foregoing observations, there are persons who are at this very moment desirous of having this point cleared up. Their silent language is something like this: "I am thoroughly convinced that my own works, instead of justifying, condemn me. I know that I am guilty before God, and, as guilty, am justly liable to eternal pain. I cordially approve of God's method of salvation. I not only value it as the only way of escape from misery, but I admire it as giving an illustrious display of God's wisdom, justice, and love. The only thing about which I am in doubt is, whether I am warranted to place my hope of pardon and happiness on that blessed Redeemer who died on the cross."

Happily, my friend, for us all, the most encouraging answer can be given to your inquiry; "Christ gave himself," said Paul, "*a ransom for all.*" "Behold the Lamb of God," said John Baptist, "which taketh away *the sin of the world.*" "He is the propitiation for our sins," said the Apostle John, "and not for ours only but also *for the sins of the whole world.*"

Truth and fact never contradict each other. The declarations just read cannot mean, that Christ died for the world in such a sense that the whole world are saved by him; since it is undeniable that some men are not saved. The meaning appears to be, that *the salvation of every man in the world who believes in Christ* is secured. But for the death of Jesus, the justice of God would have been an obstacle in the way of any one's salvation. By the death of Jesus that obstacle is completely removed, as to every human being. The value of the Saviour's

atonement is strictly infinite, and is therefore as adequate to expiate the guilt of a million millions of transgressors, as it is to expiate the guilt of one individual.

On the part of God's righteous government there is now no barrier in the way of any one's salvation. The only obstacle is man's unbelief. If that be taken away, there remains no other. With this statement agrees the language of our Lord; (John iii. 14, 16.) "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The comparison there made between the camp of Israel and the world at large; between the brazen serpent and the cross of Christ; and between looking at the serpent and believing in Christ, places the subject in the clearest light.

In the camp of Israel men were ready to die from the bite of venomous reptiles;

All men are in danger of death as the consequence of sin.

The brazen serpent was appointed as an effectual cure;

The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.

The way to obtain a cure was looking at the brazen serpent;

The way to obtain eternal life is to look, with the eye of the mind, on Christ, who died to save sinners.

All who looked on the brazen serpent lived;

All who look at a dying Saviour are saved.

From this comparison we learn, that *the death of Christ bears the same relation to the whole world which the brazen serpent bore to the camp of Israel.*

It did *not* follow, of course, that every sick man revived because the brazen serpent was placed on high;

Neither does it follow that every man is saved because Jesus died on the cross.

But it *did* follow that every man lived who looked at the brazen serpent ;

And it *does* follow that every man is saved who looks on Christ.

And now let me expostulate with those who have never so looked on Christ.

I appeal to you on the score of *gratitude*.

Meditate on that exuberant goodness in which the atonement of Christ originated. Is this the way to repay a favour so inexpressibly great? Meditate on that love which the holy sufferer manifested in bearing reproach, agony, and death for the sake of the guilty. Are you not ashamed and grieved at the consciousness of slighting such kindness?

I appeal to you on the score of *justice*.

God has an undoubted claim on your earliest, best, and constant service. By sin, you have become estranged from his service ; but by the death of Christ, a way for your return to obedience is laid open. To neglect availing yourself of that way of return to God, is to persist wilfully in a state of alienation from him; and is manifest injustice. Ingratitude and injustice, when chargeable on one creature towards another, are highly disgraceful ; how much more, when chargeable on the creature with regard to his Creator !

But I also appeal to your *self-love*.

Surely you wish to escape misery and to obtain happiness. Here, on the one hand, is misery that shall never end ; and, on the other, eternal happiness. Here, too, is the only method of escaping the one and of gaining the other. You know not that a moment more shall be given for coming to a decision. And yet you hesitate and procrastinate !

Listen to the expostulation of the Apostle Paul : " Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.—God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation ; to wit, that God was in Christ

reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

LECTURE XIX.

Oct. 10, 1824.

THE STATE AND OFFICE OF CHRIST IN HEAVEN.

ROM. viii. 34.

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.

IT is finished ;” exclaimed the Saviour on the cross : thereby declaring that as the design of his sufferings was accomplished, those sufferings were about to end. Accordingly, soon afterwards, he cried out with a loud voice, “ Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit ;” and, having said this, he dismissed his spirit, and expired ; “ retiring from life,” as Doddridge remarks, “ with a majesty and dignity never known, or to be known, in any other death ; dying, if I may so express it, like the Prince of Life.”

That no ordinary event had happened, was instantly notified by unusual appearances both in the earth and sky. The sun was darkened ; the veil of the temple was rent in two in the midst, from the top to the bottom ; the earth quaked ; the rocks rent ; and the graves were opened.

And, on the third day, an event occurred which has been matter of exultation to the Church from that time to this, and will be for ever and ever.

Very early in the morning, while it was yet dark, Mary Magdelene, and Mary the Mother of Salome, with some other pious women, approached the sepulchre, bringing with them spices and ointments, that they might embalm the body of their de-

ceased and beloved master. But their care was not needed. The body of Jesus was to be preserved from corruption, not by means of aromatic preparations, but by the recovery of life. Accordingly, while they were considering how they should remove the huge stone which blocked up the entrance to the sepulchre, they found, on arriving there, that the stone was already taken away, and that the corpse of Jesus was no longer to be seen. An angel had descended, who, having rolled the stone from the door, sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him, the guards, though Roman soldiers, trembled and became as dead men.

At the sight of this celestial visitant, the women were at first greatly alarmed. But the angel said to them, "Be not affrighted, for I know that ye seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. But why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen, as he said. Remember how he spake unto you, when ye was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

And they remembered his words and went out quickly from the sepulchre, and with mingled emotions of fear and joy did run to bring his disciples word.

To the disciples "Jesus shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them (at various times) forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

And, on the fortieth day after his resurrection, he led them out as far as Bethany, and commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. "For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence. And ye shall receive

power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you ; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth." And he lifted up his hands and blessed them ; and it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven ; a cloud receiving him out of their sight. This was all that could be observed of the ascent of Christ by the dwellers upon earth. But who can imagine the glorious scene which was visible above? Who can form an adequate conception of the triumphant passage of the Saviour through the intervening space to the heaven of heavens and to the throne of God? We have in Scripture some hints and sketches of the majestic scene.

There is good ground for considering the xxivth Psalm to be not only an historical description of the procession which attended the ark to its resting-place on mount Zion, but also a prophetic description of the ascension of Him, whom the ark prefigured, into that holy place not made with hands, of which Zion was an emblem. And if the carrying up of the ancient symbol of God's presence was an occasion of so much gladness and triumph as to justify the sublime language of that divine Hymn ; with how much more emphasis may the words be used in reference to the ascent of Jesus to heaven. Call to mind the number and character of the population of heaven : " I beheld," saith John, " and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living beings and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands ; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Here we have, at one view, both the number and the character of the inhabitants of heaven. Their number is beyond number, and with regard to their disposition towards the Saviour, they all unite, without one exception,

in admiration of him, and of the work which he has accomplished. They had watched, with deep interest, the gradual development of God's kind purposes towards our apostate race. They rejoiced at the Redeemer's birth. They witnessed his sufferings and death. Some of them were present at his resurrection; and it is surely no unwarrantable exercise of the imagination to suppose that myriads of these seraphic beings accompanied the man Christ Jesus in his transit through the ærial regions, and that the total congregation of heaven took their respective parts in some such anthem as that which "the sweet singer of Israel" had long before prepared;—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in.

"Who is this king of glory?"

"The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up ye everlasting doors and the king of glory shall come in.

"Who is the king of glory?"

"The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory."

Having followed the Saviour in his ascension to heaven, we are prepared to contemplate HIS STATE AND OFFICE there. Both are described in few, but comprehensive words, in the text. His *state* is thus set forth:—"He is even at the right hand of God." His *office*, thus:—"He also maketh intercession for us."

Christ is "at the right hand of God," a station which includes HAPPINESS, DIGNITY, and POWER.

Jesus is no longer "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He has realized the happiness of which he spoke by the mouth of David in the xvith Psalm; when, anticipating his death and resurrection, he said, "Thou wilt not leave my

soul in the unseen state, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

If the love and possession of perfect holiness; if the recollection of having thoroughly accomplished a most laborious and benevolent undertaking; if the consciousness of being loved by all holy intelligences, and by God the Father himself; if the sight of ten thousand times ten thousand beings made good and happy by his interposition, and the hearing of their songs of thanksgiving, be so many sources of pure and exalted felicity; then shall the Redeemer of man be "most blessed for evermore." "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied."

The state of Christ in heaven is also DIGNIFIED.

"He is even at the right hand of God." He has sat down on "the right hand of the throne of God."

A throne is the seat of sovereign majesty; the throne of God is the seat of the divine majesty. The right hand of the throne is the place of highest dignity.

Solomon, in order to do honour to his mother, caused a seat to be placed for her on the right hand of his throne; but the dignity which Christ possesses in reference to the Father, is greater than that which Bathsheba enjoyed with regard to her son; for in the Apocalypse, where the angels are described as being round about the throne, Christ is represented as being on the throne. It may be well to contemplate this glorification of the Redeemer with respect to each of the two natures of which his person consists.

Christ, with regard to his *divine nature*, had this glory with the Father before the world began; consequently his exaltation to this dignity, was, in this respect, nothing more than the manifestation of the glory which, while he dwelt on earth in the form of a servant, was hidden, but not lost.

The humiliation to which Christ submitted

while on earth, in his appearing as a poor and afflicted man, was a veil which covered his essential glory. But, by his resurrection, he was declared to be "the Son of God with power." During the abode of Jesus on earth, the sun of righteousness was under an eclipse: on his ascension to heaven, the eclipse was ended, and this glorious luminary of the moral world shone forth again with infinite lustre and beauty.

But by the ascension to heaven, the *human nature* of Jesus was also glorified.

"In that very nature which Christ took on him in this world, did he leave the world and go to the Father; and the human nature of the Saviour, being created and finite, was capable of receiving accessions of glory. The humanity of Christ is filled with all the divine graces and perfections of which a limited created nature is capable; and although it is not made omniscient, omnipresent, or omnipotent, it is exalted in a fulness of natural and moral attributes ineffably above the glory either of men or of angels. It is far nearer to God than they all, and has communications from God, of light, love, and power, far above them all, though still a creature."

Thus it appears that the glory to which Christ was raised on his ascension to heaven, was, with regard to his divine nature, nothing more than the manifestation of that which always belonged to him, though for a time it had been hidden; whereas, with regard to his human nature, Christ's sitting at the right hand of God was an actual increase of glory.

But although the above distinction is not unimportant, it seems expedient, for the most part, to consider Christ in his complex character, as both God and man; as Mediator. Let us then spend a few moments in the contemplation of our blessed Saviour in his full character, occupying that station of honour in which our text represents him.

God, as God, is invisible even to the angelic eye. No one even of the dwellers in heaven hath seen God at any time. The divine nature of Christ is also necessarily invisible; but the man Christ Jesus is seen; and to that manhood, deity is so united as to constitute one person therewith. Although, therefore, the deity of Christ is itself unseen, it imparts an unequalled splendour to the human nature in which it dwells. Of the degree of that splendour we can form but very inadequate and contracted ideas in the present state of flesh and blood. Christ, however, has occasionally appeared to his friends on earth in circumstances of glory which we may suppose to be somewhat like the appearance which he wears in heaven.

John, in vision, saw his Saviour in a form which may be considered as presenting an emblematical, though not a literal, delineation of his glorified human nature: "I saw one," said he, "like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the breast with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet were like unto fine brass when purified in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters; and his countenance was as the sun shining in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."

Christ, during his abode on earth, was seen on one occasion by Peter, James, and John, in circumstances of peculiar glory. While Jesus was praying, he was transfigured in their presence; and the form of his countenance was changed, so that his face shone like the sun, and his raiment was white and dazzling. And Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here."

But after all, it is the *spiritual glory* of Christ which constitutes his chief glory and will most excite the admiration and joy of those who shall "see

him as he is." Some such soliloquy as this, we may imagine, will be often uttered by each blessed inhabitant of heaven, as he looks at the throne on which Jesus is seated. "There is he in whom all the fulness of the godhead dwells bodily, the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person. His outward form is glorious beyond any thing of which I could conceive on earth; but his moral beauty and his divine glory are far superior. Of that beauty and glory I had nothing better than imperfect and hasty glimpses in my mortal state; but now that I see him as he is, my happiness is full. Now I do indeed behold his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father. There is he who made and sustains the universe. There is he who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. There is that compassionate Saviour who endured reproach, pain, and death, for us men and for our redemption. There is he to whom I and all these innumerable happy beings owe our deliverance from eternal pain, and our enjoyment of this unspeakable felicity. There is he who, by his mediation, has given the most glorious display of the divine character, and who, by the same means, has gathered together in one friendly society the two families of God, the angelic and the human, which by man's rebellion had become estranged from each other. And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Thoughts, somewhat like these, but far more worthy of the subject, we may conclude will be habitual to the redeemed, and will often form the matter of sublime and delightful converse, ending in songs of praise.

Thus not only does Christ occupy a station of the most exalted dignity, but his character is duly appreciated and honoured by all holy creatures.

The state of Christ in heaven also includes in it SOVEREIGN POWER.

“God hath set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, 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 hath given him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Let us now meditate on THE OFFICE which the Saviour bears in the heavenly world.

“He ever liveth to make intercession for us.” The word rendered INTERCESSION is of very extensive import, and denotes *to act for* another, in whatever way that agency may be employed.

The Sovereign power which Christ possesses he uses for the benefit of his Church.

“All things were created by him and for him.” “This world,” observes Dr. Griffin, of America, “was erected for a theatre on which Christ might make an exhibition of the divine perfections in redeeming his Church; and this being its design, the work of erecting it was, of course, assigned to him, for whose use it was intended. The whole plan of the world, including every event from the beginning to the final judgment, was involved in the plan of redemption.

“By Christ and for Christ the earth is also governed. Having erected this theatre for the exhibition of redeeming grace, he took the management of it into his own hands, and put it to the use for which it was intended. He early established a Church upon it, and in the character of Mediator took into his hands its universal government. Made head over all things to the Church, he has marched down the track of ages, holding the north in his right hand and the south in his left,

with his eye immoveably fixed upon this single cause, and forcing all nations and events to pay tribute to it. In the history of his government which the Holy Ghost has sketched, we trace his dealings with nations and individuals for many ages, and view his providence under a column of light which discloses its tendency and object. Here we discover his hand employed behind the scene, in directing the affairs of many inferior nations, and especially of the four great empires of antiquity, with pointed reference to his Church. Looking through the glass of prophecy, we discover that throne which Ezekiel saw in his vision, rolling on the wheels of providence down the descent of time to the end of the world, prostrating every interest raised against his Church, and overturning it to prepare the way for the full establishment of his kingdom upon earth. The revolutions of empires; rebellions and wars; the councils of Kings and the debates of Senates; are all pressed into his service. Bibles, sacraments, sabbaths; [the preaching of the gospel] and the effusion of the Spirit have no other object. Seed-time and harvest, famine and pestilence, tempests, volcanoes and earthquakes, are all made to advance his interest." "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the Church." He is appointed head over all things *to the Church*.

But let us now consider, a little more particularly, THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST, IN HEAVEN, ACTS FOR THE WELFARE OF THE MEMBERS OF HIS CHURCH ON EARTH.

In consequence of Christ's presence in heaven, believers may assure themselves of the acceptance both of their persons and services. "He is able to

save them to the uttermost who come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Of the particular mode of Christ's intercession we may not be able to form precise ideas. So much as this, however, seems to be clear, that the Mediator signifies to the Father his pleasure that certain persons should receive such and such blessings. It is not necessary for us to know in what way such intimations of the Saviour's desires are expressed, nor how far Christ's interceding for his people now that he is at the right hand of God, resembles his supplicating the Father on their behalf when he was upon the earth. It may suffice us to know that the Mediator has desires and purposes for the good of his Church, that the Father is perfectly acquainted with those desires and purposes, and that he never fails to accomplish them.

Although on this subject, as on every other relative to things unseen, we must content ourselves with very imperfect conceptions, there are certain *illustrations* which may be profitably used, some being drawn from civil affairs, and some from sacred.

Let us picture to ourselves a poor man exposed to many dangers and difficulties, and who, moreover, has been far from manifesting that cordial and constant attachment to his Prince which was justly expected from him. This man would be in a forlorn and deplorable condition were it not that at Court a distinguished personage lives who is allied both to the Prince and to the peasant himself, and who, with uncommon condescension, has undertaken to act as his Patron and Friend.

Poor, unworthy, and helpless like that peasant is every one of us; and most kindly and seasonably has Christ undertaken the Office of PATRON on our behalf. "If any man sin," saith the Apostle John, "we have an Advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous." The word translated

Advocate denotes a person, who was called by the Romans a *Patron*, and whose business it was to advise, protect, and intercede for those whose cause he undertook.

The word was also used to designate the Agent of one of the Roman Provinces, (an office corresponding to that of Consul or Ambassador in modern times,) whose office it was to take care of the interests of that province; and who, in order to accomplish this object, took up his abode at Rome the seat of government, interceding, from time to time, with the Emperor on behalf of the people. And thus is Christ, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, promoting the welfare of this rebellious province of the universe of God.

THE ULTIMATE DESIGN OF CHRIST'S INTER-CESSION, doubtless coincides with that which pervades every part of his mediatorial work.

Christ's acting as our advocate with the Father does not imply reluctance on the part of the Father to bestow blessings on us; its object is that the blessings we receive may come to us in a way suited to our character as rebellious and unworthy creatures, and suited to the character of God as a holy and righteous being. Thus, while God's goodness is manifested in the bestowment of the most valuable favours, the honour of his holiness is maintained by those favours coming to us, not directly, as if they were given for our sakes, but through the medium and for the sake of Him with whom the Father is well pleased. Of this we remind ourselves and others by the frequent use, in prayer, of that humble but prevalent plea, "For the sake of Jesus Christ." And thus, in the advocacy of Christ as in other branches of the economy of redemption, two united objects are secured, *viz.* God's glory and man's good.

But another source of illustration, of a highly interesting character, is found in the official services of THE JEWISH HIGH PRIEST; who on one

day in the year entered into the most holy place of the tabernacle, on behalf of the people.

He first offered sacrifice for his own sins; then, having taken a censer of burning coals from the altar, and his hands being full of sweet incense, he entered within the veil, putting the incense upon the fire in the censer, that the cloud of the incense might cover the mercy-seat, "that he might not die." He then took some of the blood of the slaughtered animal, and sprinkled therewith the east side of the mercy-seat, and the floor of the sanctuary before the mercy-seat.

Having done this on his own behalf, he went through the same ceremonies on behalf of the people.

The High Priest while so employed wore a breast-plate of costly materials and of beautiful workmanship, containing in the centre two precious stones, on which the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraved.

These circumstances, omitting more minute particulars, are full of meaning. They were to the Jews "a shadow of good things to come," and, by the outward images they present, are calculated to assist our conceptions of those spiritual truths which, without such help, it would be difficult to grasp.

The High Priest's bearing on his breast, while he officiated, the names of the twelve tribes, is a pleasing emblem of the affectionate remembrance of all his redeemed people which Jesus our High Priest perpetually retains. He is in the presence of God "for us." He never loses sight either of his Church as a body, or of any individual member of it. He bears their names on his heart.

The circumstance of the sacrifice being offered previously to the Priest's entering into the most holy place, reminds us of the necessity there was that he who was to become our Advocate with the Father, should first be the propitiation for our sins;

while the High Priest's carrying the blood of the sacrifice into the most holy place, and sprinkling it on the propitiatory, also points out the connexion which subsists between the atonement of Christ offered on earth, and his intercession in heaven.

The cloud of odoriferous incense which filled the sanctuary, denotes the acceptance of the sacrifice, the acceptance of him who offered it, and of all on whose behalf it was offered and is pleaded. Not so grateful to the outward sense was the fragrancy of the incense, as is acceptable and well pleasing to God the work of Christ on behalf of all "who come to God by him."

Thus, "Christ having become a High Priest of good things to come, through a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands; not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, hath entered once for all into the most holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." "For Christ hath not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

We shall in the next place notice some of those BENEFITS WHICH RESULT to the members of the Christian Church on earth, FROM THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN HEAVEN on their behalf.

A leading design of the Apostle Paul, in the text and the adjoining clauses, appears to be to set forth THE SECURITY OF ALL WHO BELIEVE IN JESUS. They are *secure from all their enemies*; inasmuch as they are the objects of the love of Christ, from which nothing shall separate them. And they are also *secure from condemnation* on the part of God, because they have hold of that golden chain of redemption of which Christ's appearance in heaven for them is the crowning link. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Shall God who justifieth?—Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ that died, yea, rather that

is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?

The scene to which we are introduced in this triumphant passage is the tribunal of God, before which all must, one day, appear. Can any charge be brought against the elect of God? Yes, very many charges. Before their conversion to God they were daily sinning with a high hand; and ever since that time not a day has passed in which they have not come short of the glory of God. But can any such charge be made out against them as to procure their condemnation and punishment? No, by no means, and that for several reasons.

First: *The Judge himself acquits them.* It is God that justifieth; and he who justifies them, of course will not condemn them.

Secondly: *Christ died for them.* It is true that, considered in themselves, they were deserving of condemnation and liable to punishment. But Christ has suffered in their stead and they therefore are free.

Again: *Christ* who died for them *rose again*, and his rising again was a proof that his atoning death was accepted by God, and that all should be pardoned who confided therein. The *death* of Christ constituted a sufficient reason, in the sight of God, for absolving the penitent believing sinner from guilt; the *resurrection* of Christ confirms the faith of the believer in the efficacy of that death.

Once more: *Christ is even at the right hand of God*, and is there acting for us. Christ's presence in heaven in that very nature in which he expiated the guilt of man, is a perpetual and prevailing plea for the justification of all believers. As the continuance in being of things created is equivalent to a constantly repeated act of creating power, so the continual presence of the Redeemer in heaven is equivalent to a perpetual act of justifying grace. He is thus our Patron or Advocate with the Father; and if he plead our cause, it matters nothing who takes part against us. In his person, his character, and his

work, he is perfectly acceptable to the Father, and his kind purposes for his people always exactly correspond with those of the Father, since he and the Father are one.

“ If then, 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.”

It would conduce greatly to the strengthening of our faith, were we more steadily and habitually to fix the eye of the mind on the Mediator at the right hand of God. Accustom yourself, my Christian friend, to follow the Saviour, in thought, from the Cross to the Throne, and there with delight to behold him as your High Priest, bearing your name on his breast-plate, and appearing in the presence of God for you.

THE ACCEPTANCE OF OUR PRAYERS is another benefit we derive from the intercession of Christ.

Our prayers are like ourselves, full of imperfection and sin; and the consciousness of this is of itself calculated to make us fear that they will be rather prejudicial than advantageous to us. But sinful as we are, and sinful as our prayers are, we are exhorted to “ come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need;” and the inducement proposed for this confiding approach to the throne of mercy is the contemplation of our great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. There are two things relative to his station there which are fitted to embolden us in prayer; one is, the undoubted *prevalence of his intercession*, on account of his being a High Priest so great and glorious, even the Son of God, and occupying so exalted a station, having passed into the Heavens; and the other is, his *sympathy* and compassion for his distressed and tempted friends on earth. “ For we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmi-

ties ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace."

The acceptance of the prayers of believers for the sake of Christ, their Friend and Advocate on high, appears to be symbolically represented in the Apocalypse by that "other angel," (distinct from all the rest,) who came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer ; and there was given unto him much incense that he might offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar that was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, from the hand of the angel, together with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God ; seeming thereby emblematically to signify how grateful to God those prayers are which ascend to him attended with the virtue of the sacrifice which Jesus offered.

This consolatory truth was declared without a metaphor by the Saviour, when he said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

The exalted state of Christ in heaven is, moreover, beneficial to his people on earth as furnishing them with A POWERFUL INDUCEMENT TO CULTIVATE A SPIRITUAL, HOLY, AND HEAVENLY TEMPER OF MIND.

With this view the Apostle Paul presented the subject to the contemplation of the saints at Colosse, saying, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

Many circumstances concur to render the glorified state of Jesus both an attractive and an edifying subject of contemplation. The love which the Christian feels for his Saviour makes it delightful to

think of the merited honour and perfect happiness which Christ enjoys. The personal concern which the believer has in the Redeemer's glory, and the connexion which the Saviour's exaltation has with the prosperity of the Church at large, are interesting considerations to the Christian mind. The subject also is one in which faith is assisted by sense; for although Jesus is not now visible *to us*, we know that he is *visible in heaven*; and the thought that Christ in our nature is actually there, is less difficult to grasp than those ideas respecting heaven which are altogether abstract and spiritual.

The more a man abounds in contemplation on the glory of Christ in heaven, the more eager will be his pursuit of those things which are connected with that happy world, and which lead thither; and the more anxious will he be to shun whatever might either endanger his arrival in heaven, or take off his attention from it. Hence, to such a man sin will be odious, worldly pleasures insipid, mere outward observances in religion comparatively unimportant; but the word of God, the house of God, and whatever else is calculated to enlarge his conceptions of Christ, to encourage his faith in him and to inflame his love to him, will be most grateful and satisfactory. And thus he will not be "carnally minded which is death, but spiritually minded which is life and peace."

Here let us *pause* a moment, in order to inquire how far we have hitherto realized or sought to realize the benefits which have already been specified as resulting from the state and office of Christ in Heaven.

Security from all enemies was mentioned as one of those benefits. But if you are living in unbelief, this benefit is not yours. You are exposed, unprotected, to the fiery darts of the wicked one; and from the corruption of your own heart, which of itself is enough to effect your ruin, you have no

one to rescue you. Fly then, without delay, to him who is able to save.

It was also proved from the word of God that in consequence of Christ's intercession, *believers are freed from condemnation*. Do you hope to be justified before God? If so, on what is your expectation grounded? Be assured that by works of law no man living can be justified. If you have not Jesus Christ the righteous one as your advocate with the Father, a sentence of condemnation must inevitably be pronounced against you, and you will be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord."

The acceptance of the prayers of the pious was stated to be another benefit flowing from the intercession of Christ. But if you are either living in neglect of prayer, or are expecting that your desires shall be granted for your own goodness' sake, you have neither part nor lot in this matter.

Lastly: Great advantage was stated to accrue from the *contemplation of Christ's exalted state*. Are you totally unused to such contemplations, and without any relish for them? How can you then imagine that you are "risen with Christ," whilst you are in no degree seeking "those things which are above?" and what reason have you to conclude that you shall hereafter appear with him in glory, whilst conscious that the contemplation of his glory has no attractions for you? You are not made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

But probably even among real Christians there are few, if any, who do not stand convicted of some degree of remissness and carnality. Sad cause has each of us to exclaim, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust." Let our prayer be, "Quicken thou me according to thy word."

There remains to be considered another benefit

of Christ's intercession, of unspeakable value; I mean THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

“I will pray the Father,” said Jesus to his disciples, “and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the Father will send in my name; he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you. He shall testify of me. He shall glorify me. And he shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.”

On the day of Pentecost this promise began to be fulfilled, in conjunction with the prophecy which had been uttered by David, concerning the Messiah, ages before, in the lxviiith Psalm, as thus quoted in the Epistle to the Ephesians: “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” The prophet, in allusion to the triumphs of conquerors, represents the Messiah, after victory obtained over all his enemies, ascending in grandeur and triumph to glory, leading in chains whatever had opposed the honour of God and the happiness of his Church. And as great generals and princes used to scatter largesses among the people on days of triumph; so our Lord Jesus, having spoiled principalities and powers, and having received the Spirit from the Father in consequence of his obedience unto death, distributed the gifts and graces of the Spirit in rich abundance, among rebellious men, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

Some of the donations bestowed on the day of Pentecost were of *temporary* continuance. Miracles were necessary in the first age of the Church to give outward proof of the divine origin of the Gospel. This purpose having been answered, miracles ceased. But other gifts of the Spirit are

both always needed, and are always granted to all believers. "He shall abide with you," said Christ, "for ever."

The commencement of true religion in the heart is the work of the Holy Spirit. "A new heart will I give you," said God, by the prophet, "and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." It was also written in the prophecy of Isaiah, "And they shall be all taught of God." "Every one therefore," said Christ, "who hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me." "Except a man be born again," said Jesus to Nicodemus, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, 'Ye must be born again.'" "Ye are not in the flesh," said Paul, (Rom. viii. 9.) "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."

The Holy Spirit, it may be remarked, is called the Spirit of Christ, not merely on account of the essential union which subsists between the Son and the Holy Spirit, but because the right of sending the Spirit belongs to Christ as the glorified Mediator. It is his office; and every instance of genuine conversion is the work of that Spirit whom Christ has sent.

Assistance in religious duties is afforded by the Spirit. *Help in prayer* is particularly mentioned as granted by him. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself 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."

It was before observed that the full meaning of the word rendered *intercede* is, acting for another, a comprehensive idea which includes both the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit. Each, though in a distinct way, acts for the benefit of the believer. In what way Christ acts for the good of his people, has been already stated. In what way the Spirit acts for their good we are now considering. He acts for their good while they are engaged in prayer, by exciting such desires in their hearts as shall be beneficial to themselves and acceptable to God.

The continued and progressive holiness of the believer is also attributable to the same cause. Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, are "the fruits of the Spirit." These dispositions are formed in the persons who "live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit." Walking in the Spirit, they do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. The same truth, though without a verbal reference to the Spirit, is stated by our Lord in the parable of the Vine and Branches; in which he represents his people to be as dependant on him for those spiritual communications out of which holy fruits grow, as the branch is dependant on the stem and root. These communications are the graces of the Spirit, granted to Christians by reason of their union to Christ by faith. "Without me," said Christ, "ye can do nothing." "I can do all things," said Paul, "through Christ who strengtheneth me." The same Apostle, writing to the Thesalonians, says, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Truth believed is the instrument of sanctification, and the Spirit is the Agent.

Consolation and Joy are the effect of the Spirit's gracious influence.

"Because ye are Sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying.

“Abba, Father.” “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” The Thessalonian believers “received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.” “We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness, by faith.” The Christians at Ephesus, “after that they believed, were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.” These Christians were assured of their personal interest in the eternal inheritance, by that faith and love, holiness and joy, which the Spirit had wrought in them. This work of the Spirit in their hearts was the seal which marked them as belonging to God; it was also the earnest of heaven, inasmuch as, being a part of heaven, it furnished a pledge of the rest.

How unspeakably important then is the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is next in value to the gift of the Saviour; or rather, as we have seen, it is a part of that gift. Who then can estimate the amount of obligation which we owe to the Father for the gift of the Son, or to the Son for giving himself a ransom for us, or to the Holy Spirit for condescending to take up his abode with us!

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!

May I now suppose that among my hearers there is some one disposed to exclaim, “O that I knew where I might find him! O that I could consider myself authorised to expect that blessed influence!”

Let me tell you, my friend, that such a desire, if real, fervent, abiding, and practical in its effects, is inseparably connected with the enjoyment of the blessing.

Be importunate in seeking the Spirit by *prayer*. “Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall

find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Our Lord, whose words these are, further encourages our application to the throne of grace for this favour, by assuring us that God is as ready to grant it as a parent is ready to do good to his offspring. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

We must also cherish an habitual feeling of *dependance* on the Spirit's aid. When we engage in prayer, or in any other duty, we should enter on it with a deliberate and solemn recollection of our need of the Spirit. We should constantly remember both our own weakness and insufficiency without such help, and the certainty that it will be granted if duly sought.

It is, moreover, of vast importance to *avoid whatever would offend* this heavenly guest.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," by unholy tempers, or by sinful practices, lest you tempt him, in any measure, to withdraw his gracious presence. Let both your prayer and your deportment speak the language of David in the 51st Psalm; "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Grant me the joy of thy Salvation, and uphold me by thy free Spirit."

LECTURE XX.

Oct. 24, 1824.

THE ENTRANCE OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH INTO THE MIND.

JOHN viii. 32.

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

THE object of the last five discourses was to exhibit "The Truth." We contemplated the principal things which are revealed in the Holy Writings relative to the nature and attributes of God; and to the person, character, death, and present state and office of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Such we conceive to be an outline of the essential doctrines of the Bible. And if Christianity were merely a matter of speculation, our inquiries might stop at this point. But it is quite otherwise. The Gospel is a thing not so much to be looked at as to be used. In the next division of our subject, therefore, to consist of four discourses, we are to consider religious truth as transferred from the Bible into the heart. In other words, we are to contemplate truth as embodied in the character, influencing the life, and affecting the state of man.

On the present occasion, our attention is to be directed to THE ENTRANCE OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE INTO THE MIND, and to the important change of character which is thereby effected.

There are two avenues to the soul, the eye and the ear: sometimes truth enters by the one, and sometimes by the other.

By the reading of the word of God, without any other outward help, some persons have been brought to know "the truth as it is in Jesus." Nor can this be deemed strange, when it is recollected that the Apostle Paul declares "the Holy Scriptures," (even of the old Testament only,) to be "able to make a man wise unto Salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Much more must the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament together be adequate to this purpose.

But probably the greater number of Christians have received the first rudiments and most powerful impressions of religious truth, through the medium of the ear. In some cases the voice of a parent, in others that of the preacher, has been the means employed. "Faith has come by hearing."

In different instances of regeneration a great variety is observable as to the *particular kind of truth* which first affects the mind. In some cases a *terrific doctrine* leads the way. The man hears the solemn words, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after death the judgment. He that believeth not shall be damned." The sound rings in his ear by day, and breaks his slumber by night. His sins rise up before him like a host of armed men, and the abyss of destruction yawns at his feet. With great agitation, he cries, "What shall I do to be saved?"

In other cases, the truth which first gains a lodgment in the soul is of a *mild and attractive character*. The man hears of the compassion of the Almighty Father to a rebellious race, and of the love of that Saviour who died for his enemies; and his heart is won. The weapons of rebellion drop from his hands, and the tear of penitential sorrow falls from his eye. "The goodness of God has led him to repentance."

There are instances again, in which a *terrific* and an *attractive* truth enter the mind in company, and

exert their respective influences so equally that it is difficult to know which of the two predominates. The man clearly sees his danger; but he sees as clearly the way of escape. He looks into his own heart and is alarmed; but anon, he looks at the gospel, and is comforted.

There is also considerable difference with regard to the *extent of the knowledge* which new converts acquire in the early stages of their religious life. There are those who with such rapidity "come to the knowledge of the Son of God," that they seem almost at once to rise "to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." But others, though really born again, continue for a long time in the state of "Children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine."

Nor is there less variety in the *degree of impression* which divine truth at first makes on the heart. There have been cases in which, at the very first moment the truth was understood, the affections of sorrow or joy, of fear or hope, were so strong, that the corporeal system was ready to sink under the pressure. In such cases, the first emotions are more lively than those which are commonly felt afterwards. There are other cases in which the contrary order obtains. The first impressions were so faint that the time of their commencement could not with certainty be ascertained. But at almost every successive season in which divine truth was brought to the mind, a more lively emotion than before was the result; till at length, the abiding impression was fully equal in strength to that which was felt by the person whose heart was, in the first instance, more suddenly and powerfully affected. In the one case the light of truth entered the mind like the sun emerging from a total eclipse, or like a flash of lightning in the gloom of the night; in the other case, the progress of knowledge and feeling was like the gradual increase of light and heat in a summer morning. "The path of the just is as the

shining light shining more and more unto the perfect day." The gradual formation of the Christian character is also compared to the growth of plants: "There is first the blade, then the ear, and afterward the full corn in the ear." In every case there is doubtless a moment known to God in which divine truth first effectually reaches the heart; but there are numerous instances in which that moment cannot be ascertained by man.

The events of human life are greatly instrumental in strengthening good impressions. It often happens that they who abound in wealth, honours, flatterers, and worldly enjoyments, see no peculiar excellency in religion, at least in its reference to themselves. But let a man be deprived of health, of ease, of property, or of a beloved relative; and there is some reason to hope that the veil which before prevented his seeing his real condition will be removed. He finds that there is a necessity for his possessing some source of satisfaction which shall be free from the casualties to which all earthly good is liable. If, then, at such a juncture, he hear of God as the only sufficient portion of the soul, and as accessible even to sinful man through Jesus Christ, he listens with an eagerness of attention to which formerly he was a stranger. If sickness visit him, he is thereby made to feel that he is a dying creature. Thinking of death, he thinks also of the judgment which follows death; and thus he is led to inquire whether he is prepared for these great events; and if not prepared, how such preparation may be obtained. And thus that gospel which, when in health, he would have heard with indifference, now becomes to him "glad tidings of great joy." Some persons, it is true, have been "led unto the way of peace" in a season of health and prosperity; but thousands have had occasion to say, "It has been good for me that I have been afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word."

Such is a general view of the MEANS by which, and the *manner* in which, the truth of God enters the mind and heart of man. We shall next consider the AGENT by whose energy the effect is produced.

All good is derived from God, and particularly spiritual and eternal good. The Almighty is, in every view, "the God of Salvation." We have seen that the *design* of saving man originated in his love and wisdom. The *application* of the blessings of salvation to individuals, is equally his work. THE SPIRIT OF GOD is the Agent in that great and happy change of which I now speak.

The words of our Saviour addressed to Nicodemus, related in the 3rd chapter of John, deserve particular attention. The fifth, sixth, and eighth verses, may be selected as referring expressly to the efficient cause of regeneration. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Two words are here used in reference to the *cause* of regeneration, *Water* and the *Spirit*. Are we then to consider these as *joint causes* of this change of character? By no means; as a little attention to the whole passage will show.

In the verses now under examination, the cause of the new birth is stated three separate times; in all three the Spirit is mentioned, but in one only is the term *Water* introduced. In two of those three instances, the Spirit alone is specified as the cause; whereas water is not once mentioned by itself; and only once conjointly with the Spirit. Hence we cannot suppose our Lord to mean that the applica-

tion of water in baptism is the cause of the change of which he treats. He does in fact plainly declare that the author of regeneration is the *Spirit*. The state of the case we understand to be this: The Spirit is the *cause* of regeneration, and Water the *symbol* of it.

Very similar we apprehend to be the meaning of a text in Paul's Epistle to Titus (iii. 5.) where we read of "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The *renewing* of the Holy Ghost is the phrase which describes the inward change; the *washing* is nothing more than the outward visible representation of that change.

In both these texts the Holy Spirit is declared to be the Agent.

The same truth is stated in the first chapter of the gospel by John (12 and 13,) "As many as received (Christ), to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

The present condition of human nature is indicated by the term *flesh*. Man, indeed, consists of two parts, flesh and spirit; but so groveling, carnal, and worldly are the desires and purposes of mankind; so bent are they on what is earthly, and so greatly alienated from things which are spiritual and heavenly, that the very *mind* of man is described by a term borrowed from his corporeal structure. He is said to have a "carnal mind;" and his entire character is summed up in the one word, "flesh."

There is in the heart of man an unwillingness to give that degree of attention to divine truth which is necessary, in order duly to comprehend and use it; and there is also a dislike of that truth so far as it is known. These obstacles in the way of the knowledge of salvation, the Spirit of God, by his invisible but powerful influence, removes.

The happy subject of that influence becomes willing not only to hear and read about religion, but to *think* of it; and that not so much in reference to the more speculative points, as to those which relate to his own character, state, and destiny, and to that Saviour in whose mediation he finds relief for all his anxieties, fears, and wants.

On these topics further remarks will occur when we come to consider the effects of regeneration.

Among the very many texts which represent a cordial reception of religious truth and the change thereby produced, as the consequence of divine agency, the following may be quoted in addition to those already mentioned. It is said of Lydia, that "the Lord opened her heart, so that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul." Nor is there any reason to regard this as an extraordinary case.

The Apostle Paul expressly declares to the believers at Corinth, that the whole success of his ministry and that of Apollos was the effect of God's blessing. "I have planted," said he, "and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase; so then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God which giveth the increase."

So, in reference to the early days of the gospel, it is said that "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." They were added to the Church on account of their faith in Christ; their faith in Christ came by hearing of Christ in the preaching of the Apostles; but the efficient cause of their so hearing of him as to believe in him was a divine influence on their minds. It was therefore, in reality, **THE LORD** who added them to the Church.

In like manner the Apostle James says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that

we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

Of the MODE of the Spirit's operation on the human mind, we know nothing. Yet there is not the least difficulty in supposing such operation possible. He who formed the mind, surely has access to it; and he in whose hand all events are, can undoubtedly so control the circumstances of a man's life as that, at any given time, truth shall appear to him with the utmost advantage in point of evidence, excellence, and suitableness. He who made man holy at first, can restore him to holiness. He who created man, can renew him in the spirit of his mind. The omnipotence of God, illustrated as it is by his past operations, removes every difficulty which might otherwise envelop the subject; and altogether supersedes the necessity of such a question as Nicodemus asked in reference to it, "*How* can these things be?"

We may observe, however, with regard to the manner in which regeneration takes place, that it is *in perfect accordance with the constitution of the human mind.*

Man is a voluntary agent. He is indeed inclined to evil, and is liable to be tempted to evil, and by temptation his inclination to what is wrong may be strengthened. Yet he is free from compulsion and restraint. Whenever he commits sin, either spontaneously, or as the result of temptation, he so acts because his will is inclined to evil.

Man is also susceptible of a holy influence, by which he may be led to what is good. But in this case, as in the other, no compulsion opposed to his inclination is employed. The subject of regenerating grace is not dragged to duty like a refractory child struggling to be released. He is sweetly drawn to it by the unfelt cords of love. The people of God "are made willing in the day of his power."

Man is, moreover, actuated by motives. The will follows the understanding. The perceptions of good or evil which the mind forms, become motives which influence the will to choose or refuse. While the moral state of the soul is corrupt, the understanding is darkened with regard to spiritual things. That appears to be good which is really evil, and that appears to be evil which is really good. This does not exempt the individual from guilt. The will and the judgment have a reciprocal influence on each other. Man's undue love of self and excessive attachment to worldly pleasure, predispose his judgment in favour of *false* good and against what is really good. This corrupt inclination is manifestly criminal. In regeneration all this is rectified. Good and evil now appear to be what they really are. The perceptions of the understanding are now correct; and, consequently, the motives by which the will is biassed are reasonable and good.

“ This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes;” yet at the same time we see that it is in strict conformity with the nature of man. The effect of regeneration is to make a man think, feel, and act, with regard to religion, *in a strictly reasonable manner*. It does indeed sometimes happen that from the time when this change in the character takes place, the man is branded by his former associates with the name of a *madman*; but the fact is just the reverse. He was, in reference to spiritual and eternal realities, a madman formerly; and has just begun to be rational and wise.

Let us now contemplate, somewhat more particularly, THE NATURE OF THAT CHANGE IN THE CHARACTER WHICH IS PRODUCED BY THE ENTRANCE OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH INTO THE MIND.

The *greatness* of the change is denoted by the phrases used in the Scripture to describe it. It is

called, "the renewing of the mind;" the having "a new heart;" being "created anew;" and being "born again." These expressions are the strongest imaginable; and doubtless denote that the change which they describe is thorough and entire.

The effect of an experimental knowledge of the truth is represented by our Lord in the text, under the idea of EXEMPTION FROM BONDAGE. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Let us contemplate the change in question under this aspect. Let us consider the knowledge of truth as imparting freedom, in reference to the *understanding*, the *affections*, and the *conduct*. Some hints on these topics have already been given; and in the next three discourses we shall have occasion to investigate the character of the Christian more at large. A few leading circumstances are all that it will be necessary now to mention.

1. Knowledge of the truth imparts FREEDOM TO THE UNDERSTANDING; freedom from ignorance and from error.

The man is set *free from ignorance*; he is brought "out of darkness into God's marvellous light."

The full effect of this change is best seen in the case of a converted Heathen. Formerly, all his thoughts about God and eternity were like objects dimly visible in the gloom of night. Now he is introduced into a glorious day. His Creator, his Saviour, his heavenly home, and the road which leads thither, are distinctly seen.

But a change equally important, though less observable, takes place even in persons educated religiously. They have now clear and vivid conceptions of things which before they saw very obscurely. This is especially the case with regard to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. Almost every fact respecting salvation which they now know, they perhaps knew before, in a certain

sense ; but their previous knowledge scarcely deserved the name. Since they became "Light in the Lord," they have perceived a beauty, glory, and appropriateness in the gospel, of which they had often *heard* before, but never *saw*. Formerly, "a veil was upon their heart;" but since they have "turned to the Lord," the veil has been taken away. The Spirit of the Lord is in them, and "there is liberty." They "all with open face, behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord." "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The knowledge which the Christian possesses is also of eminent use in *delivering and preserving him from error*.

There are certain important truths which are firmly riveted in the believer's mind, and which are in religion what axioms are in science. They are land-marks to him in all the excursions which his mind takes in the wide regions of thought. They are such as these: Man is a corrupt and guilty creature, indebted to God for all good, either on earth or in heaven. God is omniscient, almighty, of inconceivable kindness, but at the same time of strict justice; and in all his doings acts according to unerring rectitude and wisdom. Yet the reasons of his procedure are often unfathomable by man. Christ is the medium of all good to man. Without Christ there is neither holiness nor happiness. In Christ there is every blessing which the soul of man can need. It is man's duty and interest to yield constant obedience to the will of God.

These principles are so prominent in the gospel, that no man can for a moment lose sight of them "who lives by faith on the Son of God;" and no man who keeps them in sight can either go far, or continue long, astray.

And thus the knowledge of the truth makes a man free from ignorance and error.

2. The truth makes men FREE FROM EVIL AFFECTIONS AND DESIRES.

Affections may be evil, either as being fixed on bad objects, or as being unduly excited by such as are in themselves innocent. It may be well for us to confine our attention at present chiefly to the latter, as the former will necessarily be noticed when we come to consider evil conduct.

In the present condition of human nature there are many sources of gratification which, though not spiritual, are not unlawful. Affections towards such pleasures become sinful when they rise to excess; and in this particular the corrupt state of the human heart, until it is renewed, very strikingly appears.

“Love not the world,” saith John, (1 John ii. 15.) “neither the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

This excessive love of the world is manifested by extreme eagerness in the pursuit of worldly things. The attention is so engrossed by what is earthly, that a very inadequate portion of time is devoted to matters of the highest importance. “What shall I eat?” “What shall I drink?” and “Wherewithal shall I be clothed?” are the sort of questions which chiefly occupy the mind. Worldly pleasures are practically regarded as the chief good; and not unfrequently this eagerness after the world leads to the use of unlawful means for acquiring the desired object. “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.”

The same temper is also frequently shown by an extreme reluctance to part with earthly good, or

to endure any privations for the sake of spiritual designs. The honour of God and the eternal happiness of mankind, even if admitted by such persons to be good objects, are considerations which exert no influence on the desires and purposes of the heart. Hence people of this character, when induced by persuasion or the force of example to give a portion of their property to the cause of God, are in the habit of placing every such item of expenditure in the same account with the sums paid to the collectors of taxes; instead of giving God humble and hearty thanks, for granting them the opportunity and the means of contributing towards the promotion of interests which are as durable as eternity and as precious as the soul of man.

But in these respects a happy revolution has taken place in the mind since the truth of God found admittance into it. "Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." In that text three important facts are expressed or implied, *viz.* That every Christian is born of God; That every one born of God possesses Faith; and that every one possessed of Faith overcomes the world. Truth believed is the instrument of effecting this happy revolution in the soul. Our estimation of the value of things greatly depends on comparison. While the gaudy and glittering trifles of time occupy the whole sphere of vision, they are deemed of superlative worth; but faith opens before the view a landscape filled with objects so incomparably superior in real excellency, in durability, and in the power of imparting happiness, that the things of time have "no longer any glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth."

Besides this, faith in the testimony of God assures us that an undue regard to this world would inevitably prevent us from attaining the happiness of the world to come; and with this conviction

fixed in the mind we cannot hesitate as to the choice to be made.

The difference between the past and present state of the Christian's mind is set forth in very plain terms by the Apostle Paul, (Rom. viii. 5.) "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." Formerly, the man loved only the things of the flesh; now he loves chiefly the things of the Spirit. That holy Being, who has revealed to mankind in his written word "the things of the Spirit," has so renovated the believer's mind that he now knows and approves the whole counsel of God respecting man's salvation. The truth of the gospel is satisfactory and satisfying to his soul. The divine character and conduct, as made known therein, afford him ineffable delight. He is gratified to observe that man is saved in a way befitting the rectitude of the administration of God; and he is also pleased to meditate on the encouragement which is held out to an unworthy creature, such as he feels himself to be. To these truths he returns again and again from the accusations of conscience and the agitations of life, as to his resting place and home.

While the love of the world dwelt in his heart, the love of God could not have place, since these two principles are wholly irreconcilable with each other. But now the love of God is predominant within him. He sees that God is love. He enjoys the hope of the divine favour. And being reconciled to God by the death of his Son, he can contemplate the character of the Almighty without dread and without prejudice. So contemplating it, he sees that God is indeed the best as well as the greatest of beings; that he is supremely excellent, and worthy of his best affections.

This love to God excited by the truth of God, has driven from him that love of the world which once held him in bondage; and thus the knowledge

of the truth has made him free from evil affections and desires.

3. Knowledge of the truth sets men FREE FROM THE TYRANNY OF VICIOUS HABITS.

Our Lord appears to have a direct reference to this topic in the text. The Jews were indignant to hear the promise of freedom, because they boasted of having always been free. But Jesus answered them, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." They were living in the practice of sin, and therefore they were the servants of sin; nor from that servitude would any thing rescue them but a cordial reception of the truth and a persevering regard to it. "If ye continue in my word," said our Saviour, "then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

This allusion to bondage gives a very just and affecting view of the state of a man who lives in sin. There is indeed one respect in which the metaphor is not meant to apply. A slave is held by bonds which he would gladly break, if he could. The servant of sin, on the contrary, is held by bonds from which he has no sincere and prevailing desire to be delivered. Though he is "led captive by Satan at his will," he has no wish to throw off the yoke. Yet, slavery, *as a state of servile subjection*, is a most fit emblem of the condition of a sinner. There is no degradation so truly humiliating as that of being the servant of vicious habits. The chains which outward force puts on a man affect not necessarily his real dignity. Many a high-born and noble-minded Prince has been made a captive; but so long as he retained his princely character, his servitude was no bar in the way of his being honoured by all who knew his worth. But if a man should ask to be allowed to wear chains and to perform the most menial offices, this would indicate a low and mean temper. Yet the

meanness of "serving divers lusts and pleasures" is far greater.

And it is happiness, "falsely so called," which a man enjoys in a life of sin. There are short intervals of pleasure, but the prevailing state is one of discomfort and corroding care. Unless a man can banish from his mind, (a task not easily or often achieved) all remembrance of God, of duty, and of future retribution, he will be sad in the midst of mirth. "The way of transgressors is hard."

But he in whose heart the truth of God has found an abiding place is a slave no longer. If before he was a drunkard, he is now sober. If before he was a debauchee, he is now chaste. "Ye were the servants of sin," said Paul, to the Christians at Rome, "but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you," or rather, "to which ye were delivered." In those words the power of evangelical truth in subduing sin is described by a very expressive metaphor. The doctrines of the gospel are represented as a mould into which the soul, on believing the gospel, is cast, and to which it is made to correspond, line for line, as the melted metal answers to the mould in which it took its form. *What the Gospel is, therefore, such is the man*, who from the heart believes and obeys the gospel. If the gospel be "pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy and good fruits," so is the true Christian. Faith in Christ has effected an entire change of character.

It remains to be observed that this transformation is *progressive*, and is *not perfected during the present life*.

A very great and happy change is produced as soon as ever the Spirit of God begins to work on the human soul. But, from that time till death, believers in Christ are called on to press forward after higher attainments and fresh victories.

Their state on earth is a warfare. Their ene-

mies, though kept in subjection, are not slain. There is "the law in the members," as well "as the law of the mind." The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." The Christian is not perfect. He sins every day. Yet this promise is fulfilled in him, "Sin shall *not have dominion* over you;" and when he quits this body of sin and death his sanctification is perfected.

Some important REFLECTIONS are suggested by the subject we have been considering in reference both to *Religion* and to *ourselves*.

With regard to the religion of the gospel, we are led to reflect on its *reasonableness* and on its *excellence*.

Nothing can be more agreeable to reason, than the account which the Scriptures give us of the way in which that change of character takes place, which we call *regeneration*. Two things chiefly are observable in it, the *agency of the Spirit of God*, and the *instrumentality of the truth of God*. Now, considering how corrupt human nature most plainly is, and considering at the same time how thorough a change for the better does manifestly take place in the character of many individuals, in consequence of which they who once loved and practised every kind of iniquity are now become just, and pure, and compassionate; nothing can be more consonant to sound reason than to ascribe a change, at once so great and so beneficial, to the agency of that almighty and gracious Being, from whom "every good and perfect gift" proceeds.

The doctrine of *the instrumentality of the truth* in regeneration and sanctification is not less reasonable. It is *truth*, real or supposed, natural or spiritual, which always influences the mind of man in all his pursuits. When heavenly truth comes with its proper evidence to a mind which has been rectified by heavenly influence, it brings with it such a

conviction of the guilt and folly of every pursuit which is opposed to the honour of God and the immortal interests of man, that the will, the affections, and the conduct all follow the dictates of a now enlightened judgment. "Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new."

Does not the subject lead us to admire *the excellency of religion*? We cannot take a juster view of it than to regard it as LIBERTY; a name dear to almost every human heart, either from a knowledge of the blessing it denotes, or from a sorrowful feeling occasioned by the want of it. But there is no slavery like that of sin; no liberty like that of the gospel.

" He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
 " And all are slaves besides. There's not a chain
 " That hellish foes, confederate for his harm,
 " Can wind around him, but he casts it off
 " With as much ease as Samson his green withes.
 " He is indeed a freeman; free by birth
 " Of no mean city, plann'd, or e'er the hills
 " Were built, the fountains opened, or the
 " Sea with all its roaring multitude of waves.
 " His freedom is the same in every state;
 " And no condition of this changeful life,
 " So manifold in cares; whose every day
 " Brings its own evil with it, makes it less.
 " For he has wings that neither sickness, pain,
 " Nor penury, can cripple or confine.
 " No nook so narrow but he spreads them there
 " With ease, and is at large. The oppressor holds
 " His body bound; but knows not what a range
 " His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain;
 " And that to bind him is a vain attempt,
 " Whom God delights in, and in whom he dwells."

The subject of our meditations this evening has led us to contemplate Christian liberty with regard to *character*, rather than to *state*. But it is an undoubted truth, that they who enjoy the one enjoy the other also. They who are freed from the bondage of sin are also *free from condemnation*, and are the expectants of "the glorious liberty of the

Sons of God." "For when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son unto your hearts, crying Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

The Christian (to borrow the language of an eminent writer) "is a joint heir with Christ, and the destined inhabitant of heaven. The gates of glory and of happiness are already open to receive him. All around him is peace; all before him, purity and transport. God is his Father, Christ his Redeemer, and the Spirit of truth his Sanctifier. Heaven is his eternal habitation; virtue his immortal character; and Cherubim, Seraphim, and all the children of light, are his companions for ever."

But the subject also suggests some reflexions in reference to *ourselves*. "Do I know the truth?" let each one ask himself; "Am I thereby made free?" On your knowledge of the truth your eternal welfare depends. "This is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." "The Lord Jesus will be revealed from Heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." How inexpressibly momentous then is the question, "Do I know the truth?"

Some help towards answering this inquiry may be obtained from attention to the other question just now proposed. If the truth has made us free, it follows of course that we know the truth. Let me intreat you then to examine yourselves by this test.

Are you freed from *ignorance and error* in the conceptions you form respecting the truth of the gospel? Do you cordially receive the testimony of God concerning that Saviour, who is "the way, the truth, and the life?"

Are you freed from that *love of the world* which is incompatible with the love of God? What is the prevailing bent of your mind? Is it towards folly and wickedness; or towards God, holiness, and heaven?

Are you freed from the *tyranny of sinful habits*, or are you living in the indulgence of them? Are you "yielding your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin;" or are you yielding yourselves to God? Remember, that "his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

LECTURE XXI.

Nov. 14, 1824.

THE RELIGIOUS MAN CONTEMPLATED IN THE REGARD WHICH HE HAS TO GOD AND CHRIST.

JOHN xiv. 1.

Ye believe in God, believe also in me.

THE subject which engaged our attention last was *the entrance of religious truth into the mind*. We observed that the Spirit of God makes use of evangelical doctrine as the instrument of effecting that great change in the character, which in the Scriptures is called, "being born again." The regenerated person has been made to know the truth, and the truth has set him free from ignorance and error, from evil affections, and from vicious habits.

We now proceed to examine his character rather more minutely. On the present occasion, we are to view him in THE REGARD WHICH HE HAS TO GOD AND TO CHRIST.

One of the most important dispositions of his mind, and that out of which all other pious tempers grow, is FAITH. "He believes in God." He has a firm conviction of the divine existence. All nature proves it. The existence of himself and of all things visible convinces him that there is a God. So far, however, the Christian differs not from mankind at large. With very few exceptions, all men possess this conviction in common with him.

But faith, in the complete idea of it, compre-

hends not merely a belief in the fact that God *is*, but also a belief in him *as he is*; and since there is no possibility of attaining full and accurate knowledge of him, except by attention to the revelation of himself which he has given, it follows that faith in God *as he is*, is a persuasion that he is what the Holy Scriptures declare him to be. Let us notice some of those views of God in which faith regards him.

1. FAITH IN GOD, IS BELIEF IN HIS SOVEREIGN DOMINION AND UNCONTROLLABLE POWER. The Christian is assured that "nothing is too hard for the Lord;" but that "he doeth according to his pleasure in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." He knows that the power of life and death, temporal and eternal, is in his hands; that he can secure to whomsoever he pleases, perfect and endless happiness; and that he is also able "to destroy both soul and body in hell." With such views of the divine power, the man cannot but esteem "the favour of God to be life, and his loving-kindness better than life." All creatures appear less than nothing, and vanity. The favour and the displeasure of all beings besides God, are seen to be comparatively of no account.

2. Faith in God is BELIEF IN HIS INFINITE WISDOM. The Christian is thoroughly satisfied that God can never err, either as to the designs which he has in view, or as to the means which he employs for their accomplishment. Faith in this attribute of the Almighty prevents him from saying to God, "What doest thou?" even when the divine procedure either towards others or towards himself is most unlooked-for and mysterious. All difficulties relative to the government of the Supreme Ruler, either in providence or in grace, the good man is accustomed to refer to his own ignorance.

He is well assured that, in every case, God has good and sufficient reasons for what he does; and that if it were possible for himself to take a view of the divine plan as comprehensive, exact, and unprejudiced as is in the mind of God, every part of it would appear orderly, reasonable, and admirable.

3. Faith in God, is BELIEF IN HIS JUSTICE. The Christian assents to the declaration of the Psalmist, that God is "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works;" and unites in spirit with the host of heaven, when they sing, "True and righteous, O God, are thy judgments."

This branch of faith is of unspeakable value, as it is inseparably associated with a conviction of guilt and of desert of punishment, and consequently produces humility of spirit, a temper most suitable and necessary for such a creature as man is in the presence of a holy God.

The penitent man knows that "the law of God is holy, just, and good;" as being that rule of action which the righteous Governor of the earth has enacted. He knows, moreover, that although he was in duty bound to make that law his constant rule, he has daily broken it in thought, word, and deed. Hence he feels assured that "by works of righteousness which he has done" he can have no hope of happiness. He owns that his desert is to be banished "from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Accordingly, he takes his proper station in the presence of God, that of a criminal at the bar of sovereign justice; and there he presents his petition, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

4. Faith in God is BELIEF IN HIS MERCY AND FAITHFULNESS.

Divine revelation represents the Almighty as "very pitiful and of tender mercy," not desiring the death of a sinner, but that he turn from his

wickedness and live. The inspired servants of the Most High thus speak, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Here is a secure refuge to which the alarmed sinner may flee. Here is solid rock on which faith may rest. A regard to the mercy and veracity of God is indeed one of the most appropriate and important exercises of faith; for faith is TRUST IN GOD, a persuasion that he will do as he has said. He has declared that he will be gracious to every sinner who returns to him. The believer relies on the promise, and thus believes in God.

Closely connected with this trust in God is FAITH IN CHRIST.

"Believe in God," said Jesus to his disciples, "believe also in me." The immediate design of this exhortation appears to have been to encourage the disciples to place due, that is full confidence in those consolatory assurances which our Lord was about to offer to them. "In my Father's house are many mansions;—I go to prepare a place for you.—And I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.—And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.—I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

By this passage we are reminded that faith in Christ comprehends confidence in his words as a *Teacher*, and confidence in his work as *Mediator*.

1. FAITH IN CHRIST IS CONFIDENCE IN HIS WORDS.

Christ, by his personal ministry and by the ministry of his servants, the prophets and apostles,

has spoken to his people on every essential point respecting his own character, the character of God, and the final state of man. Particularly, as in the discourse just cited, he has declared that the happiness of dwelling with himself in Heaven awaits all his disciples. On these and on all the other words of the Lord Jesus, whether they are easy or difficult to understand, whether they convey consolation or reproof, the Christian implicitly relies. His daily station is "at the feet of Jesus," that he may hear his words. And believing the truth of the Saviour's instructions, he acts in conformity therewith. He flies from that wrath to come, of which he has been warned. He seeks after that happiness which is set before him. And he takes the only and the sure road to heaven which is revealed in the gospel. For,

2. Faith in Christ is also confidence or TRUST
IN HIS MEDIATORIAL WORK.

No sentiment is more completely incorporated with all the religious thoughts of the believer than that which is expressed in the Saviour's words, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." He constantly remembers that "Jesus died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God;" and that the unjust, in which number he includes himself, can have no access to God except by him.

This faith in Christ is exercised *in worship*. The ground of his hope that his petitions will be favourably regarded is not any conceit of his own goodness, it is simply that he offers them in the name of Jesus, for whose sake he trusts they will be answered.

This faith in Christ is also exercised both in the distant anticipation and in the immediate *prospect of death*. "The Lord Jesus Christ is his hope." He knows that he is guilty, but he knows, too, that Jesus has "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," and that, "through him all that believe

are justified from all things." He therefore enjoys the happy persuasion that he shall "not perish, but shall have everlasting life."

This personal trust in the Saviour is totally *distinct from a mere knowledge of the fact, that Christ is the Saviour*. The faith in Christ of which I speak is the making use of that fact for our own eternal good.

The faith which saves the soul is described in the word of God by allusions which give this view of the matter. Thus, if Christ be compared to a *refuge*, true faith is represented not as looking at the refuge, (which is all the faith that many hearers of the gospel have) but as *flying to that refuge*. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe." Believers are persons who have "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them." Again: if Christ be compared to *food*, faith in him is not looking at the provision, (with which a man without appetite would content himself, and which well describes the faith of many) but real faith is the actual partaking of the food. "My flesh," said Jesus, "is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Once more: If Christ be compared to a *physician*, faith in him is not simply an acknowledgment of his skill and kindness; it is a real application to him under the feeling of sickness, with the conviction that he and he only can effect a cure. "They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick. Jesus came, not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

FAITH IN GOD CANNOT BE SEPARATED FROM FAITH IN CHRIST.

If I believe in God, I believe in him as the God of salvation. His way of saving the guilty is by Jesus Christ, and consequently, I cannot but re-

ceive the testimony which he has given concerning his Son. He, therefore, who believes in God, believes in Christ.

On some occasions, faith is more expressly directed to God the Father, and on other occasions to the Son of God. Each of these exercises of faith involves the other. Faith fixed on God is faith in "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," who "gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" and faith fixed on the Saviour is faith in him "in whom all the fulness of the Godhead really dwells," and in whom all power in heaven and on earth is vested. Faith in Christ is therefore, virtually, faith in God.

Let us now inquire what are those emotions and dispositions towards God and towards Christ which grow out of Faith.

FEAR is not always and altogether absent from the mind of the believer; on the contrary, faith produces fear, though not fear alone. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house." Such a sense of danger as leads a man to use the means of safety, is a necessary result of faith. And even after those means have been used, some degree of fear may occasionally disturb the mind. God's strict justice and irresistible power, viewed in connexion with our own guilt, cannot fail to excite alarm. If we have, at the same time, clear apprehensions of the love of God, our alarm will speedily give way to confident hope; but every believer is not thus "strong in faith." Some real Christians are accustomed to think much more frequently of God's justice than of his mercy; of their own sin, than of the Saviour's death. Hence, although they are not without hope, fear has the ascendancy. There are seasons, too, in the experience of most Christians,

when their consciousness of manifold deficiencies and sins is more than usually acute; they do not doubt God's willingness to pardon every one who truly believes in Christ; but since they know that "faith works by love" and purifies the soul, they are ready to doubt whether their faith be genuine. The recollection of sins which they committed before they paid any serious regard to the Saviour, does not disquiet them so much as the sins which they have since committed. They reason thus with themselves: "It is now a long time since I professed to place my dependance on the Son of God; notwithstanding which my heart is still thus corrupt, and thus few and doubtful are the fruits of righteousness appertaining to my character. Have I a right to conclude that I really believe in Christ?"

There are circumstances in which fear may be productive of good, or at least may be preventive of evil. Suppose the case of a Christian in a state of spiritual declension, in which those nobler principles about to be contemplated, lie dormant. In this situation, he is strongly tempted to some great sin, but is preserved through the influence of fear. He says within himself, "Were I to commit such wickedness, I should fill my soul with horror, and should endanger my everlasting salvation." If faith in the goodness of God, and in the dying love of Christ were powerfully operative in his heart, there would be no need of the assistance of fear; and it is true that to be deterred from evil solely by apprehension of punishment, is unworthy of the Christian character. Yet it must be allowed that in the absence of a more evangelical spirit it is better to be preserved from wickedness even by servile considerations than not at all. "Perfect love casteth out fear," but love may exist without being perfect.

REVERENCE is distinguishable from fear, according to the ordinary acceptation of those terms

among ourselves, although not always distinguished from it in the Scripture; where the fear of God frequently means what we now call reverence.

He who has just views of the divine majesty and excellence will be anxious that no word may escape his lips, no thought be harboured in his soul, which would be dishonourable to his Maker. So far is he from using the name of God, or any words which relate to things divine, in a profane or even jocose manner, that it gives him pain to hear such language uttered by others.

This reverence partakes full as much of the nature of love as of fear. It is love to God which makes him cautious of every thing derogatory to the divine dignity.

LOVE is the most characteristic feature of the Christian mind; and is undoubtedly the fruit of faith.

The Christian character cannot exist without love. To be without love to God is the mark of the wicked. "I know you," said Jesus, to the unbelieving Jews, "that ye have not the love of God in you." The possession of love to God is represented as an equally undoubted mark of the regenerate: "We know that all things work together for good *to them that love God*, to them that are the called according to his purpose."

In terms exactly correspondent is the essentialness of *love to Christ* set forth. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha." "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

Love discovers itself in *Complacency, Gratitude, and Desire*.

The Christian views the Character of God with
COMPLACENCY AND DELIGHT.

The purity of the divine character delights him. There is a beauty in holiness to which nothing is comparable, and no where is such holiness seen as in God. The Christian rejoices and “gives thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.”

The mercy of God delights him.

When he looks within and looks around, and sees transgression every where, it is inexpressibly consolatory to him to recollect that “the Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and of great mercy.”

The union of mercy and justice in God delights him.

He cannot but rejoice that himself and every penitent is encouraged to expect forgiveness and eternal life, but his joy is heightened by the consideration that the administration of mercy instead of occasioning dishonour to the moral government of God, renders the rectitude of that government the more conspicuous. He is never weary of contemplating that scheme of redeeming love in which “mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other,” in which God appears “just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.”

The all-sufficiency of God delights him.

God made himself known to the Father of the faithful under the title El-Shaddai, God Almighty, or all-sufficient; under the same character he makes himself known to all the spiritual children of Abraham, and under this character they all rejoice to contemplate him. Weakness and dependance are attributes which they find to belong to themselves; and vain is the help of man. There is no resource but in God. “In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”

The unchangeableness of God delights him.

The friendship of man may turn to hatred, and in that very quarter whence the most substantial support was looked for, the most violent opposition may

arise. And if friends continue faithful till the close of life, death necessarily puts an end to their kind offices. "All flesh is grass." In a fluctuating and dying world, the Christian looks up to God; and whether the divine purity, or mercy, or justice, or power, be the more immediate object of contemplation, he has the satisfaction of knowing that "from everlasting to everlasting He is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Every one of these views of the divine character is an object of satisfactory contemplation to the Christian mind; with what joy then must he regard God as possessed of *all these excellencies!* David has well expressed that joy in the 73d Psalm: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

There are two orders of beings with whom God is in these words compared or rather contrasted,—the inhabitants of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth.

Even among the dwellers on the earth are to be found persons of estimable character. David speaks of them in the 16th Psalm, describing them as "the holy ones, the excellent, in whom was all his delight." In them are to be found fruits of righteousness which redound to the praise of God and to the good of man. "They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world." They save the corrupt mass of human society from putrefaction and death; and reflect in their character the light of truth as it beams on them from above. They are indeed the most lovely specimens of the workmanship of the Creator any where to be seen in this lower world. But they are not the Creator himself. They are emanations from the source of light; but they are not the sun. They are streams from the well-spring of good, but they are not the fountain. Nor can any better use be made of the contemplation of human excellence, than to be thereby led to infer the inconceivably greater excellence of God. In this

view the morning hymn which Milton puts into the mouth of our progenitor may be used, in a sense not contrary to its original import, though not identical with it. When we have contemplated examples of the finished christian character, whether in real life or in biographical narrative, we may sing :

“ These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
 “ Almighty ! ——
 “ Thus wondrous fair ; Thyself how wondrous then !”

Nor are there even in heaven any beings comparable to God. There are “ the spirits of just men made perfect,” and there are holy angels who never sinned, whose intellectual grandeur probably far exceeds that of Newton, Locke, or Milton, and whose moral excellence is superior to that of Adam before he fell or since he has been restored ; yet even these exalted beings are nothing in the presence of their Maker.

So that the Christian, after looking into both worlds, concludes his survey with the exclamation ; “ Whom have I in the heaven or on the earth, that I delight in so much as in thee !”

This is at all times the settled conviction of his mind, but there are seasons when he can utter that exclamation with more than ordinary feeling. *That* is the time of his greatest earthly happiness when he can “ joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he has received the atonement.”

“ When I can say, My God is mine,
 “ When I can feel thy glories shine ;
 “ I tread the world beneath my feet,
 “ And all that earth calls good or great.”

With similar emotions of COMPLACENCY AND DELIGHT does the believer contemplate OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I appeal to your own experience, my christian

brother, for proof of this. You highly admire the wise and gracious constitution of the Messiah's person, whereby, as uniting in himself the essential attributes of deity and of humanity, he has been qualified to fulfil the stupendous work of man's salvation. You admire the purity and philanthropy of the Saviour's life. You admire the love which made him willing to die the accursed death of the cross. You admire those exceeding great and precious promises which are all "Yea and Amen" in him, and which secure to every believer grace and glory and all good. In those who neglect the Saviour, that prediction of Isaiah concerning him is fulfilled; "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." But *to you* these words are by no means applicable. On the contrary, Christ is, in your eye, altogether lovely. His very names and titles have in your ear, an indescribable charm. The best affections of your heart are called forth towards him. "Behold," saith God, "I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: unto you therefore which believe he is precious; whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

If some of us know but little of this triumphant gladness, it is our own fault, and is owing either to our reluctance to give implicit credence to God's testimony, or to our love of the world and of sin. Many Christians have felt such rapture in the contemplation of God as their God, and of Christ as their Saviour, that their happiness seems to have been as great as nature was capable of enjoying, and heaven with them did indeed begin below.

As long since as the days of Isaiah and of David, mention was made of this spiritual rejoicing: "Blessed is the people," said David, "that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the

light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." "Behold, God is my salvation." A pious man is represented by Isaiah as declaring, "Behold, God my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.—Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things.—Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

GRATITUDE is another form in which love discovers itself.

As the love of complacency is excited by the consideration of what God is in himself, so is the love of gratitude by the thought of what God is to us: "I love the Lord," said the Psalmist, "because he hath heard the voice of my supplication." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.—Bless the Lord, O my soul."

The blessings which God bestows are indeed great and numerous. All good is from him. And the Christian is in the habit of tracing up all good to him as its source. The common blessings of life, which pass for matters of chance with others, are to him occasions of thankfulness. Happiness and gratitude are so associated in his mind that the one is seldom present without the other.

But who can estimate the value of infinite and eternal good! God is infinite and heaven is eternal, and both are the Christian's inheritance.

"What shall I render unto the Lord," he ex-

claims, "for all his benefits and above all for these his highest favours! How can I be sufficiently thankful, that he has been pleased to make himself known to me as the God of salvation! Praised be thy name, O God, that my habitation was fixed in a land where the Holy Scriptures are found, and where the glad-tidings of mercy are published! Praised be thy name, O God, that I was induced to hear and read thy word; but, most of all, I thank thee that I have been led in any measure to understand its import and to discern its beauty. O thou God of love, it is to thy undeserved kindness I owe it that I can call thee my Father, and can look forward to heaven as my final home. Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name let the glory be given. I am not worthy to be called thy son, nor to be put among thy servants."

The consideration of his own unworthy character greatly deepens the Christian's sense of obligation. If ever there was a time when he thought himself entitled, as matter of right, to such blessings as these, that time is gone by for ever. "What is man," saith he, "that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto." "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant."

The greatness of the blessings promised, contrasted with his own desert as a sinner, would make him "stagger at the promise through unbelief," were it not that he perceives that, in the gospel, it is God's ordinary method not to deal with his people according to their merit, but according to his own mercy and grace. These thoughts, however, cannot fail to add fuel to the fire of gratitude which blazes on the altar of his heart. Favours such as those which he has received and expects, would demand sincere thanks from those ministers of God who have never ceased to do his pleasure; how

much more from one who feels himself to be an unprofitable servant, a rebellious subject, a disobedient and ungrateful child !

GRATITUDE TOWARDS CHRIST is, also, an essential element of Christian character; for, in the redemption of man we recognize not only the love of the Father, but the love of Jesus: "He gave himself for us." For us he suffered reproach and scorn. For us he suffered the tortures of the cross. For us he endured agony of soul. For us he died. For us he lives and reigns in heaven. "Unto him, therefore, who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen."

Words can but ill express the feelings of admiring gratitude with which the believer, in his best hours, looks back on the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, and looks upward to the throne of glory on which his once-suffering Saviour is now seated.

GRATITUDE IS MANIFESTED BY OBEDIENCE.

"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and (with this principle in the heart) his commandments are not grievous." "If ye love me," said Christ, "keep my commandments." "The love of Christ," saith Paul, "constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again. We are not without law to God, but are under the law to Christ."

Here we see both the moral influence of the gospel, and the completeness of the Christian character. We see the *moral influence of the gospel*. Faith, love, and obedience all meet in the disciple of Christ. If obedience be wanting, love is wanting also; and if love be not in the heart, so neither is

faith, for faith, wherever it really exists, “worketh by love.” Let no man, therefore, delude himself with the persuasion of being a true Christian, if he be not concerned to yield unreserved obedience to the divine will.

We see also *the completeness of the Christian character.*

Some duties have God for their more immediate object; some, Christ; and some, Mankind; but love prompts its possessor to the performance of them all. Hence it follows that he who is truly pious, will also be equitable and kind. “He who loveth God will love his brother also,” because such is the will of God.

Here, too, we see how much superior genuine Christian principle is to mere morality. The former includes the latter, as the greater, the less.

Love to God and to Christ also exist in the form of **DESIRE**; desire after an increase of knowledge, an increase of faith, increase of love, and more perfect obedience.

The glimpse which the Christian has caught of the divine glory makes him long to obtain a more complete view. He has seen the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ: but he desires that the eyes of his understanding may be more thoroughly enlightened, and may be more steadily fixed on the glorious object. He is not destitute of faith, but he wants to be always strong in faith, giving glory to God. He desires also that his love may abound more and more, and that in heart and life he may be well-pleasing to God.

This noble ambition fires the soul of every pious man. In strength of faith, and in ardour of love, Christians differ; but here they all resemble one another. How much cause soever they may have to complain of their low attainments in spiritual things; this good mark belongs to them, that they are not satisfied with themselves: on the contrary, they are

pressing forwards. They long to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever.

The Christian's regard to God and Christ is evinced in WORSHIP, wherein all those dispositions which have now been specified are called into action.

No one prays without faith, and no one possessed of faith neglects to pray. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." God has assured me, that if I ask I shall receive. At the same time, since he has connected my asking with his giving, I can have no ground to expect the blessing, unless I seek it in the way he has instituted. And this is a sufficient reply to a cavil raised against prayer, as if it were inconsistent with the foreknowledge and unchangeableness of God. They who urge this objection seem to forget that God's purposes include the means leading to an end as well as the end itself. If it be his design that I should receive such and such a blessing, it is his design also that I should use the means for attaining it; and, among those means, asking for the blessing in prayer is the chief.

Faith in Christ is necessarily exercised in prayer, whether (as is fully warrantable) we direct our worship immediately to him, or come to the Father by him, as our interceding High Priest.

As there can be no prayer without faith, so can there be *no praise without love*. Adoration of the divine majesty is not the extorted homage of a rebellious subject; it is tribute as willingly rendered as it is justly claimed; and which the heart and the understanding unite to offer. Thanksgiving for God's benefits is of the same nature. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High; to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night. It is a pleasant thing, and praise is comely."

One of the proofs of the regard which the Christian has to God is, his delighting to hold intercourse with him in worship. "O God thou art my God, early will I seek thee, my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live, I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips."

To such a person the exercises of religious worship are the pleasures of friendship. God speaks to us in his word; and whether we read it in private, or hear it pronounced by the voice of the preacher, our language is, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." The voice of our Father and Friend is welcome to our hearts.

In petition and in praise, we speak to God. He permits us to enjoy this high privilege, saying to every one of us, "What is thy request, and it shall be granted to thee?" "If a man abide in Christ, and Christ's words abide in him, he asks whatsoever he will, and it is done unto him."

"It is good for me to draw nigh to God." It imparts consolation, and it makes the heart better. For, whilst faith and love are necessarily blended with every act of devotion, they are at the same time strengthened thereby. Worship has a happy tendency to withdraw the mind from outward objects and to give a real presence to such as are unseen and eternal. Seldom has the Christian such vivid impressions of the divine presence, such clear perceptions of the divine character, so much confidence in God, so much delight in him, so decided a preference for God above all things, and so strong an aversion to whatever is displeasing to him, as when, having entered his closet, and shut the door, he is praying to his Father who is in secret.

These lively emotions do not, it is true, abide in unimpaired force; but some effect remains; nor can there be any doubt that the pious man is habitually both happier and better for the hours which he spends in converse with God.

This is another fact to prove the reasonableness of prayer. It is not only advantageous to man on account of the connexion which God has established between our requests and his donations; but also as being itself an important means of strengthening those holy principles on which solid satisfaction and real excellence depend.

This subject teaches us the TRUE NATURE OF RELIGION. It consists, as we have seen, in A DUE REGARD TO GOD, as inclusive of a due regard to the Saviour of sinners.

How utterly do they mistake the matter, who imagine that devotion is made up of forms and ceremonies! Instead of this, the fact is, that there cannot be one act of real worship in which the exercise either of the understanding or of the affections is suspended. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

We also infer from the preceding premises THE MEANNESS AND DANGER OF AN IRRELIGIOUS LIFE.

It is *mean*: To refuse to employ the mind upon the greatest of all subjects, namely, the character of the greatest and best of beings, is a degradation of intellect, on which, if any pride themselves, they glory in their shame. To be susceptible of gratitude towards benefactors generally, and to be devoid of gratitude towards the chief Benefactor, is a strange inconsistency. If it be disgraceful to forget the small favours which we receive from our fellow-creatures, how much more dishonourable to the character must it be to slight the blessings

which God gives and offers ! Yet all this is chargeable on those who live an irreligious life.

Such a course is highly *dangerous*, nay, if persisted in till death, it is *fatal* ; for “ they that are far from God shall perish.” Stop a moment, I beseech you, and look at the precipice on the verge of which you are running. If you persist in saying to God, “ Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways ;” can you wonder if God should at length say to you, “ Depart ?” But consider what anguish will rend your soul if that word should reach your ear.

It is moreover evident, in the very nature of things, that in the present state of your heart it is quite impossible you should enter heaven, or be happy there, even were you allowed to enter. It is the manifestation of the divine glory that chiefly constitutes the bliss of that world ; whereas you must be conscious of a disrelish for all occupations of mind which have God for their object. See then the necessity of undergoing that thorough change of character of which mention was lately made.

LECTURE XXII.

Nov. 23, 1824.

THE RELIGIOUS MAN VIEWED IN HIS CONDUCT
TOWARDS HIS FELLOW-MEN.

I JOHN iv. 21.

And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God should love his brother also.

THE disciples of Jesus are required to “love one another, with a pure heart, fervently.” There are cogent reasons why they should cherish such a temper :

First; *The divine command.* Not in one text only, but in many, is the precept given. Our Lord, while upon earth, repeatedly urged this duty on his disciples, particularly in the discourse which he addressed to them just before his intense sufferings commenced. “Love one another,” was one of the last precepts which he delivered. Nor is there any ground for supposing that the duty is less incumbent on other disciples than it was upon them. The Apostle John, who had caught much of the spirit of his Divine Master, reiterates the same command. “Love one another,” is his incessant language.

Secondly; *The divine example* furnishes a motive.

“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. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his

friends." Such love has Christ shown to his people, with this additional circumstance, that when they were yet enemies he died for them. How peculiarly strong, then, is the motive to brotherly love springing from such an example! "This," saith he, "is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."

Thirdly; *The relation which God bears to the disciples of Christ* is a powerful reason why they should love each other.

God is their Father. "They are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." The near relationship which they all, in common, sustain towards God, brings with it, of course, a close affinity to each other; and between children of the same family, whose origin is one, and whose prospects are the same, a peculiar affection may be expected to subsist.

Lastly; *The resemblance which every disciple of Christ bears to his Father and Saviour*, ought to secure the affection of every other disciple. Although among the members of the Christian Church there are differences, corresponding to the distinctions of colour and of form observable in the great brotherhood of mankind; yet still, certain features are discernible in all, which remind the spectator of their common origin. The children of God were "predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God;" and something of his piety towards his heavenly Father and of his compassion to man, may be seen in every one of them; and, when seen, cannot fail to secure the esteem and affection of the beholder.

LOVE prompts its possessor to take a lively interest in the welfare of others. Christians "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them

that weep." The oneness of feeling which the different members of the human body have with each other, is the emblem used to describe the sympathy which subsists among the disciples of Christ. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

But it is not to sympathy alone, far less is it to merely verbal expressions of sympathy, that genuine affection will give birth. There were persons in the primitive times who were very ready to say to the famishing poor, "Be ye warmed and filled," whilst, notwithstanding, they "gave them not those things which were needful for the body." But the man who can allow a fellow-mortal and especially a fellow-disciple to perish for want, while he has it in his power to give relief, will not be owned as a disciple in the day of doom. "The King shall say, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me—Depart!"

Although Christian brethren have an essential claim on the affection of one another, the second great command of the law embraces *the whole human race*. It is not every character that we can regard with complacency, but there is no man on whom we may not look with kindness, and none whom we should not desire to benefit.

As it is not necessary and would not be possible for us to trace out Christian conduct through all its various ramifications, we shall fix our attention chiefly on this great principle of LOVE, whence all good actions proceed. With this view let us examine some of the most instructive passages of Scripture which relate to the subject. There are three especially, each of which gives some important particulars not contained in the others; and which texts, taken together, constitute a complete abstract of evangelical morality.

We shall first turn to the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, in which (xiii. 7—10.) we find the following outline of the duty of man to man: "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law (so far, namely, as respects that particular person). 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."

Man's duty towards man may be viewed in two aspects, consisting in the avoidance of what would injure another, and in the performance of what is calculated to promote another's happiness: the former is the view of duty which the Apostle here takes.

CIVIL GOVERNMENT, when so exercised as to answer the great ends of government, has a claim on the help as well as the obedience of the governed. Custom and tribute are due; and the withholding of them is doing injury not only to the persons in authority, but also to persons under authority, the welfare of all being involved in the preservation of social order.

Individuals who are raised above their fellows by RANK OR OFFICE, have a claim on the outward respect of those below them. The Apostle Paul, who would never flatter a man on account of his station, yet deemed it right, when addressing Judges and Magistrates, to employ those terms of honour which custom had enjoined.

Persons distinguished for MORAL WORTH deserve the esteem of all who know them; and although this is a debt which the parties themselves

are not in the habit of claiming, it is not the less a debt on that account; and they who, instead of respecting the good, envy, hate, and revile them, are doubtless chargeable with injustice. Love to man, as well as a sense of duty to God, induces the Christian to give honour to all to whom honour is due.

That an equivalent should be paid for MONEY OR PROPERTY of any kind received, is a truth universally admitted, though far from being universally reduced to practice. He who contracts a debt with the promise of repaying it expressed or understood, while at the same time he knows or fears that he shall not be able to make good his word, and he who renders himself incapable of discharging his lawful debts, either through slothfulness or extravagance, are both of them chargeable with injustice, the same in substance, though not the same in mode, with that of the man who clandestinely robs his neighbour's person or dwelling. The lamentable commonness of the crime in this commercial country is the principal cause of its enormity being so little perceived; to which must also be added the difficulty, in many cases, of proving the offence. But, to whatever case of unpaid debt the above remarks apply, we may fairly give the names of fraud and robbery. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another." This is the only account which can never be balanced.

All other instances of bad conduct are so many violations of the law of love. Not only adultery, murder, and theft; but calumny, covetousness, and all the diversified forms of selfishness, are utterly inconsistent with the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Self-love, in the good sense of the term, is lawful. To be desirous of our own welfare is inseparable from our very being. But the wicked man is so bent on his own interest that he cares not by what means it is promoted.

If any course of conduct presents itself which promises to conduce to his own advantage, he eagerly adopts it, although he knows that a thousand other persons will thereby be reduced to wretchedness. On this principle the robber, the adulterer, the murderer, the oppressor, and the ambitious statesman respectively act. Most affecting is it to see, in ancient and modern history, in the public journals, and in transactions which daily meet the eye, proofs so manifold of the prevalence of the selfish principle above humanity and right, and above all law, human and divine.

Yet there are numerous and happy exceptions. The gospel has so far civilized mankind, that the more atrocious instances of selfishness, directly affecting property and life, are comparatively few. And there are many persons, whose minds are not imbued with the whole system of Christianity, who notwithstanding, admire and practise, to a certain extent, its moral code; living a harmless and a charitable life.

With regard to every consistent Christian, the great law of love has become a part of his moral being. It is as natural to him to love his neighbour as it is to love himself. In his eye, his neighbour's welfare and his own are not two separate interests; they are one, and the same, viewed in different lights. Were it possible for him to injure his neighbour without fear of punishment either from man or God, he would not so act. His prevailing inclination is in a totally opposite direction. No addition of property could administer joy to him, were he conscious that another ought to have it. He could be content in honest poverty; but in wealth, however abundant, acquired or retained unjustly, he could enjoy no pleasure. He suffers a diminution of comfort if he knows that his neighbour has sustained an injury even from a third person; what then would be his misery, did conscience tell him that he himself had been the cause of his

neighbour's sufferings ! Human laws, however necessary for the well-being of society at large, are not necessary for him. The law is written on his heart. No change would take place in his conduct, were all the sanctions by which human legislation enforces its demands abolished to-morrow. Vice would not be rendered a whit less odious in his view by being stript of all the fearful apparatus of fines, imprisonment, banishment, and death, by which it is surrounded. The displeasure with which God regards iniquity, and the misery which attends and follows the commission of it, not as to the agent merely but as to others, are, to the renovated heart, dissuasives abundantly sufficient. This inward principle of goodness is, moreover, far more effectual in securing harmlessness of conduct than any written laws, however excellent, can be ; since it extends to numberless cases of which the latter can take no cognizance. A man of corrupt heart may injure his neighbour in a thousand ways, which neither the most vigilant police can prevent, nor the most impartial magistracy punish ; but where the heart is corrected, there is no disposition to injure ; so that, without either police or magistrate, the most perfect order is maintained. " Love worketh no ill to one's neighbour : therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Thus far we have restricted our attention chiefly to the negative view of the character of a religious man. We have seen that he neither is nor can be an injurious member of society. We shall now advance a step farther, and notice the operation of Love on a more enlarged scale. For this purpose we shall turn to the 13th chapter of the 1st Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, where we have a most engaging and instructive view of this noble principle. The chapter is divisible into three portions. In the first of these, consisting of the first three verses, the supreme and essential importance of this

Christian grace is shown. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Charity, (or Love,) I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

It may be proper to observe that the faith mentioned above is not that personal trust in Christ which characterises the true believer. This faith never can exist without love. But it is that reliance on divine power for the performance of supernatural works which was peculiar to the early times of Christianity.

The supposition advanced, that a man might bestow all his goods to feed the poor without possessing charity, is a manifest proof that the charity of which the apostle here speaks is not alms-giving, but Love in general, of which alms-giving, when it proceeds from a right principle, is a branch.

The apostle declares that actions which do not spring from Love will be of no ultimate advantage to the agent; and that without Love there can be no real excellence of character, although the man should be distinguished by the most splendid endowments, natural and supernatural, and should perform the most heroic and apparently charitable deeds.

It may be farther observed that the apostle is not treating of moral excellence in the abstract; for, while in a strain of genuine eloquence, he introduces a beautiful personification of Charity, he most plainly teaches that this heavenly temper is to be looked for, in a happy degree, in every true believer. His discourse is a treatise on Christian

Character; consequently, if we wish to know what practical religion is, we shall find it here.

The second section of the chapter (ver. 4—7.) contains a particular account of the nature and exercise of Love. “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

An analysis of this golden sentence presents the following thoughts.

1. LOVE IS OPPOSED TO PASSION OR RAGE.

“Charity suffereth long, and is not easily, or not highly, provoked.” “He that is slow to anger,” saith Solomon, “is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth over his own spirit, than he that taketh a city.”

“But,” says one, “I am naturally of a hasty, passionate temper.” So much the more urgent necessity then is there for your striving and praying that this temper may be subdued. The metaphor employed by this wise man supposes a previous struggle. Victory must be preceded by combat. It is lamentable when people console themselves in their sinful infirmities by the notion of their bad passions being natural and irresistible. Natural they indeed are to corrupt nature; but irresistible they must not be considered, in the face of the most explicit commands to “mortify the deeds of the body,” and of the most encouraging promises of divine help. For what end are those promises granted, if not to stimulate us to wage war against the propensities of our wicked hearts? The grace of God “can change a Lion to a Lamb, a Vulture to a Dove.”

2. LOVE IS OPPOSED TO REVENGE.

Charity not only suffereth long, but "is kind," and kind to those who have requited evil for good and hatred for love. "Ye have heard," said Jesus, (Matt. v. 43—45.) "that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." "Dearly beloved," saith Paul, (Rom. xii. 19—21.) "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." And as metals are melted by covering the ore with burning coals, so this treatment of thine enemy shall soften his obdurate heart, and bring him to a better temper. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

3. LOVE IS A PRESERVATIVE AGAINST IMPATIENCE IN SUFFERING.

"Charity endureth all things."

The Apostle Paul had much of this kind of charity. When in prison, at Rome, he expressed the hope that Christ might be magnified in his body, whether it were by life or by death. Writing, under the same circumstances, to Timothy, he says, "For the gospel I suffer trouble, even unto bonds.—I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

In the same self-denying spirit, he tells his friends at Philippi, that if it were the will of God that his blood should be poured forth as a libation

on the sacrifice and service of their faith, he would go to the altar with cheerfulness and joy, and would call on them to congratulate rather than to bemoan his lot. Nor was this an empty boast; for he did afterwards lay down his life in the cause of the gospel.

Christian! If God be honoured and your brethren benefited by your sufferings, you, too, will be willing to suffer; out of love to him and to them.

4. LOVE IS A PRESERVATIVE AGAINST PRIDE AND ARROGANCE.

Love to God will make a man afraid of cherishing a temper so contrary to his will. Love to God will dispose its possessor to trace up every good to God, and will also induce him to reflect on the very imperfect degree in which he has used the favours God has granted, to the honour of the Giver. The Christian, therefore, in his right mind, will find cause rather for humility than pride, even in the contemplation of those qualities by which he may be raised above others. Love to mankind, and especially to Christian brethren, also tends to produce the same desirable result, inasmuch as it inclines men to esteem others better than themselves.

And while this disposition subdues the inward feeling of Pride, it will also, as matter of course, prevent those outward expressions of it, which are so inimical to the comfort of society, whether civil or religious. The charity which is not puffed up, and vaunteth not itself, "doth not behave itself unseemly." There will be a decorum, a propriety, and a modesty in the deportment of the person in whose heart charity reigns.

Let us observe here, what a high and well-merited eulogium is tacitly paid to this heavenly temper by the established forms of civilized life. What is **POLITENESS** but Christian love in appearance? What is love but politeness in reality?

Religion teaches people *to be* what good breeding teaches them to *seem* to be. In social intercourse every one appears to aim at the comfort of every other, carefully avoiding such words and even looks as might occasion pain, and being ready to perform any service for which an opportunity may offer. The Christian, having good-will to man in his heart, is in reality what the polite man seems to be. He is therefore in substance, a well-behaved person. His education may have been such as to leave him ignorant of the artificial forms of civility; but they who are disposed to look below the surface, will find in him the essence of good behaviour, the prevailing wish to contribute to the happiness of others.

Politeness in the Christian is purified from flattery. He will not violate truth for the sake of making himself agreeable; nor will he hesitate, under proper circumstances, to utter an unwelcome truth, if the mention of it be necessary to his neighbour's welfare.

The timely and faithful *administering of reproof* is an important branch of Christian Love, from which we should not be deterred by the consideration either of the difficulty of performing it aright, or of the uncertainty which may be felt as to the manner in which reproof will be received. The exercise of Christian affection in the way of reproof has been in numerous instances followed by the happiest effects. Many a man has been indebted, under God, to the kind warning of a Christian neighbour, for his first inquiries after eternal happiness; and many a religious man, who had wandered from the paths of righteousness, has to ascribe his return to God to the same means. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." This duty is particularly incumbent on those who,

by age or station, are raised above the offending party.

5. LOVE IS OPPOSED TO ENVY.

“Charity envieth not.”

When Aristides, surnamed the Just, was about to undergo that public trial by the people of Athens which ended in his banishment, a peasant, who was unacquainted with his person, asked him for his vote against Aristides. “Has he done you any wrong?” said that eminent man to the peasant. “No,” replied the countryman, “I do not even know him; but I am tired and angry with hearing every one call him, *The Just*.”

Dionysius the Tyrant banished Philoxenius the Musician, because he could sing better than himself; and banished *Plato* the renowned Philosopher, because he could argue better than himself.

Mutius a citizen of Rome was so notorious for an envious temper, that Publius, one day observing him to be very sad, remarked that either some great evil had happened to Mutius, or some great good had happened to some one else.

Cambyses, King of Persia, slew his own brother Smerdis, because he could draw a stronger bow than himself.

These men were heathens. Among such as bear the Christian name, it is not usual to meet with instances of envy so flagrant. In the real Christian a very opposite spirit dwells. He “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” He is glad to see excellence any where, although the splendour of it should cast his own character into the shade. The alteration which he wishes is not in the more excellent person but in himself. The sight of such a character enflames him with a noble ambition not to be admired as much, but to be as much worthy of admiration.

Such is the feeling which we *ought* to cherish; but is this the feeling which we do actually che-

rish? There are, perhaps, few branches of Christian temper on which it is more necessary that we should examine ourselves.

6. LOVE TREATS WITH KINDNESS THE FAULTS OF OTHERS, *and herein is opposed to Prejudice, Censoriousness, and Malice.*

“Charity thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, beareth, or rather, covereth all things, hopeth all things.”

Caution in admitting faults, grief in perceiving them, and reluctance in making them known, are among the characteristics of Love.

[1.] CHARITY PRODUCES CAUTION IN JUDGING OF SUPPOSED FAULTS.

CANDOUR is the name which this amiable temper bears. Let it not be confounded with imbecility of judgment, or with a feeling of indifference towards good and evil. Candour is neither blind nor deaf. It is the glory of British Judicature that nothing is regarded as true which is not *proved* to be true; and the proof demanded is the attestation of eye and ear witnesses. Candour, in her more private sphere of action, regulates her decisions on the same principle. In her view, every one is innocent, until *proved* to be guilty.

But especially in *judging of motives* is caution necessary. An action intrinsically wrong cannot indeed be justified by any goodness of intention; but an action *apparently* wrong may assume a completely different aspect when the motives which led to it are known. Love to our neighbour will make us hesitate to pronounce a verdict until we have obtained an adequate knowledge of all the circumstances of the case.

[2.] CHARITY IS GRIEVED TO PERCEIVE FAULTS.

“She rejoiceth not in iniquity.” *David* exemplified this temper, when “rivers of waters ran down his eyes, because of the wicked that forsook

God's law;" and *Paul*, when, weeping, he told the Christians at Philippi, of the many who so walked as to show themselves to be "enemies of the cross of Christ." But, most of all was this temper seen in "the *Friend of Sinners*," who beholding the wicked city of Jerusalem, wept over it, and with tears pronounced its approaching fate.

Too many persons, on the contrary, by the diligent search they make after imperfections, and by the apparent gladness they discover in relating the successful result of their investigation, render it too evident that they "rejoice in iniquity."

[3.] CHARITY IS RELUCTANT TO SPREAD THE KNOWLEDGE OF FAULTS.

"Charity covereth all things." There are cases which render it not merely lawful but matter of duty to publish faults. But in order to this, two things are necessary; we must be well satisfied that the thing is true, and we must also have good ground for believing that our reporting of it will do good and not harm. Such occasions do actually occur. You may have a friend about to place confidence in a man whom you know to be unworthy of confidence. You ought therefore, even at the hazard of personal advantage, to give timely warning. But where no good is likely to result from the exposure, "Charity covereth all things," and is most of all careful to conceal, as much as possible, those smaller blemishes which are too often found even in the wise and good.

In the *third section* of the text before us, *the Superiority of Love above every other endowment*, especially in point of *perpetuity*, is declared.

"Charity never faileth;—And now abideth faith, hope, charity; these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." But those things which are now the objects of faith and hope are, in

the upper world, seen and present. Those dispositions therefore will cease of course in that world, since there will no longer be any scope for their exercise. Faith and Hope have been the constant attendants of the Christian through every stage of his earthly pilgrimage; nor will they forsake him so long as their help is needed; but at the gate of heaven they will bid him farewell, and will resign him to the sole guardianship of Love. For,

“Charity never faileth.”

There remains to be considered one more text on the subject of Christian character, Gal. v. 13—17, 22—24.

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say, then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

This passage embraces the following topics: The *rule* by which the Christian is governed, *viz.* the law of love; The *conduct* which results from his observance of that rule; The manifesting of long-suffering, gentleness, &c.; The *contrariety* of such conduct to *human nature*; And its *agreement with the gospel*.

Of these topics the former two coincide with those which have already been discussed; we may therefore confine our attention to the two latter,

which will give rise to remarks not unsuitable for the conclusion of the present discourse.

1. We notice **THE CONTRARIETY OF GENUINE CHRISTIAN CONDUCT TO HUMAN NATURE.**

The usual practice and the natural inclination of mankind are opposed to the law of love. "To bite and devour one another," is an apt description of men's behaviour to their fellows. The language is borrowed from the manners of wild beasts; and one might almost suppose that many human beings had received their education in the dens of lions and of tigers, and in the haunts of wolves. In one respect, indeed, men go beyond the beasts in brutality; since the latter seldom worry their own species. "The wars and fightings," with which history is filled, are the opprobrium of our race, and but too well justify the observation of an unceremonious writer, That "man is half beast, half devil."

The natural inclination of mankind is expressed in the term "flesh." The gratification of our own desires, both of the flesh and of the mind, not only to the neglect of others, but to their injury, is the bent of human nature.

Even in the heart of a believer this corrupt principle remains, although counteracted by a superior influence. Hence that internal warfare which continues from the day of his new-birth until the moment when mortality is swallowed up of life. Hence, also, we may learn, on the one hand, not hastily to conclude that we are not the subjects of regenerating grace because we are conscious of desires which oppose the law of love; and, on the other hand, that constant watchfulness, strenuous exertion, and incessant prayer are necessary, lest those desires should ripen into acts.

2. We are led to observe, by the passage under consideration, that **THE CONDUCT IN QUESTION, though contrary to human nature, IS AGREEABLE TO THE GOSPEL.**

[1.] *Nothing in the gospel opposes the conduct*

described. The only thing which could for a moment be imagined to oppose it is the state of liberty into which the gospel introduces the believer. But Christian liberty, when rightly considered, is found to be very far from inimical to good conduct. The liberty of the gospel may be compared to the liberty enjoyed by the citizen of a free state. It is freedom from all improper and really injurious restraints. It is the liberty of doing all that ought to be done. The believer is free from the burden of the ceremonial law, and is also free from the condemnation to which he had subjected himself by his transgression of the moral law; but to suppose Christians to be exempt from obligation to obey the law of love would be to represent the subjects of the kingdom of heaven to be nothing better than a lawless banditti. "Ye have not so learned Christ." "Ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

And while there is nothing in the gospel to oppose the law of love, there is *every thing* which can be imagined to *sanction, enjoin, and recommend it.*

The religion of Christ includes the most lovely *precepts*, the noblest *examples*, the most powerful *motives*, and the most commanding *influence*.

Of the *precepts*, mention has been already made; let us now advert to some **EXAMPLES**, in which the precepts are embodied.

All the chief promulgators of the religion of Christ have been eminent for the lovely temper which we have been contemplating.

When they first entered the school of Christ, they were very partially acquainted with the great law of the house. Accordingly, we hear two of them expressing a desire to call down fire from heaven to consume the dwelling-place of those who refused to receive their Master. But no such feeling ever disgraced their character after they became

fully initiated into the faith of the gospel. We may just glance at the life of the four most distinguished of the college of apostles, Peter, James, John, and Paul.

The sentiments of PETER on the subject are thus expressed, and his conduct was exactly coincident with his doctrine, (1 Pet. iii. 8, 9.) “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.”

JAMES thus speaks, (and in his case, also, his advice to others was his own practice,) “If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”

The character of JOHN and of PAUL have been sufficiently seen already, in the passages lately quoted from their writings.

LOVE was the temper which they all manifested. Their lives were consecrated to the honour of God, and the good of mankind. Labour and suffering were their usual lot, and the hope of making others happy was their fee and reward. There was an evident propriety in the circumstance of a system of universal kindness being first propagated by men who were themselves conspicuous for this heavenly spirit.

But there is ONE EXAMPLE more which is as the sun among the stars. I need not say it is that of HIM, “who though rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich;” “who went about doing good;” who “gave his life a ransom for many;” and who, even in the agonies of dying, prayed, on behalf of his very

murderers, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

The self-denying and benevolent life and death of Jesus present a *motive* as well as an example. "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."

Finally; The gospel is friendly to the law of Love, inasmuch as every one who believes the gospel is made to partake of the HOLY SPIRIT, whose influence uniformly leads to the observance of that law. Christians are said "to live in the Spirit," and "to be led by the Spirit." The desires of their corrupt nature continue to be opposed to that law; but, being Christ's, and having his Spirit, "they crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts." "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

The proof which this subject affords of THE EXCELLENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION is almost too obvious to require to be noticed. You have only to suppose mankind in general to be influenced by it, and a state of society presents itself to the imagination, in which perfect happiness, so far as it depends on human efforts, is enjoyed. Such is the state which we apprehend will be realized, when "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

But when we *compare Christianity* as delineated in *the Scriptures*, with Christianity as it is seen in what bears the name of *the Church of Christ*, how striking and lamentable is the disparity observed! One is almost ready to say, "Either this is not Christianity, or we are not Christians!" There is indeed much reason to fear that many are Christians only in name. Some who bear that honourable title are without faith. They are either trusting to their own doings for acceptance in the sight of God, or at least are without that actual

reliance on the Saviour which is essential to eternal happiness. Others who profess to place all their dependance on the Son of God, are much more conspicuous for the "works of the flesh," than for "the fruits of the Spirit;" with regard to which works, it is expressly declared, that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." There are also some, of whose character and state we are disposed, on the whole, to judge favourably, who yet appear sadly deficient in the Christian temper. If the heart is to be known by the life, it must often be matter of doubt, whether they are really "renewed in the spirit of their minds." "Examine yourselves, then, my brethren, whether ye be in the faith; Prove your own selves."

LECTURE XXIII.

Dec. 12, 1824.

THE RELIGIOUS MAN CONSIDERED IN REFER-
ENCE TO THE FUTURE STATE.

2 COR. iv. 13—18. v. 1—10.

We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 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 in life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is

God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight :) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

THE most important light in which man can be viewed is to consider him as an expectant of immortality; and one of the leading marks of distinction appertaining to the Christian is the regard which he pays to the future life.

We shall first inquire into the nature of the state which is prepared for the Christian; and then notice the regard which he has to that state.

WE SHALL FIRST INQUIRE INTO THE NATURE OF THE STATE OF BEING WHICH AWAITS THE RIGHTEOUS IN ANOTHER WORLD.

The soul of man *is* man. The rational spirit is essential to his being, the body is not. What the soul is, that the man is; and where the soul is, there the man is. The apostle uses language agreeable to this view of human nature. Both the present and the other world are each compared to a dwelling-place. Death is the destruction of the earthly house, the dissolution of the tent which the soul now occupies. But this event does not render the spirit houseless. There is a building of God ready, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

There are *two distinct periods and conditions of*

the future life, the one immediately subsequent on death, the other to commence at the resurrection.

The Christian as soon as absent from the body is present with the Lord. Accordingly, our Saviour said to the thief on the cross, "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise;" and the apostle, writing to the Philippian believers, expressed his "desire to depart and to be with Christ." This last sentence can have no meaning except on the admission that Paul was persuaded that his being with Christ should immediately ensue on his leaving the church below. On the supposition that he was not to be with Christ till the resurrection, his entering on that felicity would have been neither hastened by the cessation of his life on earth, nor delayed by its prolongation. Besides, it is reasonable to conclude that Paul, although he preferred heaven to earth, would have preferred earth to non-existence. On both these accounts his desiring to depart and to be with Christ, as being *far better* than to remain here, evinces his persuasion that he would retain conscious existence after the death of the body. And this, by the way, it may be remarked, is a convincing proof to those who take their opinions from the word of God, of the soul being quite a distinct substance from the body. The Scriptures were not, indeed, designed to teach us philosophy, nor can any stress be laid on expressions in the Bible relative to natural science, where such expressions are obviously employed merely as *illustrations* of the spiritual truth inculcated; since the sacred writers, as was inevitable, took their illustrations from the prevailing opinions of the age; and by such mention of any particular opinion on a point of secular knowledge, they neither denied nor confirmed the truth of that opinion. But when, in stating a doctrine of religion, they so introduce a fact, that the doctrine cannot be true, unless the fact be also true, that fact must assuredly be

regarded as certain. Such is the state of the case before us. Paul declares that Christians, when absent from the body, are present with the Lord. This is his doctrine. But this doctrine altogether rests on the fact that the soul can exist without the body; that is, in other words, that the soul and the body are not one and the same.

The apostle, in speaking of "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," seems to allude, not to the restored body of the believer, but to the place or state into which he enters at death. Of the particular nature of that state, so far as respects the manner in which a disembodied spirit exists, we can form no conceptions at present; but that it is a state of holiness and of happiness, is sufficiently plain. To be "with the Lord," must be a condition embracing both these important circumstances.

Meanwhile the body remains inert, and, considered as a human body, is in fact destroyed, its form being lost, and the particles of which it consisted being, in most instances, separated from each other. In reference to the body, death is called *sleep*. At death, the *spirit*, in all probability, becomes more active than before; but the body rests. But "he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus," and shall present us, with all the rest of the redeemed, before his throne. Christians who shall be living on earth at the time of the Saviour's coming will not die; but will undergo a change, without the intervention of death and the resurrection, equivalent to that which death and the resurrection shall effect for others. The apostle, making common cause with the whole body of Christians, uses the pronoun of the first person plural in speaking of this change; though he was far from supposing that he himself should be living on earth at the time. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twink-

ling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

On the subject of THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY, many questions may be started, which it is as easy to ask as it is difficult to answer; but the solution of which is not at all necessary to the proof and belief of the fact. Two things relative to it are certain; the one is that the restored body will *not be in every respect the same* with the body which died; and the other, that it will be so far identical as to be *recognised as the same*, both by the individual himself and by others. It appears, therefore, that the answer to the question, "Whether *the same body* shall rise again?" depends on the precise idea which we attach to the word sameness. If by sameness be meant, the same without any difference, the reply must be in the negative; but if by that term be meant, such a degree of sameness as will answer all important purposes of identity, the reply will be in the affirmative. The subject may be illustrated by what takes place in the present world. You saw a youth when he was fourteen years old. You saw him not again till he had attained the age of twenty-one. During the intervening period it is supposed that almost every particle of which the body had consisted was changed; and during the same period a very considerable alteration had of course taken place in his appearance, although the resemblance between the youth and the man was quite sufficient to satisfy you as to his identity. Persons fond of disputation might argue for a good while as to whether the body of the youth and that of the man were really the same. But the necessity of the dispute would be completely removed by a previous settlement of the idea affixed to the principal term in the debate. The question turns altogether on the meaning ascribed to the word *same*.

If the difficulty attendant on the doctrine of the resurrection were much greater than it is, it would be readily solved by a reference to the Power of God. Nor is it necessary that we should confine our attention to the abstract notion of omnipotence; we are acquainted with particular instances of the exertion of that power, which are well calculated to strengthen our faith. Creation itself was a greater miracle than the resurrection will be. *That* was the giving of existence to what did not exist before: *this* is merely the re-forming and re-moulding of what does exist. We are familiar, too, with certain ordinary displays of divine power, so common as to be called laws of nature, which bear some analogy to the resurrection, and one of which is accordingly alluded to by the apostle when treating on this subject. The renovation of the face of nature, at the return of spring; the revivification at that season of the roots and plants which during the winter were apparently dead; the change which certain creatures undergo, from the worm to the chrysalis, and from the chrysalis to the fly; and the springing up of a fruit-bearing plant from a seed which has perished in the earth; are exertions of divine power which occur in innumerable millions of instances every year, and which are not miraculous only because they are not uncommon. These are resurrections in the animal and vegetable worlds, and though not proofs, are certainly types, of the resurrection of the human body. I find no difficulty in believing that he who makes the full corn in the ear to arise out of a single grain deposited and decayed in the ground, can also restore life to the human corpse. They who object to the doctrine do err like the ancient Sadducees, "not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."

The qualities of the restored body, so far as the subject needs to be known, or can be known at present, are described in the 15th chapter of the 1st

Epistle to the Corinthians. The apostle, illustrating the subject by reference to agriculture, calls death *sowing*, and compares the resurrection to the plant which springs from the seed. The body "is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption." There will be no tendency to infirmity, disease, or decay. "It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory." The body laid in the grave is said to be sown in dishonour, because death is the consequence of sin, and because the appearance of the body after death appears unsightly. The restored body, on the contrary, shall be beautiful and glorious, resembling, though not equalling in glory, that of the Saviour. The apostle declares, (Phil. iii.) that Christ will re-fashion our humbled body, that it may be of like form with his glorious body. "The body is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." Even in youth and health its power is exceedingly limited; in sickness and old age it is reduced very low; and in death its energies entirely cease: but the raised body shall be endowed with activity and vigour unknown before. "It is sown a natural," or animal, "body," "it is raised a spiritual body." Although still a body, and not a spirit, it will be less gross in its contexture and mode of existence than it now is, and will more readily obey the will of the indwelling mind; nor will it any more be the occasion of temptation to sin. Finally, it will be *immortal*. "This mortal must put on immortality." Neither death nor any of its precursors and attendants shall ever more molest or threaten it.

These are indeed pleasing anticipations. To have the prospect of eternal happiness, though it were to be purely and exclusively of a spiritual nature, would be matter of great joy; but, since the restoration of the body forms an integral part of the revelation of a future life, we do well to expect and desire it.

Sensual gratifications, in the bad sense of the phrase, can form no part of heavenly bliss. Yet since a body was prepared for man in a state of

original innocence, and shall also be provided by him in the heavenly state, there seems to be no good reason why this circumstance in the future life should be overlooked or slighted.

Still the soul is the seat of happiness ; and the value of the body consists in its power of adding to the felicity of the mind, by serving as a medium of intercourse with external nature. The human frame, such as sin has made it, would prove a clog to the soul in heaven ; whereas the raised body shall become her faithful servant and delightful companion ; nor is it possible for us, in the present state, to form adequate ideas of the clear perceptions of the works of God which the glorified spirit shall then obtain, by means of the glorified body.

To those Christians whose mortal tenements are now enfeebled by sickness or age, and to those also who, on account of poverty, are exposed to many corporeal hardships, the subject is fraught with much consolation. The last groan of expiring nature, my afflicted brethren, shall be the knell of infirmity and pain. You who shall “be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead,” shall “hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon you, nor any heat.” No more shall there be occasion to say, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” “God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.” “You shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

The body and the soul being now reunited, let us notice the ingredients of the happiness which the entire person of the glorified believer shall enjoy. All the particulars relative to heavenly bliss to which it will be necessary for us to advert, may be summed up in two words, *Character* and *Occupation* ; what he shall *be*, and what he shall *do*.

LET US FIRST INQUIRE INTO THE CHARAC-

TER OF THE DWELLERS IN HEAVEN. Happiness is so intimately connected with character, that it seems proper to consider this as a leading circumstance in the heavenly state.

The object of man's redemption was to restore him to perfect holiness. This object begins to be accomplished in regeneration. All the instruction the Christian derives from the word of God, and all the correction he receives from the providence of God, contribute to promote this design. Death puts the finishing stroke to the work of sanctification, so far as the soul is concerned; and at the resurrection the body itself shall be pure.

The character of the redeemed is exhibited to us in two attractive lights. It is represented as consisting in *conformity to the will of God*, and in *resemblance to the Son of God*.

One of the most comprehensive views of heaven any where to be seen, is found in the prayer which our Lord taught his disciples, wherein they are instructed to pray that the will of God may be done "on earth as it is done in heaven." Not a single murmur against any one instance of the divine procedure finds even a momentary welcome in the breast either of angel or saint. Nor is it through the influence of fear that complaints against God are subdued. There is in the mind of every inhabitant of heaven that thorough conviction of the divine wisdom and equity, combined with high admiration of the entire character of the Almighty, which forbids such thoughts to rise.

The commands of God, moreover, are uniformly obeyed with alacrity and delight. Not only are they found to be "not grievous," but a real pleasure is felt in compliance with them. They are loved for their own sake, they are loved for the sake of the happiness they impart to the agent, they are loved for the sake of the happiness they diffuse,

and they are loved for the sake of him whose will they express. Those holy beings do indeed "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

That a constant and cheerful compliance with the will of God must necessarily be associated with happiness, will appear if we call to mind that one idea under which all obedience is comprised, namely, LOVE. It was lately observed that "Love is the fulfilling of the law;" and that this is a pleasant emotion of the mind, no other proof needs to be sought for besides the consciousness of each individual. Well-regulated love, love exercised towards all beings in accordance with the claims of each, cannot fail to be productive of unalloyed happiness.

It is true, that love exercised towards the wretched takes the form of pity or compassion; and as there will be unhappy beings in existence, and as the inhabitants of heaven cannot be ignorant of the fact, the question may be asked, whether such knowledge will not prove a perpetual bar to perfect happiness.

We may refer, in reply, to the character and happiness of God. He is full of compassion; yet he sees fit to punish evil-doers; nor can it be imagined that the suffering which he inflicts diminishes aught of his supreme felicity. If it could be supposed that any beings endured more pain than they ought to endure, then doubtless a compassionate mind would be rendered unhappy by the thought of their sufferings. But such a case as this never occurs in the government of God. If it were not, on the whole, right and proper and necessary, that the wicked should suffer, God would not have appointed them to suffer. The same considerations which induce a wise and gracious being to inflict punishment, prevent his being rendered unhappy by a knowledge of the pain inflicted.

Now, in proportion as any creatures are acquainted with the divine character, and are convinced

of the rectitude of the divine conduct, will they think and feel with God in reference to every branch of his administration. There is no need to suppose that pity, even for the condemned spirits and men in prison, will be banished from the minds of the blessed ; but at that point where pity would become pain, a sense of God's wisdom, justice, and love will interpose.

Even in this imperfect state such views as these have proved effectual preventives of murmuring. Thus "Aaron held his peace," when two of his sons were smitten with death for their impiety. In the upper world, where the benevolence of God in all his dispensations will be known, this acquiescence in the divine administration will doubtless be uninterrupted.

Another description of the character of the blessed, is *resemblance to the Son of God, and to God himself.*

The chief glory of man at his creation was his bearing on his soul the impress of the divine holiness. His present degradation consists mainly in his being totally unlike his Maker. "The gold is become dim ; the most fine gold is changed. The crown is fallen from his head." But all things valuable and excellent are restored to the believer by Christ. Even now a resemblance may be traced between the Saviour and his redeemed people ; and in that world the likeness shall be inconceivably more exact. "Beloved, now are we the Sons of God : it doth not appear what we shall be ; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Here truly is both *honour* and *happiness*. The most splendid earthly titles are often found unconnected with any real, that is, any moral, dignity. But they who are called "the Sons of God" shall be such in character as well as in name ; and this

is a glory in the presence of which worldly honours fade and disappear.

Secular distinctions, too, it is well known, can by no means secure the happiness of the possessor. Some of the most elevated are at the same time the most wretched of mankind. But he who resembles God could not be miserable any where; and in heaven he cannot fail to be supremely blessed. The sources of distress are either *outward* or *inward*; and of these, the latter are by far the most numerous and copious. That there shall be nothing external to molest, is a circumstance involved in the very idea of heaven; and that there shall be no inward source of pain, is proved by the perfection of character which the redeemed shall possess. Desires ungratified make up the principal part of present unhappiness, so far as respects the inner man. In that world no desire shall be felt which God does not approve, and every desire which God shall approve he will fulfil. The sense of want, therefore, will be wholly unknown.

To the man who "hungers and thirsts after righteousness," the prospect of a state of perfect holiness is unspeakably attractive. At present, Christian, it often happens that when you would do good evil is present with you, so that you cannot do the things that you would. There, to will and to do shall be the same. No more shall you have to deplore "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." No more shall you feel the pain arising from the consciousness of having offended the God whom you love. Most cordially do you join with the Psalmist in exclaiming, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness."

LET US NOW INQUIRE INTO THE NATURE OF THE EMPLOYMENTS OF THAT STATE.

For the word of God gives no countenance to

the notion that heaven is a state of absolute quiescence and motionless inactivity. Indeed, if not a sentence relative to the subject were contained in the Scripture, there would still be the strongest possible presumption in favour of the contrary opinion. Man, in a healthy state of body and of mind, is inclined to activity, and derives no small part of his enjoyment from action; and there is no ground for supposing that the essential attributes of human nature will be changed. But we are not left to conjecture or presumptive proof. We have numerous and clear intimations respecting the employments of the blessed.

Without professing to give a complete epitome of the scripture history of heaven, we may consider CONTEMPLATION, MEDITATION, CONVERSE, and WORSHIP, as among the principal occupations of that happy world.

“The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.” Whatever God has made is worthy of regard. The most insignificant parts of creation are full of wonders, and are well calculated to repay the attentive observer. Where knowledge and piety meet, nature is found to afford inexhaustible materials for agreeable and useful employment. The Christian Philosopher derives both pleasure and profit from his examination of the works of God. Admiration and gratitude, two of the pleasantest emotions of which the mind is susceptible, are perpetually called forth. Think of heaven, then, in this view, bearing in recollection the superior advantages which that state will furnish for contemplating the works of God with understanding, delight, and benefit. The intellectual faculties will be enlarged; and the sphere of observation will be vastly more extensive. Whether the local situation of the heavenly paradise will be, as some suppose, our own globe, renovated and purified, or some distant part of the universe, it is not unreasonable to imagine that the

spiritual bodies of the blessed may possess powers of locomotion at present unknown; or, at least, that if confined, as now, to one world, there may be enjoyed a power of vision far superior to what even philosophy and art can now furnish.

Another advantage which the dwellers in that world will enjoy for contemplating the works of God aright, is their possessing a spirit of fervent piety, which will induce them to give to God the glory due to his name in every instance wherein they discover his handy-work. This constant reference of all that is benevolent in contrivance and powerful in operation, to God, will greatly add to the pleasure of the beholders. A Father's hand will be seen in all; and the thought, that the Framer of all the beautiful objects and worlds within sight is, and will for ever be, united to themselves in bonds of condescending love, will give a relish, the degree of which is not conceivable by us, to every survey of the works of nature.

MEDITATION will assuredly constitute an important part of the employment of heaven.

Recollections of the past will doubtless often occur to the mind. The sorrows which were endured upon earth will render the heavenly state the more delightful. The battles which were fought with sin and hell will enhance the value of victorious rest. The sins which were committed will not be forgotten; but so thorough will be the assurance of forgiveness, and of the certainty of sinning no more, that the peace and joy of the soul will not be disturbed. Nay, even the recollection of sins will give occasion for grateful and joyful admiration of that love, which, notwithstanding, brought the soul to heaven. The love of God, whence originated the design of saving the rebellious, the love of the Saviour in giving his life a ransom for many, and the love of the Spirit in regenerating the soul, will be subjects of frequent

and delightful thought. And if the plan of redeeming love is found to be capable of making the heart of the believer burn within him in holy love, imperfectly as the subject is now understood; with what rapture will he meditate on it in that world! "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known." Then will every one of the redeemed enjoy for ever the privilege granted formerly for a short season to the favoured apostle, when being caught up into the third heaven, he heard unspeakable things, which it is not possible for man to utter.

The truths which relate to the kingdom of God are "things which the angels desire to look into." "Unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places are made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Fresh discoveries of the wisdom, love, and power of God, in the scheme of human salvation, shall be perpetually obtained both by angels and by saints.

"The nations of the saved" will also retrace, with deep interest, the way by which the Lord their God led them in the desert of the world. How pleasing will it be to mark the steps by which divine mercy guided them first into, and then along, the path which terminated in the heavenly Canaan. Here they will observe a spot which was to them what the passage over the Red Sea was to the children of Israel. Their enemies pressed hard upon them, and there was no visible way of escape. But they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. In many a place will they observe a pillar of remembrance with Eben-ezer inscribed upon it; and a still greater number of places will they discover where a similar monument would have been reared, but for that insensibility to the divine goodness which so often marked their character, and the pardon of which will fill their hearts with love.

“The spirits of just men made perfect” discover innumerable proofs of the truth, that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.” Those very occurrences, which at the time wore the most gloomy aspect, are at length seen to have yielded the most beneficial results. With a fulness of conviction, and an ardour of feeling, to which they were strangers before, they can now say, in reference to the whole of their Lord’s procedure towards them, “He hath done all things well.”

But their meditations are not engrossed by things which relate to themselves alone. The law of love being now in full power within their breasts, they “mind also the things of others.” Among the dwellers in heaven there is no occasion for the exercise of that branch of sympathy which consists in weeping with them that weep ; but there is both ample room and ready inclination to rejoice with them that rejoice. The kindness of God towards their kindred and associates, and towards the church at large, from the beginning to the end of time ; and the conduct of God in the world, for the sake of the church, furnish matter for admiring thought. All history is to the redeemed *sacred* history, on account of the links of connexion which they discover to exist between the providence and the grace of God. The aggregate of the events which have transpired on this earth is seen to be the history of redemption.

In Heaven there will also be SOCIETY AND CONVERSE.

“They shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down with *Abraham*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, in the kingdom of God.” *Enoch* is there, for “he was translated, that he should not see death ; and before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” *Abel* is there, for “he obtained

witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." *Noah* is there, for he "became an heir of the righteousness which is by faith." *Moses* and *Elijah* are there, for on the mount of transfiguration they "appeared in glory." That "all the prophets" are there we have the testimony of Jesus to assure us. The apostles are there, for it was to them personally that Christ said, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." The believers who lived at Thessalonica, in the days of Paul, with all persons of like character, are there, for that apostle felt himself authorized to say to them, "Ye shall be our joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming." "A hundred and forty-four thousand" (a large determinate number put for a much larger number unknown) "of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" are there, with a multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues;" for John, "in the spirit," saw them in heaven.

And besides all these, there is also "an innumerable company of angels," greater in power and might.

The imperfections which attach to the best characters on earth, and which often prove an alloy to the pleasure of social intercourse, shall be unknown in heaven; where there shall be no envy, jealousy, bigotry, party-spirit, censoriousness, passion, or any such like unlovely temper. If differences of opinion may still prevail on any points, there will be, notwithstanding, so perfect an agreement on all the master truths, that alienation of heart cannot possibly be felt. The inhabitants of heaven may not all possess the same capacity, nor acquire at once the same measure of information; but none shall be weak or ignorant, and, what is better, none will be conceited or vain. The most exalted intelligences will be always willing both to teach and to learn.

Society of this nature will be a constant source both of improvement and of delight.

Imagine to yourself a group of heavenly beings listening to *Gabriel*, while he relates events which happened "before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth was formed." Hear him describe in majestic style, incomparably superior to the language of the most sublime poetry, and without any mixture of fiction, the creation of the world, and the gladness which pervaded heaven when "the morning-stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy."

Imagine another company, to whom the *Progenitor of the human race* is telling the history of the first events which transpired on the earth; his view of Paradise on his first awaking to conscious existence; his sin, and the sorrow it occasioned; the refreshment he felt on hearing the sound of the first promise, and the gratitude which he has never ceased to feel to the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, for repairing the breach which his own apostasy had made.

The *patriarchs*, the *prophets*, and the *apostles*, will all possess a fund of information peculiar to themselves, and to the ages in which respectively they lived, and will doubtless be mutually willing to impart and to receive; for one of the characteristics of the heavenly state will be continued progress in knowledge, goodness, and happiness.

Indeed, to beings entirely free from sin, every accession of knowledge will necessarily be a source of piety and of bliss. Every fact, whether in the department of grace, of providence, or of nature, which comes before the mind of a holy creature, will be an illustration of some one or more of the divine attributes, and consequently will both delight the observer, and lift his thoughts to God.

But among the dwellers in heaven, there is none comparable to THE SON OF GOD. He is "the first-born among many brethren." He is "the brightness

of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," insomuch that "he who hath seen him hath seen the Father." Him, having not seen, his redeemed people love; in him, though now they see him not, they rejoice, sometimes even with joy unspeakable and full of glory. What, then, will be their rapture when they "see him as he is?" His presence is the heaven of heavens. When interceding on behalf of his disciples, that they might be brought to heaven at length, it was thus that he prayed: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." The view which Paul took of heaven was the same. To depart, said he, and *to be with Christ* is far better. And John, describing the New Jerusalem, declares that "the city hath no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine on it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

To behold the Saviour is a most delightful employment even now. Have you not found it to be such, my Christian friend, when you have been looking into his word, hearing his gospel, and partaking of the emblems of his death? But you have never yet seen him as he is. That felicity is reserved for heaven. The views of him which you now enjoy are, moreover, transient. Your contemplation of his glory in that world shall be unbroken and perpetual. Very striking were the dying words of the great Dr. Owen. His last performance, as an author, was his celebrated *Treatise on the Glory of Christ*; and on the day of his death, his friend, Mr. Payne, having informed him that his book was gone to press, he expressed himself pleased with the intelligence, but added, "O, Brother Payne, the long-looked-for day is come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done yet, or was capable of doing in this world."

Nor is there any reason to doubt that the redeemed will be admitted to the honour of personal

converse with the Saviour, from whose lips they will imbibe the most exalted knowledge of himself and of his heavenly Father. Something like this we understand to be meant by the words, "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water."

Another employment of heaven will be **WORSHIP.**

The essence of worship, which consists in pious thoughts and feelings, will indeed blend itself with every occupation; but besides this there will be direct acts of worship, and, in all probability, those of a social and public nature. It is becoming that rational creatures should honour God in their social as well as their individual capacity. In this view, therefore, public worship seems to be as proper for heaven as it is for earth. Moreover, it is found that the union of many individuals in any work in which the mind is concerned, awakens sympathy, and thus adds to the intensity of feeling. There is no reason for supposing that this principle, which seems to belong essentially to our nature, will not have place in a superior state. On these accounts, if there be nothing in the Scripture to forbid the expectation, we shall consider it in the highest degree probable that there will be public worship in heaven. But here, too, we are not left to mere conjecture. The redeemed are represented as being constituted not only Kings but *Priests* unto God, and as uniting in adoration and praise. "I beheld," said John, "and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four living ones, and fell before the

throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen : Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

WE ARE NOW TO CONSIDER THE REGARD WHICH THE CHRISTIAN PAYS TO THIS FUTURE STATE OF HAPPINESS.

He desires it; he pursues after it; and he expects it.

He desires it.

Whether he contrasts heaven with *hell*, with *annihilation*, or with *the present life*, it appears to him an object that well deserves his most ardent wishes.

Sometimes he *contrasts it with hell*. It is often so considered in the word of God. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him." This, says the believer, would have been my lot, had not mercy interposed. How amazing the difference between what might have been, and what, I trust, now is, my portion ! The one state is absence from God ; the other is his blissful presence. The one is subjection to his curse ; the other, the full enjoyment of his favour. The one is endless wickedness ; the other is endless purity. The one is the society of the damned ; the other, the society of the blessed. In the one there is "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth ;" in the other, the voice of joy and praise. How deplorable is the folly of the world, who neither by the terrors of perdition, nor by the happiness of heaven, can be persuaded to "flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life !"

Eternal happiness may also be *contrasted with annihilation*. There is something so revolting to nature in the notion of ceasing to exist, that, for

the most part, nothing but the fear of something worse, can make it an object of desire. The Christian, instead of anticipating an eternal sleep, looks forward to a state of perpetual activity, where all the pleasure of action shall be enjoyed without any portion of fatigue.

Very frequently, too, does he find occasion to *compare the future with the present state*. Many are the inconveniences of "the earthly house" which he now occupies. "Without are fightings, within are fears." Pain of body, sorrow of heart, trouble in the circumstances of life, are now, by turns, and sometimes altogether, his lot. But above all, he has to complain of the sin which dwelleth in him. These things make him "groan, being burdened," and, at the same time, serve to make the heavenly habitation prepared for him, an object of strong desire.

This desire, however, admits of *two distinct degrees*. All Christians in their right mind consider heaven as infinitely preferable to earth. But all do not desire speedily to quit the earth for heaven. In order to this, there must be a high measure of spirituality of mind, together with the full assurance of hope. Persons in great trouble do indeed often express a wish to be gone; but this is rather a dissatisfaction with the present world than the desire of heaven. The same piety which makes a prosperous Christian desire to be gone, if such be the will of God, also makes him willingly submit to the postponement of his departure so long as God has any work for him to do here. Thus Paul, although, had he consulted his own inclination alone, he would have desired very soon to be taken to heaven, yet believing it was for the good of his Christian friends that he should remain; was, on the whole, glad to continue with them for their "furtherance and joy of faith."

They who desire heaven, will also *seek after it*.

As we are now arrived at that part of the discourse in which the subject has a direct bearing on personal experience, it may be well for us to stop a moment in order to interrogate our consciences. Let us ask ourselves, then, what we are doing with a view to our final salvation? There are those who find it difficult to answer the question. The fact is they are doing nothing. Desire of heaven, in preference to torment, they cannot fail to possess; but this desire has no sort of influence on their minds and conduct. They are living just as they would live, were there neither a heaven to obtain, nor a hell to shun. Let those who are thus living know assuredly that they are not in the way to heaven. No one arrives at that happy world without taking the path which leads thither.

Do you ask "What is that path?" The answer is, "Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by him." Believe on him and thou shalt not perish, but have everlasting life.

He who is in pursuit of heaven will also *pray* to be conducted thither. Daily will he intreat that God would preserve him from every devious path, and lead him in the way everlasting.

He will, moreover, keep as much as possible out of the way of temptation, and will wage perpetual war with sin, and will endeavour diligently to keep the commands of God. His aim is "to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset him, and to run with patience the race which is set before him, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith." Remember, I beseech you, that although good works cannot raise the soul to heaven, sin unrepented of and unpardoned, will sink it down to hell. If you desire to know the character of those who are truly seeking after heaven, you may see it in our text: "We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be ac-

cepted of him; for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."

The seeking after eternal happiness must necessarily have a powerful influence over a man's conduct, not merely in deterring him from the commission of gross sins; but in directing his choice of companions, of books, and of amusements, and in regulating his regard to worldly things. The Christian traveller lays it down as a maxim of unquestionable truth and importance that whatever pleasures or emoluments would either endanger his salvation, or retard his course towards heaven, are to be regarded as dross or as poison; and that whatever is calculated to assist him in his progress towards his everlasting rest is to be highly valued and diligently improved. Hence, his unwillingness to make the irreligious his bosom friends, his caution in the use of worldly amusements, and his diligent attention to the seasons of private devotion and of public worship.

Do you enter, my brethren, into these views and feelings? Or are you conscious, on the contrary, that nothing has any great attraction for you which does not hold out the promise of present gain or pleasure? If this be the case, you are walking "by sight, and not by faith."

The principles above stated promote cheerful resignation under distress. They who are desirous of making use of those means which contribute to their spiritual welfare will submit to the discipline their heavenly Father employs with the same view. Consequently, though their troubles should be as numerous and pressing as were those of Paul, like him they will say, in consideration of the abundant fruit which their sorrows shall yield: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight

of glory; while we look, not at the things which are seen, but at things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Ah, my Christian friends, we rob ourselves of much consolation and of great benefit, by not realizing in our minds our heavenly inheritance. O for more of that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen!"

Finally, the regard which the Christian has to the future state of happiness includes *the expectation* of it.

The hope of heaven must rest on the promise of God. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life." No expectation of happiness which is not built on this foundation is secure; but here is solid rock. For a man to say, "I would put my trust in Christ, and would hope to arrive in heaven at last were not my sins so great;" manifests ignorance of the path of life. The gospel was expressly designed to afford hope to the unworthy. "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy."

Nor does this contradict the statement in the text, that "every one shall receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." That the wicked will be punished for their wickedness, and in a degree corresponding with their guilt, is generally admitted. The only difficulty connected with the statement in question, respects the righteous. Let it be observed that it is one thing for a man to be admitted to heaven for the sake of his good actions, and another thing for him, being admitted into that world, to have a measure of happiness allotted to him proportioned to the degree in which he has served God on earth. That the most holy men are brought to glory solely on account of the mediation

of Christ, is a truth incorporated with the whole system of the gospel. The best of them say now and will ever say, "We are unprofitable servants." very far indeed are they from putting in any claim on the score of merit. Yet it pleases God, as matter of grace, and for the sake of Christ, through whom their persons and services are accepted, to "remember their work of faith and labour of love;" and thus to "reward them according to their works."

Is your expectation of heaven built on Christ? and are you desirous of knowing whether yours is "a good hope through grace?" Inquire whether there be in you a fitness for heaven as well as a title to it. Are you made "meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light?" Do you now delight in holiness? Is sin your burden, and do you long to be delivered from it? Do you delight to trace the divine perfections as they are seen in the works, and in the word, of God? Is the gospel, especially, the favourite subject of your thoughts? Are the people of God your chosen companions? Is it your desire "to see Jesus," in the institutions of his appointment? Are you in your element when engaged in the service of God? If these things are so, it is evident that heaven, and not hell, is the region suited to your taste and pursuits. "He that hath wrought you for the self same thing is God; who also hath given unto you the earnest of the Spirit." This is the pledge of joys to come. Confidently look for the complete inheritance. You are "an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ."

LECTURE XXIV.

Dec. 26, 1824.

THE CLAIMS WHICH THE TRUE RELIGION HAS
ON EVERY HUMAN BEING.

REV. xxii. 17.

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.

IN a supernatural vision, designed to communicate knowledge of the future state of the Christian Church, through the medium of symbols, John saw "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." God and Christ are, in divine nature, one; their throne is one, and from that throne issues the life-giving stream. All the happiness of the redeemed proceeds from God; but it comes to them through the mediation of Christ.

That happiness will be perfect, uninterrupted, and perpetual, like a pure and ever-flowing river. The like emblem serves also to set forth those primary blessings of the gospel, the participation of which is the preparative for heaven, and the pledge and foretaste of that bliss. Heavenly happiness and spiritual blessings spring from the same source, the throne of God and of the Lamb. They are, moreover, of the same nature; but they differ in degree. The inhabitants of earth drink of the river far from its source; the inhabitants of heaven partake of it at the fountain-head

If any man ask, May I drink of this water, and

may I also invite others to drink of it? the text will answer these inquiries.

The Holy Spirit, by the promises and commands of the sacred word, and by the impressions which he makes on the renovated mind, says, Come. The universal church, here called "the bride," to show its unity and its relationship to Christ, says, Come. And every one who hears the invitation is required not only to accept but to spread it. "Let him that heareth say, Come." And lest a doubt should remain on the mind of any one, as to the universality of the permission and command, it is added, "Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," or *gratis*, "without money and without price." Let him come, and take it as he would the water from a well or spring, which belongs in common to himself and to all his neighbours.

The import of this text, which agrees with the whole tenor of Scripture, plainly shows that the gospel is a system of religion suited to mankind at large; that all men need its blessings; that all are invited to receive them; and that all who have learnt their value should communicate the knowledge to others.

"How sweetly," observes Doddridge, in reference to this text and the verses connected with it, "how sweetly and delightfully does the canon of Scripture conclude, leaving, as it were, the music of heaven upon the attentive ear! O, thou blessed root and offspring of David; thou bright and morning star; impress upon our hearts these thy gracious words, which thou hast condescended to speak from the throne of thy glory; thereby, as it were, to aid the weakness of our faith in those which thou didst deliver while dwelling in mortal flesh! Once did the compassionate Saviour proclaim to a crowded assembly in the temple of Jerusalem, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; and now, behold, he makes the same

proclamation from his celestial temple. He points, as it were, to the fountain-head of happiness, to the springs of the water of life near the throne of God, and says, Whosoever will, let him come, let him take, let him freely take, of this living water. Yea, not content with speaking this language by his Spirit only, he calls on his bride, to lift up her melodious voice, to publish this kind invitation. He calls on every one that hears it to echo it back, as if the excess of his goodness overcame him, as if it were necessary to his own happiness that men should accept of their own salvation."

The claims of the gospel on mankind, as laid down in our text, are two-fold ; it is the duty of man to receive it, and it is his duty to promote its spread.

I. IT IS THE DUTY OF MAN TO RECEIVE THE GOSPEL.

The religion of the Saviour claims to be personally and practically regarded by every human being.

My object will now be to state the grounds on which this claim rests.

I. THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION EVINCES ITS CLAIM TO BE BELIEVED.

It was observed in the first lecture, that truth and fact can never be inconsistent with each other, so that whatever system is supported by many facts, and contradicted by none, ought to be regarded as true.

Those facts which are knowable by man, and which have the most obvious bearing on the subject of religion, were arranged in classes, and it was proposed to bring the principal systems purporting to be religion, to the criterion which such facts furnish.

(1.) *Man is an intelligent being.*

We have examined, on several successive occasions, the leading features of the Christian system ;

and I now appeal to the candid, and ask, Whether this religion be not adapted to man in this view of his character? We have, indeed, met with truths which we could not fully comprehend; but when we took into the account, the acknowledged limits of the range within which our faculties can exercise themselves, we found that there was nothing really surprising in that circumstance. And, on the other hand, we observed a great number of truths relative to God, to the Messiah, to duty, to the soul of man, and to immortality, which are among the most sublime and gratifying ideas conceivable; truths which afford the most pleasing employment to the mind, and which are equally and eminently calculated to enrich the intellect and to better the heart. The effect of such truths is most clearly discernible in the case of persons who, previously to their reception of them, were in a state of general stupidity and ignorance. We have heard of no such instances of benefit accruing from the acquisition of knowledge in any other department of thought. Otaheiteans, Africans, and Hottentots have been speedily raised, by means of the gospel, up to the level of reasonable beings, with whom even polished Europeans might hold profitable converse.

Christianity is not merely not below the dignity of man as an intelligent creature; it is altogether worthy of his attention and admiration in this very respect.

(2.) *Man is a corrupt creature.*

Such the gospel finds him, and as such it treats him. It is *a restorative system*, and such a system man needs. Hence, so soon as any one comes to have a clear insight into his own depraved character, he perceives the gospel to be exactly suited to his case, and scarcely requires any other argument to convince him of its excellence.

(3.) All agree that a true religion may be expected to increase human happiness; and as it is a well-ascertained fact that *sin and suffering are linked to-*

gether, it follows that the most effectual way to make man happy is to make him good. If, then, any religion should make a man worse, this would be a powerful consideration against its claims; if any religion should leave a man as it found him, this would be a suspicious circumstance; but if a religion be evidently adapted to improve the character, this must be a strong argument in its favour. Such is the religion of Christ. Men may *profess* it, and be no better; nay, they may be even worse than before; but none can really embrace it without benefit. Millions of men, who once were "hateful, and hating one another," have been converted, through the gospel, into good and useful members of society.

(4.) *Man is irreligious*, and it is therefore desirable that a system should be brought to him which may have the effect of bringing him over to the service of God.

The assertion, that man is irreligious, is not inconsistent with the more common remark, that man is inclined to religion. The contrariety between these statements is merely verbal. To pay *some regard* to our Maker, Benefactor, and Judge is so obviously reasonable that there are few persons who deny its propriety. So far man is inclined to religion; and in this low sense of the expression he may be called a religious creature. But when we affirm that man is by nature irreligious, we mean that the regard which he is, of himself, inclined to pay to God, is so much inferior to that which is due to God, that in strict propriety of speech he must be considered to be without religion.

On this ground, then, we judge that a system of religious truth, to be adapted to human nature, must be one which not merely exhibits a religion good in the abstract, but which also contains such elements as are calculated to bring over to personal piety beings who at present are in an irreligious condition. How can this object be so effectually secured as by appealing to the strongest emotions

of the human soul,—sorrow and joy, fear and hope? Such is the method adopted in the gospel; and the happy consequence is that this system, when fairly set before men, and attended with that divine influence which is never withheld when implored, becomes effectual to bring all sorts of men, those of no religion, and those of false religion, to pay that practical and habitual regard to God wherein real piety consists.

And this circumstance, it may be observed, is not only a strong presumptive proof of the divine origin of Christianity, but also furnishes an argument equally conclusive in favour of that view of Christianity to which the epithets *serious* and *evangelical* are applied; since it is undeniable that this is the kind of religion which is found, in fact, to be most effectual to bring men over to the love and service of God. It was of THE GOSPEL, properly so called, and not of something like it, that Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.”

(5.) A vast number of facts which took place in past ages have been handed down to us by civil *history*. The religion of the Bible has also a history connected with it. The agreement of these two histories together affords a confirmation of the truth of each. Each, indeed, has its own separate and sufficient evidence. That the leading facts which are related by the writers of secular history are true, no reasonable man doubts. The same may be affirmed of the account which we have in the Scriptures, of the origin of the Christian religion. In the absence of other testimony we should be obliged, on the rules of impartial judgment, to receive, as facts, the events which the sacred writers allege to be such. But the direct attestation which other writers, wholly unconnected with religion, give to those facts, imparts additional strength to the evidence; which is, altogether, of so indubitable

a character, that we are placed in this predicament ; we must either receive the New Testament as an authentic history, or we must declare all history to be fable.

From this view of the connexion there is between well ascertained facts, and the truth of the Christian religion, we consider ourselves authorised to regard the gospel as unquestionably true ; and, being true, to claim from every reasonable man the assent of his understanding.

2. WE ASK YOU TO RECEIVE THE RELIGION OF CHRIST ON ACCOUNT OF ITS INCOMPARABLE EXCELLENCE.

We use the word incomparable, in this connexion, in its strict acceptance. The most remarkable of all other religions, particularly *the Pagan, the Modern Jewish, the Mohammedan, and the Deistical*, have passed under review, and we have perceived all of them to be wanting in some essential attributes of true piety.

On PAGAN RELIGION we observed the black marks of cruelty and licentiousness, forming a perfect contrast to the benevolence and purity of the gospel of Christ. In the religion of the MODERN JEWS we observed a lamentable mixture of qualities apparently opposite, but which often meet in the same character, Credulity and Unbelief, Superstition and Profaneness. In the religion of the followers of MOHAMMED we found express sanction given to a licentious life, and to the cherishing of ill-will towards persons professing a different creed ; but no mention made of the way by which pardon and purity may be obtained. Besides all this, we saw that *history*, which proves the Christian religion to be true, proves the Mohammedan to be false, inasmuch as it gives a distinct account of the fraud and force by means of which it was established. In all the history of that religion there is not a single fact which bears even

the semblance of a proof that Mohammed was a teacher sent from God.

In the religion of DEISTS we found four things especially which mark it as a system to be refused; *viz.*

Its extreme unreasonableness in rejecting the gospel in the face of evidence so abundant and satisfactory;

Its being without any standard of truth;

Its affording no certainty of immortality; and

Its giving no security to morals.

We then proceeded to examine certain SYSTEMS WHICH BEAR THE NAME OF CHRISTIAN, but which appear to be, in some important particulars, erroneous or defective.

THE GREEK AND ROMAN CATHOLIC systems of faith and worship we found to be encumbered with numerous additions of human invention; and the latter of these sects, particularly, to be chargeable with the serious offence of elevating human expositions of divine truth above the word of truth itself.

We next took occasion to notice THE OPINIONS OF THOSE WHO DENY THE DEITY AND ATONEMENT OF THE SON OF GOD; and it appeared to us that the system in question differed essentially from the gospel of Christ.

We then proceeded to examine THAT MODIFICATION OF THE GOSPEL WHICH ALLOWS A CHRISTIAN TO LIVE IN SIN; and we were led to conclude, with the Apostle James, that "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

And, lastly, we found that THE RELIGION OF THOSE WHO DO NOT GIVE THEIR MINDS AND HEARTS TO THE TRUTH OF GOD, notwithstanding the possible soundness of their creed, is altogether unavailing.

Since we examined the above systems we have investigated the first principles of THE RELIGION

OF CHRIST, as delineated in the Scriptures, and as moulded into the character and life. We saw that real piety begins in a most beneficial change, which the Spirit of God, by the agency of divine truth, produces in the human soul; that the man who is thus "renewed in the spirit of his mind," is brought into the habit of contemplating God and Christ, with faith which worketh by love, and which shows itself in complacency, gratitude, desire, and obedience; that he who loves God loves his brother also, and that such a one lives in the hope of enjoying a blessed immortality.

Extremely imperfect as these sketches of false and true religion have been, they have been faithful, I trust, to matter of fact. Though far from being finished portraits, they have been correct outlines.

And now am I not justified in denominating THE RELIGION OF THE GOSPEL INCOMPARABLE, and in urging your attention to it on this ground?

You admit that religion of some kind is desirable. Permit me, then, to plead with you on this principle. Will you deliberately choose a false religion? That surely were discreditable to you as a rational being. If you are of a candid and ingenuous temper, you love truth in every department of knowledge. Why should you reject it in that very department where it is most of all valuable?

Why do you consider religion of some kind to be necessary? Not, I hope, *solely* from the consideration of its power to hold together the several parts of the fabric of human society. Away with a sentiment so utterly repugnant to all just notions either of religion, of truth, or of morals. This is to represent falsehood as the parent of virtue; it is to convert Religion, the fairest form that dwells upon earth, into a mere scarecrow to deter silly people from doing harm. I shall suppose that your acknowledgment of the importance of religion is founded on a better principle; that you approve of

it because you perceive that, irrespective of the civil benefits which flow from this source, *man ought to pay some regard to God, some regard to virtue, and some regard to his future condition.* On this ground, then, I urge your cordial reception of the religion of Christ. My reasons are these :

(1.) *You own that some regard to God is proper.* Why? Because his character, and the relation he bears to you as your Sovereign and Benefactor, render it evidently becoming that you should cherish admiring and grateful sentiments towards him. Well, the very same considerations which evince the propriety of your thinking of God *at all*, evince the propriety of your thinking of him *aright*, so far as you have the means of acquiring just conceptions of him. On your own principle, then, you are inexcusable, if you neglect those Scriptures which God has caused to be written for the very purpose ; that, by your thence acquiring true ideas respecting him, you might be affected with just emotions of heart towards him.

(2.) *You own that some regard to virtue is proper ;* and I contend, that the same considerations which show that you should seek after *any degree of moral excellence*, show that you should desire *the highest degree of it* of which your nature is capable. Here, again, you are conducted to religion. Religion lays down the best rules of goodness ; religion supplies the most cogent motives to goodness ; religion calls down from heaven a supernatural influence to produce goodness in the heart. If, then, your attachment to virtue be any thing more than nominal, you must become the diligent student of the religion of Christ.

(3.) *You allow that some regard to the future life is proper ;* and I argue that the same considerations which prove that *any such regard* is necessary, prove also that *such a regard is necessary as will ensure eternal happiness.* Now, this can be done in no other way than by a serious attention to the

gospel ; since He who determines the future condition of every human being has declared that there is no way to happiness except by faith in the Redeemer of man. Here, then, as before, you are led to the true religion.

In fact, there is no intermediate point at which you can, without inconsistency, stop between an absolute denial of the propriety of any sort of religion, and a practical regard to the religion of Jesus Christ. The Atheist and the serious Christian are the only persons who act in conformity with their acknowledged principles. The Atheist, indeed, manifests a pitiable perversion of mind in denying the being of God ; but he is, at least, consistent with himself in discarding religion altogether. The persons who occupy intermediate stations between Atheism and real Christianity are right in admitting the being of God, and in acknowledging that some regard to him is proper ; but they act inconsistently in not seeking to pay him *that sort of regard which he claims*. The true Christian alone follows up the principle which others admit, in common with himself, to its legitimate consequences.

A madman is defined to be one who reasons well on false principles ; a fool, one who reasons ill on just principles ; and a man of sound mind is one whose principles and inferences are both good. A distinction, somewhat similar, obtains in matters of religion ; the chief difference is, that in such matters the heart is as much concerned as the head. The Atheist acts the part of a madman ; the merely nominal Christian that of a fool ; the real Christian, though frequently called both madman and fool, is in reality the only character in the world to whom, with respect to religion, neither of those names is applicable.

As a subject of the King of kings, your first duty was to yield constant obedience to his laws ;

after rebelling against him, your next duty is to return to allegiance. The past cannot be recalled. You *have* rebelled against him. You are now in a state of rebellion. It is incumbent on you, then, instantly to return to him in humble penitence, and with desires of future obedience. Such a return to God can be effected only by a cordial reception of the gospel of Christ, since no man cometh to the Father but by him. To believe in Christ, then, without delay, is matter of undeniable obligation. Accordingly, we read that "God commandeth all men, every where, to repent." And our Saviour, in answer to the question, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." God the Father also issued this proclamation concerning Christ, "This is my beloved Son, Hear ye Him." The receiving of the gospel is the sure and only way to return to God; consequently every day that you spend in neglect of that gospel is a day of continued and wilful rebellion against God. Let none, then, conceive of unbelief as if it were a merely negative thing. The *term* is negative in its construction; but the thing itself is a positive evil. It is disobedience of the worst kind. No sort of opposition to the authority of the Most High can be of a more marked character than neglect of the gospel is.

But I would not rest my exhortation solely on the ground of duty; on the score of INTEREST I beseech you. Are you young? O how desirable, then, it is that you should enter on the path of life with a wise and faithful guide! Thus will you escape a thousand errors, vices, and sorrows, into which you may otherwise fall. Let me prevail on you to say to God, "My Father, be thou the guide of my youth!"

But are the shadows of the evening gathering around you? How indispensable it is that you

acquire a good hope of possessing a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, when that moment, now apparently so near, shall arrive, in which your earthly tabernacle shall be taken down.

Are you possessed of wealth? There is, then, great need of your paying that regard to "things not seen and eternal," which shall counteract the undue and perilous influence of worldly prosperity.

Are you poor and afflicted? Religion will administer consolation which the world can neither give nor take away.

But whatever be your age or condition, you are both *sinful* and *mortal*; and these are circumstances which, duly considered, show that to neglect religion is to throw away your most valuable interests. Were you in danger of falling into temporal distress, and some practicable method were suggested to you by which you might avoid the dreaded evil, and render the residue of your days prosperous and happy, would you refuse to comply with the suggestion? Such conduct would bring you under the suspicion of labouring under alienation of mind. And yet your conduct, in rejecting the only Saviour, is inconceivably more absurd. When a few years are passed it will be all one whether you spent your days on earth in pleasure or in pain; but when millions of ages are gone by the effect of unbelief will remain unaltered. I entreat you to do your best towards forming a conception of *ETERNITY*; not in the way of cold speculation, but as a person deeply interested in the momentous subject. Endeavour to grasp the thought that you have entered on a conscious existence which will never, never, never end. Shut your eyes, for a while, on the world, and contemplate everlasting realities. Imagine the hour of death to have arrived, and yourself on the very point of taking a last look at earthly things. No kindness or skill "hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit." Your friends

are weeping around you, but all is in vain. The time of your departure is at hand. The station which, in imagination, you now occupy, and which you will soon occupy in reality, is the only spot on this side the grave where a right estimation can be formed of present and future things. On the narrow neck of land which separates time from eternity you can look at both worlds, and compare them together. Spend a few moments in that salutary employment. Look at *this world*. Does it now appear to be deserving of your exclusive regard? "It is less than nothing, and vanity."—Look at *that world*. Does it now appear to have been unworthy of your diligent pursuit? You wonder that it did not engross every thought and every desire. You have neglected the great salvation. What horror seizes you! You would give a thousand worlds, if you had them, for a little longer space of precious time. But all your wishes are unavailing. You never truly sought the favour of God in the day of health; and both your friends and yourself doubt much the sincerity of your repentance, procrastinated as it has been to the last hour.

And now endeavour to imagine that you have actually entered on the realities of an invisible state. "The body returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it."

But here imagination fails us. O the inconceivable horror of the disembodied spirit on its entrance into the world of despair!

At the appointed time "all that are in their graves hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have evil to the resurrection of damnation." The former "inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world;" the latter "depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." A portion of duration, equivalent to one of our present years,

is gone ; a hundred years are gone ; a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, a million, a million million ; but more are coming, and more, and more still ; and so on for ever ; for eternity is still the same. “What, then, shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?”

But I plead with you also on considerations of GRATITUDE.

“God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” In these words you have a representation, drawn by an unerring pen, of the regard which God has to guilty man ; whence you may learn the nature of that regard which is due to him in return. You are to consider yourself, whatever your past character has been, to be as really invited and as truly welcome to participate in the blessings of the gospel as if your name were inserted in the evangelical record. Our text speaks this language. It says, “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

My dear friends, are you altogether unmoved by such kindness as this ? You are not unsusceptible of emotion when a fellow-mortal acts generously towards you. If you had treated a superior and a benefactor with great injustice, and he were, notwithstanding, of his own accord, to propose a reconciliation, and to adopt measures for that special purpose, you would not hesitate to comply with his kind intention. You would hail the proposal with joy. Every feeling of hostility would depart from your mind, and you would be anxious to evince your gratitude in the most decisive manner. Why are you not thus affected towards God ?

Let the very thought of your insensibility affect you, and excite you to pray that God would "take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh."

In connexion with God's readiness to pardon and bless you, you should also notice the opportunity which he grants for your return to him. Take into consideration your own guilt and God's power, and you will see that the very circumstance of your continuing within reach of mercy is itself a great blessing, and proves God's willingness to bestow a greater. You have deserved that he should punish, and he can punish; why then does he not punish? Thus the excellent John Howe speaks, in a discourse on God's general good-will to man, "What doth all this signify, but a continual miracle of divine patience? And what is that to be resolved into, but divine goodness? Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? When we argue, from hence, to persuade sinners to turn unto God, do we argue from a feigned thing? Is it not a great reality, from which we are thus directed to argue, when the Scripture itself gives us the direction? It teaches men so to consider the matter themselves, as in 2 Peter iii. 9, 15. 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' And we are to account the long-suffering of the Lord *salvation*. Why doth he bear with an offending creature, in so continued a course, when he hath so many advantages against him, so many thunderbolts at command in a moment? Why doth he spare when the creature is guilty, and he is mighty? Why? the apostle tells you. Count the long-suffering of the Lord *salvation*; to wit, that he doth use this method as an

apt medium, as a proper means to bring man to consider."

You may well believe, therefore, that God is disposed to pity and forgive, when *your very continuance in life is a proof of it*. Observe, in this instance, as in many others, how the word and the providence of God are in unison. The word of God declares, that he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he turn from his wickedness and live; and the providence of God speaks the same language. Had God preferred punishing to pardoning, you had been long since "where hope never comes." See, then, in the very fact of your being still, by God's express providence, in the land of probation, an unquestionable token of his compassionate disposition towards you. May this view of his patience melt your heart, and bring you to the foot of his throne in penitence, submission, and love!

II. I proceed to press on your attention THE CLAIMS WHICH THE TRUE RELIGION HAS ON YOU IN REFERENCE TO OTHERS. It is your duty not merely to receive it, but *to spread it*.

You must not be content with drinking of this life-giving stream yourself; you must also invite your brethren of the human race to partake of it. "Let him that heareth say, Come." The duty rests not on this text of Scripture alone; it is an essential branch of practical piety. In proof of this, it may suffice to remind you of the two constituent parts of the divine law,—love to God and love to man.

LOVE TO GOD requires that you should put forth your best efforts to propagate the religion of truth. Every erroneous system, just in proportion to the quantum of error which it contains, casts dishonour on the character of the Most High. One system denies his wisdom; another, his power; a third, his holiness and justice; a fourth, his

goodness; and a fifth, his truth; and the imaginary being in whom any divine attribute is wanting is not God. The substitution of such a being in the place of Jehovah partakes of the nature both of atheism and idolatry. It is denying God to be what he is, and considering him as being what he is not. In order to give to God the glory due unto his name, it is necessary to conceive of God as he really is. Thus, too, and thus only, will those affections be called forth towards him which his glorious perfections demand. He, then, who loves God must necessarily desire that "his name may be known upon earth," in order that the people may praise him, yea, that "all the people may praise him."

LOVE TO MAN awakens the same desire. The second great command of the law is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and our Saviour, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, has given us to understand that every man is to be regarded as our neighbour who needs our help, and to whom we are able to give help. National and religious distinctions have no place here, except in this respect, that the wider the difference is between any man's religion and the religion of truth which God has given to us, the more urgent are that man's claims on our sympathy and aid.

The benefits, present and eternal, which man derives from the religion of Christ have been already considered. Put, then, these two things together, *viz.* that we are required to do all the good we can to our fellow-creatures, and, that the true religion is the best thing they can have; and it follows, undeniably, that it is our duty to exert ourselves vigorously for the promotion of this religion in the world. In urging you to receive the truth, I observed that there was no point at which you could stop, consistently with sound reason, between atheism and personal piety. And I would now extend the remark to the subject which is

before us. The case is this. Here is a system, and the only system, of faith and practice, which leads men to pay that regard to God, to virtue, and to immortality, which, on the admission that there is such a being as God, that there is such a thing as moral obligation, and that man is, to live for ever;—it is clearly his duty and his interest to pay. Hence is deduced *the reasonableness of religion, considered in the abstract*. But in order to man's actually manifesting this regard to God, to virtue, and to immortality, it is requisite that he not merely yield a cold assent to the truth and excellence of this religion, but that he make a personal and habitual use of it; since without this practical godliness not one of the purposes which religion is designed to answer can be accomplished. Hence we infer *the necessity of personal piety*. But this reasoning is as applicable to one man as it is to another. It is just as desirable that *your neighbour* should be religious as it is that you should be so. *He* will not honour God, *he* will not do his duty in the world, *he* will not seek after immortal life, if he do not become experimentally acquainted with the religion which happily you have received. Religion teaches you to love your neighbour as yourself. The most anxious desire of your heart, *as to yourself*, is that you may experience the blessings which are connected with true religion. This, consequently, is the strongest wish you feel for your brethren of mankind. Hence we conclude that *zealous exertions for the promotion of truth in the world are not merely defensible, but are absolutely essential to the entireness of Christian character*; and that THERE IS NO INTERMEDIATE STATION, WHICH YOU CAN CONSISTENTLY OCCUPY, BETWEEN DENYING THE VERY BEING OF GOD, AND BECOMING A SERIOUS, ZEALOUS, AND ACTIVE SERVANT OF CHRIST. You have no inclination to dwell on the gloomy and anti-social religion of atheism. Come over, then, to the

land of true piety ; and whatever reproaches should be thrown upon you, content yourself with knowing that you have truth, reason, and heaven on your side. "Be ye therefore steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Thus acting, you may, without incurring the charge of hypocrisy, pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

The offering up of such petitions as these is one of the ways by which you may promote the spread of the true religion ; for God heareth prayer, and it is his plan that the blessings which he purposes to bestow on man shall be asked for at his hand. A spirit of fervent prayer, generally diffused among Christians, is one of the most encouraging tokens of God's kind intentions towards the Church and the world. Amongst those blessings which we ask of God, we must never forget to regard the influence of the Holy Spirit as the chief, since therein altogether depends the success of all evangelical efforts. It is now as it was anciently, when "Paul planted and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."

The sending forth of good men to preach the gospel, the dissemination of the Holy Scriptures, the distribution of religious books and tracts, and the instruction of the rising race in the principles of Christianity, are unexceptionable means for the spread of true religion, and demand the cheerful co-operation of all who love God and man. The poorest may help forward these designs by their prayers ; all who are raised above abject poverty may give money ; and some may give time and personal labour. Thousands of Christians are so acting in the present age, and great good has actually been effected. We cherish the hope that

a brighter day than mankind have yet seen is dawning on the world. The most glowing philanthropy can wish for nothing better, than that all men should receive and practise the true religion.

In the prophetic description of a period when this consummation shall be realized, it is declared, that "they shall no more say every man to his neighbour, and every man to his brother, Know the Lord; for all shall know him, from the least unto the greatest;" words which intimate that, previously to the arrival of that desired day, such means as these should be employed. You have, perhaps, a neighbour or a brother who is leading an irreligious life. Who can tell what effect a word of kind expostulation may produce? Unnumbered instances have occurred of persons, who once neglected public worship, having been induced, in consequence of a friendly invitation, to hear that gospel which has made them "wise unto salvation." Every Christian should consider the persons to whom he has access, as having a special claim on his benevolent efforts. It is impossible to calculate the amount of good which would result from the universal adoption of this principle as a rule of action. Wait not, however, for others; but resolve so to act yourself. "Let him that heareth say, Come."

A profession of faith in Christ tends to promote the cause of religion. A sort of general profession is made by all who do not declare themselves not to be Christians. But a more decided avowal of attachment to the truth is needful. Without the unseasonable introduction of religious topics in conversation, or the use of quaint and unintelligible language, a man who desires to observe the Saviour's command, to "confess him before men," will take care to avoid every speech and action which might lead spectators to conclude that he did not wish to be considered a Christian; and will

seize every suitable opportunity of making known his regard to the gospel of Christ. This unequivocal profession of religion is highly beneficial in its effects. A partial *profession* of religion *looks* like a partial *reception* of it, and tends to encourage in indecision those who are halting between two opinions. It tends to foster the erroneous and dangerous opinion that something less than the giving up of the heart to God may suffice. An open avowal of faith in Christ, on the contrary, administers a tacit, but powerful, rebuke to the wavering; and, besides this, it gives encouragement to those who are in good earnest in religion. But in order that those benefits be realized, it is absolutely necessary that *profession and practice agree together*. If a man name the name of Christ, and depart not from iniquity, his profession is prejudicial to the cause of truth. Scarcely any thing more conduces to promote the spread of religion than a decided profession, supported by consistency of character; and nothing throws a greater obstacle in the way of its progress than the unholy life of one who bears the Christian name.

Without attempting to enumerate all the methods by which the friends of truth may promote its spread, I must not neglect to make distinct mention of the great good which may be done by *parental instruction and example*. The frequent opportunities which parents have for communicating knowledge to their children, the veneration with which children are naturally inclined to regard their parents, and the blessing which is promised to follow religious education, conspire to assure us that incalculable benefits may be expected to flow to society from this source, if the appointed means be diligently used. The command is, "Train up a child in the way he should go," and the promise is, "When he is old he will not depart from it." Very many are the families in which,

from age to age, genuine religion has flourished ; and where the above promise *seems* not to be fulfilled, who will venture to affirm that due diligence and skill have been employed ?

Let religion be a frequent topic of conversation with your children ; not in a frightfully-formal manner, but in a pleasant tone, and in a familiar style. Cause them, like Timothy, from childhood to know the Holy Scriptures. "The things which God has revealed belong to you and to your children for ever." The Bible is a mine of spiritual wealth more precious by far than gold or diamonds. Teach your children to dig in this mine. Direct them to those parts of it where the precious ore may most readily be found, and put implements in their hands suited to their feeble grasp. Let them but learn to collect wealth from this inexhaustible storehouse ; and whether you leave them with or without worldly possessions, they will be truly rich, "rich towards God," and expectants of an inheritance above the skies.

But remember, that no verbal instructions will avail any thing, unless they are enforced by the silent but powerful eloquence of a pure, pious, and benevolent life ; and that not even both together will ensure success without the blessing of God, obtained by fervent prayer.

And now, before I take leave of the subject, I must CAUTION YOU AGAINST DELAY.

I will suppose that some of my hearers are convinced of the justice of the claims which the True Religion has on them. You own that both duty and interest require that you should meet those claims. You are *almost persuaded* to be a Christian ; but you say, "Go thy way for this time ; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

I cannot exhibit to you the extreme folly of such dilatoriness in any way more effectually than

by quoting the following well-known lines of YOUNG :

“ Be wise to-day, 'tis madness to defer ;
 “ Next day the fatal precedent will plead ;
 “ Thus on, till wisdom is pushed out of life.
 “ Procrastination is the thief of time ;
 “ Year after year it steals, till all are fled ;
 “ And to the mercies of a moment leaves
 “ The vast concerns of an eternal scene.
 “ If not so frequent, would not this be strange ?
 “ That 'tis so frequent, this is stranger still.

“ Of man's miraculous mistakes this bears
 “ The palm, that all men are about to live ;
 “ For ever on the brink of being born.
 “ All pay themselves the compliment to think
 “ They one day shall not drivel ; and their pride
 “ On this reversion takes up ready praise ;
 “ At least their own, their future selves applaud.
 “ How excellent that life they ne'er will lead !

“ At thirty, man suspects himself a fool ;
 “ Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan ;
 “ At fifty, chides his infamous delay ;
 “ Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve ;
 “ In all the magnanimity of thought
 “ Resolves ; and re-resolves ; then dies the same.”

The former part of this description is the history of the past days of some who hear me. O that the concluding part may not prove to be the prophecy of their future fate ! You have already *resolved*, and *re-resolved*, God grant that you may not *die the same* ! In order that such may not be the sad termination of your career, begin *this very hour* to put your resolution into practice. Lift up your heart to the God of all grace, that he would render good impressions lasting and effectual. This very hour commence the prayer, and repeat it, time after time. Do not, as before, resolve to begin at some future period ; that resolution most likely will come to nothing, as former resolutions have ; but BEGIN NOW.

There are two considerations, my dear friends,

by which, before we part, I would urge your immediate application to God in faith and prayer; one is, that you can never have a better time; the other is, that this may be the only time. The end of another year is come. The end of life is near. "Prepare to meet thy God."

It becomes me gratefully to acknowledge the divine Providence through which I have been permitted to complete the delivery of this course of lectures on False and True Religion, without a single interruption. May God "command the blessing, even life for evermore!" May it be the happiness of the preacher, and of every hearer, to experience, in time and in eternity, the blessings of THE TRUE RELIGION. B

F I N I S.

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