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Franks, James Clarke.
On the apostolical preaching
and vindication of the

HULSEAN LECTURES FOR 1823.



ON THE

APOSTOLICAL PREACHING

AND

VINDICATION OF THE GOSPEL

TO THE

Jews, Samaritans, & devout Gentiles,

AS EXHIBITED IN THE

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, THE EPISTLES OF ST. PETER,

AND

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.



By JAMES CLARKE FRANKS, M. A.

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VICAR OF HUDDERSFIELD, YORKSHIRE.



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1823

TO
SIR JOHN RAMSDEN, BART.
OF
BYRAM,
IN THE COUNTY OF YORK.

SIR,

BEING now about to close my official duties in this University, I cannot let this Volume issue from the press, until I have put upon record a thankful acknowledgment of my obligations to you for that Patronage, which could not have been anticipated by one previously unknown to you, but which has been extended to me in a manner so flattering and disinterested, as greatly to enhance the value of the benefit conferred.

Being appointed by you to a ministerial charge so extensive and important, I must now leave this peaceful scene of literary exertion, not wholly without regret, yet with a pleasing recollection of the manifold advantages and blessings, which, for twelve years, I have here enjoyed. It is, however, no small satisfaction to me, that, through your kindness, I shall now remove to a station of high and honourable

trust; to one, which will place me near my honoured Parents, at that period of their lives when this will be peculiarly gratifying to an only child;—near also to those native scenes, in which the friends and companions of early life still survive, and with which are ever associated some of the purest and happiest feelings of our nature.

So precious to me has been the boon you have bestowed.—I am sensible that I am called upon henceforward to prove to you the sincerity of my gratitude, by the active and effectual discharge of all the varied duties of my office, as “a minister of Christ, and a steward of the mysteries of God,” for the temporal and eternal welfare of the inhabitants of Huddersfield. I would say, therefore, in the words of our Ordination Service; “I will apply myself thereto, the Lord being my helper.”

I remain, Sir,

With every sentiment of gratitude and respect,

Your obliged and obedient servant.

JAMES C. FRANKS.

Substance of certain CLAUSES in the WILL
of the REV. J. HULSE, M.A. dated July 21,
1777.

He founds a LECTURESHIP in the University of
Cambridge.

The *Lecturer* is to be a “Clergyman in the University of Cambridge, of the degree of Master of Arts, and under the age of forty years.” He is to be *elected annually*, “on Christmas-day, or within seven days after, by the Vice-Chancellor for the time being, and by the Master of Trinity College, and the Master of Saint John’s College, or any two of them.” In case the Master of Trinity, or the Master of Saint John’s be the Vice-Chancellor, the Greek Professor is to be the third Trustee.

The *duty* of the said Lecturer is “to preach twenty Sermons in the whole year, that is to say, ten Sermons during the months of April, and May, and the two first weeks in June; and likewise ten Sermons during the months of September, and October, and during the two first weeks of November.”

The *place* of preaching, is to be “Saint Mary’s Great Church in Cambridge:” and the *time*, “either on the Friday morning, or else on Sunday afternoon.”

The *subject* of the said Discourses is to be, “the Evidence for Revealed Religion; the truth and excellence of Christianity; Prophecies and Miracles; direct or collateral proofs of the Christian religion, especially the collateral arguments; the more difficult texts or obscure parts of the Holy Scriptures;” or any one or more of these topics, at the discretion of the Preacher. The subject of the said Discourses is *not* to be “any particular sects or controversies amongst Christians themselves; except some

new and dangerous error, either of superstition, or enthusiasm, as of Popery or Methodism, or the like, either in opinion or practice, shall prevail. And in all the said twenty Sermons, such practical observations shall be made, and such useful conclusions added, as may best instruct and edify mankind.”

“The said twenty Sermons are to be every year printed,” at the Preacher’s expence, “and a new Preacher elected, (except in the case of the extraordinary merit of the Preacher, when it may sometimes be thought proper to *continue* the same person for five or, at the most, for six years together, but for no longer term) nor shall he ever afterwards be again elected to the same duty.”



“AN ABSTRACT of the heads or material parts” of the WILL of the Rev. JOHN HULSE, relative to the *two Scholarships*, founded by him in St. John’s College, and by him directed to be added to the conclusion of the foregoing clauses, “so that such Clergyman, or persons, whom the same may concern, may know that there are such endowments, of which they may claim and take the benefit, under the regulations, and with the qualifications, therein mentioned.”

The Scholars are to be “Undergraduates of St. John’s College, who shall be born in the county palatine of Chester.” “Such Scholar is to be elected by the Master and a majority of the senior Fellows of the said College on Christmas-day, or in the first seven days after,” and candidates are to have the preference, in the order, and with the limitations specified in the following extracts.

1. "The son of any Clergyman, who shall at any time officiate as Curate to the Vicar of Sandbach; or next to him the son of any Vicar or Curate, who shall then live and officiate in the parish of Middlewich, as the proper Minister or Curate of Middlewich; or lastly of any Minister or Curate of the Chapel of Witton, or who shall reside and live in the town of Northwich or Witton, or the adjacent townships of Castle Northwich and Winnington, and shall do the duty of the said Chapel as the proper Minister of Witton (all of them in the said county of Chester.)"

2. "And in default of such persons, then the son of any other Clergyman, who (that is which son) shall be born in either of the said parishes of Sandbach or Middlewich, or in the said Chapelry of Middlewich, shall have the preference. And if none shall be admitted, then the son of any other Clergyman shall be preferred, who (that is which son) shall be born in the said county of Chester, and next in any of the four following counties of Stafford, Salop, Derby, or Lancaster; or lastly, elsewhere in any other county or part of England, provided that it shall appear that the Clergyman who is father to such Scholar is not, if living, or, if dead, was not at the time of his death possessed of any spiritual preferment of more than one hundred and forty pounds a year, clear income; or whose income in every respect shall not exceed the clear yearly value of two hundred pounds in the whole."

"But if no son of any Clergyman, so entitled as aforesaid, shall be elected into such Scholarship, the same shall be given to the son of some lay person, whose clear yearly income does not, if living, and, if dead, did not at the time of his death amount to more than two hundred pounds; and such son being born in the counties of Chester, Stafford, Salop, Derby, and Lancaster, the counties in that order having a preference; or lastly, elsewhere in England."

“ And such Scholar, whether the son of a Clergyman, or Layman, to be elected in manner aforesaid, shall continue to enjoy this my benefaction until he shall take, or be of standing to take his first degree of Bachelor of Arts, unless some other person, being the son of some of the officiating ministers at some of the Churches or Chapels before mentioned, and otherwise qualified as aforesaid, and which qualification, had he been a member of the said College at the time the party in possession of the Scholarship had been elected, would have been entitled to the preference, shall be admitted a member of the said College; in which case the Scholar, who shall then be in possession, shall only hold the same for that year; and the other, with a prior right, shall be elected to the same the year following. And I do appoint the Master and senior Fellows of St. John’s College Trustees for the said Scholarships.”

PREFACE.

THE following work being a continuation of a former course of Lectures, delivered and published in the year 1821,—and the principle, upon which the Author has treated the subject, having been explained in the Preface, and in the second Lecture of his former Volume,—it is unnecessary to repeat the explanation there offered. He then considered “the Evidences of Christianity as stated and enforced in the discourses of *our Lord himself*.” He has proceeded to consider the same subject, as it was propounded by *our Lord’s Apostles*, from the time at which they began their labours, down to the period at which they entered on a new and wholly different field of labour, viz. the instruction of the *idolatrous Gentiles*. Had not the Author been called to undertake the charge of a large and populous Parish, it might have been his endeavour, if “continued” in office, to illustrate the method pursued by the Apostles in their preaching to the idolatrous Gentiles; and to have reviewed

the controversies which originated in the conversion of the Gentiles. And hence he would have been led to examine the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, as the subject of the present Volume has led to the notice of the Epistles of St. Peter, and of that to the Hebrews.

One or more courses, in continuation of the present, would have included the examination of some of the most important and interesting portions of the New Testament; and the entire series would have led to the developement of the plan and scope of the Christian Scriptures,—of those parts, at least, which unfold to us the Gospel *system*. At what time, and in what form, the Author may pursue his investigations, may now be uncertain. He does not entirely abandon the idea; but the difficulty and importance of what still remains untouched, will rather cause him to rejoice that he will not be obliged to prepare, in so hurried a manner, what he may, at some future time, offer in addition.

The last remark suggests another. The Lecturer for the present year is anxious to add his testimony to that of his predecessor, respecting

the excessive and exhausting labour required by the office. He undertook it voluntarily on a former occasion, and was willing to attribute the hurry and difficulty, which he then felt, to the peculiar circumstances under which he performed its duties. A second time he has voluntarily undertaken it, but he has not found that the entire year has sufficed to enable him to prepare, with comfort and satisfaction, what he now is compelled to publish. The preparation of twenty Sermons of such a nature merely for delivery, is too much, and is not required by any similar institution. The Boyle and Bampton Lectures require only *eight*; the Lady Moyer's Lecture, which has now ceased, required the same number. That founded by Lady Donellan in the University of Dublin, at a more recent period, also requires *eight* annually. The Warburtonian Lecture imposes only *four*; and the Lecturers under that institution, and under those of Mr. Boyle and Lady Donellan, have generally published the Lectures of *three years* in the same Volume; thus having time to reconsider, revise, and, if need be, to subjoin notes and illustrations. What completes the distressing destiny of the Hulsean Lecturer, is the circumstance that his twenty Sermons must not only be *preached* within a certain prescribed

time, but actually *printed* within about *six weeks* of the *termination* of his course. Hence his attention, towards the close of the year, is distracted by preparation of Lectures for the Pulpit, revision of others for the press, and the correction of his proof sheets. If this foundation of Mr. Hulse is to be acted upon in such a manner, as to comply with the *spirit* of its requisitions,—if the *purposes* which the Founder had in view are to be accomplished,—if the individual who holds the office is to have that *comfort* in the discharge of its duties which alone (in ordinary cases) can enable him to satisfy the expectations of the University, and of the public,—the *letter* of the requisitions must be modified, whether that be accomplished by authority, or the tacit acquiescence of those concerned. These remarks are made *from painful experience* of the arduous, and almost impracticable, nature of its duties. But at the same time let it be added, that as the *metropolis* has *two* institutions of this kind, and one also exists *in each of the sister Universities*, this University ought not to suffer such an institution to expire, or be dormant, if it can be maintained with any prospect of advantage. Some of our most valuable Theological works have been produced by similar institutions; nor is there any reason to believe that

such will not be the effect of that now established among ourselves. But although the necessity for exertion often acts as a motive to vigorous perseverance, it may be so imperious as to perplex, discourage, and unnerve.

The Lecturer would beg the reader's forbearance because of the earnestness and freedom of these remarks. He would also apologize for the manner in which the subject of this Volume is treated. He laments that it has been treated in a manner rather explanatory than practical. But it is now too late to amend the error. He is anxious, however, that the blame should attach to himself, and not to the institution of Mr. Hulse. Although an idea prevails that the Lecturer is almost obliged to occupy himself in dry and unedifying investigations,—the intentions of Mr. Hulse are manifest from his Will. He suggests, indeed, that ten Sermons should be preached on the Evidences; yet his explanation subjoined seems to leave the Lecturer *at perfect liberty*, either to discuss the Evidences of Christianity, or such of “the more difficult texts or obscure parts of Holy Scripture, as may appear *more generally useful, or necessary to be explained.*”—“And in *all* the said twenty Sermons, such *practical obser-*

vations shall be made, and such *practical conclusions* added, as may best *instruct*, and *edify* mankind.”

In retiring from the office, the present Lecturer would devoutly re-echo the pious aspiration of the Founder.—“May the divine blessing for ever go along with all his benefactions! And may the Greatest and Best of Beings, by his all-wise Providence, and gracious influence, make the same effectual to his own glory, and the good of our fellow-creatures!”



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LECTURE I.

THE EXTENT AND PROGRESSIVE ATTAINMENT OF
THOSE QUALIFICATIONS FOR THEIR SUBSEQUENT LABOURS,
WHICH THE APOSTLES OF OUR LORD ACQUIRED
IN THE INTERVAL BETWEEN
HIS RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION.

—◆—
ACTS I. 8, 9.

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 when he had spoken these words, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

WHEN our Lord Jesus announced the approach of those “days of vengeance,” in which the predictions of the ancient prophets, and his own, were fulfilled by the destruction of Jerusalem, and the extinction of the Jewish nation, he illustrated the awful suddenness of that calamitous season by a reference to similar visitations in former ages. The ungodly, who lived in the days of Noah and of Lot, continued incredulous, and insensible to every intimation of the coming wrath, until awakened by a woful experience of its presence and reality. “They eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they

buildded," living in security, while they persevered in irreclaimable apostacy, when the day of irretrievable ruin overtook them. "Even thus," added our Lord, "shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."

But the longsuffering of God again waited long with the men of that generation. The blow was suspended, that they might, if possible, be led to repentance by the previous offers and demonstrations of his mercy. Yet even of these they had as little prior expectation, as they had of the terrors which encompassed them in "the days of vengeance." The Baptist had perished in Galilee, and Jesus, who reiterated the same exhortations and warnings, at Jerusalem. And then the multitudes, who had seen the miracles of Jesus, who had heard his instructions, and followed him so eagerly, relapsed into their former careless tranquillity. Their rulers bribed the soldiers, who had watched the sealed tomb of the newly risen Jesus, and persuaded them to account for the absence of the body, by stating that his disciples had taken it away by night. Yet neither, on the one hand, were the soldiers, who had been stationed to watch, punished for sleeping, as their report stated, on so important a post; nor, on the other, were the disciples, who were so well known, and were so frequently in Jerusalem, called to answer for the assault and

theft attributed to them. The matter was hushed up, and several weeks passed in perfect quiet: the very recollection of these things was beginning to fade away, and the rulers seemed to have reason to congratulate themselves on the success of their iniquitous measures. But the day of Pentecost drew near. And far were the people or their rulers from anticipating, that the same God, who had before overruled their politic determination not to put Jesus to death at the Paschal feast, would select the ensuing feast of Pentecost, when the devout professors of Judaism were again assembled, for the exhibition of new and signal miracles, for the assertion of facts which they could not deny, and for the dissemination of principles, which they were unable to refute, and yet unwilling to admit.

To that day, and to the part which the Apostles took in its momentous transactions, our Lord referred in the words of our text. With those words he took leave of his disciples, after having been seen by them, though not constantly, yet at frequent intervals, during a period of forty days, giving them "infallible proofs" of his resurrection from the dead, and "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Events had occurred, the prediction of which had filled the disciples with sorrow and perplexity, but in which, when accomplished, they could both acquiesce and rejoice. Now, therefore, they

were able to bear those more enlarged instructions, the communication of which had been previously withheld, because the obstacles to their right comprehension of them had not before been removed. Only by a gradually progressive conviction did they attain the joy of no longer doubting his resurrection. And in the same progressive manner they were thenceforward led into the knowledge of all those truths, which afterwards they confidently believed, and diligently proclaimed.

Such a remark naturally suggests the inquiry ; at what *time* the Apostles were qualified to discharge the commission entrusted to them, and by what *successive steps* they attained the requisite qualifications. And as this inquiry will form an appropriate, if not a necessary introduction to the subject, which, at the close of this Lecture, will be proposed for our consideration in future Lectures, it will be our endeavour

I. To shew that, *before the day of Pentecost*, the Apostles had attained that *knowledge* of the nature and design of the Gospel, which qualified them for their *earliest* labours.

II. To ascertain the *successive steps* by which they advanced in knowledge, during the period which intervened between the resurrection and ascension of their Master.

III. To offer some remarks respecting the *ascension* of Jesus, with reference to the influ-

ence which it had on *their views*, and also as to the *certainty* of the event itself.

I. With regard to the first of these topics it may be asked, “Were not the Apostles to be led into all truth” by the Holy Spirit, and was not the day of Pentecost the time at which they were “filled with the Holy Spirit?”

In answer to the former part of this query, we readily grant that the Holy Spirit was promised as their permanent instructor; and that his office would be, to bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had taught them, and also to lead them into the knowledge of all truth. But the latter part of this office was not fully executed even on the day of Pentecost. Some years afterwards, a special revelation was necessary in order to prepare the mind of St. Peter to attempt the conversion of *devout* Gentiles resident in Judea. And his brother Apostles objected to the propriety of his conduct, until they heard from his own mouth that the arrival of the messengers from Cornelius was preceded by a remarkable vision, that he then was expressly directed by the Spirit to accompany them, and that his Gentile hearers, immediately after his preaching the Gospel to them, received spiritual gifts of the same kind as had been previously given to themselves^a.

^a Acts x.

Another communication was made by the Holy Spirit in order to effect the general conversion of the *idolatrous* Gentiles, by the separation of Paul and Barnabas as Apostles of the uncircumcision^a. And again, when the success of the Gospel among the Gentiles gave occasion to the question, whether they were exempt from the civil and ritual obligations of the Mosaic law, the Apostles came together to consider of that question: and it was not until after that solemn deliberation that they prefaced their joint decision with the declaration, “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us^b.”—St. Paul also speaks of the universal and unrestricted call of the Gentiles, as a dispensation, of which the propriety “was not in other ages made known to the sons of men, as it had then been revealed to the Apostles and Prophets” of the Christian Church “*by the Spirit*^c.” That it was taught them by the Holy Spirit, the facts to which we have just alluded abundantly prove. But the revelation was not given until the period at which it was necessary to *act* upon it; and that period was many years later than the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

We read, indeed, of a second spiritual communication after the first imprisonment of the Apostles, and in answer to their prayers. They

^a Acts xiii.

^b Acts xv. 28.

^c Eph. iii. 5.

did not, however, petition for an increase of knowledge; nor do we find that they received any other than the precise benefit which they had requested, that is, a boldness in speaking the word, and a miraculous power to accompany their ministrations. For we read that, as the consequence of this second spiritual communication, “they spake the word of God with boldness, and were of one heart, and one soul; and with great power the Apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all: and by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people^a.”

A similar remark may also be made with regard to the day of Pentecost itself. We find not, either in the narrative of St. Luke, or in the discourse of St. Peter which he records, any thing which suggests the opinion, that, from the spiritual gifts of that day, they derived an accession of *knowledge*. Such an additional effect it must undoubtedly have had, inasmuch as all events, which are the completion of prophecy, give a more distinct apprehension of the meaning of such prophecy, and of the system with which it is connected. But it does not at all appear that it *directly* added to their knowledge as the

^a Acts iv. 24—35.

primary and *especial* object of the miracle. In fact, if we contemplate the proceedings of the Apostles even previously to that important day, during the ten days which succeeded our Lord's ascension, we shall be led to infer, from the calm and devout tranquillity which they exhibited, that their views were already settled and distinct, and their hopes and expectations as well directed, as they were assured and exalted. And if we advert to the circumstance of their solemnly electing, with prayer and appeal to divine direction, a twelfth Apostle, "who might take part in that ministry and Apostleship from which Judas had fallen," the measure, and the terms in which it is mentioned, both in their joint prayer, and in the preparatory address of St. Peter, betoken an accurate anticipation of the course which they were destined to take, so soon as the promise of the Father, for which they were patiently waiting, was fulfilled. That discourse of St. Peter, and the one which he delivered on the day of Pentecost, may be contrasted with each other, not so much because of the substantial difference of the knowledge of the speaker, as in another respect. In the latter he both asserted the great facts and doctrines of the Gospel, and enlarged upon the *proof* of them, because he addressed those who were as yet both uninformed and unconvinced; in the former he

was addressing those, whose knowledge, in that respect, was at least as definite as his own; a knowledge which is implied both by the language which he uses, the proceeding which he recommended, and the grounds upon which it was declared to be expedient^a.

Thus it appears, by tracing back the history of the Apostles, that their knowledge in the mystery of Christ was completed, as to all those particulars which qualified them for their earliest labours, before the day of Pentecost; and that it did not, until some time afterwards, receive any declared and specific addition. What then was the design of the spiritual gifts bestowed on that auspicious day? They were the predicted and expected *signal* from on high to commence their testimony to Christ and him crucified. Only a few days had they been fully instructed unto the kingdom of God. Yet knowledge *alone* would not have availed for the conversion of others; unless they had also, on that day, been qualified, as well as authorized, persuasively to speak those things, which God had already revealed to them by his Spirit, as the Spirit gave them utterance, and in the words which the Holy Spirit taught them. Then first could they begin their arduous undertaking, gifted with miraculous attainments, which were

^a Acts i. 15—26.

“a sign to them that believed not,” which excited the wonder of the multitude, and which caused them to come together in a state of mind fitted to listen to statements respecting their source and design, and to receive the surprising intelligence, that the unhallowed transactions of the preceding Passover had led to the accomplishment of the promises made unto the Fathers.

II. Having now touched upon those considerations, which seem to shew that the Apostles were qualified, as it respects their *knowledge* of the Gospel system, to begin to teach it to others as soon as “they received *power*, by the Holy Ghost coming upon them;” we shall, in the next place, offer some remarks on their *successive advances* in knowledge, from the time of our Lord’s re-appearance after his resurrection, until the period of his ascension. For, to consider the method by which, after all their doubts and difficulties, *they* were at length established in the faith of that Gospel which they were commissioned to teach, is of no small importance to the clearness and reasonableness of *our own* faith in their testimony, in Jesus whom they preached, and in that God who raised him from the dead.

We shall not enlarge on the circumstances, by which they were at length brought to acknowledge the reality of the resurrection of their Master, for that would be to repeat what you

have already heard^a. We shall merely allude to those instructions, which he then gave them, respecting the nature and object of the Gospel system, and its agreement with the promises, types, and predictions, of the Old Testament. They might have received such declarations with confidence, even if they had depended only upon the *authority* of One, who so lived, and died, and was risen again. But he not only asserted these things, but shewed them that so it was written in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. He “opened their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures; and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high^b.”

This at least may be safely asserted, that such instructions removed the difficulties respecting the death and resurrection of their Master, which had hitherto dispirited and perplexed the Apostles.

^a Hulsean Lectures for 1821, Lect. XVII.

^b Luke xxiv. 45—49.

But it seems equally probable, that they did not yet distinctly comprehend, in what manner, after having “suffered these things,” Christ would “enter into his glory;” nor to what he referred when he declared, both before and after his resurrection, that he should “ascend to his Father.” For we shall soon have occasion to observe, that, although they now clearly recognized in Messiah “the author of eternal salvation,” they still retained, in conjunction with that belief, the expectation of a temporal kingdom. That they themselves were to have a principal share in extending the beneficial consequences of these transactions, and in testifying their design, was evident. That, in some sense, they were to be conveyed to all nations was equally evident. Yet their first exertions were expressly limited to Jerusalem; and only afterwards were to be extended to all Judea, then to Samaria, and eventually to the uttermost parts of the earth. But whether all nations were to be converted to Judaism, and thereby, under the Messiah, Judaism was to be the universal religion; or whether all nations were to be united in one vast empire, under the personal reign of Messiah, was not yet evident to them. Such injunctions, however, from the mouth of their Master himself, well prepared them for acting, as they afterwards did, upon the special direction and warrant of the Holy Spirit. They would re-

member that the command was explicitly given by their Master, and that the authority from which it proceeded was as explicitly stated: "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; make disciples of all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Even at a still earlier interview, when all the Apostles, except Thomas, were present, and recognized Jesus as their beloved Master now risen again, he said to them, "Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

The time and manner of this declaration, the symbolical action which accompanied it, and the commission which was annexed to it, seem naturally to suggest the opinion, that it was not merely designed as an additional assurance of spiritual gifts yet future, but as an actual communication of those spiritual influences, which were even then needful to illumine what was dark, and to raise and support what was low in their conceptions; influences, which thenceforward continued with them, enabling them, as

succeeding events presented the occasion, to increase in knowledge, until that day, when having both received, and understood, the commission with which they were charged, they were invested with power to execute it. Thenceforward they needed and received boldness to persevere in their work; and, even when brought before governors and kings, “it was given them in the same hour what they should speak;” for, as Jesus had declared, “it was not they that spoke, but the Spirit of their Father which spoke in them;” and therefore, they had “a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries were not able to gainsay nor resist^a.” Thus successively were imparted to them “the word of wisdom, and the word of knowledge;” the “faith” which impelled them to “the working of miracles,” and the “gifts of healing” by which it was justified, and the other gifts, enumerated by St. Paul, which qualified the Apostles, and their assistants, according to the measure of the gift of Christ to every one, to found, establish, and extend his Church^b.

When Jesus was assembled together with them at Jerusalem for the last time, having sent them thither from the mountain of Galilee in which, by agreement, and according to his promise

^a Matt. xviii. 18—20. Luke xxi. 15. ^b 1 Cor. xii. 8—11.

before his death, he had met them, he repeated the command, that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which they had heard of him. "For John," said he, "truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Probably they did not fully apprehend the nature and design of those additional communications of the Holy Ghost, which would accomplish the promise of the Father; and probably also conjecturing, that the immediate establishment of Messiah's kingdom was the object of their meeting at Jerusalem, and no longer ignorant of its spiritual purposes, they propounded the well known question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" As if they had said, "We know that to bring men to repentance, and to preach the remission of sins, have been the purposes of thy life, and of thy death and resurrection; and that it will also be our office to spread the knowledge of these things, as that which formerly was predicted, and now is accomplished. But the same Scriptures also have led us to expect the restoration of that temporal kingdom, which Israel has lost, and that this also shall come to pass in the days of King Messiah, whom we believe thee to be. Wilt thou *at this time* restore it?"

This question received no direct answer, for

two reasons. First, that same Holy Ghost, by means of whose influence he had already given to them, and caused them to understand, commandments respecting their own immediate functions^a, would also “bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them.” Among these things were predictions respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, the universal captivity of the Jews, and the occupation of their metropolis by the Gentiles; all which proved that the restoration of the kingdom to Israel was not *then* to be expected. And, secondly, the accomplishment of those prophecies, in which any such an expectation originated, was then far distant, and is, even yet, future. And in what *sense* they are to be understood is yet to be ascertained by the event. It appears probable from the New Testament, that the conversion of the Jews will precede the complete conversion of the Gentile world; but whether or not, the Jews shall then, according to the *literal* sense of prophecy, return to their own land, and whether, or not, the reign of Christ on earth shall be *personal*, or *spiritual*, is yet matter of controversy and speculation. For even some Christians adopt those principles of literal interpretation of prophecy, upon which the past and present expectations of the Jews them-

^a ἐντειλάμενος τοῖς ἀποστόλοις, διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου, οὓς ἐξελέξατο.—Acts i. 2.

selves are founded, but which the event may prove to have been figurative descriptions of spiritual blessings. Others contend that even now we have sufficient reasons for not expecting a literal accomplishment. But it was necessary that the Apostles should at that season wave these speculations; for they had objects of immediate duty, and, therefore, of immediate concern. Our Lord does not therefore undeceive them, nor does he absolutely sanction their expectation; but rather checks their needless inquiries, and directs their attention to a present and practical end. “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But 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.”

Thus, while our Lord taught them to leave to God the selection of the proper season for bringing all things to a due completion, and, by his directions, descriptions, and promises relative to their future functions, more fully instructed them, he indulged their present weakness and ignorance. For the event was at hand, which completed their views; which, by removing Jesus from them, taught them that although he was to reign, yet not in a temporal kingdom, nor at all

visibly on earth. “When he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud removed him out of their sight.”

III. We have now to offer, in the third place, some brief remarks on the *ascension* of our Lord, with reference to the influence which it had on the *views* of the Apostles, and also as to the *certainty* of the event itself.

The ascent of their Master was gradual, that they might distinctly see, and so bear a credible and sure testimony of it. As far as mortal vision could reach, they beheld him ascend; the clouds then interposed, and they saw him no more; for “he was parted from them,” and “was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God^a.”—But upon what grounds did they assert this? They did not assert it without reason. For “while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up,” partly lost in wonder, and partly, perhaps, scarcely knowing whether to expect his return, their doubts on that head were removed by two angels. Now the testimony of the angels, who first announced the resurrection of Jesus, had been found accurately true; and those, who now informed them that he had been “taken up from them into heaven,” afforded evidence of the truth of that communication, by shewing they

^a Mark xvi. 19.

accurately knew the object of the present assembling of the Apostles, the reason of their present consternation, and who it was that had been separated from them. They had, therefore, sufficient evidence for their own conviction, that Jesus had indeed ascended into heaven; and if we cannot disprove their credibility as witnesses, we may rest assured of this same truth.

It was further declared, that he would one day return in like manner; but the very question, with which the angels prefaced the declaration, intimated that they were not to look for it *then*^b. They so understood the declaration, for “then returned they to Jerusalem.” Then had been rendered intelligible, by the event itself, the prediction of Jesus, that he would ascend “to that place where he was before,”—“to their Father, and his Father, to their God, and his God.” Then did “the Father glorify him with himself, with the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.” Then was accomplished the prediction of David, to which Jesus himself had also referred, and which St. Peter cited when addressing the Jews, that Jehovah would cause him, who was David’s Lord, to “sit on his right hand, until his enemies should be made his footstool.”

^b “Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?” &c. Acts i. 11.

Various circumstances, therefore, concurred to establish the fact, that he, who had been raised from the dead, also ascended up on high. The Jews believed the translation of Elijah, upon the testimony of Elisha, who was upon the very spot, and of the sons of the prophets, who stood to view it afar off; and the subsequent miracles of Elisha confirmed the testimony. The Apostles also, who attested the ascension of Jesus, themselves were gifted both with miraculous powers, and with those other spiritual qualifications, which proved that an abundant portion of the prophetic spirit rested upon them. The Jews, therefore, could not consistently reject the evidence of the ascension of Jesus, since it was similar to that of the translation of Elijah, and not less satisfactory.

Nor can it be reasonably maintained that, if the Jews in general had been eyewitnesses of the ascension of Jesus, such a circumstance would have obviated all their objections, and have induced them to acknowledge the Messiahship of Jesus. The awful glories of Mount Sinai, and the terrible judgments on Korah and his company, left their ancestors in the wilderness still rebellious. Elijah, Elisha, and the other prophets, did not convince and reclaim all their ancestors of a later period. The Jews of our Saviour's time beheld his miracles; they knew the testimony given to him by the Baptist, whom they acknow-

ledged to be a prophet; they knew of the wonders which attended his death; and many of them, as we shall hereafter shew, did not deny, or doubt, the fact of his resurrection. Yet of all these things they admitted not the consequences; they repented not of their wickedness, nor did they believe in Jesus. For in every age, and in the affairs both of religion, and of common life, and even of nations, those who have adopted a particular opinion, and are also, by indolence or prejudice, by interested hopes or disappointed views, induced to maintain it, will resolutely cavil at every argument which might lead them to abandon it, and endeavour to place in the strongest and most favourable light all that confirms their own favorite notions.

Our own religious views are not likely to be correctly embraced, nor to be steadfastly maintained, if we consider only who have adopted or rejected them, and do not examine them for ourselves. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was, even at its first promulgation, received by great multitudes; but it becomes us to consider not that fact only, but also the arguments which were successfully employed by the Apostles of our Lord, in the conversion of the Jews, then of the Samaritans, then of the resident Gentiles, who already had some knowledge of true religion, and eventually

of the idolatrous Gentiles in the uttermost part of the earth. Such is the investigation to which, so far as opportunity and ability shall be given, we would direct your attention in subsequent Lectures. Resuming the subject at the point where it was left at the close of a former year^c, we shall be occupied in considering, the early *history* of our holy religion, when fully preached by the Apostles after the ascension of Jesus—the gradual *advances* which it made,—the *arguments* by which, as we read in the former part of the *Acts of the Apostles*, their converts were first persuaded to receive the Gospel, and, lastly, those fuller instructions, and more extended arguments, of certain portions of the *Apostolical Epistles*, which were written in order to establish the converts in the truth of the Gospel, and to fortify them against the apostacy, to which, in that age, they were so variously tempted.

We shall prosecute these inquiries in the conviction, that the facts, which were then believed, are now not less certain; that the transactions, which will be reviewed, are interesting to us as Christians; that the arguments, which were then convincing, are now also satisfactory; and that the reasons, which may deter us from abandoning

^c In the Author's Lectures for 1821, "On the Evidences of Christianity, as they were stated and enforced *in the discourses of our Lord.*"

the hopes of the Gospel, are essentially similar to those, which were then urged against apostacy.

At the same time the Lecturer will not be disposed to forget, that the same Scriptures, and the same portions of Scripture, which thus supply materials for the proof of the Gospel, are all along “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.” We have, indeed, believed in vain, if our faith is not founded on a knowledge so clear and comprehensive, as to bring us under the influence of all the promises, invitations, consolations, and precepts of the Gospel. Whatever, however, may enlarge the boundaries, and strengthen the foundations of a faith so enlightened, so impressive, and so practical, is of the highest value; and such are the Scriptures, taken in their original meaning, and according to their literal and genuine interpretation. So that although, as required by our office, we shall in some degree be occupied by the consideration of *evidence*, it will be such as meets us *in the discourses and writings of the Apostles*; such therefore as it behoves every lover of the Christian Scriptures to *consider* and to *understand*; and which may be profitable, if successfully treated, to the hearts and understandings of a Christian auditory. For I am not in this place to suppose that I am addressing a company

of infidels, and that I must, therefore, either endeavour to clear away that which one sceptic may say obscures the beauty of the temple, and is an obstacle to his entrance therein; nor, for the sake of another speculatist, to shew where, and how, the first stone of the temple may be laid, and to pull down that Sanctuary which has stood for so many ages, in order to try whether it can be rebuilt upon his proposed principles. Among the persons who compose our congregations it is not likely that many such hearers will be found; and if there should be solitary exceptions, we must remember how many others there are, who want something more than an abstract demonstration of what they already believe. It may, nevertheless, be both expedient and necessary that even they should be instructed in the history of their faith, and in all those arguments, which may either improve their acquaintance with the nature of their religion, or quicken their sensibility to its importance and value.

In the exercise of the Christian ministry, all needful topics should find a place, in that measure and order which may best correspond to the respective importance of each. We treat, at one time, of the several perfections and attributes of "the only true God," at another of the relations in which we stand to him as revealed by "Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." Again we enlarge

upon the eloquent, persuasive, and infinitely varied treasures of Holy Writ, which present to us promises, invitations, exhortations, and appeals to the conscience. We do not overlook its threatenings; we unfold its manifold and holy precepts, and enforce the necessity and means of obeying them^d. In all this we may hope that

^d If it be desirable that the Christian preacher should, in due season and measure, lay before his hearers the different portions of "the whole counsel of God," it may be expedient to secure, by some regular method, the accomplishment of such a design, lest he should either dwell on his own favorite subjects, and those which are more popular, or, by selecting his subjects at random, and without any system, be inadvertently giving too partial an exhibition of divine truth. Under this impression, when engaged in a Parochial charge, the author entered in a book the leading heads of Christian instruction, in order to register under each head the particular topics of which he had treated in the Pulpit, and, on the opposite page, the time at which such Sermon was delivered. He was thus weekly led to observe, what other subjects, or what other Scriptural view of the same topic, had for some time been omitted, and was reminded of the necessity of supplying the deficiency. He mentions this because he found it very satisfactory, and in the hope that the suggestion may be useful to others. The divisions might be made more or less numerous, but some of the most important seem to be—Particular doctrines—Christian privileges—General promises, invitations, exhortations, and appeals—the Scriptures, the sacraments, and public and private devotion—particular moral duties—death, judgment, and eternity. Another classification, occasionally affording a useful variety, would include—Scripture History and Biography—Parables—subjects occurring in the Lessons, Epistles and Gospels—and those suitable for Fasts, Festivals, Charities, &c.

we have an advocate in the breast of every hearer; in all this we may, in some measure, look for the countenance and concurrence of such as will candidly judge of what is “holy, and just, and good.” When also we speak of those signal events which attended and contributed to the propagation of the Gospel, we stand on high ground, and doubt not that we can convincingly demonstrate the operation of the finger of God. If ever we might seem to have reason to be ashamed of the cause which we plead, and might be disposed to suppress some of the circumstances under which it stands, it would be, when we are under the necessity of describing him, whom we preach, and in whom we believe, as “despised and rejected of men;” humbled even to the servile death of the cross; stricken, afflicted, and forsaken of God. If, however, we were so affected, we should “handle the word of God deceitfully;” we should suppress, and be ashamed of a transaction, which is intimately and inseparably connected with the history and design of the Gospel. But so anxious are we, even to give prominence to the fact of the death of Christ, that we set apart, and have recently observed, a day appropriated to the solemn and special consideration of it^e. We know that to the Jews it was a stumbling-

^e This Lecture was delivered on the first Sunday after Easter.

block, and that to the Greeks it appeared foolishness; yet we “glory in the cross of our Lord,” and “we preach Christ crucified.” We preach therein “the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory;” which was effected by his power, and which made known to us his wisdom; “which none of the princes of this world knew; for, had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.” Even the chosen Apostles of Jesus, who had “trusted that it was he that should have redeemed Israel,” saw not at first that by that very event, which seemed to crush their hopes, those hopes had been accomplished. But “God revealed these things to them by his Spirit;” these things they taught, and “mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed.” These things also they have taught us, “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” In the day when they entered on the work, they found the “fields ripe unto the harvest; they received their wages, gathered fruit unto life eternal,” and entered into the joy of their Lord. They “prayed to the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth more labourers into his harvest.” Others have since entered into their labours, and have found the like success, amidst similar discouragements. For, while “the Jews

sought a sign, and the Greeks sought after wisdom;" and while many others, in later times, have been like minded with them, there have been, in all ages, multitudes of believers, who have seen, and acknowledged, that "Christ crucified is, both the power of God, and the wisdom of God."



LECTURE II.

THE NATURE, DESIGN, AND REALITY
OF THE GIFT OF TONGUES, FIRST COMMUNICATED
ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

ACTS II. 4.

They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

THOSE who had been witnesses of the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, did not, as soon as their Master had been removed from them, make those events the subjects of open attestation ; but, in compliance with the direction they had received, tarried in Jerusalem, “continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication,” and pondering these things in their hearts. Thus they had time to recover from the perplexity occasioned by the occurrences of the preceding forty days. Their spirits were thereby calmed, their views were matured, and their hopes were raised to a confident expectation of other approaching wonders, which they were assured would take place after the lapse of “not

many days," and of which they did not doubt the accomplishment at the appointed season.

That season was the day of Pentecost. On that day, the fiftieth day after the Passover, was celebrated the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai amidst various impressive tokens of the divine presence and majesty. On a day so appropriate in itself, because of the transaction which was then celebrated, and so suitable, because of the multitudes then present at Jerusalem, the law of God, in the still more glorious ministration of righteousness, "went forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem;" in order that, as the issue proved, in these "last days," the days of the Messiah, "all nations might flow unto the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, that he might teach them his ways, and that they might walk in his paths^a."

Let our attention now be directed to a consideration of the occurrences of that day, on which commenced the witness of the Spirit after the glorification of Jesus, and that complete publication of his Gospel, which has been announced as the subject of our present Lectures. Three several subjects of enquiry will occupy our time on this occasion, viz. the *nature*, the *design*, and

^a Isai. ii. 1—3. Micah iv. 1, 2.

the *reality* of those endowments, which were the immediate consequence of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

I. First we shall inquire, what was the *nature* of those endowments, after premising some remarks suggested by the supposed difficulty of the question, and by the numerous and conflicting opinions which have been hazarded in consequence.

The conciseness of the narrative cannot well have escaped the notice of any one, who has been desirous to form a decided opinion on this subject. Although the general facts are distinctly specified, yet many particulars are either omitted, or so briefly narrated, as scarcely to furnish the means of coming to a positive decision respecting several questions, which even a reasonable curiosity might suggest. But it should be remembered, that though the conciseness of the historian should confessedly leave even some difficulties, which a more extended detail might have obviated, yet a narrative, which specified every particular, would very materially have increased the bulk of a Volume designed for general perusal,—that most men have little learning and little leisure,—and that few can *consistently* make the objection, because few so acquaint themselves with what *is* written, as to be authorized to complain that *more* is not written. An accurate perusal and collation of what is in

our Sacred Records would satisfy us, that we need not really wish for any addition to it; and would qualify us to judge aright what opinions deserve the title of conjectures, and what are either expressly taught, or clearly implied in Scripture. We would give no undue colouring to the plain narrative of the sacred writers, and so avoid the hyperbolical statements of some divines, which have led to the adoption of crude and erroneous views, and have provoked the cavils of the sceptic, at what he would term their simple credulity. Yet should we also be scrupulously jealous of the disposition, now so prevalent and, as it should seem, so infectious among Protestant divines in foreign Universities, to explain away all that is extraordinary and peculiar in Scripture history, by means of an almost infinite variety of glosses, theories, and fictions^b. Most of these are entirely novel; and many are so different from what is obviously suggested by the narrative, as to induce a feeling of surprise at the bold and perverse ingenuity of the theorist, and also a conviction that, if such had been the intention of the sacred writer, his statements would not have been such as we find them.

These remarks are strikingly exemplified by the various speculations, in which many foreign

^b See Note (A) at the end of Lecture II.

Theologians have recently indulged respecting the spiritual gifts, which were bestowed on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, and which afterwards, either mediately through them, or immediately from above, were also conferred on others. The subject is doubtless difficult; nor have we perhaps sufficient information perfectly to explain, so that the statement shall be wholly free from objection, the nature, the duration, and the precise measure of the “gifts of Christ,” which were received by the several ranks and orders of spiritual men in the primitive Church. But still, although those preternatural endowments were then unprecedented, and were continued only during a short period, their nature appears to be specified with sufficient precision, and their effects were sufficiently striking and abiding, to render it the safest, most rational, and most satisfactory course for us to rest contented with such brief information as we have, and to understand it in that sense, which is the most obvious, and which has, indeed, been most general^b. The great erudition and industry of many of those divines, to whom we allude, may justly challenge our admiration and our emulation; but as their labours are duly appreciated, and their writings begin to be more accessible, and are more extensively perused

^b See Note (B) at the end of Lecture II.

among ourselves, it may not have been improper to have repeated the caution, which so many eminent men have thought it needful to give, respecting the fearless, I had almost said irreverent spirit, in which they approach the consideration of every part of Scripture; while each is building his own novel and visionary hypotheses upon the ruins of former speculations^c.

These remarks will serve to show, that the consideration of such speculations, in reference to the subject in hand, has not at all led me to suppose that the gifts of the Spirit, mentioned in the text, were any other than such as the words of St. Luke, according to our authorized Version, naturally suggest. “They were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began *to speak with other tongues*, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Among the gifts conferred by the Holy Spirit, not on all the Corinthian converts equally, but on each one severally as he would, St. Paul enumerates the two following, “diversities of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues^d.” The last mentioned endowment seems unanswerably to show that those, who possessed the former, were enabled to speak in *languages* not commonly in use in those assemblies, nor even intelligible

^c See Note (C) at the end of Lecture II.

^d 1 Cor. xii. 10.

to some individuals there present, and for whom, therefore, an *interpretation* was needed. And the mention, both of one endowment and of the other, as spiritual gifts, shows that they were enabled by *divine assistance*, and not as the result of early association, or the labours of study, to speak and interpret languages, which they either had not previously known at all, or but imperfectly; or, as the text expresses it, “*other tongues*,” different, therefore, from their native tongue^e.

Some of the hypotheses alluded to proceed upon the principle, that these spiritual gifts did not at all refer to the language employed, but to the subject matter, or particular method and employment of their inspired effusions. We do not exclude this as a joint effect, but the expressions which we have cited, and many others, are explicit assertions of something further. In the general summary of the spiritual gifts enumerated by St. Paul, we not only find mention of “the word of *wisdom*” and “the word of *knowledge*,” which would supply the matter of such effusions, whether in the form of prayer, praise, or exposition of doctrine, but also, as additional and distinct qualifications of those whom the Apostle terms “spiritual,” “the gifts

^e See Note (D) at the end of Lecture II.

of healing, diversities of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues." The same faculty of speaking with tongues is also described, in a following chapter^f, as assuredly supernatural, for it is said to be "a sign to them that believe not;" though its efficacy to convince could be completed, in many instances, only by what is termed "prophesying," or that divinely assisted faculty of expounding the Scriptures, which not only led to the acknowledgment that God was in them of a truth, but persuaded men to worship him. In further exhorting to the *edifying* use of all these spiritual gifts, the Apostle manifestly distinguishes the speaking with tongues, and the interpretation of them, from other endowments which more immediately related to the subjects upon which they spoke. "How is it brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a Psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a *tongue*, hath a revelation, hath an *interpretation*. Let all things be done to edifying. And if any speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the Church; and let him speak to himself and to God." Whatever other difficulties there may be in fully explaining cir-

^f 1 Cor. xiv. 22.

cumstances, of which we have now no example, and respecting which we obtain most of our knowledge indirectly, from the directions given in order to guard against the improper use of these endowments, it seems very evident, that “the gift of tongues” was a faculty of speaking in such languages, as might not in some instances be intelligible to the hearers, though in others they were so. In the latter case they served, not only as an *evidence* of supernatural endowments, but as a *means of conveying instruction*, which in such cases could not otherwise have been at all, or not so readily, communicated. Hence, when this miraculous faculty was communicated for the first time, we find it was exercised in the presence of persons usually resident in various nations; and the reason assigned for their astonishment seems as decisive as any other circumstance of the nature of the faculty itself: “They were confounded, because that every man heard them speak *in his own language*. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these men which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man *in his own tongue* wherein we were born? we do hear them speak *in our tongues* the wonderful works of God ³.”

³ Acts ii. 7—11.

To suppose, as some have needlessly done, who first led the way in deviating from the obvious interpretation of this miracle, that the Apostles *spoke* in their own usual native language, but that the words so spoken were *heard* by those present, as if they had been uttered in the native languages of each hearer respectively^b, is to make the hearers, and not the Apostles, the persons on whom the miracle was wrought. Yet it is expressly stated, that it consisted in this, that “they *spake* with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance,” not that either the ears or understandings of the auditors were miraculously influenced. If there be difficulties in the interpretation for which we are contending, there would certainly be much greater ones in the strange and gratuitous supposition now referred to, and still greater would arise if it were applied in the other instances mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. And it certainly would make this exercise of the gift of tongues wholly different from that mentioned by St. Paul to the Corinthians, where, as we have already seen, similar language is employed in describing it; for all his cautions and directions respecting it proceed on the principle, that the things spoken by him who had this gift might not be *at all*

^b See Note (E) at the end of Lecture II.

understood by those present, and yet the exercise of it be *real*, though useless to others.

These and similar reasons have induced me to conclude, after a full consideration of the various hypotheses to which I have before referred, that we have no pretext to justify a deviation from the established opinion on this subject, but that, on the contrary, it is clearly warranted by the statements of the writers of the New Testament. It is, however, readily granted, that neither have we authority to describe this signal miracle, which is in itself sufficiently wonderful, in such terms as to convey those notions respecting it, of which we do not find any proof in the New Testament. Much injury is done to the cause of truth, and much error is produced, by such incautious statements. We know not in *what* languages, nor in *how many*, the Spirit gave utterance to the teaching of the Apostles. They were probably various, even on the day of Pentecost, to give occasion to the remark of the strangers present in Jerusalem at that time. For they declared that they heard the wonderful works of God celebrated, not in the languages of Palestine only, and of Greece, which might have been less unaccountable, but "every man in his own tongue wherein he was born," and, therefore, in the proper languages of the several nations whence they came ;

for we read that both “ Jews and proselytes ” joined in the remark. Neither is it matter of certainty whether the twelve only, or also the hundred and twenty brethren, participated in these gifts. The tenor of the *entire* narrative of the proceedings of the disciples, after the ascension of Jesus, seems to render probable the latter supposition. Thus also the prophecy of Joel, cited by St. Peter, would be more accurately descriptive of the event; and we elsewhere find that the gifts of the Holy Ghost were communicated directly from heaven to many others besides the Apostles, even without the laying on of their hands.

II. But we proceed, in the second place, to inquire, what was the *design* of this gift of tongues. We grant, that there is no express assertion that it was wrought in order to enable the first heralds of the Gospel to proclaim its message to those, who could not otherwise have understood their preaching; but certain other uses and purposes undoubtedly are specified. This, however, is far from disproving a supposition, which seems to be obviously suggested by the very nature of the miracle. For as the Apostles certainly possessed a faculty, which would be eminently serviceable in propagating the Gospel among those of different “ tongues,

and kindreds, and people," it can scarcely be supposed that it was not so employed. The conciseness of the narrative will, in some measure, account for the omission: and we owe indeed to particular circumstances the more detailed discussion respecting it, which is found in the Epistle to the Corinthians. If, therefore, any similar occasion had called for the notice of the subject in another respect, and if the narrative of St. Luke had comprehended a history of the proceedings of all the Apostles, and if we had had a more detailed account of the labours of Paul and Barnabas among the idolatrous Gentiles, the aptness of this gift in qualifying them to be successful preachers might probably have been mentioned. It seems sufficient, for the purpose of sanctioning such an opinion, to know, that not only the Apostles in general were qualified in the way which directly tended to the purpose in question, but that St. Paul, who laboured more abundantly among the Gentiles, himself asserts his possession of the gift of tongues; "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all¹."

But it is contended that, even upon supposition that this was a permanent endowment, and that it was granted in order to enable the

¹ See Note (F) at the end of Lecture II.

Apostles to propagate the Gospel in distant countries, yet no other languages were necessary for that purpose than the different dialects of Greek and Hebrew. This may in some measure be doubted, even if we suppose that all the Apostles laboured in the same parts of the world as St. Peter and St. Paul. Even to them other languages would, in many instances, have been highly valuable, and would have, at least, greatly facilitated and extended their usefulness; for although the Greek language was very widely understood throughout the Roman Empire, and the dialects of the Hebrew were spoken in many of the cities in which they laboured, yet in others their teaching would be intelligible only to a limited number of individuals, unless they could speak the languages usually prevalent in those several countries. And if we receive the testimony of ecclesiastical history as to the countries in which the *other* Apostles preached, the same remark would probably, in a still greater degree, be applicable to them. And the argument from what was barely necessary, hardly can induce us to restrict the meaning of the expressions of the New Testament to the extent proposed, when the argument itself is not certainly conclusive, and when the expressions leave us at full liberty to suppose that, if divers kinds of tongues were necessary, the same Spirit. who

enabled them to speak in one, did also supply such others as might be requisite.

But even if not one really was required besides the Greek and Hebrew, and their respective dialects, how can we conclude with certainty, I had almost said with probability, that such men as the Apostles needed not, as some have contended, any further acquaintance with them than they already had? Their own mother tongue they assuredly knew; but the arguments alleged to prove that, because many Jews knew the Greek language, therefore the Apostles did, are, at best, only presumptive. Their own testimony on such a point we could not expect to find in their writings; but unless we are determined, upon a general principle of accounting for all the supposed miracles of the Bible from ordinary causes, to overlook their own statement, they do positively assert, that their Lord had promised that they should "speak with tongues," as one of the "signs that should follow those that believed" in him^k, and that the promise was fulfilled, both with respect to the Apostles, and many at least of their followers. Nor would it be unreasonable even to assert, that, had their destined commission confessedly required the use

^k Mark xvi. 17.—On this part of our subject, see the Programma of Less referred to in note (D): and note (F).

of no other language than their own, it might have been as needful for them, as for any of the prophets of the Old Testament, to have the assistance of inspiration to endue them with an eloquence, and a readiness of addressing a mixed assembly in a collected and persuasive manner, which their early occupations, and probably limited acquirements, had not permitted them otherwise to attain.

III. If we inquire, thirdly, respecting the *reality* of this gift, the way in which it is mentioned in the Epistle to the Corinthians is a convincing proof, that both the Apostle, and they to whom he wrote, firmly believed that they were endued with it. Now they could neither have supposed that they had it, unless that were really the case, nor that they had received it by the Gospel, and in an extraordinary manner, if they had had it previously, and attained it by means of early education, or subsequent study. The remarks even of those, who scoffed at the circumstance on the day of Pentecost, prove the reality of it. For, either because of the strangeness of it, or because particular individuals were unable to judge respecting it from ignorance of the languages spoken, or from worse motives, many contended that the Apostles were “full of new wine.” This remark of itself proves that

a novel circumstance had occurred, and that the behaviour and speech of the Apostles were remarkable. The Apostle Peter, however, at once calmly rejected that supposition as in itself improbable, for the third hour of the day of a festival had not yet arrived; and as intoxication in the early part of the day was, in ancient times, rare and infamous, so among the Jews it was doubly so on the morning of a festival; since their custom was not to eat or drink until after the time of prayer. But those were present, who were better qualified to judge, and who could apprise them of the real nature of the fact which had occasioned that insinuation; an insinuation, refuted both by the collectedness of the subsequent demeanour of the Apostles, and by the argumentative address of St. Peter in illustration of the design and origin of these unusual proceedings, and in proof of those conclusions to which they ought to lead. Multitudes had come together, especially of such as were natives of distant parts. Galileans, notoriously such, for they had been known as the companions of Jesus,—men of humble station, and not to be classed with the noble, the mighty, nor the learned,—were heard to praise God, and instruct those present, so that each one recognized these things delivered in the languages, which had long been familiar with them. There

could be no deception here, for they heard and they understood them.

They heard them celebrate “the wonderful works of God.” We are not told what particular topics were selected by them, nor whether they were declarations of the wonderful works of God for the information of those who heard them, or, which is most probable, rapturous effusions poured forth in grateful adorations, and animated thanksgivings. Grateful assuredly they were to Him, who had now fulfilled their expectations, enlarged and confirmed their views of his wonderful work of redemption, and visited them with consolation by that promised Comforter, of whom they knew that it was also promised, that he would abide with them for ever. Full of the Holy Spirit, their hearts and all their faculties were so raised above their former low conceptions, and above earthly things, that “the fire was kindled” within them, “and at the last they spoke with their tongues.” Those who witnessed their ardour, would be reminded of the prophetic influences of former ages, when they heard from them some such songs of the divine “mercy and judgment,” as flowed from the lips of Moses and of Deborah, of David and Nehemiah, of Isaiah and Zachariah. And similar to the song, which Isaiah prepared as applicable to the latter days, was probably their’s:

“ In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold God is 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. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee¹.” Or we may suppose that they exclaimed with Zacharias, “ Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began^m.”

How must such effusions, attended by such a miracle, have astonished, and penetrated the very soul of those who heard them! And we cannot wonder that so many of the hearers, when they had been more fully instructed, turned unto the Lord with full purpose of heart. And how

¹ Isai. Chap. xii.

^m Luke i. 68, &c.

happy above all were the Apostles themselves! For though their astonishment might in some respects be less, because these things had been promised to them, and they had been waiting for them, yet how must the fulfilment have caused their joy to be full! How cheering must have been the beaming of that light, which then shined unto the perfect day! How instantaneous and how irresistible the conviction which it brought! For to them these gifts were preceded by wonders betokening the presence of Divine power and majesty, no longer indeed with the terrible and alarming glories of Sinai, but yet solemn and impressive. “Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.” Jesus had breathed on them before, that they might receive the Holy Spirit; but now when he confers the fulness of the Father’s promise, he sends also, as its precursor and outward sign, a more vehement and mighty emblem of a more powerful influence. Like the path of the wind, that bloweth where it listeth, and of which the sound is heard as it passes by, so the coming of the doctrine, which was thenceforth to be proclaimed, though gradual, and “without observation,” would yet be sure and progressive; and as soon might the wind be impeded in its destined course. “There appeared unto them cloven tongues like

as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." Each was to preach the same lively word, to proclaim it in due season to all nations. Each was to have an abiding inspiration, not that interrupted and occasional one which the Prophets of the Old Testament enjoyed. The Spirit, who came to them as they needed additional light, was to "abide with them," to lead, to guide, and to preserve from error. And they who had such a commission, and proclaimed such a doctrine, and whose labours were to be unintermitting, needed such an abiding influence. They had expected it, and they received it.

Ever grateful ought we ourselves to be, that our Lord Jesus Christ, "according to his most true promise," thus qualified and supported them; "whereby we also have been brought out of darkness and error, into the clear light and knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ".^a What they learnt by inspiration, they communicated to others by word of mouth; what was then spoken still remains written for our instruction. If, therefore, the Apostles and first Christians were "filled with the knowledge of God's will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," the benefits have not ceased. Had we lived in the days of the Apostles, when they spoke under the influence of

^a Communion Service, preface for Whitsunday.

inspiration, and were gifted with miraculous powers, we should have heard from their *lips* no other truths than those, which we find in their *writings*. The faith which was then “delivered to the saints,” was delivered “once for all.” The system was then fully revealed, and needed no addition; it is handed down to us with equal fulness and sufficiency; and those, who search the Scriptures, may even now as perfectly attain to the knowledge of God’s will, as those who heard it from the words of the Apostles’ preaching. Not indeed without the assistance of that Holy Spirit, who giveth “a right judgment in all things.” But if we draw our knowledge from the pure fountain of Scriptural authority, and pray that the “Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts,” may scatter the darkness of our understandings, remove all “that exalts itself against the knowledge of God,” mould our wills, influence our affections, and renew our hearts, then shall we also, in our measure, and according to our necessity, be “filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God^o.”

^o Col. i. 9, 10.

Note (A), page 32.

THIS systematic endeavour “naturali modo rem omnem explicare,”—“accommodatè ad antiqui ævi ingenium et loquendi usum,” is entitled by Ammon (in his preface to Ernesti’s *Institutio Interpretis N. T.*) “*idonea narrationum mirabilium in N. T. obviarum interpretatio.*” The following extract will perhaps appear extraordinary, when considered as proceeding from a *Christian* editor of a *Treatise on the Interpretation of Scripture.* “Ejusmodi narrationes dum explicandas sibi sumit interpres, hoc sibi imponit simul officii, ut non auctoris verba solum in suam linguam transferat, sed dicta ejus etiam in sensum clarum resolvat, effectus ad causas revocet, eventa legibus idoneis adliget, hacque nota insigni traditiones a narrationibus, somnia a factis distinguet. Non sufficit animadvertere ad Matt. iii. 17. vocem cælitus emissam fuisse, cum Jesus baptismo prolueretur: adde potius e loco parallelo Joh. xii. 29. *βροντὴν γεγόνεuai* de liquido, cui suam quisvis sententiam, ceu oraculo divino, substernere solebat.—Magna debetur verecundia animis hominum, concedo; cavendum est ne conscientiam ægrotam vulneremus, non refugio; quid, quod parcendum est etiam superstitioni, e qua fides haud raro subnascitur, non contra dico. Videant modo, qui in hac meticulositate sibi placent, hæc omnia pertinere ad prudentiam, pastoralement vocant, quam ad provinciam interpretis, qui de eventu et efficacità sanæ explicationis securus sensum auctoris sui indagat eumque æqualibus suis ita propinat, ut non verbis solum verba adnumeret vel adpingat, sed suum etiam de veritate hujus sensus judicium interponat.” He then gives many exemplifications of his principles, of which let the following suffice. “Alio loco ejusdem evangelistæ (Matt. xiv. 26.) *περιπατεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν* non est fluctibus *insistere* ceu continenti, ut ipse somniat Hieronymus, sed *ambulare per undas* in regione vadosa, deinde

natare (v. 29.)” His opinion, which is also that of Kuinoel and others, respecting the gift of tongues, is thus stated. “Videsis, quam multa commenti sint interpretes de γλώσσαις καινῆς καὶ ἐτέρας Marc. 16. 17; Act. ii. 4. quarum notitiam quasi agmine facto animis Apostolorum cœlitus illapsam esse volunt; probavimus autem alio loco, Jesum evangelii institutionem, precesque secundum præcepta ejus fundendas, non Judæorum modo linguæ Hebraicæ adligavisse, sed *alias* etiam adeoque *novas* linguas hunc in usum admisisse. Quare novo idiomate utuntur Apostoli eorumque discipuli non in cœtibus Judæorum Palæstinensium, sed in conventiculis mixtis Hierosolymæ, Cæsareæ, Ephesi, Corinthi, quibus præter Hellenistas etiam Romani aliique exteri interfuerunt.”

Note (B), p. 33.

For an investigation respecting the several kinds of spiritual gifts, and the persons to whom they were severally communicated, reference may be made to Lord Barrington’s Essay, On the witness of the Holy Spirit, contained in his *Miscellanea Sacra*, and reprinted in *Watson’s Tracts*, Vol. IV; to *Benson’s First Planting of the Christian Religion*, book I; and *Horsley, Sermon xiv.* Vol. I. with the Appendix.

Note (C), p. 34.

The Author deems it expedient to cite one or two passages in corroboration of this caution respecting the philosophizing spirit, and unsound expositions of a very large proportion of the German divines.

The first of these is an extract from the preface to G. C. Knappii scripta varii argumenti, Halæ, 1805. “Hac laude privari nolim, me operam dedisse, ut legitimam illam rationem interpretandi sacros libros, quæ nostra ætate a quibusdam multis modis deseritur, constanter tuerer, et meo exemplo, quantum

possem, meæ certe disciplinæ alumniis commendarem. His enim me non assentiri profiteor, qui, cum in religione cognoscenda aliunde haurire quam ex his fontibus malint, cavendumque putent, ne ei scholæ, cui se totos addixerunt, ulla in re displiceant; sua et commentata et scripta sic adornant atque instruunt, ut modo placita recens excogitata antiquitati obtrudant, modo, si id minus ex sententia succedere viderint, auctoritati sacrarum Scripturarum vel aperte, vel ex occulto officiant ac detrahant. Hi sunt fere, qui, dum recentissima quæque verissima judicant, nihil inveniunt, in quo diu possint firmiter insistere. Atque illud etiam vere dicturus mihi videor, locupletissimam simul testem producens omnium pœne sæculorum memoriam, operam perdere, quicumque ex armentariis *scholasticæ* Philosophiæ (sive veteris illius, cui velut uni id nomen imponi solet, sive hujus recentioris, quæ assidue formam mutat) tela depromunt, quibus, prodita atque amissa hac tanquam arce Theologiæ Christianæ, castella tamen defendere ac retinere student.—Neque is (intelligens et æquus æstimator) ita interpretabitur, quasi id mihi propositum sit, ut eam Philosophiam, quæ est vere nominis sui, quæque ad tractandas res divinas sobria accedit, aditu prohibitam velim.”

To this extract I subjoin one from Bishop Jebb's Sacred Literature, in which he mentions “one reason, in addition to many others, for serious apprehension, that from those philological works which students are more and more *taught* to respect, as guides to the critical knowledge of Scripture, much confusion, much obscurity, repeated contradictions, and a fatal habit of explaining away the most pregnant truths of Christianity, may be superinduced upon, or rather may be substituted for, our manly, sound, and unsophisticated English Theology. But I would earnestly exhort those biblical students, who may happen to use (as, *with proper caution*, all *advanced* students will find it their advantage to use) the Lexicons of Spohn and Schleusner for the New Testament, and those of Schleusner and

Bretschneider for the Septuagint and Apocrypha, to be particularly on their guard against alleged identity of meaning, in words whose ordinary acceptation is any thing but synonymous. In such cases, let the cited passages be carefully examined; and I venture to affirm, that, instead of synonyme, there will almost universally be found an important variation of meaning, between the related members: commonly a progress in the sense; but always such a variation, as will quite supersede the necessity of resorting to an *unusual*, much less an *unprecedented*, acceptation of the terms employed.—It is with no invidious, or controversial purpose, or feeling, that I have given this caution. I am simply zealous to maintain the truth and purity of Scripture; to promote, so far as in me lies, the acceptance of Scripture language in its just and proper meaning; and to protest against all novelties of interpretation, which may tend, in any degree, to render that language vague, uncertain, unsettled, and indiscriminative.” p. 51, 52.

It may justly be doubted, whether an *exclusive* attention to philology, and *merely* literary examination of the Scriptures, will either dispose or qualify the students in our Universities for the reception and dissemination of the doctrinal and moral treasures therein contained. But since the works, which supply valuable and necessary information of that kind, *may* in fact be insidiously setting aside the genuine dictates of divine truth, it will afford subject of regret, if any of the younger students should derive their philological apparatus for the study of the historical books of the New Testament from such sources as Schleusner, Rosenmüller and Kuinoel, without being put upon their guard against their errors and deficiencies. Further cautions are also needful with regard to the interpretation of Scriptural prophecy and miracles; although the writers just mentioned have by no means proceeded to the extravagant principles adopted by Baver, Ammon, and others.

Note (D), p. 35.

On the various expressions used in St. Mark, the Acts, and 1 Corinthians, descriptive of the gifts in question, (γλώσσαις λαλήλουσι καιναιῖς — ἤρξαντο λαλεῖν ἐτέραις γλώσσαις — ἀκούομεν λαλούντων ἀντῶν ταῖς ἡμετέραις γλώσσαις — γένη γλωσσῶν — ἐρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν — γλώσσαις λαλῶν, &c.) see Storr. Opuscula, Vol. II. 290—325, and Vol. III. 277—292; also Ernesti de dono linguarum, Opusc. Theol. p. 411: and, in answer to some of Ernesti's conclusions, Less's Programma, entitled, Super doni linguarum indole, ab Ernesti oppugnationibus vindicatum, Opusc. p. 302.

Note (E), p. 38.

“Seculo quinto, clarum est duplicem opinionem tenuisse, alteram, quæ Apostolis et cæteris sodalibus omnibus sua lingua, una eademque, loquentibus, audivisse diceret homines suæ quemque linguæ sonum et verba; alteram, quæ Apostolos ipsos—existimaret cepisse vi divinâ loqui verbis linguarum peregrinarum, &c. In Ecclesia Latina — non defuere qui priorem sententiam probarent, quibus olim Erasmus, Gravesonius, nuper et Io. Lamius, accessere.” Ernesti Opusc. Theol. p. 416.

Note (F), p. 41.

1 Cor. xiv. 18.—It has been inferred from Acts xiv. 11, &c. that, since St. Paul did not interfere *immediately* to prevent their intended sacrifice, he did not understand “the speech of Lycaonia.” In *what* language then did he address the people? for, that he had *previously* done so, appears from v. 12. And as soon as the Apostles *heard* of the superstitious preparations, they proceeded to expostulate, and most probably in the language of the country.—The position maintained by some, that all the Apostles were originally acquainted with Greek, almost as a matter of course, is hardly consistent with the surprise which the Chief Captain, upon being addressed by St. Paul, intimated in the exclamation, “Dost thou speak Greek?” Acts xxi. 37.

LECTURE III.

THE DISCOURSE OF ST. PETER ON THE
DAY OF PENTECOST.

ACTS II. 16, 17.

*But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;
And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God,
I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.*

ASTONISHMENT will, in the first instance, be excited, when the divine interposition occasions a deviation from the ordinary course of events. But the ultimate design of a miracle is not only to arrest our attention, but also to direct it to some important subject. When Moses turned aside to “see the great sight” which was presented to his view, and wished to ascertain “why the bush was not consumed,” his eager curiosity received a check; and, with feelings solemnized by a sense of the divine power and presence, he received assurances of the mercy of God to his afflicted countrymen, and an injunction to act as their appointed deliverer. And, on the day of Pentecost, when those who had come together were amazed, and were in doubt, and conferred with

each other as to the explanation of what they had seen and heard, one of the company of the Apostles stood up, and lifted up his voice, to satisfy their doubts, and answer their inquiries. A few words sufficed to shew, that the hasty insinuations which some had thrown out, were irrelevant and groundless. Others of the audience, who felt that the occurrences of that morning suggested inquiries, which could not be satisfied by an idle cavil, or flippant remark, required a more enlarged notice of the natural and expressive exclamation, “what meaneth this?”

“Peter said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken unto my words; for these men are not drunken, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.”

We are directed, therefore, to open the book of prophecy. The prediction cited from the prophet Joel was the text, as it were, and groundwork of St. Peter’s discourse. For he contended that, in the things which they had seen and heard, and respecting which they inquired, that prophecy was receiving its fulfilment. What those things were we endeavoured to show in the last Lecture. We see them not in these days, nor have we heard them; but the writings, from which we derive our information respecting them, are the

authentic records transmitted to us by persons well qualified to attest those facts, which were then notorious and incontrovertible, and the consequences of which, in the erection and extension of the Christian Religion, have ever since been certain and manifest. On the present occasion we shall

I. Shew the purport and fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel cited by the Apostle.

II. Endeavour to elucidate the discourse which he subjoined.

I. In order to the discussion of the first of these topics, we shall briefly remind you of the circumstances under which St. Peter addressed his hearers. He, with his brethren, were heard by persons of various and distant countries, to celebrate in the languages of those respective countries, “the wonderful works of God.” Those persons were confounded. For they were witnesses of a fact, evidenced to their senses, which, on account of the country and situation of those concerned in it, appeared wholly inexplicable; and which seemed to proceed from an inspiration, such as none of the old prophets had possessed. They had heard of the multitudes that flocked to the preaching of the Baptist; and that, afterwards, the people had been “astonished at the doctrine

of Jesus ;” but now their attention was so arrested by the *medium* of communication, that they repeatedly expressed their surprise at that circumstance ; and seem to have been comparatively little impressed by “the wonderful works of God,” upon which the Apostles enlarged. The explanation given of the circumstance, if it had rested on the unsupported authority of men who were so gifted, would have been entitled to attention. Their qualifications were referred by them, not to any human source, but to the gift of God, by whom alone they had been, or could have been, communicated. But as they addressed those, to whom, as Jews by descent, were committed the oracles of God, or who, as Proselytes, revered them, they did not claim any other gifts than such as had been promised of old, and promised in language, which demanded the attention of those present, because they had been witnesses of events, which then first occurred, but which, for some time after, continued to attest the fulfilment of the prediction.

“This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel ; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams : And on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will

pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved^a.”

The whole of this passage was cited by St. Peter, yet it is very evident that the *entire* prediction was not, *at that time*, accomplished. The whole passage, however, forms one continuous prophecy; and the several particulars are so connected together, and follow each other in such order, as to suggest the idea that, whenever the first particular received its fulfilment, the others would speedily follow. And so the issue proved. For, in these words of the prophet Joel, an epitome is given of the leading events which came to pass, from the day of Pentecost to the day of Jerusalem's destruction. That the Apostles should open their commission by the citation of so comprehensive a prediction, is not a little remarkable; and such a reference to it, as having a decided connection with the wonders of that day, was calculated to excite the most earnest

^a Acts ii. 16—21. Compare Joel ii. 28—32.

attention to what St. Peter had farther to offer. For if it were even probable that all that prediction, as to its wonders, its terrors, and its mercies, would, in all its particulars, be verified, when once the season of that fulfilment had arrived; and if there were reason to conclude that the wonders of that season had already commenced; then all, who saw and heard these things, were placed in a crisis of the most solemn nature. Their own reflections upon the consecutive clauses of this prophecy might also remind them of several passages in other prophets, by whom, in similar language, similar events were intimated^b.

If we consult the writings of the prophet who delivered this prediction, we find that he commences with a lively and highly wrought description of the horrors of devastation, and of a consequent famine, which would be caused by countless swarms of locusts and other insects, whom, as the army sent to execute the purposes of Jehovah, no human power or prudence could resist. The prophet prescribes, as the only effectual means of safety, a return to God, “with fasting, and weeping, and mourning;” in all the seriousness and humility of hearty repentance. Then would

^b Isai. xxxii. 15; xlv. 3. Ezek. xxxvi. 22—31. Zech. xii. 10. Isai. xlv. 3—5. Isai. xliii. 10. xxxiv. 1—4. Zeph. i. 14—18. ii. 1—3. Isai. xi. 10. Obad. 17.

the Lord “be jealous for his land, and pity his people ;” and, by the return of fruitful seasons, “restore to them” that which was lost in the years of famine, so that they should “eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord their God.” “And ye shall know” says the Most High “that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else ; and my people shall never be ashamed. And it shall come to pass *afterward*, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh : and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. And upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.”

The succeeding chapter of this prophet seems to refer to events as yet future ; events, which may probably take place when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, and the glories of Israel return. Even the words before us had not received their accomplishment, until the period at which St. Peter cited them. The gifts of prophecy had anciently been vouchsafed only occasionally, and to few. When the Jews returned from Babylon, and were again settled in peace at Jerusalem, they ceased altogether, until revived in the father of the Baptist, in the Baptist, and in Jesus. And, even then, the abundance, and wide diffusion,

of the gift was not such as in any degree to correspond to the declaration, that it would be “poured on *all flesh* ;” although we grant that that expression must not be understood in the largest sense of which it is capable, but either as declaring that some of *all ranks* would enjoy such gifts, or some of *all nations*, or those of *any nation*, who, as the context supplies the limitation, “should call on the name of the Lord.” Understanding that expression in the most extensive of the senses we have just specified, we know that, within the period included in the history of the New Testament, the prediction was most accurately accomplished ; though at first it was matter of surprise, even to St. Peter himself, that on the Gentiles also the gifts of the Holy Ghost were poured out as on the Apostles at the beginning. We might also justly contend, that we are not bound to receive literally the detail of the prophecy as to the divers manners, in which the inspiration would be communicated, in *prophecy*, and *visions*, and *dreams* ; nor as to the enumeration of *sons* and *daughters*, *old men* and *young men*, *servants* and *handmaidens*, who should severally participate in these gifts. The figurative language of prophecy would authorize us in supposing, that this was little else than a poetical amplification of the first clause, designed to describe the variety, and general communication,

of spiritual gifts ; and yet, perhaps, each one of these particulars had its corresponding fulfilment.

But to proceed with the remaining clauses of the prophet's presages. " And I will shew wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come." The disciple of Jesus will remember, that these words are almost identical with the descriptions, which occur in our Lord's distinct and circumstantial predictions of the fall of Jerusalem. And we might suppose that the prodigies reported by Josephus were to be considered as the fulfilment of both these predictions, if, upon reference to other parts of the Old Testament, it did not clearly appear, that this is no other than the ordinary symbolical language of prophecy, employing such figures to denote the consternation and ruin of kingdoms and their rulers. So, in his thirteenth chapter, Isaiah foretels the fall of Babylon ; and, in his thirty-fourth chapter, the desolation of Idumea ; and so Ezekiel, in his thirty-second chapter, declares the terrors of that day of darkness which would accompany the ruin of Egypt.

We cannot, then, be at a loss to discover to what event these presages of Joel are to be referred. And if we further remember that the Christians in Jerusalem, in compliance with their

Lord's directions, fled to the mountains, and removed the Christian Church of Jerusalem to Pella, and that not a hair of their heads perished; we shall further see the purport of the remaining part of this passage of the prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call."

Thus to have carried forward our views, and to have surveyed, though but rapidly, the *whole* of this prediction, and the accomplishment which it received, may not have been without its use in order to the confirmation of our own faith. But we must now limit our attention more particularly to the *day of Pentecost*, and consider how this prediction, then only *partially* accomplished, tended to produce the conversion of so many of those, who were the hearers of St. Peter.

That God had largely, and with efficacy then unprecedented, poured out of his Spirit, was manifest; and those, who witnessed the fact, did not conceal their amazement. Even if none but the twelve Apostles in any measure participated in these spiritual gifts, the circumstance, that *so many* should receive such communications, was sufficient to obtain assent to the justness of the explanation which St. Peter offered. It

was a maxim with the Jews, that “prophecy doth not reside on any, but on one that is wise, and valiant, and rich ;” and, therefore, the Jewish commentators have interpreted the clause, which declares the outpouring of the Spirit on *servants* and *handmaidens*, with such limitations, as might reconcile it with their received maxim^c. The rulers of the Jews afterwards marvelled at the boldness of Peter and John, because they were unlettered men, and of a private station: and doubtless those, who witnessed their spiritual qualifications on the day of Pentecost, would no less marvel; yet they would see that this circumstance also corresponded with the words of Joel. And the correspondence was still more perfect, if we suppose that the Apostles were not alone on this occasion, but that the remaining disciples, and the women, shared in these gifts; and certainly we read, both in the Acts of the Apostles, and in one of the Epistles to the Corinthians, that women did afterwards receive the gift of prophecy^d.

But the accurate fulfilment of this prediction was not the only circumstance which might contribute to produce conviction in the minds of St. Peter’s hearers. The words of Joel are these :

^c See Pococke’s Commentary on Joel.

^d Acts xxi. 9. 1 Cor. xi. 5.

“ It shall come to pass *afterward*, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” St. Peter cites them thus: “ It shall come to pass, *in the last days*, saith God.” The Jews themselves allow the phrases, *afterwards*, and *in the last days*, to be equivalent, and understand them, as we do, of the days of the Messiah. And they occur in that well-known prophecy, which is found in the same words, both in the second chapter of Isaiah, and in the fourth of Micah; in which it is predicted, that “ the law would in the last days go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and that all nations should go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.” Perhaps the phrase, “ in the last days,” was employed by the Apostle for the purpose of more expressly limiting the period, at which the accomplishment of the prediction was to be expected, and of directing his hearers to connect it with other predictions, in which either a similar note of time was used, or in which similar effects were predicted; for, in several instances, parallel prophecies are in the New Testament cited together. And if we further consider the very general expectation that then prevailed, that the appearance of the Messiah was at hand; and that it is no improbable conjecture, which some have proposed, that that very expectation occasioned the presence of many of these strangers at Jerusalem

at this time,—it may very reasonably be supposed, that the hearers of St. Peter would call to mind the prediction of Daniel, which expressly mentions the Messiah, and which connects with his appearance the desolations, which the event proved to have been denounced against Jerusalem^a. The same desolations, as we have seen, were foretold in the prophecy of Joel; and an expression was used, which is found in one other place, and which, if called to mind, would still more fully prepare them to receive the further instructions that St. Peter gave them: “Behold the day cometh,” says Malachi, in words which closed the canon of Jewish Scripture, “*the day cometh*, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts.—But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings.—Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of *the great and dreadful day of the Lord*”^b.—Of the identity of the events described here, and in the prophecy of Joel, we can have no doubt; believing as we do, that these and similar anticipations were accomplished by the preaching of the Baptist, warning the Jews “to flee from the wrath to come;” by the coming of Christ

^a Dan. ix. 25—27.

^b Mal. iv.

Jesus, as “the day-spring from on high,” to guide us into the way of peace; and by his preservation of all his disciples, as well from the calamities which befel the Jews, as from greater and more lasting perils.

Was then Peter silent on the day of Pentecost respecting Jesus of Nazareth? Was he, who, after a threefold denial of his Master, received from him a threefold injunction to “feed his sheep;” and who, “when converted,” had so lately “strengthened his brethren,” by his address and judicious counsel; was he backward to proclaim the name of One, whom he had once confessed to be “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and who had declared that on him, and on his good confession, he would found his Church, as on a rock against which the gates of Hell should not prevail? No. He was not “ashamed of him, nor of his words.” He connected *his* name with the wonders of that day. He ascribed them to *him* as the giver. He would so declare *him*, that “all the house of Israel might know assuredly, that God had made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ.” For it would not satisfy his desire and prayer for them, nor would it suffice for their information and profit, only to acknowledge the hand of God in the bestowment of those gifts, and to perceive the correspondency of that particular event to the prophecy which foreshowed it, unless they also adverted to other considerations.

The miracle they had witnessed had a close and important connexion with the office, exaltation, and merciful designs of Jesus of Nazareth; subjects faintly pictured even in the prophecy of Joel, but in other predictions fully and distinctly. He proceeded therefore so to recal recent occurrences to their minds, and so to argue upon them, that he might bring them to repentance, and an acknowledgement of the truth. “Ye men of Israel,” said he, “hear these words.”

II. We proposed, as the second head of this Lecture, to elucidate the discourse which the Apostle subjoined.

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words. They relate to Jesus of Nazareth; whose name is already familiar to your ears, whom we accompanied in his life, and whose name and character are still recollected by us with affection and reverence. He was a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people. He was seen and heard among you during the period of his public and unwearied labours; and God gave testimony to him, as his approved messenger sent to you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you. This you yourselves also know. For the facts were public; and great multitudes followed him, confessing that he had ‘done all things well,’ and

that 'it was never so seen in Israel.' Nor need I to inform you how he was betrayed into the power of your rulers, and that they condemned him; they and yourselves extorting from a reluctant Roman Governor the sentence for his execution, and thus causing him to be crucified and slain by the lawless hands of heathen soldiers. That was 'your hour, and the power of darkness.' Never before could the evil designs of his enemies effect their unholy purpose. But then the work which he had to do on earth was finished; and God, by his own determinate counsel and foreknowledge, therefore permitted those to exercise their power against Jesus, who 'could have had no power against him except it had been given them from above.' That same God has now raised him up, having loosed the pains of death. For as he had never been crucified and slain, unless the designs of God had so required that it should be; so it was not possible that he should be held in the bands of death, because of the office which he sustained; in order to the discharge of which it was necessary, that he should be raised from the dead."

"What that office was, and why he was to rise again, as he had himself predicted, I will shortly inform you. But first let me refer you to the words of David in the sixteenth Psalm, words which David spoke concerning him: 'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my

right hand that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope; because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.' Men and brethren, these are the words of David; and if you suppose that he spoke them respecting himself only, let me point out to you the grounds for another opinion respecting them. However cautiously I may advance the assertion, so novel to you, that God has raised up Jesus, I may freely speak to you of the patriarch David, and declare, without fear of contradiction, that no such thing happened to him; but that he is both dead, and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. That he was a prophet you will scarcely deny. Nor can you forget that God swore to him with an oath, that his throne should be established for ever, and that his promise would not fail; but that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne, and that for ever. You yourselves believe that Christ abideth for ever. If, therefore, he ever enter the grave, he must be raised from it again, to reign over the house of Jacob for ever. David, therefore, being a prophet, and anticipating such an accomplishment

of the promises made to him, spoke, in those words, of the resurrection of Christ, that *his* soul was not left in hell, neither *his* flesh did see corruption."

"That Jesus of Nazareth has been raised from the dead I have announced to you, and of the fact we all are witnesses; for we all have seen him, and are assured that he is risen indeed. Nay, we can further testify, that he has ascended into heaven, there to reign at the right hand of God. To such power he has been exalted; and, as the first-fruits of his triumph, he has received of the Father that Holy Spirit, which, as you have heard, was promised of old, which he himself promised to us before his death, and since his resurrection; and for which we have been waiting until this day, when, as you have seen and heard, the promise has been fulfilled. These gifts we refer to Jesus Christ as their purchaser and giver. We, I say, so refer them to him, who have this day been proved, by these gifts, to be the subjects of divine inspiration. We testify that Jesus is that Son of David, for whom you have so long hoped; the same Jesus whom you crucified, God has now raised from the dead, and made him to sit down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Thither has the Son of David ascended: but of David this cannot be asserted. And yet, in words which, like the former, cannot be understood but of Christ, the Son of David, the royal Prophet has

spoken of such an exaltation ; nay, in spirit has predicted that exaltation. He gives to him, who was his descendant according to the flesh, the title of Lord. ‘The Lord Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.’”

“Facts, then, of which we are witnesses ; facts also which, in your own presence, have given the sanction of the Holy Spirit of God to our testimony ; and the correspondence of all and each of these things to the Scriptures of the Prophets : these circumstances conspire to demonstrate that certain conclusion, which, from our own full conviction, and in fearless confidence, we assert and proclaim. *Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same JESUS, whom ye have crucified, both LORD and CHRIST.*”

Such an address was not ineffectual. “The same day there were added to the Church about three thousand souls.” They “were pricked in their hearts ;” for they were amazed at the surprising fulfilment of the hopes of their nation, and at the manifest tokens of divine interposition to perfect the astonishing designs of divine mercy. They were also stung with the most poignant remorse at their own former unbelief ; and some of them, perhaps, at the recollection, that they were not guiltless of that innocent blood, which

they had invoked on themselves and on their children.

We were not partakers with them in that guilt, nor to us are the truths and the designs of the Gospel a new and almost overwhelming discovery; and, therefore, we are more careless, and less deeply affected. But whence does it arise, but from the depravity of our nature, that that familiarity with the most solemn truths, which ought to render us more abundantly and habitually fruitful in every good word and work, does but too constantly weaken the impressions that they leave upon our hearts; and substitutes, in the place of salutary emotions, and holy purposes, the cold, inert, and cheerless tranquillity of mere speculation? The new convert should not, if all were as it ought to be, abound most in gratitude and love; nor the man, whose conscience accuses him of gross and deadly sins, alone be eminent for the depth and efficacy of his repentance. There are many, indeed, of whom it cannot be said, that they have lost their first love, because this love has never as yet been “shed abroad in their hearts.” There are many, who have yet practically to learn “the first principles of the doctrine of Christ,” and to lay “the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God.” But be it remembered by all, that the true Christian waxes not cold, nor loiters in the narrow way

to eternal life. He presses on to perfection ; a perfection of faith, and of hope, and of love as the principle of obedience. He is ever sensible to the value of promises of God, and to the importance of his commands ; and when the arrows of conviction are fixed in his tender conscience, his question is that, which the converts of St. Peter proposed, “ Men and brethren, what shall we do ? ” The answer is, in all ages, substantially the same ; “ Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins ; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” True, you have already been baptized in his name ; but are the privileges and the vows of baptism duly remembered ? Are you, as baptized into the death of Jesus Christ, dead to sin, and are you living again unto righteousness ? Having, by baptism, been made to drink into one and the same Spirit of Christ, that ever regenerates and renews the members of his Church, are you so living in the Spirit, as not to fulfil the lust of the flesh ? If so, you have not only “ gladly received the word,” but you have received it “ in an honest and good heart.” “ Bring forth fruit, therefore, with patience,” and “ endure to the end.” “ Continue steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking

of bread, and in prayers." So shall the due and diligent use of the "means of grace," strengthen in you the "hope of glory;" and while you yourselves are rejoicing in hope, doubt not that "the Lord will add to the Church daily such as shall be saved."



LECTURE IV.

“THE GIFTS OF HEALING” EXERCISED BY THE APOSTLES.—
THE CURE OF THE LAME MAN,
AND ST. PETER’S DISCOURSE ON THAT OCCASION.

ACTS III. 12—16.

When Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glorified his son Jesus, whom ye delivered up—and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong whom ye see and know.

WE recognize in the salutary doctrine of Jesus indications of its heavenly origin, and in his mighty works we are furnished with indisputable credentials of his divine authority. When, therefore, we find such a one delivering to his disciples explicit predictions, which would be speedily fulfilled, if at all, in *their* personal qualifications, proceedings, and success, we are naturally led to inquire respecting the actual issue of these

things. For, whether or not Jesus were the great one promised of old, an additional demonstration of his mission as a divine teacher would be furnished, both by the fulfilment of his predictions, and also by the very nature of the particulars which he foretold. Whatever might be the purposes of his mission, they were not effected while he lived; nor was he alone to be concerned in accomplishing a design, of which the extent and greatness is so clearly suggested by his own declarations. Let the following words of Jesus suffice to illustrate this remark. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.—Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask *in my name*, that will I do, that *the Father may be glorified in the Son*^a."

The transaction referred to in the text, and the phraseology adopted in it, by one who received the assurance just cited, will shew to us, that in that transaction they found those promises verified, not to their own conviction only, but

^a John xiv, 6—12.

to the satisfaction of the multitudes whom they addressed; so many of whom were thereby brought to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, sent by the one true God. We have already seen how "the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father," was sent by Jesus, and in his name, to teach the Apostles, to lead them into all truth, and also to communicate to them the gift of tongues, which was one of the "signs" promised to them that believed. Now we are called upon to contemplate the further communication of the gifts of the Spirit, in consequence of which they became not only *subjects* of miraculous influence, but instruments in the hands of God, to *work* miracles on *others*.

In reviewing the narrative of the first Apostolic miracle, we shall have to consider

I. The circumstances and immediate consequences of the miraculous cure of the lame man.

II. The discourse of St. Peter on that occasion.

I. The time of the miracle in question was one of the stated hours of prayer. The scene of the transaction was a gate of the temple, at which a cripple was daily laid to ask alms of

the worshippers. They beheld him, whose person and decrepitude they had known so long, walking and leaping, in all the joyous feeling of newly acquired strength, ‘with supple joints, as lively vigour led.’ They saw him enter the temple. There they heard him utter the animated expressions of gratitude, and of praise to God, for so unexpected a restoration. They saw him earnestly and affectionately attach himself to Peter and John, as if unwilling to be separated from those, who had been unable to bestow the silver and gold for which alone he had hoped, but who had given him that more valuable boon which they were empowered to bestow, the perfect soundness which, from his mother’s womb, had never before been his. The same sensible evidences of the reality of the cure, which at first excited the surprise, and awakened the curiosity of the multitude, did not permit them afterwards to doubt the certainty of the fact. They manifested no disposition to cavil and object, for the circumstances afforded no opportunity. But they found an additional cause for astonishment, when they contemplated the person, at whose word, and by the extension of whose right hand, the cripple had immediately lost his previous disabilities.

A short time before, similar occurrences had been witnessed among them. Jesus had gone

through their cities, "healing all manner of sickness and disease;" and in Jerusalem had performed a similar miracle on one, whose decrepitude had remained thirty-eight years. But Jesus had died; and how came it to pass that the season of wonders had now recommenced? and that the followers of Jesus exhibited proofs of miraculous influence vouchsafed to themselves, and by them to others? These people, with their rulers, and fellow-countrymen, had conspired to put Jesus to death; or, if they were shocked at the time, they had since acquiesced in that legal murder, and now had almost lost the recollection of it. Should they then admit surmises like those of Herod, when he heard of the fame of Jesus, and conscience-struck, exclaimed: "It is John, whom I beheaded, he is *risen from the dead*, and *therefore* mighty works do shew forth themselves in him"? Such conjectures might suggest themselves; and they would not have been far distant from the truth. For though the Baptist still remained in death, Jesus truly had risen; and the mighty works that had formerly been exhibited by him, now were performed by his Apostles, giving confirmation to that unwelcome, yet unanswerable testimony, which they unceasingly and successfully bore.

It will readily be allowed, that those, in whom the exhibition of a signal miracle produces no

emotion, no feeling of awe, no disposition to inquiry, are in a state of mind little fitted for the reception of the truths which the miracle may have been designed to attest. And yet most of those vivid impressions, which excite the soul to feelings of the most animating nature, are of brief duration. If such impressions are connected with that important subject, so unacceptable to sinful man, which calls him to the renunciation of darling sins and long cherished error, to the practice of self-denial and the pursuit of holiness, then must the conviction that such attainments are needful, and the resolution to strive after them, be implanted while yet his conscience is roused, and his heart softened; and while he remains conscious of his guilt, and disposed to bow to that authority which peremptorily enjoins him to repent and turn to God. If such seasons are not favourable to the commencement of the principles and habits, which lead to truth and holiness, we shall in vain look for similar effects at a moment when he, whose eye clearly perceives the magnificence and extent of the scene presented to him, is so chilled by the keen blast, or wintry atmosphere, that his mind partakes of the torpor of the body; or when the man is so indolent and insensible, that although he knows that danger is near, he prefers to take his rest, and so to incur the risk

of inevitable destruction, rather than undergo the exertion which might ensure his preservation.

We have seen that the spectators of the miracle in question were not so affected. They knew not as yet their guilt and danger; nor were they sufficiently aware of those truths, which it was expedient that they should learn. Their attention, however, was excited; and it was directed, in all the solemn expectation of most justifiable astonishment, towards those, who had been enabled to shew signs and wonders, in order that their witness might be believed. The communication of the needful information could never be made more seasonably; and the silence of the Apostles, under such circumstances, would indeed have been inexplicable. They would in that case have been guilty, not merely of neglect, but of unfaithfulness. For, to have omitted the explanation which they gave, might have led the spectators to ascribe to them a character and powers, to which they made no claim. But they deferred not to remove any such impression, and, with that disinterestedness which ever characterized them in all their subsequent labours, they gave the glory to him to whom it was due; even to Jesus, whose name they proclaimed, and whose servants they were.

II. In the discourse of St. Peter, which we proposed to consider in the second place, we may observe *three* leading divisions.

1. In the *first* of these he cautions them against adopting an erroneous view of the transaction; directs them to the proper and only explanation which it admitted; and takes occasion to evince the divine authority of the Gospel, and the guilt which they had incurred in opposing it during the ministry of its author. The substance of this part of his discourse, which was addressed to the people in the presence of the lame man who had been healed, may be expressed in the following manner.

“Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this?—Ye are not such strangers in Jerusalem, as never to have heard of those miracles, which have so frequently been wrought there in these days; and why, then, does an additional one excite your wonder? Rather let your reflections be directed to a review of the entire series of those things which ye have seen and heard. But why look ye so earnestly on us? It is true that we are able to apprise you what is the purport of this miracle, as we were to perform it. Nor, without distinctly pointing out your mistake, can we permit you to entertain the idea, that, by our power, we have made this man to walk; or that, because

of our own holiness, we have been empowered so to do. ‘No man can do these miracles except God be with him’; and we worship, and trust in no other God, than the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers; and to him would we ascribe the power to do this miracle. Be assured therefore that we have no intention to persuade you to ‘go after other Gods, whom ye have not known, and to serve them^b.’”

“But the testimony, which we do design to give, we must explain more particularly. By so empowering us, the God of our fathers has glorified his Son Jesus, whose disciples we are; and the Son is so glorified in the sight of men, because he has been by the right hand of God exalted. Having gone to the Father, he is now glorified with the Father; and, according to his most sure promise to us, has enabled us to do these works, ‘that the Father may be glorified in the Son.’ This may appear to you strange intelligence, since that same Jesus, notwithstanding all that God did by him in the midst of you, you delivered up to trial and to condemnation. Though he then professed himself to be ‘the Christ, the Son of the Blessed,’ you renounced him in the presence of Pilate; who, acting with more justice than yourselves, was determined to let him go, and would fain have released him. But

^b See Deut. xiii. 1—5.

rather than accept his release, though by all but yourselves pronounced to be holy and just, you demanded the release of a murderer; as if such an one were more worthy than Jesus to enjoy the governor's accustomed clemency at the season of the passover. Thus you killed the Prince of life; him, who taught the doctrine of life eternal, and who promised it to those that believed in him, because he has procured it for them, and is able to bestow it. Notwithstanding all that you have done in this matter, we still avouch him as the Author of life, as the guide and Captain of eternal salvation to all them that obey him. For, in proof of this his character, God has raised him from the dead. Of that fact we are witnesses; for we have been most fully convinced of the truth of it. Not only have we already asserted it openly, but must persevere in maintaining that assertion; because we are bound to be his witnesses respecting it, and boldly deny that any one can disprove it. But let this recent miracle be the evidence, both of our veracity, and of the fact which we attest. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, we bid this man to rise up and walk. If our faith in Jesus had been visionary, and if he had not risen from the dead, then we are false witnesses of God in testifying that he has raised up Jesus. You may learn, however, that the case is far otherwise, from what you have

seen, and from what we now declare. For his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.”

Thus did the Apostle apply the miracle which had been wrought, to the establishment of the truths which it was his office to proclaim. Those parts of the argument, which directly tended to that end, were accompanied by such references to the life and character of Jesus, and to the manner in which the Jews had effected his death, as might remind them of his innocence, and lead them to suspect the unjust and hasty violence of their own proceedings. They might then be the less disposed, with the hardihood of an undisturbed conscience, to entrench themselves in prejudices, which had occasioned such proceedings, and which still fortified their minds against the admission of truth. Those, who denied the inference drawn from the miracle, and also justified the proceedings which St. Peter censured, of course went away unconvinced. Those, who might be otherwise minded, required still further instructions; and such he proceeds to give them in the *second* division of his discourse.

2. The guilt, which, according to his statement, they had incurred, was such as might

justly lead them to fear the consequences. But, lest they should fall into despair, and not seek for pardon, he exhorted them to repentance. He prepared them for an exhortation to that effect, subjoined in the concluding portion of his discourse, by the notice of *two* particulars, which afforded grounds of hope, and encouragements to repentance; though both of them had reference to the deeds because of which their criminality was so great.

Though they knew enough to have rendered even more equitable proceedings against Jesus far from excusable; yet still they had not so perfectly apprehended his dignity and office, as that their's was a case of hardened presumption. They had done it ignorantly, in unbelief; deeming the supposition, that Jesus of Nazareth could be the Christ, to be as incredible in itself, as it was at variance with all their favorite prejudices. Those unhappy prejudices, and the ignorance which they tended to perpetuate, afforded such an extenuation of that, which, in every point of view, was a highly criminal transaction, that they had reason to hope and believe that pardon would not be denied to a repentance, consequent upon the discovery of the whole truth.

In the next place, if they compared recent events with the declarations of the Prophets re-

specting the sufferings of the promised Christ, they would discover that whatever were the views which had induced them to participate in those transactions, "God had so fulfilled" that class of the predictions of the Prophets. If, therefore, in sorrow for their haste and ignorance, and in the hope that it would find pardon, because their crime admitted of extenuation, they repented of their crime, they would discover that Jesus, as the Christ, had suffered according to the divine purpose. Being "wounded for the transgression, and bruised for the iniquities," of men, for whose salvation he suffered, there was even more than hope that he, who had died through their ignorance and injustice, in dying atoned for their sin; and that he had not prayed in vain when he said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

3. It now remains to notice the *third* and concluding portion of this discourse, in which the Apostle gave and enforced the exhortation to repentance. The entire passage would afford to the private student several topics of interesting inquiry, and to the Lecturer matter for extensive discussion. But it must suffice to give the substance of it in the form, which has already been adopted; and to represent the observations of the Apostle in such a manner as may, at least,

elucidate his argument, and as we might suppose that he delivered himself more at length than the limits of the historian permitted him to record the discourse.

“ Repent, therefore, and turn to God, since there are such grounds for entertaining the hope, that even those of you, who ‘ consented to the counsel and deed ’ of those who killed the Prince of Life, may yet obtain mercy. Nor is it only to such that I address the exhortation, but to all ; with reference not to that crime only, but to all those sins, the prevalence of which required the sufferings of Messiah. By those sufferings he ‘ made an offering for sin, in order that he might justify many, because he bore their iniquities.’ To all, therefore, are we commissioned to ‘ preach in his name repentance and remission of sins.’ You we this day exhort to repent, and turn to God ; for he will then ‘ turn to you, receive you graciously, and love you freely, though you have fallen by your iniquity.’ Return to him, in order that your sins may be blotted out, and that so ‘ the anger of God may be turned away, and he may comfort you.’ Return, that so the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. Of such a season the Lord spoke by Isaiah, in a passage of his prophecy, which already has, in part, been accomplished in the spiritual gifts which we have received, and in the instructions which we are

commanded to give, and which we fear will hereafter be realized in its more threatening intimations to all that continue impenitent.”

“ ‘With stammering lips,’ said the prophet, and another tongue, will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is *the refreshing*; yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Sion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgement also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not

stand; and when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, ye shall be trodden down by it^c.”

“I seek not to conceal from you, that judgments are here threatened. But I have encouraged you to hope for better things; and would fain persuade you to hear and turn to God, that you may obtain his favour, and that from God may come to you those times of rest and refreshing, of which the prophet speaks. This you can obtain only by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is described as ‘a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious^d.’ But then shall God send unto you, to your comfort and salvation, him who before was preached to you by the ministry of the prophets, and long since was destined to become your Saviour, even Jesus Christ. He shall be sent unto you in the preaching, and in the benefits, of his Gospel. For though he has ascended to the

^c Isai. xxviii 11.—18.

^d Compare St. Peter’s first Epistle, ii. 4—8, where he cites and enlarges upon the latter part of the passage of Isai. xxviii. to the former part of which he referred in the discourse under consideration.—In a subsequent Lecture we shall take occasion, from the two Epistles of St. Peter, to ascertain the nature and reasons of the *principles* upon which he cited, and applied to Christ, the prophecies of the Old Testament. A *detailed examination* of each prophecy cited in the portions of Scripture considered in these Lectures, would require several such courses. Such a work, however, still is a desideratum in English Theology.

heavens, yet he will, according to his promise, ‘manifest himself’ to those that ‘love him, and keep his commandments;’—both he and the Father will love such, and they ‘will come unto them, and make their abode with him;’ dwelling in them by the Holy Ghost, whom he giveth to such as obey him, and who testifieth of him. And thus shall Jesus Christ be with you, and bless you, though the heavens, to which he has ascended, must receive him at present; and he shall there reign until the time when all those things shall have been accomplished, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

“Our great lawgiver Moses spoke to the fathers of that Prophet, who has now appeared among us; and who, according to his prediction, ‘was raised up from among us,’ and was ‘like to Moses,’ as the promulgator of the law of God with authority, and as the favoured messenger of God to man. That Prophet he enjoined us to ‘hear in all things, whatsoever he should say unto us;’ adding moreover a threatening, which the later prophets also variously deliver, that ‘every soul, that will not hear the voice of that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.’ And of these days we find additional intimations, both in the book of Samuel, which contains the promises made to David, and in those of the succeed-

ing prophets. And ye, to whom I now speak, are the children of the prophets ; instructed in those things which they have announced, and heirs of the promises which they have recorded. Ye are children of that still earlier covenant which God made with our fathers ; in which he not only guaranteed the possession of this the promised land, but said also to Abraham, ‘ In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ God has now raised up his Son Jesus, the seed of Abraham, the son of David, the prophet like unto Moses. Whosoever, and how many soever be eventually blessed in him, unto you he has sent him *first* ; sent him to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, sent him to bless you. But he will bless you, not as you would more readily believe, by delivering you from national bondage, and by leading you on to warlike triumphs and wide-spreading dominion ; but, on the contrary, by conferring on you, individually, that spiritual and eternal blessedness which each one will attain, who turns away from his iniquities. None but such are blessed in him ; and all whom he blesses, he will enable to forsake sin, and to follow after righteousness.”

When the discourse of the Apostle had proceeded so far, it was abruptly terminated by the presence and interference of the rulers. This will appear at least probable to those, who are not

prevented from observing the connexion of the sacred records, by the division into chapters; which so often unhappily interrupts and obscures the sense, both of the historical and doctrinal portions of Scripture.

Such an address, however, pointedly suggested the necessity of employing the miracle, which had caused astonishment, as a motive to enter on various and important inquiries. If they duly profited by the suggestion, then they either undertook those inquiries in a wrong spirit, or conducted them on erroneous principles, if they were not led to misgivings which prepared them for repentance; to hopes, which encouraged them to it; and to discoveries, which excited wonder, not because of the strangeness of something they understood not, but because of the sublimity and importance of truths, now fully exhibited to their apprehension. But those who have before them the same facts, and the same arguments, do not always arrive at the same conclusion. Nay, it sometimes happens, that such as have had qualifications in some respects more ample, and data more abundant, refuse to admit the truths which others justly deduce from fewer premises. So the majority of the Jewish rulers, who confessed the reality of this miracle, and did not deny the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, set themselves to oppose the band who had flocked round the stand-

ard of the Cross ; while others, in consequence of the same events, were convinced that in joining that persecuted company they espoused the cause of truth, of Christ, and of God.

We must reserve the consideration of the proceedings of the rulers, and of the Apostles when summoned before them, for a future Lecture. We have had ample matter of important meditation in that address of St. Peter, which, as we have already observed, was suddenly interrupted by the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees ; who, “grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead,” came upon the Apostles, and apprehended them. But many had previously heard enough to satisfy them, that the witness of the Apostles was true. “The number of the men was about five thousand ;” so that already, even if we are not justified in adding that number to the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost, the Lord was daily adding to the Church such as saved themselves from that untoward generation, and who rejoiced in the light which so many refused to see and to follow.

And blessed be God, who hath also blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. While, however, we rejoice that through Jesus is preached unto us the resurrection of the dead, we must remember, that those only shall rise unto

life eternal, who are Christians indeed; who have done good, because they are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” In the guilt and the prevalence of evil deeds originated the necessity of that redemption, which the Saviour has so fully wrought out for us. But we are not “saved from wrath through him,” unless we are “redeemed from all iniquity,” and become a purified people, “zealous of good works.” Therefore must we pray, in words of which our subject readily reminds us;—words of deep solemnity, and comprehensive import—that God will “give us *true repentance*, forgive us all our *sins*, *negligences*, and *ignorances*, and endue us with the grace of his Holy Spirit, to *amend our lives* according to his holy word.”

That holy word, which is to be the rule to guide our feet, the light to direct and cheer our path, must not be a neglected Volume. Nor can we, with any claim to the character, with any right to the hopes of the Gospel, remain in negligence, any more than in ignorance. Both the one and the other are dangerous in their final consequences, and the fruitful occasions of sin. True repentance alone can lead us to obtain pardon, or to walk in newness of life. Otherwise, neither will our sins be blotted out, nor shall we be turned away from our iniquities. Though we cannot but desire pardon, it is the peculiar privilege of the

true penitent; though we all desire salvation, we can reach it only in the paths of true holiness. The task is arduous, and the performance of it little congenial to our original and acquired depravity. Let the necessity thereof make us reflect, and the benefit thereof induce us to comply. Though we may sow in tears, we shall reap a blessed harvest of peace, hope, and bliss. Giving all diligence, and therefore aroused from former negligence, we shall seek to abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, and so shall be continually farther removed from the dark and slippery paths of ignorance. The threatenings, which at first deterred us from perseverance in iniquity, will still be a motive to keep us at a distance from it. The promises, which first invited us to enter the pleasant and peaceful highway of holiness, will ever cheer and animate us in all that we do or suffer; till we attain their perfect accomplishment in the rich and eternal inheritance of heaven. To live will be Christ,—to die will be gain.



LECTURE V.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF PERSECUTION.—
INFERENCES SUGGESTED BY THE CONDUCT AND TESTIMONY
OF THE APOSTLES UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES.

ACTS V. 41, 42.

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach, and preach Jesus Christ.

SUCH were the feelings of the Apostles of Jesus Christ under persecution excited against them by that testimony, in which, after all, they joyfully and boldly persevered! For they witnessed and suffered, because they believed; and because they knew that the subjects which they taught publicly, and from house to house, were not merely matter of private concern, or personal interest, but for the glory of their God and Saviour, and for the consolation, instruction, and eternal benefit, of every creature under heaven.

We have already seen the fulfilment of *two* of their Master's predictions in the season of the Apostles' earliest labours; for Jesus had promised,

and they received, the gifts of the Holy Ghost to themselves, and the power of working miracles on others. He also unequivocally announced to them some other facts, which would have deterred many from undertaking the task assigned them; and which must have deterred the Apostles themselves, had they not found in so many other particulars that conviction and consolation, and those motives of gratitude and zeal for their Master, which counterbalanced the awful aspect of some of his forewarnings. "They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before rulers and kings for my name's sake. Yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Such was the destiny which awaited the Apostles in the midst of their labours, nay, in consequence of those labours! But it wanted not an addition which furnished consolation to them. "And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it, therefore, in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist."

This declaration also found its accomplishment, even in the earliest period of Apostolical suffering. At the close of that period "they departed from the presence of the council, re-

joining that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." They felt it both possible, and even natural for those, who contemplated the world and its concerns as they did, to "rejoice and be exceeding glad, knowing that great was their reward in heaven." But those adverse circumstances were not only a trial of their own personal faith, but of their Apostolical fidelity; and also brought the question respecting the things which they attested to such an issue, that this beginning of persecution "turned to the Apostles for a testimony:"

I. Of their sincerity and fidelity.

II. Of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; and

III. Of the general truth of the religion they taught.

I. Reflect how uniformly consistent was the behaviour of the Apostles; who pointedly and explicitly denounced the guilt of those who put Jesus to death, and declared his Messiahship, his heavenly dignity, and the power of his name. Such things they taught to the assembled multitudes; nor was any thing suppressed in their defence before the rulers. Scarcely, however, can we call it their defence; for they wholly forget

themselves, and preach Jesus as the Christ, more strongly, if possible, than they had previously done. They appeal to the miracle recently performed, not as offering a reasonable apology for their teaching the people, but as furnishing a complete justification, and as authorizing them again and unceasingly to proclaim the name and authority of their Master. "Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved^a."

The boldness and forcible eloquence of Peter and John astonished the rulers. They were notoriously 'unlearned men, and of private station;' yet, with fearless confidence, and unanswerable statements, they testified of Jesus, whose

^a Acts iv. 8—12.

attendants they were known to have been. Though their arguments were not answered, and the presence of the man, who had been healed, at once silenced even a surmise against the reality of the late miracle, they were strictly commanded, and that with repeated threatenings, ‘not to speak at all, nor teach, in the name of Jesus.’ With those, who were so convinced and authorized as they were, and whose office it was to declare such truths, these threatenings presented no terrors sufficient to deter them from a duty, for which they had still higher authority. “Whether it be right,” said they, “in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard^b.”

Notwithstanding, however, the fulness of that conviction, which so often enables men to defy and despise all future danger, the disciples knew and remembered the insufficiency of human resolutions, if unaided from above. With one accord they prayed unto God, that he would behold the threatenings of their opposers, and grant unto them boldness, and the sanction of miracles to the word they preached. They were “filled with the Holy Ghost,” in answer to their prayers; the place where they were assembled being shaken

^b Acts iv. 13—20.

in token of the divine presence and attention. Thenceforward they were fortified against all fear. They failed not to fulfil their best resolutions; and because of the strength of their own convictions, and the support of divine grace, “they spake the word of God with boldness, and with great power gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.” Yet this their faithfulness led to a second apprehension by the rulers, and a miraculous release from prison led to a third. But, during all these proceedings, we observe no one action or sentiment which indicates the slightest shade of doubt, or irresolution; but every word and proceeding shews, on the contrary, the fulness, and constancy, and maturity, of their own knowledge and views, and their steady purpose to make them known to others, as the clear and unanswerable dictates of divine revelation. “We ought,” said they again, “to obey God rather than man. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him^c.”

This last cited declaration was a sufficient

^c Acts v. 29—32.

offence in the eyes of the enraged rulers to justify measures for removing them by death, if Gamaliel's more impartial counsel had not prevailed. And when, as partly verifying their former threatenings, the council had beaten them; the Apostles departed rejoicing in this, as at once testifying that they had been faithful to their Master's cause, and that their faith and hope in him were sufficient to support and console them, in a constant unremitting proclamation of his name.

We most readily confess, that there is a confidence both empty and boisterous, which raises our disgust, and which reposes on no solid grounds; which intoxicates minds in a great measure incapable of a sober and enlightened judgment; which offers no persuasive argument to convince, exhibits no manliness or discretion to allure, and is followed, either by no effective energy, or by one of a mischievous and tumultuous nature. It would be well if the presuming sciolist could be persuaded to doubt, that so he might cease to dogmatize, and begin to inquire. But we cannot allow that confidence in statement, and steady perseverance in action, are the peculiar characteristics of ignorance, precipitancy, and error; rather are they the proper and original companions of that wisdom, which dwells with prudence and with truth. And when those, who have hazarded their lives, and devoted

them to painful labours, and frequent sufferings, in behalf of what they deemed truth, exhibit no symptom of overweening pride, bewildering enthusiasm, or thoughtless imprudence; and have embraced, after long and anxious inquiry, those views which they maintain with steady confidence, and propagate with prudent earnestness; we cannot justly be deemed credulous if we think favourably of their testimony, and give it our hearty assent.

II. We asserted, secondly, that the proceedings we have been considering give testimony to *the resurrection of Jesus*. Explicitly and constantly the Apostles asserted to the multitude the fact of the Resurrection; and the same they asserted before the council. And yet the fact was not denied, nor even *noticed*, by the rulers. Why, then, and with what effect, were the precautions they had themselves taken, by Pilate's permission, to guard against such a consequence? If those precautions had prevented the opening of the sepulchre, and if the body were still there, it would have been easy to meet the assertion of the Apostles, so often repeated, with both denial and refutation. In this instance, they asserted the fact before those very individuals who had taken such special pains to enable themselves to refute the disciples of Jesus, if they

should attempt to circulate a report that he had risen from the dead. But now, the Apostles of Jesus made that declaration; and the rulers were silent. Neither was any contradiction given to the statement when the Apostles announced it, nor any attempt to propagate any such contradiction of the fact among the people at large. The soldiers, who had watched the tomb, had given the rulers information respecting it; and their conduct at the time shewed that they believed their report. Had it been otherwise, and had any attempt really been made by the followers of Jesus, they would have endeavoured either to convict the soldiers of falsehood, or to punish the disciples for the violent removal of the body. The confession of the soldiers, that they were asleep at the time, was too dangerous to themselves to be made, except under promise of unexpected and unusual impunity. The testimony of the soldiers was undoubtedly such, that those who were determined to persevere in their rejection of Jesus were obliged to suppress, rather than to discuss and examine it. The story, however, by which they avoided giving prominence and publicity to the real account, was such as proved the reality of the resurrection of Jesus, by a power independent of human agency, and that the rulers were unable to disprove or deny it. And when the fact was becoming so notorious, that Jerusalem

was filled with the doctrine, that Jesus who was crucified had risen from the dead, still they shrunk from considering the point really at issue ; and yet, at the same time, the fear expressed, that the Apostles designed to “bring upon them the blood” of Jesus, seems to indicate a conviction of their own injustice ; and the advice of Gamaliel, and the influence which it had upon their proceedings, further imply a conviction, that the tokens of divine interposition in these occurrences were far from ambiguous.

III. And let it be observed, thirdly, that these proceedings afford testimony to the *general truth of the religion* which the Apostles taught. For not only were the rulers unable to contravene the declaration that Jesus had risen, but they were equally unable to deny that a notable and certain miracle had since been wrought ; one which they could not deny, and which was known to all that dwelt at Jerusalem. Unanswered also were the reasonings of the Apostles from the known miracles of their Master himself, and from the correspondence of all these things to the writings of the prophets. Nor were they, and the prophets, the only witnesses, whose testimony was unanswered. The gifts of the Holy Spirit, given to those who obeyed the call to believe in Jesus Christ, also testified of the

certainly, and abundance, and duration, of his power. As far as the worldly views of the Jewish rulers were concerned, “the last error was worse than the first;” but the error was not, that they had suffered Jesus to rise, and his name to be proclaimed, but that they did not bow beneath his yoke. There was enough of holy doctrine, and pure example; of miracles, and signs, and gifts of the Holy Ghost; of the testimony of the living and of the dead; to prove that God had raised up to Israel a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins; and to justify that impressive declaration, “neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

And still further we would observe, that while the proceedings of the Apostles, and of the rulers, may convince us of the *sufficiency* of the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, and for all else that concerns the truth of the Gospel, the same proceedings of the rulers shew us the *propriety* of the evidence actually afforded.

St. Peter afterwards observed, in his discourse to Cornelius and his company, that Jesus “did not shew himself to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God, even to his disciples, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.” Had he also shewed himself

openly to the priests and rulers, who had condemned him, it would indeed have been an undeniable proof to them of the fact; but it could really have added nothing to the force of that evidence, which had already been afforded them by the testimony of the soldiers, and the absence of the body. Their subsequent conduct towards the Apostles, who asserted the fact, proves that the rulers believed it, and were as unable to deny it, as they were to deny the miracles which those Apostles continued to work in attestation of their testimony. As, therefore, the raising of Lazarus from the dead by Jesus himself, had only operated as a motive to devise measures for effecting the speedy destruction both of Jesus and Lazarus; and as the evidence which they had of the resurrection of Jesus himself only induced them to endeavour to silence, and to oppose and persecute, those who attested and published it; no other conviction would have been impressed upon them by his actual appearance to them after his resurrection, except that it was expedient to seize him, and to put him to a second death, in order to prevent the same consequences, which they dreaded before, and which their language to the Apostles shewed that they dreaded still. The evident and increasing disposition of the people to believe on Jesus had occasioned their fears; and, assuredly, the public manifestation of one,

whom they had seen crucified, would have convinced the people that he was the Messiah:—yet in such a manner, as would have renewed, strengthened, and called powerfully into action, all their mistaken prejudices respecting the nature of Messiah's kingdom. We cannot conceive any other result of such a procedure, than that both the disciples of Jesus, and the multitude, would have been more than ever disposed to take him by force and make him a king; and, filled with ideas of temporal splendour, and national glory, would have been ready to revolt from the Romans, and to take up arms in favour of their Messiah. If such had been the effect upon the rulers also, the evil would have been greater and more general. Then, instead of the evidence which we now have, not merely of the *resurrection* of Jesus, but,—because of his proceedings and instructions after it, his ascension into heaven, and the out-pouring of the Spirit,—of the *spiritual nature of his kingdom*; we should have had a national testimony, either to something very different, or, whatever were the object of it, it would have been far more suspicious than that full and varied testimony which we now have; and the whole might have appeared, both to the Romans at the time, and also to posterity, as being little more than a pretext for throwing off the Roman yoke.

But now, [however we might be disposed to grant that *other* evidence of these things might have been satisfactory, we are confident that the evidence we already have certainly is conclusive. We know in whom we have believed; we know that he is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Adopting, therefore, the language of our Liturgy, “May the Almighty Lord make us know and feel, that there is none other name under heaven given to man, in whom and through whom we may receive health and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!” Such was the declaration of St. Peter to the Jewish rulers; such is the declaration of the Scriptures to every minister of Christ; and such, therefore, our Church has directed him to use as the concluding expression of his heart’s desire and prayer on behalf of the sick and dying, whom he is called to visit in their affliction.—Truth is invariable, and what, therefore, was certain in the time of the Apostles, has lost none of its sufficiency to satisfy us. The same facts still challenge our belief; and they establish the same doctrines, convey the same promises, and give assurance of the same gracious assistance. But as we have before taken occasion to guard you against impenitence, or unholiness, so must you again be put in remembrance of those practical con-

siderations, which alone can make you truly profit by the knowledge of that holy name by which ye are called.

That Church, which is “built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.” Within those holy precincts we may behold the faith which overcometh the world, which resists and puts to flight the wicked one. In those, who have been joined to that chosen generation, we may see the affections and lusts of the flesh mortified and subdued, and all that can recover man from his abasement, dignify him in this world, and fit him for the society of the perfected just ones, to flourish and abound. Such was the Christian Church in primitive times; and such are those, in all ages, who alone shall be finally and eternally acknowledged as its members.

Do you wish to ascertain whether you belong, really and hopefully, to that “blessed company of all faithful people?” Determine your character by the testimony which conscience gives in answer to the inquiry, Am I living in “negligence,” or am I giving “earnest heed” to the concerns of religion?—Be assured, that religion is either imperfectly understood, or not heartily received, if it does not lead us to *think*.

He, who is in the bond of iniquity, and is not disposed to be translated into the perfect freedom of God's service, may so far comprehend the ultimate design, and be so far aware of the preparatory requirements, of Christianity, as to perceive that they are little suited to his taste. Such an one, therefore, will be likely to shrink from that serious reflection, which can but force upon him a conviction of present guilt, and future condemnation.

He, who is a Christian not in name only, but in spirit, dares, and even endeavours, to attain a realizing view of all that Christianity leads him to contemplate, whether in its past operations, its connexion with present events, or its future prospects. In the records of his faith he traces the origin, the progress, and the final tendency, of a design almost coeval with the birth of time, and co-extensive with eternity. He does not deem it unwise to be observant even of the manifold miseries of this sinful world. He beholds them with sympathy and regret; but he most regrets that cause which first introduced them, and which still perpetuates their existence. He principally consoles himself by reflecting, that the woes which sin has caused, and which are in some sense its punishment, will often prove its correction, and issue in its removal; so that all things may be working together for good. He

himself has but recently been brought from non-existence to contemplate these varied scenes, and to become, by birthright and by investiture, a fellow-heir, and of the same body, with those, to whom there is a common inheritance in which they are personally and eternally interested. He knows the eternal importance of all that he himself has been, and is, and shall be. He thinks of the sins and omissions of his past days; and so compares his own character with the perfect standard of the divine law, as to supplicate the divine mercy in all the awfulness of that conviction, which is impressed upon an enlightened conscience by a discovery of guilt. He thinks of his present responsibility; and wishes not to lose the recollection that his present circumstances afford, either an opportunity for the discharge of duty, or an occasion of sin; and that every thought, and word, and action, is sown as the seed, either of corruption or of immortality. He thinks also of futurity, and of one not limited by his own existence, or that of the world; and in the assured expectation of a judgment to come, he is influenced on the one hand by fears, and cheered on the other by hopes, full of immortality. He finds the expectation of a future existence, even though it suggests an alternative so momentous, to be congenial to all that either hopes or wishes within him. He has avouched one for

his Master, who has the words of eternal life; who declared himself to be the resurrection and the life; and who added that declaration, which his works and the end of his labours on earth render a satisfactory and tranquillizing assurance, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

If these things be true, we have strong consolation, and a good hope through grace. To refute the claims of Jesus upon our faith and hope, might leave us at ease in our sins, insensible to their guilt, and careless of their danger; but it would be a hopeless tranquillity, and would still subject us to those doubts and fears of nature, which, though less clearly defined, are not less distressing, and whose gloom is relieved by no cheering prospect. Then might we, indeed, for it would be our only resource, listen to the arguments of the philosophic advocate of the soul's immortality, and the dark and inert mind might be lighted up by a transient gleam of conviction. But on closing the book, we, like others before us, should return, from the subtleties of abstract reasoning, to the distressing and distracting realities around us; feeling not only that all operative influence was absent, but that even the pleasing conviction itself had vanished like a dream.

It is true that the faith, even of the Christian, is not always equally steadfast. It may be un-

settled, and he may be disquieted by the painful struggle between faith and unbelief. Its cheering and lightening flame may be obscured, and may even be quenched. The connexion between his faith and the immediate motives of his conduct may even be so far broken, that, when called upon to act, he may act as the man of the world; though if his attention were recalled to the unseen objects of faith, he would profess and believe, what a Christian ought to know and to believe to his soul's health. But the effects in the two cases ought to be different, because the causes are so. The disciple of the religion of nature knows and acknowledges no other source of information than the wisdom of man; the Christian professes to have received a revelation from God. The former can only found his opinions on conjectures and reasonings; the latter on facts. The Christian is, indeed, at present situated in the midst of sensible things, which require his attention, which solicit his attachment, which too often engage, to an unwarrantable extent, those affections which ought to be set on things above. It is true those better things are spiritual and unseen; yet his faith cometh by hearing, though not by sight. He is the disciple of one, who taught of heavenly things, and accompanied the words of a tongue more than human with works which revealed the finger of God. He did not actually

rend asunder the veil which conceals all beyond this present visible existence, nor bring the solemnities of the day of judgment, the glories of heaven, and the terrors of hell, actually under the cognizance of mortal sense,—for it was impossible, and would have been useless;—but he taught these things with an authority, shewn both in the manner and in the matter of his teaching, in the deeds of life, and in the events and consequences of his death. He died, as he himself and the prophets had foretold, but he was raised from the dead to die no more, to reign over his Church for ever, and finally to vanquish every enemy. If, therefore, we would be living worthily of such a faith, such a Redeemer, and such a salvation, we must with all gratitude, constancy and consistency, acknowledge that “there is no other name given among men, whereby we can be saved;” and that if he, by whose name we are called, reject us at that decisive Day, it will be because we have disbelieved, neglected, or abused, the “doctrine according to godliness.”



LECTURE VI.

THE OPENING OF THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN
CHRISTIANS AND JEWS.

THE APPREHENSION, DEFENCE, AND DEATH OF STEPHEN.

ACTS VII. 51—53.

Ye stiffnecked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have now been the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

CONSULT the page of general history, and dwell upon the efforts, the deeds, and the fortunes, of the most eminent of those, who have been conspicuous in the annals of the several ages and nations of the world. Consider those, whose valour saved their country in danger, and rescued it from thralldom; those who effected the most beneficial changes in legislation; those who bequeathed to posterity the productions of their genius, or the monuments of their erudition, and whose inventive penetration discovered and made known the true principles of science, taste, and

philosophy. They were lovers of truth; they were conscious of their own integrity; they were well satisfied that they laboured for the diffusion, and permanent establishment, of those principles and measures, which were calculated to ensure the happiness of their fellow-men, and to dignify and embellish human life. In such convictions they found a motive for patient perseverance; and trusted to the test of time, and the judgment of a grateful posterity, for the approbation and honour which was due to their deserts. But how often was that late recompense, too late for their own participation in its benefits, the only one awarded to them, except by their own applauding conscience! And how fully verified has been that well-known observation, that living virtue must not expect its deserved honour; but must wait until malice and envy no longer behold the objects of their jealousy, and till such as have been benefited can do justice only to the memory of those, who have been the neglected and often oppressed instruments of such utility!

If such has been the treatment of statesmen, and poets, and philosophers, the same has also been experienced by those, who have promulgated the dictates of pure and undefiled religion. To “speak smooth things, and prophesy deceits;” and to strengthen and recommend the errors which prevail and delude, because “the people

love to have it so ;” this may provoke no obloquy, and may even conciliate the esteem of those who are satisfied, and at ease ; and who will resist the endeavour to conduct them, even to truth and blessedness, if they must first undergo the humiliation of acknowledging their errors, and the difficulty of attaining to better views and habits. When, therefore, we are surveying the progress of that religion, which is assuredly the holiest and purest that ever claimed to be a divine revelation, and behold its heralds going forth among sinful and prejudiced men, with the proclamation of its divine but unacceptable truths ; we should prove our complete ignorance of human nature, if we expected an immediate and universal acceptance of the message. We cannot be surprised if it meet with opposition, and excite persecution against those who deliver it ; and the circumstance may even furnish an argument for the truth of the religion, rather than justify our hesitation and doubts respecting it.

Already, in the present course of Lectures, we have adverted to the interruption which the Apostles received in the exercise of their ministry ; the first onset of that persecution which afterwards so sorely and so frequently harassed them. We found them still equally confident in statement, and persevering in their ministry ; rejoicing even because of the things which had befallen them.

and undismayed by those threatenings, the execution of which they had many reasons to expect. It was observed, that, even at that period, their behaviour, and their testimony under the circumstances which then existed, gave us reason to conclude favourably respecting their sincerity and fidelity; and that not *their* conduct only, but also that of their opponents, added strength to the arguments which establish the fact of the resurrection of our Lord, and which assure us of the general certainty of “the truth as it is in Jesus.” We have now to observe the further progress of the primitive Church, till the controversy between the followers and opponents of the Christian faith assumed a more definite form. Thus we shall be led to listen to the impeachment, and to the defence, of him who *first* sealed his testimony with his *blood*; that blood of the first Martyr Stephen, which afterwards proved the occasion of more extensive labours, and a more abundant harvest.

I. “The word of God increased;” that word in which the Apostles taught and preached Jesus Christ: “and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” The office of the Apostles required that they should “give themselves continually to prayer,

and to the ministry of the word." Since the number of the disciples, who were already united to the Church, and who shared in the daily ministrations made to those who needed it, was so great, it was found expedient to appoint certain officers to superintend that department of the affairs of the infant Church; and to prevent a repetition of the neglect which the widows of the Hellenistic Jews had experienced. More than one of these, however, are found to have been successful labourers in the spiritual employments of the Church. One of these was Stephen; a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost, who, "full of faith and power, did great miracles and wonders among the people." He, and some, if not all, of the others, probably belonged to the Hellenistic Jews, or to those who were distinguished from the native Jews of Judea, by their knowledge, or more general use, of the Greek language. And, consequently, certain members of several synagogues of Hellenistic Jews entered into controversy with him, respecting the new doctrines which he had embraced, and was propagating. We read respecting their discussions no larger record, than that he so maintained the cause in which he was engaged, that "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake."

So, however, commenced the controversy

between the converts of the Apostles, and the unbelieving Jews. For we have already remarked, that no opposition of argument had previously been offered to the reasonings and testimony of the Apostles, perhaps not even the mere denial of their truth; but certainly such injunctions and threatenings, as leave us quite at liberty to contend that the opponents could neither deny nor refute. That controversy has ever since been maintained; and it must still be maintained, for in one sense we cannot consider it as decided, so long as the Jews refuse to admit the truth of Christianity. Yet it is at least so far decided with respect to ourselves, that, perhaps, no one, who inquires into the truth of Christianity, would so waver between Jesus and Moses, as that he would be a disciple of the latter, because he abandoned the former; he would believe in both, or reject both. And the consideration of the principles upon which the Christian argues, and upon which the Jews resist the argument, will justify that alternative. Yet, perhaps, in the present state of the controversy, little success is to be expected, however it be our acknowledged and evident duty to keep open the controversy, for the conviction of the Jew, if so it may be; and if not, for our own justification, and the satisfaction of our own minds. A good effect of that nature results from

discussion, even respecting differences of religious opinion. But so many unhappy affections are often excited by it, and, when an opponent has some truth on his side, the pride of man, and his dread of inconsistency, always make him so reluctant to abandon the cause he has openly defended, that we find in fact, that controversy, though unavoidable, generally leaves each party apparently as little disposed to agree as it found them. When, however, as in the Apostolic age, intelligent Jews shall embrace the Christian faith, we may expect much from their labours among their brethren, and, through their conversion, probably that of the whole world. Many of that nation, at different periods, in consequence of their own reflections and inquiries, have professed the faith of Christ; and *their* example and arguments seem to have had an extensive and salutary influence upon the minds of their Jewish brethren. But it does not appear that the controversies of Justin Martyr with Trypho, of Limborch with Orobio, and of other Christians with the Jews of their times, have been attended with equally important accessions to the Church of Christ.

But however this be, we find, in the dispute with Stephen, *the first opening of the controversy*; and it will be required, by our leading design in these Lectures, that we offer such

remarks, as time will allow, on the consequences which resulted from the inability of the unbelieving Jews to withstand his ready wisdom and reasonings.

II. As in the third part of this Lecture, we shall illustrate the principal topics contained in Stephen's defence before the council; so the second part, to which we now proceed, will lead to the notice of the circumstances, which occasioned that defence, and a knowledge of which is a necessary preparation for understanding it.

Baffled in argument, his opponents resorted to violence; and suborned men to testify, that "they had heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God." Prepared in this manner for their unhallowed purpose, "they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes;" and Stephen was hurried before the council to be formally accused and examined. The charge being brought against him, the high priest asked him, "Are these things so?" He availed himself of the opportunity thus afforded him of answering the accusation; and his discourse, as recorded by St. Luke, is the longest of those which have been handed down to us. It is also very different in its method and manner from most of the others. The former part of that delivered by St. Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, is, in some degree, similar;

and probably the entire discourse would have been so, if the defence of Stephen had not been interrupted, and abruptly terminated. But the curtailment of a discourse of a *very peculiar* method, has left it in such a state, that its object is by no means evident to a superficial reader. When the seventh chapter, beginning with the question of the high priest, and almost wholly occupied with St. Stephen's discourse, is read in church separately from the sixth chapter, which relates the previous circumstances, the obscurity is much greater; unless the hearer is already acquainted with the previous transactions. For the information given in the preceding chapter, furnishes a clue to the intricacies of the discourse, and also shews the *reason*, and *necessity*, of that *indirect method*, which has caused it to appear inartificial and confused.

With respect to the reason and necessity of an *indirect method*, it must be remembered that the charge brought against Stephen was that of 'blasphemy against Moses and against God;' a crime capitally punishable, if legally proved by the mouth of two or three witnesses. That the charge was so supported by evidence in the present instance is obvious. Consider, then, the situation of Stephen when put upon his defence. Had he pleaded guilty to the charge, of course he would have been immediately condemned. Had

he directly and positively denied the charge, the witnesses were sufficient in number to cause the same result. In the opinion of the judges, the words attributed to him were blasphemous; and if he were convicted, he would expect no lenity from them towards one of his sentiments and proceedings. In addressing a defence, therefore, or an instructive discourse, to those who were violently prejudiced against his views, and superstitiously attached to their own, it was not probable that he would obtain a hearing at all, unless he cautiously and indirectly proceeded to such statements, as furnished an apology for his own principles, and pointed out the incorrectness of their's. Only in the words cited in our text has he made any *application* of the facts and principles which he had brought forward; and their prejudices, and obstinacy, and precipitation were such, that they would hear no more, but "were cut to the heart, and gnashed upon him with their teeth." And upon his speaking a few additional words, "they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him."

III. Bearing in mind the remarks offered respecting the peculiar method of Stephen's defence, we shall, thirdly, consider of what the

different parts consist, and how they respectively and jointly include an answer to the charges brought against him.

The former part of his discourse, in which he prepared the way for the inferences which he intended to establish, consists of a brief and unadorned summary of certain leading acknowledged facts in the history of their ancestors, from the call of Abraham to the building of the temple; illustrated by some quotations from their own prophets, which expressed the views, the correctness of which St. Stephen maintained. As we have just observed, the inferences from these are not made; but, if we consider the several particulars of the charge brought against him, it will then be an easier task to perceive the bearing of the several parts of that answer, which otherwise, from its peculiar method, must appear inconclusive and unsatisfactory. "We," said the witnesses, "have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. He ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law; for we have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us."

There is ground for supposing, that the statement was partly true; though the additions and colouring given to it, authorized the historian

in using the term *false witnesses*. Remembering the predictions of Jesus, and several of the previous addresses of the Apostles, we may conclude that St. Stephen had intimated, if not distinctly made the assertion, so speedily verified, that "Jesus of Nazareth would destroy that place." Perhaps also the following clause was, in substance, correctly reported, that Jesus "would change the customs which Moses delivered." For the profession of the Gospel even then, in some measure, led to such a change; but not at that time did the Apostles themselves expect that complete alteration, which afterwards became both an acknowledged doctrine, and an undeniable fact. And probably, therefore, this statement was an inference from what St. Stephen had taught, if not a misrepresentation of it; though the possibility of such a change was a principle not obscurely intimated in his subsequent defence.

That he 'spoke blasphemous words against Moses, and against God; against the holy place and the law;' was, we doubt not, entirely a false statement, or, at best, a perversion of his teaching, and a charging him with consequences, which he did not intend to be drawn from it. And all this part of the charge is tacitly refuted by the whole tenor of his defence. The facts which he enumerates, and the language in which he states them, are an express and an undeniable

demonstration of his reverence for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for Moses their law-giver; for the law given by his ministry; and for the temple in which they so fondly gloried. Nothing can be more evident in the whole form and spirit of his answer, than that he yielded to no one in the fulness and sincerity of his belief of the Old Testament, and of all that was recorded and inculcated therein. And although we also may perceive in his discourse a design to prove from the Old Testament certain principles which they had overlooked, yet they are all along expressed in language, which reminded them of God as the author of the Old Testament, and of the authority which Moses, and the prophets, and the law, derived from God himself.

It was “the God of Glory who appeared to our father Abraham, and called him from his country, and gave that promise which he swore with an oath to him, and gave him the covenant of circumcision; and who, when Joseph was sold into Egypt, was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.” And, when the time of the promise drew nigh, it was God, “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” as St. Stephen expressly professes, who sent Moses to be a ruler and a deliverer, by the hand of the angel that appeared to him in the

bush. It was he, that “was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel that spake to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the lively oracles to give to us,” said St. Stephen. “Our fathers,” added he, “had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as God had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Joshua into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him a house.” Of all these proceedings the apologist spoke as undoubtedly sanctioned by divine authority, and of the law, as “received by the disposition of angels.” The accusers ventured not to contend, that he now spoke a different language from that which he had formerly used; and, if not, where was the justice of the charge, that he failed in reverence for God, his temple, his law, or his servant Moses?

But he was accused of teaching, that “Jesus of Nazareth would destroy that place.” The event alone would finally prove the correctness, or falsehood, of such a statement. Yet there were various facts before them, which might lead them to suppose that Jesus of Nazareth and his fol-

lowers were so apparently sanctioned by God, that, if they delivered such a message, it was at least entitled to respect. He did not directly remind them, as he might have done, that their temple and city had once been taken and destroyed; yet he cited a passage from the prophet Amos, expostulating with the ten tribes respecting their idolatries, and predicting the captivity of Israel; a subject which might readily remind them how soon the captivity of Judah followed, and that then the temple had been destroyed^a. Their reverence for the temple was grounded on the superstitious notion, not only that it was the place where they ought to worship, but that it was so exclusively. Yet that had not always been the case; nor had either the worship, or the favour of God, been confined to the temple of Jerusalem, or the land of promise. Abraham and the patriarchs in several countries, Joseph and Moses in Egypt, and their fathers in the wilderness, were worshippers of God, and received his promises, his assistance, and his blessing. And if the tabernacle of the witness was the place of worship in the wilderness, and until the reign of Solomon even in the land of promise; and if God visited the Jews with his favours even in Babylon, they were grossly superstitious in

^aAmos v. 25—27.

associating the idea of acceptable religion only with the temple. For, added St. Stephen, approaching the application of his statements, “the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me saith the Lord? or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?” The kind of reverence, therefore, which the Jews had eventually adopted for the temple, was inconsistent, both with the history of their religion, and with the exalted ideas of God as a spiritual and omnipresent Being, which were taught in their own Scriptures? Reverence was due to the place of which God had said, that “his name should be there;” but not such as they had adopted, and substituted for one of a more correct and enlightened character.

But again, did St. Stephen really contend that “the customs which Moses had delivered would be changed?” He did not assert that they would; but the history of the divine dispensations with Abraham and his posterity would shew that, however important their design might be, there was no such inherent sanctity, or indispensable necessity, in them, as to justify the opinion, that change of times and circumstances might not again lead to the alteration of all merely positive, and ceremonial, and local observances. The analogy

observable in the divine proceedings, continually differing in the times of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and David, with respect to place and manner of worship, might lead them to expect that such might again be the case; though, of course, they were not of themselves to change them, but only the same authority which first instituted them. For such authority had brought about every previous change. And, as they had such implicit and unbounded veneration for Moses and his institutions, he reminded them that it was by him that certain intimations were given of a Prophet, to whom, whatever he taught by divine authority, they were to be obedient. This is that Moses, that said unto the children of Israel, “a Prophet shall the Lord your God raise unto you of your brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear.” St. Stephen at first cited the words without expressly applying them, as doubtless he would have done, to that same Jesus of Nazareth, of whom they had supposed him to assert, that he would “destroy the holy place, and change the customs which Moses delivered.” And if he were that prophet, doubtless the command of Moses himself was sufficient to authorize whatever words he spoke in the name of God. Abundant demonstration had been afforded, that Jesus of Nazareth was, at least, a prophet, mighty in word and deed; nor did their opposition and rejection of

him disprove his authority. For the proceedings of their forefathers would, upon the same principle, disprove the authority of Moses. For, said Stephen, "This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge, the same did God send to be a ruler and a judge." The history of the murmurings and rebellions in the wilderness, with which they were well acquainted, shewed the same unbelieving and disobedient waywardness. The same might have been proved by the treatment of the prophets, had Stephen prosecuted the investigation of the history of the nation after the time of Solomon. But he had said enough in detail to remind them of those facts, and to refute the other erroneous principles which induced them to persecute him, and to oppose the authority and doctrine of Jesus of Nazareth. Probably they began to see the tendency of what he had so artfully, but justly, pressed upon their notice; and already were shewing symptoms of that indignation, which afterwards burst forth. He, therefore, at once applied the subject to themselves, and to their treatment of Jesus his Master; and gave his testimony in those words of our text, which suggested the remarks made in the opening of this Lecture respecting the propensity of mankind to undervalue and injure their best instructors, and greatest benefactors.

“Ye stiffnecked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have now been the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.”

The more accurately the discourse of Stephen is examined, the more clearly will appear its force and propriety, as an answer to the charges brought against the first Martyr to the Christian faith. But though, ere he began to speak, “all they that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel,” they heard him unmoved, except by the tempest of their own prejudices and passions. Nor did they any longer endure, when he added his testimony to the resurrection, and ascension, and glory, of Jesus his Master; for whose name’s sake he had laboured, with the evidence of miracles, but at the hazard of his life. He was rewarded, and prepared to meet his approaching doom with faith and joy unspeakable, by a manifestation vouchsafed to him of the *readiness* and *power* of Jesus to succour and save him, though surrounded by evil and murderous persecutors.

“Being full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus *standing* on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man *standing* on the right hand of God.” And how did he die? He died, praying to Jesus, as Jesus had prayed on the cross to his Father, saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then, after the same example of his forgiving and benevolent Master, “he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

So St. Stephen taught, and testified; and so he slept in Jesus. How ought we to cultivate the same heavenly principles, the same exalted faith, the same lively and assured hope! And how ought we to study God’s holy word, that it may preserve us by its full and complete communications from all sin, error, and superstition; that our views may be correct, abiding, and sufficient to support us in the paths of holiness and fidelity, in the hour of affliction and persecution, in the dangers of temptation, and at the hour of death! But I will substitute the well-known words of prayer, for the word of exhortation:

“Grant, O Lord, that in all our sufferings here on earth, for the testimony of thy truth, we may steadfastly look up to heaven, and by faith behold the glory that shall be revealed: and being

filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our persecutors, by the example of thy first Martyr, St. Stephen; who prayed for his murderers to thee, O blessed Jesus, who *standest* at the right hand of God to *succour* all those that suffer for thee, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen ^b.”

^b Collect for St. Stephen's Day.—It has often been remarked that, on this occasion alone, it is said that Jesus “*stands* on the right hand of God.” The fact, and the appropriate signification of it, are beautifully noticed in the conclusion of this collect.



LECTURE VII.

THE OCCASION AND METHOD OF THE CONVERSION OF THE
SAMARITANS—THEIR PARTICIPATION OF THE
GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST.



ACTS VIII. 14, 15.

Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.

UNDER every circumstance, and at every season, the Christian has abundant matter of profitable meditation. Yet even the variety of the topics, which solicit the attention of the considerate disciple; the forgetfulness of some Christians, and the tendency to error in others; all these render it expedient that particular seasons be devoted to the consideration of the more important and interesting facts, upon which the truth, and the peculiar doctrines, of the Gospel depend. The advantages of such a provision are in some measure lost, if the facts themselves, or their consequences, or the practical lessons which they furnish, are not, at such periods, the subjects of

inquiry. But by duly appreciating, and rightly conforming to such arrangements, the leading transactions of the Gospel, and therefore its essential features, are brought under our consideration.

The subject noticed in our text will suggest some appropriate matter for contemplation at this season^a. It will also remind us of the interesting account given by the Evangelist St. John of the short ministry of our Lord himself in Samaria; and of his last declaration to the Apostles that they were to be ‘witnesses to him, not in Judea only, but in Samaria.’ Such a declaration, and his own previous conduct towards the Samaritans, would have great efficacy in rendering the Apostles superior to that inveterate, and almost malicious, jealousy, which had so long subsisted between the Jews and Samaritans. And when Providence brought about the season for preaching Christ to the Samaritans, the Apostles of Jesus would find additional authority and encouragement in those words of their Master, which seemed to give assurance of success in such an undertaking. “Look on the fields,” said he, “for they are white already unto the harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth, and he

^a Preached on Whitsunday.

that reapeth, may rejoice together. I sent you to reap that on which ye bestowed no labour; other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours^b.”

It will be seen, under what circumstances the seed, sown by our Lord, became an abundant harvest in the time of his Apostles, if we now consider ;

I. The circumstances which led to the preaching of the Gospel to the Samaritans.

II. Their conversion by the preaching of Philip the deacon, and

III. The communication of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of the hands of the Apostles.

1. This increased spiritual prosperity of the cause of Christ, by the extension of the Gospel to the Samaritans, was caused by the *adverse* temporal circumstances which befel his Church. Hitherto it had been confined to Judea, and, in a great measure, to Jerusalem; but the severe persecution which began with the martyrdom of Stephen, and which continued to vex the followers of Jesus, dispersed all the preachers of his word,

^b John iv. 35—38.

except the Apostles. Their superior office, and the exigencies of the season, required the presence of the Apostles at Jerusalem; and they, therefore, remained there, notwithstanding the dangers which threatened them. Those, who were "scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word," throughout Judea and Samaria; and persecution, therefore, happened to them, as to many others since that time, "for the furtherance of the Gospel." Sufferings they had been taught to expect; and they were at the same time assured that these would turn to them for a testimony; and that they would be supported by the divine presence and assistance amidst those persevering labours, in which they defended the truth of the Gospel, and exhibited their own confidence therein. Now they found an additional and unexpected consolation, in the occurrences, which, though unexpected, and at first seemingly calamitous to their cause, were found to be eminently instrumental to the successful *propagation* of the doctrine entrusted to them.

So works the Almighty, according to his mysterious wisdom, both in nature and in providence. Often the bright and smiling serenity of nature is disturbed by the stormy wind and tempest: but thereby the atmosphere is purified, and the soil refreshed and fertilized. In human life, the

needful calls of duty, or the afflictive dispensations of Providence, deprive us of the comforts of leisure and repose, and separate us from the peaceful scenes of domestic tranquillity; but thereby we are rendered less selfish, and are made to put forth our energies for the benefit of others: thereby we ourselves also are taught the most salutary truths, and are raised to the contemplation of better and more enduring blessedness. Even the wars, which for a time cause bloodshed and devastation, promote in the end the intercourse of nations with each other; and secure more effectually the liberties, or other advantages, which have thereby been recovered when lost, or obtained for those who knew them not before.

II. Let it suffice to have briefly pointed out the calamitous circumstances, which *occasioned* the presence of the followers of our Lord among the Samaritans. For “then *Philip*,” usually called one of the seven deacons^c, whose number had been diminished by the death of Stephen, “went down to the city of Samaria, and *preached Christ* unto them.” He proclaimed the advent of that expected deliverer, whom they, equally with the Jews, expected; and the ready reception given to his doctrine is remarkable. “The people, with

^c See the Note (A), at the end of Lecture VII.

one accord, gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." Now when Jesus himself visited them, and for a short time instructed them, though he wrought no miracle there, yet his character as a prophet, and as the Christ, was readily allowed; and they moreover added, that believing him to be the Christ, they recognized in him "the Saviour of the world."

The Samaritans, it is well known, received the five books of Moses, of whose instructions and directions they professed themselves most scrupulous observers; and the justness of their boast is allowed, even by Jewish writers. They even contended that they were more faithful adherents to the Mosaic law than the Jews themselves, and utterly rejected all traditionary glosses and observances; and did not admit any of the books of the Old Testament later than the writings of Moses. In adopting, however, the title which the Jews attributed to the expected deliverer, they must either have derived it directly from the writings of the prophets much later than the time of Moses, or by tradition from those instructors in the religion and rites of Moses, who, coming from Judea after the Babylonish captivity, taught the tenets of pure theism to the mixed race who inhabited Samaria, and established the observance of the Mosaic ritual on Mount

Gerizim. Those Jews were, doubtless, acquainted with the writings of Daniel, and the other prophets; but the reception of the other books of the Old Testament would have involved a refutation of the opinion of the Samaritans, that Gerizim was "the place where men ought to worship;" nor could they have avoided it by such interpolations as have probably been made in the Samaritan Pentateuch. In later times they have avowedly declined to discuss, either the title, or the origin, of him whom we term the Messiah; deeming it sufficient to profess their expectation of such a one, and to declare their views of his office, and of the benefits of his advent. This we learn from the communications which have taken place, within the last two centuries, between European divines and the Samaritan priests, who still remain on Mount Gerizim. In those communications reference is made to the passages of the Pentateuch, on which they found their hopes and views; passages, which we also consider as being early and important promises of the Saviour of the world.

It appears, indeed, that, from some source, they have added to the expectations derived from the books of Moses, a notion that he, in whom they expect that those predictions will be accomplished, will recover, and again dedicate to the purposes of divine worship, the tabernacle, and

other sacred utensils, which they say are *hidden* in Mount Gerizim; and, having brought all nations to acknowledge the sanctity of that place, that he will die, and be buried at Sichem. Thus it appears, that either by erroneous interpretations of Scripture, or unauthorized additions to them, both Jews and Samaritans had obscured the light derived from thence; and many of both nations were thus prevented, and are still prevented, from acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah. But in several particulars the Samaritans had expectations more justly corresponding to the spiritual design of his advent, and to the extent of the benefits which he was sent to bestow; and we may therefore account for the favourable reception, both of the instructions of Jesus, and of the preaching of Philip, by that people^d.

At one time, indeed, the Samaritans “would not receive Jesus, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.” This is what might be expected, when we remember the jealousy subsisting between the two nations, and the interminable controversy between them respecting the proper place for the worship of God. But the remembrance of his previous impressive teaching, and the fame of the miracles which Jesus did in all regions round about them, would tend much

^d See Note (B), at the end of Lecture VII.

to abate their prejudices; especially as the prophecy of Jacob, to which the modern Samaritans refer as predictive of the Messiah whom they expect, would lead them to infer that “salvation would be of the Jews.” When, therefore, Philip also came among them, and wrought miracles, “preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” The doctrine of a disciple of Jesus, respecting the *kingdom of God*, would indeed much more nearly agree with the views of the Samaritans, than with those which were attached by the Jews to the same phrase; and which, therefore, caused the progress of the Gospel among the Jews to be so slow and partial. But the Samaritans, received the intelligence announced to them, not with readiness only, but with joy.

It may further be observed, that there was no hesitation in the minds of the Apostles with respect to the propriety, either of preaching the Gospel to them, or of admitting them without hesitation into the Christian Church. Shortly afterwards, when *uncircumcised*, though *devout*, Gentiles were brought to the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ, we know the difficulty which at first occurred. The objection brought against St. Peter was this, that he “went in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them.” The

Samaritans, however, were observers of the law of Moses ; and, therefore, the Apostles had no hesitation in complying with the direction of their Master to “ be witnesses to him in Samaria.” The same injunction also declared, that they were to be so “ to the uttermost part of the earth ;” but, probably, they either understood this as only applicable to Jews and Jewish proselytes ; or that all of other nations, who believed in the name of Jesus, and desired the remission of sins, must become proselytes to the law of Moses. Such, however, the Samaritans already were, though they did not attend the temple at Jerusalem. And so far were their minds already purged from national bigotry, and prepared for admitting the universal and unrestricted call to the privileges of the Gospel, that Philip, with equal alacrity, preached Christ to the Samaritans who observed the law, but not in the temple at Jerusalem ; and to the Eunuch, who being either of Jewish origin, or undoubtedly a Jewish proselyte, had travelled from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to attend the temple-worship. The special revelation given to Philip respecting the latter of those undertakings was merely a direction to the *place* where he would meet with the Eunuch^e. It was wholly different, therefore, from that after-

^e Acts viii. 26—29.

wards given to St. Peter; which, both as to the vision in which it commenced, and the definite injunction which followed it, was designed to obviate those remaining prejudices, which would otherwise have induced him to shrink from proclaiming the Gospel to a company of *uncircumcised Gentiles*.

It might have been desirable, had we been able to include in these Lectures *all* that appertains to our subject, to have noticed more particularly the interesting narrative of the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch. We see in his journey from a distant country to the temple, and in his reading of the ancient Scriptures as he journeyed, the piety and diligence of a sincere inquirer, preparing him for further advances in divine knowledge. We find a competent guide divinely sent to him, at a time when he was employed in the consideration of that remarkable chapter of Isaiah, which has occasioned the conversion of so many Jews; which is so justly formidable to those who remain hostile to Jesus of Nazareth; and which affords to the Christian such conclusive evidence of the Messiahship and Redemption of a suffering Saviour^f. He was proposing to himself, and he proposed to Philip, that question upon the answer to which depends the application of the prophecy:

^f Isai. liii.

“Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Philip began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” He was prepared to shew, that in the sufferings, resurrection, and glory of Jesus, that prophecy had an accomplishment equally exact and satisfactory. And still does the Christian interpreter of prophecy maintain, that no application of it to any other individual, or to the long afflicted Jewish people, can or ought to induce us to reject that only defensible and obvious one, which refers it to Jesus Christ.

But let us return from this brief digression, and connect it with the subject before us. It is no improbable supposition, that as the Eunuch was at first induced by the testimony of the Prophets to confess his faith in “Jesus Christ the Son of God;” so the Samaritans, who at first grounded their faith on the books of Moses, and on the testimony and miracles of Jesus and his Apostles, would afterwards see cause to acknowledge the divine authority of the later prophetic writings. In the same manner, and for similar reasons, do we ourselves receive every part of Scripture as divine; because, whatever be the *order* in which our inquiries have been conducted, we perceive the mutual dependence of each portion of the Bible on every other, and the perfect harmony of the whole; and hence deduce that it is given by inspiration, and profitable for every religious end.

III. It remains that we notice, in the third place, the communication of the Holy Ghost to the Samaritans, by the laying on of the hands of the Apostles: “When the Apostles, which were at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.”

We doubt not the benefits of baptism; for the strongest and plainest language is used in Scripture respecting them. But there is a marked distinction here made between the reception of Baptism, and of the Holy Ghost; as also between those, by whose ministry the one and the other were received. In fact the *extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit are principally intended; for, in similar circumstances, a declaration is expressly made to that effect. Those disciples whom St. Paul found at Ephesus, had believed, but as yet had received only the baptism of John. After the instructions, however, and at the instance, of the Apostle, they “were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them; and they spake with tongues, and

prophesied^s.” Such effects had, on the day of Pentecost, rewarded the patient hope of the Apostles; and they assured others that, upon their repentance, and after being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, they also would “receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Accordingly, the Apostles sent to Samaria prayed to God on behalf of their converts, and laid their hands upon them; and the expectation which prompted these measures was not disappointed. The gifts were bestowed, and thus an evidence was afforded to the Apostles that God was with them, and approved and co-operated with their labours; and also an evidence to their disciples that there was the full sanction of divine authority and inspiration for the Gospel of Christ; and that the days had arrived when all should be “taught of God,” and “know him, from the least unto the greatest.”

We do not, however, *exclude* from these communications the *ordinary* gifts of light, comfort, and sanctification; which are the constant and permanent blessings of the Gospel, as the “dispensation of the Spirit.” For, in the language used respecting the “spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus” which distinguished the primitive times, we find the mention of these necessary and essential blessings ever combined with the allusions

^s Acts xix. 1—6.

to more miraculous influences, which produced such effects as were sensible to others. Both of them are described in connexion; for a great part of the expressions employed cannot be justly understood, except when considered as referring to the extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit, vouchsafed in order to edify, and sanctify, the body of Christ, that knowledge, and love, and holiness, might abound more and more^h.

Nor does it appear that all were equally gifted; but, on the contrary, that there were “diversities of gifts,” which “one and the same Spirit divided to every man severally as he would.” There were different *orders* in the Church, and different correspondent *qualifications* were required and bestowed. “God set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Were all apostles? Were all prophets? Were all teachers? Were all workers of miracles? Had all the gifts of healing? Did all speak with tongues? Did all interpretⁱ?” Certainly not; all had not the same gifts, as if they had been all equally honoured, and called to equal dignity and usefulness. And, in another passage,

^hSee Rom. i. 11, 12. Gal. iii. 2—5. Eph. i. 15—23. Col. i. 9—11, &c.

ⁱ1 Cor. xii. 28—31.

the Apostle seems to apportion to each of the above offices and employments, and probably in exact order, the appropriate qualification which each required. “To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues^k.”

We may, however, conclude that to all the believers in Samaria *some* measure was vouchsafed of these gifts of Christ; for this is a supposition consistent both with the previous and subsequent history of the Christian Church. To such as were destined for ruling in the Church, or for ministering in the word and doctrine, doubtless were given the higher and more extraordinary communications; and this is confirmed by the profane request of Simon. For those outward and sensible distinctions, calculated, as he thought, to gratify the ambitious views both of him who gave, and of him who received them, must have been the motive for his offer of a bribe in order to persuade the Apostles to confer on him

^k 1 Cor. xii. 8—10. See the authors referred to in Note (B) to Lecture II.

the power which they possessed, “that on whomsoever he laid hands they might receive the Holy Ghost¹.” The character of the man leads us to such a conclusion. For he was fond of popularity, and now perceived, that the manifest tokens of really miraculous powers were likely to deprive him of the celebrity, which he had before enjoyed, in consequence of high-sounding pretensions, and fictitious miracles. The silent, unostentatious, but effectual, influences of a sanctifying Spirit would be without observation; and, though their effects would be real, time alone could fully display them; and then that efficacy would be admired only by the pure of heart. But these showy gifts of a miraculous nature were capable of being turned to the purposes of vain-glory, if possessed and communicable by those whose hearts were not right in the sight of God. Simon appears to have believed with the understanding, but not with the heart unto righteousness; and therefore his desires principally, and avowedly, tended towards those qualifications, which were observable and wonderful, and might be subservient to his own worldly views.

It is manifest, not only from various other circumstances, but also from the conduct and request of Simon, that we have abundant evidence

¹ Acts viii. 19.

of the reality of the *miracles*, which first prevailed on him to request Christian baptism, and of those extraordinary gifts, which he sought by unhallowed means to obtain. But though an historical faith may receive confirmation thereby, let us learn also from his example, that it “is dead, being alone;” even though we are induced outwardly to profess the religion of Christ. He too was baptized; because he was convinced that the followers of Jesus wrought undeniable miracles. But he either had not attended to the doctrine which was established by them, or had not received it in an honest and good heart. Though, therefore, we were to grant that he had himself received by baptism the regenerating and extraordinary communications of the Holy Spirit, which we shall hardly be disposed to admit, it must at the same time be evident, that their partial and incipient benefits may be received by one, who retains “neither part nor lot in the matter,” because “his heart is not right in the sight of God.”

While, therefore, we this day rejoice in the certain truth, that “God did, as at this time, teach the hearts of his faithful people by sending to them the light of his Holy Spirit^m,” let


^m Collect for Whitsunday, on which day this Lecture was delivered.

us at the same time remember, that we *may* not have savingly profited by that Gospel, which is so convincingly proved to be divine, and which has been safely transmitted to us. By the events this day commemorated we have complete assurance of the resurrection, and of the exaltation of Jesus; of his power to atone, to intercede, and to save; of his power to fulfil his promises and his threatenings. But if those threatenings produce in us no other prayer, than such as Simon preferred, let us not flatter ourselves it will be of any avail. He requested only that the Apostles would pray for him, “that none of those things which they had spoken might come upon him.” We must pray for *ourselves*, as well as request the prayers of the faithful. And our desire must be, not only that we may *escape* the wrath to come, but that we may be endued with repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. “Repent of this thy wickedness,” said the Apostle to him, “and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” We must not look upon religion as a matter of mere policy, or as subservient to the promotion of our interest, honour, and respectability; but as that practical and personal concern, which enjoins repentance so sincere, that we shall earnestly pray for pardon, and for grace to walk in newness of life. *That* pardon is offered through an all-sufficient Saviour;

that grace supplied by an Almighty Spirit. Gratitude to the Redeemer, and confidence in the mighty power of the Sanctifier, will not only prompt to holy vows and resolutions, but dispose and enable us to observe them. Then will our hearts be right in the sight of God; then shall we “have a right judgment in all things, and evermore rejoice in the holy comfort of the Holy Ghost;” then shall we abound in all the fruits of the Spirit. May, therefore, “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of our understanding being enlightened; that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places.”

^u Collect for Whitsunday.

^o Eph. i. 17—20.



Note (A), p. 145.

The use of the word *deacon* being of great consequence in a particular controversy, too much notoriety cannot be given to the following observations. "Wherein did the office of a deacon consist? The Scriptures have not informed us. Some readers may be surprised at this assertion, and ask, Were not seven deacons appointed to take care of the public stock of the Church? It is true, that "seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom," were chosen by the people, and appointed by the Apostles, to take care that no partiality should be shewn in favour of the Hebrew women, in distributing the daily portion of food provided by the Church; but these men are *not* called *deacons*, except in the *running title* of our Bibles. The text does not give them that name." W. Hey's invaluable and satisfactory 'Defence of Episcopacy, derived from the New Testament,' in Tracts and Essays, published 1822. In fact there is no stronger reason for calling *those officers* deacons, because they were appointed *διακονεῖν τραπέζαις*, than for applying that term to the Apostles, who two verses afterwards declare, *τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου προσκαρτερήσομεν*. And is not the latter of these phrases sufficient to shew that the office of *διάκονος*, which in the Epistles is described as requiring the *same* qualifications as that of presbyter, was a *ministry* of the *word*, though in some subordinate and probationary manner?

Note (B), p. 148.

I gladly refer the reader, to whom any of the above statements may be new, to an elegant and interesting tract respecting "*the faith of the Samaritans*," which may now be added to Bp. Horsley's celebrated discourses on that subject. The title of the tract is as follows: I. C. Friedrich *discussionum de Christologia Samaritanorum liber*. Lipsiæ 1821.

LECTURE VIII.

THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THE DEVOUT GENTILES.—
IN WHAT MANNER, AND FOR WHAT REASONS, ST. PETER
AND CORNELIUS WERE PREPARED FOR SUCH
A PROCEEDING.



ACTS XI. 17, 18.

Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

ACCUSTOMED as we are to the pure and simple solemnities of Christian worship, and familiarized with the discoveries and instructions of the Gospel, we are too little sensible how great and varied are our religious blessings. Too rarely we call to mind, and, even then, too faintly do we picture to ourselves, the multiform idolatrous superstitions, and the debasing ignorance, of our heathen ancestors. Nor would the contrast, presented by such a review, alone suffice to make us acquainted with our exalted privileges as Christians. We

ought also to ascend to a still earlier era; and to take a survey of the state of the whole human race in those ages of the world, when Judea was the only terrestrial spot which reflected the beams of religious truth; and when it would have been universally, and perhaps irrecoverably, excluded from the world, had not a special revelation caused it to enlighten that favoured people. To preserve it from that utter extinction, amidst the darkness which was continually deepening around it, was one main purpose of the miraculous separation, and peculiar discipline, of the Jewish nation. The light, however, which shone even among them, was but the faint and limited glimmer as of twilight; to be followed by a more perfect and distinct knowledge, when the day should dawn, and the day-star arise in the hearts of the faithful, who expected the promised consolation of Israel. But the true light, which shone when that darker season was past, was not to be confined to any one people, like the light which shone in the dwellings of the Israelites, when the Egyptians had none; but was destined, like the glorious ruler of the natural day, to burst forth at its rising for the illumination of the whole earth. Though the same favoured people first received "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ;" yet it soon extended its benefits to others; and we doubt

not that it will eventually leave no nation destitute of those manifold blessings of religious knowledge and hopes, which have hitherto been extending themselves only at successive and unequal intervals, and may not, until a distant period, be actually universal.

We shall be led, in this Lecture, to consider the *first* communication of the Gospel to the Gentiles. It is true indeed, that the dispensation of the grace of God, by which “the Gentiles were made fellow-heirs, and of the same body” with the Jews, “and partakers of the promise in Christ,” was even in other ages made known to the sons of men; for Christ was predicted as the “blessing,” and “desire, of all nations,” to whom “the Gentiles should seek.” But it was not distinctly known until the latter days, who and what were the objects of that promise; and this knowledge was very obscure, until the wisdom and goodness of God “made known to the Apostles and prophets by the Spirit,” at what time, in what manner, and upon what terms, the Gentiles were to be admitted to the fellowship of Christ’s religion. Even the Apostles, instructed, gifted, and guided as they were in their earliest labours among the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, who were *expressly* mentioned to them by their divine Master, yet needed some further directions from above respecting the season, and method

of complying with his injunction as it respected “the *uttermost part of the earth.*”

Those directions of course related to the permanency, and inherent propriety, of those peculiar regulations, by which the Jew was distinguished and separated from the Gentile. Every Jew, as such, was bound to observe the injunctions, and to conform to the peculiarities, of the law of Moses. The Apostles of Jesus, therefore, had no exemption from the strict observance of that law, unless the same revelation of the divine will, which obliged them to receive and preach Jesus as the Christ, also sanctioned that deviation from the letter of the law, which necessarily attended the communication of its most important promise and essential blessings to the uncircumcised Gentile. Those Gentiles, who became ‘proselytes of righteousness,’ submitted to the rite of circumcision, and rendered themselves “debtors to do the whole law.” Hence they became incorporated members of the Jewish Church, and confessedly stood upon the same footing with those who were Jews by descent. Between the propagation of the Gospel among the Jews, proselytes, and Samaritans, and its extension to the *idolatrous* Gentiles, there was an intermediate step. There were resident in Judea, and in the other parts of the world where Jewish synagogues were established, many Gentiles, who are by some denominated ‘proselytes

of the Gate;’ and who, whether rightly or not the title of proselytes is given to them, had renounced idolatry, and embraced the faith and worship of the one true God, although they were not circumcised, and, therefore, not brought within the pale of the Jewish Church, so as to be parties to the Mosaic covenant. To them also the offers of the Gospel were at length addressed, when about eight years had elapsed since the ascension of our Lord; during which period the labourers in his vineyard had gathered fruit among those Jews, proselytes, and Samaritans, who were willing to receive the promise of eternal life made known by the Gospel.

These preliminary observations being made, it is proposed now to engage your attention

I. To those remarkable circumstances, which *preceded* and *occasioned* the first preaching of the Gospel to the devout Gentiles;

II. To the method, in which St. Peter *delivered his message* to them;

III. To the remarkable circumstances, which *followed* his instructions, indicative of the divine approbation and acceptance of the Gentile converts.

I. The remarkable circumstances which pre-

ceded and occasioned the first preaching of the Gospel to the devout Gentiles, were designed to effect the twofold purpose of *inducing* St. Peter to *announce* to them, and of *preparing* them to *receive*, the truths of the Gospel. Let them be considered, therefore, with reference to each of those purposes.

1. The remarks already offered, will have shewn how necessary it was, that St. Peter should be induced, by a special revelation, to undertake that work, which his Jewish prejudices, if we may employ so harsh a term, would previously have led him to decline; and which his “knowledge of the mystery of Christ” had not, at that time, instructed him to anticipate. Eventually, however, he had no such hesitation; for the circumstances, which followed in close succession, were abundantly sufficient to assure him, that he was divinely directed in acting as he did.

It is almost superfluous to detain you by a narration of the well-known vision, which was presented to St. Peter, when, complying with the custom of pious Jews, he occupied himself in prayer at the sixth hour of the day. The imagery of the vision was adapted to one important department of those peculiarities, of which he had yet to learn the abrogation; and also to his own personal circumstances at the same. For “he became very hungry, and would have eaten; but

while they made ready, he fell into a trance; and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and descending to the earth; wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise Peter, kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed that call not thou common. This was done thrice; and the vessel was received up again into heaven^a."

The reluctance, expressed by St. Peter, exactly corresponds to those feelings which must naturally have occupied the mind of a strict and conscientious adherent to the law of Moses. The prohibition, of which he so faithfully revered the authority, was a consequence of the design of God to keep the Israelites separate from the heathen, lest they should be "mingled among the heathen, and learn their works." The injunctions given concerning that and similar provisions, were express and peremptory, and were absolutely necessary to secure the end in view. Had they been less directly adapted to that end,

^a Acts x. 9—16.

and less strongly enforced, they would probably have been wholly ineffectual; for we find that they were not always sufficient to keep the Israelites from idolatrous connexions and practices. We find, however, that the prohibition is announced in language distinctly specifying the reason why the distinction of meats was prescribed. "I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people. Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between clean fowls and unclean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And ye shall be holy unto me; for I the Lord am holy; and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine^b." In the particular detail of the precepts here referred to they were forbidden to eat at all of many of those animals, which furnished sacrifices to the gods of the heathen, or which they would generally find at the social table, if they lived upon terms of unrestricted intimacy with the neighbouring nations. The observation addressed to St. Peter, when, upon being enjoined to act in violation of such regulations, he hesitated and expostulated, immedi-

^b Lev. xx. 24—26.

ately reminds us, who have been apprized of the purport of the vision, that such a separation of the Jew from the Gentile was no longer intended nor expedient; and that therefore the limitation, which was subservient to that temporary purpose, was now no longer to be continued. But we need not wonder that St. Peter did not readily comprehend, or confidently acquiesce in the apparent intention of the vision, though its threefold repetition most decidedly riveted his attention. The explanation, in fact, was at first given to him only in very general terms; and therefore he was for a time at a loss to what particular purpose its declaration was to be applied. Hence he remained in a state of some perplexity and wonder, “doubting in himself what the vision which he had seen should mean.”

Soon, however, he received from the same source additional information, which connected the vision with his immediate duties. For he was apprized that three men sought him; and was commanded to go down to them, and to “go with them, doubting nothing;” because they were sent by him, who had been preparing the Apostle’s mind for the duty to which he was now called. The fact was found exactly conformable to this announcement, and therefore he could have no further hesitation; and he was the more strengthened in such a determination, by the intelligence, that

Cornelius, whose messengers the three men were, had himself, though a Gentile, been “warned from God by a holy angel, to send for St. Peter into his house, and to hear words of him.” Accordingly, he not only went with the men, but addressed Cornelius in a manner, which indicated both a recognition of the divine authority of the vision, and of its general purport. “Ye know, said he, that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or to come unto one of another nation: but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for. I ask therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me^c?”

2. If St. Peter was furnished with such evidence of the divine will, Cornelius, in a manner equally remarkable, was prepared to receive whatever communications the Apostle was commissioned to deliver. The season of stated prayer was to him also an occasion of a special revelation. An angel of God visibly appeared to him, assuring him of the acceptance of his alms and devotions, and directing him to send for Peter to his house, as qualified to supply him with in-

^c Ver. 21—29.

structions relative to the salvation of himself and his family. When his messengers returned, and St. Peter with them, the speedy sequence and exact agreement of these several occurrences so filled him with the conviction that an instructor was divinely sent to him, on a message of the highest importance, that he was prompted, by the first impulse of his astonishment, to reverence St. Peter as though he were more than man. Although the Apostle's gentle reproof corrected this erroneous impression, yet it were impossible to suppose that he wanted any essential qualification of a full, steadfast, rational confidence in the authority of his instructor. For his faith received a still further confirmation by the statements of the Apostle himself respecting that heavenly vision, and its attendant circumstances, which had induced him to comply with the request of Cornelius. In fact, the devout centurion manifested a disposition of mind which is ever suited and needful to the reception of divine revelation. Being convinced that he had the opportunity of learning, from one authorized and qualified to teach, those truths which he was ready to obey; he declared, in the name of himself and of his company, that nothing was wanting on their part but the knowledge of the will of God, to which God had so excited their attention. "Now therefore are we all here present before

God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God^d.”

II. Such being the circumstances which prepared an Apostle to preach to this company of devout Gentiles, and which excited them to listen with fixed attention to his instructions, let us next inquire what was the method in which he *delivered his message* to them.

A comparison of St. Peter's discourse on this occasion with those subsequently addressed to the idolatrous Gentiles, will immediately lead to the observation of a marked difference between them. The people of Lystra, and of Athens, needed instruction in the fundamental principles of true religion. They were to be recovered from the errors of Polytheism, and to be made acquainted with the natural and moral perfections of the one true God, and with their own accountability to him, before they could advance to the knowledge of Jesus Christ whom he had sent. But we find the topics, upon which the Apostle enlarges in his address to Cornelius, to be very similar to those, which formed the subject matter of his addresses to the Jews. For the devout Gentiles knew and had embraced the fundamental principles of true religion, although

^d Ver. 33.

they did not conform to those peculiarities and observances, which were more especially connected with the national separation, and civil polity, of the Jews. Although such worshippers as Cornelius had not been naturalized, yet because of their attendance on the worship and public readings of the Jewish synagogues, and from the circumstance that only from the Scriptures of the Old Testament they could derive their knowledge of true religion, we may infer that they could not be ignorant of the promises respecting the Messiah. If, then, it were announced and proved to them that Messiah's advent was for spiritual purposes, and for the benefit of the whole human race, and not for the temporal advantage and exaltation of the Jewish people; we may readily conjecture, and the event confirms the supposition, that those who had professed the pure, and not then perfected, religion, revealed in the ancient Scriptures, would gladly embrace the additional communications of the Gospel of Christ, which completed the promises of God, exalted the hopes of the believer, and left him nothing to desire of "the things which accompany salvation," until he attains to the society of "just men made perfect."

Such an opinion, respecting the present situation, and probable conversion of persons so circumstanced, influenced the mind of the Apos-

tle, when he opened his mouth for the instruction of the first Gentile audience. For he commenced his discourse by a declaration of the views, which he had then recently attained, of the designs of God respecting the communication of his will and favour to every creature under heaven. He now perceived that the reasons, why the knowledge of divine truth, and the manifestation of the divine favour, had so long been confined to the men of his own nation, were not because they were deserving above all others, or that the Deity was partial in his dispensations; but that the apparent preference of the Jew above others was occasioned by exigencies of a far different kind, was designed to be only temporary in duration and was thenceforward to cease, even in appearance. “Of a truth,” said the Apostle, “I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him^e.”

This declaration must be understood, not in any sense which may be put upon it as a separate and disjoined proposition; but in that, which was appropriate to the occasion on which it was made, and is suited to the connexion in which it stands. It is perverted, if it be applied to prove that modes of faith are indifferent; and that, in the *latitudi-*

^e Acts x. 34, 35.

narian sense of the Poet's words, "He can't be wrong, whose life is in the right." The acceptance of the prayers and alms of Cornelius is indeed declared; but it must be further observed that this was far from a proof that, at that time, he "stood perfect and complete in all the will of God." For the history before us proves the direct contrary, and affords an exemplification of the maxim of our Lord; "He that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly." The previous improvement by Cornelius of the religious knowledge and opportunities which he had enjoyed, rendered him a fit person to be selected as the first Gentile convert; and a similar reason is assigned for the selection of Abraham as the father of the favoured people of God, and the depositary of the promises^f. But this does not prove that Abraham had actually heard and seen those things, which many prophets and kings had desired to hear and see, but were not so blessed; nor does it shew that Cornelius had no further need of instruction. On the contrary, he was directed to send for an Apostle; for that Apostle, to whom were committed "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," that *he* might *first* admit both Jews and Gentiles into that kingdom. And he, who was the first Gentile admitted within

^f Gen. xviii. 17—19. xxii. 16—18.

those holy precincts to partake of the manifold blessings, as well as to submit to the authority, of his Lord and Saviour, was furnished with extraordinary assurances of the divine commission of him, who was sent to “teach him the way of God more perfectly.”

The Apostle knew that even a Gentile, so long resident among the Jews, must of course have heard of “the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ,—the word which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached^s.” And accordingly, after he had declared his conviction that God now designed to call the Gentile, as well as the Jew, to the actual acknowledgment of the truth, he entered on a brief recapitulation of the transactions of the Gospel history. He then enlarged upon their design and certainty, the nature and sufficiency of the evidence of Christ’s resurrection, his authority as the Judge of quick and dead, and the testimony of the ancient Jewish prophets “that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

If through *him* that blessing is conveyed, then it is attainable only through his name, and in no other way than by faith in him. It must

^s Acts x. 36, &c.

be *through him* therefore, that “all in every nation, who fear God and work righteousness shall be *accepted.*” Those assuredly, to whom the promise is actually made known, must receive it as the alone doctrine of their salvation; and therefore, however God may wink at the times of *ignorance*, those who *reject* the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” reject it to their condemnation. “He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” It is not for us to speculate on the number or the nation of those that be saved; but to rejoice that to us are made known, as the means of our salvation, the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,” which were indeed “kept secret since the world began, but now, under the Gospel, are made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known *to all nations* for the obedience of faith.” We like the Apostles are bound to glorify God, who hath “granted also to the Gentiles repentance unto life;” and therefore to strive that there may be wrought in us a genuine and Scriptural repentance. Such a repentance will ever lead to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and cause us truly to turn to God, and to do works meet for repentance, and so will be a repentance unto life.


III. It remains that we notice, in the last place, the remarkable circumstances which followed the preaching of St. Peter. By them again were decisively testified the divine approbation of the preaching of the Apostle; and the acceptance of the Gentile converts as “members incorporate of the mystical body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people.” In previous instances the hands of the Apostles were first laid upon baptized converts, and then the gifts of the Holy Spirit communicated to them. But the importance of this change in the promulgation of the Gospel occasioned an inversion of that order.—“While Peter yet spake the word, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Nothing indeed could be more decisive than such an occurrence. For the Apostles themselves had witnessed no other such spiritual communication, except those vouchsafed to themselves at an earlier period. Therefore, not only were the doubts of St. Peter fully removed, but he had the most conclusive evidence of the divine will in this matter. The recent, though sincere, faith of his hearers received additional confirmation from such an immediate participation of spiritual gifts. And the Apostle

himself was enabled to produce sufficient authority, by his own testimony, and that of the witnesses whom he took with him, for the satisfaction of his brother Apostles. They could not but conclude when they heard his narrative, that as certainly as they were on the day of Pentecost authorized and qualified to preach the Gospel, the Gentiles were now to be the objects of their labours and their prayers. They were admitted without any further hesitation to Christian baptism; and from that time forward we find that a large accession was made to the Church of Christ from among them. Very shortly afterwards even those who had been immersed in ignorance, and devoted to idolatry, were instructed in true religion, and united with other believers in Jesus Christ.

The transaction, which has been now cursorily reviewed, is calculated to establish our conviction of the truth of the Gospel, and to call forth our admiration of the gradual, sure, and wondrous method observed in its propagation. Nor should we be wanting in gratitude to God, who has called *us*, the descendants of Gentiles, out of the darkness of our forefathers into his marvellous light; and has “translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, according to the riches of his grace.”

We are not indeed now endued by the Gospel with those supernatural gifts which enabled the Apostles, and their converts, to “speak with tongues, and magnify God.” Yet ought we not to be insensible, nor unwilling to “shew forth the praises of God,” with our lips, and in our lives. If indeed we fail in the latter of these particulars; if we profess to know God, yet in works deny him; if, having hope in Christ, we do not purify ourselves even as he is pure; we shall not be accepted of God,—we cannot be reckoned among those “that fear him, and work righteousness.” In this particular even Cornelius, and his conscientious and diligent endeavours before his conversion, will rise in the judgment and condemn us. As merely nominal Christians, who remain willingly ignorant of the peculiar doctrines and promises of the Gospel, our actual knowledge of divine truth is not far different from his. He acknowledged the unity and spirituality of God, and so do we. He endeavoured to abound in all purity and benevolence; and it will be both for our present comfort, and the well-being of others, if we do the same. But he needed more enlarged views in order to make him perfect in the sight of God. That he might possess eternal life, it was needful for him not only to know the only true God, but Jesus Christ whom he has sent. That knowledge of the Gospel, and that believing

reception of its discoveries which may influence to the love and practice of its holiness, are also needful for us. Not until after the lapse of many years of his life, were the opportunities for such attainments graciously vouchsafed to him. To us they are present even from our earliest years. The whole Volume of revelation is transmitted to us, written with the pen of inspiration ; conveying to us exceeding great and precious promises, high and holy motives, pure and sanctifying precepts. That same Holy Spirit, who poured forth on him, and his company, the manifold gifts of supernatural qualifications will “ vouchsafe,” in answer to our prayers, “ to direct, sanctify and govern both our hearts and bodies in the ways of God’s laws, and in the works of his commandments.” Then shall we have joy in life, steadfastness in trial, hope in death, and acceptance in the day of judgment. May “ repentance unto life” be so granted to each of us !



LECTURE IX.

ST. PETER'S REMARKS, IN HIS EPISTLES,
ON THE CONFIRMATION OF THE APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY
BY THE PROPHETIC WORD;
AND ON THE USE, DESIGN, AND INTERPRETATION
OF PROPHECY.

2 PET. I. 16—20.

We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice, which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.

IN these words, an important passage of the New Testament is exhibited according to our authorized version. That version we justly reverence, as being at once forcible and faithful; and, therefore, calculated both to impress the mind of the pious reader, and to give him correct and adequate views of every essential doctrine. exhor-

tation, and precept. At the same time we may affirm, with reference to all translations, that he, who is qualified to have recourse to the original, will readily acknowledge, that many of its single words and phrases are such, that no other language can, in all cases, furnish corresponding ones, which will fully and exactly represent their force and signification. He would, therefore, advance a bold assertion, who should deny that any particular version of the Scriptures is capable of no improvement. Yet we are confident that a faithful improved version would exhibit no other truths, than those which are obviously taught by the Scriptures in the form in which they are at present circulated. The advantages of an improved version, if they were sufficiently great to counter-balance the disadvantages of the change, would be of a very different kind. We believe that the *same truths* would sometimes be more perspicuously and strongly stated. But the principal advantage would consist in the more exact representation of the progress, connexion, and conclusiveness of the *reasonings* by which they are established, and of the immediate dependence of the *practical inferences* upon the doctrines by which they are enforced.

It is, perhaps, desirable to deviate as little as may be, in the pulpit, from that version, which happily deserves the respect, and is so familiar

to the memories of our hearers^a. If, in this Lecture, I should appear to violate such a principle, my apology must be this, not only that this passage does not represent, with perfect accuracy, the expressions and connexions of the original; but that one of the most subtle and formidable of English Deists borrowed, from our authorized version of one of the clauses of my text, an apparent sanction for a principle, upon which he constructed a most insidious argument against the sufficiency of “the grounds and reasons of the Christian religion^b.” Such a passage may, therefore, be considered as one of “the more difficult texts, or obscure parts, of Holy Scripture,” to which the pious Founder of this Lecture has directed the attention of the Christian Preacher; and I doubt not, that if, to use his words, it be “necessary to be explained,” it also “admits of such a comment or explanation.”

Before we proceed to the actual examination of the words of the text, it will be expedient to premise some brief remarks respecting the persons addressed in the Epistles of St. Peter, the main design of those Epistles, and the connexion in which the text stands.

^a See Note (A) at the end of Lecture IX.

^b See Note (B) at the end of Lecture IX.

It is agreed on all hands that *both* the two Epistles of St. Peter were addressed to the *same* persons, viz. “the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia^c.” To what *class* of converts these strangers belonged is not so generally agreed; but the more general opinion is, that the Apostle wrote to those Jews of the dispersion who had embraced the faith of Christ, or, at least, to them in conjunction with their Gentile fellow-Christians. It is not, however, necessary that we should determine this point, although our principal object has been the elucidation of the method, in which the Apostles preached and vindicated Christianity to the *Jews*. For it is evident that the remarks contained in the text were highly deserving of consideration by the Jew, whose faith *originally* had respect to the Old Testament, and who afterwards received the Gospel, because he believed it to have been predicted by Moses and the prophets. Yet neither was the Gentile unconcerned in the advantages resulting from the prophetic word. For upon whatever grounds he first became a believer in the Gospel, Jesus and his Apostles taught him to acknowledge the authority of the Old Testament; and the transactions and benefits of the Gospel had been the subjects of its pro-

^c 1 Pet. i. 1.

phetic intimations. The passage before us, therefore, is calculated to establish and improve the faith of all, whether Jews or Gentiles who have seen reason to allow the inspiration of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures; and to whom, therefore, every statement is valuable, which tends to evince that both in one and the other, we have a unity of design, and that a perfect harmony subsists between them.

It is further observable, that these Epistles, like that to the Hebrews, were addressed to believers, who were exposed to manifold temptations, and to a fiery trial of the steadfastness of their faith, occasioned by insult, calumny, and persecution. Sublime and impressive are the Apostle's representations of the discoveries and doctrines of the Gospel; animating the glorious hopes, and rich consolations, to which he directs the persecuted convert for support under affliction; confident the assurances which he gives respecting its happy issue, and eternal recompence; and persuasive his exhortations "by well doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." But in addition to these topics, so suited to the circumstances of those whom he addressed, he also takes occasion, like his divine Master, and his "beloved brother Paul," to remind them of the certainty of those facts and views, in which all these essential principles originated and had

their foundation. His own firm and abiding conviction of the truth and value of the Gospel caused him not to be “negligent to put them always in remembrance of these things^d ;” and to persevere in this earnestness so long as he remained in that tabernacle of the body, which he knew he must shortly lay aside. Nay, he would even “endeavour that they might be able after his decease to have these things always in remembrance^e,” so far as the possession of a written memorial might contribute to that end.

He assuredly knew, and he would fain satisfactorily and permanently convince them, that when those, who preached the Gospel to them, “made known to them the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, they followed not cunningly devised fables^f,” false in themselves, yet fitted to deceive by the specious semblance of truth. The *authority* of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the *power* with which he was invested to redeem, and rule, and save, his followers; his *coming* and actual *presence* on earth; his approaching coming to take vengeance on the rebellious Jewish Church, and to deliver the Christian Church; and his final coming to minister to his people “an entrance into his everlasting kingdom ;”—

^d 2 Pet. i. 12.

^e 2 Pet. i. 13—15.

^f See Note (C) at the end of Lecture IX.

these subjects of Apostolical instruction were the words of truth and soberness, announced with great plainness of speech, and confirmed by various and sufficient evidence. He does not enter on a statement of all the arguments in proof of these things; but on a particular department of the testimony to “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” which is at once conclusive and comprehensive. It shall be our endeavour to state and elucidate his observations; which may be announced under three heads.

I. The testimony of the Apostles, and the ancient prophetic word, mutually confirm each other, in announcing the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. It is expedient to give heed to the prophetic word, because of its use and design.

III. The principles of interpretation to be adopted in such an inquiry, are suggested by consideration of the real origin of that prophetic word.

I. Under the first of these heads we shall have to inquire,

1. What was the occasion and certainty of the *testimony* of the *Apostles*? and

2. How it *confirmed* the *prophetic word*?

1. If the Apostles, and more especially Peter, James, and John, made known the authority and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, it was because they had been "*eye-witnesses* of his majesty," when they were with him in the holy Mount. This Mount is called *holy*, because of that transfiguration of the Holy One of God upon it, which exhibited him to the astonished eyes of the three Apostles, invested with all the splendour and majesty of his glorious body. "We have seen his glory," said another of those who were present at that important season, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father^g." The fulness of their own conviction was abundantly demonstrated by their perseverance in labour, and their constancy in suffering. The subject of their testimony was a transaction which fell under the cognizance of the senses; they saw and believed. They could not doubt the majesty and superhuman dignity of one so glorified before their eyes. Nor could they suppose that *he* was merely an ordinary prophet, with whom Moses and Elias were seen associated, and the chief subject of whose conversation with them respected *his own* future destinies, for they spoke "of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem^h." He was even visibly shewn to be come as one superior in dignity

^g John i. 14.

^h Luke ix. 31.

and authority, both to Moses and Elias ; when, at such a juncture, he remained alone, invested with a majesty in which they had never appeared. Of what, therefore, were the Apostles eye-witnesses, but of a visible demonstration, that Jesus was “ both Lord and Christ,” as St. Peter described him on the day of Pentecost, after having then proved, upon other principles, his right to those titles.

But again ; the Apostles were *ear-witnesses* of another demonstration of the same truth. For, to complete the wonders of that remarkable transaction, Jesus “ received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice,” adds St. Peter, “ which came from heaven, we *heard*, when we were with him in the holy Mount.” This audible attestation given by the Father, explained and confirmed the intention of the scene of which they had been spectators. It was in substance the same as the testimony given to Jesus after his baptism, and reported by the Baptist. But it was now given when a manifestation of the glory of the Son of God had preceded ; and when the purpose of his power and coming was indicated by his visible superiority to Moses and Elias, and by the subject of his death, upon which they conversed with him. The

vision was not to be related till after their Master had risen from the dead. When, however, that event had occurred, the recollection that it had been predicted on such an occasion, and in such a connexion, would still further establish the conviction previously produced by the transfiguration. They had then had a repeated demonstration of the same truths, of which the transfiguration had assured them by the sight and hearing of their risen Lord. And, therefore, on both one occasion and the other, they had decisive evidence to satisfy them, that, in making "known unto men the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," they had "not followed cunningly devised fables."

2. But the Apostle adds another reason for the testimony which they gave to the truth: "we have also *the prophetic word more sure,*" that is, *confirmed*¹. The prophetic word had predicted the power and coming of Christ, the Son of God; and, as believers in the Old Testament, they had never doubted but that, at some season, and in some way, those predictions, and all others relating to the Messiah, would be fulfilled. They also were convinced that the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection, of Jesus, accurately corresponded to those predictions. But the exhibition of his superhuman glory before their eyes, and

¹ See Note (D), at the end of Lecture IX.

the actual hearing of the heavenly testimony, afforded them a still more certain confirmation of the authority, and actual accomplishment, of the prophetic word. They no longer framed uncertain conjectures respecting the Messiahship of Jesus, for it was now not only probable, but *declaratively* certain, that he was the Christ. And how satisfactory must this confirmation of the prophetic word have been to St. Peter himself! For, a very short time before, he had declared in very strong terms, that he and his brethren “believed, and were sure, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God^k.” “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,” said our Lord in answer, “but my Father which is in heaven.” “Flesh and blood,” (whether that expression denote other human beings, or his own carnal and national hopes and prejudices) would have led him to expect a very different exhibition of the promised Messiah. But the Father had revealed to him a more just view of the subject; not immediately, but by the intervention of some medium of communication. And if we attribute it in part to the testimony of him, whom God “sent to baptize, that the Christ should be made manifest to Israel;” to the “witness of the Father” at the baptism of Jesus; and to the “works of the

^k Matt. xvi. 16.

Father” which Jesus did; yet it was from the correspondence of all that Jesus was, and did, and taught, to the *prophetic* testimony, that it was revealed to Peter that his Master was “*the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” The Apostles enjoyed greater facilities than others for arriving at this conclusion; and by these, and in the use of these, the Father revealed to them that important and fundamental truth. On the holy mount St. Peter again received other evidence of the same truth, and himself heard the heavenly declaration repeated, that Jesus was, indeed, the Son of God, and that his faith in the prophetic word was well grounded. Thus, therefore, because of the concurrence of ancient predictions and present declarations of their fulfilment, and by the observance of their *mutual confirmation* of each other, he was assured that he had “not followed cunningly devised fables,” in the declarations which he confidently and perseveringly made respecting “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

II. We now proceed to the second topic proposed, viz., the Apostle’s remark respecting the expediency of giving heed to the prophetic word, because of its use and design.

Having mentioned the prophetic word, in connexion with the transactions by which it

was confirmed, he subjoins a remark to this effect: “whereunto ye do well that ye take heed; as unto a light that was shining in a dark place until such time as the day should dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts¹.”—Confessedly the word of prophecy was the word of divine revelation; and, as such, was given to afford to men the *light* which was suited to their particular circumstances, in such a measure as the divine wisdom knew to be necessary for them, and subservient to his beneficent designs. Before the Christian era, the word of prophecy certainly had not received its fulfilment, so far as it related to that great, final, and universal, blessing, which, both in the earlier and later ages of the Old Testament, was the subject of promise, the object of hope, and the theme of prophecy. What was the nature, what the method and consequences of the blessing predicted, and who and what was he, by whom it would be procured and conferred, was but imperfectly known. *So far*, therefore, the state of those ages was a state of *darkness*; it was still night, and the *perfect day* had not as yet dawned. Yet it was not without light, though it saw not that “true light,” either in kind or degree, which shineth in an age of clear, perfect, and unclouded, revelation. What was then known of the promises and purposes of God was

¹ See Note (E), at the end of Lecture IX.

but as the fainter and uncertain beam of the moon; or as the artificial light of the torch or candle, which to a certain extent more perfectly, yet, less widely than the moon, render visible surrounding objects, and guide the steps of the nightly traveller. Such was the purpose, and such the efficacy, of the word of prophecy, previously to the grand season of its completion. It shone, though faintly, yet, nevertheless, it shone in a dark place; it gave the information which enabled those, who dwelt in earlier times, to pursue their destined course; and yet at the same time they were so sensible of its imperfection, and of the glories of that knowledge of the Lord which was reserved for later times, as to look forward in anxious, yet confident, anticipation of that season, when God should “shine into the hearts of his people, to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.” The prophetic word, by its promises of future blessings, and obscure, yet certain, outlines of the method in which they would be conveyed, was a light which was ever shining, as it were, in a dark place; and which continued and was designed so to shine, till the time when the day dawned; till “the day-spring from on high visited us,” and the “Sun of righteousness arose”, to shed upon us the healing influence of his beams, and “guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Though he, who is “the light of the world,” has now come, it does not follow that the prophetic word is to be laid aside, forgotten, or despised. We do well in attending to it. If the use of other evidences consists, among other circumstances, in the *confirmation* afforded thereby to the word of prophecy, it is implied that prophecy itself affords a very forcible and satisfactory evidence. If, when it existed alone, it gave light, we should inquire, what were the objects of faith and hope, which were perceived, even though imperfectly, through the medium of those dimmer rays. And it will be satisfactory to find, as assuredly we shall, if the organs of mental vision be not perverted, that, in all their prominent features, the objects which “the children of the prophets” discovered and contemplated, before the day dawned, are the same as those, which we now survey amidst the brightness of that light, by which they are completely developed and illustrated in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By giving heed, therefore, to the prophetic word, our faith will be strengthened, and our gratitude be excited. At the same time we also shall admire the goodness of that God, who has never “left himself without witness,” but has, in all ages, furnished adequate instruction concerning every essential particular, whether of faith, hope, or obedience; and has thus caused that “the light,

which coming into the world enlighteneth every man, should shine even in the darkness.”

III. In the third place, let us advert to the principle, which should guide us in our attention to the prophetic word, suggested by a consideration of its real origin.

“Knowing this first,”—says the Apostle, evidently inculcating the importance of the principle which the remark involves^m,—“that no prophecy of the Scripture is of *any private interpretation.*” So stand the words in our authorized version; to which, however, it is not easy to attach any definite sense, except that which the Romanists would gladly draw from it, that an infallible and authoritative interpreter of Scripture is requisite, and that individual Christians are not qualified, or authorized, to interpret it. Not Scripture in general, however, but only the prophetic parts of it, are the subject of the Apostle’s remark; and whatever were the subject of it, the original would not bear the sense just noticed. It is not, indeed, easy to express the meaning of the original in a close literal translation, without some little amplification. I would also allow the difficulty of the passage; but I conceive that of all explanations given of the passage, two only

^m See the same expression in ch. iii. 3.

will appear deserving of consideration; and each of these substantially involves the same sentiment". One would render the passage thus; "No prophecy is of *their own* (the prophets') *interpretation,*" That is, no prophecy is such, that it appertained to the prophets, or was in their power, to interpret it.—The other exposition, which is more consistent with the grammatical construction and order of the context, implicitly asserts the same; and in fact, assigns a reason for the inability of the prophets to interpret their own predictions: "No prophecy of Scripture is of *its own interpretation,*" that is, no prophecy of Scripture was so constructed, as to be self-interpreting; and the reason is subjoined: "For the prophecy came not, in old time, by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Had it originated in "*the will of man,*" that principle would not have held good. If man had foreseen nothing, he could have predicted nothing with any certainty of fulfilment; and this pretended prophecy would either have been wholly vague, and irrelevant, or it would have given sufficient indications of the intention and contrivance of the deceiver, by corresponding to the expectation which he wished to excite, in sub-

ⁿ See Note (F), at the end of Lecture IX.

serviency to his designed ends. If the conjectures and foresight of man led him to calculate on the probability of a particular event, and he couched the declaration of his expectation under the assumed form of prophecy, the current of his own ideas would lead him to use terms sufficiently intelligible; and, at any rate, others equally discerning might discover, both the meaning of his prediction, and the probability of the event foretold. But if, as was the case with holy men of old, they spoke not of events which they foresaw, or could foresee; which were to be brought about after the lapse of many ages, by contingencies over which they had no control, and in the consequences of which they had no personal worldly interest;—if, in a word, being “*moved by the Holy Spirit*” of God, they spoke the prophetic word, the purposes of such predictions are inconsistent with the supposition, that they will be found to supply, in the form and language which conveyed them, the means by which, other aids being wanting, we can interpret them. If it were otherwise, prophecy would convey as clear a light as its fulfilment; and would either lead to its own fulfilment, and thereby impair the strength of its evidence, or excite the endeavours of perverse mortals to prevent that fulfilment. At whatever time, however, and in whatever form, method, or language, a genuine prophecy is dictated by

the Spirit of him, to whom all things, past, present, and future, are known, we may expect it to be such, that it will serve the immediate purpose of maintaining the faith and hope of those, who lived at the time of its delivery, and yet be so obscure, as not to interfere with the authority, and subsistence, of any intermediate institutions.

It follows, from the same view of the subject, that the time, at which the interpretation of inspired prophecy can with certainty be determined, is that of its accomplishment; and that the events, in and by which it is accomplished, will furnish the only decisive means of interpretation. Whether it was expressed in literal terms, or veiled under type, figure, or allegory, the most accurate understanding of the language will not *suffice*. But when we have the means of comparing the event with the prediction, and advert to the place which that prediction holds in the series, and how it is connected with the entire system of the prophetic word; then first the words dictated by the Holy Spirit, cease to be to us as a sealed book, and our faith and hope derive from prophecy that confirmation, which it was destined eventually to furnish.

It further follows, from this principle, that the prophets themselves were not qualified to understand their own prophecies, as they would have been if they proceeded from human invention.

And the methods, in which they were moved by the Holy Ghost to deliver them, were such as are consistent with such a supposition; at the same time that they are exactly suited to the divine purposes, and to the belief that the events themselves alone will develop their meaning to human understandings. Often a vision, or revelation, was vouchsafed to a prophet, respecting future things, in a form not occasioned by the occurrences of his own times, or having reference to them, or to his own individual fortunes; and then, although the words were his own, the subject matter proceeded wholly from inspiration, and was not perfectly intelligible to himself. In other instances, either, when meditating on his own circumstances, and pouring forth the language of hope, trust, and thanksgiving; or when predicting certain events which were *speedily* to be fulfilled; he was led, by the same Holy Spirit, to employ language far beyond the immediate occasion, and exactly descriptive of far distant and far greater blessedness. And if part of the prediction was literally and completely fulfilled in present or approaching events, yet was he often led to anticipate others at a later period, and to subjoin animated predictions respecting them. And those interpretations, therefore, of Scripture prophecy, which overlook such a principle, must necessarily fail to give us a comprehensive view

of its scheme and design, and so limit the reference of many important parts of the ancient Scriptures, as to confine them to the personal afflictions and deliverances experienced by the prophet, and to immediate and subordinate events ; when they are, in fact, pregnant with lively and inspired anticipations of the events, glories, and consequences, of that dispensation of the Gospel in the fulness of the fit season, to which the preceding fortunes of the Jews, and even of the world, were preparatory and subservient.

Such are the principles which are expressed in St. Peter's second Epistle, or which naturally and justly may be inferred from thence. If, however, the observations which have last been made in connexion with the words of our text, should appear to be rather remote inferences from them, we would now further observe, that the same views are more fully developed in his first Epistle, in a passage which may be considered, in regard to the topics it contains, a continuation and explanation of those already noticed. A brief notice of that passage will close this Lecture.

We have said that the prophets did not comprehend their own inspired communications ; and that they could not be understood by others, before the season of the fulfilment of their predictions. Yet we meant not to assert that they

had no general, consolatory, and, to a certain extent, definite anticipations. This was previously stated under our second head. They saw, in fact, that great things were promised respecting a salvation to be effected in the latter days; but of many important particulars in regard to it they could then have no conception. “Of which salvation, says the Apostle, the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time (rather, ‘in reference to *what person*, or what manner of time’^o) the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister those things^p.”

Such is the Apostle’s statement as it regards the prophets themselves, and the previous clearness of their predictions. He was convinced, from a knowledge of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory which followed, and from a recognition of these events as described in their prophecies, that to such things the Spirit of Christ designed to refer, in order to prepare, in that

^o Ἐρευνῶντες, εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρὸν ἐδήλου τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ, κ. τ. λ.

^p 1 Pet. i. 10—12.

way, an evidence for the complete conviction of the generation who lived in the latter days. He believed that he and his brethren had seen, and could bear witness to, the actual accomplishment; but the prophets themselves confess the indistinct idea which they had respecting those events, and in several places declare that they received intimations that no more definite idea was attainable in their own times⁹.

But the Apostle proceeds to direct our attention to another circumstance, which is of great importance, and has been too frequently overlooked. He not only declares the actual occurrence of those transactions, which, as the completion of prophecy, do of themselves furnish decisive and ample means of rightly interpreting it; but he reminds us of the fact, which is established by the promises and events of the Gospel itself, that the same Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of Christ," who first dictated those prophecies, had also inspired the Apostles and Evangelists of the New Testament. "Those things," which the prophets "ministered not to themselves, but to us," are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." Thus we have now a double source of assistance in taking

⁹ See Dan. xii. 9, 12.


heed to the prophetic word. One is supplied by the *events* themselves, which so exactly correspond to the descriptions, and manifestly appear to be their fulfilment. Another is derived from the inspiration of those, who were guided by the Holy Spirit, not only to understand those ancient prophecies, but to declare their fulfilment to the world. This office they have discharged by frequently referring, in their narratives, discourses, and writings, to the prophets in general, and to particular passages which they often expressly cite, and to which they often tacitly refer. It cannot be denied that they have frequently employed the language of the Old Testament merely in the way of accommodation; and confessedly there is some difficulty in regard to the application of many passages which are cited as the materials of direct argument. But upon the extensive inquiry which is connected with that subject we have not time or space to enter, even if we had the learning and ability required to do justice to it^r. This only would we contend, that the inspiration of the Apostles ought to make us hesitate before we use such language respecting their citations as some do not scruple to employ; and that, in whatever sense, and for whatever purpose, they have made such citations, we can

^r See Note (G), at the end of Lecture IX.

confidently and satisfactorily rely upon their authority, as unfolding, in all their detail, extent, and consequences, those doctrines of our salvation which before were so obscurely made known.

The length to which our observations have been extended, will only allow us further to trespass upon your time by the delivery of one exhortation. It is one intimately connected with our subject, and shall be given in the words of its real author; who is no other than the Apostle St. Peter who has guided us in these inquiries.—
“This second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before *by the holy prophets*, and of the commandments of us the *Apostles of our Lord and Saviour*.”

^s 2 Pet. iii. 1, 2.



Note (A), p. 135.

Let not this be understood as implying any doubt of the inestimable advantage, if not absolute necessity, of an accurate acquaintance with the original Scriptures to every *teacher* of Christianity. Thereby he will both select his texts, and produce his citations, in exact conformity to their real meaning. He will be enabled to exhibit in his public instructions the valuable, though unostentatious, result of his private studies. And, by unfolding and applying Scriptural statements in their full force, and true sense, he will impart to those of his hearers, who have neither learning nor leisure, all the substantial advantages of both. “The priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.” Mal. ii. 7.

Note (B), p. 185.

Collins, in his Discourse of the grounds and reasons of the Christian religion. Assuming that “prophecy is a stronger argument than a miracle,” he endeavoured to explain away, and render inconclusive and ridiculous, the argument from prophecy. His design is obvious.

Note (C), p. 188.

2 Pet. i. 16.—Οὐ γὰρ σεσοφισμενοι μύθοις ἐξακολουθήσαντες ἐγνωρίσαμεν ὑμῖν τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν. “*Παρουσίαν sunt qui de futuro Christi adventu hic accipiant, comparantes loca ex c. iii. 3, 10, 12. Sed popularis interpretatio de presentia illius ac vita, quam in terris egerit, tum perpetuitati totius orationis, tum iis præcipue, quæ paulo post de αὐτοψία memorantur, magis consentanea est.*” Knappii Scripta var. arg. p. 8. The assent to this interpretation

has not appeared to the author inconsistent with the allusion made above to those other advents of Christ, which, although they be not referred to in this passage, were so in others; and for the expectation of which the *authority* of Jesus Christ, and his *presence* in the flesh, were the occasion and foundation.

Note (D), p. 192.

Καὶ ἔχομεν βεβαιοτέρον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον.—“Eadem dicendi ratio est apud Josephum Ant. V. 10. 4. ἔτι μᾶλλον βεβαιοτέραν εἶχε τὴν προσδοκίαν.” Knappii, sc. v. a. p. 10.

Note (E), p. 195.

ᾧ καλῶς ποιεῖτε προσέχοντες, ὡς λύχνῳ φαίνονται ἐν ἀνχμηρῷ τόπῳ, ἕως οὗ ἡμέρα διαυγᾶσι, καὶ φωσφόρος ἀνατείλη ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν. v. 19. i. e. ut candelæ quæ aliquamdiu tenebricoso in loco *lucet*. “Neque enim φαίνονται in præsentī, (*quæ lucet*), ut vulgo fit, sed, bene monente Bengelio, in *imperfecto* vertendum est, plane ut ὄντες v. 18. Nam subsequuntur *aoristi*; διαυγᾶσι, ἀνατείλη, *illucesceret, oriretur*; non præsens tempus (διαυγάζη, ἀνατέλλη), quod vulgatus interpres (adstipulante Luthero) expressit, vertens: *elucescat, oriatur*; cui etiam continuatio sententiarum et consilium scriptoris refragatur.” Knappii sc. v. a. p. 13.

Note (F), p. 199.

Τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες, ὅτι πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται. Οὐ γὰρ θελήματι ἀνθρώπου ἠνέχθη ποτὲ (alii τοτὲ) προφητεία, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν οἱ ἅγιοι Θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι. v. 20, 21.—The rendering and exact application of *ἰδίας* must depend upon the subject to which it is supposed to apply. If the “holy men of God” be referred to, then it must be rendered as *ἰδίας (αὐτῶν) ἐπιλύσεως*; But *prophecy* is the subject of v. 20. and *the prophets* are not mentioned till v. 21, and in a manner which render such a supply of the ellipsis somewhat unnatural. Hence I have preferred

to render it, as Bp. Horsley has done, as if it were *ιδίας* (*αὐτῆς*) *ἐπιλύσεως*. Similar expressions occur in Matt. xxv. 15. Acts ii. 6; iii. 12; xx. 28. Tit. i. 12.—For other but unsatisfactory expositions, See Wolfius in loco; and Knappius p. 21. who himself adopts the former of the expositions here noticed.

Note (G), p. 206.

I have supposed that the following Extracts from I. T. BERGMAN'S *Commentatio in Psalmum Centesimum Decimum* (L. Bat. 1819.) might not be unacceptable to the Biblical student. They present such an abridgement of Ernesti's dissertation as may probably induce him to refer to that elegant and interesting review of the history of the interpretation of prophecy: and then follows a comprehensive synopsis of the various questions connected with prophecy, and references to the foreign divines who have severally treated them.

Historia Interpretationis.—“In interpretatione eorum Veteris Fœderis locorum, in quibus Vaticinia de Messia reperiri censentur, magna fuit a primis inde rei Christianæ initiis sententiarum discrepantia, de qua egregie exposuit magnus Ernesti in *Narratione Critica de Interpretatione Prophetiarum Messianarum in Ecclesia Christiana*, quæ reperitur in ejus *Opusculis Theol.* p. 447—478.”

“Primis quidem Ecclesiæ temporibus tota Prophetas interpretandi ratio simplex erat et popularis, dogmatica magis quam grammatica et erudita; idque maxime ob controversias cum Judæis; unde fluxit ratio mystica et allegorica, cujus incommodum auctum est per ORIGENEM, qui omnia sensibilia et historica ad intelligibilia et cœlestia torquebat. Hunc imitati sunt quam plurimi, cum Græci, tum Latini.”

“Igitur EUSEBIUS Emisenus primus instituit diversa illa genera distinguere, et sequi illud modo, quod historiam teneret, et ea modo vaticinia ad Christum referre, in quibus proprie de eo et eo uno sermo esset: totum allegoricum genus repudiabat.”

“Imitator ei contigit DIODORUS Tarsensis, qui, ut Suidas tradit, discrimen instituit ἀλληγορίας et θεωρίας; quarum hæc videtur ea fuisse interpretandi ratio, qua res sensibiles ad invisibilia et intelligibilia traducerentur: illa posita fuisse in iis, in quibus per figuram aliquam de consilio Spiritus Sancti exprimerentur res Christi; ἀλληγορεῖν enim proprio et antiquissimo usu significat *figurate dicere*; vulgaris significatio, non diversa a θεωρίας vi, recentior est, Origenis demum temporibus nata. Universa ejus ratio hæc fuit, ut alia dicta ita ad Christum pertinere diceret, ut de eo uno proprieque, μόνον καὶ κυρίως, intelligi deberent, sed ea non valde multa: alia μυστικῶς, quæ κατὰ ῥητόν et καθ’ ἱστορίαν de aliis, ut de Davide v. gr. dicta essent: esse etiam quæ interpretando per accommodationem ad Christum referrentur.”

“E discipulis ejus fuere THEODORUS MOPSUESTENUS et CHRYSOSTOMUS. Ille contra Allegoristas librum scripsit: quod contra opus Eusebii scripsit *Apologiam Origenis*, cujus pars Latine exstat in Opp. Origenis T. IV: magis ursit Diodori rationem, ita ut inde invidiam traheret, maxime Nestorii tempore.”

“Hinc diversa genera interpretum fluxere. Alii Theodorum secuti, ut COSMAS INDICOPLEUSTES: alii, velut eclecticici, media via incedebant: alii id egerunt, ut quoquo modo quam plurima ad Christum referrent: quod genus in primis late patuit.”

“Proximus ab Origene est EUSEBIUS Cæsareënsis, cujus et in Psalmos et in Esaiam habemus Commentarios primum a Montfauconio editos, plane Origenis rationem sequens. Tum HILARIUS Pictaviensis, qui item totus ab Origene pendet: cui in summa rei similes sunt Latini Interpretes, AMBROSIUS, HIERONYMUS, AUGUSTINUS.”

“In Oriente fuit EPHRAIMUS SYRUS, ob Origeniano vitio intactus, Diodoro aut Theodoro propior. Sed eadem, ac Origines, via incedit BASILIUS, magnus illius admirator. Clarius interpretandi arte est JOANNES CHRYSOSTOMUS, sed in hoc genere non dispar. THEODORETUS, ejus, uti et Theodori, discipulus, hujus

rationem ad illius rationem mitigare tentavit. In eandem ætatem incidit CYRILLUS Alexandrinus, qui credidit V. T. totum esse figuram Christi et N. T. tum etiam SEVERUS Antiochenus, EUTHYMIUS, alii.”

“Mansit eadem fere interpretationis varietas sequentibus seculis, tum etiam post renatas literas et instaurata sacra, quæ tempora complures tulerunt doctos et celebres interpretes : de quibus singulis hic dicendi locus non est : id tantummodo hisce universe dictis in quibus Ernestium secuti sumus, voluimus, ut via quasi et aditus aperiretur ad intelligentiam diversarum sententiarum, in quas discesserunt interpretes in tractando Psalmo cx.”

De Prophetiis Messianis universe.—“Qui de Messia Psalmum interpretantur, de illo veteribus oraculis prædictum esse sumunt. Hoc autem si falsum reperiatur, omnis de hoc quoque carmine quæstio sponte cadit. Negatur autem a nonnullis. Ergo, quo jure negetur, paucis videndum est : non quo hujus loci esse putemus eam quæstionem, de qua multa a multis optime sunt disputata, denuo pertractare, sed quo firmiter illud teneatur, cui, tanquam fundamento suo ædificium, reliqua omnia superstruenda sunt.”

“*Vaticinium* cum dicimus, sive *Prophetiam*, intelligimus claram sive perspicuam, distinctam, certam, atque eventu comprobata prædictionem ejus rei, quam nulla unquam humana perspicientia prævidere possit, sed cujus cognitio debeatur divino Spiritus Sancti afflatui, quo Prophetæ cum loquerentur aut scriberent acti fuerint. Est ergo *Vaticinium Messianum* ejusmodi, qualem diximus, prædictio futuri Messia, rerumque ad eum pertinentium. *Messias* autem is est, qui Hebræis מָשִׁיחַ, Græce Χριστός, h. e. *Unctus*, addito autem Dei nomine, *Unctus Jehova* dicitur : quæ appellatio cum iis omnibus, qui solemniter oleo infuso Dei nomine Hebræorum Reges constituti erant, quod de Saulo, Davide, et Salomone diserte constat ex 1 Sam. x. 1. Ps. lxxxix. 21. 1 Reg. i. 34—39, 45., convenit, ac reipsa tribuitur Saulo 1 Sam. xxiv. 7. 11. Davidi Ps. xviii. 51. xx. 7. lxxxix. 39. tum κατ’ ἐξοχήν

ita dicitur unus ille regum omnium maximus Rex, qui gentis suæ res collapsas restitutus, peccata ejus expiaturus, et omnino omnis generis felicitatem in eam collaturus, regnumque perpetuum habiturus esset. Ps. ii. 1. Dan. ix. 25 et 26. coll. Ps. xlv. 8. Hinc *Vaticinium Messianum* quodammodo idem valet ac si dicas *Vaticinium Regium*. Atque haecenus probari possunt et *Herderus*, qui Psalmum cx. aliosque *Psalmos Regios* inscribi voluit *de Poësi Hebr.* v. iv. p. 314. et sqq. Ed. Belg. et *Friedrichius*, qui pag. 2: ‘Messiana prophetia cernitur,’ inquit, ‘in certa viri illustris cujusdam futuri prædictione, ejusque virium humanæ naturæ statum longe superantium clara descriptione, sic, ut ullus alius, cujuscunque sit conditionis homo, intelligi non possit.’ Messiam autem talem aliquando exoriturum esse nulla hominum vel sagacissimorum perspicacia certo præ sagiri potuisse, facile intelligitur.”

“Jam cum eventus et historia Novi Fœderis nos doceant, Messiam advenisse Jesum Christum, Dei Filium, ortu supernaturali e Virgine natum, quis est qui neget cum summa Dei bonitate, sapientia, potentia, et provida rerum humanarum cura convenire, quo hominum animi ad Messiam illum recipiendum præparentur, eumque certis quibusdam quasi notis, simulac venisset, dignoscere possent, quæ ad eum pertinerent, antequam veniret, aliquatenus cum hominibus communicare et quasi legatos emittere qui futurum ejus adventum annunciarent? Imo vero ipsa divina sapientia id prorsus postulare videtur. Quod si autem non tantum nihil absurdi habeat, sed vel maxime necessaria et sapientiæ divinæ consentanea sit ejusmodi rerum Messianarum cum humano genere communicatio, eam revera exstare vel hinc tuto possumus efficere. Quidquid enim Deus videt cum sua sapientia congruere, neque homines eo carere posse, id quin velit et re ipsa faciat, nullum dubium esse potest, nec debet. Existere autem eam si sumas, ubinam tandem quæretur nisi in libris Veteris Fœderis? Hi enim sunt ex omnibus antiquitatis monumentis, qui et purissimam de Deo rebusque divinis doctrinam complectantur, et vel per se manifesta prodant indicia altioris et præstantioris quam humanæ origi-

nis: quæ duo qui constanter negare sustinuerit vel valde pertinax sit, necesse est. Hi sunt, quibus doctrinam de futuro Messia contineri et Judæi, qui ante Christum Natum vixerunt, constanter affirmarunt, et Jesus ipse ejusque Apostoli testimonio suo confirmarunt, et eventus et argumentum totius N. F. comprobavit: ne addatur omnium fere Christianorum et recentiorum quoque Judæorum in ea opinione tuenda consensus. Enimvero hæc ab iis, qui hanc quæstionem dedita opera pertractarunt, tam bene sunt probata, ut nostra cura non indigeant.”

“Quod vero diximus, tulisse Judæorum opinionem, esse in veteribus Oraculis scriptum de Messia, atque hanc opinionem a Jesu ejusque Apostolis probatam et confirmatam esse, de eo non levis est inter recentiores Theologos atque Interpretes dissentio. Primum enim sunt, qui negent Judæos de futuro Liberatore quidquam cognitum habuisse, omniaque, quæ e V. F. eo spectare feruntur, nihil aliud esse censeant, quam poëtice exornatam descriptionem aureæ cujusdam ætatis, qualis Græcorum quoque, Romanorum, aliarumque gentium carminibus celebrari soleat. Illud facile refutaveris ex indiciis ejus cognitionis passim in N. F. obviis, veluti Matt. ii. 4, 5. Joann. vii. 42. Matt. xvii. 10—13. xxii. 42 et 44. Joann. iv. 21, 22, 25. coll. 42. Luc. i. 70. ii. 25, 26, alibi. Hoc ex eo falsum esse apparet, quod ipsi Judæi illa vaticinia non pro meris humani ingenii commentis habuerunt, sed spem certam foverunt, fore ut aliquando eventu comprobarentur, atque satis distinctam futuri Liberatoris notitiam ex iis hauserunt. Quod vel eadem loca docent. Matt. ii. interroganti Herodi respondisse leguntur Sacerdotes et Scribæ debere Christum nasci Bethlehemi, allato Michæ loco v. 2. Joann. iv. mulier Samaritana diserte dicit: οἶδα ὅτι Μεσσίας ἔρχεται ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός· ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐκείνος ἀναγγελεῖ ἡμῖν πάντα. Quis credat eos tanta fiducia locutos fuisse, si, quæ vates de Messia cecinissent, figmenti tantum poëtici loco habuissent? Ne dicam nonnullorum vaticiniorum indolem obstare huic opinioni, et maxime inde a reditu ex

Chaldæo Judæos spe melioris conditionis a Messia expectandæ fractos animos erexisse, quam unde hauserint, nisi e vaticiniis Prophetarum, et quo fulcro sustentaverint, nisi oraculis et promissis Divinis, quæ majores acceperant, non liquet. Vid. bene monita *Friedrichii* in Ann. p. 2. ubi complures istius de aurea ætatis spe sententiæ patronos laudavit.”

“Majore audacia dicitur ac difficilius refellitur alterum, quo contendunt, quidquid Judæi de futuro Messia cognoverint, aut certe cognoscere sibi visi fuerint, non esse e supernaturali quadam revelatione profectum, sed ex ipsorum ingenio natum, adeoque habendum pro falsa vulgi opinione: neque Messiam humani generis Servatorem spectavisse, sed oriundum e familia Davidis Regem terrestrem, futurum Gentis suæ vindicem: Jesum autem ejusque Apostolos, quæ in V. F. libris alio sensu dicta repirerent, more Judæis non insueto ad se et novæ religionis œconomiam transtulisse. Praeter alios, sic fere ratiocinatur *Eckermannus* in *Theol. Beiträge* V. I. P. I. p. 114 et sqq. 118. et passim alibi. Verum et hæc sententia nulla satis certa ratione nititur. *Primum* demonstrari debet Messiaæ expectationem fuisse falsam populi opinionem. Negari nequit doctores Judæorum ista præsertim ætate ingenii lusibus indulsisse, et hactenus erravisse quod Messiam expectarent Regem terrestrem, qui eos ab hostium jugo liberaret: a quo errore ne ipsi quidem Apostoli, antequam Spiritus Sancti dona accepissent, liberi fuisse videntur; cf. Luc. i. 71, 74. ii. 38. xxiv. 21. Act. i. 6: sed eum Jesus ipse refutavit Joann. xviii. 36. et complures erant qui meliora de Messia sentirent; cf. Joann. i. 46. vi. 14. iv. 25. vii. 31. Matt. xvi. 16. Joann. i. 50. vi. 69. xi. 27. alibi. Ita ut ex eo minime efficiatur universam hujus expectationem præjudicatæ multitudinis opinioni abscribendam esse. *Deinde* ipsorum vaticiniorum indoles ostendit ea multo latius spectare, quam Regem terrestrem e Davidis stirpe prognatum, magna cum potentia et splendore regnaturum, atque adeo ea complecti de quibus Judæi, omnia in suorum popularium salute et externo splendore ponentes, ne per somnium quidem cogita-

rent. Mentio fit gravissimarum calamitatum, quas Messias per-
 pessurus esset, aperitur consilium novæ religionis condendæ,
 et longe lateque per alios populos ad extremos orbis fines pro-
 pagandæ: Ps. xxii. Jes. liii. coll. Luc. xxiv. 25—27. Cf. Cl.
van Voorst in *Diss. de Regia Christi Dign.* p. 26—34. *Postre-*
mo, qui statuunt, ubicunque V. T. dicta in N. afferuntur,
 Jesum ejusque Apostolos et reliquos N. F. Scriptores, ea, etsi
 alio spectarent, ad se et novam religionem transtulisse, ut sen-
 tentiam tuentur, quæ et per se stare nequit et cum disertis
 eorum effatis pugnat, ita magna eos injuria afficiunt. Per se id
 parum probabile est, cum quia, vel sepositis N. F. libris, in-
 sunt veteribus oraculis quæ non nisi difficulter et contorte de
 alio quam de Messia exponi possint; qua de re cff. monita *An-*
tonii Diss. de Proph. Mess. Interp. p. 1. §. 5, 6. et quæ spe-
 ciminis loco attulit Cl. *van Voorst* in *Diss. laudata* p. 6—23;
 tum quia alioquin non satis perspicitur, quare tandem tot loca
 Prophetarum in libris N. F. allata sint, idque iis formulis, quæ
 consilium eventus veterum oraculorum significandi manifeste
 prodant, ὅπως πληρωθῆ τὸ ρηθὲν, ἵνα ἡ γραφή πληρωθῆ, et simili-
 bus, quin nonnunquam ita, ut diserte veteris effati cum repræsentii
 convenientia ostendatur, atque inde argumentum pro hac pe-
 tatur, ut Act. ii. 25—31. iii. 22. sqq. iv. 25—27. prorsus temere
 et inconsulto, si vera sit ista sententia: neque enim omnia ista
 e consuetudine et usu accommodationum repeti possunt. Porro
 cum disertis Jesu Apostolorumque effatis illa pugnat. Jesus
 qui se Messiam esse aperte profitebatur Jo. xvii. 3. et discipu-
 los hanc ejus dignitatem agnoscentes impense laudabat Matt.
 xvi. 16. et 17. non tantum dum in hac vita versabatur affirma-
 vit vates antiquos de se scripsisse, atque inde argumentum pro
 doctrinæ suæ veritate petiit Jo. v. 39. 45—47. Luc. xxii. 37.
 Jo. xx. 9., sed vel maxime e mortuorum sede redux, quo suis
 fidem faceret, et nihil aliud evenisse ostenderet, quam quod e
 consilio Dei evenire debuisset, fatorum suorum cum oraculis
 antiquis consensum diserte exposuit, primum discipulis duobus
 Emmaüntem proficiscentibus, quos teste Luca xxiv. 25, 26. ita

allocutus est: ὧ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ τοῦ πιστεῦειν ἐπὶ πᾶσι οἷς ἐλάλησαν οἱ προφήται· οὐχὶ ταῦτα ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν Χριστὸν, καὶ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ; Subjicit Lucas, v. 27: καὶ ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ Μωσέως καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν προφητῶν, διηρμήνευεν αὐτοῖς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς γραφαῖς τὰ περὶ αὐτοῦ. Tum reliquis discipulis, excepto Thoma, eodem loco congregatis, cum subito apparuisset, hique suis ipsi oculis diffiderent, referente eodem Luca v. 44: οὗτοι, dixit, οἱ λόγοι, οὓς ἐλάλησα πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔτι ὧν σὺν ὑμῖν, ὅτι δεῖ πληρωθῆναι πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Μωσέως, καὶ προφήταις, καὶ ψαλμοῖς περὶ ἐμοῦ. Quid? quod addit Scriptor v. 45—47: τότε διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν, τοῦ συνιέναι τὰς γραφάς· καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ὅτι οὕτω γέγραπται, καὶ οὕτως ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν Χριστὸν, καὶ ἀναστήναι ἐκ νεκρῶν τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, καὶ κηρυχθῆναι ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ μετάνοιαν καὶ ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, ἀρξάμενον ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλήμ. Quæ loca, quorum contortam interpretationem ab Eckermanno commendatam refutavit Cl. van Voorst l. c. p. 18. in nota, profecto cum docent Messiæ res revera prædictas fuisse a vaticiniis antiquis, tum summam eorum exhibent, quæ illi prædixerant, nimirum et humilem et excelsam Messiæ conditionem: quod plane convenit cum argumento vaticinii Jesaiæ Cap. liii. Nec minus disertæ sunt Apostolorum effata. Petrus I Ep. i. 11. affirmat prophetis τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ præsignificavisse τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα καὶ τὰς μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας. Paulus Thessalonicae, ubi erat Synagoga Judæorum, commorans κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς εἰσῆλθε πρὸς αὐτοὺς, καὶ ἐπὶ σάββατα τρία διελέγετο αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν, διανοίγων καὶ παρατιθέμενος ὅτι τὸν Χριστὸν ἔδει παθεῖν καὶ ἀναστήναι ἐκ νεκρῶν, καὶ ὅτι οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, ὃν ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν. Hoc Paulus fecit, acerrimus antea Jesu adversarius, et factum est ut haud pauci ad meliorem sententiam perducti Religionem Christianam amplecterentur. Vid. Act. xvii. 1—4. Similiter de Philippo legimus, eum eunuchum quemdam Æthiopem ad nova sacra traduxisse Act. viii. 27—39. Simul ac effusa essent dona Spiritus Sancti, Petrus ita e vaticiniis argumentatus est, ut ea de

nemine alio, quam de Messia, explicari posse ostenderet Act. ii. 22—36. Mox tria millia ad nova sacra transierunt v. 41. Vid. etiam Act. iv. 25—28. x. 43. xiii. 32. Rom. i. 2. Jam ipse Messiae præcursor Joannes Baptista, tempus advenisse, quo, quæ a Prophetis prædicta fuerant, eventu comprobarentur, significavit Jo. i. 23. coll. Matt. iii. 13. Luc. iii. 4. Quæ omnia profecto, ut ad illud quod postremo loco posuimus, transeamus, qui non nisi accommodationum, quæ dicuntur, loco habeat, næ is et longe ab interpretandi simplicitate recedat necesse est, nec modo omnem fidem Sacris Scriptoribus debitam evertet, sed etiam Jesum Dei filium ipsumque verum Deum, omnium sine dubio Religionis doctorum sapientissimum, qui dicere poterat *etsi ego ipse de me tester, testimonium meum fide dignum est* (Jo. viii. 14.) ejusque Apostolos et Discipulos, viros non vulgari doctrina instructos, sed θεοπνεύστους atque ab omni noxio errore immunes (Jo. xvi. 13.) eo ipso fatebitur mendaces et fraudulentos impostores fuisse, qui quæ minime ad se pertinerent, falso et contra S. Scriptorum et Spiritus Sancti consilium, ad se transtulerint. Cf. Cl. *Heringa* loco laudato”

“Atque hæc omnia faciunt ut nos quidem haud dubitemus assentiri *Friedrichio* p. 1. dicenti: *per hoc accommodationis systema necessario omnis interpretatio incerta, omnis Scriptoribus Sacris debita fides infirma debet existere**. Quid igitur, inquiet, aliquis, ergone id totum quantum repudiandum censes? Non equidem istud facere ausim: sed certe maxima cautione eo

* Jam olim placuit ea interpretandi ratio per accommodationes *Clerico*, *Lockio*, aliis; displicuit *Cunæo de Rep. Hebr.* iii. 8. aliisque. Vid. *F. Fabricius de Sacerd. Christi Sec. Ord. Melchis.* C. V. §. 6. et 7. cujus hæc sunt ipsa verba: “Quæ cum ita sint, jam ego oro atque obtestor omnes eos, qui arbitrantur Scriptores N. T. in citanda scriptura Veteris, aut se accommodasse mori suæ ætatis, qua allegoricæ Scripturarum expositiones in pretio erant; aut saltem in citandis nonnullis locis V. T. magis allusisse ad sonum verborum, quam ad genuinum istius loci sensum, ut velint attendere, quo tandem deveniant. Quibuscunque enim circumlocutionibus, verborumve mitigationibus utantur, hoc revera dicunt, Apostolos ex textibus a se allegatis tales eduxisse veritates, quæ revera iis juxta Spiritus S. intentionem non sunt inclusæ.”

utendum esse dico ; qua de re pauca egregie monuit Ven. *van Vloten Intr. in Ps.* p. 238 sqq. Nimirum negari nequit Judæis, æque ac aliis gentibus, in more positum fuisse, ut veterum dictis in vita quotidiana uterentur. Negari nequit Scriptores N. T. eam secutos nonnunquam formulis uti e V. F. desumptis, quæ suo loco alio sensu ac de aliis rebus usurpatæ fuerunt : eæ vero quasi aliud agentibus exciderunt, neque apparet consilium notandi rerum præsentium cum antiquis consensus. Vid. *Overdorp Diss. l.* p. 140. et sqq. 149. et sqq. In reliquis, ubi consensus ille diserte notatur, etiamsi forte Prophetæ dicta non videantur directe ad Messiam pertinere, non video cur non possit a Prophetarum aliorumve veterum Scriptorum consilio, discerni consilium Spiritus Sancti, quo illi in scribendo acti fuerint, atque hoc latius dici pertinuisse quam illud. Nec enim verendum est ne sic duplicem sensum scriptoris verbis tribuere debeamus : hic enim suam mentem tantum exposuit, sed ita, ut e consilio Dei ac Spiritus Sancti, a quo impulsus scriberet, verba ejus latiore sensu accipi possent, ut revera, ut eventus postea docuit, latius spectarent. Sic, ut hoc utar, Jesaïas liii. 4. utitur vocabulis הַלִּיִם et מַכְאִבִּים , quæ possunt significare *morbos* et *dolores* vel corporis, vel animi h. e. vitia et sollicitudines. Jesaïam sine dubio posteriore sensu intellexisse declarant sequentia פְּשַׁעַי et עוֹנֵי , quæ non nisi de vitiis animi usurpantur, ac docet universa ejus oratio. Utrumque vero sensum spectavit Spiritus Sanctus, utrique prophetiæ eventus respondit. Jesum suorum morbos et dolores miraculose sustulisse referens Matt. viii. 17. diserte addit : ὅπως πληρωθῆ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ προφήτου, λέγοντος· αὐτὸς τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν ἔλαβε καὶ τὰς νόσους ἐβάστασε. Idem, sacrificii piacularis loco pro peccatis humani generis oblati, *vitiarum nostrorum culpam tulit, et angores nostros expertus est.* Hoc sensu e vatis ipsius consilio dicta evenerunt, notante etiam Petro 1 Ep. ii. 24 : ὃς τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον. Ei enim Jesaïæ locum ob oculos

fuisse, apparet e cm. 22. et 23. coll. Jes. v. 9. Quod si id nunc dedita opera ageremus, plura exempla ejus generis afferri possent. Sed haud prætermittendum, hanc nostram sententiam egregie ut videtur confirmari ab eodem Petro loco classico 2 Ep. i. 19—21. Ultimi enim versus sensus sine dubio hic est: *non ita homines hoc sibi voluerunt ut futura prædicerentur, sed hoc potius sibi voluit Spiritus Sanctus, cujus impulsu sancti vates acti fuerunt.* Quibuscum cff. quæ de Cajaphæ dicto notavit Joannes xi. 51, 52.”

§. II. *Num in Davidis Scriptis Vaticinia Messiana reperiuntur?*—“Atque hæc quidem sufficiunt, ut appareat quam temeraria sit illorum sententia qui nulla plane vaticinia de Messia V. F. libris contineri censent. Unde fit ut hactenus possit Psalmus noster de Messia explicari, nisi ex alia parte nobis occurreretur. Sunt enim qui, etsi concedant Jesaiam, et qui eum ætate consecuti sunt, de Messia vaticinatos esse, negent tamen Davidem hoc facere potuisse, neque enim probari posse eum de rebus Messianis sua jam ætate satis edoctum fuisse. Sic loquitur *Rosenmullerus* in Argumento Psalmi: verba ejus attulimus Cap. i. p. 18. Verum primo loco probe animadvertendum est, etiamsi indubitatis argumentis probari nequeat, Davidi doctrinam de futuro Messia cognitam fuisse, inde minime sequi eam ipsi plane incognitam fuisse. Est enim hoc ex genere rerum historicarum, quæ, sive adsint, sive non adsint scriptorum testimonia, per se esse possunt verissimæ ac certissimæ. Nulla autem diserta hujus rei adesse testimonia, neque exstare ulla indicia, e quibus probabiliter efficiatur cum quid Davidi cognitum fuerit, tum quid ipse senserit, vehementer negamus. Nam, ut primum Veteris Fœderis limitibus circumscribatur nostra disputatio, ne dicam de loco Genes. iii. 15, quo, quisquis tandem verus verborum sensus sit, sine dubio Deus homines lapsos aliqua felicitatis restaurandæ spe solari voluit: cf. *Muntinghius Gesch. der Menschh.* T. I. p. 92 et 153. *Ann.* p. 54. et T. III. p. 223. Davidi cognita fuerunt eximia promissa primum Abrahamo identidem facta de posteritate

innumera, de perpetua possessione terræ Canaanis, imprimis de omnibus terræ gentibus ab eo, sive ab ejus semine h. e. posteritate omni felicitatis genere beandis; Gen. xii. 2, 3. xiii. 14—17. xv. 5. 18—21. xvii. 2, 4—8. quin jurejurando confirmata, xxii. 16—18: deinde Isaäco et Jacobo repetita; Gen. xxvi. 2—5. xxviii. 12—15. Quæ quidem promissa si latissimo sensu accipiantur, quod quominus fiat tantum abest ut ulla ratio prohibeat, ut contra jurisjurandi divini vis id cum maxime postulet, aliter plane fieri non potest, quin spectent Messiam et felicitatem ab eo omnibus gentibus afferendam. Cff. Act. iii. 25. et 26. Gal. iii. 8—16. Hebr. vi. 13—18. item Joan. viii. 56. Noverat, quantum iis pretii statuissent sanctissimi Patriarchæ, quam magnifice, iis fretus, et mente divinitus collustrata, Jacobus morti proximus de tribu Juda vaticinatus esset, Gen. xlix. 10. Noverat, quæ Moses de futuro maximo Propheta prædixisset Deut. xviii. 15, 18. coll. Act. iii. 22, 23. In carmine, quod servavit auctor libri 1 Chron. xvi. distincte illa promissa memorat, cm. 15—19. coll. Ps. cv. 8—11. Sed nec ipse Davides, e tribu Juda oriundus, similibus promissis carebat. Simulac hostibus subactis regno pacato fruebatur, Deus opera Nathanis Prophetæ ei regnum perpetuum et florentissimum filii promisit: 2 Sam. vii. 12—16. coll. 1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10. quod promissum etsi proxime pertinuerit ad Salomonem, tamen iis verbis enunciatur, atque ea complectitur, quæ, quod ad Salomonem attinet, nullo modo locum habuerunt, sed necessario ulterius spectare debeant. Cff. quæ de hoc loco egregie disputarunt *Michaëlis Coll. Cr.* p. 461—467. *Anton. Diss. de Proph.* p. 1. §. 8. nota l. p. 260. Quod ipsum Davidem perspexisse haud obscure indicant quæ, eo accepto, Jehovahæ dixisse legitur, vs. 18, 19. sqq. 29. Quid? quod Ps. lxxxix. 4, 5. 30—36. mentio fit gravissimi jurisjurandi, quo Deus affirmaverit, sese effecturum esse, ut Davidis posterius per omnia secula post eum regnarent, ejusque thronus stabilis foret. Vid. etiam Ps. lxxii. 5, 7, 8, 11. cxxxii. 11 et sqq. Quæ omnia si teneantur, non aliter existimari poterit,

quam Davidem promissis divinis fretum longe majora et excellentiora exspectavisse quam regnum prosperum tempore Salomonis filii, sed revera ei in mentem venire debuisse ejus Regis omnium maximi, qui post multa secula ex ejus stirpe oriturus regnum perpetuum habiturus, atque omnibus orbis terrarum gentibus imperaturus esset. Quod vel maxime confirmatur iis quæ divinitus impulsus vaticinatus esse legitur 2 Sam. xxiii. 1—7. de quo loco cf. Cl. *van der Palm* in libro *Eenige Liederen van David*, init. Atque hinc etiam apparet, pro temporum ratione, ejus ætate promissa de Messia imagine regis potentissimi regnique florentissimi ac firmissimi involuta fuisse, qua imagine ipse Davides usus est Ps. ii. et xlv. Cff. bene monita *Friedrichii*, p. 2—6.”

“Jam videmus vel e solis V. T. indiciis manifesto sequi, Davidi facta fuisse promissa de splendidissimo Messia ex ejus stirpe oriundi regno: quod N. F. Scriptores, si modo fidem iis habere velimus, neque quæ perspicue scripserunt, in alienum sensum detorquere, plane extra omnem dubitationem ponunt. Ne jam dicamus de loco Matt. xxii. 42. sqq. et ll. parall. de quo postea agendum erit, Jesus ipse, in vitam redux diserte testatus est, et Discipulis ostendit *non tantum in Lege Mosis et in Prophetarum libris, sed etiam in Psalmis* de se scriptum esse. Luc. xxiv. 44. Jesu præeunte, ejus Apostoli ac Discipuli postea, Spiritus Sancti luce collustrari, sæpius e Psalmis argumentati sunt, et convenientiam rerum Messianarum cum dictis Davidis indicarunt. Quid? quod Petrus diserte affirmavit, Davidem divinitus impulsum, ideoque futura prævidentem, multis ante seculis *de Messia* cecinisse, *non de se* aut de ullo alio: “*Ἀνδρὸς ἀδελφοί, inquit in oratione Hierosolymis habita Act. ii. 29—31, ἐξὸν εἰπεῖν μετὰ παρρησίας πρὸς ὑμᾶς περὶ τοῦ πατριάρχου Δαβὶδ, ὅτι καὶ ἐτελεύτησε καὶ ἐτάφη, καὶ τὸ μνήμα αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῖν ἄχρι τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης. Προφήτης οὖν ὑπάρχων καὶ εἰδὼς ὅτι ὄρκω ᾤμωσεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεός, ἐκ καρποῦ τῆς ὀσφύος αὐτοῦ τὸ κατὰ σάρκα ἀναστήσειν τὸν Χριστὸν, καθίσει ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ* (Respicit et explicat promissum 2 Sam. vii. aliisque locis

supra laudatis in primis Ps. cxxxii. 11. commemoratum)· προῶδων ἐλάλησε περὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτι οὐ κατελείφθη ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ εἰς ᾄδον, οὐδὲ ἡ σὰρξ αὐτοῦ εἶδε διαφθοράν. Nam etsi Hebraicum נִבִּיָּא cui respondet Græcum προφήτης, non necessario significet *eum qui futura prædicit*, hoc tamen loco aliter eam vocem accipi non posse, declarant sequentia προῶδων ἐλάλησε, atque ita denotat *futura prædicentem*, ut simul indicetur id fieri non viribus humanis, sed divino impulsu, divina inspiratione, quæ vis est vocabuli Hebraici, docente *Koppio* in Exc. III. ad Ep. ad Eph. p. 150. Jam non ignoro recentiorum interpretum plerosque negare loco laudato Ps. xvi. Davidem de Christo vaticinatum esse, nec diffiteor posse ea verba, ratione habita calamitatum, quibus cum hunc Psalmum componeret Davides premebatur, non male de eo explicari, et fortasse ab eo de se dicta esse: cf. *Kuinoelius* ad Act. 1. et ad v. 25. Sed vel sic tamen, propter ea quæ antea disputavimus, contendo hisce verbis verum vaticinium de Christi reditu in vitam ex consilio Dei et Spiritus Sancti, eo tempore in animum Davidis agentis, contineri, atque adeo Davidem hactenus vere illum eventum, mentis oculis quasi subjectum, prævidisse et prædixisse. Hoc autem est quod vult Petrus. Non dicit Davidem, regem, hominem aut poëtam, de Christi reditu in vitam cecinisse, sed hoc fecisse ait Davidem divinitus inspiratum, extraordinario Dei impulsu actum, et luce divina collustratum, ita ut futura secula quasi ante oculos haberet, προφήτην ὑπάρχοντα καὶ προῶδόντα. Vere ergo Petrus affirmat Davidi Messiae fata ob oculos fuisse. Cff. ad h. Ps. cl. *Muntinghe* et cl. *van der Palm* p. 1. Op. 95. et sqq.”

“Stat ergo in Psalmis vera reperiri vaticinia Messiana, atque hactenus posse Psalmo quoque cx. inesse ejusmodi vaticinium. Nec tamen ubique æque perspicuis vestigiis apparet, futura prædicta esse. Modo obscurius, modo apertius, prout sinebat vis divina in animum ejus agens, loquitur vates, ut possint fere quæcunque in Psalmis vaticinia reperiuntur in certas quasdam classes distribui. Quatuor ejusmodi Psalmorum Pro-

pheticorum classes distinxit *Michaëlis* in fine *Præfat. ad Coll. Crit. Primam* eorum, quos, etiamsi non legeris Novum Testamentum, ac de eventu nihil scias, tamen non possis de Davide, aut, quicumque tandem eorum auctor sit, interpretari, nisi simul agnoscas iis contineri prædictiones olim existuri magni cujusdam viri, veræ victimæ pro peccatis nostris, sive promissi Davidi extraordinarii illius posteri: in his locum invenire Psalmos cx, xl, xvi. *Alteram* classem eorum facit, quæ peculiaria Christi fata aperiant ejus generis, quæ ut et aliis Deo probatis hominibus obtingere queant, ita tamen omnia conjuncta, ac simul ratione habita mentionis similium rerum, quæ Christo contigerint, et silentii in historia Davidis de talibus conspicui, sine dubio ad Messiam pertinere dicenda sint. Huc refert Psalmos xxii. et lxix. *Tertia* classis eos complectitur, qui quidem non adeo apertas neque eadem perspicuitate propositas historiæ Jesu notas complectantur, neque quidquam exhibeant quod poëta de Davide aut Salomone poëtica hyperbole canere non potuisset, sed quos, simul ac Messiæ e Ps. cx. notitiam hauseris, atque testimonia Scriptorum N. F. animadverteris, potius ad hunc, quam ad illos referas: huc pertinere ait Psalmum ii. Denique *quartam* eorum constituit, in quibus alterutra harum conditionum desit: sic Ps. lxxii. nusquam in N. T. ad Christum transferri, et probabili sensu poëtice de Salomone accipi posse; verum simulac Psalmos cx. et ii. de Christo explicaveris, non posse non in eo agnoscere ejusdem Regis imaginem. Hæc ille. Hanc vero distinctionem improbat *Starckius Prolegg. in Ps.* v. 1. p. 1. §. xiv. paucissimos Psalmos de Christo agere censens, magisque propensus ad accommodationes assumendas, quas contra Michaellem defendere conatur p. 473—476, unde p. 477: ‘Ii ergo,’ inquit, ‘soli de Christo dicti videntur, qui ita comparati sunt ut de Davide, illisque temporibus exponi prorsus nequeant, qui de Christo in Sacris N. T. pandectis vere explicantur, et in quibus nihil est, quod datæ ab Apostolis explicationi ullo modo adversari possit.’ Et ex hoc genere esse censet Psalmos ii, xvi, xxii, xl, cx. Convenit fere

sententia *Cosmae Indicopleustis*, cujus Cap. i. p. 6. mentionem fecimus. Aliter Cl. *van der Palm Op. laud.* p. 96. postquam de Ps. xvi. fassus erat se eum Propheticum habere, ita tamen ut Davidis fata ejus conscribendi causam præbuisse videantur, duo facit Psalmorum Propheti-
corum genera: alterum eorum in quibus consilium Propheticum tam clare per totum Carmen appareat, ut levissima tantum iis rerum Davidicarum adumbratio insit; quales esse Psalmos ii et cx: alterum, in quibus contrarium quodammodo obtineat, ita ut carmina sint ad Davidis fata pertinentia, sed eo tempore composita quo poëta sensu Prophetico excitatus futura præsigiret; tales esse xvi, xl, alios. Nostrum non est, neque etiam hujus loci diversas illas sententias dijudicare. Sed hoc inde apparet, Psalmorum Interpretes, quos nemo non lubenter principibus annumeraverit, et quibus plures alii Cap. i. laudati addi possint, in eo consensisse, non tantum Messianum vaticinium Psalmo cx. editum esse, sed vaticinium vere præcipuum, quod omnibus fere reliquis lucem præbeat, ipsum autem, e Palmii quidem aliorumque sententia, e Psalmo ii. lucem accipiat. Ceterum de universo hoc argumento conferri potest *G. F. Hufnagelii Dissert. de Psalmis Prophetias Messianas continentibus.*"

LECTURE X.

THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL; AND HIS EARLIEST
PREACHING ADDRESSED TO THE JEWS, PREVIOUSLY TO HIS
MISSION TO THE IDOLATROUS GENTILES.



ACTS XIII. 46.

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

THE rejection of the Jews, and the universal call of the Gentiles into the Church of God, present to the contemplation of a reflecting mind a subject of deep interest and of vast extent, when we review the transactions by which that change was effected, and speculate upon its future consequences. But it is a subject also involved in great mystery, with regard to the purposes in which such a dispensation originated, and to which it will be eventually subservient. For it naturally leads us to contrast the previous and the present state, on the one hand, of the once favoured, but now forsaken, people of Israel; and on the other, of the once benighted, but now enlightened, Gentile world.

Without attempting to pry into the unsearchable dealings of the Almighty, we may yet perceive the justice and the design of some portion of his proceedings. In relation to the subject before us, we cannot doubt but that the obstinate unbelief of the Jews was the direct and sufficient reason for their rejection: because, as the text expresses it, “they judged themselves unworthy of that eternal life,” which “the word of God” in the Gospel of Jesus Christ offered and provided. Such a method of salvation seemed to them needless on the one hand, and degrading on the other; for they deemed “the righteousness which is by the law” to be sufficient, and prided themselves in what they supposed to be the indefeasible privileges of the children of Abraham. Their unbelief, however, did not, and could not, make the promise of God of none effect; it could not alter its nature, it did not postpone its fulfilment. That promise had respect, designedly and expressly, to “all nations;” and therefore their unbelief did not invalidate the fact, that, in and by the Gospel, “the middle wall of partition” was actually broken down; and that the Gentiles, therefore, were admissible to the blessings of the invisible, and to the privileges of the visible Church. The Jews no longer remained, in any sense, the exclusively favoured people of God. Yet, since “salvation was of the Jews,” to *them*

first was the word of that salvation sent. It was necessary that so it should be, because they were as much concerned in it as others; and because no other than Jews could have become its first recipients, and future promulgators. It was necessary that those who did receive it, should first endeavour to promulgate it among their brethren; because, without such a tender regard to the prejudices and fond complacency of that people, the converts from among them would have been even fewer than they were. But it could answer no purpose to stop the progress of the Gospel, and delay the diffusion of its benefits to the remainder of mankind, after the Jews avowedly and irreclaimably rejected its offers. Then the heralds of the heavenly King turned to the Gentiles. And (for whatever purposes, to be made known in future ages, God has overruled the unbelief of the Jews, and still maintains the wonderful separation of that peculiar people) he has ever since the Gospel era “taken out of the Gentiles a people for his name.”

In tracing the progress of the Gospel among the Jews, Samaritans, and devout Gentiles, we have had occasion to notice, more especially, the reasonings and exhortations of St. Peter; and, in the last Lecture, those which he addressed to his converts at a later period. Similar will be the subject of our ten following Lectures; for they

will be devoted to the analysis and elucidation of the more prominent arguments of the Epistle to the Hebrews, addressed to them for their more complete establishment in the faith. It seems, however, a necessary introduction to our future Lectures, as well as in itself an important department of our main subject, to take some notice of the history and earlier labours of St. Paul, to whom that Epistle is generally ascribed. For that Apostle first laboured among his brethren the Jews, as well as wrote to them at a later period, when, in pursuance of the resolution announced in the words of our text to the Jews who disbelieved his testimony, he was now principally occupied in the service of the Gentiles.

Our present design will lead us to notice,

I. The conversion of St. Paul; and

II. The nature and subjects of his early preaching addressed to his Jewish brethren.

I. 1. The first particular which attracts our notice respecting the conversion of St. Paul, is the *miraculous nature* of those circumstances which immediately occasioned his profession of the Gospel. I say *immediately*, because it is scarcely possible to conceive that his mind had not, in some measure, been *prepared* for the impression, which those unexpected occurrences

produced. A resident in Jerusalem must have had some knowledge, either from personal observation or current report, of the character, works, and instructions of Jesus. St. Paul was resident there at a time when the Apostles were proclaiming and vindicating the claims of their Master; and a spectator of Stephen's martyrdom must have frequently witnessed their firm confidence, their exemplary magnanimity, and their steady perseverance, amidst continued opposition and persecution. But, as long as he himself was unconvinced of the truth of the Gospel, St. Paul considered them the propagators of error; and he also remained so zealously attached to the law, that he did not hesitate to co-operate in measures for suppressing, even by violence, principles which he conceived to be dangerous and unfounded. Although, however, his former opinions might not have been unsettled by the knowledge of those obvious facts, nor might he be sensible of the conclusion to which they would eventually conduct him, yet his mind might be undergoing a process preparatory to a revolution of sentiment. In such cases, some remarkable circumstance, at some particular juncture, finally impels the mind to notice and employ the materials, which for some time may have been accumulating; and opens the understanding for the discovery and admission of the conclusion which is involved. In the case of the other

Apostles, during the lifetime of our Lord, a similar fact is certain. Their call to be stated attendants, and *actual Apostles*, may appear to a careless reader of the Gospel history to have been sudden, and their compliance precipitate. That *special* call was undoubtedly made at a certain definite period. But he who traces the order, and observes the connexion, of the narrative, will see that certainly many of them, and probably all, had for a considerable time been acquainted with our Lord, had been witnesses of his miracles, and hearers of his preaching; and their resolution, therefore, to forsake all and follow him, was not hasty or irrational. They were ignorant neither of the person and proceedings of our Lord, nor of the proofs of his mission and authority.

We have granted, that causes which preceded St. Paul's journey to Damascus might have contributed to produce his conversion. It is not impossible that, when he was hastening to Damascus with the credentials which empowered him to bind and imprison the disciples of Jesus, compunction had already visited his breast. The disciple of Gamaliel might not be disinclined to adopt the principle which his early instructor recently announced to the Jewish rulers; "Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest

haply ye be found to fight against God." Yet these considerations did not immediately influence him to desist, and to embrace the faith which before he persecuted. Not until the moment, in which sudden, unusual, and alarming circumstances occurred, did his alacrity abate; not until that moment was any hesitation, confusion, or alarm observable by his companions. The light which shone from heaven, and the voice that spoke to him, were not the visions presented to a disturbed mind by an uneasy conscience; for they were witnessed by all his attendants, and surprised and confounded them also. As little can the blindness of St. Paul be attributed to the illusions of imagination; for its reality was sufficiently perceptible to those, who led him by the hand to Damascus. Neither can the utmost stretch of ingenuity satisfactorily explain by natural causes, not these circumstances only, but the expectation of Paul that he would receive additional communications at Damascus; the visions of Paul and of Ananias there; the interview which was thereby occasioned; and the recovery of his sight at the time of that interview.

The Theologians of our own country, although surely not deficient in penetration, nor superstitiously credulous, have not doubted the preternatural character of these occurrences. Not so those commentators of foreign countries, to

whom reference was made on a former occasion, and whose scepticism appears in their annotations on almost every miracle recorded in the New Testament^a. How must the novice in Theology be amazed and bewildered, when, upon perusing a commentary, justly esteemed on many accounts, he finds the author laboriously demonstrate that a particular event, which is usually considered miraculous, was merely an ordinary occurrence, in which there was no divine interposition! Perhaps he will find it added, in cases where such an interpretation is manifestly inconsistent with the language of the historian, that undoubtedly that historian himself considered it miraculous; but that, nevertheless, it is not necessary to believe that it was so, because Jewish writers were in the habit of so referring all important events to divine interposition, or of expressing themselves as if they did. Now if we admit the conclusiveness of the arguments for the genuineness of the Christian Scriptures, that the authors had opportunities of accurate information, and were faithful narrators of the events they describe; how can it be consistent to explain away, and virtually to contradict their testimony respecting transactions, which must be either acknowledged as facts, or be considered as falsehoods? If the mention of visions,

^a See Note (A), at the end of Lecture X.

and of voices from heaven, and of angelic messengers is interpreted to mean nothing more than that the matter was brought about by the disposing providence of God, how can this be a fair or admissible interpretation? Why is not the same language used in regard to other occurrences, since the providence of God ordereth *all* things? It might be consistent in an infidel to give us a description of the cosmogony, and mythology, and poetical language of heathen writers, and then apply it to persuade us that we should interpret in a similar manner the Old and New Testaments. But if we have reason to conclude that in those writings we have a statement of facts, and certain evidence of divine interposition, both as to the entire system and its several parts, then the cases are wholly different; and the system of interpretation, which in fact proceeds upon the contrary supposition, must be abandoned as irrational, and irreligious^b.

In the instance before us, we have three recitals of the circumstances which attended St. Paul's conversion; one given by St. Luke as a part of his narrative, the other two included in those vindications of his conduct by the Apostle himself, which are recorded in the latter part of the Acts of the Apostles. If, by paraphrase or explanation of the perspicuous statements contained

^b See Note (B), at the end of Lecture X.

in those recitals, a representation be given of the story, which does not involve decided reference to divine interposition, it will assuredly be found to be inconsistent with itself, and at variance with St. Luke's original record. And if the Biblical student finds that only by such forced interpretations, or by an impeachment of the sacred historian's judgment or fidelity, the miraculous nature of those occurrences can be contravened, he will infer that it ought not to be questioned; and that God designed in such events to afford certain evidence that St. Paul was so converted to the faith for purposes of great and lasting importance.

2. It is not unsuitable to these times to add a second remark with regard to the conversion of Paul. viz., that he became a *faithful* preacher of *true* Christian doctrine, and that he was converted to it, not merely externally and professedly, but *really* and *sincerely*.

The diligence and zeal which he displayed in his subsequent labours, and the extensive and permanent success which attended them, are confessedly undoubted. Many of those who reject the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, avowedly depreciate, from that motive, the authority of the writings of St. Paul; and the infidel, anxious to bring discredit on Christianity in any shape, has frequently, and not in these days only, endeavoured to prove that he preached a different doctrine

from that of the other Apostles. But it has repeatedly been shown, in answer both to one and the other, that his writings are of equal authority with the rest of the New Testament; and that every portion of the Christian Scriptures inculcates the same truths. When an attempt is made to establish the contrary position, declarations, both of which are equally true, but in different respects, are improperly set in opposition to each other: as in the case of the apparent discrepancy between St. Paul and St. James respecting justification. At another time, the circumstance that the Gospel system was gradually revealed, at successive periods and in separate portions, is misrepresented and abused. Yet to him who candidly and carefully examines the Scriptures, this particular feature in the plan and method of divine revelation, affords a most satisfactory indication of the wisdom of that method, as being admirably suited to the circumstances of mankind, and subservient, therefore, to the divine purposes. The principal objection of this kind relates to that particular subject which is noticed in our text. The call of the Gentiles at the proper season, naturally and necessarily afterwards occasioned discussion as to the divine will respecting it, as to the terms upon which they were to be received, as to the extent to which the observance of the Law was obligatory upon the Jewish believers not

resident in their own land, and whether that observance was at all necessary for the Gentiles. St. Paul, as the Apostle of the Gentiles, was of course frequently engaged in the discussion of such questions; but no one can compare his determination concerning them with what we know of the views and proceedings of the other Apostles, without perceiving their perfect agreement; especially if he takes into the account time, place, and circumstance.

With regard to the sincerity of St. Paul's profession of the Gospel we need to say very little. When we call to mind his previous exemption from peril, and his enjoyment of the confidence and respect of the leading men of his nation, and that his own proceedings against the Christians would convince him how many were the temporal calamities to which that hated sect were exposed, we cannot discover any worldly inducement to allure such a person to espouse such a cause. If he were influenced by the same motives, and were a partaker of the same feelings as other men, we cannot account for his perseverance, exertions, privations, and disinterestedness, upon any other supposition than that he was, originally, permanently, and finally, a sincere believer in Jesus Christ. It would, in fact, be superfluous to repeat observations so long ago, so often, and so triumphantly supported by all

the force of eloquent reasoning, if it were not with the view of reminding those who may hear or read this Lecture, that however new, ingenious, or plausible, an infidel work of the present day may appear, there is scarcely any objection which has not been repeatedly advanced by older writers of the same school, and as often answered, by the advocates of Christianity, in writings well known, and accessible^c. If there be, however, any one who does not perceive the unfairness, and feel indignation at the tone and spirit, of a work, which professes the name of Jesus, but *disavows the name of Paul*, yet which indicates no other feeling than *malignity against every thing in the shape of Christianity*—to such a one I would earnestly recommend the perusal of one Volume, of which the title is generally familiar, and an accurate knowledge of whose contents, and even of a portion of them, would furnish a sufficient answer to most of the adversaries of Christianity. That Volume is *the Bible*. If the statements of infidel writers fall in the way of those who are either too much occupied, or too indolent, to examine that Volume, the authority of which is the subject of discussion, it is not altogether surprising if they receive impressions unfavourable to the authority and reception of its truths. But

^c Lord Lyttleton, Dr. Paley, Dr. Graves, Mrs. H. More, &c.

if the Scriptures themselves could gain their attention, and interest their curiosity, we doubt not that they would at once obtain their respect, and eventually be admitted as true. With regard to the particular subject before us, he, who carefully peruses the history of St. Paul recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and his numerous official and confidential Epistles, and compares them with each other, will find in the contents of each, and in their mutual and satisfactory confirmation of each other, the most convincing evidence of the general truth of the history, and of the momentous fact that God did at that time communicate to man a pure, perfect, and universal religion, founded on the assurance of complete redemption, and blessing man here and hereafter. And if the manly, open, consistent conduct of St. Paul, and the zealous, benevolent, disinterested spirit apparent throughout his writings, be the conduct and spirit of an ambitious and avaricious deluder of mankind, as the work above alluded to would fain persuade us, then can no human being, however sincere, give unequivocal indications of his sincerity; and all reliance upon human integrity, and even its very existence, must be a mere chimera.

3. We proceed then to a third consideration relative to the conversion of St. Paul, viz. the *appropriate season*, at which one so peculiarly fitted to become the Apostle of the Gentiles, was

converted to the faith. For very shortly afterwards, “God made choice among the Apostles, that by the mouth of St. Peter, the Gentiles should first hear the word of the Gospel and believe;” and in that commission he was employed, although peculiarly the Apostle of the circumcision. And though St. Paul was, at the due season for the general call of the Gentile world, constituted an Apostle of the uncircumcision, yet at first he laboured for some time among his brethren according to the flesh, and afterwards specially addressed to them a learned Epistle in confirmation of their unsettled faith. Many of the reasonings also in his other Epistles were peculiarly suited to vindicate the Gospel, and its promulgation among the Gentiles, from the objections and arguments of the Jew. And who could have been more fitted for such a task than St. Paul? If his extended sphere of labour among the heathen required unwearyed exertion, and the elasticity of an active mind, who ever possessed those qualifications in a higher degree than St. Paul? And if it were specially incumbent on him to defend the cause of the Gentiles, their right to the offers of the Gospel, and their liberty in Christ Jesus from the bondage of the law, who was better qualified than the learned and eloquent disciple of Gamaliel? A knowledge of the religion of the Old Testament is indeed a very important and needful aid in order

to the complete and precise understanding of the Gospel system ; for many of the fundamental principles, both of religion and morality, are taken for granted in the New, because they are taught in the Old, Testament. But the extensive questions arising out of the universal designs of the Gospel, which are so fully discussed in the Epistles of St. Paul, and which, when carefully investigated, are so important for displaying to us its nature, sublimity, and obligations ; these questions eminently required the learning, which St. Paul had acquired in early life. Thereby he was possessed of all the materials for a just and comprehensive knowledge of the purpose, character, and duration of the earlier dispensations ; of the meaning and fulfilment of prophecy ; and of the method and form in which the Gospel addressed its communications, and extended its privileges, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. He whom St. Peter calls “his beloved brother Paul,” according to the wisdom given him, has transmitted to us such statements and reasonings respecting those important subjects, as differ not in substance from the doctrines taught by the other Apostles, and furnish those of every age with enlarged views and triumphant vindications of the Gospel scheme, in almost every light and connexion in which it is requisite to consider it. Let us then “having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, shew

forth our thankfulness to God for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught.”

II. It was proposed, in the second and last portion of this Lecture, to take some notice of the nature and subjects of St. Paul’s earlier preaching.

In the Acts of the Apostles, several of St. Paul’s discourses are recorded. In the latter part of that book occur his addresses to the idolatrous Gentiles, and his several defences of himself and of his religion before the Jews. But his earlier addresses to the Jews alone belong to our present subject. Of some of these we find only a general description; of one we have an ample record.

In our next Lecture it will be necessary to advert to those general descriptions of St. Paul’s preaching, which are subjoined to the narrative of his conversion. We read that he “straightway preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the Son of God, and that Jesus is truly Christ^d.” And in other similar descriptions we find a similar line of argument pointed out. Thus, in the synagogue of Thessalonica, “Paul, as his manner was, —reasoned with them out of the Scriptures; opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach to you, is

^d Acts ix. 20—22.

Christ^e." Now if these statements be compared with the reasonings and instructions of our Lord to his Apostles, after his resurrection^f," it will be seen that, in both instances, the same order and ground of argument is taken. In the first place, the prophetic descriptions respecting the title, ministry, sufferings, and subsequent glories of Messiah, were produced and analyzed; and secondly, it was shewn that Jesus of Nazareth was that Messiah, because in him all those predictions found their accomplishment.

An exemplification of the manner in which St. Paul argued, is furnished by the discourse delivered to the Jews, who were assembled in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia^g. "After the reading of the law, and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation to the people, say on. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience." The commencement and plan of his discourse renders it a very probable supposition, that, in the same manner as our Lord, in the synagogue of Nazareth, took occasion from the lesson read in ordinary course to proclaim the actual advent

^e Acts xvii. 1—3.

^f Luke xxiv. 26, 27, & 44—46.

^g Acts xiii. 13, &c.

of him who was therein described ; so St. Paul's exordium was suggested by the first chapter of Deuteronomy, which had just been read, and which he cites. Commencing with a review of the dealings of God with Israel, during the time when for "forty years he suffered their manners in the wilderness," he traces the history of the nation to the time of David, and then grounds his declaration of Jesus Christ upon the promises given to David, his royal ancestor. His reasonings which follow are similar in substance and method, to those which have already been noticed in several of St. Peter's discourses. The application of the discourse calls for more particular notice in this Lecture.

He announces the forgiveness of sins through Messiah's name in that point of view, which immediately reminds us of the author of the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. "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, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." The general invitation which was now given to the Gentiles, to embrace, not the law of Moses, but only the Gospel of Christ, of course implied the inefficacy of the law for the purpose in question. When St. Paul declared that inefficacy, it had

become expedient so to state the subject; for then, not only was the great promise of the Gospel announced, but an additional step had been taken towards that abrogation of the law of Moses, which eventually was the consequence of the Gospel revelation. The Apostle knew the indignation and opposition which such a declaration would excite. But he could not discharge his commission, without now explicitly stating that principle upon which the necessity of a superior revelation was founded, and which authorized the heralds of the Gospel to include the Gentiles in their labours. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, which will form the subject of our subsequent Lectures, we find decisive reasonings in proof of such declarations respecting the unrivalled authority and efficacy of the Gospel; to our subsequent Lectures, therefore, must the consideration of the subject be deferred.

Solemn was the caution subjoined by the Apostle, when he announced to them a religion so perfect, beneficent, and effectual! If they rejected its offers, and were inattentive to the manifest tokens of divine interposition which accompanied its introduction, they might experience a repetition of the threatenings denounced by the prophets against such obduracy and insensibility. “Beware, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold ye

despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you^h.”

Yet they were neither convinced by the arguments, nor alarmed by the warning voice, of the Apostle. And their unbelief and desperate conduct caused him to make the declaration of our text.—Seeing they put away from them the word of God, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, it was necessary not to withhold the offer of it from the Gentiles. And may we ourselves, my brethren, who have heard of the same mercies, and are invited to participate in the same privileges, not incur a like rejection and condemnation! Many, while we hesitate, will attain pardon and life eternal. Let us not inexcusably neglect and reject those means, which alone can avail to purify our nature, and carry us from earth to heaven. Rather let us prize what we do already know, and rejoice in that to which we have already attained; and yet at the same time, let us so forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before, that we may attain the mark, and receive the prize of that high calling, with which God has called us in Christ Jesus.

^h Isai. xxix, 14. Hab. i, 5.

Note (A), p. 133.

See Lecture II. and the notes annexed to it.—A reference to the commentaries of Rosenmüller and Kuinoel will shew that it was not superfluous to devote a portion of this Lecture to state our dissent from their opinions respecting the conversion of St. Paul. And similar remarks might have been made in regard to the conversion of Cornelius.—The remarks, which follow shortly afterwards, respecting the *reality* of St. Paul's conversion, were penned with reference to a very recent publication in our own country. Should the circulation of that volume be such as to render it dangerous, and should the station and education and talents of the person, or persons, by whom the work has been concocted after a preparation of *several years*, seem to render an answer expedient, it cannot be that the *character* of St. Paul, and the religion of *Jesus Christ* for which he laboured and suffered, and the credibility of the *witnesses of the resurrection* of Jesus, can want able, persuasive, and sincere advocates. We have only, therefore, to express the hope that those, who have ability and leisure, will be as ready as were the contemporaries of Herbert, Tindal, and other *educated* sceptics, to observe and repel the attacks made upon Christianity, whether openly or insidiously.

Note (B), p. 134.

Bayer in his *Hermeneutica Sacra*, systematically propounds, and defends at length such a principle of interpreting Scripture. And he is not a solitary patron of such Hermeneutics.



LECTURE XI.

THE GENERAL SUBJECT AND OCCASION OF THE EPISTLE TO
THE HEBREWS.—THE INTRODUCTION NOTICED.

HEB. I. 1—4.

God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the Fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high: being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

THE Holy Scriptures abound with passages remarkable for precision and harmony of language; in which the sublimity of the writer's conception corresponds to the dignity of his subject, and to the authority with which he speaks. But at the same time that we feel that the Scriptures are calculated to excite such emotions as are most grateful to every cultivated mind, we must remember that it is not so necessary to feel that it is a venerable and interesting Volume, as that its contents are unspeakably important. He who

admires its beauties, and is familiar with its contents, may not have rightly profited by its communications. Its utility begins, when we not only know, but tremble at its threatenings; when we value and are thankful for its promises; when we accept its invitations; when its doctrines are made the standard of religious principles; and when they so influence the affections, and regulate the will, that we hold fast the form of sound words, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, and shew, out of a good conversation, our works with meekness of wisdom.

Such reflections are naturally suggested by the magnificent opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and by the day on which it is made the subject of our meditations^a. For this is the last great festival of our Ecclesiastical year, on which, after having separately commemorated the signal events which attended and followed the advent and glorification of our Lord, we at length rise in our meditations to contemplate the glories of the Triune God; and to acknowledge the Father who created and loved the world, the Son who hath redeemed it, and the Holy Ghost who sanctifies all the elect people of God. So ought we, therefore, to look into the great mystery of godliness, that we may know and admire the

^a This Lecture was delivered on Trinity Sunday.

wonders therein revealed ; and so to remember the God, who is the fountain of all goodness, that we honour him by the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. And then shall we be prepared to follow the guidance of the Church, while, on succeeding Sabbaths, she directs our attention to the practical improvement of our hearts and lives ; that, by the grace of God, we may so order our conversation aright as to see the salvation of God.

We are not here assembled, as those who have never been instructed concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, but as those who have already professed the faith once delivered to the saints ; yet who need line upon line, and precept upon precept, lest the doctrines, which we acknowledge, should become merely speculative and inefficacious, and lest the form of godliness should contain little of its power. For we need to look to ourselves, lest through infirmity, or seduction, or temptation, we lose those things which we have wrought, and so receive not a full reward.

In some measure similar was the situation of those, to whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was first addressed. The text contains statements, with which they were already familiar ; and the *practical* character of the whole Epistle, and the nature of the *exhortations* with which it abounds, prove that it was addressed to such, as were

already Christians, but who were *in danger of apostasy* from the faith. And the *arguments* also which are therein contained, further prove, that they needed not only to be reminded of those truths which they had already learnt, but to be more fully instructed respecting them; in order that the faith which was imperfect, and unsettled, might be *established* by their increased knowledge and proficiency. It is further evident, that their peculiar temptation was partly occasioned by the fear of persecution. And who that knows what are the fears of human nature, and how natural and powerful is the love of present ease and security, and the desire of respect and sympathy from those among whom we dwell, can wonder that persecution thins the ranks of those who adhere to any cause! If that cause be the best and most interesting, he who resolutely maintains it when it calls for sacrifices, and leads to danger, must be truly devoted to it, and possess both decision of character, and steadiness of purpose. Even then, if there be within him a suspicion that the cause may be unsound, nay, if there be not a full conviction, both that it is the cause of truth and of God, and that the most important interests of man are involved in it, even the stoutest heart will fail. And when the arguments of the adverse party are plausible, and when, either because of their intrinsic force, or their coinci-

dence with his own prejudices, they half convince him that he is in error, he will waver, and, in the end, probably apostatize to that side, which offers security, and which, he is not disinclined to hope, may also have truth and justice.

That such was the situation of the Hebrews who embraced Christianity, whether in Judea or in other countries, when this Epistle was written to them, we can have no doubt. They had joined a society, which was every where spoken against, and exposed to contempt, insult, and persecution; and the unconverted Jews were active agents in the work of malice. Of this fact the words of St. Paul to the Thessalonians give us definite information: "Ye, brethren," says he, "became followers of the Churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus; for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us^b." Now we may readily conceive, that when the light of pure theology had once been received by the mind of a *heathen*, he would not readily be so far deluded as to return, with the approbation of his judgment, to the absurdities of Paganism, however pains and penalties might prevail to deter him from the profession of

^b 1 Thess. ii, 14, 15.

Christianity. The *Hebrew* Christian, in one respect, was in more danger of returning to his former faith, because it confessedly proceeded from the same God; and his countrymen, who still adhered to it, enlarged upon the divinity of the law, the solemnities which attended its delivery on Mount Sinai, its perpetual obligation, and the excellency, necessity, and sufficiency, of its ritual and sacrifices. These topics were dwelt upon with all the fondness of prejudice, and sufficed to keep many back from the Gospel; and probably led others to forsake it, who were nevertheless almost, if not altogether, convinced that Jesus was the Christ.

To strengthen their faith, and not only to remove their doubts, but to enlarge and systematize their views, was the object of the Apostle in writing to the Hebrews. I doubt not, both because of external testimony, and because of internal evidence, that that Apostle was St. Paul. True, he was the Apostle of the Gentiles, but not until after he had first laboured among the Jews. St. Peter first opened the gate of Christianity to the Gentiles, although to him was committed, more especially, the Apostleship of the circumcision. And, from the discourses and the writings of both one and the other, we learn the same truths, and find that a knowledge of the Old Testament is necessary to enable us to trace the history of revelation, and the entire foundation on

which Christianity rests. Nor will that be the only advantage derived from a clear and enlightened knowledge of the former dispensations. We shall thereby become more convinced of the transcendent superiority, dignity, and importance, of the Gospel. From an acquaintance also with the grounds and reasons by which the Jew was persuaded to follow Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, and upon which the Gentiles were called and admitted into the Christian Church without any submission to the law of Moses, we shall learn aright the principles and doctrines of the religion promulgated by him, who was promised to the Fathers, and witnessed by the prophets, and has been preached to all nations as the Saviour of the world. Such an advantage may be derived from an accurate study of the Epistle to the Hebrews; for although it was primarily addressed only to Christians of Jewish extraction, and although, for reasons easily assigned, it does not avowedly discuss the question of the *abrogation of the law*, as that question affects *the privileges of the Gentile Church*, yet it enters so fully into the character and office of Jesus as the prophet, king, and priest, of his Church, that we derive from it the most enlarged views of Christian doctrine, additional evidence of its certainty, and arguments and instructions which are equally conclusive to the mind of the Gentile and of the Jew.

The words of the text are not only an introduction to that Epistle, but a summary of its contents, and a preparatory statement of those several propositions, which are discussed in succeeding chapters. In them the Apostle also brings forward such other arguments, as either tended to establish the truth and superior excellence of Christianity, or to fortify the Hebrew converts against the objections which the Jews urged, to the exaltation of Moses and his law, and to the disparagement of Jesus and his Gospel. It was necessary that the subject should be so stated, so handled, and so applied, for the sake of those who then lived; and also to justify the Gospel against any similar objections, and to clear it from similar difficulties; in order that the same important truths might be more perfectly and impressively taught to all succeeding generations. And, accordingly, with respect to several of the topics enumerated in the text, the detail of argument and illustration is such, as we find in no other part of the sacred writings; particularly respecting the doctrine of the sacrifice, priesthood, and intercession of Christ.

The particulars just mentioned, and some others, are fully argued. But it may appear, at first sight, that the Apostle has taken many things for granted in the announcement of his subject, upon the full investigation of which he has not

entered. And this is at once accounted for by the circumstance, that he was writing primarily and specially for those who were *already Christians*, although the entire argument was also not unsuitable for the conviction of a Jew who still adhered to the law of Moses. The latter *knew* what were the principles and doctrines which the Apostles promulgated respecting Jesus of Nazareth; and the former had already *admitted* their truth. There was, therefore, no need, for the sake of either, to repeat those proofs and arguments, which were already known and familiar, but rather at once to meet the objections against them, and to supply what might yet be wanting. He therefore contented himself with such an enumeration, as introduced what he had further to offer respecting those particulars, for their more complete illustration and defence. That design occupies the first four chapters of the Epistle, and afterwards the writer enters upon the principal subject which he had in view, viz. the superiority of the sacrifice and priesthood of the Gospel to those of the law.

These remarks may suffice for explaining the general *subject* and *occasion* of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the particular *method* in which the subject is *introduced*. Our plan will hereafter lead us to enter more particularly into the

arguments which it embraces, and the truths and instructions it contains. The remainder of the present Lecture will be employed in briefly adverting to those specified in the text, and in noticing the grounds upon which they rest.

The Apostle first recalls to the minds of his readers, familiar as they were with the writings of the Old Testament, the recollection of those communications, which, at sundry times, and in divers manners, God had made unto the Fathers. The original more clearly, and more consistently with the object of the Apostle, expresses the idea, that the messages of God had been conveyed to mankind in many distinct portions^c, and therefore, undoubtedly, “at sundry times.” God spoke indeed to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, and to Moses; giving to each such instructions, and directions, and promises, as sufficed for the time then present; but not revealing the whole counsel of his will, nor so much as the exigencies of succeeding times required. In later times the prophets had still more extensively been commissioned to instruct men respecting the perfections, the requirements, and the designs, of the Deity. But the progress of revelation had never been finally arrested. Even when Malachi closed the

^c Πολυμερῶς.

volume of inspiration, men were still kept in expectation of new discoveries, nay, of much greater mercies. Revelations were made to the prophets by dreams and visions, by inspiration animating their lips, and guiding their pens. They had taught the Fathers, by divine direction, in rites and sacrifices, in hymns and exhortations, in parables and promises, and prophecies. But the prophets were confessedly men of the same original, of the same infirmities, of the same mortality, as those whom they taught. Now, in the last days, as the Hebrews knew and believed, had been raised up another prophet, to whom God had given witness, both by what he taught, and by what he did, both by the circumstances of his birth and life, and by the consequences of his death. Him the Apostle places above all the others of whom he spoke, by giving to him the title of *the Son of God*.

The whole tenor of the Apostle's statement makes it certain, that although he does not by name mention Jesus of Nazareth, yet to him was that title to be applied. If it truly belonged to him, his superiority above all other prophets, and his unrivalled authority and dignity, are unquestionable; for to no other was such a title ever applied. But the question still remains to be answered; in what *sense* is that title to be understood?—It will therefore be our endeavour

briefly to touch upon those considerations, which, while they shew us upon what grounds the title is ascribed to Jesus, will also inform us in what sense it must be understood.

“God in these last days hath spoken unto us by *his Son*.” St. Paul so describes Jesus of Nazareth; and so he was described by John the Baptist, when he pointed him out to his disciples, and “bare record, that this is the Son of God.” When also he declared to his disciples his joyful acquiescence in the growing celebrity of Jesus, he spoke of him as one ‘who came from heaven, who was loved by the Father, and into whose hand the Father had given all things^d.’ Even *his* testimony therefore leads us to the conclusion, that Jesus was superior in nature to man.

But we further know, that Jesus himself frequently used the same title, and made various statements in exact conformity to it. And these declarations occasioned the imputation of blasphemy; for the Jews so understood him, as if he had called God his own Father, in a peculiar sense^e;” and thereby had “made himself equal with God.” Yet he did not protest against such an inference; nor did he so explain his use of such language, as at all to disavow the claim

^d John i. 34; iii. 31—36. ^e John v. 18. πατέρα ἴδιον ἔλεγε τὸν θεόν, ἴσον ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ θεῷ.

which they supposed him to make. On the contrary, he continued to advance similar assertions; he argued in defence of them; and appealed in confirmation of them to miracles which were wrought in immediate connexion^f. He so replied to the questions proposed by the high priest, as to acknowledge himself the Christ, the Son of the Blessed; and so as also to justify their inference from the prophecy of Daniel, that, in calling himself the Son of Man, he designed to intimate that he was truly the Son of God^g. And as he granted, at the close of his ministry, that the assumption of the former of those titles, necessarily involved an assertion of the latter, so had he taught the same to Nicodemus at the very commencement of his instructions. For, with evident reference to himself, he speaks of the love of God in sending “his only begotten Son;” and attributes the authority and sufficiency of his own teaching to the fact that he had descended from heaven; and that he who so descended, was “the Son of Man, who is in heaven^h.”

Had we assurance of nothing further than this, a remarkable case would be presented to us in the fact, that so wise and holy a person assumed to himself such a title, evidently intimat-

^f See John v. 9. 22—38; xiv. 8—11.

^g Matt. xxvi. 64. Luke xxii. 69, 70.

^h John iii. 13.

ing a claim to divinity; especially when it is compared with other statements, in which he asserts his pre-existence and antecedent glory before the world was. And if we further remember that, twice at least, a voice from heaven gave to him the same title; and that he, who was put to death because he professed to be the Christ the Son of the Blessed, was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; we shall not hesitate to say, that “by his resurrection from the dead, he was declared to be the Son of God with power.”

All these words of the Lord Jesus, and the circumstances which were connected with them, were doubtless familiar to those to whom the Epistle before us was addressed. And we might at once conclude, that they were understood in the sense we have specified, and that there was every reason to believe that that title justly belonged to Jesus, as a truly divine person, if we were not here met by the Socinian, who would persuade us that we are to understand by it merely a title of the Messiah, and one which did not imply the divine character of the Messiah. We grant that it was a title of the Messiah, because of the declarations of the Old Testament, and the traditionary interpretations of the Jews. Nor would it be certain, *merely* from the question of the high-priest, and from the answer of Jesus to it, that *the Christ*, and *the Son of the Blessed*,

are not in any respect more than equivalent expressions. But the various statements which the Apostles made in their discourses to the Jews, all involved or justified the opinion that he, to whom they ascribed the office of Messiah, was a divine person. The method also, which St. Paul observed in his first preaching of the Gospel, deserves particular notice, because of his scriptural learning, and his conviction of the truth of Christianity; and because we believe him to be the author of the passage under consideration.

“He straightway preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.” Now since Jesus was condemned by the Jewish Rulers, because he laid claim to both these titles, viz. *the Christ*, and *the Son of God*; and since the supposed *blasphemy* could have been attributed to the latter claim only; therefore by such an argument St. Paul contended, that, if Jesus were truly the Christ, he was also the Son of God; and the sense of that title would, from the places of the Old Testament where it was attributed to the Messiah, be proved to involve the possession of a divine nature. And that conclusion would still further be strengthened by the examination of many other passages, in which both divine names, and divine attributes, were ascribed to him. And the newly converted Apostle further proceeded in his preaching to bring the matter

fully before his hearers, for “he confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.” And if this were also proved, as undoubtedly it might be from the witness of the prophets, then did it follow that the Jews had “crucified the Lord of Glory.” And though, as St. Paul afterwards reasoned, “God had so fulfilled that which he had before shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer;” yet were even those sufferings not inconsistent with the prior dignity, and subsequent exaltation, of Jesus Christ. Still was it true, as St. Paul declared many years afterwards, in the words of our text, that “God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son; whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his Father’s glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

The more excellent name is that of the Son of God; and since that name belongs to him, not in any figurative and subordinate sense; but really and properly, therefore to him we ascribe those glorious attributes, and to him have been


awarded those transcendent dignities, which the Apostle has specified. He has indeed proceeded, in subsequent verses, to establish from the language of the Old Testament the superior dignity of Messiah as the Son of God. Into the meaning and just application of the passages cited by the Apostle we have not the opportunity to inquire. And the task might not be an easy one, if we were engaged in controversy with a Jew: because respecting one or more of the passages cited it may reasonably be questioned, whether they are cited as accommodations of scripture language, or as passages really, if not primarily, applicable to Messiah. The latter view of the subject I would embrace, and that upon due consideration. But it may suffice for our present purpose to advance the assertion, that the character of the passages cited by the Apostle, and the difficulties which some have found in this chapter, are such, that the Apostle could not in any sense, and upon any principle, have applied them to Christ, if he had not been, fully and decidedly, an advocate for his divinity. He ascribes to him the "more excellent name" of the Son of God, in a sense, and in a connexion, in which it never was, nor can be attributed to any created being.—We may, then, join issue with another Apostle, and say, in the language of faith, thankfulness, and hope: "We know

that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This (or, as the original even requires, as expressly referring to Jesus Christ, ‘*this person*’) is the true God, and eternal lifeⁱ.”

Here let us close, for the present, our reflections on the dignity, which originally, and truly, and eternally, appertained to the Author of the Gospel. We can readily concede to the Jew and to the Socinian, that, if we wrongly embrace the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, we are guilty of a breach of that precept, which St. John annexed to the passage just quoted. We do not, in that case, “keep ourselves from idols;” or, at least, we are unwittingly guilty of worshipping a creature, to whom, on that supposition, we have erroneously attributed the attributes of the Godhead. The alternative is undoubtedly awful. Even if our opinions are perfectly decided on the subject now briefly noticed, and still more, if it be otherwise, we ought to find in that alternative a powerful motive to the most diligent study of the Holy Scriptures,—and to earnest prayers, that “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, would give unto

ⁱ Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ αἰώνιος. John v. 20, 21.

us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." And in fact, the question of the divinity of Christ involves that of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and the whole system of the Gospel. To our apprehension, and, we humbly conceive, to the mind of the Apostle Paul, the divinity of Christ was of the highest importance, as having a most intimate connexion with the authority of his Gospel, the sufficiency of his sacrifice, the efficacy of his intercession, and the final accomplishment of that work of our salvation, which, from first to last, as we confidently believe, and devoutly confess, is to be ascribed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one only living and true God, to whom be glory for ever.



LECTURE XII.

THE TRUE INTERPRETATION OF THE SECOND CHAPTER
OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST NOT INCONSISTENT WITH HIS
DIVINITY. REASONS OF HIS INCARNATION.



HEB. II. 8, 9, 10.

But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the Angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

THE Jew refuses to obey the Captain of our salvation, and rejects the eternal benefits which are offered through him, because they have not corresponded to his expectations respecting the Messiah, nor sanctioned his notions respecting either the past, or future, transactions of Messiah's kingdom. The infidel cherishes no belief that a Messiah has already appeared, or was ever promised to mankind; and to him, therefore, the divinity of the Messiah, and the work which he was to accomplish, are matters of little concern.

Some, again, acknowledge Jesus to have been the Messiah, and profess themselves his disciples, who, as resolutely as any that utterly renounce his authority, oppose the doctrines of the divinity of Jesus, and of the expiation effected by his sufferings and death.

To all these it appears incredible, that one appearing in the likeness of man should, at the same time, be possessed of a divine nature; and that man must rest his hopes of acceptance with God upon the merits and satisfaction of the lowly, suffering, and crucified, Jesus. The mysterious nature of the former of these subjects, and the humbling tendency of the latter, have, in all ages of the Christian Church, rendered them a stumblingblock to many. But if the divine origin of the Gospel be established, as undoubtedly it is, by various and satisfactory proofs, it cannot be either justifiable, or consistent, to deny the obligation to receive what it teaches. And the topics in question appear so clearly taught in the Scriptures, so obviously constitute the distinguishing features of the Gospel, and are so largely explained and vindicated by our Lord and his Apostles, that we cannot consent to abandon them, nor hesitate to announce and defend them. In many parts of the sacred writings they are illustrated upon principles, immediately suited to persuade those of that particular age and country;

yet even those vindications are such as may be both intelligible and satisfactory to ourselves. Very frequently also the inspired advocates of the Gospel address themselves to the removal of such difficulties and objections, as are common to all ages ; such as are still felt and brought forward alike by the Jew, the sceptic, and the Socinian ; such as sometimes suggest themselves even to the recipient of those very doctrines, and endanger the stability or the efficacy of his faith, so long as they successfully plead for admission.

Of this character, in a great measure, are the observations of the Apostle in the second chapter to the Hebrews, and they are, therefore, highly deserving of attention. Let it, then, be our present employment to consider :

I. The object and true interpretation of the passage before us, and

II. The particular detail and bearing of the Apostle's remarks.

I. The former subject will require a brief recapitulation of the topics treated in the previous part of the Epistle ; because a knowledge of these will best enable us to ascertain of what nature is the objection which the Apostle is answering, or the error against which he intended to caution us.

The word *Angels* occurs no less than ten times in the course of the two first chapters of this Epistle; and upon the meaning attached to that word depends, in a great measure, the interpretation of the whole context. That it should be interpreted in the last four of these instances as referring to celestial spirits, in the sense which the word usually has in the English language, and that those, who confess themselves obliged so to understand it, should, notwithstanding, consider it as descriptive, in the first six instances, of merely human beings, the messengers of God, (that term being referred to the *prophets* of the Old Testament) seems an extraordinary and improbable interpretation. But surely there was no motive for such a variation, if that sense of the word did not, in the former part of the passage in question, most clearly lead to the conclusion, that the Author of the Gospel possesses a nature, superior to that of other celestial beings, who, as the subsequent remarks of the Apostle imply, are themselves superior to man. Many difficulties are also introduced by that supposition; for the passages cited, and the remarks made, cannot, without violence and inconsistency, be understood of the merely human beings who were the prophets of the Old Testament. We must also suppose that the Apostle has introduced great confusion by using several distinct expressions as

synonymous, as well as by using the term *Angels*, first as descriptive of inspired men, and then of celestial spirits. But even the admission of such a varying interpretation of the term would not explain away the testimony given to the divinity of the Author of the Gospel. For the title of the *Son of God* is ascribed to him, in a manner so strikingly contrasted with the mention of those by whom God had spoken to the Fathers; and the sense which we elsewhere learn to put upon that title is so obviously confirmed by the very strong language, in which his dignity and participation of divine resemblance and power are asserted by the Apostle; that we still could not but feel that it is not the description of a merely human being, however honoured above all other prophets. And, if this be the case, we shall have no hesitation in supposing, that the Apostle proceeds to confirm the same truth, by shewing that he, whom he calls the Son of God, inherited a nature superior to that of angels. For I know not what objection can then remain, unless we are infected with that heresy of the ancient Sadducees, that “there is neither angel, nor spirit.” But that there are celestial spirits superior to man, is certainly taught in various parts of Scripture, and is sanctioned by the author of this Epistle, in his second chapter, even by the confession of our opponents themselves.

If such is the purport of the first chapter, and if, in the opening of the second, the superiority of the Son of God to the Angels is urged as an argument for the higher authority of the Gospel, and the more perilous responsibility which it involves; then we cannot so explain the subsequent argument, of which our text is a part, as if it was *inconsistent* with the notion of the Messiah's divinity; much less can we say that it was specially designed to *caution* the reader against that notion. Such a representation, especially when accompanied by a long tirade against the doctrine of the Trinity, is an unwarrantable use of a perverted interpretation, which subverts the truths previously taught by the Apostle, and diverts us from the right apprehension of his further design^a. It is true that he proceeds to speak of the *humanity* of Jesus, as made lower than the Angels, for most important and gracious purposes; yet he advances nothing which *contradicts* his former position. On the contrary, it is *implied* throughout, that he, who was "made lower than the angels," was in fact, *originally* the inheritor of a more exalted title; and that he partook of flesh and blood, as belonging, not to his original nature, but to one

^a The recent commentary of Mr. Belsham on this Epistle will shew, that these remarks have not been made without reason.

which, for particular purposes, he assumed for a season.

That Jesus was truly human when on earth, was a fact not denied; the difficulty felt by the Jews who heard him, arose from his claim to be divine. And since, that he was truly divine, was the position first established and applied by St. Paul, it was natural that he should proceed to obviate the objection, which occurred to the minds of the Jews from the knowledge of his human nature. They believed that they had "received the law by the disposition of angels;" but in the opening of this Epistle he reminded them, that they had now heard of the promulgation of a higher and more complete revelation, not spoken by angels, who were merely ministering or subordinate spirits employed on services according to the will of God, but delivered by the Son of God, his express image, and the Lord of all. But "if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him: God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to

come, whereof we speak.”—The work of the Messiah required a more exalted agent than even an angelic being. In the times of Messiah there was not, even apparently, any participation of authority given to angels; the authority of that kingdom was exercised only by him, whose original and nature were far superior. But he was exhibited in the human nature, and his real and proper humanity was essential to the Gospel system; for the work which he came to execute required such a temporary humiliation, and by that participation of humanity the design of his mission was also illustrated and confirmed.

When we call to mind several of the difficulties, which the Jews had respecting the claims of Jesus, it will be evident that the statements upon which the Apostle entered were directly calculated to remove them. Not only did they object that he, being a man, made himself God; but, at the same time, shewed that they had some indefinite expectation of the greatness of Messiah, which they did not see accomplished in Jesus. “We know this man,” said they, “whence he is; but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.” Nor could they comprehend our Lord’s allusion to his approaching death; for they expected his kingdom to be one which should not be destroyed, although they conceived of it as an earthly kingdom. “We have heard out of the

law," said they, "that Christ abideth for ever; and how sayest thou, that the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?" And, again, when he was suspended on the cross, they exclaimed, "Let Christ, the king of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see, and believe." If, then, they were instructed to perceive, not merely the dignity of Messiah, but that he must be man, as well as the Son of God; appearing in humility, as well as destined for a kingdom and glory; if they were taught the propriety of his sharing in suffering, and of his undergoing death, as a necessary prelude to his glory, and as also necessary, both for the accomplishment of his work of redemption, and for his application of its benefits to his Church: if these things could be proved to their satisfaction, the scandal of the cross would thereby be removed, and the real nature and value of the Gospel be established. It remains, then, that we notice,

II. The particular detail and bearing of the Apostle's remarks.

1. In the first place, the testimony of David in the eighth Psalm is applied to prove, or at least to illustrate, the position, that he, to whom the power over all things was to be given, would be a partaker of human nature. "One, in a certain place, testified, saying, What is man, that thou art

mindful of him, or the Son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little" (or rather, perhaps, a little while) "lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." Now in this passage the dominion over all things is ascribed to man, though made lower than the angels; and, as the Apostle argues, "in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But," adds he, "now we see not yet all things put under him;" because if we take the assertion in a full and unqualified sense, it has never found its accomplishment in any individual man, nor in the dominion of the whole human race over the visible creation. But what if an individual be found, who, appearing in the likeness of man, has given proof that he was truly a man; and yet hath also been found to attain such power and authority, as may be safely deemed an incipient accomplishment of that assertion, in its largest sense? May we not then expect its entire fulfilment? And if that declaration of the Psalmist be not actually designed to *predict* his attainment of that dominion, yet, at least, it *describes* it accurately; and the fact of humanity, therefore, is so far from being inconsistent with such power, that that particular circumstance is most prominently

specified by the Psalmist, and is the ground of his feeling acknowledgment of the divine goodness.

How far do the circumstances relative to Jesus correspond to such a description? The evidence of his claim to be the Son of God, and, therefore, originally higher than the angels, does not justify a denial of the fact, that he was perfect man, "of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting;" and therefore, so long as he remained on earth, made a little lower than the angels. Being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death; and the doctrine of the Gospel is, that he was so made flesh, "because of the suffering of death, in order that, through the grace of God, he might taste death for every man." Now if the grace and mercy of God designed such a transaction; if "thus it was written, and thus it behoved the Christ to suffer," in order to obtain the remission of sins; why should we be offended at his lowly appearance, or at his participation of that nature and of those infirmities, which were necessary in order to the accomplishment of such a design. And if this temporary humiliation be visible, and if it be notorious that he had undergone the suffering of death, it is not less certain that he has entered on that glory, which the Psalmist has attributed to the human nature. "We have seen him, who was made

a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour," by his resurrection from the dead, by his ascension into heaven, and by that testimony of miracles and spiritual gifts, which prove that he has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; and although we do not as yet see all things actually subjected to him, we have the assurance of the Psalmist, in another place, that he will reign until all things are put under him.

2. It may be further observed, that if the gracious goodness of *God* devised such a method of saving us, it belongs not to *us* to cavil at the method by which such benefits are procured for us. For the sovereign wisdom of *God* ought to assure us of the propriety of his designs, even if we are unable fully to perceive them; since "for him are all things, and by him are all things." In this instance, however, the propriety of the method adopted may be pointed out. "Many sons were to be brought to glory" by him, who was the author, the leader, and the captain of their salvation. *They* have to go through much tribulation; and, therefore, *God* saw fit that he, who saved them, should himself be made perfect through sufferings. For he and they were of one Father, and, by reason of their common nature, were of one blood. He, therefore, who said, with reference to the work which he undertook on behalf of men, "for

their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth," being of the same nature, is not ashamed (an expression implying such condescension, as leads us to recollect his previous dignity) is not ashamed to give the title of brethren to those whom he sanctifies. This the Apostle proves, by the citation of several passages of the Old Testament, in which Messiah identifies his own nature and situation with that of the men whom he came to sanctify and save; and in which he exhibits those feelings of thanksgiving and trust in God, which, as well as obedience, "he, though a Son, learned by the things which he suffered." As, therefore, he came to give "to those, that believe on his name, power to become Sons of God," he calls them his *brethren*; and, therefore, partook of their nature. And forasmuch as they were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; and, by that procedure, has shewn us the use and benefit of suffering, and left us an example that we should follow his steps, in all humility, and patience, and hope.

3. But, thirdly, must be observed another purpose of his manifestation in the flesh, which his antecedent dignity, and the commission given to him, enabled him to accomplish. He came, not merely to suffer and to die for man, but in order that, "through death, he might destroy

him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hereby was accomplished that dark but consolatory presage of a future Deliverer, given at that season, when, by him who was a murderer from the beginning, our first parents were brought under the law of sin and death. Ever since has he had the power of death; though not the authority, either of determining the appointed time of natural death, or of pronouncing and inflicting the merited sentence of eternal death. These things appertain to that Supreme God, to whom belong the issues of life and death. But, alas! since our fallen race are led captive by Satan at his will, they render a willing obedience to his evil suggestions, and so suffer him to be the spirit that worketh in them, as children of disobedience; and have blindly continued in that alienation from the life of God, and that devotedness to their earthly and carnal lusts, which have made his temptations effectual, and have enabled him to effect that fatal alteration of their destiny, by which they are exposed to eternal death, as the wages of their sin. But the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who, as the seed of the woman, and thereby the brother of mankind, partook of flesh and blood; and, dethroning him who had exercised this

deadly influence, has redeemed us from death eternal; and, by opening a path “through the grave and gate of death,” whereby believers may “pass to a joyful resurrection,” “has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light.” From him, therefore, who knows and can believingly rejoice in the certainty of this, the slavish fear of death is removed. It will still come in all its terrors, as to the failing of the flesh; but the heart of the believer faileth not, because God is the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever. Because Jesus has procured, and dispenses the pardon of sin, he has therefore drawn the most painful, and only fatal, sting of death, by delivering us from the condemnation and dominion of sin; and therefore, though the law still remains strong to condemn, Jesus is still more mighty to save them that come to God by him. Thus is weak, sinful, and ruined man, saved by the death of an incarnate Saviour; who “succoured not angels, but the seed of Abraham;” and, therefore, was in all things made like unto those of his brethren, whom he has graciously honoured by that condescending and encouraging title, and who both needed, and have obtained, his interposition.

4. Lastly, it behoved him, in interposing for our rescue, to be made in all things like unto his brethren, “that he might be a merciful and

faithful High-priest in things pertaining to God.” Not that this was really needful in order to his actual knowledge of those infirmities and fears, which, because of the weakness of our mortal nature, and the consciousness of guilt, beset us here, but in order that he might convey to us that knowledge, which renders us more assuredly confident of his mercy and faithfulness. His interposition, in any manner, might have encouraged us to hope; but, by consenting to assume our nature, and therein to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows, he renders the proof of his compassion level to our capacities, and, as it were, visible to our senses. Thereby also he appeared as our High-priest, having a body in which to bear our sins, and which he could offer in our behalf, and so make reconciliation for the sins of the people. And though, having by himself purged our sins, he has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, yet has he left us not only hope in death, and for eternity, but a resource and consolation in every affliction and temptation. Because he himself suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. We find his sufferings and dangers correspondent to ours; we behold him supported and carried through them all; we know that he is our pattern and our guide; we know that actual experience has, even according to our appre-

hensions, furnished him with knowledge, and touched him with compassion; we know that he has promised a Comforter to abide with us for ever; and we hear, with hope and confidence, the address which he made to his disciples, and may apply it to ourselves: "In the world ye shall have tribulation. But, be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

These truths so exactly provide for the necessities of sinful man, are so suited to raise him from despair, to calm his fears, and to encourage him to a cheerful pursuit of holiness and immortality, that they contain in themselves a presumptive evidence of their divine original. They are so consistent with all the promises given in the early ages; they so exactly are suited to fulfil the prayers of the saints of old; they so accurately correspond to the meekness, patience, and demeanour, of the holy Jesus, and to the whole tenor and substance of his declarations, and of the teaching of the Apostles, that we must have either surveyed imperfectly the inestimable love of God in our redemption, or be under the influence of some unhappy prejudices, if we hesitate to acknowledge that Christ crucified, though to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, is, to them that believe, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

LECTURE XIII.

CHRIST JESUS THE APOSTLE OF OUR PROFESSION,
SUPERIOR TO MOSES.—

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THAT CONSIDERATION.

HEB. III. 5, 6.

Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

How earnest and affectionate is the address of the Apostle when he bespeaks the attention of the Hebrews to the subject noticed in our text! “Holy brethren,” says he, “partakers of the heavenly calling.” *Brethren*, not merely as living partakers of the same common nature, not merely as descendants from Abraham, not merely as having been admitted through Christ Jesus to the adoption of sons, but brethren even in a higher sense, which he had just before noticed; as belonging to that happy company of numerous sons of God, whom the Captain of their salvation undertook to lead to glory, and whom he was not ashamed to call his brethren. *Holy brethren*, ye who are sanctified by him “who is not ashamed

to call you brethren," ye who are separated as a holy and peculiar people, who are taught the blessedness, the obligations, the nature, and the means, of attaining that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord;—ye who are also *partakers of that heavenly calling*, which cometh from heaven, which addresses you while here upon earth that it may call you away from earthly things, and fix your affections on heavenly things,—a calling, which is accompanied with the Holy Spirit sent to endue you with heavenly gifts, that your conversation may be in heaven, and that you may become meet partakers of the heavenly inheritance to which you are called:—“holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, *consider the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.*

Is not *our* profession, and are not therefore *our* hopes and privileges, such as to render such an address applicable to ourselves? And who is the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, but the same Christ Jesus? Have we then sufficiently considered who and what he is in himself, and in his past, present, and future relation to ourselves? Have we reviewed and made ourselves fully and profitably acquainted with the reason of the hope that is in us, and with the transactions and consequences, the privileges and obligations, of the Gospel? Have we so fixed our attentive

regards on Christ Jesus, conducting and consummating the designs of his mercy, as to have known the things which make for our peace?—If we have sufficiently considered them, then is our admiration excited, and our love enkindled; our gratitude is fervent, and our obedience willing, permanent, and universal. But if these effects are wanting, then is the defect to be attributed to ignorance, or to unbelief, or to negligence; all and each of which are insulting to God, and ruinous to ourselves.

As holy brethren, therefore, and as “partakers of the heavenly calling”—as those who have so known and participated in these privileges, that they must be to you, either the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death, we beseech you to “consider the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him,” both in the former and in the latter of these offices, which he undertook and discharged for our instruction, and salvation. Was he *the Apostle of our profession*, sent forth as the authorized herald and ambassador to communicate to us the will of God? He has avouched his faithfulness, nor can we refuse to allow his claim. “I have not spoken of myself,” said he, “but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his command-

ment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak^a." We must consider him as invested with divine authority, as declaring to us the truth, and as claiming from us that faith in his testimony, which may lead us to know the things which he taught, and to be happy in a compliance with them.

Was he also "*the High-priest of our profession*," whose intercession is all-prevailing, and whose sacrifice of himself procures our pardon and our sanctification, and all grace and heavenly benediction? He must be considered in this respect also, that we may have an assurance that these blessings are obtained, and may attain to an interest therein. "Therefore," said he when on earth, "doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father^b."

The priesthood of Christ, and the sacrifice which he offered, it will be our endeavour to illustrate at a future period. For the present we propose to consider him as "*the Apostle of our profession*," by whom in the last days

^a John xii. 49, 50.

^b John x. 17, 18.

God hath spoken to us ; who, because of the dignity of his person, the importance of his communications, and the exalted nature of his office, demands our reverence and our obedience, as sent to instruct, establish, and govern his Church. In devoting this Lecture to a brief discussion of this topic, it will be necessary to consider,

I. The superiority of Jesus to Moses.

II. The exhortation addressed by the Apostle to the Hebrews in connexion with this subject; and,

III. The application of that exhortation to ourselves.

I. It was necessary to point out to the Hebrews the superiority of Jesus to Moses. For their disposition to waver in the profession of the Gospel was grounded on a respect for the laws and institutions of Moses. And the Apostle grants them all that they could claim on his behalf, at the same time that he claims as much for Jesus, and proceeds to shew that his claims were even more extensive and exalted.

1. “ Jesus was *faithful* to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.”

This testimony to Moses was not originally that of the Apostle, but of God himself, given

out of the pillar of the cloud, when Aaron and Miriam had undervalued the authority of Moses. “If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth^c.” The circumstances under which this testimony was given, and the source from whence it proceeded, were decisive as to the authority of Moses, and his fidelity in the employment of his superior qualifications. And had not a similar testimony been given to Jesus, when a voice, from the cloud that over-shadowed him, said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him?” And did not the whole tenor of his teaching, his life, and his death, declare that “he sought not his own will, but the will of the Father that sent him?” The comparison, if it were more accurately made, would, even in this particular, be favourable to Jesus. For, after that honourable testimony, Moses failed in faith; and so omitted to sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the congregation of Israel, that on that account he was not permitted to lead them into the promised land. But Jesus was *faithful to the end*, and the witness of God was repeatedly and variously given to

^c Numb. xii. 6—8.

him, even till the day when God raised him from the dead, and gave him glory. True, he was the prophet whom Moses had predicted as like to himself, to whom they were to hearken. But although he was in many respects like Moses, both that prediction implied, and other considerations still further evinced, his superiority to Moses.

2. He was *superior in station*. “This man was counted worthy of more honour than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some one; and he that built all things is God.” God undoubtedly designed and established both the Jewish Church by Moses, and the Christian by Jesus Christ; and both the one and the other were his house or family. But Moses was himself a *member* of the Church which he was commissioned to regulate, himself as much bound by the obligations, and interested in the benefits of its institutions, as any of his brethren. Jesus was not only the *head* over all things to his Church, but also, for the same reason that he was so, was not himself personally indebted to the privileges and blessings which he procured for any part of that dignity which belonged to him. To us, in the Gospel Church, “there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by

him^d." And as this was a position which the Hebrews had been before taught, and which had been again set before them in the opening of the Epistle, it was clear that since nothing of that nature ever was, or could be, declared of Moses, Jesus must be counted worthy of more honour than Moses, as the divine, preeminent, and unrivalled builder of the Church for the sake of others only.

3. It thus appeared that Moses was confessedly faithful *in* all the house of God, as a *member* of it, but Christ *over* his house, as its *supreme ruler*. And the *titles* which each received, and to which their respective offices corresponded, further demonstrated the superiority of Jesus. Moses was faithful in all his house, as a *servant*. He was so termed even in that divine attestation which declared his authority; and he was indeed greatly honoured as a servant of God, employed in so exalted a service. But he received no higher title; nor did his proceedings evince an attempt to act in any higher capacity, except in the instance to which we have before alluded, when his hasty and unauthorized conduct received immediate reproof, and was followed by signal punishment. But Christ was faithful as a *Son*, *over* his house; that exalted title was given to him from heaven; and he ever spoke, reproofed,

^d 1 Cor. viii. 6.

promised, and commanded, as one having authority, and the authority of a *Son*; and his right to such a title cannot be denied by any one who does not altogether reject his authority.

4. The last circumstance noticed by the Apostle as evincing the superiority of Jesus, relates to the *nature* and *design* of the *dispensations* respectively founded by Moses and by Jesus. “Moses was faithful in all his house, as a servant, *for a testimony of those things which should be spoken after.*” His record of the promises and prophecies of the patriarchal ages, his own predictions, and even those of all the subsequent prophets, looked forward, and, by the Jews themselves, were understood to look forward, to a future and more perfect revelation. And the Apostle himself afterwards entered on an enlarged demonstration of this, as it respects the priesthood and sacrifices of the law, to which more especially the Hebrews were attached, and to an exclusive regard for which they were in danger of returning. But if “the law had only a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things,” then was it only an imperfect dispensation, though of divine authority, and sufficient for the time then present. But if *the body* were of *Christ*; if in him all those predictions and promises had their accomplishment; if in him were seen the substance of all the shadows, and

the fulfilment of all the types; then was the Gospel the more perfect dispensation, and that exclusive veneration and obedience which were before rightly rendered to Moses, were now due to Christ, as superior in dignity and authority; as “the mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises.”

But who are they that constitute that house, or family of Christ, which has such a Founder and Master, and is so amply provided with present blessings, and future expectations? *We* are members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of heaven with Christ, being baptized in his name; as the Israelites were “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea,” and were that family which *he* was appointed to regulate, in an inferior though important office. Great were the privileges of the Israelites as the family of God; to them pertained “the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants and the giving of the law, and the promises; their’s were the fathers, and,” (which completed the privilege of their Church, at the same time that it introduced higher and permanent blessedness) “of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is God over all, blessed for ever.” To him, for such must now be the subject of our reflections, is our *obedience* due. We are indeed his house; but that advantage will be merely nominal, of no avail, and eventually lost to us.

if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. "His house are we," say the concluding words of our text, "if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope steadfast unto the end." We belong to that great "family in heaven and earth," which has Christ for its head; we are "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; we are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone; we are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." We all, as one body in Christ, and as individually members of that body, inherit the promises, and are enlightened by the truths of the Gospel. The word, the ordinances, the sacraments, are to us the means of grace, to implant and nurture the hope of glory. But that confidence which we place in Christ, and in our exalted privileges, that joyfulness of hope which supports us in this world, and directs our expectations to the glory that shall be revealed, these must not only be active within us, and rightly regulated in knowledge and in all judgment, but held fast steadfastly unto the end. Unless they exist, we have the name and form of godliness only. Patient continuance therein, even to the end, is the only decisive test of the reality of our religion, and of a well grounded hope. For however great is the joy with which we receive

the word of the Gospel, if we endure only for a while, and in time of temptation fall away, no fruit can be brought to perfection; but either the soil, or the seed sown, or the care of the cultivator, has been defective.

2. But let this lesson be this day presented to us, by the exhortation addressed to the Hebrews in connexion with the subject just discussed. This was proposed as our second head.

After treating of the respective offices of Moses, and of Christ, the Apostle selects a passage from the book of Psalms, written at an advanced period of the Jewish Church, for the purpose of instructing the men of that generation by the ensample of their forefathers, who were in the wilderness with Moses. This passage is adopted, as it were, as the text of a practical address to the followers of Christ in a still later period: and upon the very same principle which he states to the Corinthians when proceeding to a similar exhortation: "These things happened to them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come^e." Now the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, has in that manner applied the disobedience, and awful doom, of the followers of Moses; in the former part of the Psalm praising God, as the Creator

^e 1 Cor. x. 11.

of the world, and exhorting us to “rejoice in him as the strength of our salvation,” to worship him and kneel before him, as it becomes those to do, who are more especially the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the day of provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart, and have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest^f.”

From the day they came out of the land of Egypt, the Israelites provoked God to wrath in the wilderness; and they suffered repeatedly for their disobedience. But their greatest and most bitter provocation was their refusal to obey the command to enter Canaan, which led to the exclusion, from that land of rest, of all the men of that generation, excepting the two, who alone were found faithful, among so many faithless^g. They heard the voice of God, not only commanding them to go up and possess the land which he had promised to the fathers, but assuring them of his guidance and assistance; but they feared the dangers reported to them by some of their

^f Psalm 95.

^g See Numb. 14.

erring brethren; they could not be reclaimed by the more faithful statements of Caleb and Joshua; they doubted the word of God, which doubt amounted to disbelief, and ended in disobedience. While the opportunity was present, they refused to embrace it; and as in all human affairs, as well as in things pertaining to God, it was lost for ever; they could not again recal it, it was irrecoverably withheld from them.

Thus did the contemporaries of Moses lose the rest which they might have attained in the earthly Canaan, and to which the succeeding generation were conducted by Joshua. And long after the age of those to whom it was first promised, in the days of the Psalmist, after so long a time, the call is repeated "To-day to hear the voice of God;" again giving promise of a rest yet attainable. Was this the rest of the sabbath, since the Psalmist begins by exhorting to the worship of God? "The works of God were finished from the foundation of the world," and on the seventh day God rested from his works, and sanctified the sabbath; and the Israelites enjoyed the blessings of the day of rest, before they lost the rest which was intended by that promise which they disobeyed. Still in the days of David, while the rest of the seventh day was yet observed, a further rest is promised; one of which that was merely an emblem. So that even

then there remained a rest for the people of God, for those who heard his voice, and hardened not their hearts; and they who attained it would rest from their works, as God did from his. Nor perhaps does it signify much, whether we understand this as referring to that eternal and heavenly rest, to which we all look forward after the toils, vexations, and miseries, of this sinful world, or to that repose of conscience, relief from the terrors of the moral law, and, from the bondage of the ceremonial law, with which Christ has made us free. They that attain to that rest, which is the peculiar happiness of the Christian in this world, shall as surely enter into that heavenly and eternal rest, which is reserved for those who are kept “by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation.” And truly that rest is an object of delightful and cheering anticipation to all who are passing through the privations and afflictions of this probationary state. For in that future world, “the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.” The earnest expectation of the creature, therefore, waits for the manifestation of the Sons of God, knowing that a voice from heaven hath declared, “Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord:” and the Spirit also adds the reason and the assured confirmation of that blessedness; “Even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”

But not only do the afflicted know how desirable it is to have in heaven a more perfect repose, a better and more enduring substance, but those also acknowledge it, who, though basking in the sunshine of prosperity, and surrounded with all temporal blessings, find that no solid and permanent satisfaction can be derived from those things, which perish with the using, which gratify the senses of the flesh, and which a man cannot carry with him when he dieth. There are few, therefore, who can look forward to the hour of dissolution without a wish and a hope, that they may die the death of the righteous. But the pursuits and the pleasures of this present world so powerfully tend to withdraw our affections, and even our recollection, from the concerns of our future eternal condition, that we have need attentively to consider the solemn warnings, and affectionate exhortations, of Scripture; that we may look at the things which are not seen, and which are eternal; that to-day, while it is called to-day, we may hear the voice of God inviting us to lay hold on life eternal; and that weary and heavy laden, whether with the sins, the fears, or the vexations of the world, we may come unto Christ, and so find rest unto our souls.

III. Thirdly, then, and lastly, let us apply the exhortation to ourselves. Three words give

a summary of the Apostle's exhortation, "BELIEVE, —FEAR,—and LABOUR." Let us hear and profit by what he observes with reference to each of these:

1. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of *unbelief* in departing from the living God: but exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. For to whom sware he that they should not enter in, but to them that *believed* not. So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Neither shall *we*, my brethren, if we tread in their steps? and yet how general, how debasing, how fatal, is the unbelief of mankind! For how can we be said to believe that which gives us little concern, which excites no interest, the knowledge of which impels to no exertion, and produces few, if any, of the emotions and deeds, that would naturally follow the conviction of such truths, affecting as they do our present and everlasting destiny? And how obvious is the fact, that most of us so live and act, and, we may conclude, so hope, and plan, and resolve, and desire, as if there were no heavenly inheritance, no fearful looking for of judgment, no God to call us to account, no Saviour to re-

deem, no Spirit to sanctify.—God has pronounced threatenings, but man listens not to them; he has given great and precious promises, but man values them not. Man desires not the joys of heaven, and is reckless of the pains of Hell. Though omniscience itself vouchsafes to teach him, he refuses to learn; though omnipotence summons him to give up an account of his advantages and progress, he makes no preparation for so solemn a season. Though infinite mercy provides a Saviour to redeem him, and a Sanctifier and Comforter to fit him for future blessedness, he prefers the galling fetters of sin, and the polluting vanities of the world, and is sometimes content even with the mere listless apathy of insensibility and negligence. How deceitful is sin, and how deceitful our hearts, which parley with it, and suffer us to be deluded by its specious promises; so that at length we are rendered insensible to better things, and our hearts are so hardened, and our habits so confirmed, that reformation is next to impossible! Beware of entering so fatal, though so inviting, a path. Turn aside, and contemplate the promises set before you. Contemplate them till that faith which gives substance to the things hoped for, and is the evidence of things not seen, invest them with a reality that persuades and invites. For to us are the glad tidings of the heavenly rest preached; but the word preached did not

profit them to whom it was first preached, because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it. But “we which have believed do enter into rest:” we enter on that narrow way which leadeth to life, and shall be animated throughout by the assured prospect, that the promise will be attained by faith and patience.

2. “Let us *fear*, then, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” Assured as you are of the faithfulness of God, be not presumptuous; nor count yourselves to have attained, but straining every nerve, and exercising all care and diligence press towards the mark. For “blessed is the man that feareth always.” So great is the prize which we have to secure, so awful the alternative if we lose it, so many are the dangers which beset us because of the weakness and depravity of our nature, that none, but the humble and earnest disciple, who is ever examining whether he is in the right path, and whether he is making progress therein, is likely to walk steadfastly in the way that leadeth to eternal life.

3. In fine, “Let us *labour* to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” The blessings are worthy of our utmost diligence, and nothing less can secure them. And if we rely on the faithfulness of him who has promised them, we may rely also on his promised


support, and therefore ought, on both accounts, to “give all diligence to make our calling and election sure,” because he who calleth us, also “worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

And what is the object of our *faith*, the calmer of our *fears*, and the guide of our *endeavours*, but that unerring *word* of God, which is “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart?” We have, therefore, a sufficient and effectual guide; and if, through our unbelief, presumption, or indolence, that word of God is ineffectual, we cannot escape his awful, just, and final judgment. “For there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight; for all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do,” or rather, “to whom we are accountable.” Nay, as our Saviour himself has assured us, that word which has been spoken to us, will, if it do not excite, and guide, and sanctify us, “judge us at the last day.” For, in fact, every promise implies a threatening to those who despise it, and every threatening also implies a promise to those who are persuaded, either by the terrors of the Lord, or by his mercies, or

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by both, to believe, and fear, and labour, as the word of God requires.

Therefore do we exhort you as “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.” We beseech you by the consideration of that judgment to come; by the perfect knowledge, and inflexible justice, of our future Judge; by that mercy, which has called us to repentance; by the riches of that forbearance which leadeth you to repentance; by the dignity and authority of “the Apostle of our profession;” by the atonement he hath made; by his resurrection for our justification, and his eternal presence in heaven to intercede; by your guilt and infirmity; by your mortality and your immortality; “be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is!” “Seek the things above,” that you may be admitted now to peace with God, and enjoy that peace which passeth all understanding, and finally may come to that eternal rest, “which remaineth for the people of God.”



LECTURE XIV.

THE OFFICE AND QUALIFICATIONS OF A HIGH-PRIEST.—
THE POSSESSION OF THESE BY THE HIGH-PRIEST OF OUR
PROFESSION.—PRACTICAL DIGRESSION.

HEB. IV. 14.

Seeing then that we have a great High-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

“**HOLY** brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” Such is the earnest and affectionate address of the Apostle at the commencement of the preceding chapter. In that chapter he points out the several particulars, in which Jesus, as “the *Apostle* of our profession, was counted worthy of more glory than Moses.” And having further observed, that while Moses was faithful in all his house as a *servant*, Christ was so “as a *Son* over *his own* house,” he adds, “whose house are *we*, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

Hence it appears that the Apostle applies the position established respecting the preeminent

Apostleship of Jesus, in aid of the purpose for which the Epistle was written, viz. the confirmation of the Hebrews in the faith of the Gospel, notwithstanding the arguments advanced by those who still adhered to the law of Moses, and the persecutions which assailed those who embraced the doctrine of Christ.

When the author of the Epistle announces, in the words of the text, that subject upon which he afterwards treats at large, he applies it in the same manner. These words, indeed, may be considered as a brief enunciation of the truths which he afterwards establishes, and of the practical inferences which are to be drawn from them. And although the Gospel had no visible sanctuary, sacrifice, or priests, like the religion of Moses, yet if it were proved that Christians had “a *great High-priest*, who had passed into the heavens, even Jesus the *Son of God*,” the objection brought from that circumstance against the Gospel was inconclusive; and the difference in that particular between the two systems was, in fact, a direct and satisfactory argument in favour of the Gospel, and furnished a powerful motive for retaining the profession of it.

Even, however, from these exalted views of the dignity, sufficiency, and authority of such a High-priest, a difficulty might suggest itself to the mind of the faithful Christian, who was con-

scious of his manifold infirmities, and felt the want of a *merciful*, as well as a *powerful*, High-priest. The Apostle meets this difficulty also, by reverting to the consideration, upon which he had touched already, and which he afterwards resumes, that he who was now so highly exalted, had been a partaker of flesh and blood, having been made for a little while lower than the angels, and perfected through sufferings. In evincing the necessity of such a temporary humiliation of the Son of God, he had assigned this among other reasons for it, that “in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted^a.” In accordance with these views, he subjoins to the descriptions of dignity, which were calculated to obviate one difficulty, those declarations respecting other more endearing qualities, which might tend to satisfy doubts of a different kind. “Let us hold fast our profession, because we have a great High-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God;” and also, because “we have not an High-priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our in-

^a Heb. ii. 17, 18.

firmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need^b.”

When the Apostle enters upon his fuller discussion respecting “the High-priest of our profession,” he first gives a *general description* of the office and qualifications of a High-priest, and then proceeds to shew the *possession* of these by Jesus Christ. It will be our present endeavour to notice each of these particulars.

I. First, then, we shall consider his description of the office and qualifications of a High-priest. And herein several particulars are specified by the Apostle.

1. Whatever be established respecting the reality of the priesthood of Christ, and the nature which belongs to him, every other High-priest is “taken from among men,” is a *human* being like other men, and, therefore, a partaker of like sins and infirmities.

2. Every High-priest is ordained to discharge his office *in behalf of men*, in things pertaining to God; to conduct the worship which they offer to God, and to offer, on their behalf, “both gifts and sacrifices for sins.”

^b Heb. iv. 15, 16.

3. The High-priest's liability to the *sins* and *infirmities* of human nature is so far from unfitting him for his office, that it constitutes one of his essential qualifications for the useful discharge of it. For since he is ordained to it for the benefit of men, and since they are ignorant, and have wandered out of the way of peace and safety, he is the more likely to have compassion on such, and to treat them with tender sympathy, from the circumstance, that "he himself also is compassed with infirmity." If he would faithfully discharge his priestly functions, he will be called to affectionate exertions of that kind for the good of men, as well as to offer sacrifices on their behalf. And by reason of this his infirmity, "he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins." So the law prescribes, and so his own necessities require; and his consciousness of his own individual need of mercy, at the hand of God, will be a powerful means of stimulating him to the effectual performance of the duties required by his high and holy office.

4. The High-priest's office is an *honourable* one; but "no man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is *called of God*, as was Aaron." The God, to whom men are accountable, whom they have offended, and who alone is the dispenser of every good and perfect gift, must himself appoint the means and method of reconciliation;

and the High-priest, who is the medium of intercourse between God and man, must be appointed by him, as well as the office itself be instituted and sanctioned by him. That Aaron, and his lineal descendants, were so specially designated to the office in question, was a circumstance well known to the Hebrews; and the Jewish priesthood thence derived an authority, which gave great plausibility to the arguments of those, who advocated the obligations of Judaism in opposition to those of the Gospel. The Apostle, however, does not hesitate to admit the justness of the *principle* upon which such objections were founded; and avowedly contends that the reality, and sufficiency, and supreme authority, of the priesthood of Christ, ought to be determined, according to those views respecting the office, which were common to the Jew and the Christian. Having, therefore, enumerated them, in the manner which we have seen, he proceeds to notice

II. The possession of the office and qualifications of a divinely appointed priesthood by Jesus Christ.

In treating of the several topics relative to this point, the Apostle does not observe the same *order* in which he had specified the qualifications of other High-priests taken from among men. For the particular *last* mentioned, viz. the *divine*

designation necessary to constitute any one a high-priest, was the *first* which required attention in order to establish the priesthood of Jesus Christ. For if it were not proved that he had been “called of God, as was Aaron,” it would be to no purpose to enlarge upon any other of the requisite qualifications.

Let it, then, be remembered, that the Hebrews, to whom the Epistle was addressed, were such as admitted the *Messiahship* of Jesus, and who also revered him as the *Son of God*, in consequence of their previous instructions, and in conformity to the statements with which the Epistle opened. Believing, therefore, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, they understood the words of the second Psalm, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,” to be spoken by God to his anointed Son; who was, by the resurrection from the dead, declared to be the Son of God, and that “King who was set upon God’s holy hill of Zion,” and to whom “the heathen were given for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession.” This was readily admitted by those, who could easily comprehend the prophetic descriptions of the *kingly* office and authority of Christ. But the book of Psalms ascribed to him, with equal plainness, the possession of *a priesthood*, not assumed

by himself, but conferred by the same Supreme Being, whose decree respecting the Christ was recorded in the second Psalm. "No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High-priest; but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.' As he saith also in another place, 'Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.'"

The words here cited are introduced with great solemnity in the hundred and tenth Psalm; a Psalm, the reference of which to Christ the learned men of the Jews did not deny, when our Lord, in his lifetime, cited a passage from it, and inquired what opinion respecting the nature of Christ they deduced from it. And the Psalm proved that, in some sense, Christ was a priest, as incontrovertibly as that, in some way, his royal dignity was superior to that of David. The argument of the Apostle might, indeed, have been wholly founded on that one Psalm. The same Supreme Being who said to David's Lord, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," also "sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Deeming this one passage decisive of the question, whether the Christ were at all a priest, he enlarges no further on that head;

but, in subsequent chapters, proceeds to inquire what are the nature, and dignity, and duration, of his priesthood^c; what sacrifice he offered; what was the sanctuary in which he ministered; and what was the covenant of which he dispensed the blessings^d. For the present he adverts to the other topics appertaining to the subject; which, therefore, present themselves for our immediate notice.

It was observed, that other priests, being “ordained for men in things pertaining to God,” are “taken from among men.” Now although, in our text, the Apostle speaks of Jesus as “the Son of God, who had passed into the heavens,” yet he could also speak of what he did “in the days of his flesh.” If he had possessed *only* a divine nature, he would have wanted some of those attributes, which fitted him to act as our “merciful and faithful High-priest.” But he participated also in our human nature, not only in order that he might therein “by himself purge our sins,” and “make reconciliation” for them, before he “sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high,” but also in order that, in other respects, he might be able to discharge his priestly office for the benefit of men.

^c Ch. vii.

^d Ch. viii. x.

Did others learn to “have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that they themselves also are compassed with infirmity?” The same was also true of Christ, “who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet *learned he obedience* by the things which he suffered^e.” Not only by his own sufferings has he learned to sympathize with our’s, but he has had personal experience of the nature and difficulty of the obedience to which we are called. Moreover, he has felt the awful severity of the penalties inflicted on disobedience; but the “prayers and supplications,” which he offered “unto him who was able to save him from death,” were not presented in vain. He was heard, and delivered from his fears; and, therefore, can he give us the assurance of the like deliverance. He requires, indeed, of us the same obedience which he himself rendered; but we thus know that he, who so requires, can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and will be ready to impart to all, who come to the throne of grace, that mercy and assisting grace, the necessity of which he knows so well.

^e Heb. v. 7, 8.

Thus belong to Christ the office and qualifications of a priest, in exact correspondence with those which appertain to such as are priests on earth. There are, however, certain particulars, in which his qualifications may be *contrasted* with those possessed by merely human priests, without at all impairing the resemblance which we have been considering.

1. Although he was "in all points tempted like as we are," that is, according to the likeness of his nature to our's, "yet was he without sin." He reaped all the *benefits* of the experience which he underwent, without sharing in its *fatal consequences*. When, therefore, he offered for sin, he "needed not, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins." And, therefore, while we can confidently expect his sympathy in our sufferings, and all the consolation and benefits derived from his knowledge of our infirmities, we cannot doubt but that he is fully qualified to present to God, on our behalf, an *acceptable*, because a sinless, offering.

2. Again: being through sufferings "made perfect," and fully invested with the office and authority for which he was so fully qualified, "he became the author of *eternal* salvation to all them that obey him." The sacrifices, offered by the priests under the law, removed those disabilities which had respect to present privileges; they

delivered from temporal penalties, and restored the worshippers to the enjoyment of the rites of the visible Church. But Christ came for higher and more lasting designs, to make known, obtain, and bestow, an eternal salvation from all the consequences of sin. And who, but the Son of God, could so “bring many sons to glory?” Who, but one of such power, holiness, and compassion, could “by himself purge our sins,” and then “sit down on the right hand of the majesty on high,” thence to confer all the benefits of that offering, by which he “perfected for ever them that are sanctified?” Those priests, who were merely partakers of human nature, “were not suffered to continue by reason of death;” and were under the necessity, while they lived to officiate, of repeatedly offering those sacrifices, which could never take away sins. But he is “a priest *for ever*, after the order of Melchisedec;” and as such is qualified to be the author of *eternal* salvation. In the present enjoyment, and glorious prospects, of that great salvation, his faithful adherents can partake; and the abundant consolation, which such privileges furnish to weak and sinful man, the Apostle sets before us, as he advances in the discussion of his important subject. These various topics will hereafter come under our consideration. But let it even now be observed, that they alone who *obey* Christ, are the persons to whom he

becomes the author of eternal salvation. The description is contained in one word, *obey*; but this is a word of comprehensive import. If then we would be partakers of this salvation, we must not only be called by his name, but must be devoted to his service. From him, as the Captain of our Salvation, must we receive our instructions. From them we shall learn our duty, the obligations under which we are placed, and the motives which should influence us. But if we walk not according to instructions given by one so beneficent and condescending, as well as powerful, if we “fight not manfully under his banner, and continue his faithful soldiers and servants unto our lives’ end,” we shall not, under his guidance, be made conquerors, nor receive that crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Let it have sufficed briefly to have reminded you of the necessity of constant obedience, maintained by unremitting care and vigilance. For we propose to direct your attention to such practical considerations, by notice of the remarks annexed by the Apostle to that portion of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which has been reviewed in this Lecture. In fact, he breaks off for a season his doctrinal discussion, and introduces a long practical digression, which presents to us two leading exhortations. The first of these relates to our

advancement in knowledge, the second to *perseverance* in *Christian diligence, faith, and patience*. The former is prefaced by *reproof*, and followed by *caution*; the latter is enforced by motives of a *consolatory* nature.

1. The first exhortation is as follows: "Leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection^f." It would be unprofitable for them, and discouraging to their instructors, if there was continual need to lay again the foundation of their religious principles as Christians. He would fain excite them to that progress in the knowledge of the Gospel, which might make them advance to higher degrees therein; that so the building of which the foundation had long since been laid, might be completed, strengthened, and adorned. But he introduced this exhortation with a *reproof*. For when about to enter on an enlarged discussion respecting the priesthood of Christ, he felt a painful conviction, that the "many things" which he had to say respecting it would be "hard to be understood," or rather, would be difficult of explanation to *them*, because of their dull apprehension: "For when," says he, "for the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles

^f Heb. vi. 1.

of the oracles of God; and are become such, as have need of milk, and not of strong meat^g." By the expression in the last clause, he implies a fear, that they had actually gone back in their spiritual course, and were, therefore, in a state far different from that to which they might have advanced. And the simple statement of the fact was a reproof of their lukewarmness, and carelessness. And having addressed to them the exhortation suited to their case, he subjoins a *caution* respecting the danger of apostasy. For those, whose doubts and difficulties lead them, like the Hebrews, not only to make no advances in Christian edification, but even to recede therein, are in a state the most dangerous; since they will find it difficult to retain what they have learned, and will be in peril of abandoning it. They must either maintain their ground, and advance in the path in which they have set out, or they will, in all likelihood, finally apostatize. And if such persons, from such a cause, so "fall away, it will be impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame^h." By abandoning the Gospel, the Hebrews would, in fact, approve the counsel and deed of the Jews who put to death the Son of God; and all, who, by not confessing him before men, shew themselves

^g Heb. v. 11—14.

^h Heb. vi. 6.

ashamed of him and of his words, act as apostates would act, even though in reality they retain a conviction that Jesus is the Saviour, and the Gospel from God. If then, we, my brethren, fear such a state of apostasy, let us keep at a distance from it, by not only retaining the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, but by also going on to perfection; thus “growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Then shall we abound in the fruits of righteousness, and “receive a blessing from God:” but that ground, “which drinketh in the rain which falleth oft upon it,” even the constant communication of holy instruction, and gracious influences and yet “beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burnedⁱ.”

2. But let us hasten to notice the other exhortation of the Apostle. “We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises^k.” This he introduces in a manner the most gratifying. For, although there was occasion for rebuke and caution, yet there was also cause of satisfaction and hope; and those favourable symptoms authorized the conviction, that they did and would

ⁱ Heb. vi. 7, 8.

^k Heb. vi. 9—12.

profit by his suggestions. "But beloved," says he, "we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." But since he exhorts them not to relapse, but rather to use additional exertions, he reminds them of the *encouragement* so to act, which is derived from the gracious condescension of God, when giving the promises to Abraham. And since all "the heirs of promise," have "strong consolation" in *the ratification of God's promises by his solemn oath*, he would fain persuade and lead them also to the same faith and patience which Abraham manifested. For "after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise," which God, who is "immutable in counsel," had sworn to fulfil. And neither, my brethren, shall we be disappointed, if, not being "weak in faith," we "bring forth fruit with patience." For hope is "set before us," unto which we are to "flee for refuge;" a hope, which is "as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither our forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus," who, as we shall see in the next Lecture, is "made an High-priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec¹."

¹ Heb. ix. 20.

LECTURE XV.

THE ORDER, DIGNITY, AND EFFICACY OF THE PRIESTHOOD
OF CHRIST, DEDUCED FROM A COMPARISON WITH
THAT OF MELCHISEDEC.



HEB. VI. 20.

*Jesus, made an High-priest for ever after the order
of Melchisedec.*

No part of the Scriptures of the Old Testament is more frequently referred to in the New, than the hundred and tenth Psalm, from whence are cited the words applied to Jesus in our text. We cannot, indeed, class that Psalm among those prophecies, of which the direct and almost exclusive design was to identify the person of the Messiah, but rather among those which describe the authority and office of the Messiah when so identified. Assuredly, until the ascension of Jesus, its application to him could not have been established to the satisfaction of the Jews. But such of that nation, as were convinced of the fulfilment of other predictions in his person, and who were further assured of his ascension into heaven, would then also be prepared to acknow-

ledge the correspondence of his exaltation with the description given by his royal ancestor, and to study the entire description with a view to ascertain the dignity and official character which appertained to him, in order that they might receive him in that character.—“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” And again, “The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

The *first* of these clauses was cited by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, as accurately predictive of the consequences of the ascension of Jesus, whom he proclaimed to be “both Lord and Christ^a.” It is cited also in the first chapter to the Hebrews, as bearing testimony to the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, even over angelic beings, and as to his being David’s Lord, because he was truly the Son of God^b. The same writer, having entered upon discussions, either illustrative of the same and collateral points, or clearing them from difficulty, then applies the *second* clause, which we have cited from the Psalm, as at once proving that the Messiah was to be a priest^c. And let it be here observed, that we cannot reasonably suppose that he ascribes to him that

^a Acts ii. 36.

^b Heb. ii. 13.

^c Heb. v. 5, 6

title merely in a figurative sense, by way of *allusion* to the Levitical priests, and in order to *accommodate* the principles which he espoused to the *prejudices* of those who were attached to the Levitical priesthood; for such a view, although it may serve the purposes of those who would explain away the doctrine of atonement for sin by the sacrifice of Christ, yet would be wholly at variance with the argument of the Apostle. He professedly agrees with the Hebrews as to the necessity of a *priesthood*, and of a *sacrifice* offered for sin by a priest, divinely called, and duly qualified; but he does not agree with them in considering the Levitical priesthood as perfect and never to be abrogated. He argues that it was temporary, typical, and imperfect; and that Christ has accomplished those objects, for which the priesthood was instituted, *once for all, really and perfectly*. He describes the office of a real priest, and then shews that Christ was called to that office, was qualified for it, and effectually discharged it. He possessed, indeed, some qualifications which never did nor could belong to priests merely human; but they were such as fitted him to accomplish that which none but one so qualified could accomplish. He did not offer the same animal sacrifices, nor present them in an earthly tabernacle, but those circumstances do not contradict the reality of his office,

or render the title of priest merely metaphorical. For unless he were really such, and unless he obtained more perfectly and permanently the benefits, in order to which any priesthood was ever instituted, it would have been mere trifling to identify his priesthood with that of Melchisedec, to shew its superiority to that of Aaron, and to prove the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice greater than of those offered under the law of Moses.

But the truth of these remarks will probably more fully appear during our ensuing discussion of these several particulars. In this Lecture we propose to consider the *order of priesthood* to which Christ belonged, as designated in the words of the Psalmist's prophecy. And as therein Messiah is saluted by God as a priest, so it is observable that he is saluted as belonging, not to the order of Aaron, or the Levitical priesthood, but to the order of Melchisedec. The inferences, deducible from this and the other expressions of the Psalm, may be summed up in the three following positions, viz. that Messiah's priesthood, as compared with the Levitical, is

- I. Different in kind.
- II. Preeminent in dignity, and
- III. Superior in efficacy.

I. It is *different in kind*; for, says Jehovah, Thou art a priest *after the order of Melchisedec*.

Brief is the narrative of Moses respecting Melchisedec. But no other person can be referred to in the Psalm, than he who is described as “king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all^d.” The endeavours of some learned men to identify him, who is called Melchisedec, with Enoch, or Shem, or some other of the Patriarchs, are unsatisfactory and futile. Still more so is the opinion that he was no other than Christ himself; an opinion for which there is no foundation. And although, perhaps, it was suggested by some expressions in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it would render the argument conducted by the Apostle, a mere string of truisms and equivocations^e.

^d Heb. vii. 1, 2.

^e For a very copious enumeration and careful examination of the various topics connected with the subject of this Lecture, the following Work may be consulted with great advantage: “Francisci Fabricii tractatus Philologico-theologicus de Sacerdotio Christi juxta ordinem Melchisedechi.” L. Bat. 1720.—Bergman, in his Commentatio in Psalmum 110, (p. 129—160.) has given the substance of that Work, with which his own opinions generally coincide, and has applied it to illustrate the sixth chapter to the Hebrews; upon which he has given the most satisfactory comment which the Author has yet seen.

There is no need or pretext to look for such mysteries in the short narrative given in the book of Genesis. It explicitly attests those facts which are sufficient for our information. Melchisedec, the king of Salem, was also priest of the Most High God, uniting in his person both those offices. And the Apostle does indeed cursorily notice this correspondence to the office of Christ, who is the *king* of righteousness and peace, as well as a *priest* after the order of Melchisedec. But it is in the *latter character* that he is directly and principally engaged in comparing *Melchisedec with Christ*, in order to shew in what respects Melchisedec was so *likened* to the Son of God, that the latter is afterwards saluted as a High-priest after the similitude of the former. As “no one taketh the priesthood” to himself, we may reasonably conclude that Melchisedec was specially called of God; and that he was so called to that office in order that he might exhibit a priesthood which was typical of that of Christ, and which might afterwards be serviceable in evincing its nature.

Melchisedec, *as a priest*, was “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but, made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually^f.” These expressions have been un-

^f Heb. vii. 3

derstood by some as if they related to the divinity of Christ, and were descriptive of the manner, in which the silence of Moses respecting the parentage, birth, and descent, of Melchisedec, has caused his existence to afford a typical resemblance of the real eternity of Christ. But a similar omission is so common in other instances, that no such inference can satisfactorily be deduced from it; especially when we remember, that it is with special reference to Christ's *priesthood* that St. Paul enters on this comparison with Melchisedec, and that the principal feature in the comparison is contained in the words just cited. In fact, they point out to us how completely the *order* of Melchisedec differed from the *order* of Aaron. That the former was more ancient than the latter was not the only point of difference. The special provisions, which maintained and regulated the succession and legitimacy of the latter priesthood, and the age of performing its duties, wholly distinguished the one from the other. Not only the immediate parents, but the remoter genealogy of the Aaronic priests, were subjects of the nicest scrutiny; and even then the official labours were confined, as to the "beginning of the days" of the priesthood, to thirty years of age; and the "end of their priestly life" arrived at fifty. Now Melchisedec was neither found among their genealogies, nor

claimed descent from them; nor was he of an order so limited and peculiar; but being once called by God, he remained a perpetual priest, and so was likened to the Son of God. And when the priesthood of the Son of God is said to be of the order of Melchisedec, it is at once, therefore, clear, that it is not after that of Aaron. And this will suffice at present, in regard to this point.

II. Messiah's priesthood, as compared with the Levitical, was *preeminent in dignity*.

It was after the order of Melchisedec, an order wholly separate and independent, as well as more ancient than that of Aaron. Even Abraham, the great father of the whole nation of the Israelites, acknowledged the priestly claims, and received the priestly benediction, of Melchisedec. So that the Hebrews could not advance any thing against the *legitimacy* of that order, nor fail to acknowledge its *preeminence*. For the Levites received tithes of their *brethren* only by virtue of *their* office; but Melchisedec of those who were in no way directly connected with him; nay, even of Abraham, who was the friend of God, and was the recipient of his peculiar promises. Nay, Abraham received the blessing pronounced by Melchisedec, as proceeding from one greater in power, dignity, and authority; and that not in his

quality of a king, but in that of a *priest*‡. And although the family of Levi, among Abraham's descendants, were divinely called to the priestly office, yet in some sense we may say, that the acknowledgment of Melchisedec's priesthood was virtually binding on them, for they were not greater than their father Abraham. And since they were descendants of Abraham, and he paid tithes to Melchisedec; and as, in many instances, the deed of the ancestor affects the eminence and privileges of his descendants; it is not altogether abhorrent to the customs of the world, to say, (though of itself confessedly it is not a decisive argument,) that Levi, who afterwards, through the medium of his descendants in the priesthood received tithes of his brother Israelites, yet through Abraham, his ancestor, paid tithes to Melchisedec, as to a *priest*, though not to one of the same order. And if the priesthood of Melchisedec, being prior to that of Levi, and also acknowledged, in so decided a manner, by Abraham, was undeniably superior in dignity to the Levitical; then that of Christ, which was predicted as belonging to the same order, was also superior to the order of Aaron.

III. But we proceed to the third head of our present subject, under which we were to shew

‡ Heb. vi. 5, &c.

that Messiah's priesthood, as compared with the Levitical, was *superior in efficacy*. This will be found to result from the words of the Psalm, in three several respects: from the very introduction of another priesthood of such a kind; from the permanent nature of it; and from the person and character of him, on whom it is conferred.

1. *The very introduction of another priesthood, of such a kind*, leads us to infer its superior efficacy: "Thou art a priest after the order of Melchisedec." "If, therefore," argues the Apostle, "perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron^h?" It is obvious that such would never have been the case, had the Levitical priesthood been sufficient perfectly to accomplish those purposes which God had designed to secure. Yet very high honour had been conferred upon that priesthood. It was so interwoven with the institutions of the Jews, that most of the regulations of the law were under the superintendence of the priesthood; and the obligation of maintaining its dignity, and the constant exercise of its functions, was a principal feature in the principles and provisions of the Mosaic legislation. It held, indeed, so important

^h Heb. vii. 9.

a place, that the priesthood could not be changed, unless the law also were changed. And yet he, to whom, as being a priest of a more ancient order, the salutation of the Psalm was addressed, “pertained to a tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar;” even to the tribe of Judah, as being the Son of David, “of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthoodⁱ.” This seems to have portended the abolition of the Levitical order, since he who was destined to hold the order of Melchisedec, could not possibly unite *the two priestly orders* in his own person. And this supposition is yet far more evident from another consideration; viz. “that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another Priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of *an endless life*. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest FOR EVER after the order of Melchisedec^k.” Whatever change, therefore, was to take place, was to be *permanent*. He who, after this ancient order, attains the priesthood, is to retain it perpetually. The question before proposed, what need there was of this, if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, is easily answered. In this decree of Jehovah, we see that “there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before”

ⁱ Heb. vii. 14.

^k Heb. vii. 15—17.

respecting the Levitical order, because of “the weakness and unprofitableness thereof: for the law made nothing perfect¹.” But this argument respecting the imperfect and temporary nature of the law, on account of which alone it was ever designed to be set aside, is drawn from a divine oracle, which further leads us to such a conclusion, by giving direct testimony to the “bringing in of a better hope; by which we draw nigh to God^m.” For that the hope to which we are thereby introduced is a better one than the law could suggest, is evident, not merely from the determination of Jehovah to constitute *another* priest, and from the declaration that his office should be *perpetual* in his own person, but also from a circumstance, which still more decidedly distinguishes him, and the order of his priesthood. “Those priests were made *without an oath*.” That solemn declaration of the immutability of the divine counsel never accompanied the establishment of the legal priesthood; but this one, the Messiah, “was made *with an oath*, by him that said unto him, The LORD sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedecⁿ.” The Levitical priesthood, therefore, was not of full efficacy; the law which ordained it was temporary; the

¹ Heb. vii. 18, 19.

^m Heb. vii. 19.

ⁿ Heb. vii. 21.

covenant itself to which they appertained was imperfect: but the decree of Jehovah had designed to establish a better covenant, to bring in a better hope, and he so introduces to our notice the priesthood of Christ, as to assure us that he, even Jesus, was “made a surety of that better covenant.”

2. The superior efficacy of Messiah’s priesthood, not only appears from this substitution of it in place of the legal one, but in another and further respect, from its *permanency*. That permanency, declared and confirmed by God’s irrevocable oath, not only shews that it possesses the required efficacy, but that such efficacy is actually exerted and applied. “They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this one, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood,” one that never passes from him to any other^o.

“Wherefore,” adds the Apostle, “he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them^p.” These are well known words, replete with encouragement and never failing consolation, to all that truly repent and turn to God. And yet, perhaps, that encouragement is sometimes drawn from an expression, which suggests properly

^o ἀπαράβατον, Heb. vii. 23, 24.

^p Heb. vii. 25.

a different idea from that usually and popularly attached to it. Assuredly Jesus is able to save *to the uttermost*, if we were to understand that term to be descriptive of such as are *most deeply sunk in sin and wretchedness*. But the term is originally, and properly, descriptive, not of the *miserable estate* of those whom he saves, but of the *permanency, fulness, and perfectness* of that salvation, the blessings of which are promised to “them that come unto God by him⁹.” Not to a particular expression, but to the entire purport of the declaration should our attention be directed, if we need, and would enforce on others, the wide and ample encouragement which this passage breathes. For *if we come unto God by him*, who ever liveth to intercede for us, we may expect to obtain, by his mediation, a *complete, final, and everlasting*, liberation from all those fears and dangers, from which none but he ever could deliver us. Living for ever, he is *ever ready*; nor will he ever want the *will, the ability, or the authority*, which cause us to hope in him, as the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.

3. Lastly, we may be further assured of the efficacy of this priesthood, from the *person and character of him, on whom it is conferred*.

⁹ Ὅθεν καὶ σώζειν εἰς τὸ παντελές δύναται τοὺς προσερχομένους δι' αὐτοῦ τῷ Θεῷ, πάντοτε ζῶν κ.τ.λ. Compare Luke xiii. 11. and Macc. iii. 12. 31; vii. 40; xi. 30.

“THOU art a priest for ever.” To whom were these words addressed? To David’s Lord; to the only begotten Son of God; to him who, though partaker of our nature, was yet without sin; and who has now entered into that glory predicted in the former part of the Psalm, and therefore unites, in his own person, the functions of king and priest over and for the benefit of his Church. “Such a High-priest became us,” such a one was qualified to profit us, “who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens: who needeth not daily, as those High-priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s; for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men High-priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore^r.”

The contrast in this passage between “men, who have infirmity,” and “the Son, who is consecrated for evermore,” is a very striking testimony to the *divinity* of our High-priest. For if he were other than divine, he could not be consecrated for evermore; nor could he have “passed through the heavens” there to appear in the presence of God for us. And if the fact were otherwise, we

^r Heb. vii. 26—28.

could not have relied so entirely on the purity of his character, the sufficiency of his offering, and the prevalence of his intercession. But if we are assured, as we are, by so many satisfactory proofs, of the truth of that doctrine; and if we further learn that not only God decreed and promised to consecrate a priest after the order of Melchisedec, but that he has long since superseded the observance of the Levitical law, and disturbed the succession of Levitical priests; then may we be convinced, that a better hope has already been brought in, and a better covenant ratified; and that Jesus, who died, and rose again, and ascended on high, is that Lord and Christ, who is consecrated for evermore to be *the High-priest of our profession*.

Now if the services of the priests under the law still left a more perfect sacrifice to be offered by one of more dignity and ability than themselves, how can we hope that *our* deficiencies can be supplied, except by him who was destined to that office? How shall we escape from wrath, if we neglect that better covenant, that better hope, that effectual sacrifice, which we owe to Christ Jesus? And if the priests of old were not suffered to continue in their office by reason of death, neither are we in our respective states of probation. We are hastening fast to the close of our lives, and to the termination of the duties of our station. But

while our lives continue, and those duties require our attention, we need the instruction and support of religion both for our guidance through the difficulties of duty, and for that expectation of future blessedness, which may render us faithful, cheerful, and persevering. The subject which has this day been considered, will in vain have occupied our thoughts, unless it tend to increase our estimation of Christ, and of his Gospel. We are, as is elsewhere observed^s, “complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” But if we are so to any saving purpose, we must also be “circumcised in him with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.” As being “dead in our sins, we are buried with Christ in baptism;” and, through the “bringing in of a better hope,” we are “risen with him,” and our “trespasses are forgiven” through his atonement. And since he “liveth for evermore,” if we now believe in him, flee to him for refuge, value his atonement and intercession, and so follow his steps, that, in our measure, we also be “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,”—then shall we be in this world spiritually alive unto God, and in the world to come have life everlasting.

^s Col. ii. 10—13.

LECTURE XVI.

IN WHAT SANCTUARY, AND UNDER WHAT COVENANT
CHRIST MINISTERS AS A PRIEST;
AND WHAT ARE THE METHOD AND EFFECTS
OF HIS MINISTRATION.

HEB. VIII. 1, 2, 6, 7.

Of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an High-priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.—Now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

Two Lectures have now been delivered on that portion of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which its author treats respecting the priesthood of Christ. Our text will lead us to recapitulate what has been already advanced, and to specify the several topics which remain to be considered in reference to the same subject.

“Of the things which we have spoken this is the sum.” We have in Jesus Christ “such an

High-priest" as we have described; "one who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; who learned obedience by the things which he suffered, and can, therefore, be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He was the Christ, yet he did not assume the priesthood presumptuously, or without reason; for Jehovah had long before, even with an oath, declared and ratified his designation to the office. He saluted him as a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. And such being the order of his priesthood, it appears, upon comparing it with that of Aaron, that it is a priesthood different in kind, preeminent in dignity, and also, for three reasons, superior in efficacy. For the very design of introducing another order implies the imperfection, and, therefore, the abolition, of the Levitical; in order that the predicted one may accomplish those purposes for which the Levitical was weak and insufficient. Further, the permanent and unsuccessive character of the predicted order shews that no other subsequent one is needful. And, thirdly, the character and divine nature of him, on whom it was conferred, gives full assurance of its perfect and perpetual efficacy when exercised by him.

"The word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son a High-priest, "who is

consecrated for evermore^a.” He is “set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,” as was predicted in the same Scripture which so long before announced his priesthood. And it is also matter of history, that Jesus Christ in whom all these predictions are fulfilled, and to whom the office of perpetual High-priest appertains, was, in fact, “exalted with great triumph unto his kingdom in heaven,” there to reign until all enemies are put under his feet, and to be the head over all things to his Church; inasmuch as he is a king and a priest, a king superior to David,—a priest superior to Aaron,—a king and priest as Melchisedec was.

At this period of our inquiries we are led to ask, what is the *sanctuary* in which he officiates, what is the *ministry* which he discharges, what is the *sacrifice* which he offers, and what is the *covenant* of which he is the mediator? These four leading particulars are brought under our notice immediately after the Apostle’s recapitulation of the topics previously handled; and his reasoning respecting them remains for our present consideration. Following the *order* in which the Apostle’s *method of arguing* has led him to treat of them, we shall in this Lecture discuss the following questions:

^a Heb. vii. 28.

I. What is the *sanctuary* in which Christ ministers as our High-priest?

II. What is the *covenant* of which he ratifies and bestows the promises?

III. What is the method, and what the effect, of his *ministration*?

I. In what *sanctuary* does Christ minister as our High-priest? He is described by the Apostle, as “a Minister of the sanctuary, and of the *true tabernacle*, which the Lord pitched, and not man^b.” Or, as he more distinctly expresses it in the following chapter, “Christ is 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^c.” That he has so ascended we know, as one of the prominent facts of the Gospel history. But how does it appear that he ascended to enter on his ministrations *in heaven*, as the *sanctuary* in which alone he officiates as a priest?

In his preliminary enumeration of the functions and qualifications of the priesthood, the Apostle has observed, that “every High-priest, taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and

^b Heb. viii. 2.

^c Heb. ix. 24.

sacrifices for sins^d.” Having closed his discussion of the other particulars, and approaching to the consideration of this only remaining one, under which the topics just enumerated are included, he then repeats the fundamental principle, of which he is about to ascertain the application to Christ. He is “a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every High-priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that *this man* have somewhat also to offer^e.” It is already evident, that if he is a High-priest, he is such in heaven. And since he is a priest, and that for ever, and since he *is now in heaven*, he must in heaven present those offerings, which his priesthood requires, or they cannot be presented at all; for he is to remain in heaven, whither he has ascended, “until all his enemies be made his footstool;” and he will, therefore, no more return from thence until the consummation of all things. His, therefore, is that “Sanctuary, and true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched, and not man;” “a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building^f,” or creation; not belonging to the order of visible created things on earth, but invisible in heaven.

^d Heb. v. 1.

^e Heb. viii. 2, 3.

^f Heb. ix. 11.

Again, Messiah must discharge his priestly office in heaven, *because on earth he cannot*. “For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law^s.” The law confines that office to the tribe of Levi, to which Messiah did not belong. He, therefore, who, as the Messiah, sprung from the tribe of Judah, could not offer sacrifice on earth, for such a proceeding would have been a direct violation of the law. That supposition is also inconsistent with the solemn oath, which constituted him an everlasting priest, and, therefore, not one appertaining to the successive Aaronic priesthood; but which ascribed the possession of that dignity to one, who “sat at the right hand of God,” and who, therefore, officiated, not on earth, but in heaven.

Again, the priests under the law, who ministered in the earthly tabernacle, “served unto the *example and shadow of heavenly things*^b,” for their service, and the tabernacle in which they performed it, were temporary, and prefigured the introduction of a correspondent, but more perfect, ministry, in another and heavenly sanctuary. This appears from the admonition given to Moses, “when he was about to make the tabernacle.” “See,” saith God to him, “that thou make all

^s Heb. viii. 4.

^b Heb. viii. 5.

things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mountⁱ.” Whether the directions were merely given in words, or whether some visible pattern was exhibited to him, it is clear that he was enjoined to observe *a particular arrangement* with the greatest exactness. This would not have been needful, had there been no important reason for it. And that assigned by the Apostle is sufficient and satisfactory. The whole arrangement was designed to typify the heavenly sanctuary, and the entrance of Messiah therein with an offering, of which those of the Levitical priests were but an example, and shadowy resemblance. How exact was that resemblance, will appear hereafter.

Although, therefore, if Christ had remained on earth, he could not have been a priest, yet, “*now*,” because he is no longer on earth, but has passed through the heavens, and has entered into that true tabernacle, of which that formed by Moses, as well as the Jewish temple, framed upon the same model, presented only a typical resemblance, “he hath obtained *a more excellent ministry*^k.” The place in which he exercises it might lead us to adopt such a conclusion. But its superiority is more directly and convincingly deduced from another consideration, which will

ⁱ Heb. viii. 5. See Exod. xxv. 40.

^k Heb. viii. 5.

eventually guide us to perceive, not only why his ministry is more excellent than that of the Levitical priests, but *why it is exercised in heaven*. If he had ministered under the same *covenant* that they did, his ministrations would not have been superior to their's, because they could only have been the means of procuring the fulfilment of the very same promises which that covenant promulgated. But herein consists the excellence of his ministry, in that "he is the mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises¹;" and the degree of excellence is in exact proportion to the superiority of that covenant, and of the promises which belonged to it. This remark will shew why we now proceed, in the *second* place, to consider,

II. What is the *covenant*, of which Christ ratifies and bestows the promises? The Apostle terms it, "a better covenant, established upon better promises." In fact, it must be a *better* covenant, if it is established upon *better promises*. And we have, therefore, to enquire,

1. Whether another covenant was to be established? and

2. Whether it was to be established upon better promises?

¹ Heb. viii, 6.

1. First, then, we have reason for expecting that, under the Messiah, *another covenant was to be established*. Not, indeed, if the former one were sufficient, for then it would not have been needful. “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second^m.” Now the covenant under which the Jews enjoyed all their peculiar privileges as a nation, by which all the ritual of their religion was regulated, and in which they exclusively trusted, was that made in the wilderness. Yet, by their continued idolatries, they violated that covenant; and, about the time when they were once more punished, by the Babylonish captivity, for the breach of one of its fundamental principles, God expressly declared, by the mouth of Jeremiah, that he would supersede the covenant, which had been found so ineffectual, and introduce another. “Finding fault with them, he saith, (rather, *finding fault* with the covenant, *he saith to them*ⁿ;) Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and

^m Heb. viii. 7.

ⁿ Μεμψόμενος γὰρ αὐτοῖς λέγει κ.τ.λ.

I regarded them not, saith the Lord^o." It is true, that, after the captivity, they were in some respects more faithful in their adherence to the pure worship of Jehovah; yet the declaration respecting the introduction of another covenant was not contradicted. We must therefore conclude that the divine purpose respecting it remained unaltered; and, therefore, if not the very same, yet sufficient reasons still existed for such an alteration. The truth was that it did not accomplish all that it was in the divine intention to effect; and its inefficacy corresponded to its imperfect nature, which required another and more adequate provision. The Jews themselves expected that the prediction would be fulfilled in the days of the Messiah; and if indeed there has been no Messiah, it has yet had no fulfilment. But if Jesus be the Messiah, by him that new covenant has been introduced, and we may expect to find it decidedly distinguished from that anciently made with the Israelites. This leads us to observe,

2. That the new covenant was to be established upon *better promises*. The essential nature of a covenant, in fact, depends upon the promises connected with it; for the very object of a covenant is the ratification of those promises. Let us hear them, from the mouth of Jehovah

^o Jer, xxxi. 31, 32; cited in Heb. viii. 8, 9.

himself, what are the promises of the new covenant to be ratified in the days of Messiah.

The *first* specifies the implantation of a pure and ready obedience. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel.—After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."—The *second* adds the assurance of favour and security, to those who are thus made to be conformable to the will of God; "and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." The *third* describes the extensive and perfect knowledge that shall prevail in those days, when "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least unto the greatest:" or, as another prophet expresses it, at this happy time, "All thy children shall be taught of God, and great shall be the peace of thy children^p."—The *fourth* promise relates to that inquiry, which is a subject of primary and intense interest to sinners, and a satisfactory answer to which lays the foundation for all that true peace, enlightened gratitude, and willing obedience, which are in substance announced in the three former promises: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and their iniquities, will I remember no more^q."

^p Isai. liv. 13. ^q Heb. viii. 10—12; cited from Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

The enumeration of these promises, as *peculiar* to the new covenant predicted as future in the days of Jeremiah, is an implied declaration, that the fulfilment of them was *inadequately secured* by the former covenant. Whatever purposes it was designed to serve, and doubtless they were many and important, and might easily be specified, yet it did not so distinctly announce, nor so perfectly accomplish, the promises of that blessedness, which is eminently needful to sinful man, if he is either to obtain eternal salvation, or to live in the joyfulness of the assured hope of it, or to be fitted for the participation of it. Something was yet wanting to effect and make known that complete expiation of sin, which alone could authorize the expectation of a remission so sure and so final. Man had not as yet attained to that knowledge of God, which gives him “the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.” He had not been introduced to that state of higher privilege, when he has “fellowship both with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,” and partakes of “the Communion of the Holy Ghost.” He had not been so “established unblameable in holiness,” as he may be when “the love of Christ constraineth him,” and when the motives and dispositions to holy obedience are “written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not on tables of stone,

but on the fleshly tables of the heart." However valuable we may deem the promises of the first covenant, yet, if the covenant of which Jesus Christ is the mediator, be *that new covenant* predicted by Jeremiah, we cannot hesitate to allow that it is, indeed, a *better* covenant, because it is established upon *better promises*.

"In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away^r."—For it had become old, not only as prior in point of time, but as now out of date; as having been temporary in its purpose, and defective in its very nature. Because of the reasons which occasioned it at first, it was indeed to be continued until the Jews ceased to be a nation. Yet when the Apostle wrote, the new one was already introduced, and the old one not only was virtually superseded, but was, in fact, about to be done away, by the subversion of that civil polity, with which its temporal promises were connected, and of that ministry, which never was designed to be the actual and perfect medium by which better and spiritual promises were to be bestowed. What the Apostle then intimated, and what was then only approaching, is now distinctly manifest, for it has actually taken place. There remains no longer any other

^r Heb. viii. 13.

ministry, than that more excellent one, which Christ, our High-priest, has obtained, as the mediator of a better covenant, and the dispenser of better promises. Let us now pass on to consider,

III. What is the method, and what the effect of his *ministration*.

Since the Apostle has declared its excellence to be in proportion to the excellence of the blessings promised by the better covenant, we shall perhaps not err in laying down this as the principle by which to guide our inquiry, that the *ministry* of the *Levitical* priests was *inferior* in excellence, *if it could not secure such promises*, and that of *Christ* is *superior*, *if it avails to that purpose*. We shall be called, therefore, to *compare* the method and effect of their respective ministrations.

“The first covenant had ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary^s,” and they were arranged in compliance with the divine directions given to Moses, and in conformity to “the pattern shewed to him in the mount,” so that the Levitical priests might serve therein “unto the example and shadow of heavenly things^t.” “For there was a tabernacle made; the first,—which is called the sanctuary; and after the second veil,

^s Heb. ix. 1.

^t Heb. viii. 5.

the tabernacle, which is called the Holiest of all. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God; but into the second went the High-priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people^t." Such was the sanctuary, and such the service of the *Levitical priests*. But the arrangement was figurative, and the service of imperfect efficacy.

1. *The arrangement was figurative.* "The Holy Ghost, this signifying, that the way into the holiest was not made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing; which (tabernacle) was a figure for the time then present^u." As all other regulations of the Mosaic law, respecting the tabernacle, and the divine service therein performed, were typical of those better and heavenly things, according to the similitude of which they were arranged, so also was that department of it just noticed. Why were the ordinary priests excluded from that portion of the tabernacle, in which the emblematic symbol of the divine presence "dwelt amidst the thick darkness?" And why was even the High-priest permitted to enter therein *only once a year*, on the great day of atonement, there to offer up an external and visible

^t Heb. ix. 2—6.

^u Heb. ix. 8, 9.

medium of reconciliation, first for his own sins, and then for those of the nation at large? If the entire tabernacle were made after a heavenly pattern, then this manifestly shewed that heaven itself was yet closed, except to him, who could bring thither an adequate expiation for the sins of those, who, by their guilt as sinners, were banished from the presence of God. But since, as long as that tabernacle stood, that same exclusion remained, the Holy Spirit thereby signified, and continued to signify, that, during the continuance of the tabernacle, (at least until the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, at the death of Jesus,) the way into the heavenly sanctuary was still closed, and that still there was needed the introduction of a better hope, by which we may all once more draw nigh unto God, and have access to him with confidence.

2. But again ; the offerings which were made in that tabernacle, which, for the time it existed, was a figure of a greater and more perfect tabernacle, were, in themselves, of *imperfect efficacy*; certainly insufficient to secure, and assure to us, the fulfilment of the better promises of the predicted covenant ; without the fulfilment of which we cannot attain eternal redemption. Of this we cannot entertain an assured hope, unless we are “made perfect, as it respects the conscience.”

That conscience accuses us of sin, and we know its guilt and condemnation; and the remaining ignorance, depravity, and helplessness, of corrupt nature, will induce us to cry out, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" The sacrifices of the law, however they might typify a more perfect and availing sacrifice, could not in themselves, nor professedly, ratify and ensure any other promises than those of the covenant under which they were offered. Now for many offences the Mosaic law provided no atonement, but left the offender to be the subject of utter excision from the congregation of the Lord; and the promises made therein to those sins of ignorance and infirmity, for which an atonement was provided, professedly had respect only to the removal of *ceremonial* uncleanness, and *temporal* penalties. For the removal of such visible disabilities, and for restoration to present and carnal privileges, any ordinances might have sufficed. But it pleased God to ordain those gifts and sacrifices, and those "carnal ordinances consisting of meats and drinks, and divers washings," which at the same time answered the immediate purpose, and also, as far as *animal* sacrifices, and *visible* ordinances, can typify *better* sacrifices, and *heavenly* services, had some analogy to that all-sufficient sacrifice, and more availing service, which was reserved

for the more excellent ministry of the predicted everlasting priest.

It only remains that we consider the superiority of *Christ's* ministry, both as to its *method* and *efficacy*. Premising the remark, that, in both cases, the ministry *peculiar* to the priest consisted in the *offering* of the blood, which maketh atonement, whereas the sacrifice itself was killed by him on whose behalf it was offered, whether he were one of the priests, or one of the people. The comparison of the *sacrifices* under the law, with that of Christ, will be the subject of another Lecture. At present we are only comparing the *ministry* in the tabernacle which *followed* the sacrifice, and was the essential part of it, as far as *expiation* was concerned.

Now "Christ being come, a High-priest of good things to come," that is, whose office respected the bestowment of those better promises of the predicted and typified better covenant, "by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once (*once for all*) into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us*." Since he has entered into

* Heb. ix. 11, 12.

heaven itself, there to appear in the immediate presence of God for us, it follows that we have now access, not only to the privileges of the visible Church on earth, but to those of the triumphant and invisible Church in heaven. And since he has not only entered once, but once for all, it is equally certain that the efficacy of the atonement, which was accomplished by his priesthood, is perfect and permanent; that he hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers; and that there being to us such a High-priest, we no longer need the services of priests, in the *proper* sense of the word, that is, of such as *offer gifts and sacrifices for sin*; since he has done it perfectly, and ever remains in that tabernacle, into which he has entered as our forerunner, because he hath gone thither, according to his own promise, “to prepare a place for us.”

But this better hope may be still further confirmed, if we consider that, as the ordinances of the first covenant were effectual to the purposes for which they were designed, the same God, who ordained them, has now appointed another priesthood, which can completely effect those higher, spiritual, and eternal objects, which were needful to man, and which God promised to bestow, in and by that new covenant, to which that other priesthood belongs. “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer,

sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?!"

Both the one, and the other, of these were appointed by God; and, therefore, the superior efficacy of the latter cannot be accounted for by that circumstance alone, but by the superior fitness, and more accurate adaptation, of the means employed. Though the legal victim be spotless, and without blemish, that cannot be in respect of *moral* purity; and can, therefore, at best, be only *typical* of that spotless sacrifice, which alone can be the medium of the *internal* purification of the *conscience*. The blood of Christ alone is the blood of one, who was truly, and in all respects, "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." Through that eternal Spirit, which dwelt in his human nature, preserved him from the pollution of the flesh, raised him from the grave, and delivered him from that death, by which he could not be holden,—*he*, since his resurrection, has ascended to heaven, and there offered himself without spot to God. Thus he has offered a sacrifice, and discharges a ministry, which can

† Heb. ix. 13, 14.

avail to purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God;" and not merely to the purifying of the flesh.


My brethren, if the law, which could not accomplish these things, "in that it was weak through the flesh," has been superseded on that account; and if God, "sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh," this more efficacious proceeding is available for *us*. The design of it is, that "the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us, who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Let us, then, so lay hold on the hope set before us, that "our consciences may be purged from dead works to serve the living God!" Does our conscience accuse us of sin? "A full, perfect, and sufficient, sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, is offered for the sins of the whole world." We may, therefore, hope and believe that, by the merits and death of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, God will be "merciful to our unrighteousness, and that our sins and iniquities he will remember no more."—Does our conscience also convince us of our inherent and prevailing depravity? We "escape the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" and, by the "exceed-

ing great and precious promises," ratified and fulfilled in and by him, we become "partakers of a divine nature." He will, by that Holy Spirit, which proceedeth from the Father and the Son, "put his laws in our minds, and write them in our hearts," if we duly seek to him for this. And then shall we attain that peace with God, which we have through our Lord Jesus Christ; and which leads us to be assured, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is "to us a God," that all his perfections are engaged on our behalf, and that "we are to him a people," even "a peculiar people, zealous of good works."—And thus "to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, is life eternal." For he, whose blood can cleanse our conscience from dead works,—from works done by those who are dead in sin, and of which the wages is death,—so that we shall serve the living God in spirit and in truth, He, I say, hath obtained eternal redemption for us. "For this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament, (or covenant,) that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance^z." May God grant that, "being called according to God's purpose, by his Spirit working in us

^z Heb. ix. 15.

in due season, we may through grace obey the calling; may be justified freely; may be made the sons of God by adoption; may be made like the image of God's only begotten Son Jesus Christ; may walk religiously in good works; and, at length, by God's mercy, attain to everlasting felicity^a!"

^a Art. XVII.



LECTURE XVII.

THE SACRIFICE WHICH CHRIST OFFERED AS OUR
HIGH-PRIEST.

HEB. IX. 15.

For this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament (Covenant), that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first Testament (Covenant), they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

How great is the satisfaction derived from the promise of an earthly inheritance; how pleasing the anticipations which it occasions; and how sedulous the attentions which it calls forth from the favored dependent of the future benefactor! When the expected inheritance devolves on him who has so long possessed it only in hope, how readily and carefully does he adopt the measures which are necessary in order to his investiture therein; and with what complacency does he review the long line of ancestry, or the succession of fortunate circumstances, to which he is indebted for his possessions! So did the nation of Israel feel, when they looked forward to the

inheritance of Canaan; and when, at a later period, they rejoiced because of the possession of it, and of their descent from Abraham, to whom it was first promised. But *he* also sought “a better country, even a heavenly one;” and that same heavenly and eternal inheritance belonged not to him only, but to all those who, whether his lineal descendants or not, were heirs of the same faith and obedience. We are called to a knowledge of the same inheritance, which is reserved in heaven; and our’s it shall eventually be, “if we walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had yet being uncircumcised^a.” Circumcision, indeed, and the law to which it obliged the Jews, were seals of the promise of God relative to the earthly Canaan, upon the possession of which they entered shortly after the ratification of the first, or Sinaitic, covenant; and by virtue of that covenant, and by the observance of its terms, they retained the possession of it. But the introduction into the heavenly Canaan is provided for by another and better covenant, promised indeed, and partially made known, to Abraham, but actually ratified, and fully promulgated, only in these latter days, when, as the words of our text speak, Christ became “the mediator of the new covenant, that,

^a Rom. iv. 11.

by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of (the) eternal inheritance.”

Death is mentioned as the medium, through which such a promise is conferred, and by which its performance is so guaranteed to us, that we need not doubt of attaining the inheritance so promised. And it is of the *death of Christ* that the Apostle speaks, the powerful efficacy of whose blood he had established in the preceding verses. And because, as he there argued, Christ did, “through the eternal Spirit, offer himself without spot to God;” and because also the “blood” which he shed, when he became a sacrifice, avails to “purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God;” for this cause he is the mediator of the new covenant, which announces the promise of eternal inheritance to those, who become parties to it by complying with its terms. And under this better covenant we are not only redeemed from the penalties due to the violation of the first covenant, but even from the obligation and observance of it.

The subject to be considered in the present Lecture, is the only one remaining of those specified on a former occasion, viz. “the *sacrifice* of the death of Christ, and the benefits which we receive thereby.” Of this subject we shall

treat, with the guidance of the Apostle, under the three following heads :

- I. As serving to ratify the new covenant.
- II. As contrasted to the sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual, and
- III. As the completion of Scripture prophecy.

I. We have to consider the sacrifice of Christ, as serving to ratify the new covenant. — And here it will be necessary to explain why we employ the term *covenant*, when the passage of this Epistle, from whence our argument is to be borrowed, presents, in our authorized version, the word *Testament*, and appears to argue in a manner corresponding to the thing signified by that word, when it is used to describe the instrument by which a testator disposes of his property. It is, however, known to many here present, that in those passages, where we find *either* of these words in our version of the Christian Scriptures, the original word is one and the same ; and that although it may appear to have in the Christian Scriptures, and in classical authors it really has, both these senses, it is the term by which the Seventy have rendered a word, which signifies a covenant, and never a testament ; and which is never rendered testament in that portion of our Bibles. The only plea for so translating it in

any passage, is derived from the portion of the Epistle to the Hebrews now under consideration, because it has been supposed that the author here illustrates the necessity of the death of Christ, from the circumstance that the death of a testator must precede, and occasion the validity and effect of his last will and testament. But if that comparison applies to the consequences of *Christ's* death, so that the benefits of it may be considered as a legacy to his Church, it is wholly inapplicable to the case of *Moses*, which is mentioned in immediate connexion; because his death was long subsequent to the establishment of the law, and had no effect whatever upon its obligations or benefits. It is true that there is some plausibility in the reasons for such a translation, and that there is some difficulty in adopting that for which we have avowed a preference. But this difficulty is not insuperable, and so to interpret the passage, preserves a unity of subject, and a connectedness of argument, which are wanting, if we suppose that either the Apostle has argued upon the double sense of which the word is capable, or has used it in the same passage as significant of two very different notions. Waving, however, any farther discussion of this kind, which more properly belongs to the commentator, I will only now subjoin a version of the passage in question, which retains the rendering of the original

word which our translators employed throughout the eighth, and in the former part of this same ninth Chapter, and which they afterwards resume. It differs not essentially from many earlier versions of the same passage, for the principle upon which it proceeds is by no means a new and fanciful one; and it is proposed in that form by one, who has most carefully investigated and ably defended it^b.

“ On this account he is the mediator of the new covenant, in order that, death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first covenant, the called might receive the promise of (the) eternal inheritance. For where there is a covenant, there also it is necessary that the death of the ratifier should be. For a covenant over dead victims is valid; since it is of no strength while the ratifier is living. Whereupon, neither was the first covenant inaugurated without blood. For every commandment according to the law having been spoken by Moses to all the people, having taken the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, he sprinkled both the book itself, and all the people, saying, This is

^b See Faber's treatise on the Genius and object of the Patriarchal, the Levitical, and Christian dispensations. Book III. c. ii.

the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined to you^c.”

A reference is here made to the custom, very generally adopted in ancient times, and of which numerous instances occur in the Hebrew Scriptures, of solemnly *ratifying* covenants *over a sacrifice*^d. The accompanying ceremonial might not be always the same; but the *death* of the victim employed as the ratifier was essential to establish the acknowledged validity of the covenant. It appeared, in the last Lecture, that the law of Moses was termed a *covenant*, in which the people engaged to obey God, and he engaged to guide and protect them; and, in the words just cited, we are reminded of the method which was observed in the ratification of that covenant. But another and better covenant to be introduced in

^c Exod. xxiv.—Διὰ τοῦτο διαθήκης καινῆς Μεσίτης ἐστίν, ὅπως, θανάτου γενομένου, εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῶν ἐπὶ τῇ πρώτῃ διαθήκῃ παραβάσεων, τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν λάβωσιν οἱ κεκλημένοι τῆς αἰωνίου κληρονομίας. Ὅπου γὰρ διαθήκη, θάνατον ἀνάγκη φέρεσθαι τοῦ διαθεμένου· Διαθήκη γὰρ ἐπὶ νεκροῖς βεβαία, ἐπεὶ μήποτε ἰσχύει ὅτε ζῆ ὁ διαθέμενος. Ὅθεν οὐδ' ἡ πρώτη χωρὶς αἵματος ἐγκεκαίνισται. Λαληθείσης γὰρ πάσης ἐντολῆς κατὰ νόμον ὑπὸ Μωϋσέως παντὶ τῷ λαῷ, λαβῶν τὸ αἷμα τῶν μόσχων καὶ τράγων, μετὰ ὕδατος καὶ ἐρίου κοκκίνου καὶ ὑσσώπου, αὐτό τε τὸ βιβλίον καὶ πάντα τὸν λαὸν ἐρράντισε, λέγων· Τοῦτο τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης, ἧς ἐνετείλατο πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὁ Θεός. Heb. ix. 15—20.

^d See Gen. xv. and Jer. xxxiv.

the latter days, was promised by the mouth of Jeremiah; and the terms upon which it was to be constructed were at the same time specified, one important particular of which was the complete remission of sins. And here we scarcely need to be reminded, that our Lord himself described his own death as subservient to the establishment of the covenant which had respect to such a purpose. "This," said he, "is my blood of the New Testament (*covenant*), which is shed for many, for the remission of sins^e." He, therefore, considered himself as the victim, whose blood would ratify the new covenant promised by the prophet. And the Apostle assigns the reason why he was the mediator thereof, dying to establish its validity between the contracting parties upon the terms proposed. He was a victim fitted by his spotless character, his exalted nature, and the moral efficacy of his blood, to ratify a covenant, which was established upon promises so important, and so far transcending those which were guaranteed by the blood of animal victims.—Did the law of Moses prescribe sacrifices, and ceremonial expiations, for particular offences against the terms of the first covenant, and with reference to the particular circumstances of those who lived under it? The new covenant no longer

^e Matt. xxii. 28.

required them ; and, therefore, the same sacrifice by which it was ratified, delivers both from the penalty, which would have been consequent upon the neglect of such observances, and from the obligation to comply with them at all.—Were there many offences for which no such method of expiation was pointed out? The new covenant promises plenary remission, and the sacrifice, which ratifies the covenant, secures its fulfilment ; and has thus superseded a law, which was “the ministration of condemnation,” by the introduction of another, which is “the ministration of righteousness.”

But as sacrifices were not only employed at the first *introduction*, but also formed a prominent and permanent feature in the *established ritual* of the law, we must proceed to consider the sacrifice of the death of Christ,

II. As contrasted to the sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual.—Now, in the method of sacrificial oblations under that ritual, especially of those which, in their object and manner, may be considered as typical of Christ’s sacrifice, there were *three* distinct proceedings, each of which has its corresponding antitype in the sacrifice of Christ. If the offering was made on behalf of an individual, he himself *presented* his victim, and *dedicated* it to God, before the altar which stood in the court of the priests. If it was made on behalf of the

whole congregation, then the priest, as the representative of the people, presented it himself. Then followed the imposition of hands, and the symbolical transfer of guilt thereby to the victim, which was then *slain*. Afterwards the body of the victim was consumed without the camp, or without the city after they inhabited Jerusalem; and the *blood* was *sprinkled*, according to circumstances, either on the altar, or in the tabernacle; which last office was *peculiar* to the *priesthood*.

In a manner exactly conformable to that of the type, Christ voluntarily offered himself as a sacrifice to God previously to his actual apprehension, as appears from his discourses on that evening, and from his institution of the Lord's Supper; both of which shew, and more especially his solemn prayer recorded by St. John, that he distinctly foresaw, and readily consented to, his approaching death, as the victim whose life would be made an offering for sin. And, to this *commencement* of the sacrificial work of our redemption, many expressions of the Apostle seem to refer, as when he speaks of the blood of Christ, as the blood of one who "*offered himself* without spot to God^f," and as having "*once offered himself*, in order to bear the sins of many^g." But

^f Heb. ix. 14.—*ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν.*

^g Heb. ix. 28.—*προσενεχθὲς.*

as he has rather casually alluded to this, and all along proceeded upon the supposition that such an offering of himself had taken place, we will more particularly notice the correspondence of his sacrifice to the two other particulars which have been specified.—To these he expressly calls our attention in these words: “Moreover he (Moses) sprinkled with blood, both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission^h.”

In conformity to this statement, therefore, we have to observe,

1. That the blood of Christ, which the Apostle afterwards calls “the blood of sprinklingⁱ,” was required *in order to the dedication of the heavenly tabernacle*.

2. That he shed that blood *as the one availing sacrifice* once offered for the remission of sins.

1. As it was necessary that the *patterns* of things in the heavens, (and such we have before seen the visible tabernacle of the Jews was designed to be) should be purified with the blood of these animal sacrifices, so it was necessary that “the heavenly things themselves should be purified with better sacrifices than these^k.” If it be asked, why there is any need that the heavenly

^h Heb. ix. 21, 22.

ⁱ Heb. xii. 24.

^k Heb. ix. 23.

place should be purified, since it is ever holy, and nothing that defileth is admitted there? We answer, that neither was the tabernacle of the Jewish temple, really and of itself impure; and that the necessity for its purification is expressly denied by Moses to be on that account, being ascribed to a cause which equally applies to heaven itself; because that impurity belongs not to the place of worship, but to the state of those who desire to be admitted therein. The priest “shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness¹.” “Christ entered not into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us^m.” Being himself sanctified as our High-priest, he could enter into that holiest of all, and was furnished with somewhat to offer there on our behalf. Thus he dedicated that better sanctuary, and opened a way of access thither, even for sinful men; because he first entered therein with his own blood, the blood of a better sacrifice, which has expiated sin, and endued us with that better hope,

¹ Lev. xvi. 16.

^m Heb. ix. 24.

by which we even now draw nigh to God, and by which hereafter we may have an entrance ministered into his everlasting kingdom. Thus it is not because heaven itself is purified from any actual uncleanness, but because the blood of the everlasting covenant, there presented to God on our behalf, witnesses to the perfect expiation of sin; and that our cause is there pleaded by him, who accomplished that expiation on earth, and who, as our High-priest, for ever lives in heaven to prepare a place for us, that he may hereafter take us to himself; that where he is, there we may be also.

This opening of the heavenly temple to us manifestly depends upon the sufficiency and acceptance of that sacrifice which Christ offered, and, therefore, we further observe,

2. That He shed that blood as *the one availing sacrifice* once offered for the remission of sins.

It will appear, under the third head of this Lecture, that such was the divine purpose, as declared by the word of prophecy. And to that department of our subject we shall be naturally led by the remarks which remain for our immediate consideration, and which will be more particularly directed to the point, that this sacrifice was not to be offered *often*, but *once for all*.

In the first place, this was suitable to the person of *him* by whom it was to be offered.

It was necessary that the heavenly things should be purified with better sacrifices than those offered under the law, in order to obtain eternal redemption, and secure the promise of eternal inheritance. Nor yet was it necessary that Christ should effect this, by offering himself often, as the Jewish High-priest entered every year into the holy place with the blood of others. "For then must Christ often have suffered since the foundation of the worldⁿ." And it is obvious, that it was not the divine purpose that he should appear until a late period; and until that period arrived he had never actually completed that purpose for which his coming was appointed. But if when he appeared he was to accomplish that work which would suffice, *retrospectively*, "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant;" by a parity of reasoning, it would also, *prospectively*, be efficient to accomplish that purpose for ever, and once for all. And, therefore, now "once in the end of the world," that is, at the conclusion of the ages during which the Jewish economy was to subsist, in those latter days spoken of by the prophets, "he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." And if that sacrifice really availed for that purpose, if it could abolish and

ⁿ Heb. ix. 26.

destroy the body of sin, it must be so meritorious, that it need not be offered again. And, on the other hand, if there was any other method, whereby that important end could be secured, it would not have been necessary that Christ should ever appear to make his soul an offering for sin, much less that he should do it often.

Again, this arrangement was suited to *us*, on whose behalf he offered himself. For “as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment;” and as it is in order to give us hope in death of an eternal inheritance, and acceptance with God in the day of judgment, that we need remission of sins, and all other benefits of Christ’s passion; and as the disobedience of the first Adam introduced sin, and death as its penalty; so the second Adam, our representative and surety, need not often die, even if it were consistent with his participation of human nature to repeat that death by which his sacrifice for sin was accomplished. He was “once offered to bear the sins of many,” and, “being raised from the dead, he dieth no more,” but ever liveth to carry on the other purposes of his undertaking. Nor will he return from his glory, except finally to complete his work of redemption; when he will, “unto them that look for him, appear the second time without sin (*a sin-offering*), unto

salvation^o.” Thus perfect and sufficient is his oblation; for, being once offered, it needeth not repetition; which would have been needful, had any thing yet been wanting in the way of expiation for sin.

This leads us to observe, further, that, in this particular, the insufficiency of the sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual is very manifestly shewn. For not only are they found to be a shadow of future good things, and not the very image, substance, and reality, of those things; but it never was designed that the law should, by “those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect^r.” The very fact, that this yearly and even, in some instances, daily, *repetition* of the same sacrifices for the same purposes, was specially ordained and enjoined, is a manifest indication that they were not at first instituted as the means of perfect expiation, or as conveying the concomitant benefits. “For,” as the Apostle observes, in that case “would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers, once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins^q ;” that is, not so as to be alarmed and anxious respecting the need of any additional atonement. “But, in those sacrifices, there is a remembrance again made of sins every

^o Heb. ix. 28.

^r Heb. x. 1.

^q Heb. x. 2.

year^r ;” and, therefore, they were a standing testimony, that the expiation was not yet fully accomplished, though they were a memorial of God’s design, that in some such way, and in the fulness of time, he would effect that completely and really, which was heretofore done imperfectly and typically. And no other could be the use of those sacrifices, because “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin^s.” They might serve, as “a figure, for the time then present ;” but, for reasons before specified, they could not, as animal sacrifices, be an adequate expiation of the sins of rational beings ; in order to which a sacrifice must be offered in the same nature that sinned, by one who was himself without sin, and who was specially appointed and designed as the Lamb which God himself had provided as an availing burnt-offering.

III. It remains now only to point out, as the third division of our subject, that the sacrifice of Christ was the completion of Scripture prophecy.

From the various passages of the ancient Hebrew Scriptures, which predicted this important event, the Apostle has selected three, as presenting a comprehensive view of the divine purpose.

^r Heb. x. 3.

^s Heb. x. 4.

1. The first of these is from the fortieth Psalm. And it expressly contrasts that, which the Messiah was appointed to execute, with the sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual. "When he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice, and offering, thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings, and sacrifices for sin, thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will O God^t." As the Apostle convincingly argues, by so contrasting the two proceedings, it is obviously implied, that Christ "taketh away the first, that he may establish the second^u." The sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual are declared to be insufficient, and not acceptable, for the purpose required; which is to be accomplished by him, who "cometh, as it is written, to do the will of God." Although God "had no pleasure" in those sacrifices, yet in him, who was in that Psalm described, the Father was always well pleased. For that holy person not only rendered a perfect obedience in other respects, but was obedient even unto that death, of which he himself spoke as the act for which his heavenly Father *more especially* loved him. And if we consider those parts of the volume of the book, which were written before the Psalm was penned by David,

^t Heb. x. 5—7.

^u Heb. x. 9.

we may find several intimations that such was the will of God ; more especially, *in the beginning of the book*, as some would translate, we find the effectual triumph over sin ascribed to the seed of the woman.—If we understand the passage to speak of the chief article or design of the whole Bible, it might be equally shewn to be the sum, and substance, and ultimate purpose, of the several dispensations and ordinances, prior to the days of Messiah, that he should bring in an everlasting righteousness by his death on our behalf. And in those parts of it, which were later than the time of David, and to which he might prospectively refer, we find many clear and express testimonies to such a design, the fulfilment of which was reserved for the latter days, viz. that by the will of God, mentioned by the Psalmist, “we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all^x.”

2. This final and perfect offering is further evinced by the hundred and tenth Psalm, considered in connexion with the transactions of the Gospel history, and contrasted with all preceding sacrifices. For “every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for

^x Heb. x. 10.

ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool^y.” For this state of exaltation is ascribed to that glorious personage, who was David’s Son, and yet David’s Lord, and who is saluted when thus exalted, as “a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” He, therefore, has offered a sacrifice, previously to his entrance into that heavenly sanctuary, so perfect, that it needeth not to be repeated; he, “by one offering, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified^z.”

3. The Holy Ghost is a witness to us of this consolatory fact in another place, viz. in that passage of Jeremiah, where the introduction and blessings of the new covenant are predicted. For it is added to the promise of that covenant, “their sins and iniquities will I remember no more^a.” And, of course, where remission of these is granted so freely, so expressly, and so permanently, there is “no more offering for sin^b.”

From the subject which has been discussed, in this and three preceding Lectures, several important inferences are deduced by the Apostle. We have now, under the Gospel, “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated

^y Heb. x. 11—13.

^z Heb. x. 14.

^a Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

^b Heb. x. 17.

for us, through the veil of his flesh ;” and we have “ a High-priest over the house of God^c.” Therefore,

1. Let us “ draw near” unto that throne of grace to which Christ has given us access ; and there let us hold communion with that God, who no longer hides his face, and keeps us at a distance, but who has revealed himself fully, and invites us to approach him. Let us do this, “ with full assurance of faith,” because if we come not with that confident trust, and lively hope, we shall not “ receive any thing of the Lord ; and also, because he has given us the most abundant evidence of his readiness to accept us. We may boldly draw near, if we do so “ with a true heart,” sincerely penitent, and disposed to obedience, and so “ having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.”^d

2. Since we are baptized into the name of Jesus, and have had “ our bodies washed with pure water,” and have so been enlisted into the service of our heavenly leader, and proselyted to his holy religion, “ let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering ;” for he who has given us its promises is faithful, and we dishonour him by the want of confidence in his word. And we must so retain the pro-

^c Heb. x. 19—22.

^d Heb. x. 22.

fession of religion as to abound in all its holy fruits. By the purity of our principles, conversation, and example, let us “provoke one another unto love and to good works.”^e

3. Thirdly, that this end may be the more certainly attained, the means of grace must be diligently and perseveringly used. “Considering one another,” so as to stimulate each^h other in the pursuit of every good thing, we must not neglect the manifold advantages of social worship; nor “forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is^f.” “The day” of persecution was a fiery trial which would try the steadfastness of the faith of the Hebrews; and its “approach” was a powerful motive to attend to such an exhortation. But we all, in every age, are so in danger from seasons of temptation, that we need to use the same precautions; because


4. Lastly, we should dread apostasy from this holy faith, which reveals to us such a sacrifice: for there is now no other, which presents even the typical assurance of remission of sin. And if those, who were disobedient to the first, and now superseded, covenant, were severely punished, “of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under

^e Ver. 22—24.

^f Ver. 25.

foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace^g?”

^g Heb. x. 26—31.



LECTURE XVIII.

THE NATURE, OPERATIONS, AND BENEFITS OF FAITH, UNDER
THE OLD TESTAMENT DISPENSATION.—
ITS OBJECTS ENLARGED UNDER THE GOSPEL.—
APPROPRIATE EXHORTATION.

HEB. XI. 39, 40; XII. 1, 2.

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

IN seven Lectures now delivered on the Epistle to the Hebrews, we have been occupied in considering that part of it which may more directly be considered as *argumentative*. Not that the remaining portion of it contains nothing of an argumentative nature. But the arguments which remain are very similar in substance, and tend to confirm and illustrate the same positions, which the continuous argument of the former portion is employed to establish; and they are also

more immediately suited and adapted to practical exhortation. Several of these will be reviewed in the next Lecture. On this occasion it is proposed to direct your attention to that important and well known portion of this Epistle, of which our text presents at once a summary and an hortatory application^a.

It has already been observed, and it is evident throughout this Epistle, that they, to whom it was addressed, were in danger of negligence, or even of apostasy; not only because of the reasonings of their Hebrew brethren, and the splendour of the Mosaic ritual, which was still existing, and to which they were, for various reasons, much attached, but also because of the obloquy and persecution to which the profession of Christianity exposed them. This is more prominently apparent in that portion of the Epistle, to which our attention is now to be directed. It is introduced, and followed, by the express mention of the afflictions to which they were exposed. For it commences with an exhortation to persevere, notwithstanding their present trials, in the same steadfastness which they had maintained at a former period; and in the sequel of the passage the Apostle reminds them, that their own Scriptures attribute such dispensations, however grievous, to

^a Heb. x. 32; xii.

the sovereign appointment, and fatherly goodness, of God; and that “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” is the designed, suitable, and happy consequence, if they are rightly endured. Substantially to the same effect had been the statement of the Apostle in the former passage to which we have just referred, before he entered on a description and exemplification of that faith, by which the elders obtained a good report. The assurance that they “had in heaven a better and more enduring substance,” if it were possessed and recollected, would suffice to support them under present trials and privations, as it had heretofore done. “Cast not away, therefore, your confidence,” says the Apostle, “which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after having done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul^b.”

As I do not know that the topics, which our text contains, can be noticed in a more natural or more convenient manner, than that in which

^b Heb. x. 35—39.

they are there presented to us, let us first advert to the first clause of the text: "These all obtained a good report through faith." And herein we shall have to notice,

1. The faith which they possessed, and
2. Its beneficial operation in them.

1. Faith has no place in the mind with respect to those things, which we actually possess, or know by the evidence of the senses. It is, therefore, in another part of Scripture, contradistinguished from the actual sight of what we desire or hope for. And the Apostle here describes it to be "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen^c." Perhaps we may say, more accurately, and more conformably to the meaning of the original, that it consists "in *the confident expectation* of things hoped for, in *the conviction* of things not seen." Such a principle is, indeed, the foundation of all religion, because its promises relate to things which are future, and which, therefore, can only be hoped for, even if faith acknowledges their existence;

^c Heb. xi. 1. "Ἔστι δὲ πίστις, ἐπιζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων. Compare 2 Cor. ix. 4; xi. 17. Heb. iii. 14. The *marginal* rendering of ὑπόστασις is the same in the passage before us. — Compare also the use of ἐλέγχω in Joh. viii. 9; Acts xviii. 28. 1 Cor. xiv. 24. Tit. i. 9. James ii. 9; and *conviction* would not be unsuitable to 2 Tim. iii. 16.

and, since they are not subject to the examination of the senses, we can only have that conviction of their existence which is founded on the *testimony of another*. But faith, as a principle of action, is not confined to religion. Whenever we hope for any future advantage, either because it has been promised by a fellow-creature, or upon other grounds, we entertain that hope, because we have a belief in his veracity, or his goodness. If we rely upon his testimony respecting the existence and nature of any thing at a distance, we have that faith which has for its object things unseen; and it becomes a principle personally interesting, and prompting to actual measures on our part, if the testimony relates to persons, places, or things, in which we are individually concerned. Now, says St. John, when urging upon us an attention to “the testimony which God hath given us of his Son,” “if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater^d.” Faith in men’s promises and assertions is the principle of acquiescence in their fidelity and veracity; faith in God has for its object his more weighty and unerring testimony. The former of these animates and suggests the measures of the warrior, the philosopher, the merchant, and of every other human being; for, generally, they would not act

^d 1 John v. 7.

at all, unless they ventured to act upon the testimony of others, and with a confident expectation that success will attend suitable means directed to the objects which they severally have in view. Now faith, as it respects the promises of God respecting things hoped for, but unseen, is of the same general character. “If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it^e.” But it is faith, which leads us to recognize their existence, as declared in the volume of the book of God, which invests them with a reality perceived and acknowledged by the mind, and by which it is at once consoled under difficulty, and encouraged in duty. And when faith is thus firm, influential, and active, it produces a conduct conformable to the conviction produced, as surely, and as reasonably, as the intelligence conveyed to our minds, whether by human testimony, or by the transitory, yet ever-present, objects of sense.

“By it we believe that the worlds were made by God, and that he exists, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him^f.” Without such a faith “it is impossible to please him;” for without it we should neither desire, nor endeavour, to do so. But influenced by it, we shall so endure in the hour of affliction, and in the discharge of duty, “as if we saw him who is invisible.” “We

^e Rom. viii. 25.

^f Heb. xi. 6.

shall so have respect unto the recompence of the reward, as to esteem the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of earth ; and to prefer the suffering of affliction with the people of God, to the enjoyment of sin's pleasures for a season, knowing that we have in heaven a better and more enduring substance.”

Even when faith is considered as specially directed to Christ and his atonement, it is founded upon the recognition of the principles just specified, and still remains of the same general character. For our faith then has a special reference to the testimony which God has given of his Son ; a testimony, which announces to us the love of the Father in sending his Son into the world for us men, and for our salvation,—the voluntary undertaking of the work and its completion by the Son,—its acceptance by the Father as the sole plea and method of human salvation,—and all the other benefits of his cross and passion. The faith of a Christian must comprehend all these, or its *object* is essentially and fatally imperfect : but *the act of the mind* is the same, only it is applied to the recognition of a more enlarged, more consolatory, and impressive, testimony, given by him who made the worlds, and who requires us to serve and trust in him. The subjects thus declared are, indeed, the sum and substance of Christianity, as distinguished from

all other religions, and as the perfect and final communication from God. The Apostle has largely established this in the former part of the Epistle; and he eventually directs *our* attention to Jesus as the author and finisher of the faith, although he previously directs our attention to the operation and benefits of faith, even in those whose knowledge was more confined, and whose privileges and duties were, therefore, less exalted and extensive.

2. Upon that part of our subject, which relates to these Old Testament worthies, we must be very brief, and be content with a mere reference to it. Would you then become acquainted with the *operation* and *benefits* of faith in the existence and authority, the goodness and veracity, of God, even when he had not as yet made known “the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus?” Read, then, the history of the Old Testament, and make yourselves acquainted with the character and proceedings of its several worthies; and inquire what was the principle which animated them, and which alone can explain their conduct? And if you would be furnished with a brief abstract of their history, and with a sure and satisfactory comment on their views and obedience, their exploits and sufferings, read the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, of which our text is the summary and

striking application to ourselves. You will behold emblazoned at its commencement, and ever and anon will still be presented to your notice, that expressive word, which was their motto, and which should be our's. For FAITH is that principle, which at once originates, maintains, and completes, the graces and virtues of every true servant of God, whether they be of a more lowly or more exalted kind, whether they be shewn in courageous exertion, in patient continuance in well doing, or in submissive suffering according to the will of God. If you have not the same spirit of faith, yet see how efficacious it has been in producing a compliance with every divine command, a reliance on every divine promise, and the fear of every divine threatening! Consider the blessedness and the efficacy of the faith of Abel, of Enoch, of Noah, of Abraham and the patriarchs, of Moses, and of those others, of whom the time would fail us to tell; "who thereby subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens^g:" and who, when tortured in order that they might save the body by renouncing their faith, "did not accept

^g Heb. xi. 33, 34.

deliverance," but sought "that they might obtain a better resurrection." *That* assuredly they will obtain at the decisive day, when all that are "departed in the true faith and fear of God," with all others that shall then be counted worthy, shall have their "perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in God's eternal and everlasting glory." They have already in part entered on their reward, though not on that fulness of life and immortality which are brought to light by the Gospel, and which encourage us to expect a future resurrection, after the similitude of his resurrection, who shall appear the second time unto the salvation of those that look for him.

"All these, having obtained a good report through faith, *received not the promise*^h."—In connexion with these words we must inquire, *what the promise is*, which they received not; what the promise is, of which, although they might receive the announcement and assurance, they yet did not receive the actual and personal accomplishment, as the word used by the Apostle leads us to understand his meaningⁱ?—The same word is used in the preceding chapter, when the Apostle says, "Ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may *receive the promise*;"

^h Heb. xi. 39.

ⁱ Οὐκ ἐκομίσαντο τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν.

and also when St. Peter speaks of those, who loved and believed in Jesus Christ, though they had not seen him, and did not see him; yet rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory, “*receiving*,” says he, “the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls^k.” It is clear that both these passages refer to the complete fulfilment, and future consummation, of all that is contained in the full revelation, and perfect redemption, of the Gospel. And it also seems probable, from the assertion made respecting the faithful under the Old Testament; and also from the circumstance, that in the preceding part of this eleventh chapter, the Apostle speaks more than once of *particular promises* being fulfilled to some of those, of *all* of whom he says, that “they received not *the promise*;” and because similar phraseology is elsewhere employed with reference to the completion of the promises made unto the fathers by the advent and finished redemption of the Christ;—from such considerations it seems probable, that it was of that primary and distinguished promise that he says none of them were partakers. It was given to our first parents, and to Abraham, and to the patriarchs; and under the peculiar constitution of the Jewish polity it was still repeated. But its fulfilment was

^k 1 Pet. i. 90.

still future; and however numerous were the other promises which were actually fulfilled, that promise they received not, nor could actually receive, until the season at first designed, and, at length, specified, for its accomplishment, had arrived.

The Apostle adds, that “God had provided some better thing for us¹.” This implies, that they had not wanted the supply of some good things, such as God then saw fit to bestow, and such, therefore, as were then sufficient for every essential purpose. But God had foreseen, and therefore had had in contemplation, and designed at a future time to provide, “some better thing.” Not that all the benefits of it are not eventually and really applied to the ancient saints: but they never *saw* the accomplishment of them, and they never *knew* of them as matter of *fact*, as the subject of declarative *revelation*, though they had them in promise, and hereafter will share in the blessings so procured and bestowed. But that partial revelation of God, and of his attributes,—partial, at least as far as relates to some of his dealings with mankind as sinners; and that temporary benefit of which the descendants of the patriarchs partook by being placed in the earthly land of promise, and by sharing in all the peculiar

¹ Heb. xi. 40.

advantages which corresponded to their remarkable situation, were not that better thing, which was yet in reserve. That, says the Apostle, God has foreseen and designed “*for us;*” that is, for those who lived at the time, and after the time, of Christ’s coming; the purposes, and complete efficacy, of which event, had already been explained and proved to those to whom these words were addressed.

But the Apostle is far from contending that Christians, that is, those who have borne that title in this world, are alone interested in that “better thing.” He asserts, indeed, that those, who lived in preceding ages, had not received it; but it is as clearly asserted, that its accomplishment has respect to them, though not to them alone. “God provided some better thing for us, *that they without us should not be made perfect*.”^m

In order to elucidate this statement, we shall have to enquire,

1. What is the meaning of the term *made perfect*?

2. In what way *they* are together with *us* made perfect?

1. The simplest, and most satisfactory, method of determining the sense of the phrase, “made

^m Heb. xi. 40. “ἵνα μὴ χωρὶς ἡμῶν τελειωθῶσι.

perfect," will probably be to compare the other passages in this same Epistle, in which the same word is used by the Apostle, although the translation given in our Bibles does not always give the same, though an equivalent, rendering. Now we find it applied to Jesus Christ himself, as the captain of our salvation, *made perfect* through sufferings; as becoming, when *made perfect*, the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him; as being the Son of God, our High-priest, who is *perfected* for evermoreⁿ. We find the Apostle arguing against the opinion, that *perfection* was by the Levitical priesthood; observing also, that the law *made* nothing *perfect*; and that its sacrifices could not *make* him that did the service *perfect* as pertaining to the conscience^o. We find the full knowledge of the better covenant, sacrifice, and priesthood, opposed to the knowledge of *the first principles* of the doctrine of Christ; and the Apostle prepares for his disquisition respecting these, by an exhortation to press on towards *perfection*^p. Jesus himself is termed the finisher, or *perfecter*, of the faith; and we also read of the spirits of *just men made perfect*^q.

ⁿ Heb. ii. 10; v. 9; vii. 28. In the last passage τετελειωμένον is, in the E. T. rendered, *consecrated*.

^o Heb. vii. 11, 19; ix. 9.

^p Heb. vi. 1.

^q Τῆς πίστεως τελειωτήν.—Heb. xii. 2. Δικαίων τετελειωμένων.—Heb. xi. 28.

Comparing these passages together, we find the same *general idea*, differing only in its particular *adaptation* to the subject to which it is applied. When applied to *Jesus himself*, it is descriptive of his entrance on the dignities and exercise of his mediatorial kingdom, after having finished successfully the work assigned him on earth. And, of course, when the former *dispensation* is contrasted with that of which he was the author and perfecter, we are led to advert to the temporary and defective character of the former, and to recognize the permanent and perfect nature of the latter, as affording a better hope of an eternal inheritance, and as purging the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, with the cheerfulness which they will feel, who have the promised certainty of complete remission. And all who truly are *partakers of Christ*, and *faithful adherents* of that *perfect religion*, which he has so established, are made perfect, *in this life*, by the complete knowledge of the better promises, guaranteed, as well as clearly promulgated, by him; and by being already partakers of such of its benefits as appertain to this state of existence. Their perfection, *in a future state*, is the complete happiness which they enjoy through his eternal redemption, with the certainty, that, at the end of all things, their bodies will be raised, and they shall ever be with the Lord.

2. Now in conformity to *both* these views of the subject, we may understand the Apostle's remark, that those, of whom he had been speaking, "without us *were not made perfect.*" In the *knowledge* of the great mystery of godliness they were not partakers, during the time of their sojourning on earth; but those who were admitted after death to happiness, were so admitted only by virtue, and in anticipation of that great and availing sacrifice which was once for all offered, not only for those who have lived during the time of the Gospel covenant, but also "for the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first covenant." For we read that, "by one offering, he hath *perfected* for ever them that are sanctified." And as they, and we, and all that have lived, do live, or shall live, were then once for all made perfect, so far as it respects the *means* of our redemption; so in all ages, though more fully and by express promise in these latter times, has the sanctifying Spirit of God striven with man, to purify and seal him unto the day of final redemption. And not only was the ransom and oblation in behalf of the Old Testament saints offered at the same time with that on which we ourselves ground our hopes of acceptance, but probably also at that time was the joyful intelligence made known to them, who had previously "died in faith, not having received the promises."

For we read, that “in the dispensation of the fulness of time, God gathered together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God; according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord^r.”

And as to the *final introduction into the heavenly kingdom*, which will take place at the consummation of all things, when sin and sorrow and death shall be abolished for ever, neither then shall they without us be made perfect in final blessedness. For though “the dead in Christ shall rise first,” yet those also, who shall “then be alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them, in the clouds.” The corruptible body shall put on incorruption, and this mortal body shall put on immortality, and so shall they and we ever be with the Lord.

Such is the view given by the Apostle of the fulness and universality of the salvation which is in Christ! All those, who died in the faith and fear of God, though they had not actually received the fulfilment of this great and comprehensive promise of redemption; and all who have

^r Eph. i. 10; iii. 10, 11.

died in the faith of Christ, and have rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory; all these, “having come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb;” all these, “a multitude which no man can number of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues;” shall then stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with the white robes of perfect holiness, and with the palms of final triumph in their hands, and shall ascribe “salvation unto God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.”

Brethren, “we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses^s.” The goodly fellowship of the patriarchs and prophets, the glorious company of the Apostles, and the noble army of martyrs, although they be now raised above the trials and sorrows, the infirmities and temptations, of this lower world, yet, by their principles and sayings, their constancy and triumphs, which are left upon record, do, as it were, stoop down from heaven, to witness to us of the glory that shall be revealed in us, if, like them, we are faithful unto death. Numerous as the drops of rain, of which those clouds consist that water the earth and make it bring forth and bud, they

^s Heb. xii. 1.

also resemble them in the fertilizing efficacy of their examples. If we would but contemplate their path and progress, profit by their experience, and be disposed to imbibe their instructions, which distil upon us like the drops of rain, we also should flourish as trees of righteousness, and bear those “fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.” Seeing, then, that we are environed with so great a host of witnesses, who sought a better country, and were not disappointed; who trusted in the Lord, and were not confounded; who now, as it were, behold us conflicting in the same world and nature, amidst the same dangers and infirmities, and would fain encourage us to affiance, and steadfastness, and obedience;—why shall we not emulate their example?—why do we turn a deaf ear to their counsels?

They witness to the *reality* of the things unseen, of which they before received the assurance, and which they believed with that confidence, which may also be produced in us, if we will draw off our attention from the things of earth, so as to contemplate the evidence of those things which are above.—They witness to the *reasonableness* of giving a *preference* in our judgment, and in our conduct, to those abiding pleasures which are in heaven, to those eternal delights which are at God’s right hand! They

witness the *necessity* of so doing; for how shall we seek them with due earnestness, if we do not thus value them,—if there be any thing upon earth that we desire in comparison of them? How shall we act as strangers and pilgrims upon earth, if we do not feelingly confess ourselves such? And how can we make that confession, unless we see the promised inheritance, even though afar off, and unless we are persuaded of those promises, and embrace them? And lest, after having sat down and counted the cost, we should hesitate to make that sacrifice, for which reason and religion call, the same witnesses will assure us, that we shall in reality lose nothing; that the very proceeding, which we would term a sacrifice, is our truest *interest*, our surest *gain*; that, to all the purposes of *happiness*, godliness has alike the promise of this life, and of that which is to come; and that even though it should be needful to forsake all, in order to follow Christ, we shall receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting! They witness also, against all our fears and excuses, the *practicability* of living a life of faith and patience, humility and meekness, mortification and self-denial, charity and constant perseverance unto the end. They had their fightings without, and doubtless also fears within, yet they maintained their steadfastness, shewed the power of faith,

glorified God, and, by adorning their profession, induced others also to glorify God. They proved that God's precepts are not beyond our powers, so that they be animated by the same faith and hope, and supported by that God, from whom cometh our help. And being made more than conquerors, in circumstances the most trying to flesh and blood, they have entered on their reward, and rest from their labours, and their works have followed them. And do they not say to us, Follow us, for through faith and patience, we inherit the promises? They have long since fought a good fight—they have finished their course—they kept the faith. The race is still before us—the incorruptible crown is seen, as it were, suspended from the goal to which the eye of faith is directed. All the holy beings in heaven and earth are the spectators of our earnest striving for the mastery. Let us then not delay to prepare for the struggle—let us not be weary, or faint, or be discouraged—let us press towards the mark, that we may obtain the prize of that high calling wherewith we are called in Christ Jesus; remembering that to all that so run as to obtain, there is laid up a crown of glory, which God the righteous Judge shall give at that great day to all them that have been faithful unto death, and love his appearing.

The recompence of the reward being so glorious, and so certain, and the hope of the faithful

and obedient disciple being so consolatory and so purifying, what shall beguile us of our reward, but either somewhat that prevents us from setting out in the ways of religion, or that lets and hinders us in running the race set before us? We are aware that there are many, who are unwilling to undertake the work, or, perhaps, wholly unconcerned about it; because they have no desires beyond the world, and the things of the world; because the love of the Father is so far not in them, that they scarcely ever call to mind his existence and omniscience, their accountableness to him, and the things which he hath prepared for them that love him. Such is, perhaps, the case with the greater part of mankind. Others there are, who would fain be delivered in the day of judgment, and have hope in the hour of death; who know, and feelingly acknowledge, the things unseen as yet; but at the same time are so immersed in the cares and pleasures of the world, so attached to what it presents to their attention, and desires, and affections, that they cannot persuade themselves to relinquish them, or even so far to sit loose to them, as to let their spirits rise above them to contemplate and seek after the things above. Bound down to earth, and immoveably fixed to the particular spot in which their present interests and pleasures lie, they never resolve to seek a better country. We

beseech such to consider how foolish a part they are acting; to make a comparison between time and eternity, between that ease and pleasure which are but for a season, and the favour of God, which is better than life, and issues in life everlasting. If such a comparison be made, we are fearless as to the result. The judgment will decide aright,—that the things eternal are worthy of our preference, our pursuit, and earnest endeavour.

But we must address those who have attained such a realizing view, such a just estimate. You must act consistently with it. The manifest inference which you make is, that you must set out in the heavenly race. As, therefore, the candidate, in an earthly race, divests himself of all superfluous attire, so must you “lay aside every weight,” all those affections, desires, and pursuits, which burden the soul, and hinder you from proceeding. So will your course be more rapid and easy. Above all divest yourselves of “the sin which doth so easily beset us,” that which encircles us and entangles us, like the loose garment which the racer gracefully girds around him, or lays aside. Put away every darling and habitual sin, especially that sin of *unbelief*, which is, perhaps, more especially meant, and which will be the origin and bond of every other. Run also “with patience,” for the race may be long, and it may have its difficulties and privations, which may

require endurance. But in spite of all these, still pursue “the race set before you;” and even though you should be behind in the contest, still go on, lest you should inevitably fail.

And remember, for your encouragement, that you can now “*look off*,” even from the brightest human examples, to him, who is not our exemplar only, but “the author and finisher of the faith” of the Gospel. He has trod the way before us, and through every difficulty and danger he persevered, and was made perfect. So also shall we be made perfect, in our measure, if we tread in his steps. And how animating is the example of such a one, “who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God! Consider him, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds.” For if the saints of ancient times exercised such faith, patience, and perseverance, under a dimmer revelation, and with inferior promises, how shall we excuse ourselves, if we run less successfully, when we have more extended knowledge, more enlarged promises, more exalted hopes, more efficacious means, more abundant encouragement, and the bright and spotless example of Jesus Christ himself, now appearing amidst the great cloud of witnesses which encircles us. “So run, that ye may obtain!”

¹ Ἀφορῶντες εἰς . . . Ἰησοῦν. v. 2.

LECTURE XIX.

THE MILDNESS AND PRIVILEGES OF THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION; THE RESPONSIBILITY WHICH IT INVOLVES; AND ITS UNALTERABLE ESTABLISHMENT.—
ATTENTION TO THE GOSPEL
URGED.



HEB. XII. 25.

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.

THE promises of religion are “exceedingly great and precious.” They are announced to us most clearly, and the blessings are offered most freely. Nothing is omitted which may convince us of their value, assure us of their certainty, or persuade us to embrace them. Yet the actual attainment of heavenly bliss is not a matter of course; nay, rather is it attended with great difficulty, and requires great circumspection, because we are in a condition of the utmost hazard, and the final issue is very uncertain. Not that the things eternal are uncertain, though unseen; not that God has withheld any thing that might avail for our salvation; not that we are, or need be, at a loss to know what manner of men they are,

who alone are “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” But we are depraved, and therefore not already meet; negligent, and therefore do not attain that meetness; unstable, and therefore do not excel. Hence how few are they, who maintain that state of watchfulness, holiness, and perseverance, which alone can fit us for the bliss of heaven. How many, who have received the word with joy, and endured for a while, in time of temptation fall away! The prison, the sword, and the fire, of the persecutor, have terrified some into the renunciation of their eternal hopes. Others, even when the external peace of the church has not been disturbed, because of the frowns and sneers of mortal men, and through the fears which presented these to their uneasy anticipations, have been deterred from examining and receiving the essential truths of the Gospel, and have even enlisted themselves in the ranks of those, who opposed or perverted the doctrine of Christ. In other instances, the tribulation, that has been less obviously occasioned by our fellow-creatures, has not been referred to the beneficent superintendence, and fatherly correction, of God, and so has become an occasion of falling. If the providence of God has been acknowledged therein, murmuring and a non-improvement of the affliction has led to the same result. But whether events are prosperous or adverse, still there are

causes which may endanger our steadfastness. The rivalries and disunion, which so often prevail amongst men; an aversion to that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord; or the actual dominion of those “fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;” these also may effectually prevent our cordial acceptance of the benevolent, holy, and self-denying religion of Jesus Christ. In so many ways may our religious improvement be endangered. But since “in these last days God hath spoken to us by his Son,” see that ye be not in any way influenced to “refuse him that speaketh.” Such an exhortation I would this day enforce, by setting before you the representations given by the Apostle in the concluding portion of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

We have been principally occupied throughout the year in considering the Apostolical preaching and vindication of the Gospel to the Jews. And our present subject will also have a reference to that law, and to those privileges and institutions, which were given to them by divine authority, and were defended by them with an earnestness, which would have been reasonable and laudable, had they not remained insensible to the *superior* claims of the Gospel. But the Gospel of Christ was “the power of God unto salvation to every believer, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.”

For if we consider the Gospel system *in itself*,

we are bound to receive it with thankfulness because of its perfect suitableness, sufficiency, and necessity. If we *contrast* it with former dispensations of religion, however certainly divine and important, we perceive its vast superiority, and therefore inevitable obligations. In either point of view, therefore, it addresses to us a message which we cannot reject, an offer of mercy which we cannot refuse, a commandment which we cannot disobey, if we value the favour of God, and our own salvation.

My present subject leads me to enlarge on the duty and necessity of giving heed to the Gospel, because of its more encouraging *mildness*, its more exalted *privileges*, its more perilous *responsibility*, and its unalterable *establishment*.

I. Consider, first, the more encouraging *mildness* of the Gospel above that of the Law^a. The latter was delivered amidst the most terrific splendour from Mount Sinai; and in every particular of that solemnity were displayed only those more august attributes of the great Supreme, which render him an object of awe to every creature, and of apprehension to the sinner. We come not, under the Gospel, to the same exhibition of

^a See Heb. xii. 18—22. With which compare Exod. xix. and xx: and Deut. iv. and v.

unmixed terror; but the Israelites, when they entered into covenant with God, came unto that visible, terrestrial, and, therefore, “*tangible* mount, which burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that it should not be spoken to them any more.” Every thing tended to impress them with awe, and eventually to overwhelm them with dismay. The scene itself was a rugged mountain, frowning upon a vast desert, where solitude held her dreary reign, and where nature seemed as unkindly and desolate, as the law itself was rigorous and peremptory, and the accompanying sanctions severe and appalling. The people, assembled in such a spot, and for such a purpose, could see and hear nothing but God and themselves. God seemed to have enthroned himself on the mountain in order to “judge his people,” and to shew them how fearful a thing it is to “fall into the hands of the living God.” The appointed limits within which neither man nor beast were permitted to enter, on pain of death, inculcated the same lesson of “reverence and godly fear,” because of the distance which intervenes between us and our God, because of his majesty, and our meanness; his holiness, and our unworthiness.

This lesson is undoubtedly conveyed “to us

and *our* children for ever, that we may do all the words of his law." If, in subsequent exhibitions of glory, God has not exclusively directed our attention to those more awful perfections which deepen our reverence, arouse our fears, and which, if unaccompanied by more endearing manifestations, might operate as motives to despair;—if he has now clearly revealed himself as the God of love and mercy, of peace and hope, we must not suppose that he is less exalted, just, and holy. Yet if the ministration of condemnation seem to discourage by its terrific glory, the ministration of righteousness encourages by its affecting display of those milder attributes, in which "the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared." When, in Gospel times, the Apostles were with *the beloved Son of God* in the holy mount, "the voice of words," which *then* from heaven, commanding us to *hear* HIM, was the voice of one "who willeth all men to be saved," as well as to know and obey his holy law. The Apostles were indeed witnesses of the dignity of him who speaketh to us in the Gospel; but it was the dignity of one, who was "full of grace and truth," "meek, lowly, and having salvation." Yet he came not to destroy the law or the prophets. On the contrary, he "magnified the law, and made it honourable;" he was in all things obedient to it, and came to effectuate the fulfilment

of its righteousness in us. He came to accomplish all the predictions, and to ratify all the promises. But none of his words spoke terror to the penitent believer. All his commandments are enforced by motives the most persuasive and endearing. All his promises give assurance of pardon, peace and eternal life. Every evidence of the dignity of his person, of the authority of his mission, or of the success of his undertaking is an evidence of divine forbearance, boundless mercy, and never-failing love. Woe indeed to him who still “continues in sin, that grace may abound,” and who thus “turns the grace of God into licentiousness.” But the very *possibility* of such a fatal perversion, is a most conclusive demonstration of the compassionate nature of that dispensation, which reveals to us “the exceeding riches of God’s grace;” which “blesses us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus;” which encourages, invites, and beseeches us to be “reconciled to God,” and to embrace “the doctrine according to godliness,” that we may thereby have “the promise of this life and of that which is to come.” “See then that ye refuse not him that speaketh.” Be obedient to “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that ye may be made free from the law of sin and death;” for then will ye find that “the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever.”

II. As supplying a second motive to this, consider the more exalted *privileges* of the Gospel^b. Advert to the state of Israel of old, no longer wandering in “the waste howling wilderness.” Happy indeed were they even then. For they were a people saved by the Lord, led about under his guidance, instructed by his law, kept as the apple of his eye. But still more happy did they become when they dwelt in that good and pleasant land of promise, and had rest from all their enemies round about. For then did God, their tutelary Deity, their heavenly King, choose Sion to be a habitation for himself. There did he dwell upon his holy hill; and peace was within the walls, and plenteousness within the palaces of that city of the great King, the favoured Jerusalem. The same covenant, by which was repeated and ratified the promise given to Abraham respecting the possession of that land, also guaranteed to them the enjoyment of national peace, safety, and prosperity, so long as they continued faithful to that fundamental principle, upon which it was rested, viz. an allegiance to the worship and service of Jehovah, their God and King. But the privileges, upon the possession of which the Christian enters, are more exalted, and more lasting, for they are spiritual and eternal. He too “comes

^b See Note (A) at the end of Lecture XIX.—Heb. xii. 22—25.

unto Mount Sion^c," but in a higher sense, and after a different manner. If the Israelite, as the inhabitant of the earthly land of promise, was more blessed than those of his ancestors who sojourned in the wilderness, more blessed still is the condition of the Christian. The city, of which the Christian is a denizen, is truly "the city of the living God," built, made, and inhabited by him; even that "heavenly Jerusalem," in which God dwells with his people, before death by his Spirit, and after death by admitting them to see him as he is, and to be present with him for ever. Whether they are still living as the subjects of his kingdom of grace, or are translated to his kingdom of glory; whether they belong to the Church militant, or the Church triumphant; they belong to a society far more numerous, and more honourable, than the associated tribes whose metropolis was the earthly Jerusalem. They become fellow-citizens with the saints, and members of that household of God, which comprehends, and "knits together in one communion and fellowship," every holy and glorified being in heaven and in earth^d.

They are come "to an innumerable company of angels^e;" who now no longer discharge the

^c See Note (B) at the end of Lecture XIX.

^d See Note (C) at the end of Lecture XIX.

• Compare Heb. i. more particularly ver. 14.

awful ministry with which they were entrusted at Mount Sinai, but are fellow-servants and fellow-worshippers with those heirs of salvation, to whom they are sent forth to minister; divinely 'appointed to succour and defend them on earth,' till they become like themselves in heaven. Henceforth, and for ever, the Christian 'lauds and magnifies the glorious name of God,' adding his thankful adorations to those offered 'by angels, and arch-angels, and all the company of heaven.'

The Christian is come "to the general assembly and Church of the *first-born*^f;" not to that partial one, consisting of Israelites only, which heard the law from Sinai, but to that which is collected from every nation, and kindred, and tongue. To that Church belong all those, who, being "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," have attained to the adoption of sons, and to all the exalted blessings of that heavenly birthright; who, therefore, have their names "written in heaven," of which they are heirs, and where many of their brethren in Christ already dwell.

Thus united with Christ's mystical body, the Church, the believer comes "to God," not, like the Israelites at Sinai, as to the judge, and ruler, and lawgiver of a peculiar people, but as to "the Judge

^f See Note (D) at the end of Lecture XIX.

of *all*;" who, in the administration of his righteous judgment, "will by no means clear the guilty," but will accept all those, of every nation, who "fear him, and work righteousness."

Having access to God, acceptance and communion with him, the Christian is come "to the spirits of just men made perfect." Before the completion of the promises in Christ by the Gospel, the just who had departed in the faith and fear of God, were not yet made perfect. But by that better thing which God had provided for the latter days, we and they are together perfected for ever. We are of the same communion with them, and heirs of the same blessings. We are supplied with all that can make us perfect here, and we look forward to the day when we shall actually join them, before the throne of God and the Lamb, exempted from sin and sorrow, "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," perfectly sanctified, and finally glorified.

All this we now enjoy, and all this we yet hope for, inasmuch as we are come "to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant;" a covenant, designed to confer these varied blessings, and ratified by that "blood of sprinkling," which speaketh better things than that of Abel^b,"—which

^a Compare Heb. ix. 12; and xiii. 12.

^b Compare Heb. xi. 4; and Gen. iv. 10.

pleads for *mercy* and not for *vengeance*, and gives not the intimation of reserved misery, but the assurance of prepared and endless bliss. See then, as the Apostle exhorts, “that ye refuse not him that speaketh,” by his blood of pardon and restoration to the divine favour, and by his mouth who invites to a reception of his salvation, and enforces the necessity and means of all holy obedience. Consider how great are the privileges of his people; from what evils they are rescued, with what honour they are invested, to what felicity they look forward. But if you are insensible to the persuasive allurements and accents of mercy, let us subjoin a third motive for compliance with the exhortation of the text.

III. Consider the more perilous *responsibility* of those, who have received the knowledge of the Gospel. Neither Moses nor any of the prophets delivered a message which it was safe to reject. Witness the punishments which befel the murmuring, rebellious, or irresolute, Israelites in the wilderness, and all the other visitations of a special Providence which, in succeeding ages, befel that remarkable people; all of which are “written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” Those judgments, and also the rewards which as surely attended the obedient, were of a national and temporal nature. The peculiar

constitution of that people, and the discipline by which it was necessary to train them, in the infancy of the world, amidst increasing idolatry, and in subserviency to the future revelation of the Gospel, required the adoption of such a system. Now although, as Christians, we are no longer a peculiar people in the same respect, and although the prosperity and adversity which befall us are no longer administered by a Providence which *in this life* awards exact retribution, are there no denunciations of vengeance which may alarm the sinner, who despises and turns a deaf ear to "him that speaketh" in the Gospel? If the promises of Gospel bliss are inconceivably glorious, its threatenings are unutterably terrible. Both the one and the other are yet future and unseen; but not the less surely will they be experienced at "the revelation of the righteous judgment of him, who will render to every man according to his deeds." And shall we venture to deny that those, who have enjoyed more extended knowledge, more exalted privileges, and more efficacious means, shall be obnoxious to a condemnation proportioned to their great and aggravated guilt? It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Nineveh, than for disobedient and unholy Christians. "If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from

him that speaketh from heavenⁱ." The dignity of the messenger, as well as the consideration that he was the last and most condescending, might reasonably be expected to challenge our gratitude, and bespeak our reverence. If it be otherwise, we must consider with ourselves how we can stand excused, and what plea we can offer in arrest of judgment.

IV. But there is one other consideration, to which we have just alluded, but which must be more specially noticed, viz., the *unalterable establishment* of the Gospel as "a kingdom that cannot be moved." Though former revelations were partial, and were succeeded by more perfect ones; though former institutions had only temporary and limited purposes, and were therefore superseded; yet the Gospel is complete and final, sufficient and universal. By the prophet Haggai God announced his design of "shaking the heavens and the earth;" that is, according to the tenor of figurative prophetic language, he declared his purpose of subverting and abolishing the existing institutions and authorities of the Mosaic economy^k." But since it is expressly said that this would be done "yet once more," the Apostle argues that "this word, yet once

ⁱ Heb. xii. 25.

^k Haggai ii. 6—9. Heb. xii. 26, &c.

more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." The former arrangements were typical of future good things, and did not effect and confer the benefits of them; and hence the Apostle calls them "things that are made," that is, things instituted and constructed for a particular purpose. But those realities, which in themselves are of eternal duration and of universal application, are, therefore, entitled "those things which cannot be shaken." When that which is perfect is come, when the eternal purpose of God is accomplished, it remains ever permanent and unalterable, whether he is pleased to continue the same visible representation of it, or not. But lest we should any longer rest satisfied with that which is imperfect, and lest our conceptions of the spiritual and eternal benefits of the Gospel should be lowered by the continued observance of merely carnal ordinances, under the Gospel they are for ever abrogated, and our attention is exclusively directed to the substance and reality of all that was before promised and typified. "The Desire of all nations" having come, and the second temple being "filled with his glory," the sacrifices therein offered have ceased for ever, and the institutions of Moses can no longer be observed. All nations are now brought into the terms of the covenant,

and form one body, equal in privilege, in knowledge, and in hope. They are subjects of that kingdom of the God of heaven, which in the last days he designed to establish, which shall never be destroyed, which will extend itself over the earth¹. We, therefore, who have received the right and title to that "kingdom which cannot be moved," now live under a dispensation the most merciful and effectual. We are called to "worship God in spirit and in truth." If we "have not, and retain not, that grace," which shall enable us to "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear," we cannot justly frame to ourselves any hope that we shall be partakers of his mercy; but, with no less severity than he shewed to the despisers of inferior privileges, he will pour out his indignation upon us. "For our God is a consuming fire^m." He was so declared to be in the Law; he ceases to be so under the Gospel to those only, who "flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them." "See then that ye refuse not him that speaketh from heaven;" that ye may attain that great salvation, which he wrought out on earth, and which, being exalted to heaven, he bestows on his obedient followers.

¹ See Dan. ii. 44.

^m Deut. iv. 24.

In the opening of this Lecture we specified some of those temptations and hindrances, which, unless we be on our guard, and give all diligence, will cause us to fail of the grace, and beguile us of the reward of the Gospel. Those remarks, as well as the four topics which have passed under review, were suggested by the chapter from whence our text was taken. Of the things which we have now spoken, and of most that is spoken from the pulpit, this is the sum. You are liable to fall, therefore “watch and pray”—you are called, by motives as cogent as they are various, to embrace and hold fast a blessed hope, therefore “see that ye refuse not him that speaketh.” Now if he speaks, and we are to hear, then the things which he announces, of whatever kind they be, it is necessary for us to know. To turn away from him, is to reject him. To profess respect, and readiness to listen, if after all, we neither attend nor obey, is mere trifling and mockery. And yet how imperfect, vague, and often erroneous, is the knowledge to which many, who call themselves Christians, have attained! Though they argue against the peculiar *doctrines* of the Gospel, and it be shewn that such doctrines are taught in Scripture,—though they object to the strictness and obligation of particular *moral* rules, and Scripture be appealed to as specifying that rule, and inculcating its spirit,—nay, though they

have inadvertently been cavilling at the very *phrases* and *sentences* of holy writ,—yet will not even this induce men to search the Scriptures, that they may learn what are its dictates, and what the character, conduct, and temper it requires. Though we thus speak, we are persuaded better things of you. Yet would we earnestly entreat you to inquire, whether you have made yourselves fully acquainted with the nature and requirements of the religion you profess, or, at least, whether you have begun and are continuing such an undertaking. One question may suffice. Is the Bible a neglected book? It may be respected,—it may be dispersed,—but do we ourselves read it? Is it *studied*? Are its contents weighed with that daily attention which we should apply to a subject of less importance, and more transitory interest?

Let the man of business, engaged, from day to day, in the multifarious occupations and distracting cares of life, answer this question to his own conscience. Let him “take heed, lest that day come upon him unawares.” Let him see to it, lest, although he be cherishing the hopes of religion, he be nevertheless in error, and know it not. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.” How are we to ascertain the truth, unless we are not only not refusing him that

speaketh, but attending to his instructions, and receiving and doing the things which he says?

Let the man of science, and the lover of literature, stand the test of the same inquiry. Even the investigations in which he engages, while they discipline the mind, improve and adorn society, and afford the purest satisfaction, may yet withdraw our attention from him, who speaketh from heaven, and of heavenly things. To a large proportion of the members of an University, such pursuits are, in fact, the acknowledged and necessary occupation of life. To the younger members they are more immediately and indispensably such. It may be advanced as a general principle, that no one, who places himself as a student in a University, can neglect the ordinary and appropriate studies of that University without a dereliction of duty, and manifest inconsistency; without indirect injury to society, and a disregard of his own present comfort and future usefulness. To whatever profession he intends to devote himself, and, if he is looking forward to no profession, whatever station in society he is destined to fill, he is at a period of life, he is enjoying such opportunities, and has the command of such leisure and retirement, that it is both his duty and his interest, and will at a future day be his comfort, to have devoted the period of his residence here to the cheerful and diligent pursuit

of the studies to which he is directed. And perhaps few considerate persons leave this place, either at an earlier or later period of life, who may not have reason to regret that the aids, and means, and opportunities, for the acquisition of human learning, have not been better improved.

On this sacred day, however, the pursuit of human learning is, or ought to be, laid aside, and our attention should be directed to that which respects the things unseen, and our eternal salvation. I would not be supposed to contend that, in any case, whether with the member of a Christian family, or the solitary individual, it ought not to be a subject of daily reading, prayer, and meditation. But this day is uselessly observed, and in vain do we omit our buying and selling, our studies and lectures, unless we devote it more specially and entirely to those things which accompany salvation. If the earlier part of the day be devoted to the celebration of a protracted social meal, and the remainder of it to mere trifling, at the best, it is not likely that the day will be employed in those holy pursuits, which might render us better members of society, and more hopeful candidates for eternity. In suggesting to the younger members of our body the advantage and expediency of employing the sabbaths spent in this place for the purposes of that *religious study*, which would be so highly valuable

in itself, and a relief to other studies, I would not rest the recommendation on my own individual authority. I will express it in the words of a Prelate, who has rendered many valuable services to the Christian Church. "The doing this will give little interruption to their other studies, and if it should give a great deal, their time will not be misemployed. Let them dedicate a small portion of every day, or the whole of Sunday to this occupation, and, in the course of three or four years, they will easily accomplish the task; and when it is accomplished, they may offer themselves to the Bishop to be ordained, with a becoming confidence that they are not wholly unprepared; and they may undertake the most important of all human duties—the cure of souls—without being alarmed by a consciousness of their inability to discharge it as becometh *the servants of the most high God*.—But the students designed for the Church are not the only ones to whom I would recommend the practice of setting apart some portion of their time for religious inquiries; I would press it with the greatest earnestness and sincerity on the young men of rank and fortuneⁿ."

Among other reasons for this suggestion, he mentions one, which, after the lapse of near forty

ⁿ See Note (F) at the end of Lecture XIX.

forty years, is, I fear, yet a cogent one, and one which may suggest reflections, at this period, tending to excite our anxiety for the permanent utility of our religious establishment, as well as for the eternal welfare of individuals. “Our mode of education, as to religious knowledge is very defective; the child is instructed in its catechism before it is well able to comprehend its meaning, and that is usually all the domestic instruction it ever receives.”—Now if there be any correctness in such a supposition, it is surely desirable that the defect should be remedied, lest the rising generation should grow up to maturity with partial and ill digested notions of the nature and use of Christian principles. It is more especially important in regard to those, who are to become teachers of others; that their own knowledge may be correct and matured, that their public instructions may be adequate exhibitions of religious truth, and that they may be aware of the necessity, and possessed of the ability, to train up “the congregations committed to their charge,” in the faith and obedience of the Gospel. For, as is excellently observed by Archbishop Usher, “though we preach never so many sermons unto the people, our labour is but lost, so long as the first principles are untaught, upon which all other doctrine must be builded.”

“Suffer then the word of exhortation,” which

has now been addressed to you, with much plainness, but with much sincerity; for it relates to a subject, which concerns our individual comfort and salvation, the welfare of society, the prosperity of Christ's Church, and the glory of God. Let us remember the dignity and authority of that Gospel which is preached to us, the condescension and love of him who first proclaimed it, the value of its promises, the sanctifying tendency of all its communications, and the approach of the decisive day when we must give account to God; that we may, each in his sphere and station, adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. We have health, and strength, and opportunities. But in vain shall we have enjoyed them, unless we so improve them, as to be renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. I would conclude, for the present, by citing that prayer of the Apostle, which will occupy our consideration on a future day.

“May the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

° Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

Note (A), p. 416.

Knappe has published (in his *Scripta var. arg.*) a prolusion on this passage. His work richly deserves a place in the Theologian's Library, as a model of judicious criticism.

Note (B), p. 417.

Compare this phraseology with Rev. xiv. 1; and with the passages which refer the origin of Messiah, and the publication of his Gospel, to Mount Sion, the city of David: such are Ps. lxviii. and cxxxii; Isai. ii., and Micah iv. Jer. iii. 17—and those cited in Rom. x. 33, and xi. 26.

Note (C), p. 417.

“Quemadmodum Sioni monti urbs illa adjacet et jungitur, ac sicut ex Sione ad eam prospectus atque aditus patet, ita cum institutis Christi hac in terra, beatitas futura in cælo conjuncta est; et qui ejus disciplinam colant, et præceptis obsequantur, hujus beatitatis participes fiant, atque jus civitatis jam nunc in cælo habent. Vid. c. ix. 19, s. 6. 18, s. et Apoc. xxi. 3.” Knappius, p. 280.

Note (D), p. 418.

This figure beautifully resumes the illustration given in v. 16, 19. of this same chapter; where he had warned the Hebrews by allusion to the conduct and vexation of Isaac's *first-born*, Esau.

Note (E), p. 429.

See the Preface to Bishop Watson's Theological Tracts, (Vol. I. p. viii.) The recommendation, which occasioned the remarks above cited, is this; that Students in the University

should read that collection “twice or thrice over before they take their first degree.”—Undoubtedly the six Volumes of Bishop Watson’s tracts contain some very valuable treatises, and the greater part of them merit an attentive perusal. One or two (such as Taylor’s Key to the Apostolic writings) may be mentioned with some hesitation. Their tendency, to say the least, is very questionable; and the student should not *hastily*, nor without full investigation, adopt the views therein maintained.—A valuable collection of theological tracts was also published by the late Bp. Randolph, under the title of *Enchiridion Theologicum*. Two other Works of a similar nature may also here be mentioned, viz. *The Scholar armed* against the Errors of the Time, or a collection of tracts on the Principles and Evidences of Christianity, the Constitution of the Church, and the Authority of Civil Government; and, *The Churchman armed* against the Errors of the Times, containing reprints of scarce tracts in defence of the Church of England.

The mention of the above useful Works was naturally suggested by the citation from Bp. Watson’s preface. But the Lecturer did not mean to recommend, exclusively or principally, that particular collection, or similar ones; but cited the passage as giving a hint of *general application*. Nor does he venture upon the attempt to specify a *systematic* course of theological reading, to which the suggestion might be applied. Not that he would be understood to deny the utility of such *lists of books*; for they present to the student a connected view of those subjects, all of which, eventually, and in proportion to their relative importance, should engage his attention. But there appears also to be a *disadvantage* in merely recommending such a systematic course, which it is desirable to point out, because it may frustrate the end in view. A student has not always *access* to all the books referred to: and, even if he had, there is danger lest he should be discouraged from attempting *any thing*, when he sees the formidable array of Works, all of which may profitably be

read. If he makes the attempt to read them *in order*, he soon finds that he is making a comparatively slow progress; and is in danger of fainting in his path, because he sees so little hope of soon reaching the end of it. This is a feeling, however, which he ought not to suffer to prevail, after he has concluded his *literary* labours in the University, preparatory to his particular profession, and has entered on a more enlarged and systematic study of theology. For any systematic course of reading, on so extensive a subject, *must occupy many years*; and it should be pursued under the conviction, that the Christian minister will derive continually increasing satisfaction from it, both as to his own mind, and with reference to his clerical functions.

But the remarks, which have occasioned this note, were made in reference to students still engaged in those important academical pursuits, which ought to occupy their principal attention. The Lecturer wished to suggest to them the *possibility* and *expediency* of making considerable progress, at least of a *preparatory* nature; and such as may excite and maintain an *interest* in the subject, to which their lives and exertions are ultimately to be devoted. We have reason, indeed, to rejoice that a certain portion of theological acquirement is now required of all candidates for degrees. And it is almost needless to add, that they will do well to avail themselves of that requisition as a motive and stimulus to acquire real, solid, and durable knowledge on those subjects of examination, that the preparation for it may answer more than a temporary purpose. But the *critical* investigation of the New Testament, and the *historical* and *archæological* reading connected therewith, as a preparation for public examination, seems to be the proper employment of the week-day. The Lord's day will find a more appropriate employment in reading more immediately subservient to *practical* and *devotional* improvement. A few hints it is proposed to offer; and with the observation premised, that it cannot be supposed that any one can have opportunity to read *all* the Works which might

be mentioned; but let every student attempt *something*. If he ask for a rule to guide him, let it be this:—to read such books as he *possesses*, or can *readily procure*, on those topics *to which his attention happens to be more particularly directed*, whether that interest is excited by his own doubts or difficulties, by subjects discussed in conversation, or by the Lectures or Sermons which he hears. But let not this interfere with the proper and prescribed studies of an undergraduate, because *they will be the best foundation* for valuable acquirements in *any* liberal profession, and *especially in Theology*.

We mentioned above, that Sunday reading should be subservient to practical and devotional improvement. It would be well if the student, generally spending the earlier hours of the day *alone*, would then peruse some of the devotional and practical parts of Scripture; and also, when time permitted, a portion of some of our Works of practical divinity. The following Works may be mentioned as belonging to this department:—Bp. Hall's Contemplations and Devotional Works, Bp. Everidge's Private Thoughts, Archbishop Leighton's Works, Scougal's Works, Lucas on Happiness, Law's Serious Call, Scott's Christian Life, Evans on the Christian Temper, Hammond's Practical Catechism, Horne on the Psalms, Bp. Patrick's Christian Sacrifice, and Bp. Wilson's Works.

He who is looking forward to Ordination, should direct his meditations to that particular subject in a practical point of view. He might refer to Brewster's Practical Reflections on the Ordination Services; and to that part of Dean Comber's invaluable Work on the Liturgy which treats on the same services. The collection of tracts on the Ministerial Duties published at Oxford, under the title of the Clergyman's Instructor, is very interesting and valuable. There are also many other excellent Works on the Pastoral Care, in the form of Treatises, Charges, and Sermons. Archbishop Secker's Charges are included in Bp. Watson's Tracts. Vol. 6. and are deservedly esteemed.

Another suggestion seems naturally to follow those just made. Occasionally let a Sermon by some of our most celebrated divines be read: for this will tend to personal edification, will store the mind with much sound divinity, and prepare the future preacher for his pulpit compositions. The names of Taylor, Barrow, Atterbury, Sherlock, Secker, Seed, are familiar: to which may be added, Horsley, Walker (of Edinburgh), Venn, Gisborne, Wordsworth, and many others.—It has often struck the Writer of these pages that the style of preaching in this country has been rendered more formal and devoid of interest than it might have been, in consequence of the peculiar excellence, which has deservedly drawn attention to the Sermons of some of the divines first mentioned in the above list. But the want of clear arrangement in some, the length and multiplied subdivisions of others, and the abstract argumentative style of a third class, render them not the best models for Sermons suited to the taste and feeling of *this day*. Especially it should be remembered, that the Sermons of many (for instance, of Sherlock) were delivered before congregations of a higher order than are to be found, except in the metropolis and in Universities, and at a time when it was necessary to fortify those congregations against the subtle *reasonings* of our *Philosophical* infidels, such as Herbert, Tindal, Morgan, and Bolingbroke. Hence, however valuable they are, the writers mentioned in the second list given above, are more appropriate *models* in point of length, style, and distribution of the different topics. Nor would a reference to some of the most celebrated French and Dutch preachers be without its use. An infusion of a little of their animated, and, if we may so term it, *addressive* style, need not lead to the adoption of their bad taste and flippancy; but might be successfully combined with the sober, solid, and scriptural method of the English divines.


Another subject, which would interest and inform the student's mind, is furnished in our Works of Ecclesiastical Biography. The Memoirs of our Reformers, and of the most active and

learned divines since the Reformation, by Strype, Ridley, Walton, Todd, and others, would promote his piety, and excite his diligence, and love for the Church of England. The collection of such Memoirs, in the Ecclesiastical Biography of Dr. Wordsworth, would of itself be sufficient for such a purpose. And it might lead him to refer occasionally to some of our best Ecclesiastical Histories, though we suppose that a regular study of that subject would be postponed to a later period. On that subject the works of Mosheim, Milner, Strype, and Burnet will claim his attention: or, as a convenient substitute for a *shorter* course of reading, Johnson Grant's History of the English Church.

We are aware that none of the subjects yet specified lead directly to the ultimate *source* whence our religious system must be derived. We would urge, indeed, the study of our Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies; with which a candidate for orders in the English Church cannot consistently remain unacquainted. But we would also offer one other hint, which every student is most strongly and decidedly requested to act upon, as a sure, and not very difficult, preparation for a systematic and comprehensive study of *the Volume of Revelation*. It is rarely that one meets with those, who have an adequate acquaintance even with the *history* of the Bible. Let the student make this his *principal* aim,—to lay a foundation for his future progress by an orderly perusal of the Bible, more particularly the historical parts of it, either in the common English Version, or in Townsend's Arrangement. And as a means of informing himself respecting the truth of the religion of Moses, the true explanation of the principal difficulties in the Old Testament, the nature and use of the Jewish dispensation, its connexion with Christianity,—and, therefore, in fact, as a key to the whole Bible,—let him *procure* and *most attentively peruse* Dr. Graves's Lectures on the Pentateuch; a Work published by its Author, as Lady Donellan's Lecturer in the University of Dublin, but not sufficiently known in England. He would have well employed his undergraduateship, who, in addi-

tion to the usual studies of the place, should have thus made himself acquainted with the *general* plan and scope of the Scriptures. He might occasionally refer to Commentators ; and, if he wished for fuller discussion of a similar kind, might refer to Allix's Reflections on the Books of the Old and New Testament (reprinted in Watson's Tracts), Sherlock on a Future State, Bishop Sherlock on the Use and Intent of Prophecy, Edwards's History of Redemption, and Faber's Treatise on the Patriarchal, Levitical, and Christian Dispensations.

In the mean time, let the student carefully, and critically, investigate those *portions* of Scripture, in which he will be *examined*; and learn thereby to apply the same earnest attention, *eventually*, to *every part* of the sacred Volume, using every assistance which a knowledge of *history*, *antiquities*, and *Philology*, can supply. Thus will he attain a more satisfactory and enlightened *understanding of the divine oracles*, and, therefore, *a more correct view of divine truth*, than could be derived from the dogmatism of a party, the authority of a favourite commentator, or systems of Theology. And, if he *love*, as well as know, the truth, and *pray for a divine blessing* on his labours, he may hope for all the *comfort* and *sanctifying efficacy* of the truth.



LECTURE XX.

THE CONCLUDING PRAYER OF THE APOSTLE
IN BEHALF OF
THE HEBREW CONVERTS.

HEB. XIII. 20, 21.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

THE religion of Christ is styled in Scripture “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.” Its glories are manifold, and wondrous, and attractive. Nay, even the very language, in which its statements are expressed, is such as to present to our minds truths of greater certainty, and of greater comfort, than had ever been promulgated before the Christian era, and than have at any time since been made known, except by the Christian Scriptures. Even if we were to confine our attention to the titles given in the Bible to the God whom we adore, and to the Saviour who has come into the

world, there is that expressiveness in them which speaks consolation, and hope, and joy.

The God of the Christian is "the God of peace." The untaught savage hears the thunder, and the whirlwind, and he hears therein the terrible voice of an Almighty Power: he sees the horrors of the pestilence, and of the earthquake, and he ascribes them to the vengeance of the Deity. The philosopher speculates about the attributes of the Godhead, and either makes to himself a glorious God, too glorious to condescend to notice us of this lower world, or leaves in utter uncertainty his disposition towards us, and the manner in which he is to be worshipped, conciliated, and obeyed.

But how cheering is the title given in our text, and in many other passages of Scripture, to the Supreme Being! He is the "God of peace." This title at once is fitted to calm all those wild and undefined fears, by which the ignorant, but conscientious, mortal is agitated and alarmed. If such a title belongs to him, man knows that there is peace on earth, and that religion bears a message of good-will to man. But he cannot but know and feel at the same time, that such a statement requires further inquiry; that such a conviction cannot be firm, and satisfactory, unless he further be informed what is the nature of that peace, and whence it arises, and why it did not always exist, and what are the causes which destroy and

interrupt it.—He sees the world full of disturbance, and rendered miserable by bloodshed, violence, confusion, and every evil work. He finds his own personal character to be a mass of inconsistency; his passions and his judgment ever at variance, his hopes and his wishes ever different from his expectations and fears. He wonders that man is the enemy of man, that he himself is either his own enemy, or that he cannot ensure his own happiness. He is anxious to answer the question, whether the God who made him is the approver and rewarder of his creatures; or whether he is irreconcilably at enmity, and never again to be reconciled. That God has been provoked by the wicked, and because of their wickedness, man cannot doubt. But is there no forgiveness with him? He is “the God of peace”—therefore there is hope. His desires are, that we may be at peace with him, even though we have been at enmity: nay more, it is implied that, in a certain sense, we *are* reconciled to him. If, as individuals, we have not been brought into his favour, yet the race to which we belong has been reconciled, and it only remains, that we individually flee for refuge to him, and accept the terms on which he is ready to receive us.

And how fully satisfactory is the peace which the Christian perceives to be provided and ensured! “Though we were enemies, we were recon-

ciled to God by the death of his Son." For he, the Son of God, is "our peace." He "hath made peace by the blood of his cross." Thereby is the kingdom of heaven opened to all believers. Thereby the wall of partition, which excluded the Gentiles from the privileges of the Jewish Church, is thrown down ; and the same God, who once especially ruled, taught, and protected the Jews, is shewn to be the God of the Gentiles also. Thereby, without respect to the peculiar circumstances either of Jew or Gentile, is brought in "an everlasting righteousness:" a righteousness, which can blot out the guilt of past transgressions ; a righteousness, which provides the means by which we can be renewed after the image of God, and by which we can be made meet for the inheritance of the holy ones in light.

The Apostolical prayers are very profitable subjects of Christian instruction from the pulpit, and of meditation in private. They shew us, what ought to be the objects of our desires and endeavours,—for what we ought to pray,—and in what words, upon what grounds, and for what purposes, we should ask such blessings. They furnish, in that practical and intelligible form, very comprehensive summaries of the substance, design, and application of Christian principles. Under this impression our Lectures shall be concluded by the consideration of the Apostle's prayer for the He-

brews, at the close of his Epistle. This will lead us to notice :

I. The statements of the Apostle with respect to him who is styled the God of peace ; and

II. That which the Apostle hopes and requests from him.

I. He, who is the God of peace, “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” In this way has he reconciled us to himself, and hath given us strong consolation, and a good hope through grace. For our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom God reconciled the world unto himself, was raised from the dead, and exalted to glory, that the acceptance of his all-sufficient sacrifice might be declared, and that his continual intercession for us, and his perpetual power over us, might thenceforth be exercised. When on earth, he was that “great and good Shepherd,” to whom the sheep were given, that they might hear, and know, and obey his voice, and follow him, and receive from him eternal life. And he laid down his life for the sheep ; the Shepherd was smitten, and, for a time, the sheep of the flock were scattered abroad. But this was by the permission and determinate counsel of the God of peace, thereby providing for the salvation

of a lost world, for the glory of the Lord Jesus, and for the abiding comfort of his faithful disciples. Thereby was shed “the blood of the everlasting covenant;” a covenant, made between man and his God, and therefore relating to objects the most important;—a covenant, not imperfect, and designed to remain in force only for a season, but one ratified by “the blood” of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself once without spot to God, and took away sins, which the blood of animal sacrifices never could remove;—a covenant, designed from the foundation of the world, which in the fulness of time was established and made known, and which is everlasting both in its benefits and duration; which procures once for all the remission of sins, and for ever perfects them that are sanctified; which procures for the sheep eternal life, so that none can pluck them out of the hand of that Shepherd, who laid down his life for them.

Such being the benefits of that precious bloodshedding, and such being the covenant ratified by it, the God of peace “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus;” that we might be made acquainted with these his merciful designs, and, believing in him who raised up Jesus from the dead, might place our faith and hope in so powerful and gracious a God. And is he not hereby known to us as the God of peace? Are we not

hereby assured that he is both able and also willing to “give us peace always by all means?” Are we not authorized in concluding that since, “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?” Most certainly, as he has made with us an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure, he will bestow on us the blessings of that covenant. If, in order to accomplish its grand design, he “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, he will with him freely give us all things;”—all things necessary for life and godliness, all things that exalt our hopes, and promote our comfort here, and all that fit us for that inheritance which is reserved in heaven for the faithful. Because of these things, if we rightly understand the work which the God of peace has effected for us men, and for our salvation, we shall flee unto him for refuge, that we may obtain his favour; and earnestly desire that “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Believing these things with that deep sensibility and unfailing steadfastness, which affects our hearts, and fills them with repentance and gratitude, we shall reap the consolation which they are fitted to communicate. “The God of hope will fill us with all joy and peace in believ-

ing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

It behoves us to inquire how we are circumstanced with respect to these important truths. They are proclaimed to us as glad tidings of great joy, and as announcing to sinners that which it most concerns them to know and to receive.

But does conscience tell us, that the great Shepherd may truly say to us, as he said to many who heard him in the days of his flesh, "Ye are not of my sheep?" If we are not, let us remember that we must return unto him, if we would find pardon, protection, and rest for our souls. To that little flock it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom; but is it not therefore implied, that from others it will be withheld? If we consider these things, we shall, by God's grace, seriously weigh the subject of Christ's religion. For, if it be a matter of the highest interest to us to know what we must do to be saved; then is the Gospel a subject of momentous inquiry. We shall find in its promises and transactions that which may encourage, and in its injunctions that which may direct us. Then shall we "draw near with full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience," having the hope of pardon conjoined with repentance for our past sins, and with earnest desires and resolutions for our

future progress in all virtue and godliness of living. The same joy and love, which suggest the feelings of gratitude and thankfulness, will also impel us to the endeavour, that it shall be shewed forth not with our lips only, but in our lives. We shall be disposed to adopt for ourselves the prayer of the Apostle, and to say with him, in behalf of all that serve the same gracious Saviour, “May the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

II. We proposed, in the second place, to consider that which the Apostle hopes and requests from the God of peace. The request is one not made in this passage only, but in most of the other Apostolic prayers; and it is a prayer for the efficacy of Christian doctrine, by means of Christian motives, in establishing us in all Christian virtues and graces, that we may go on unto perfection. The necessity of this is very explicitly laid down by the Apostle St. John. Speaking of our hope in Christ, which authorizes to expect, that at the resurrection to eternal life we shall be made like

unto *him*, and see *him* as he is, he observes that “ he that hath this hope in *him* (Christ) purifieth himself, even as *he* is pure ;” and that “ he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous^a.” Now he came to do the will of God, and it was his meat and drink to do it; and the Apostle prays that God would “ make us perfect in every good work to do his will.” Now as he willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his sinful ways, and live, so it must be known to all that so turn in hope of eternal life, that God willeth their sanctification ;— that his will cannot be done by sinful deeds which are his abomination, nor yet by mere abstinence from evil, but by learning to do well, and by every good work which God hath before appointed that we should walk in such ;—that we should abound therein more and more, and be “ made perfect in every good work to do his will ” in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. The word which the Apostle uses here, “ signifies, to reduce things, when out of order, to their proper state, and so prepare them for use. The object of the Apostle’s prayer, therefore, is this, that God would prepare, fit, and dispose them for every good work which he calls them to perform, that

^a 1 John iii. 4—7.

they may be always ready, cheerful, and active in doing his will from the heart^b.”

Now if it be required of men by their allegiance to God, and if Christians be bound by additional, more exalted, and more endearing, obligations to “prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God,” it is clear that such must be the desire and endeavour of all Christian men; and that, without attainments of such a nature, they are not adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour. And the prayer of the Apostle not only shews that this is needful, but also suggests that it is attainable; for prayer pre-supposes the hope that the object of that prayer can be procured. And, as the petition is directed to God, it further appears, that the blessing is to be procured from him; and the character under which he is addressed, as the God of peace, teaches us that, as such, we are to believe him both able and willing to make us perfect in every good work to do his will.

The same encouraging truth, and that which is also implied, that only by his assistance we can be enabled so to walk as to please him, is also more

^b Maclean on the passage. The Author would recommend his Commentary on this Epistle, as being, in general, luminous, satisfactory, and useful; though less learned than the critical one of Ernesti, edited and enlarged by Dindorf.

fully shewn in the additional explanation given in the following clause, in which the Apostle prays that God would do that which is requested, by “working in them that which is well pleasing in his sight.”

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” So says St James ; and the text agrees with his statement. He it is who enlightens the eyes of the sinner’s understanding,—who turns him that so he may be turned,—who draws him that he may come to Christ,—who enlarges his views of the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of that love which passeth knowledge,—who worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Hence all the growth and improvement of a Christian in the spiritual life is to be ascribed to God, who cleanses our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, and implants all those holy tempers and spiritual affections which are the fruits of the Spirit.

All this, however, is effected in us as rational creatures, and for the most part indirectly, in and by the use of the revelation of his word, and of the ordinances of his Church. If humbly, constantly, and with the desire and hope of advantage, we avail ourselves of the opportunities afforded us, then, through the blessing of God upon them, our judgements will be enlightened by the doctrine


of the Gospel, our faith be strengthened by its evidence and value, our wills be excited by its motives, and our affections be influenced to devotedness and obedience. Thus we are not to be passive, but active, recipients of the grace of God. It neither authorizes, nor is consistent with, any thing else than earnest diligence and unceasing obedience. But since it is no other than God who works in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, it is our's to apply to him for the influences of his Holy Spirit, to depend upon his assistance in every thing that is required of us, and to him to give the glory of all that is good in us, saying, as said St. Paul, "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me; I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This very blessing is, in another part of the New Testament, requested in language still more definite; and it deserves more especially to be compared with our text, because the same description is given to that Being to whom the prayer is addressed. "Abstain from all appearance of evil, and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."^c

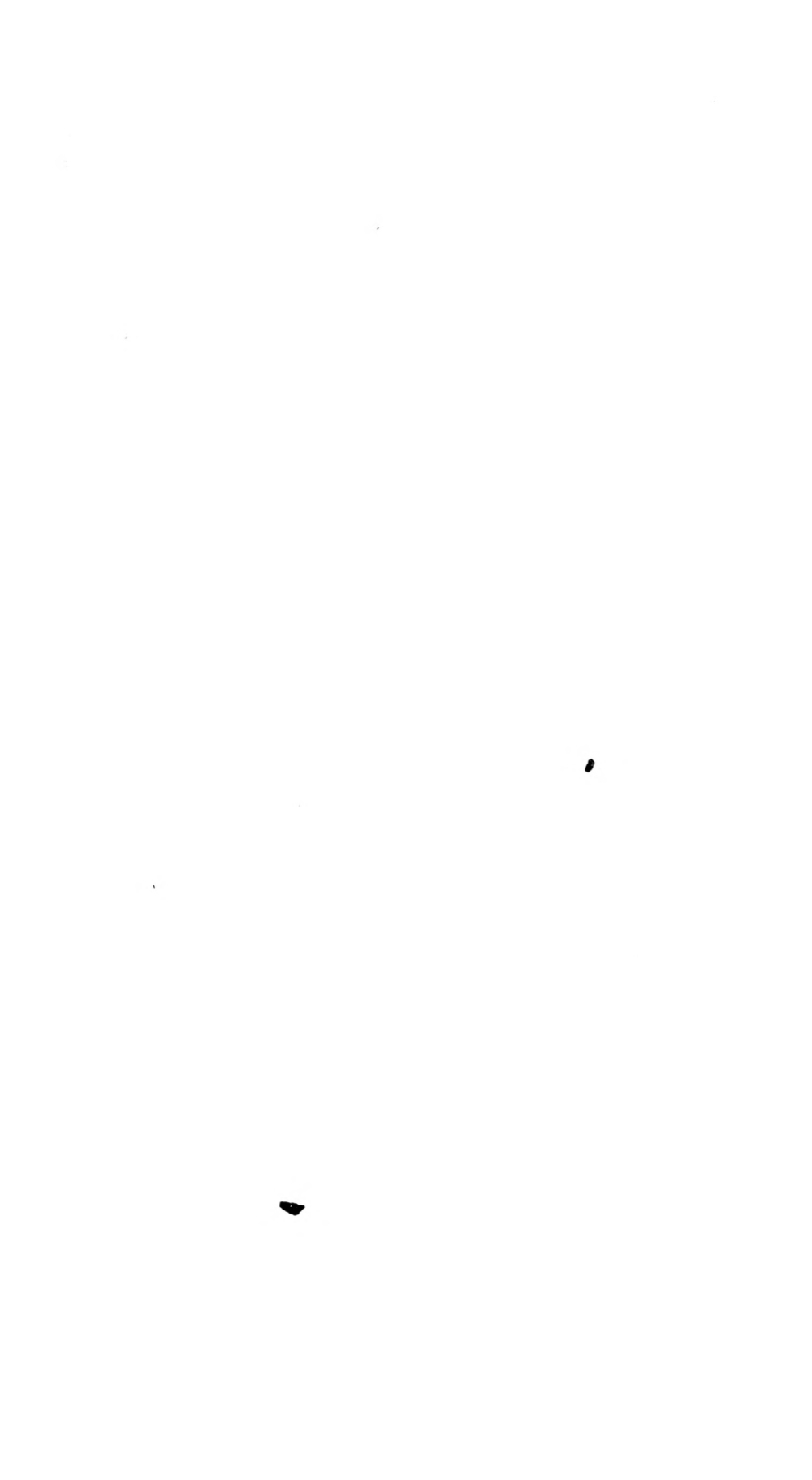
And lastly, as we look for pardon to be obtained through the merits and intercession of

^c 1 Thess. v. 22, 23.

Jesus Christ, so must we hope that our services, even when agreeable to the will of God, may be accepted "through Jesus Christ." For that which he works in us is "pleasing through Jesus Christ," when accepted through his mediation, as the fruit of his Spirit, and the effect of his doctrine and salvation. Therefore, while we do all that it is our duty to do, we must confess that we are unprofitable servants; and, feeling, as it is expressed, in our Communion Service, that "we are unworthy through our manifold sins to offer unto God any sacrifice," yet should we "beseech Him to accept that which is our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ."

"To him be glory for ever and ever," as says the Apostle in the text. To the only wise God our Saviour, to the Almighty Father of all, and to the Holy Ghost, are we bound at all times, and in all places, to give thanks, and to magnify the glorious name of that God, who is "the Author and giver of all good things; who grafts in our hearts the love of his name, and increases in us true religion, that finally, by his mercy, we may attain everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."





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