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PARTING COUNSELS:
AN
EXPOSITION OF THE FIRST CHAPTER
OF THE
SECOND EPISTLE OF THE APOSTLE PETER,
WITH
FOUR ADDITIONAL DISCOURSES.

BY JOHN BROWN, D.D.,
SENIOR MINISTER OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION, BROUGHTON
PLACE, EDINBURGH, AND PROFESSOR OF EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY
TO THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

*Δίκαιον δὲ ἠγοῦμαι, ἐφ' ὅσον εἰμι ἐν τούτῳ τῷ σκηνώματι, διεγείρειν ὑμᾶς
ἐν ὑπομνήσει.—σπουδάσω δὲ καὶ ἐκάστοτε ἔχειν ὑμᾶς μετὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ἐξόδου
τὴν τούτων μνήμην ποιῆσθαι.—ΠΕΤ. Ἐπ. Β. Κ. α. Κ. ιϛ' εἰ.*

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TO THE

REV. JOHN TAYLOR, M. D.,

TORONTO,

PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CANADA,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED,

WITH HIGH RESPECT FOR HIM AS A SCHOLAR AND A DIVINE,

AND WITH

CORDIAL ESTEEM AND AFFECTION FOR HIM AS A FRIEND.

PREFACE.

SINCE the publication of "Expository Discourses on the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter," the desirableness of following up that work by a similar illustration of the Second Epistle, has often been brought before my mind, by individuals whose opinions and wishes must always have much weight with me. Concurring entirely in their conviction, that few portions of the sacred volume, from peculiarities of style, and occasional obscurities, as well as from the almost singular paucity of expositions whether critical or practical, stand more in need of satisfactory elucidation, I should have at one time readily complied with their suggestion, to attempt such a work.

But though convinced of the right of the Epistle to a place in the inspired volume, and in some measure familiar with its contents, I could not help perceiving, that to produce such an interpretation as would satisfy myself, or ought to satisfy the public, would

require a more careful examination of the whole question with regard to its genuineness and canonicity, and especially of the elaborate attacks and defences of these, which have recently appeared, than I could bestow. Besides, on examining the second and third chapters, I found, that while the general object and meaning of most of the statements in them seemed plain, there was much, regarding the sense of particular phrases and the reference of some of the discussions, so involved in uncertainty, as to forbid me, till better informed and more fully assured, to come forward as their interpreter.

The same objections do not hold with regard to the first chapter of the Epistle. Though it also has its difficulties, arising chiefly, from peculiarities of construction ; yet on dealing with these, they did not seem insurmountable. I have obtained what appears to myself a more satisfactory view of the chapter than I have met with in any one commentator, and I would be ashamed of being backward to afford my brethren a participation in any advantage which I may have thus gained. The niggard of knowledge is the worst of all niggards.

No portion of an inspired book can suffer less from separate interpretation than this chapter. It is complete within itself, and contains a remarkably condensed and impressive view of truth, doctrinal, experimental, and practical, most harmoniously blended.

An additional inducement to this publication is, that,

from the nature of its contents, it seems peculiarly fitted to form the subject of a communication from a pastor, who has passed more than half a century in official labour, to those whose spiritual interests he has ministered to; and, on the supposition of such communication being made, it may be better to offer it as a present, than to leave it as a legacy.

The first two of the discourses appended to the volume are kindred in their subject to that of the Exposition which they follow. That is a subject which has been much discussed in our times, and, from its close connection both with the sanctification and comfort of Christians, must be a subject of interest and importance in all time. In reference to it mistakes of opposite kinds are rife among us, leading, on the one hand, to presumptuous confidence, and, on the other, to causeless and injurious despondency. Should these Discourses in any measure repress the former and prevent the latter—should they, on the one hand, startle the antinomian enthusiast and the legal formalist out of their delusive dreams, and drive them from their refuges of lies; and, on the other, enable “him who is of the truth” to rise above distracting doubts and fears, “assure his heart before God,” and maintain well-grounded “confidence before Him,” by “holding THE BEGINNING OF HIS CONFIDENCE stedfast to the end,” the object of their publication will be gained.

The last two Discourses are of an occasional kind, and are inserted chiefly to gratify a natural and

amiable wish on the part of some more immediately interested in them.

In consequence of the sheets receiving, as they passed through the press, the skilful superintendence and correction of my esteemed friends, the Rev. PETER DAVIDSON and the Rev. WILLIAM VEITCH, this volume has fewer faults than it would otherwise have had; and for this and similar favours on former occasions, I have a satisfaction in thus publicly expressing my gratitude.

JOHN BROWN.

ARTHUR LODGE,
Nov. 1856.

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PARTING COUNSELS:

AN

EXPOSITION OF THE FIRST CHAPTER

OF THE

SECOND EPISTLE OF THE APOSTLE PETER.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

WERE it my object to give an exposition of "the Second Epistle of the Apostle Peter," I should consider it proper to inquire, with some minuteness, into the claims of this composition to genuineness, authenticity, and canonical authority, all of which have been called in question,¹ as well as to ascertain, so far as it is possible, from what place, to what individuals, at

¹ "In answer to all critics who take this Epistle not to be genuine, we only exclaim, with the most perfect confidence, in place of adducing our external grounds, Oh, ye psychologists! O, ye Christian psychologists! The supposition that words, doctrines, testimonies, such as are to be found here, have proceeded from a forger's own invention,—that such strength, such enlightenment, such confidence of speech, should exist in one and the same mind, along with a pious fraud—that this *μυθολόγος*, when, in a Second Epistle, he designedly counterfeits the person of the apostle, still exhorting, confessing, and prophesying before his death, has had the impudence expressly to renounce *σεσοφισμένους μύθους*, and, with this impudence, at the same time, has such gifts of knowledge and of boldly original discourse—this hypothesis contradicts all the psychology of Christian feeling; and this the true defenders of the genuineness of the Epistle should not be ashamed openly to confess as the dictate of their Christian feeling."—BONNET, *La parole et la foi*, quoted by STIER, ii. 366.

what time, and for what purpose, it was written. As my object is, however, much more limited, I think it enough to quote Bloomfield's Introductory Note, which contains a brief account of what is generally held on these points:—

“Of this Second Epistle the authenticity has been called in question, yet it is quoted or alluded to by some very early Fathers, and, in the second century, was received into the canon. Upon the whole, the external or historical evidence for its authenticity is strong, and the internal yet more so; for if *not* written by St Peter, it would indeed be a most daring fabrication; and yet, if a *fabrication*, it would be one of the most artfully contrived on record; for there is not a single particular that betrays imposture, though it has been a subject of examination for above seventeen centuries. Moreover, it would be very difficult to conceive what *motive* could have induced any one to fabricate such a composition, for here we see no attempt to support any peculiar doctrine or practice, for which the pious fraud might be supposed to have been committed. Indeed, such an air of unfeigned and deep piety breathes through the whole, that it is difficult to imagine how a person possessed of such a spirit could deliberately indite an imposture of that kind. As to the argument of some critics against its authenticity, derived from the dissimilarity in character of the second chapter with that of the First Epistle, it is very inconclusive; for though it be different from *that* Epistle, it is also different from the other two chapters of *this* Epistle. In fact, there the *subjects* are different, and (as in the case of St Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews) different subjects call for different styles. In the case of the *first* Epistle, and the first and third chapters of the second, the whole is simply *didactic*; whereas in the second chapter of the present Epistle, more of energy would be requisite, and consequently a higher degree of inspiration would be vouchsafed, even like that granted to the prophets of the Old Testament. Besides, even waiving such a principle, and supposing St Peter's style elsewhere to be as plain as those critics please, yet they will hardly deny that the style of a writer is much

influenced by the feelings with which he is affected. Thus, in the present instance, we may suppose that the apostle's strong indignation at the heresies of the Gnostics quickened his feelings, and consequently somewhat altered the usual character of his style.

“The above may suffice to show that the internal arguments *against* the authenticity of this Epistle are unfounded. Proceed we to advert to the internal evidence *for* the authenticity. 1. There is the *same character* (namely, of *gravity, dignity, energy, and authority*, united with *simplicity*) observable in this *second* Epistle as distinguishes the first. 2. There are several incidental allusions to circumstances which correspond to no other apostle but St Peter. 3. A truly apostolical spirit breathes through the whole. 4. The style is (with the exception of the second chapter) the same as in the former Epistle. There are repetitions of the same words, and allusions to the same events.

“This Epistle is supposed to have been written not long after the First Epistle, and shortly before the death of the apostle.”

If the reader is desirous of obtaining fuller information on the subject, I would recommend him to read Dr Davidson's discussions in his “Introduction to the New Testament,”¹ where the whole subject is carefully and candidly handled.

I know few things that are more to be reckoned *desiderata* than a really good exegetical commentary on this book. There are but few separate comments on it, none of a high order. The largest commentary we have—that of *Adams*, an Antipuritan minister of the English Church of the beginning of the seventeenth century, lately re-edited by Sherman—is the very reverse of judicious, and, as a piece of Scriptural exposition, can scarcely be underrated. The best works of the kind I am acquainted with are Benson's Notes, in his Exposition of the Catholic Epistles, Nisbet's Short Commentary, and Potts' Annotations in the Koppian edition of the New Testament—none of which can be considered as anything like what, in the pre-

¹ Vol. iii., pp. 396-450.

sent state of Scriptural exegesis, might be reasonably expected in an exposition of this Epistle.

The First Chapter of the Epistle, to the illustration of which I mean to confine myself, divides itself into two paragraphs—the one including the first eleven verses, the other the remainder of the chapter. Let us, then, take up, in succession, the topics contained in these paragraphs. The first paragraph is substantially an exhortation to Christian duty. The second contains certain resolutions of the apostle, and the grounds on which they were founded.

PART I.—THE APOSTLE'S EXHORTATION.

2 Peter i. 1–11.—Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

THIS exuberant passage of "Scripture given by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," is an exhortation to duty, connected with a description of the class of persons to whom that exhortation is addressed, and a statement of the motives by which it is enforced. The best order for taking

up these topics, so as to derive from their discussion the advantage they are fitted to communicate, seems to be, to attend successively to the following questions: *Who* are here addressed? *What* are they called to do? *How* are they required to do it? And *why* are they required to do it? To the first of these questions, *Who?* the answer furnished by the passage itself is, They are persons who have "obtained like precious faith" with the apostles; persons who are in possession of "grace and peace," but need to have these "increased and multiplied;" persons who have been "called" by God; persons who have been "elected" or chosen of God. To the second question, *What?* the answer furnished by the passage is, They are to "make their calling and election sure;" they are to make it evident to themselves and others that they have been called and chosen. To the third question, *How?* the answer furnished by the passage is, By "adding to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity." To the fourth question, *Why?* the answer furnished by the passage is, Abundant provision has been made for enabling them to perform the commanded duty in the commanded way; God has "given to them all things that pertain to life and godliness;" He has "given them exceeding great and precious promises; by which they may become partakers of a divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world:" very bad consequences will result from their neglecting this duty; they will be "barren," idle, and "unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;" they will become "blind, incapable of seeing afar off;" and forget that they have been "purged from their old sins;" they will be apt to fall, and though saved, will be saved with difficulty: and finally, very blessed consequences will result from the performance of this duty; they will be active and fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, they will be clear-sighted and see afar off, they will "never fall," and an "entrance shall be ministered to them abundantly into the ever-

lasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Such are the answers to the four questions: Who?—What?—How?—Why?

§ I.—WHO?—THE PERSONS ADDRESSED.

This Epistle is plainly addressed to the same persons as the first:—the Christians, many of them of Jewish origin, "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." This is obvious from the beginning of the 3d chapter, "This second Epistle, beloved, I now write to you." In both Epistles the apostle describes them, by characters not rising out of their peculiar circumstances—but out of their common state, character and situation as Christians. The descriptions in both cases suit Christians, if they deserve the name, in all countries, and in all ages.

In the inscription of the first Epistle they are described as "strangers;"¹ as "pilgrims and sojourners;"² as "elect,"³ or selected, "according to the foreknowledge,"⁴ or appointment, "of God the Father,"⁵ through sanctification of the Spirit"⁶ or by a spiritual separation, "unto obedience,"⁷ that they might obey the truth, "and unto sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,"⁸ that they might be interested in the saving effects of the expiatory death of the incarnate Son of God;⁹ as possessors of "grace and peace;"¹⁰ as "begotten again to a living hope,—to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven,"¹¹—even "salvation,"¹² complete and eternal deliverance from all evil, and the enjoyment of all good; and as "kept,"¹³ preserved so as

¹ παρεπίδημοι, (Chap. i. 1.)

² πάροικοι καὶ παρεπίδημοι, (Chap. ii. 11.)

³ ἐκλεκτοί.

⁴ κατὰ πρόγνωσιν.

⁵ Θεοῦ πατρός.

⁶ ἐν ἀγιασμῷ πνεύματος.

⁷ εἰς ὑπακοήν.

⁸ καὶ βάπτισμὸν αἵματος.

⁹ Chap. i. 1, 2.

¹⁰ χάρις καὶ εἰρήνη, (Chap. i. 2.)

¹¹ ἀναγεγεννημένοι εἰς ἐλπίδα ζῶσαν—εἰς κληρονομίαν ἀφθαρτον καὶ ἀμίαντον καὶ ἀμάραντον τετηρημένην ἐν οὐρανοῖς, (Chap. i. 3, 4.)

¹² σωτηρίαν, (Chap. i. 5.)

¹³ Φρουρούμενοι.

assuredly to obtain this salvation, “by the power of God through faith.”¹

In the introductory paragraph of this Epistle, they are described as having “obtained like precious faith” with the apostles,² “through,” or rather *in*, “the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,”³ or rather, ‘our God and Saviour Jesus Christ;’ as enjoying “grace and peace,”⁴ which may be “multiplied,”⁵ “through,” or ‘in,’ “the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord;”⁶ as “called *to*,” or rather *by*, “glory and virtue;”⁷ and as having an “election,”⁸ as well as “a calling,”⁹ having been chosen or selected as well as called. The description in the first Epistle is fully illustrated in an exposition published some years ago. I shall now attempt a similar illustration of the description now before us.

1.—*They have received like precious faith with the apostles.*

The first statement with regard to Christians here is, that they have “received like precious faith” with the apostles, “through,” or ‘*in*,’ “the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” or rather, ‘our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.’

Faith, in the strict sense of the word, means the belief of a statement—counting it true on the testimony of another. It is one of the distinguishing characters of Christians, that they are believers—not believers in the abstract, for there is no description more universally applicable to men—than that they are capable of—disposed to—belief or credence; but that they are believers of certain statements, which other men do not believe. They count things true, which other men either count false, or respecting which they form no judgment about their truth or falsehood; and they believe these things on the

¹ ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ, διὰ πίστεως, (Chap. i. 5.)

² λαχόντες ἰσότημον πίστιν ἡμῖν, (2 Pet. i. 1.)

³ ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρος, (Ver. 1.)

⁴ χάρις καὶ εἰρήνη.

⁵ πληθυνθείη. (Ver. 2.)

⁶ ἐν ἐπιγνώσει.

⁷ κλητοὶ διὰ δόξης καὶ ἀρετῆς. (Ver. 3.)

⁸ ἐκλογῆν.

⁹ κλήσιν, (Ver. 10.)

testimony of another, which testimony the great body of mankind disregard or discredit. Now, the questions of importance here are, What is it that Christians believe? and On whose testimony is it that they rely in their belief?

(1.) As to the first point, they believe “the word of the truth of the gospel”—“the gospel”—the good news “of salvation”—“the gospel of the grace of God.” They believe—they are sure that “Jesus is the Son of God,” and “the Saviour of the world”—that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”—that “He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures”—that He was “delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification”—that “God is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing to men their trespasses, seeing He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

The object of the faith of the Christian is here spoken of, as “the righteousness of God and our Lord Jesus Christ,” or ‘of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.’ By many—perhaps most—interpreters, with whom our translators seem—from their rendering—to have concurred, “the righteousness” here, whatever it may mean, is considered as something *through* the medium of which Christians receive their faith. But the precise meaning of the phrase is “in the righteousness,”¹ and it most naturally denotes the subject of the proposition believed. As faith *in* a future state—is belief of the truth respecting a future state; so “faith *in* the righteousness of God”—is a belief of the truth respecting the righteousness of God.²

¹ *ἐν* and *διὰ* are not synonyms, and Dr John Lillie very justly remarks, that “no reason can be given why the connection between ‘faith’ and ‘righteousness,’ in this verse, may not be the same as between ‘faith’ and ‘blood,’ Rom. iii. 25, and ‘faith’ and ‘Christ Jesus,’ Gal. iii. 26, etc. For *διὰ*. τ. Θ. as the object of faith, see Rom. i. 17, iii. 21, x. 3,” etc.

² This is the view Bloomfield takes. His note is “Render *to those*

The expression rendered "God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," according to the strict usage of the language, should be translated 'our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.'¹ Were the doctrine of the divinity of our Lord not taught in other places of the Scriptures, or were the doctrine of His *mere* humanity taught in them, then the expression *might*, without impropriety, be rendered as our translators have done it; but as the doctrine of our Lord's divinity—that He is God—is taught in the plainest terms in many passages of Scripture, and as the doctrine of our Lord's *mere* humanity—that He is nothing more than a man—is no where taught in Scripture, it seems but right that the strictly grammatical rendering should here be adhered to.²

But what are we to understand by this "righteousness of our God and Saviour"—our Divine Saviour—concerning which Christians have a faith or belief, which is peculiar to them? and what is it that they believe respecting this righteousness? The Apostle John calls Jesus Christ "the Righteous One,"³ "the just in the room of the unjust,"⁴ and His righteousness—may signify His absolute moral perfection; or it may signify, what in orthodox modern systematic theology it does signify, His perfectly answering as a surety, all the demands which the law of God had on sinful men, which is the ground of their being justified before God—ordinarily termed His vicarious righteousness, which is imputed to the sinner, on

who have obtained like precious faith with us as to the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ—meaning the method of justification by faith in Jesus Christ as opposed to the law."

¹ The principles on which this assertion is made are to be found illustrated in Granville Sharp's and Wordsworth's publications on the Greek article, and more fully in Bishop Middleton's work, especially Professor Scholefield's edition. Dr Pye Smith's *Scripture Testimony*, vol. iii., p. 188, may also be consulted. Semler says, "Beza et alii sic intelligunt, ut contineat hic locus manifestum divinitatis Christi testimonium; quod nemo jure potest reprehendere."

² At the same time, it is but right to remark, that the position of ἡμῶν in reference to σωτηρίας leaves a slight shade of doubt on this exegesis.

³ 1 δίκαιος, John ii. 1.

⁴ δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκου, 1 Pet. iii. 18.

his believing—reckoned as if done by him—set down to his account, so that he is treated as if he had done it—and which constitutes the entire and sole ground of his acceptance before God, being the procuring cause of his salvation. The phrase *may* mean either of these, but the best way of ascertaining the meaning of a phrase in the New Testament, is not to rest in knowing what it *may* mean, but to endeavour to find out what it *does* mean, as used by the inspired writer in other places, or by other inspired writers.

In the only other passage in the Apostle Peter's writings where the phrase "the righteousness"¹ occurs in the same way as in the passage before us,² he is describing the designed effect of Christ's death, "that we, being dead to sins, might live unto righteousness,"³ or *in* or *under* "the righteousness." When commenting on that passage in the work already referred to, I endeavoured to shew that the apostle's meaning is 'that we being delivered from those "sins,"⁴ those liabilities to punishment which Jesus Christ "bare in His own body to the tree,"⁵ and there expiated, we might live in a justified state'⁶—under the transforming influences of such a state.

The phrase here seems to have the same meaning. The "righteousness"—in which Christians live—"of our God and Saviour," and "the righteousness" which is here represented as the object of faith, is the same as "the righteousness" of which the Apostle Paul speaks so much—which he calls "the righteousness of God,"⁷ "the righteousness of faith,"⁸ "the righteousness by faith,"⁹ and which he contrasts with "the righteousness of the law," or 'by law,'¹⁰ and "our own righteousness."¹¹ I believe that the word designates "justification," sometimes viewed as a blessing conferred by God, sometimes

¹ ἡ δικ.² 1 Peter ii. 24.³ τῆ δικαιοσύνη.⁴ ἁμαρτίας.⁵ ἀνήνεγκεν ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον.⁶ ἐν τῆ δικαιοσύνη.⁷ δικ. Θεοῦ, Rom. i. 17.⁸ δικ. εκ. π., Rom. i. 17, x. 6.⁹ διὰ πίστεως, Rom. iii. 22.¹⁰ δικ. νόμου or εκ from—δικ—or δι' ἔργων νόμου.¹¹ τῶν ἰδίων διν.

viewed as a privilege enjoyed by man—both ideas being included in the phrase “the divine method of justification by Christ through faith.” This, then, is the great subject about which the Christian’s faith is conversant.

Now, what he believes about this divine method of justification, we are not left here to conjecture; his faith is “like faith” with the apostle’s faith. “Ye have obtained,” says Peter, “like faith with us.”¹ That is, ye believe the same things about the righteousness of God that we do.² The question now is, What did the apostles believe about “the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ?” I will leave them to answer the question themselves. What is the doctrine of the apostles respecting justification? What is the doctrine of the Apostle Paul, who, of all the apostles, gives the fullest account of this head of Christian belief? “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in God’s sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,”—lost the approbation of God: “being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness; that He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.”³ “We conclude, then, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the

¹ τοῖς ἰσοτίμοις ἡμῶν λαχρῶσι πίστιν ἰσ = τοῖς τὴν αὐτὴν (τιμίαν) πίστιν σὺν ἡμῶν λαχρῶσι, who have obtained the same precious faith which we have obtained.

² This the *μία πίστις* of which Paul speaks, Eph. iv. 5; the *κοινή πίστις* of which he speaks, Tit. i. 4-6. Jude’s *ἡ ἅπαξ παραδοθεῖσα τοῖς ἀγγέλοις πίστις*, Jude 3.

³ Rom. iii. 20-26.

law."¹ Faith shall be reckoned to us for righteousness, "if we believe on Him who raised up Christ Jesus from the dead; who was given for our offences, and raised again for our justification."² "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,"³—of being fully approved by God. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth them shall live by them. But the righteousness of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made to salvation."⁴ "Of God are ye in Christ Jesus, (who of God is made to you wisdom,) justification, sanctification, and redemption,"⁵—justified, sanctified, and redeemed. "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ."⁶ "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," "that the blessing of Abraham," even justification by faith, "might come upon the Gentiles."⁷ This is what Paul believed respecting the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Now what is the faith of Peter? "Christ also suffered for us;" "He bare our sins in His own body to the tree, that we, being delivered from these sins,"—He having, as the Lamb of God, borne them and

¹ Rom. iii. 28.² Rom. iv. 24, 25.³ Rom. v. 1, 2.⁴ Rom x. 4-10.⁵ 1 Cor. i. 30.⁶ Gal. ii. 16.⁷ Gal. iii. 13, 14.

borne them away,—“we might live in the righteousness,”¹—in a justified state and under its influences. And what is the faith of John respecting the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ? “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world.”²

Such was the faith of the apostles respecting the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ; and the faith of all true Christians is “like faith,” the same faith. This is the “everlasting righteousness” which Messiah brought in when He was “cut off but not for Himself,” in consequence of which He is termed, “Jehovah our righteousness;”³ of which Isaiah sings so loftily, “My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth:” “lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell in it shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished;”⁴ and of which the apostle says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth, for therein is the righteousness of God by faith revealed to, faith,”⁵ in order to be believed.

The sum of the common faith of the apostles and all believers may be comprehended in two great principles; the first that guilty man is justified, made righteous, in the divine estimation, not by his own doings and sufferings, but by the doings and sufferings of the incarnate Son of God; the second, that the sinner is personally interested in the righteousness of “Jehovah our righteousness,” not by working but by believing.

This then is what all true Christians, along with the apostles,

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

² 1 John i. 7. ii. 1. 2.

³ Jer. xxiii. 6.

⁴ Isa. li. 5, 6.

⁵ Rom i. 16, 17.

believe, count true, concerning the "righteousness of our God and Saviour." They have very different faiths on many topics. Even on this topic, they sometimes differ about the best way of expressing their faith; but substantially all Christians have the same faith on this point—the faith of the apostles. He who has not this faith, whatever he may call himself, is not a Christian; all true Christians are disciples of the apostles; they follow them, and they followed their Lord.

(2.) Faith, as we remarked, is the belief of a testimony. The question then comes up, On whose testimony do Christians believe these things respecting the righteousness of our God and Saviour? Here, too, the word "*like*" helps us to an answer. The faith of *Christians* is so *like* that of the apostles, as to be the same, and so is the testimony on which it rests. The apostles believed what they taught respecting the righteousness of God, because God had revealed it. They credited the testimony because they knew it was God's testimony. It was "witnessed in the law and prophets," which they knew were "given by inspiration of God;" it had been declared to them by their Master, whom they knew to be not only "a teacher sent from God," but "God manifest in flesh," the great declarant of the Father; it had been more fully revealed to them by His Spirit, whose inspiration was a matter of consciousness to themselves, and confirmed both to themselves and others by "divers signs, and wonders, and miracles," which they were enabled to perform.

Hear their own account of the testimony on which they believed what they did respecting "the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." "I," says Paul, "came to you declaring the testimony of God. We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no

man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God. Which things also we speak not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."¹ "We," says Peter in the close of this chapter, "have not followed cunningly devised fables, but were eye-witnesses of the majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ; 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." When they declared their testimony respecting the righteousness of our God and Saviour, they did it, as John says, that men by believing it might have fellowship with them, in the belief of which they knew they had "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

In *like*, though not precisely in the *same*, manner, all Christians believe that truth on the authority of the divine testimony. When they believe the gospel, they receive it "not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the word of the living God." Whenever the gospel in its true import is really believed, "it comes," to the believer, "not in word only, but in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." They believe it, not because other men have taught them it; they believe it, not because it is intuitively evident to them,—it is not their Christian consciousness that is the foundation of their faith; they believe it, not because they can demonstrate it to themselves on rational principles; they believe it simply because it is contained in a divine revelation, the meaning and evidence of which have been rendered palpable to their minds. The truth about the "righteousness of our God and Saviour," is so very strange, so utterly different from what human reason or experience would lead us to suppose, that nothing could make it credible but divine testimony; and till that divine testimony is apprehended, it cannot be really

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 1-11.

believed. Till then, men may in words profess it, but they will in deeds deny it.

This faith of the truth respecting the righteousness of our God and Saviour is, on the Divine testimony, "precious faith," "like precious faith" with that of the apostles. It is to the likeness of the preciousness of the faith of Christians to that of the apostles that the phrase primarily refers, though it implies also what we have been illustrating, for if our faith is not like the faith of the apostles in its substance and in its evidence, if we do not believe the same things as the apostles, and for the same reason, our faith will not be "like precious" with theirs, for its value depends on its substance and evidence. "Precious"¹ means valuable. The truth respecting the righteousness of our God and Saviour believed, or the belief of this truth, was very precious, very valuable, to the apostles. Their apostolic dignity and gifts were not the direct results of their faith on this subject, though without this faith they would have been unfit for their office; but all the heavenly and spiritual blessings, all the benefits of the Christian salvation,—pardon, acceptance, adoption, sanctification, spiritual strength, comfort, hope, and joy,—all these they enjoyed, not as apostles, but as believers. The apostolic office and its gifts, were very *precious*, very valuable, to the church and to the world, as well as to their possessors,—they were "a grace given;" but it was personal faith that interested the apostles in the blessings of the Christian salvation, so that they had not so much cause to "rejoice in that which made even the spirits subject to them," as in that which marked them as men whose "names were written in heaven." They were saved men; but, if they were so, they were saved by faith in the righteousness of their God and Saviour. Their faith justified them, their faith sanctified them, their faith made them active in labour, patient in suffering. By faith they stood, they fought, they conquered.

Now the faith of Christians of the same truth, on the same

¹ For the force of the word, see 1 Pet. i. 7-19, and Sept.; Prev. iii. 15; viii. 11.

testimony, in all countries and ages, is "like precious." Who-soever believeth is "justified," as fully as any of the apostles, "from all things" from which otherwise he could not have been justified, and there *is*, there *shall* be, there *can* be, "no more condemnation" to him than to them. He is "saved even as they," his heart is "purified by faith," he has peace and joy in believing. The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is an extended illustration of the preciousness or value of the faith of what God says, because God says it. It makes weak man very strong. It enables him to do much which otherwise he could not do; to endure much which otherwise he could not endure; to obtain much which otherwise he could not obtain. That is the key of that admirable but somewhat difficult chapter. The faith of the truth respecting the righteousness of our God and Saviour is exceedingly precious. It calms the tempest of the awakened mind; it heals the wounds of remorse; it satisfies the demands of conscience; it quells the terrors and jealousies of conscious guilt; it creates the joy in God which is the strength of the soul; it mortifies depraved principle; it is light in darkness, consolation in sorrow; for all the purposes of spiritual food and medicine abundantly effectual; "a tree of life;" "a well of water springing up to eternal life."¹ Faith like precious with that of the apostles, had we but their measure of it, would make us as holy and as happy as they were.

There is just one other point with respect to this first characteristic of true Christians, which requires to be attended to. They did not always possess this faith. It was not an innate principle in their mind, nor was it the natural development of any such principle. It did not grow up spontaneously in them—it was implanted. Its origin was from without, from above. They "*obtained* like precious faith" with the

¹ In the quaint language of Adams, "It is a jewel given out of God's own treasury, brought by the best messenger, the Holy Ghost—laid up in the best coffer, the sanctified heart. It comes from heaven and brings heaven with it. It is Christ's wedding ring; to whomsoever He gives it, He gives Himself."

apostles. No natural growth of the human heart is anything like so precious as this faith. Indeed nothing precious of a spiritual kind grows there. All, of a spiritual kind, which unchanged human nature, "that field nigh unto cursing," produces, is vile and pernicious. Out of the heart spontaneously come many things, but faith like precious as that of the apostles is not one of them. "By grace are men saved through faith; and *that* not of themselves: it is the gift of God." "It is given" to men to believe on the name of Christ, and there is no need to ask by whom it is given. It is given by "the Father of lights," "the Father of mercies," "from whom comes down every good and perfect gift." The word rendered "obtained"¹ is full of meaning. It means to cast lots,² or to receive as by lot,³ as the Israelites received their inheritances in Canaan.⁴ The faith of the Gospel, in every view you can take of it, is the gift of God. (1.) God makes men capable of belief by the intellectual constitution He has given them. (2.) God, by His Holy Spirit, gives the revelation which is to be believed. (3.) God, by His providence, brings this revelation to the individual, or the individual to the revelation. (4.) Finally, God, by His Spirit, so fixes the mind of the individual on the meaning and evidence of the revelation, that it is understood and believed. In all these senses, specially in the last, faith is the gift of God. This gift is not conferred on all. It is a special favour, a distinguishing blessing. None continue unbelieving where the Gospel is preached but through their own fault. None become believers to the saving of the soul but through the effectual operation of the Holy Ghost. It is as true, that "No man cometh to Christ unless the Father draw him," as it is, that "No man cometh to the Father but by Christ."

So much for the illustration of the first characteristic of Christians contained in the passage before us. "They have obtained like precious faith with the apostles, in the righteous-

¹ λαχούσι.

³ Luke i. 9.

² John xix. 24.

⁴ Joshua xiii. 6.

ness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ? God, in the exercise of sovereign mercy, leads them by His Spirit to believe the truth with regard to the method of justification through the incarnate Divine Saviour.

Let us endeavour to turn to practical account what has been said. And first, let us seriously inquire, whether we have “obtained like precious faith” with the apostles, “in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” It much concerns us all to examine ourselves whether we be in this faith. To do this to any good purpose, we must know what is the faith of the apostles on this important subject. Many think they believe along with the apostles, when, in truth, they believe exactly in opposition to the apostles. I have endeavoured to make this part of the process easy, by reducing the faith of the apostles on this subject to its elements. Do we really believe that man is to be restored to the Divine favour, not by his own doings and sufferings, but by the doings and sufferings of another, even of Him, the Just One, who, though He knew no sin, was made sin in our room, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him; and that we are to obtain an interest in Him as our justifier, not by working, but by believing? Are these truths not merely the objects of intellectual apprehension, but of *belief*? Have we received them on the *divine* testimony distinctly perceived? Do we believe what God has said on these subjects, and believe it because God has said it? Have we found this truth believed very precious—very valuable? Has it given us hope—has it given us holiness? Has it led us to abandon all going about to establish our own righteousness—a way of justification of our own—and led us “to submit to the righteousness of God, the righteousness which is by the faith of Christ—the righteousness of God by faith?” Has the grace of God, as exhibited in this method of justification, taught us “to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, while we look for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour, who has given Himself for us, that He might redeem

us from all iniquity, and purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works?" Are we deeply impressed with the thought that, if we have this faith, we have "*obtained*" it in the exercise of sovereign mercy on the part of God? Humble hope, self-denying obedience, superiority to the allurements and terrors of the present evil world, active persevering exertion to promote the great end of faith—holiness in ourselves and others—these are among the best proofs, the most satisfactory evidences, of having really obtained like precious faith with the apostles in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

If, on inquiry, it should turn out that we have not obtained this precious faith, let us ask ourselves why we have not. It is owing to our not using aright the means with which God has furnished us, or not receiving what God has graciously promised, and is ready to bestow. He has given us the faculty of believing; He has given truth and evidence, argument and motive, in abundance; He has promised—and *He* always means what He says—the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him; and however the evil heart of unbelief may act the sophister now, and try to cast the burden of responsibility from itself on God, in the day of reckoning no one will dare to say, "I was hindered from believing, because God would not give me faith." Most of those who want faith are mere no-believers, rather than disbelievers. They never have so seen the importance of the subject as to put themselves to the trouble to make up a decided opinion on the subject. But not a few are disbelievers—mis-believers; they have a faith, but a faith not like that of the apostles—a faith not precious, but utterly valueless, aye, dangerously mischievous. Both these classes must obtain faith, or they cannot obtain salvation. There is no obtaining salvation but by believing; and there is no believing but by apprehending the meaning and evidence of the truth as it is in Jesus. He who will not seek, how can he expect to find? he that will not ask, how can he expect to receive? he who will not knock, how can he expect to have it opened to him? On the other hand, "Ask

and ye shall receive—seek and ye shall find—knock and it shall be opened to you.” Believe that you may pray, and pray that you may believe more and more. Oh! remember what is the unrepealed and unrepealable law in reference to all under the dispensation of the Gospel: “He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.”

If the inquiry should terminate in a well-grounded conviction, that we have indeed obtained like precious faith with the apostles, let us be grateful to Him whose gift this faith is; let it be our constant, fervent, persevering prayer—“Lord, increase our faith;” ‘give us enlarged views of the truth—deeper impressions of its evidence and importance.’ Let us “build ourselves up on our most holy faith,” and prove that we really have the faith that purifies the heart by the issues of a pure life—“the faith that works by love,” by abounding in acts of beneficence, “doing good to all as we have opportunity”—“the faith that overcometh the world” by not loving the world, nor the things that are in the world; by mortifying the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which are of the world, and by looking not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal.

Finally, let those who have received like precious faith with the apostles exert themselves to the utmost, that their fellow-men, who are destitute of this faith may become possessed of it. “Freely they have received—let them freely give.” They have not *faith* to give—they cannot make others believe—they cannot believe for them. Faith must be God’s gift, in one view; and in another, the believer’s own mental act; but such as we have let us give. We can give the unbeliever the means of faith; we can press on his attention truth and its evidences; we can give him statement, argument, persuasion. It is a shame to believers that so many perish without the means of faith. If the believers in the world were doing their duty—fearfully as they are out-numbered by the unbelievers—it would take no very long course of years to secure, that not one human being should perish for want of the means of

faith. Till this be the case, there is not only a heavy burden of duty, but a heavy burden of guilt, lying on the Church.

And as, though we cannot believe for our unbelieving brethren, we can and ought to furnish them with the means of faith, so, though the residue of the Spirit is not in our hands—though He breathes here or there not according to our will, but according to His own wise and benignant good pleasure, we can, we ought, to use the means of prayer which we know God has connected with the putting forth of the Divine influence, necessary to produce faith. He makes promises to His church in reference to an unbelieving world, promising its conversion; and he says—“For all these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do them for them.” He says to His church, as well as to His Son—“Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” Surely they who have obtained this precious faith should show their desire that their unbelieving brethren were in possession of that which they value more than a thousand worlds—should often go forth to the “valley full of bones, dead and very dry,” and “prophesy to the bones,” and say, “Live;” and at the same time pray to—pray for—the Divine breath: “Come, oh come, from the four winds, breath of the Lord! Breathe on those dead bones, that they may live!” Were this universally, nay, generally practised, in the degree it might and ought to be, by those who have obtained precious faith, though they be comparatively a little flock; what glorious effects might ere long be expected! There would be a “shaking among the dry bones”—“bone coming to its bone,” flesh covering them from above, the skin clothing them, life entering into these bodies, and instead of a valley full of dead bones, a multitude no man can number of living men filling the valley—“an exceeding great army”—all having obtained like precious faith with the apostles in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ—all living by Him and to Him. Hasten it, O Lord, in its time! “The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will do it.” Let this sentiment ever live in our hearts.

‘O the honour and blessedness of being, in the humblest degree, actively subservient to the gaining of a consummation so glorious!’

2.—*They are possessed of “grace and peace,” but need to have them increased.*

The persons here addressed are represented as being in possession of “grace and peace,” yet needing to have these increased. Both these truths are plainly enough intimated in the apostle’s prayer for them. “Grace and peace be multiplied to you, through,” or rather ‘in,’ “the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord.” Here we are taught, first, that Christians have grace; secondly, that they have peace; thirdly, that they need to have their grace and peace increased or multiplied; and, finally, that this increase of grace and peace is to be obtained “through,” or ‘in,’ “the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord.” Let us shortly consider these truths in their order.

First, Christians are in possession of grace. Grace¹ is a word signifying favour or kindness, and here plainly signifies the grace—favour or kindness²—of God. Christians possess the grace of God in a peculiar sense—they are the objects of God’s special regard or kindness. He remembers them with “that favour which He bears to His own people,” which is connected with being “visited with His salvation,” “seeing the good of His chosen,” “rejoicing in the gladness of His nation,” and “glorying with His inheritance.”³

Christians may, in three points of view, be considered as the objects of the grace—the special, favourable regard—of God. (1.) From eternity they were chosen to salvation by Christ—“Chosen,” as the apostle expresses it, “before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame

¹ χάρις. Luke ii. 40, 52; Acts ii. 47.

² Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 3; 2 Cor. i. 2; Gal. i. 3, etc.

³ Psalm cvi. 4, 5.

before Him : predestinated in love,"¹ in the exercise of sovereign special kindness, "unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure," the benignant choice "of His own will." This is the source of all the blessings enjoyed by Christians. When they are called, justified, sanctified, and glorified, it is all "according to God's own purpose, and grace given them, in Christ Jesus, before the world began." The connection between this primal form of special kindness, and all the subsequent manifestations of it, is strikingly stated by the apostle, "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified."² Of this grace every Christian is possessed. He was the object of it before he was a Christian—before he was born again—aye, before he was born at all; and he can never be deprived of it. God's eternal determination to save him can never change. But in this sense of the term, the grace of God toward the Christian cannot be multiplied or increased. It is, from its very nature, incapable either of addition or diminution; it is unchanged—unchangeable. The ground of this grace is nothing out of God. Everything that is spiritually good in man is the *result*, and therefore neither as foreseen, nor as existing, could be the *cause* of this grace. It is *pure* grace—sovereign favour.

(2.) When a man, according to the Divine method of salvation, is united to the Saviour, so as to be "justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," he becomes the object of Divine grace in another and most important sense of that term. Like all his race, the Christian is born in sin—he is without Christ in the world, and till he be born again, and by faith become "in Christ," he is a "child of wrath even as others." While he is an unbeliever, the wrath of God abides on him—he is the object of the legal condemnation—of the judicial displeasure of God :

¹ For *ἐν ἀγάπῃ* belongs not, as our translators supposed, to the preceding clause. Eph. i. 4. 5.

² Rom. viii. 30.

and continuing in this state, his salvation would be inconsistent with the perfections of the divine nature, and the principles of the divine government. The grace we have already spoken of, secures that this state shall not continue, and on being united to Christ by that faith which is the gift of God, the sentence of condemnation is repealed, the condemned criminal becomes a dear son—a joint heir with Christ Jesus; there is no condemnation to him—there never can be condemnation to him—he is “made accepted in the beloved,” and “grace,” henceforth with regard to him, “reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.” As in the first sense, when we said the Christian was the object of the grace of God, we meant, God is unalterably determined to save him; so, when we use the expression in this second sense, we mean, that that has taken place which so connects the individual with the person and work of Christ, that his salvation is not only consistent with, but absolutely secured by, the perfections of the divine nature, and the principles of the divine government. Of this grace every Christian becomes an object when he believes the Gospel and is united to Christ, and of this grace he never can be deprived—“None can separate him from the love of God”—“in Christ Jesus his Lord.” “Whom God justifies, them He also glorifies.” The ground of this grace is the finished work of Jesus Christ; and this grace, as that work is absolutely perfect, cannot be withdrawn—cannot even be lessened, and for the same reason, it cannot, except in its manifestations, be increased or multiplied.¹

(3.) But there is a third sense in which the grace of God—His special kindness—is said to belong to Christians, in which it may—and in which it does—increase or multiply; and it is plainly in reference to this, that the Apostle Peter here and elsewhere, as well as his beloved brother Paul in his Epistles, uses the term, when they pray that grace—or love—may abound or be multiplied to the Christians to whom they are

¹ It has been justly said, “The grace of God that justifieth hath neither more nor less. It admits of no latitude, as being absolute and perfect in itself, for a man cannot be more than justified.”—ADAMS.

writing. In the 2d chapter of Luke, v. 40, it is said,¹ “the grace of God was on the child Jesus”—*i.e.*, ‘God regarded Him with complacent approbation;’ and at the 52d verse, He is said to have “increased in favour”—grace (it is the same word), “with God and with man.”² Every day He discovered new excellencies, as His human character developed itself, and these excellencies were regarded by His Father with complacent love. In the same general sense, the word seems used in the phrase “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God”—lose the approbation of God by walking inconsistently with his Christian profession; and “grow in grace,” or rather ‘in the grace,’ “and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” *i.e.*, ‘Continue in His love by keeping His commandments, as by keeping His Father’s commandments He continued in His Father’s love.’ By becoming better and better, become more and more the object of the love of Him who cannot but love moral excellence in the degree in which it exists and is exhibited. The synonymous word “love” is used in a similar way, “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” Beware of offending Him.³

All men, in their natural state, are the objects of the Divine moral disapprobation, as well as judicial displeasure. There is nothing in their character or conduct, nothing in their actions—or in the principles from which they spring—that can be the object of the complacency or approbation of a holy God, who “loves righteousness and hates iniquity.” But when a man becomes a Christian by obtaining “like precious faith” with the apostles, an important change takes place in his character as well as in his state, in his dispositions as well as in his relations. When united to Christ, he is not only interested in His merits so as to be justified, but he is so animated by His Spirit, and conformed to His image, as to be

¹ χάρις Θεοῦ ἦν ἐπ’ αὐτό—παιδίου Ἰησοῦς.

² προέκοπτε χάριτι παρὰ Θεῶ καὶ ἀνθρώποις.

³ These views will be found more fully unfolded in the first of four sermons on Jude 20, 21, appended to “Discourses suited to the administration of the Lord’s Supper.”

sanctified. He is “created anew *in Christ Jesus*, in righteousness and true holiness”—“transformed by the renewing of the mind” of which the Spirit is the author, and the truth as it is in Jesus—believed—is the instrument. He thinks as God thinks—chooses as God chooses—wills as God wills; and in the degree in which he does so, he is, and must be, the object of the Divine complacency. The second creation of man, like the first, is a subject of satisfaction to its Divine Author. It appears to Him “very good.” “With a pleasing countenance” He beholds man anew made upright “in His own image—after His likeness.” Of this special grace or favour, every renewed man is the object; and he possesses more or less of it, just according to the degree in which he is renewed: for God sees persons and things as they really are.

This is one of the highest privileges of the Christian. To have “come short of the glory of God,” that is, to have lost His approbation, to have become, not the object of esteem and love, but of disapprobation and dislike to the wisest, holiest, most benignant, and most powerful being in the universe, is really the worst consequence of sin, involving in it all the rest; and to be at last found and declared to be perfectly and unchangeably, “in the whole man, soul, body, and spirit,” the fit object of the entire approbation, the complacent delight of this all perfect being, this is the very essence and completion of the “salvation that is in Christ, with eternal glory.” Pardon and justification are precious blessings, but they are so chiefly as laying the only sure foundation for that spiritual change of character which draws down on its possessor the approbation and complacential love of God. To be an object of this love is, just in other words, to be truly holy, for holiness alone, holiness wherever it exists, and in the degree in which it exists, is the object of the Divine approbation and delight.

But the Christian is a possessor not only of grace, but also of “Peace.” This is the second truth implied in the apostle’s wish under consideration. In the wish that peace may be

multiplied to those to whom the apostle wrote it is clearly implied that they have peace. "Peace"¹ is a general word for happiness; but it is so because, in a being constituted like man, nothing but what produces inward tranquillity, concord in the mind, quiet in the heart, can make him happy. Man the sinner, is a stranger to true peace. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Doubt and uncertainty on the most important of all subjects; dissatisfaction with, and rebellion against law by which he feels himself bound; remorse for breaking this law, which, while he hates, he cannot but inwardly approve; passions ill directed and ill managed; desires unsatisfied and unsatisfiable; hopes constantly disappointed, even when seemingly gratified; fears of undefined yet tremendous evil, at and after death, and uncertainty as to what may take place even in life—all these make the unregenerate man "like the troubled sea, that cannot rest." There is no solid peace to his mind, to his conscience, to his heart. It was once so with the Christian, but it is not so now. When he obtained "like precious faith" with the apostles, "believing, he entered into rest," peace; "the peace of God which passes all understanding" entered into his mind and heart; and entered not as a wayfaring man to tarry for a night, but to dwell there; aye, to "rule" there, and to "keep," preserve, the mind and the heart through Christ Jesus. "Being justified by faith, he has peace with God." Believing, on the authority of God, what the Gospel reveals respecting the character and will of God, especially in reference to the method of human salvation, he obtains, in the measure of his faith, deliverance from the unrest of uncertainty. He does not doubt and guess, he knows and is sure. Believing that an infinite atonement has been offered and accepted for the sins of men, that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin," and that "God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself," he obtains, in the measure of his faith, relief from the unrest of

¹ εἰρήνη.

remorse. Knowing that God is satisfied with the expiation made, his conscience is satisfied also, being sprinkled by the peace-speaking blood of the great atonement. The jealousies of guilt are quelled; the inward rebellion is put down; for He whom he had made his enemy, is his reconciled Father, and He “grants him His law graciously.” It appears not only “holy and just,” but “good.” He loves it, and finds how true the Psalmist’s declaration is, “Great peace have they who love Thy law.” The love of God, through the faith of the truth, takes possession of the throne of the heart, and the result is, that in the degree in which it reigns, all the passions take the right direction, fix themselves on their proper objects, and seek them with the due measure of ardour, no longer conflicting with each other, but in happy concord ministering to their common sovereign. God, embraced as the upmaking portion of the soul, satisfies the heart, and in the enjoyment of Him the Christian says, “This is the rest—this is the refreshing;” “Whom have I in heaven but God, and there is none in all the earth I desire beside Him. My flesh and my heart” will “faint and fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” His faith gives him “a good hope through grace;” “a living hope,” not dead, not dying; a hope that cannot make him ashamed, for he knows that he shall assuredly obtain what he hopes for, for God has said so; and he knows he shall find in it even more than he expects—than he can expect; and, “filled with hope through the Holy Ghost,” he is delivered from the agitations of the fear that has tormented, and can peacefully look forward to life with all its changes, death with its unknown trials, judgment with its awful solemnities, and eternity with its mysterious unchanging realities. This is the peace on the enjoyment of which a man enters when he becomes a Christian, and which he enjoys in the measure in which he obtains “like precious faith” with the apostles. Thus, as to have grace in the sense in which the term is here used is to be holy, inasmuch as nothing but holiness can be the object of the Divine complacent approbation—so to have peace is to be happy, inasmuch

as freedom from all that can disturb, and the possession of all that can satisfy, constitutes happiness. True Christians are holy, happy persons, in consequence of their having obtained "like precious faith" with the apostles, and it is this which makes that faith so precious.

The third truth implied in the words of the apostle under consideration is, that the grace and the peace of the Christian required to be increased or multiplied. He is really holy, but how far from being perfectly holy! he is really happy, but he is far from being perfectly happy.

The Christian needs to have grace "multiplied" to him. Grace, in the sense of electing love, cannot be increased or multiplied. It is an eternal, immutable determination of the Divine mind to save the individual, and is like the mind in which it resides, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Grace, in the sense of judicial pardon or justification, does not admit of being increased or multiplied. It is conferred once for all. From the moment of union with Christ, it continues a certain truth that this person united to Christ is secured of all the blessed saving results of His mediation throughout time and eternity. But grace, in the sense of the complacency of God, admits of indefinite increase or multiplication. The grace of election cannot change; its cause is in the divine benignant sovereignty, the good pleasure of Jehovah's will. The grace of justification cannot change, for its ground is the finished work of Christ, the offering of the body of the incarnate Son once for all. But the grace of complacency resting as it does on the work of the Spirit in the mind, on the progressive conformity in thought and affection, in mind and will, to God, obviously admits of increase. The Christian is as really sanctified as he is elected or justified; and sanctified wholly, too, that is, in every part of his complex constitution, "soul, body, and spirit;" but in every part of that constitution he is but imperfectly sanctified. He is "born of the Spirit," and, so far as he is born of the Spirit, "he sinneth not," and the grace of God is on him as it was on his all-perfect Lord. But in him there is

still flesh as well as spirit, and as the flesh is enmity against God, so it is hateful to Him. Sin dwells in Christians, and God does not love but hates sin wherever it dwells, and He hates it nowhere so much as in His own chosen, redeemed, pardoned ones. And the prevalence of sin necessarily brings on Christians not the grace, the favour, the benignant smile, but the fatherly displeasure, the frown of God. In the degree in which they are influenced by "the flesh," that is, native corrupt principle, they are not approved, they are disapproved of God, and He shows His disapprobation of them. When they were "in the flesh," entirely under its influences, they could not *please* God at all, and now they displease Him when they allow the law in the members to get the better of the law in the mind, and they only then do the things that are pleasing in His sight, when they walk in the spirit, and do not fulfil the lust of the flesh. Christians cannot be the objects of the entire, unvarying, complacential approbation of God, till they are "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Oh, how far are the best of them from this? how much is wanting, how much is wrong? How do they need to grow in knowledge, faith, humility, love, self-renunciation and self-sacrifice, in reverence and holy fear, in living hope and holy joy? In proportion as they grow in these, they will "grow in grace," or in other words, have "grace multiplied to them." God will regard with complacent approbation every advance they make in holiness, and give them, in the best way, distinct evidence that He does so.

And as the Christian needs to have grace, so he also needs to have peace multiplied to him. As he needs to be made more holy, he needs to be made more happy. Apart from external afflictions, which, however severe, go but a short way to make a man unhappy who is in possession of the peace of God, Christians are prevented from being so happy as they might be and should be (as it is a duty in a Christian to be happy), and are even made to a very considerable degree unhappy by their own folly and sin. Because their knowledge of truth and its evidence is not so extensive and

accurate as it might and should be, they are harassed with doubts. Because they lose sight of the perfection of the Saviour's work of atonement, they are agitated with the fears of guilt. Distrusting God, they are anxious and "troubled about many things," about everything. Not seeking, with so unreserved a heart as they should do, rest in God, they do not find it in Him, and they cannot find it elsewhere. Yielding too much to the power of the present world, and seeking and expecting from it what it cannot give, they pierce themselves through with many sorrows. Not "walking in the fear of the Lord," in the degree in which they ought, they do not—they cannot—"walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost;" and losing sight of Him who is "the resurrection and the life," "who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light"—they are often "in bondage through fear of death," and of what is beyond it. The Christian's peace is very imperfect in the present state, and it is by no means difficult in ordinary cases to see how it is so—how, indeed, it could not be otherwise. Peace is, here below, rather like the little brook than the mighty river, with its flowing stream. But it is needless to enlarge here, for every Christian is sensible that peace needs to be "multiplied" to *him*. It is of more importance to proceed to show how this increase is to be obtained.

The last truth intimated to us by the words under consideration is, that grace and peace are to be multiplied "*through*" or *in* "the knowledge of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Christians are to have their holiness and happiness increased; they are to become more the objects of the Divine complacency, and to receive more abundant proofs that they are so—"through"¹ or in "the knowledge of God and our

¹ *ἐν* is generally said to be here used for *διὰ*. But we see no reason why it should not have its proper meaning. "*Through the knowledge*, literally *in the knowledge*; but the preposition *ἐν* often means *through*, or *with*: yet either sense may suit the context. I am, however, more disposed to the former; for the more any one advances in the knowledge of God, every kind of blessing increases also equally with the sense of Divine love."—CALVIN, OWEN'S translation.

Saviour Jesus Christ." While they did not know God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; while they lived in ignorance and unbelief of the Gospel—of that revelation God has made of His own redeeming character, and the saving work of His Son, in the word of the truth of the Gospel, they were destitute equally of grace and peace. It was in the knowledge of God and His Son, which they obtained by the faith of the Gospel, that they attained to that measure of grace and peace which they possess. And these precious possessions can be retained and increased only in the way in which they were originally obtained. We must "grow in the knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ," if we would "grow in His grace." We must seek an increase of peace in an increasing knowledge of the character of God, and the work of His Son, the source and channel of our peace. It is the losing sight of the truth about God and Christ, that prevents us from doing the things which are well-pleasing in His sight, and deprives us of the peace and joy that can only be enjoyed in believing. The only way of holiness and happiness is the way of faith. We must "live by the faith of the Son of God," if we would "serve God acceptably, without fear, in righteousness and holiness, all the days of our lives."

The words before us are but a wish; but in most of the apostolic Epistles,¹ this wish takes the form of a prayer:—"Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." This increase of grace and peace is a blessing which only "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" can bestow; and it is to be sought and expected as the answer of believing, fervent, persevering prayer. Before proceeding to the exposition of the two other descriptive views of true Christians—as "the called" and "the chosen" of God, let us attend to the practical use of what has now been stated, which is so very plain, that "he may run who reads it."

All mankind may be divided into two classes—they who

¹ Rom.; 1 and 2 Cor.; Gal.; Eph.; Phil.; Col.; 1 and 2 Thes.; 1 and 2 Tim.; Tit.; Philem.

have, and they who want, "grace and peace." I hope that not a few of my readers having obtained like precious faith with the apostles, are in possession of the complacential approbation of God, and of well-grounded peace. To such I say, you cannot be too thankful, brethren; you cannot be too humble. How valuable are the gifts you have obtained! how ill did you deserve them—how little have you improved them! Seek to be more and more the objects of the complacent approbation of your heavenly Father. Tremble at the thought of seeing His most venerable benignant countenance darkened by a frown. Seek to have "your hearts assured before Him," and to this end seek that they be "stablished unblameable in holiness before Him." See that ye do "the things that are well-pleasing to Him." Seek larger and larger measures of holiness and happiness, of grace and peace. Live not so far beneath your privileges as you do. How much more of heaven might you enjoy on earth by an increased measure of grace and peace! Remember that grace and peace are to be increased as they were commenced, in the knowledge of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Build yourselves up, then, on your most holy faith;" "Follow on to know the Lord," and knowing that, while increase in grace and peace is your duty, it is also God's gift, pray each of you for himself, and all for one another, that "the God of all grace may make all grace to abound to you; that the God of hope may fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost; that the God of peace may give you peace at all times, by all means; that He may make you perfect in every good work, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight."

There may be others, I am afraid, who are destitute equally of grace and peace; who are the objects of the judicial displeasure and moral disapprobation of God, and whose steps have never yet found the way of peace. We pity such men—we pray for them; we beseech them to consider how miserable and dangerous is their condition—how degraded their cha-

raeter, how indefensible their conduct. But their condition is not hopeless: they may yet “please God;” they may yet obtain true happiness. Grace and peace may yet be possessed *by them*—may yet be multiplied *to them*. God is making Himself known to *them* as “the God of grace” and “of peace,” as “God in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.” Christ is set forth before them as “the peace”—*their* peace; as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, able and willing to save *them* coming to God by Him, “the Saviour of the world.” He is preaching “peace to them afar off,” as *they* are, from Him. “To *them* is the word of this salvation sent.” In the knowledge of God and Jesus contained in that word they *may*, and, if they believe, they assuredly *shall*, find “grace and peace.” They *can* obtain them in no other way. Oh, “may He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in their minds, and give them that light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus,” which will transform their minds and hearts, and shed abroad on them the light of peace and joy. Then, indeed, shall they be truly holy, truly happy—never either really holy or really happy till then.

3.—*They are “called¹ by God to,” or rather ‘through,’ “glory and virtue.”*

I proceed now to the consideration of the third descriptive representation of those to whom the exhortation is addressed. They are “called by God to,” or rather *by*, as in the margin, “glory and virtue.” The word “call”² is often used in the

¹ The verb *καλέω*, and the noun *κλησεις*, and the participial adjective *κλητός*.

² In illustrating this appellation, and in one or two other cases, I have preferred laying myself open to the charge of, in some degree, repeating myself, rather than make a *hiatus* in the exposition, by a mere reference to some other publication, which may not be within reach of the reader of this. I have done this the more readily, considering the annoyance sometimes experienced from such references, and observing that one of the most judicious writers of our time, Archbishop Whately, does not scruple to carry the practice farther than I have any occasion to do.

New Testament in reference to that change, by which men become Christians. The prophet Joel, speaking of the spirit of the people of God under the economy of the Messiah, describes them as "the remnant whom the Lord shall *call*." The apostle, speaking of his own conversion, says, "It pleased God to *call* me by His grace," and describes himself as "*called* to be an apostle," or 'a called apostle.' The participants of the Christian salvation are represented as, "as many as the Lord our God shall *call*." Christians are described as "the *called* of Jesus Christ," "they that are *called*"—the called ones, "*called* according to God's purpose," "*called* to the fellowship of God's Son Jesus Christ," "*called* to liberty," "*called* in one body," "*called* to eternal life," "*called* out of darkness into God's marvellous light," "*called* to inherit a blessing," "*called* to God's eternal glory," "*called* with a heavenly, holy, hopeful calling," "*called* into grace," or rather 'in grace'—graciously. "*Calling*" has an important place in those blessings of the Christian salvation, which the apostle represents as indissolubly connected together. It stands in the same category with predestination, justification, and glorification. "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." John the divine, describes the army of the Lamb, when contending with the kings of the earth and their armies, as composed of those who are "*called*, and chosen, and faithful."

It is obviously then a question of importance and interest: What is this "*calling*," so often spoken of in the New Testament as peculiar to Christians? What are we taught in reference to the state or character of Christians, when they are termed "the *called*"—"the called *of God*?" The word "*call*" has various shades of meaning, in two of which it is very well fitted to designate what is peculiar to true Christians. The word is used as equivalent to 'name'—give a designation to—thus God is said to *call* Cyrus by his name, Joseph is required to *call* the name of the son of his virgin wife, Jesus; and it is also used as equivalent to—'invite' or

'command.' Thus our Lord says, "I am not come to *call* the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

In the first of these acceptations, Christians may be denominated the called ones—called—called by God. They have peculiar names—distinctive characteristic names—given them by God; they are called "sons and daughters of the Almighty"—"children and heirs of God"—"God's people"—His "inheritance"—His "purchased possession"—"a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." These are distinguishing denominations divinely bestowed on them. They are "men of name"—distinguished persons.

It does not, however, admit of a doubt, that it is in the second shade of meaning that the word "*called*" is usually, if not uniformly, employed as a designation of true Christians. They are persons who, in some peculiar way, have been the subjects of a Divine invitation and command—persons who have been so invited as to have complied with the invitation—persons who have been so commanded as to have obeyed the command—persons who, to use the language of our Shorter Catechism, have been "effectually called."

This name, descriptive of the people of God under the new dispensation, is, like almost all their distinctive appellations, borrowed from the preparative economy; and one of the best ways of discovering the meaning of such appellations, is to inquire into their origin. The origin of the application of the word "*called*" as a descriptive denomination of God's people, under both economies, is to be found, I apprehend, in two remarkable facts, referred to in the following passages of Scripture—"I *called* Abraham alone,"¹ *i.e.*, 'when he was alone'—"When Israel was a child I loved him, and *called* My son out of Egypt."² By a revelation of the Divine will, directly made to him, and understood, believed and obeyed by him, Abraham was brought out from among his idolatrous relatives, made to leave Ur of the Chaldees, and invested with

¹ Isa. li. 2.

² Hos. xi. 1.

privileges, and formed to a character suitable to the place he was to occupy as the "father of the faithful"—the great patriarch of the family of God on earth. By a revelation of the Divine will made to them through the instrumentality of Moses, understood and believed by them, the Israelites were brought out of a state of bondage—induced to leave Egypt, and enter on the privileges and duties of God's peculiar people, first in the wilderness, and then in Canaan. In like manner, when in a state of alienation from God, and of spiritual bondage, the voice of God in the revelation of mercy, is, by His providence, brought to the ear, and, by the effectual operation of His Spirit, brought to the heart, of those who are the destined "heirs of salvation"—so that its meaning and evidence are perceived by them, and its authority and Divine kindness felt by them, and thus, yielding themselves to its influence, they "come out and are separate" from the world lying under the wicked one, and enjoy the privileges, are formed to the character, and perform the duties of "the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty." This is to be "called"—"effectually called;" "called out of the darkness" of ignorance, depravity and misery, into the "marvellous light" of true knowledge, holiness and happiness.

The great truth brought before the mind, by this representation of true Christians, is that, on the one hand, while men do not hear and listen to the voice of God calling them, they must remain, from the very nature of the case, alienated from God—strangers to the privileges and character of the people of God; and on the other, that where this call is so rendered effectual by the Holy Spirit, as that the man understands it, believes it, and bends to the authority and grace which it embodies—then he is brought near, and brought into the fellowship and kingdom of God's dear Son.

This calling is plainly not our own work; it is not the work of other men, though they may be instrumentally employed in effecting it. It is, as Paul says, "not according to our works, but according to God's own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." "He," says Peter,

“HE hath called us”—“called us,” as he elsewhere says, “out of darkness into His marvellous light”—“called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.” The appellation “He who calls Christians,” viewed by itself, might naturally enough be supposed to be descriptive of our Lord Jesus Christ. But when we look at the many passages of Scripture where this ‘calling’ is mentioned, a number of which have been quoted, we shall come to the conclusion, that it is God the Father, who, in the whole restorative economy, acts as sustaining the majesty of the divinity—predestinating, calling, justifying, glorifying. In the new creation all things are *of* the Father, *through* the Son, *by* the Spirit. The call to Israel after the flesh, was the call of Jehovah by Moses; the call to the spiritual Israel is the call of Jehovah by Jesus, speaking in His word—working by His Spirit. His call alone is effectual. His word is spirit and life—“it leaps forth into effect;” it “calls for things that be not, and they are;” it *makes* men what it *calls* them to be—*His* word is with power.

This is the idea contained in the second part of this description of true Christians. They are not only called—called by God, but “called *to*,” or rather, as it is in the margin, “called *by* glory and virtue.”¹ The idea naturally conveyed to the mind by these English words, “called to glory and virtue,” is, that the persons referred to are, by their calling, brought into an honourable state, and required to be distinguished by a virtuous character and conduct—that “glory and virtue” in them are the design and effect of their calling.

There can be no doubt this is the truth. They who are called of God, are called that they may “inherit glory”—that they may be intimately related to, and perfectly conformed—so far as their natures admit—to God, the most glorious Being in the universe; that they may be His children, “sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty;” that they may be engaged in the most honourable employment in which

¹ The rendering of our translators is, I believe, utterly indefensible. Pott justly says, that the sense they give is one “*græcis auribus plane in auditum.*” *διὰ* is never used for *εἰς*. How should it?

creatures can be employed—His service; and that they may obtain the highest honour which can be conferred on creatures—His approbation; that they may “reign in life” with Christ, may be “kings and priests to God,” even His Father. “The God of all grace” calls them to His “kingdom and glory”—His “eternal glory by Christ Jesus.” And it is equally true that they are called to virtue, in the sense of right, holy dispositions and conduct. They are called as well as chosen, “that they may be holy and without blame”—their calling is “a holy calling.” They are called out of the world “lying under the wicked one,” that they may be God’s peculiar people, “denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.” “God has not called them to uncleanness, but unto holiness.”

While all this is truth, important truth, and truth naturally enough expressed in the words in the English text, “called to glory and to virtue,” there is no doubt that it cannot be brought out of the original words—that the marginal reading, “by glory and virtue,” is their only correct, as it is their literal translation; and that they do not describe the end, the design or result, of the Christian’s calling, but the manner of it, the means by which it is produced.¹

But what is meant by being called by God, by “glory and virtue.” “Glory and virtue” are not two things; but, by a figure of speech of which we have many instances in Scripture, the expression is equivalent to “glorious virtue,” just as “justice and judgment” in the Psalm means “just judgment;” and, in the history of the Lystrians’ attempt to offer sacrifice to the apostles, “oxen and garlands,” means “garlanded oxen.” The proper ordinary meaning of the word rendered “virtue,” is power or energy; and the apostle’s idea may be expressed in the English idiom thus, “by a glorious power” Christians are called by God in the exercise of a glorious, an illustrious, wonderful power. This exactly accords with

¹ *ἀποστέλλει* and *ὁρίζει* refer not to the called, but to the caller, not to men, but to God.

what the apostle says in his first epistle, when he represents Christians as “a peculiar people, that they may show forth the praises,”¹ literally, the virtues, that is, the energies, the powers “of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.”

The effectual calling of men is a work of power—of omnipotence. No created agency is capable of so calling men as to “turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive the forgiveness of sin, and an inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith which is in Christ.” No voice but the voice of God can make the spiritually dead to hear, to hear so as to believe and obey.

Divine power was strikingly manifested in giving the revelation by means of which the call is addressed to men. That call is not given by a voice from heaven. It is contained in the word of the truth of the Gospel. *That* is the voice of God. Now, what a display of divine power was made, on the minds of those to whom the revelation was made. Flesh and blood did not reveal it to them, but their Father in heaven, and He did it by a miraculous operation on their minds—by the working of His Spirit making them know “what eye had not seen, ear had not heard, and what it could never have entered into the heart of man to conceive.” An audible voice from heaven calling men to turn to God through Christ, would be acknowledged to be a glorious display of a divine energy; but it would not be, in reality, a more glorious display of it than that put forth in the influence exercised over the minds of inspired men, in giving them the message by which men were to be called. In doing this, God, to use the apostle’s language, “worked in them mightily.” The commanding the light to shine out of darkness, and fixing it in the sun, was not so glorious a display of divine power, as the shining in the apostles’ hearts, in order to their becoming the lights of

¹ τὰς ἀρετὰς, and the δόξα καὶ ἀρετὴ, and the ἑνδοξὸς ἀρετὴ, are the same things.

the world; "the giving them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Divine power was also gloriously displayed in giving the evidence of the revelation by which men are called, and without which it could not have answered the purpose; for a divine revelation, without evidence that it is a divine revelation, could never be recognised by a being constituted like man, as the voice of God. What a display of glorious power was given when God bare witness to the testimony of the apostles, both with "signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to His will!"

But when the apostle represents Christians as called by God in the exercise of a glorious energy, the reference does not seem to be so much, if at all, to the power exercised in giving and confirming the revelation of grace and truth, by which the Christian is called, as to the energy exercised on his mind in calling him. When God effectually calls a man, He manifests a glorious energy. He does what no other being in the universe can do. The Apostle Paul, speaking of this energy, calls it "the exceeding greatness of God's power towards them who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places."

What a glorious power went along with the call, "Follow Me," uttered by our Lord on earth, when it induced men, in opposition to their worldly interest, to forsake all and follow Him! This power was not less glorious than that which stilled the storm, healed the sick, raised the dead. What a resistless energy was that which the voice of Jesus, our Lord from heaven, exercised on the soul of Saul of Tarsus, when he was called! "Who art Thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." The blasphemer—a blasphemer no more—replies, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" and from that hour till he laid his head on the block as Jesus' martyr, that power never lost its energy. His whole life was spent in doing, at whatever cost of labour

and suffering, what Jesus his Lord would have him do. The power which prostrated the strong man on the earth, was but a type of the power which humbled his proud spirit, and carried thorough change into the deepest recesses of his hardened heart.

Conversion, or effectual calling, in every case, is substantially the same thing. There is always the putting forth of a mighty, an almighty influence, a glorious power. The power must be great, for the opposition to be overcome is great both from within and from without. The call is to renounce self and come to God through Christ, that we may be delivered from what we naturally love, sin, though it be in reality the cause of all evils to us. Now, to do this, there is in every man in his natural state, a disinclination amounting to a moral disability. It is absolutely certain that no man will ever believe and obey the Gospel, but under an influence which, though in no way inconsistent with his rational and free nature, is divine in its origin, and invincible in its power. No man can come to God but by Christ. No man can come to Christ but by God effectually calling him to come, and thus leading him to Christ. There is a power which comes with the voice of God, making the spiritually dead hear and understand it; and hearing and understanding, he lives an entirely new life, having by this call—rendered effectual by divine influence—been made a new creature. Is not this a glorious power?

But great opposition from without, as well as from within, must be overcome when a man is effectually called. The power of the world, and of the prince of the world, oppose the sinner's complying with this call. That which overcomes their combined powers (and they are overcome in every case of conversion or effectual calling) must be powerful indeed. He that enters in and spoils the strong man of his goods, must be stronger than he. When "the prey is taken from the mighty, and the captive from the terrible," there must be the exertion of a glorious power.—So much for the illustration of the third statement descriptive of those

to whom the exhortation in the text is addressed—they are persons who have been called by God in the exercise of glorious power.

4.—*They are not only the called, but the chosen of God.*

The fourth and last circumstance in reference to these persons noticed in the paragraph is, that they are not only the called, but the chosen of God. The exhortation addressed to them is, to “make their calling and *election* sure,”¹ plainly implying that they have been elected as well as called. There is a double election or choice, of which all true Christians are the objects. They were, from all eternity, chosen to salvation by God, in the exercise of sovereign mercy. According to the Apostle Paul, the “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chose” all whom He “blesses with all heavenly and spiritual blessings;” “chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world—having predestinated them in love unto the adoption of children,” “according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,” “who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.” This election could not be on the ground of excellence *existing*, for the objects of the choice did not exist when chosen. It was “not according to their works, but according to His own purpose and grace, given them in Christ Jesus, before the world began.” Nor did it proceed on the ground of excellence *foreseen*; for in sinful man all excellence is the *result* of this choice. They were chosen, not *because* it was foreseen they would be, but *in order that*, being chosen, they might be made to be “holy, and without blame before God in love.” This election has no cause out of God, and is, like God, immutable. The purpose of God, according to election, must stand. This is the blessing out of which all other blessings flow, to those who are its objects. “Whom He predestinates, He calls; whom He calls, He justifies; whom He justifies, He glorifies.”

¹ For the meaning of the word *ἐκλογή*, as applied to Christians, see Rom. xi. 5, 28; 1 Thes. i. 4; Eph. i. 4; Tit. i. 1; 2 John 13; Rev. xvii. 14.

As from all eternity the saved were chosen by God, so in time are they, as the consequence of this choice, *selected* from the rest of mankind, and made a peculiar people to Himself. This kind of choice, or selection, is made when they are effectually called, and by means of their effectual calling. When the call of God comes to them “not in word only,” but in its glorious power, “with the Holy Ghost and with much assurance,” they “come out from the world, and are separate;” and in their transformed character and changed conduct, it becomes evident to themselves and others, that they are among those whom God hath “set apart for Himself”—His “purchased possession,” His “peculiar people.” It does not matter much in which of these two closely connected meanings of the word “election,” we understand the language of the apostle. Every true Christian is the object of Divine choice in both senses, and the second is but the consequence and manifestation of the first.

I have thus endeavoured to reply to the first question, *Who* are the persons to whom the exhortation contained in this paragraph is addressed? and the answer has been *fourfold*. First, they are persons who have obtained like precious faith with the apostles; secondly, they are persons who are in possession of grace and peace, but need to have their grace and peace multiplied; thirdly, they are called by God in the exercise of a glorious power; and, fourthly, they are the subjects of a Divine *election* as well as a Divine calling. The next point to be considered is, *What* these persons are exhorted to do? they are exhorted to “make their calling and their election sure.” But before proceeding to the consideration of this part of the subject, let us endeavour to find out what practical improvement we should make of the truths which have just been brought before our minds.

From Scripture and experience, there can be no doubt that “calling and election” are not mere words. They are real things—invaluable privileges enjoyed by some of our race. Do we possess them? Are we among those who are with the Lamb “called and chosen and faithful?”

It is not necessary to ask the question, Have we been called? in the sense of, Have the calls and invitations of the Gospel been addressed to us? It is scarcely necessary even to ask the question, have not these sometimes been pressed on us, not only in the read or preached word, but by an inward influence, making us feel, in some measure, their reality and importance? How often has God, in His word, called us to repent and believe the Gospel—to turn from sin to Him—to flee from the wrath to come—to hear His beloved Son—to look to Him that we may be saved—to come to Him that, taught by Him, we might have rest to our souls, and taking on us His easy yoke and light burden, might, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, as a people purchased by His blood, that we might be to Him a peculiar people, zealous of good works! How often, by the events of His Providence and strivings of His Spirit, has He sought to fix our minds on these calls!

Thus we have all been called. But multitudes are thus called who are not *effectually* called. He calls, but they refuse—He stretches out His hands, but they do not regard. Gospel hearer, is this the case with thee? Or hast thou been constrained to listen to—to comply with—to obey the call? Has the word not only come to you, but come to you with power? Can you appropriate the words of the Shorter Catechism in its description of this calling. The Holy Spirit, by the word, has convinced *me* of my sin and misery—has enlightened *my* mind in the knowledge of Christ—has renewed my will, and has thus persuaded and enabled me to embrace Jesus Christ as He is offered to me in the Gospel—freely, fully, particularly, as my Saviour and Lord—my Prophet to teach me, my Priest to expiate my sins, and my King to protect me by His power and govern me by His word and Spirit.

Let him who knows that this is the truth—who has “the witness in himself”—give all the praise where it is all due. Let him acknowledge that it is all the result of God's

glorious power. Let him never forget that, called out of darkness into God's glorious light, he ought to walk in the light of truth, and holiness, and joy, as God is in the light, knowing that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin. And let him often earnestly pray, that the glorious power which sweetly compelled him to obey the call, may be put forth to make others come in—to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they too may obtain the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith which is in Christ. "His arm is not shortened that He cannot save." He still can cause His glorious voice to be heard, and "the lighting down of His arm" to be seen, in mercy.

And oh! thou stupid, hard-hearted, God defying, Christ despising, Spirit resisting, sinner—hear, hear again the call—the call of mercy—"hear, and your soul shall live." The Master, the Great Lord of the universe, is come, and calls for *you*—aye, calleth you. He speaks to you by His servant—"Hearken to Me thou stout-hearted one far from righteousness. Behold I bring near to you My righteousness and salvation. Look to Me and be saved. I am God, not man. I am He that blotteth out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sin. Return, return, I have redeemed thee. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die." Oh! can you resist all this importunity of call on the part of Infinite Greatness and Goodness—on the part of Him against whom you have most causelessly rebelled, and who has but to will it and immediately you are in the midst of that eternity of hopeless misery, in which you, refusing to glorify His grace, shall be compelled to be the everlasting monuments of His righteous vengeance? Can you? Yes you can. Will you? You have often done it, and you may do it again. Oh Thou who art most mighty, accompany Thine own call with Thine own glorious power, and save that poor, guilty, depraved, helpless, infatuated creature, from drawing down on himself the lingering lightnings of Thine anger! Speak to his heart—make him willing in the day of Thy power!

Am I among the elected to eternal salvation? is a foolish question, which some would have resolved before complying with the call. It has nothing to do with their duty. It is not *the elect* as such, it is men, sinful, perishing men, that are the objects of the Gospel call. The only questions to the point are, Is it God who calls? Has He not a right to call, and to expect that I shall respond to His call? Have I any reason to think that He designs to deceive me? Does He promise me any thing He cannot bestow on me? Are not all His demands reasonable and right? Why then neglect, why delay to comply with them? The question, Am I elected? is a question which cannot be directly answered. "Who hath known," who can know, "the mind of the Lord" in such matters, till the decree bring forth the event? or, "who has been His counsellor?" The natural, reasonable order of things is, accept the call—make it sure, and then only can you become sure of the election.

And let the sinner beware of applying to his conscience this flattering unction, that it is *his not being elected* that prevents him obeying the call. What is unknown can have no moral influence on the mind any more than what does not exist. The cause of his refusing the call is nothing in God, it is his own love of sin and alienation of heart from God. "God has not told us whom He has chosen to salvation. It is not for us to know such matters. But He has told us that all to whom the Gospel is preached should believe it, and that all who believe it shall be saved. We have a law plain and express, and a promise encouraging obedience to it."¹ The command is given by Him who has a good right to give it. The promise is given by Him who can do all things but deny Himself. What would we have more?

And even with regard to true Christians, it behoves them to take care how they seek the answer to the question, Am I among the elect of God? That is a question which is not likely to be most satisfactorily answered by seeking a direct

¹ Dick.

answer. Keep constantly before your mind the word of the truth of the Gospel in its meaning and evidence, and you can have no distressing doubts as to your own individual ultimate salvation; and seek evidence of your election neither by prying into the Divine counsels, which is impossible, nor by poring upon your own hearts, where, at all times, if you see clearly, you will find more to discourage than to comfort you, but by taking the advice, "Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity." It is in the faith of the Gospel, and in a constant continuance in well-doing, that, "Brethren beloved, ye are to know your election of God."

The question, Am I among the *selected* ones—those whom God has actually set apart for Himself, those whom He has made come out from the world and be separate? is a very proper one for all of us, whatever be our state and character, and should not be difficult to answer. If we have obeyed the call, we belong to that happy company; if we have not, we do not. The world lying under the wicked one is destined to destruction, along with him under whom it lies. The world and its god must perish. None can be saved but by being "delivered from this present evil world"—being spiritually taken out of it and joined to that people whose God is the Lord. Let those who have been thus selected walk worthy of their calling and election, by being no more of the world, even as their Lord and Saviour was not of the world. And let those who are giving but too abundant evidence, that they are not among the separated ones, but following the multitude; that they are not among the few who enter through the strait gate, and walk along the narrow way which leads to life, but among the many who enter through the wide gate, and walk along the broad road which leads to destruction—pause and reflect what must be the end of these things. Oh, let them seek to enter ere the Master of the house rise up and shut to the door. He has not yet done

so. Behold, He sets before you an open door. In the faith of the truth enter in and ye shall find your place ready among "the called, the chosen, the faithful." He will put you among the children (*faith* is the children's character) and bestow on you the children's inheritance. Remain without, and your portion must be with the dogs, to whom it is not meet to give the children's bread.

"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof: behold, I will pour out My Spirit upon you, I will make known My words to you." Persist in disregarding these calls—what must follow? "Because I have called, and ye refused; I stretched out My hands, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel; they despised all My reproof: Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." But He cannot leave you without once more pointing out the way in which you may yet escape all this fiery indignation, this everlasting destruction, this hopeless ruin. "But whoso hearkeneth to Me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil." Oh, that He who calleth things that be not as though they were, whose word attended by His Spirit can make the dead hear and live, may save and call us all with His holy calling, and justifying us by His grace, sanctifying us by His Spirit, give us an inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in Christ.

§ 2. WHAT?—THE DUTY ENJOINED ON THE PERSONS ADDRESSED—THE MAKING OF THEIR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE.

I now proceed to attempt an answer to the second question, What does the apostle call on these persons to do who have obtained like precious faith with the apostles; are in possession of grace and peace, but need more of both; and are the called and chosen of God? He calls on them to “give all diligence to add to their faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity:” and he calls on them to “give all diligence to make their calling and election sure.” These two injunctions, though lying at some distance from each other in the text, ver. 5 and 10, are closely connected. ‘The making sure their calling and election,’ seems the duty which it is the primary object of the apostle to enjoin. Everything which precedes its injunction in ver. 10 seems plainly intended to bear on it. This appears to be intimated by the manner in which it is introduced:¹ “Wherefore the rather,” looking back to all that had been said. The injunction in the 5th and 6th verses contains a statement of the way in which the injunction in the 10th verse is to be complied with. It is by “giving all diligence to add to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity,” that the Christian is to “make his calling and his election sure.” The order, then, best fitted to bring the whole subject, in a satisfactory form, before the mind, seems to be, to explain first, *what* the apostle would have Christians to do—“make their calling and election sure;” then, *how* he would have

¹ διό μᾶλλον ἀδελφοί.

them to do it ; and then, show how the means pointed out by the apostle are fitted to gain the end proposed.

Let us then inquire *what* the apostle calls on Christians here to do ; or, in other words, What does he mean by their “making their calling and election sure?” “The calling” here referred to is, as we have already shown, in the last section, the being brought to faith and obedience, and to the enjoyment of the blessings connected with these—“grace and peace,” through the word of the truth of the Gospel, attended by the glorious power of the Holy Ghost ; and “election” is either the sovereign eternal choice of God, of which calling and all other heavenly and spiritual blessings are to be considered as the results, or the manifestation of this, in the actually selecting, from among the mass of mankind, of the chosen ones, by their effectual calling, and making them a part of His “peculiar people,” His “holy nation,” His “inheritance,” His “purchased possession.”

The question, then, now before us is, What is meant by “making sure this calling and election?”¹ Some interpreters have supposed that as, by an ordinary figure of speech, faith, which properly means believing, is sometimes used to denote the truth which is believed; hope, which properly means expecting, is sometimes used to signify the thing hoped for; so calling and election here do not mean so much, if at all, the being called, the being elected, as the glorious state of holy happiness to which Christians are called and chosen, and that for a Christian to “give diligence to make sure his calling and election,” is just an expression synonymous with “to seek for glory, honour, and immortality”—to endeavour to obtain personal possession of “the salvation that is in Christ, with eternal glory,” to which they have been called—to “lay hold on the eternal life” to which they have been chosen.

This is, however, an unwarranted interpretation, not only of the words “calling” and “election,” but also of the expression “*make sure,*” which does not mean to secure some-

¹ βεβαίαν ποιῆσθαι.

thing future, but to establish or make sure something that is understood already to exist. On this principle, it is plain also, that the words cannot signify, 'Give all diligence to secure that ye may be called and chosen.' The persons here addressed had, if their profession was genuine, been called by a glorious power, and this call was at once the evidence that they had been from eternity elected of God, and the means by which He had selected them and separated them from the world.

The question naturally occurs here, How can the calling and election of such persons be made *sure*? The calling and the election, supposing them really to have taken place, are as sure as they can be. This calling is without repentance: "The purpose of God, according to election, *stands*." Whom God thus calls and chooses, He never rejects. The making sure refers not to the *existence* but to the *evidence*, of the facts referred to. For a Christian to "make his calling and election sure," is to afford satisfactory evidence that he has been called and elected. The meaning is, 'Seek diligently to make it evident, both to yourselves and others, that you are indeed called and elected.' The force of the expression before us is illustrated by a phrase in the 19th verse of this chapter: "We have a more sure word of prophecy," or rather, as I shall endeavour to show, by and by, 'We have the word of prophecy more confirmed.' The word of prophecy in itself, could never become surer. Its certainty rests on the immutability and veracity of God; but the truth of the word of prophecy was more *confirmed*; that is, they who lived in the times of the apostles, when so many of its strangest declarations were accomplished, had stronger evidence of its being sure than they who lived at a period when almost all prophecy was unfulfilled prophecy. There are two men, both of them called and chosen; their calling and election are equally sure, in the sense that it is certain they are so called and chosen; but the one man may not be sure whether he is called and chosen or not, and be full of doubts and fears; the other may be satisfactorily

convinced that he is called and chosen, and have abundant consolation and good hope. All who know them may stand in doubt in reference to the one, and have no doubt at all about the other. The apostle's injunction on Christians is, that they should be diligent in endeavouring to secure *that* which will afford satisfactory evidence, to themselves and to others, that they are indeed the called and the chosen of God.

It is *necessary* that those who profess to be "called and chosen," should inquire whether they are so indeed; for many suppose themselves called and chosen who have no satisfactory evidence that they are—nay, who have abundant and most satisfactory evidence, if they would but attend to it, that they are not. Because they hear what they think is the Gospel, and what may very possibly be the Gospel, they think they are among the called; and because they are members of a society which is called a Christian church, and very probably may be so, they think they are among the chosen, the selected ones, while their whole temper and behaviour make it evident that, if the call of the Gospel has come to them, it never has come with power—that they are yet in ignorance, error, unbelief, and disobedience—and that, if they are nominally among the "children of God," they are in reality among "the children of the wicked one."

A mistake here must be dangerous, and, if persevered in, fatal. He who thinks himself called when in reality he is not, is in far greater danger of never being called than he who is quite conscious that he is an entire stranger to what is termed the Christian calling, and quite careless about it. He who thinks he is among the chosen ones, when in reality he is not, is less likely ever to be among them than he who is quite aware that he is entirely of the world, and has no claim, as he has no desire, to be classed among Christians. Hypocrites and self-deceivers are in the most hazardous circumstances of any class of men—"Publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of God before them;" and wherever a profession is made, men should give dili-

gence to make the calling and the election they lay claim to sure, lest they be found at last to have been hypocrites or self-deceivers. The result of seeking after evidence may be, in very many cases would be, that no satisfactory evidence of calling and election exists. So far from their calling and election being established, what they supposed to be so would turn out to be pretence and delusion. This is painful; but is it not much better to be made aware of this now than to dream on till they wake in hell? The blessings they supposed themselves possessed of are yet within reach; and, if honestly sought for, *will* assuredly be found. If the delusion continue, they will never be found, for they never will be sought for.

If it be good for the hypocrite and self-deceiver to know that they are hypocrites and self-deceivers, it is good for the genuine Christian to know that he is not a hypocrite or self-deceiver. It is good for him to have his calling and election made sure to himself—to know what, by the grace of God, he really is. It promotes his comfort, it promotes his holiness. A Christian in doubt about his calling and election must be unhappy. On the other hand, an inward, well-grounded conviction, that he is among the “called and chosen” who form the Lamb’s army, must be productive of inward satisfaction and peace.

It sanctifies as well as solaces the mind. It gives definite direction and increased ardour to gratitude for heavenly and spiritual blessings. How can a man very strongly feel, or very intelligibly express, gratitude for blessings which he is not sure whether he possesses or not? It increases hope, not by giving it a new basis, but by showing that we are indeed resting on the only sure foundation. It makes us, with enlarged hearts, run in the way of God’s commandments. How closely connected is our sanctification with the having our calling and election made sure, must be obvious, when we consider that it is only in the degree in which we understand and believe the Gospel, and live under its influence, that we *can* be assured of our calling and election. Every satisfactory proof of these is

the exercise of some holy principle, the discharge of some commanded duty. The Christian, as will come out more fully in a subsequent part of our discussions, cannot grow in well-grounded assurance of his calling and election, except by growing in knowledge, faith, and holiness; and when he does thus grow, his calling and election are assured to him, without his making them the subject of direct and anxious inquiry. He cannot doubt, if he would.

While it is of great importance to every one who professes to have been called and chosen to know whether this professed calling and election can be established, confirmed, made sure, by satisfactory, appropriate evidence; while it is of great importance to the true Christian to have the calling and election he has obtained from God so confirmed to him by satisfactory and appropriate evidence as that he cannot doubt of them; it is also of great importance to the unbelieving world that the calling and election of Christians should be made sure, or confirmed, by such evidence as it is capable of forming a judgment about, and being impressed with. The world does not believe either in the calling or the election of Christians. To it these are mere cant terms, to which it attaches no very definite meaning. But it understands well enough that Christians profess to have been led, by a divine influence, to embrace certain views, and prosecute certain objects—views and objects which necessitate their separation from the great body of their fellow-men in a variety of respects, and form them to a character, and bind them to a line of conduct, different from the “course of the world;” and when the world sees men laying claim to the Christian name, no better—it may be, in some respects, worse, than those who make no such claims, it naturally enough comes to the conclusion that either these men are hypocrites, or, if not, Christianity is but a name.

But when Christians “make their calling and election sure,” by “a conversation becoming the Gospel;” when worldly men see Christians acting a part which they cannot help approving, and even admiring—a part, they know well, *their*

principles could never enable *them* to act—discovering a patience and fortitude under suffering, a meekness amid provocation, incorruptible integrity in spite of the strongest temptations, self-sacrifice in the cause of humanity ;—they are constrained to say, not only that these are wonderful people, but that these strange effects must have an adequate cause. There is such a thing as Christian principle ; it is a powerful thing ; and the effect in every such case should be—in many cases is—the conclusion, ‘ God is with these men of a truth ; that must be good which produces such good effects.’ Oh, what have professed—nay real Christians to answer for, in reference to the unbelief and destruction of worldly men, in consequence of their not making “ their calling and election sure ;” in consequence of their not manifesting the dispositions, and following the conduct, which would constrain the world to say, ‘ These are Christians ; and if these are Christians who are ever telling us that they are by no means so good as their religion is, what must Christianity be ?’ Thus, reproach is borne down, infidelity disarmed, the ignorance of foolish men put to shame, and men constrained to “ glorify God in the day of visitation.”

Thus to “ make their calling and election sure,” Christians must give “ all diligence.” The object to be gained deserves diligence ; it cannot be gained without diligence ; and with diligence, properly directed as to its end, and properly guided in its movements, it will assuredly be gained.

The ascertaining, then, our “ calling and election,” both to ourselves and to others—the proving it to be something more than an abstraction and a name ; the making evident that we are called by a glorious power to be a peculiar people—is the duty which the apostle here enjoins. To perform it, there must evidently be a distinct apprehension of what our Christian calling and election are, and satisfactory evidence afforded that calling and election are realities—realities in us. It is of infinite importance that every man professing to be called and chosen should make sure whether he be so or not. It is of the highest importance, both to themselves and to the

world, that they who are really called and chosen should give full proof of their calling and election.

§ 3. HOW? THE MANNER IN WHICH THE DUTY ENJOINED IS TO BE DONE BY THE PERSONS ADDRESSED.

But *how* are they to do so? This forms the third of the questions which must be put and answered, in order to our understanding the text, and deriving from it those practical advantages which it, when rightly understood, is calculated to communicate. *How* are Christians to make their calling and election sure? The general answer is, by "giving diligence"—by earnestly and assiduously using the appropriate means. But what are these means?

Are we to be diligent in seeking to lay hold on the records of the eternal counsels, and secret operations of God on the minds and hearts of men, that we may peruse it for ourselves and expose it to the view of the world, and say, 'there is the register of the time and date of my conversion,' and 'there is my name written among "them who shall be the heirs of salvation" by the hand of God, before the foundation of the world?' "All diligence" employed in such a search would be worse than lost. It is not in this way that any man can "read his title clear to mansions in the skies." To expect to have our calling and election made sure, in any way analogous to this—such as a conviction darted into the mind as by immediate revelation—is deplorable delusion.

Are we, then, to be diligent in scrutinizing the state of our own minds and hearts, that we may find there what will make our "calling and election sure?" I would not wish to say a single word in disparagement of self-examination, an exercise so plainly commanded in Scripture, and so obviously fitted to serve many important purposes, especially as it is an exercise to which those who need it most are so strongly disinclined. But, I must say, that we sadly mistake, when

we go to the utterances of our conscience for a ground of hope. If the heart is at all honest, its declaration will be, 'I condemn you; if you wish a ground of hope, you must seek it elsewhere.'

And, even to serve as a source of evidence that we are called and chosen, self-examination requires to be cautiously conducted; for, to the person ignorant of what is implied in being called and chosen, and unaware of the deceitfulness of the heart, such self-examination as he is likely to institute will end in a self-flattering verdict, saying that all is safe where there is no safety; all is right where all is wrong; "peace, peace, where there is no peace." And, on the other hand, to the man who has such views on these subjects as the Scriptures, carried home by the Spirit, produce—if the faith of the truth respecting the free grace of God and the Saviour's finished work and the Spirit's all-powerful energy, is under a temporary eclipse—self-examination, however honest and thorough, is likely to increase, rather than diminish, doubt and perplexity; and just so much the more likely to produce such an effect, the more honest and thorough it is. The more diligently we dig into our own hearts, the less sure do our calling and election seem to become. Thorough self-examination is of great use as a means to prevent our forming a too favourable view of our own state and character, and, by shewing us what is wanting and what is wrong, to lead us to use the appropriate means for having the former supplied, and the latter corrected. But not only are we wrong, utterly wrong, when we seek to discover in ourselves something on which we may rest our hope of pardon; we are wrong, too, when we seek solely or chiefly, in the state of our minds and hearts, at the time of self-inquiry, the evidence that we have been pardoned—called—chosen. As the glorious finished work of Christ is the only ground of hope, the best evidence that I am resting on it, is not the *recollected*, but the *present* faith of that truth—and that present faith, manifesting its existence and power in working by love, purifying the heart, overcoming the world. It is by

following out the faith of the Gospel to its natural results on the mind, the heart, and the conduct—the giving ourselves up to its influence, that we are sanctified, and made to know that we are sanctified; it is thus that “we make our calling and election sure.”

The doctrine of the apostle seems to be—we are to “give all diligence to add to our faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, godliness; to godliness, brotherly-kindness; to brotherly-kindness, charity”—it is by being thus diligent that we are to make our “calling and election sure”—afford satisfactory evidence both to ourselves and others, that we have been called and selected by God.¹

These words contain a very condensed, yet a very comprehensive, summary of Christian morals, exhibiting in a striking point of view that character of connection, consistency, symmetry, and completeness, by which the morality of the Bible is so palpably and so favourably distinguished from the morality taught in the schools of heathen philosophy, and exemplified in the characters of the heroes and sages of ancient Greece and Rome. The heathen morality is not based on sound principles, and in its details there is much wanting and much wrong. It errs equally by defect and excess, so that the best portions of it have been justly enough termed, “glittering fragments,” and “splendid enormities.”² It pre-

¹ Bishop Warburton has an ingenious discourse on the 5th, 6th, and 7th verses of this chapter, but like many or most of that prelate's disquisitions, it is more ingenious than satisfactory. Dr Henry More, the English Platonist, has, in his *Theological Works*, p. 262, etc., a discussion on the subject, worth reading. Mr Binney's remarks, in his *Tower Sermons*, and those of Dr Williams, an American divine, in an exposition of the whole paragraph, also deserve to be consulted. There are also some fine remarks on the paragraph in Isaac Taylor's *Saturday Evening*, though many of them have the same fault as Bishop Warburton's, over ingenuity. Of all these I have made use, in my attempt to bring out the true and full meaning of a paragraph, of which Beza says well, “*Est autem insignis hic locus, si quis alius, vere Christianæ vitæ summam præbens.*”

² Isaac Taylor.

sents rather the materials of a system, than a system itself solidly founded and fitly framed; and when the attempt is made to construct such a system out of these materials, they are found not to suit each other—they will not dovetail into each other—they will not cohere—the foundation is sometimes too wide, sometimes too narrow, and the result is a structure destitute of proportion, strength and stability. However grand and beautiful detached portions of the building may be, there is a general want of congruity, and it is found, in a great measure, if not entirely, unfit for the purpose for which it is professedly raised—the right regulation of the dispositions and conduct of men.

It is altogether otherwise with the morality of divine revelation, especially in the completed form which it wears in the New Testament. The morality of the New Testament is based on such wide and accurate views, in reference to the constitution and relations of man, as naturally to suggest, when you take into consideration the circumstances of the sacred writers, strong corroborative evidence of the super-human origin of the books in which it is unfolded. How else should Peter, and James, and John, Galilean fishermen, rise as moralists so far above the profoundest thinkers among the Greeks and Romans? How is it that Jews—in many cases unlettered Jews—have given to the world the only complete and consistent system of morals it has ever seen? No well informed man can deny the premises in this argument, and it is difficult to perceive how he can escape from the conclusion.

Of those qualities in the morality of the New Testament, to which we have adverted, the passage before us furnishes us with a striking illustration. At first sight, the enumeration of those mental dispositions and habits, contained in these verses, may seem a “merely vague and fortuitous congeries of moral qualities,”—some of them not very clearly or completely distinct from others, and not so arranged as to indicate any mutual relation to each other. This impression, however, is caused in a great measure by the looseness

of our English translation, which, certainly, in more than one instance, but imperfectly brings out the sense of the apostle. For, first, the term rendered "*add*," has a wider and more distinctive meaning than our word, properly signifying 'to bring together—into proper combination and correspondence.' It indicates not merely the adding the quality spoken of, to that immediately preceding, as unconnected items; but the commixture of the whole as a set of ingredients, all of which are necessary to the production of the desired result—the making Christian "calling and election sure," in the realization of the virtues of the Christian character, and the performance of the duties of the Christian life. The phraseology would have suited the making up of a medicine composed of various articles, the efficacy of which, as a remedy, depended on these component ingredients being duly proportioned and intimately combined. Then, the word rendered "virtue" means, not moral excellence in general, but energy, courage; the word rendered "temperance" means, not merely moderation in the indulgence of the appetites, but self-command; and the word rendered "charity" means, neither almsgiving nor love in the widest sense, but universal benevolence, as contra-distinguished from "brotherly-kindness."

Something approaching to the view of Christian morals, in their mutual connection and completeness, exhibited by the apostle here, may, perhaps, be thus given in a brief paraphrase on his words—'Having believed the Gospel (for the apostle presumes they all had faith), see that under its influence you display that energy which is necessary to its open, fearless profession—to the discharge of the numerous and difficult duties which grow out of it—and to the endurance of the varied and severe trials to which your attachment to it may expose you; and see, too, that this energy, based on faith, be regulated by a wise use of wide and enlightened views of what is true, and right, and becoming; see that, as your faith is not pusillanimous, your energy be not rash and ill-directed; and let this character of energetic, enlightened faith manifest itself in the manner in which you conduct yourselves

in reference to the good and evil of the present state—producing self-possession, self-mastery—at once making you moderate in all your affections and pursuits, in reference to its enjoyments; preventing the world from lording it over you, and rendering you superior to its disordering influences; and preserving you from succumbing under the pressure of its afflictions. Farther, let that connection with God, with which your faith makes you acquainted, have its due, *i.e.* a supreme and constant influence over your minds. Cultivate communion with God in all appropriate and appointed methods, and let all your virtues, all your duties, have a decidedly religious character. Whatsoever you do, do it as to God and not to man. But let not your piety be ascetic or unsocial. You are connected with your fellow-men—specially with those who are your fellow-Christians standing in the same spiritual relation to God as you do, love them as brethren—cultivate and manifest a peculiar affection to them. But forget not that you are also connected with all mankind—that you are citizens of the world as well as members of the Church; and cultivate and manifest a benevolent affection to every human being, so that you may “do good to all men as you have opportunity;” while you do good specially “to those who are of the household of faith.”

This is Christian character, this is Christian conduct, and it is by cultivating the one, and exemplifying the other, that the Christian calling, and the Christian election, are to be made sure. How complete! how symmetrical! is this view of human duty. Everything is here, and in the right place and order. First comes an energetic, enlightened faith in God—the grand principle of conduct; then personal virtue, consisting in temperance and patience, enlivened and sustained by godliness; then social virtue, first, in reference to fellow-Christians—“brotherly-kindness;” second, in reference to mankind at large—“charity.” “Such is the edifice which,” to use the words of an accomplished preacher, to whom I feel indebted for giving greater consistency and completeness to the view I had formed on this passage, “every

individual Christian, as a wise, diligent, and honest workman, is to build on the foundation of the common faith—faith like precious with that of the apostles.” “The series begins in faith and ends in love; it touches at the one extremity all that is revealed of God and the infinite; and on the other, all that belongs to the world and man—while between the two are placed, in their order, whatever can be required for practical goodness, for the various utterances of a manifold virtue, for the personal and relative, the active and the passive, the divine and the human.”¹

What is the only safe ground of a sinner's hope? How does that only safe ground become the ground of *my* hope? And how am I to know that that only safe ground has become, and continues to be, the ground of my hope, so that I may be assured that my hope is not the “hope of the hypocrite,” that “shall perish,” but “the hope that maketh not ashamed?” These are three questions to which it deeply concerns every man to seek for satisfactory answers. Each has its own answer, and it is dangerous to mistake the answer of one of them, for the answer of either of the others. The only safe ground of the sinner's hope is the sovereign mercy of God, exercised in consistency with His righteousness, through the atoning sacrifice of His Son, made known to us in the Gospel revelation. The only way in which this only safe ground of hope can become the ground of my hope, is by my believing the word of the truth of the Gospel; and the only way in which I can obtain permanent, satisfactory evidence, that the only safe ground of hope has become the ground of my hope, is by *continuing* to believe the Gospel, and by living under the influence of the Gospel believed.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh verses of this chapter may be considered as the apostle's answer to the third question. These words are *his* directory to believers how to “make their calling and their election sure.” It is as if he had said, ‘Ye have “obtained like precious faith” with us, the apostles. Hold fast

¹ Binney.

that *faith*, nothing can be done without it; and “add to that faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity.” Thus, and thus only, will you “make your calling and election sure;” thus you shall “never fall, but have ministered to you an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The sum of this statement is, ‘If you would prove to yourselves or others that ye are the called and elected of God, be, and do, what the called and elected of God are called and elected to be and do. If you would know that you are Christians—*be* Christians.’ In these words he shows *what* the called and elected of God are called and elected to be and do. He gives us a very brief, and yet a very complete view of Christian disposition and conduct, and suggests much important instruction to the individual believer, as to how he is to realize these in his own experience.

Let us briefly examine this more excellent way of obtaining and retaining satisfaction respecting the reality of our “calling and election.”

1. *By adding to faith, virtue.*

First,—That their calling and election may be made sure, Christians are to add to their faith virtue. It has struck some people as strange that faith is not only not enjoined here in the first place, but not enjoined at all. This wonder, however, is an ignorant wonder. It arises from not noticing who the persons are whom the apostle is addressing, and what the purpose is which he has in view. He is not addressing unbelieving men. Had he been doing so, his first, almost his sole exhortation to them would have been, “Repent, and believe the Gospel.” He is not pointing out to a perishing sinner the way of salvation; in that case, he would have said, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;” look to Him and be saved. He is addressing believers—men who had “obtained like precious

faith" with himself—men who had a knowledge of "the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ," *i.e.* the method of justification by Him; and his object is to point out to such persons the best way of proving, both to others and to themselves, that they were the called and chosen of God.

He takes for granted that they have faith. They could not have been what he assumes them to be, without faith. I have already explained, at some length, what is the faith of which the apostle speaks—faith like precious with that of the apostles—the faith of the same truth which the apostles believed, received on the same evidence on which the apostles received it, and producing on them the same blessed effects that it did on the apostles. They are not exhorted to have this faith, or to add it to anything else. They have it, but they are to take care that the faith they have be the right faith—the belief of the right truth on the right evidence. If it *be*, it is not meant to be alone, it cannot be alone. The faith that is alone is dead, good for nothing. Our "most holy faith" is a foundation on which a building must be erected. Wherever it is really laid, there is "a growing unto an holy temple in the Lord, a habitation of God through the Spirit." Faith is the first step in the road to heaven; but, were the believer to stand still and do nothing but believe, do you think he would ever reach heaven? If he *really* believe he cannot stand still. "Add to faith virtue."

The word translated "add,"¹ is a somewhat remarkable one. It is a scenic word, and denotes the duties of the person who supplied in proper order everything that was necessary to give completeness and perfection to a public entertainment; the leading idea is, to afford that which is needed. It is the word used to signify the effect of all the parts of the body doing each its function, "the whole body being ministered to increaseth."² It is used in the phrase, "he that ministereth seed to the sower,"³—supplying a want, and thus enabling him to do his work. Here the idea is, that all

¹ ἐπιχορηγῶσαυτε.

² Col. ii. 19.

³ 2 Cor. ix. 10.

those Christian excellencies go to constitute a Christian character. It is by being a Christian, that a man is to prove himself to be one. A man's "calling and election" cannot be made sure by a faith which is alone; other Christian, holy dispositions must be added, and must be exercised and displayed in orderly harmonious operation. Do not think that in seeking "to make your calling and election sure," it is enough to say, I am a believer. I trust you are: but you must add many things to faith, in order to make your "calling and election sure" either to yourself or to others; and, in the first place, "add to your faith virtue," *i.e.* 'believe, then be virtuous.

"Virtue," in our language, is a general name for moral excellence, and the original term,¹ so rendered in the passage before us, is sometimes used in the same way. Standing, however, as it does here, contradistinguished from "temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity," all of them "virtues," or particular forms of moral excellence, it obviously cannot be understood in its general sense. I have already had occasion to state to you that the word rendered "virtue," properly signifies *energy*, and that the phrase "glory and virtue," is just equivalent to "glorious power—illustrious energy." I have no doubt the word has the same meaning here, 'add to faith, *energy*'—energy manifesting itself in the active performance of duty, and in bravely meeting the trials of the Christian life.

The Christian has much to do—much to suffer. His life is to be spent, not out of the world, but in it, in the midst of its activities; and it is expected that in his own sphere none shall be more active than he. What his hand finds to do (and it will find much) he must do with all his might. He is also exposed to numerous temptations amid which he is to stand fast; and afflictions amid which, instead of becoming weary and faint in his mind, he is to be patient and even joyful; and without energy, activity,

¹ ἀρετή.

fortitude, he cannot perform these duties, resist these temptations, and sustain these afflictions. Any want of, or deficiency in, energy, is a very serious defect in a character. It prevents much good, and produces much evil. Want of fortitude, one form of energy, was the main cause why many of the chief rulers who believed in Jesus did not confess Him. They were afraid of being put out of the synagogue; they loved the approbation of men more than the approbation of God.¹ Want of fortitude induced Pilate, in opposition to the dictates of his conscience, to condemn our Lord—he feared the Jews. A deficiency in energy and fortitude prevents many men from becoming Christians, and it greatly interferes with the consistency, and respectability, and usefulness, of those who are Christians. It was the not adding to faith, virtue, that made Abraham to equivocate so pitifully in Egypt and Gerar, and Peter so shamefully to deny his Master. Who has not had reason to regret how many opportunities of doing good, of honouring God, and promoting the best interests of mankind, he has lost, just for want of a little more energy and fortitude? How often has he done what he ought not to have done—what he knew he ought not to have done; how often has he not done what he ought to have done—what he knew that he ought to have done, just because he did not “add to faith virtue?”

The force of the apostle's exhortation may be thus given,—you believe, but you must act and suffer; and that you may do either or both to purpose, you must be energetic and brave, active and courageous. “Add then to faith virtue.” Work—be strong. Have manly energy, and let it be manifested in prompt decision and resolute action. Behave like a man who believes, who has a clear, fixed judgment of what is true and right, and who is determined to follow it to its fair practical results. Do not look as if you were halting between two opinions. “Be not weary in well-doing.” Be not “a double-minded man, unstable in all thy

¹ John xii. 42. 43.

ways." Bear a bold front in opposition to the hazards connected with a consistent Christian profession. Fear not the world—fear not the god of the world—fear only thine own God. Sink not under the pressure of affliction. Be strong to suffer as well as to do.

But how is this energy to be obtained? It is to be added to faith. Being believers, be energetic.¹ That seems to say that it cannot exist without faith, and that it is naturally connected with faith. None but a believer can be thus energetic and courageous; and every believer will be thus energetic and courageous, according to the measure of his faith. Would you be delivered from spiritual slothfulness? would you be raised above the debilitating, exanimating influence of fear? "Believe," "only believe." Let the truth respecting the holy benignant character, and the ever-righteous government of Jehovah, the excellence and authority of His law, the power and grace of the Saviour, the perfection of His atonement, the prevalence of His intercession, the power of His Spirit, the fulness and freeness of His salvation, the certainty of the general judgment, the righteousness of the sentences to be then pronounced, and their eventful results in the unmixed enjoyments or sufferings of eternity—let the truth on these and similar subjects be habitually before your mind, in its meaning and evidences: in one word, under the influence of faith, realize these things so as to look on what is unseen—"to see Him that is invisible;" and active energy, indomitable fortitude, will be the necessary result. He only, who is strong in faith, is strong for work and warfare; ready to do and suffer up to his highest capacities of action and endurance, whatever God in His word or providence commands

¹ Some expound *ἐν τῇ πίστει* as = *διὰ τῆς πίστεως*, as if faith were the grand means of supplying energy; you cannot, however, carry this principle through the paragraph, making the exertion of energy the great means of the supply of knowledge, and the supply of knowledge the great means of the supply of temperance, etc. I rather think the apostle's meaning is thus brought out—being believers, become energetic—being energetic, become intelligent—being intelligent, become temperate, etc.

him to do, or appoints him to suffer. It is by the truth believed, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, that God (from whom comes this good gift, and who will give it to every one that asks, and shews his sincerity in asking, by using the appointed means of obtaining it) strengthens men, weak and timid in themselves, with all might according to His glorious power unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, so that they are enabled to make their "calling and election sure," and amid all temptations to walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work. It is thus that "they run and are not weary, walk and do not faint," and, like the ancient worthies, who added to faith energy and courage, "through faith subdue the kingdom of Satan" within them and around them, "work righteousness, obtain promised blessings, out of weakness become strong, wax valiant in fight, put to flight the armies of the aliens," and are finally, "made more than conquerors through Him that loved them." In thus adding to his faith virtue, the Christian will "make his calling and election sure" both to himself and others.

The importance of adding to faith virtue—energy, is strikingly exhibited in the very frequent repetition in the Holy Scriptures of the command "Be strong," Only "be strong," says Moses to the Israelites. "Be thou strong, and show thyself a man," says David to Solomon, the Lord hath chosen thee to build a house to His name, "be thou strong and do it." "Be strong," said the Prophet Azariah to Asa and his army, "be strong, and let not your hands be weak." "Be strong," says God by Isaiah to those who are of a fearful heart. "Be strong," says the Prophet Haggai, "O Zerubbabel; be strong, O Joshua; be strong, all ye people of the land." "Quit you like men, be strong; be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might;" "be strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus," says the Apostle Paul.

The subject we have been considering is one of deep *importance*, and ought to be one of deep *interest* to us all. There are many men—reader, art thou one of them?—who give themselves no trouble about "calling and election."

Some of these men have come to the conclusion that there are no such things, that they are the dreams of enthusiasm, or the pretences of hypocrisy; and others, who do not call in question their existence, are obviously so entirely occupied with the pursuits of this world, that they are to them as non-existent. There is no room, however, for rational doubt on the subject. That the Bible is the revelation of the Divine will, is proved by a variety and power of evidence such as very few propositions of any kind can boast; and, if it is so, nothing is more certain than that there is a class of men called by God through the instrumentality of His word, by the agency of His Spirit,—out of their natural state of ignorance, error, guilt, and depravity, into a state in which they have the true knowledge of God, the enjoyment of His favour, and an ever-growing conformity to His image,—and thus distinguished from the rest of mankind as a selected, separated, peculiar people; and that these, and these alone, are in a safe state in reference to their highest and eternal interests. To this class no man *naturally* belongs; and he that is not brought into it must carry into eternity all the responsibilities connected with that guilt and depravity which, in our fallen state, are the characteristics of our race—responsibilities which will secure, under the government of a righteous God, that his eternity of being shall be an eternity of complete privation of good, and of suffering up to his capacities of suffering. Surely if men were not deplorably stupid, they could not continue either careless or doubtful whether they have been brought into this privileged class. There are many who are far too easily satisfied on this question, and on grounds which will not bear half-an-hour's serious self-examination—far less the searching of the divine tribunal—have arrived at the conclusion that they belong to this class, and who try to put down the doubts which will, in spite of themselves, arise, by calling them unbelief: as if to doubt of the safety of our own state were the same thing as to doubt the truth of the divine testimony. There are others who, though really belonging to this class of the called, yet spend their lives, not in-

deed without hope, but amid many painful uncertainties, doubts, and fears, from seeking a kind or degree of evidence of which the circumstances do not admit. I have endeavoured distinctly to show how the false hopes of the one, and the false fears of the other, may be dissipated; and it is much the interest of the one class that they should fear, for till they do so, they will never have the "hope that maketh not ashamed;" and of the other that they should rise above fears which not only prevent comfort, but impede sanctification. May God bless what has been said for chasing some poor sinner out of his refuge of lies, and preventing him from seeking or finding peace except in the faith of the Gospel, and the hope of eternal life through Christ Jesus; and for leading "the called and the chosen," who may be walking in darkness and having no light, to perceive and follow the only course by means of which they can habitually recognise their own state and character—the keeping steadily to the King's highway of truth and holiness—the moving constantly onwards and upwards—the "seeking glory, honour, and immortality," in an entire dependence on divine grace, and through "a constant continuance in well-doing."

2. *By adding to virtue, knowledge.*

Let us now proceed with our illustration: "Add to virtue"—energy, "knowledge." Mere energy and courage, though under the influence of a *genuine* faith, may be misdirected. They may lead a man to engage in labours which it would be wise to leave alone, and to expose himself to dangers and perplexities which he would do well to avoid. Misdirected energy and courage, though springing from a true faith, may injure the cause which it was meant to support and extend. It is not enough that exertions should originate in faith; it is necessary, also, that they should be directed by knowledge and wisdom. They must be enlightened as well as honest. Hence, says the apostle, "Give all diligence to add knowledge" to the energy and courage, which you have added to your faith.

By knowledge, some very good interpreters understand here an accurate and extensive acquaintance with Christian truth; others understand the term as denoting the wise use of this knowledge—what we ordinarily term Christian wisdom or prudence. The word not unnaturally expresses both these ideas. Nor am I at all disposed to limit the meaning of the word to the extensive knowledge, and wise use, of *religious* truth properly so called. I would extend it to all kinds of knowledge within the Christian's reach, which can be turned to account in the way of improving his own character, and gaining the great ends of his Christian calling in reference to the glory of God and the good of the church and the world. A Christian should be an intelligent, a knowing, a wise man.

There is no doubt that it is religious knowledge and wisdom that he is primarily to seek after, the "knowledge of the Holy," that knowledge of which the Patriarch says, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."¹ The persons addressed here were not destitute of this knowledge. The faith the apostle speaks of as possessed by them, was not a blind, implicit belief—the believing they knew not what or wherefore; they knew "the truth which had made them free." It could not have made them free if they had not known it. They understood, they apprehended the meaning and evidence of the divine testimony, in the belief of which they became Christians. But many a genuine Christian has very limited views, though they may be clear and accurate so far as they go, of the subject and evidence of the Gospel revelation; and the most accomplished Christian, so long as he is in this world, has much to learn on these points. It is the Christian's duty and interest to "follow on to know the Lord;" to seek that the light kindled in his mind may not only not be extinguished, but may wax even brighter and brighter, that he may comprehend more and more of "the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ,

¹ Job xxviii. 28.

in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." When a grown up man, he must not be content to live always on the food of babes; when he ceases to be a child, he must give over understanding and thinking as a child—become a man, he "must put away childish things." "Leaving the first principles of the oracles of God, he must go on to perfection." He must not always be a child, in danger of being "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive," but under the influence of the truth well known and firmly believed, must "grow up unto Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." The doctrine of Christ is the mould in which the new man is to be fashioned; and it is by believing knowledge, by intelligent faith, that the human faculties and susceptibilities, melted by the fire of Divine influence, are, as it were, poured into this mould.

Growing in the knowledge of the truth both doctrinal and practical, Christians must grow also in the knowledge of the evidence on which it rests; both the evidence that the Bible is a divine revelation, and that the principles they hold are to be found in that revelation in the form in which they hold them. It will increase as well as regulate energy and courage, if we know, as Luke says, "the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed." It is an enlightened faith which produces that steady, principled courage by which alone the world can be overcome. Christians should make such progress in the knowledge of divine truth that, in the course of time, they should be qualified to be teachers: "a guide of the blind, a light of them who are in darkness;" and it is highly discreditable to them, and very likely to make their "calling and election" the reverse of sure, both to themselves and to others, if, when that time comes, they are found still to "have need that some one teach them what be the first principles of the oracles of God."

Nor should Christians content themselves with accurate and extensive views of divine truth, and its evidences, as revealed

in the Scriptures. They should seek, so far as circumstances will admit, to be well informed, intelligent men. It is a very false system of Christianity—it is anti-christianity—that gave origin to the maxim—‘Ignorance is the mother of devotion.’ Real Christianity and real knowledge in all its forms are mutual friends. There is no field of knowledge—whether history, or literature, or science—from which a Christian may not derive advantage. The works of God throw light on the word of God. And *all* His works are worthy of being inquired into, “sought out of all those who have pleasure in them.”

The Christian who continues ill-informed—mis-informed—on such subjects, when he has the means of information, injures himself, and strengthens against religion the prejudices of those classes of worldly men, who are well-informed on those matters. It has been justly, as well as finely said, by an American divine, “We improve ourselves, and bless our race, and glorify our Redeemer, when we strive to wreath every discovery and every invention, all art and all science, into harmonious and devout subordination, around that redeeming Cross, whence radiates the world’s chiefest wisdom, and its only hope of everlasting life.”¹

The Bible cautions not against science, but against “science falsely so called;” not against knowledge of any kind, but that which, with a show of knowledge, is ignorance and error; not against philosophy—the love of wisdom, but against that vain deceitful thing which assumes its name; not against instruction, but only against “the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.”

But Christians should cultivate knowledge in its true extent—not only in its principles, but in its uses; they should seek to have their spiritual senses so exercised about the subjects of knowledge, that they shall discern the things that differ, or approve those things that are excellent—making a distinction not only between what is true and what is false,

¹ Williams.

but also between what is right and wrong—what is becoming and unbecoming—what is advantageous and hurtful.

They should learn to turn their knowledge to practical purposes. Christians should be *wise* as well as *knowing*. Some know much, who have very little wisdom; and some are wise, who have not very much knowledge; for,

“Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
Have oftentimes no connection.”¹

As the Apostle Paul says, they should not be “unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” They should “walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise;” “walk in wisdom towards them that are without: redeeming the time.” They should be like the wise man of whom Solomon speaks, whose eyes are “in his head;” and they should take the advice, “Let thine eyes look right on, and thine eyelids look straight before thee; keep sound judgment and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble; when thou liest down thou wilt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down and thy sleep shall be sweet.”

This practical knowledge, this turning of all we know to its appropriate use—which is of very high importance in the Christian life—requires habitual consideration. It requires a man to be looking constantly both inward into his own heart, and outward to the church and world around him; and both in his looking inward and outward, to look at everything in the light of God’s word. Without a growing knowledge both of the world and of ourselves, as well as of our Bibles, we will make little progress in gaining the great ends of our Christian calling, either to ourselves or to others. We must seek after “the wisdom of the prudent,” which consists in understanding his way. We must study character and condition—our own and those of other men. We must consider our capacities and opportunities, ascertain our duties, and take heed that they be rightly performed:

¹ Cowper.

and we must think of our weaknesses, temptations, and dangers, that we may be duly watchful and reliant. We must distinguish time, place, and circumstances. We must know the peculiar character of the times we live in—mark events as they arise, and be ready to do what is requisite at the proper season and in the proper way.¹

There is a peculiar propriety in the place assigned by the apostle to “knowledge,” in his enumeration of the attainments he calls on Christians to make, in order that their calling and election may be made sure—“add to faith virtue,” energy, courage; and to courage, “knowledge.” “Strength and force, resolute purpose and daring energy, require to be presided over, and directed by large knowledge.”² How much harm is done, when good men prove themselves, as they often do, more forward than wise! Without appropriate knowledge, without due consideration, a man with the best intentions, may do evil rather than good; and after running himself out of breath, find that it would have been his strength, his duty and interest, to have stood still. His too rapid course may be but a succession of blunders and failures. Courage inspired by faith supplies the impulse, but this impulse must be directed and guided by wisdom, else we are likely to “labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought.” Without knowledge, courage becomes rashness; and a blind energy is not likely to do much good, and may possibly do much evil.

The injunction now under consideration—like all the moral injunctions of the New Testament—is for all places and for all time; but it is peculiarly seasonable in our country and in our times. Highly excited energy—restless activity—both in reference to secular and religious subjects, is a leading character of our age. When a strong gale, though, on the whole, favourable, fills the sails, the pilot’s eye must be steady on the compass and his hand firm on the helm. When the steam is up, there is need of science and caution in directing and guiding the engine. It has often been more necessary than in our own times, to say to Christians, “add to your faith”

¹ Jay.

² Binney.

energy—but never was it more necessary to proclaim to Christians, “add to your energy—knowledge.” This alone can prevent your wasting, or worse than wasting, your energy; this alone can secure the important objects which that energy, rightly directed, is suited and intended to secure. Had all the energy, which has been put forth within this last half century, been wisely directed as to its objects, and wisely regulated as to its measure, the Church and the world would have been in better circumstances than they are. Had all the energies of Christian individuals and Christian bodies, instead of being directed to different—often very subordinate and even doubtful objects, and put forth in opposition to each other—been not fitfully, but steadily and wisely directed to great common objects—how much evil might have been prevented—how much good might have been effected? I conclude the illustration of this part of the subject, in the words of a distinguished living preacher, “By the union of energy and wisdom standing together on the basis of faith, there will come to be within the Christian man, the harmonious co-operation of great powers, principles, and habits; high aims, true thoughts, sound judgment, rectitude of purpose, strong impulse, practicable plan, indomitable perseverance, tact to discern time and opportunity—all issuing in a wise and intelligent course of action, fruitful in noble deeds, and crowned with frequent success.”¹ And what may not, under God’s blessing, be expected from the united efforts of multitudes of such men—all acting under the guidance of a wise mind, and the impulse of a strong heart?

In these two injunctions, which I have attempted to illustrate, “add to your faith, virtue—energy; and to energy, knowledge”—viewed in connection with the injunction, “give diligence to make your calling and election sure”—we are presented with this great truth, that it is by faith putting forth a powerful influence, and by that powerful influence being directed as to its objects, and guided in its operations by ever-growing knowledge, and habitually considerate wisdom, that

¹ Binney.

Christians are to afford satisfactory evidence to themselves and others, that they are indeed the called and chosen of God.

I conclude these explicatory remarks with the exhortation of the Apostle Peter, "Grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" and with the prayer of the Apostle Paul, "May your love abound yet more and more in all knowledge, and in all judgment: that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Christ Jesus, to the praise and glory of God." "May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye 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, toward them who believe;—that you may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of God which passeth knowledge." Thus may you know the Lord, and follow on to know Him. "Now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

3. *By adding to knowledge temperance.*

The apostle's third direction to the Christian, as to *how* he was to make his "calling and election sure," is—"Add to knowledge temperance." Temperance, according to the current use of the English language, signifies freedom from excess in the gratification of the appetites, those principles of our nature which we possess in common with the lower animals, the humblest part of our complex constitution. It is opposed to all epicurism, gluttony, drunkenness, and incontinence. The temperate man abstains from all forbidden, sensual pleasures.

and is moderate in the use of even lawful enjoyments of this kind. Christians are required to be thus strictly temperate. They are forbidden to "make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." They are commanded by their Master to "take heed lest their hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness." "Be not filled with wine," says the Apostle Paul, "wherein is excess." "Walk honestly"—respectably—"in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness." "Mortify your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, and inordinate affection." "The time past of our life," says the Apostle Peter, referring to the unconverted state of those to whom he wrote, "may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." One of the very first things, which "the grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all," teaches those who receive it in truth is, "to deny worldly lusts" and "to live soberly."

This species of temperance, however, can go but a short way, or rather no way at all, towards making a man's "calling and election sure." Habitual intemperance, in any of its forms, clearly proves that a man has not been called of God. Even occasional acts of intemperance, must make a man's calling very doubtful to himself as well as to others. But the strictest temperance is no proof of conversion. It may, it often does, originate in bodily constitution, in education, in natural good sense, in a clear apprehension of, and delicate sensibility to what is decent and honest, becoming and honourable in moral feeling and conduct, without any reference whatever to religious principle. The want of it degrades a man almost to the level of the brutes, or even below that level; but the presence of it, even in its most perfect form, by no means gives a man ground to conclude that he has a place among "the called and chosen."

The word "temperance,"¹ here and in the New Testament

¹ ἐγκράτεια.

generally, includes this, and a great deal more. It has a deeper root, and a much wider sphere of influence. The word properly signifies "self-command," and denotes the right state of the mind, heart, and life, in reference to those objects in the world which naturally call forth our desires, whether it be pleasure, profit, power, or reputation. It is just another word for moderation or self-control, and is descriptive of the right state of the thoughts, affections, and behaviour, in reference to "things seen and temporal."

The foundation of temperance, in this extensive sense, lies in the just estimate which the faith of Christian truth leads a man to form of the intrinsic and comparative value of "all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;" that is, all that the eye or the flesh desires, and all of which living men are apt to be proud. The Christian does not consider the wealth, the honours, and the pleasures of the world, as things altogether destitute of value; but he sees that that value is by no means so great as the deluded worshippers of Mammon suppose it to be. He sees, with equal clearness, that the possession of them cannot make him happy, nor the want of them make him miserable. They cannot obtain for him the pardon of his sin; they cannot pacify his conscience; they cannot transform his character; they cannot give him strength in weakness, consolation in sorrow; they cannot save him from the pit of corruption, or the deeper pit of perdition; they cannot give life in death, or secure happiness for ever; and the want of them, though it may—in some cases must—give him severe uneasiness, cannot deprive him of the favour of God, of the testimony of a good conscience, or of the hope of glory, honour, and immortality, beyond death and the grave. The views which, as a believer, he has obtained, lead him to look on the prosperities of life with some measure of alarm. They appear to him polluted with sin, replete with temptation, pregnant of danger to his highest interests.

With these views, he is temperate in all things. "He is temperate in his desires of earthly enjoyments; not setting his

affections on the things on the earth. He is temperate in his pursuit of them; he does not *labour* so much for the meat that perisheth, as for that which endureth unto eternal life." He is temperate in his attachment to them, while he enjoys them; he does not say, "Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast goods laid up for many years." He is temperate in his regrets when he is deprived of them; he does not feel as if he had lost his all, or say, "My gods are taken from me, and what have I more?" He does not allow his natural desire of such things to interfere with his convictions and his obligations. He keeps the body, and all the desires connected with things seen and temporal, in subjection. The world has not dominion over him: he is master of himself; and, being possessed of a far better inheritance than it can give him, he does not expect or seek on earth real, perfect happiness, which he believes to be in heaven and secured for him there. This is the Christian temperance, which the apostle says, must be added to an energetic, enlightened faith, in order to the making our "calling and our election sure." It is for those who have earthly relatives to be as if they had them not; for those who weep, as though they wept not; for those who rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; for those who use this world, to use it as not abusing it,—knowing that "the fashion of this world passeth away."¹

Now, this temperance is to be *added* to "faith, virtue, and knowledge." It cannot exist without these; it naturally results from them. It is what the Christian believes that makes him temperate in reference to this world. Never were there more temperate men, in the sense we have explained, than the Christian apostles: *in* the world, they were not *of* it. How were they formed to their temperate, their unworldly character? We shall allow them to answer the question themselves. One of them says, "The cross of Christ"—*i.e.* the faith of the truth about Christ—has "crucified the world to me, and me to the world." "This is the victory,"

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 29-31.

says another, "which overcometh the world, even our faith." The man who believes that he has an inheritance laid up for him in heaven—that he is rich in faith—the heir of a kingdom; that there is reserved for him a crown of life, and that rivers of pleasure are awaiting him at God's right hand for ever more—is not likely to be intemperate in his estimates, desires, attachments, and regrets, in reference to worldly wealth, honours, or pleasures; especially as he believes, also, that an inordinate regard to the latter is inconsistent with the enjoyment of the former.

And it is not a *dead* faith—it is not merely speculation about Christian truth which will suffice to produce this temperance; it must be such a faith as has had energy added to it. The world has a strong hold on the human heart, and it requires nothing short of "the power of the world to come" brought into the heart by believing, to enable the Christian to keep attachment to it in due subjection.

Moreover, the faith, to which temperance is to be added, requires to be enlightened as well as energetic. Where knowledge has not been added to an energetic faith, a bastard kind of temperance is in danger of being produced. To escape temptation, an energetic but unenlightened faith has led men to go out of the world, to become hermits and monks; and availing themselves of this tendency of unenlightened energy, men of corrupt minds have "forbidden to marry, and commanded to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them that believe and obey the truth;" as if "every creature of God were not good, and any of them to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Knowledge is profitable, even necessary, to direct where, and how, and when, self-denial is to be exercised; when pursuits and pleasures, lawful in themselves, are to be followed and indulged, and when they are to be abstained from—when and how the world may and ought to be used without being abused.

The manner in which this temperance—which is just the opposite to the love of the world—the manner in which this

disposition, and the conduct to which it naturally leads, make a Christian's "calling and election sure," is so obvious, that it does not require more than a word or two to point it out. For what is the Christian calling? It is this—"Come out from among them," that is, from among "the world lying under the wicked one," "and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And what is the Christian election? "The Saviour has chosen all His people out of the world that they may be like Him, "not of the world." The man, then, who makes things seen and temporal the principal subject of his thoughts and object of his affections—who is not temperate in the sense we have explained—makes it plain, whatever profession he may make, that *he* has not been thus called and chosen; he is still of the world. On the other hand, he whose faith, energetic and enlightened, is overcoming the world—in whose heart, affections, and pursuits, the world has its proper, that is, a very subordinate place—has the evidence in himself that he is among the called and chosen ones, and his unworldly dispositions and conduct silently, but expressively, confess before the world that he is a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth, and plainly declare that he is seeking a better country—that is, an heavenly.

4. *By adding to temperance patience.*

But, still farther, to "make their calling and election sure," the apostle calls on Christians to "add to temperance patience."¹ It would be a very imperfect system of morals that taught men only how to conduct themselves with regard to what is naturally desirable. In the world in which we live, we are surrounded by evil as well as good, and are called to suffering as well as to enjoyment. "Man who is born of woman is not only of few days, but these few days are full of trouble." He is "born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

¹ *Abstine et Sustine*—abstain and sustain—*i.e.* temperance and patience were the two words under which the ancient philosophers used to comprise all virtue in reference to external things.

He is exposed to varied suffering, both directly from the hand of God, and from the folly, injustice, and unkindness of his fellow-men. Pain, poverty, disappointment, bodily disease in endless forms, mental anxieties and anguish, loss of property, bereavement of relatives and friends, outraged feelings, a reputation blasted by calumny—these are but a few in the long catalogue of “the ills that flesh is heir to.” These are *trials*—experiments. According to the manner in which they are borne, we may judge of our own character—we may know whether we are among “the called, chosen, and faithful.” If, amid sufferings from the hand of God, we habitually cherish a stupid insensibility, a sullen unsubmitiveness, or a proud stubbornness, which will rather be broken than bent, or a hopeless despondency—if we either despise His chastening, or faint when we are rebuked of Him; and if, when suffering under the hand of man, we are entirely occupied with the immediate cause of our affliction, and have our minds filled with feelings of bitter resentment, and revenge—then it is evident that, whatever profession we may make, we have no “calling nor election to make sure.” If we would “make our calling and election sure,” we must add to our temperance *patience*: we must show that as we are not to be seduced by the blandishments of the present state, so we are not to be driven by its sufferings, from the prescribed path of doing and suffering the will of God.

Patience, when distinguished from meekness (which signifies the right way of bearing affliction from men) means the right way of bearing affliction from God: but when used singly, as here, it includes both. It is a general name for the right way of enduring afflictions, from whatever quarter they come. It implies that the suffering is felt—it may be, very painfully felt—but that it is, at the same time, willingly submitted to and cheerfully and thankfully borne. It has been justly said, “Patience stands opposed to pride, insensibility, levity and thoughtlessness on the one side, and on the other to querulousness, discontent, depression and despair.”

Patience towards God cannot be better described than in

the words of Richard Baxter, who knew well by experience what it was, few men having had so much to bear, and having borne it so well:—"True patience," says that singularly good man, "is when, both body and mind having a natural and due sense of the suffering, we yet restrain inordinate passion, grief, fear, or anger, and their ill effects, especially repining thoughts or words of God, and use no sinful means for our deliverance, but still acknowledge the sovereignty, justice, wisdom, and love of God, and obediently do submit our wills to God, and approve and love His holiness and justice" manifested in our sufferings, "though we love not suffering itself, and comfortably hope for a happy issue, even amendment and increase of holiness here and heaven hereafter, where all our sufferings will end in everlasting joy: this is patience."

Patience towards man does not imply that we are insensible to wrongs done us; nor that we are not displeased at the sin of those who injure us; nor that we are not, by proper means, to defend ourselves against injuries threatened, or to seek, by proper means, redress from injuries inflicted: but it does imply, that we do not exaggerate the wrong done us; that we do not think worse of our injurer than the facts of the case absolutely require; that we do not revenge, or even seek to revenge, the injury; that we do not seek redress, even by means in themselves lawful, if the good to be thus gained does not appear likely to over-balance the evil that may be thus occasioned.

We are exhorted to the one kind of patience in the words of the Apostle Peter: "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God;" and to the other by the Psalmist, "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, cease from anger and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil;" and to both by the Apostle James—"Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Job exemplified the one when he said, "Shall we receive good from the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!"—and Eli, when, in reference to the

calamities denounced against his family, he said, "It is the Lord—let Him do what seemeth good in His sight;" and David the other, when he refused to allow Shimei to be punished, when he cast stones at him and cursed him in the day of his severe affliction, but calmly said, "Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." A still more illustrious example of both was given by our Lord, when He said, "The cup which My Father giveth Me to drink, shall I not drink it?" and when "He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed His cause to Him that judgeth righteously."

The original term¹ used in the passage before us—translated also "patient continuance," in Rom. ii. 7—suggests the idea not only of uncomplaining suffering, but of constancy and perseverance in the path of duty, notwithstanding all the sufferings we may be exposed to—neither quarrelling with God, nor becoming tired of a cause which exposes to privation or suffering; but "running with *patience*,"² that is, continuing to run the race set before us, however heavy our burden, and however rough or thorny the road.

This *patience* must be added to "faith, virtue and knowledge," that is, to an energetic enlightened faith. Such patience cannot exist without such a faith; and in proportion to the faith will be the patience. It is not without good reason that the apostle joins faith and patience, and puts faith before patience, when he represents the inheritors of the promise as having obtained their goodly heritage "by faith and patience." It is the believing that the Great Governor of the world is "God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself," "the God of peace," "our God and Father in Christ;" that all things being ordered by Him, who is infinite in power, wisdom, righteousness and benignity, must be well ordered; that He does not afflict without a good reason; that the

¹ ὑπομονήν.

² Heb. xii. 1.

object of His chastisements is, "that we may be made partakers of His holiness"—the only and the certain way of our becoming partakers of His blessedness; that there is no affliction that He cannot, that He will not, support under, and ultimately relieve from; that sufferings coming directly from our fellow-men, yet come ultimately from *Him*; that we richly deserve all the suffering we *can* sustain; that our afflictions are not penal evils but fatherly chastisements; and that our afflictions, however heavy and long continued, are "but light, and but for a moment," compared with "the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," in which they are to terminate, and for which they are a necessary preparation;—it is the faith of these truths, and truths like these, that produces patience. It is difficult to say, what the man who really believes these things cannot endure patiently, perseveringly, cheerfully; aye, joyfully.

But the faith which leads to patience, must be energetic faith. The man must "know and be sure" of these things. He must "be strong in faith." Energy must be added to his faith—for it is not easy for weak man to be thus patient under severe and long-continued suffering. A great sufferer needs to be a magnanimous man. It requires energy to enable a man to retain self-possession amid harassing perplexities and heart-crushing sufferings. To make a man patient in tribulation, requires not less energy than to make him resolutely, perseveringly active in the discharge of the most difficult duties. *He* must have had virtue, courage, as well as patience, who could say—"None of these things move me;" "we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

And, farther, the faith to which patience is to be added, must be enlightened, as well as energetic—there must be knowledge, as well as virtue. Partial views of the Divine character and government, throw great difficulties in the way of patience; while, on the other hand, the more extensive and accurate our views are on these subjects, the more will we

be disposed to say, "I am dumb, not opening my mouth, for *Thou* hast done it. It is the Lord, let *Him* do to me what seemeth good to *Him*. Not my will but *Thine* be done. Lord, what *Thou* wilt—when *Thou* wilt—how *Thou* wilt."

There is significance in the exhortation, to "add patience to temperance," as well as to add *it* along with temperance to an energetic enlightened faith. Temperance and patience, as we have explained them, are intimately connected. They are, indeed, but two manifestations of the same spirit—unworldliness; in reference to what is desirable in the world, unworldliness is temperance, moderation; in reference to what is undesirable, it is patience. The man who is not temperate, is not likely to be patient. An inordinate attachment to the good things of life, is a bad preparation for the endurance of its evils. He who has accustomed himself to recline in the lap of indulgence, is more likely to be fretful and desponding than patient, when visited with affliction. They who rejoice as though they rejoiced not, are, when called to weep, most likely to weep as though they wept not.

It is easy to see how such patience is calculated to make a man's "*calling* and election sure." Speaking of sufferings like Christ's, the apostle says to Christians, "even hereunto ye are called." Ye are called to suffer—to suffer like *Him*—patiently, cheerfully; He has "set you an example—that ye may walk in *His* steps." The sufferer for Christ's cause, in Christ's spirit, has in his sufferings, and in the way in which he is enabled to bear them, evidence that he is among the called ones. His calling is made sure, and so is his election—"For whom God did foreknow, He also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of *His* Son"—to be made like *Him*, first, in the fellowship of *His* suffering, and then in the fellowship of *His* glory. Suffering, borne in a child-like spirit, is a proof of being among the chosen ones. The election of the "beloved brethren," as Paul styles the Thessalonian Christians, was evidenced to themselves and others, by becoming "followers of the apostles and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost."

All the chosen ones are "brethren, companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."

Let us employ what has been said, as materials for self-examination. Are we, or are we not, in possession of that temperance and patience, which we have been endeavouring to illustrate? If what has been said has been attended to, and understood, that question should have been answered in every bosom already. If it has not, let conscience answer it now.

To those who have been enabled to add to an energetic, enlightened faith, some measure of the temperance and patience described, I would say, you have great cause to be grateful, but no cause to be proud. By the grace of God, you are what you are. The spirit of the world is an intemperate, impatient spirit; that spirit was once yours, and if you have been delivered in some good measure from it, it has been the work of the Holy Spirit, "working in you to will and to do." To God be all the glory. Remember that your temperance and your patience are still but imperfect. You are exposed continually to temptation to indulge an intemperate and impatient spirit. "The old man," though mortally wounded, is still alive in you, and intemperance and impatience are among his members. Let the force of the new life manifest itself in mortifying these and all his other members. Seek larger measures of a holy superiority to the undue influence of the apparent good and evil of the present world; become more weaned from its enjoyments, and cherish an ever growing disposition to be unrepiningly submissive to "the mighty hand of God." "Be sober" (a word nearly equivalent to temperance in meaning), "putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation;" and "be filled with the Spirit." Living in the Spirit, "walk in the Spirit, and then ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." As to patience, take the apostles and prophets of the Lord, and above all, take the Lord himself, "for an example of suffering affliction and of patience," and pray to "the God of patience" to strengthen you for suffering all His will. Re-

member that, as your temperance and patience originated in your faith, it is just by faith becoming more energetic and intelligent that you are to grow in these graces: according to your faith it will be to you. "Grow then in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and like the disciples say, "Lord, increase our faith." Thus will you find in your own experience, the truth of the apostle's assertion already alluded to, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith; and increasing in the knowledge of God, you will be strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."

To those who are conscious that they have not the temperance and the patience we have been discoursing on, I have to say, You are to blame for not having them; you must have them, or you must perish; you may have them, in the faith of the truth as it is in Jesus.

You are to blame for not having these graces. What is *intemperance* in the apostle's sense, but such an inordinate esteem of this world's pleasures, or riches, or honours, as to make a man seek his chief happiness in them? What is this, but to put the world in the room of God? *Covetousness*, which, like intemperance, is just another word for this supreme love of the world, is idolatry. And what is *impatience*, but a calling in question the wisdom, or righteousness, or kindness, of the Divine dispensations?—an implicit desire to get the sceptre of the world, so far as our own interests are concerned, out of the hands of God. And are not these criminal? If idolatry and rebellion against God be not criminal, what is? Is it not obviously right that you should seek your supreme happiness in God? and that you, the creature, should humbly submit to the Creator's arrangements; you, the sinful creature, take uncomplainingly—aye, thankfully—those afflictions, which, however severe, are far less than you deserve; and which are intended and calculated to promote your real welfare? Surely you ought to be temperate and patient. What can be plainer intimations of God's will, than these? "Love not the world, nor the things in the world. If any man love the

world, the love of the Father is not in Him." "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God."

But not only ought you to have these dispositions;—you *must* have them or you must perish. They form a part of the "holiness without which no man can see the Lord." An intemperate, world-loving, impatient man, could not enjoy heaven were he there—where God is all in all. The man whose god is his belly, has destruction for his end. "To be carnally minded is death." He who will not meekly submit to the Divine chastisement *here*, must endure the Divine vengeance hereafter.

What you must have, if you would escape everlasting destruction, you *can* have; but only in one way. There can be no *such* temperance and patience as the apostle describes, and as we have been endeavouring to illustrate, without the faith of the Gospel. They must be *added to it*. Faith must be in the heart before temperance and patience, in the true meaning of the words, can be there; and they will be there just in the degree in which an energetic and enlightened faith is there. A man without faith may be temperate, if by temperance is understood merely abstinence from gross sensual indulgence; and he may be patient, if by patience is understood merely a naturally quiet, uncomplaining disposition; but the only temperance and patience that deserve the name of Christian graces can grow from no root but the faith of the Gospel, planted and nourished in the heart by the Good Spirit. He who believes the Gospel obtains God for his all-sufficient, up-making portion, and in the measure of his faith is indisposed, indeed incapacitated, to seek or find his chief enjoyment in the pleasures, wealth, or honours of the world. Admitted to drink his fill from the pure well of salvation, he can no longer repair to the polluted streams of worldly delights, to quench his inextinguishable thirst for happiness; and he obtains too, by his faith, such views of the Divine character and administration, as, in the measure of his faith, will make him acquiesce in all the dispensations of the Divine Providence, and make him incapable of quarrelling

with any of them, being assured that He, the wisest and best Being in the universe, his Father and Friend, does all things well. There is a deeper philosophy than human wisdom ever dreamed of, in the Divine arrangement which makes the faith of the Gospel the necessary and effectual means of transforming the believer's character, as well as of securing his salvation. Happy is the man who has "the witness in himself" that it is indeed so!

5. *By adding to patience godliness.*

"To patience add *godliness*," is the fifth direction given by the apostle, how to make our "calling and election sure." *Godliness*¹ is a general name for religious duties, as distinguished from moral duties—for our duties in reference to God, in contra-distinction to our duties in reference to ourselves and our fellow-men. It is descriptive of the right state of the individual with regard to God—the right state of his mind, of his heart, and of his life—of his thoughts, his affections, and his conduct—the right way of thinking, feeling, and acting towards God.

On a cursory glance at the passage, we are apt to be surprised at the place which godliness holds, in this catalogue of the dispositions and habits by which the Christian is to make his 'calling and election sure.' As it is obviously, in some points of view, the most important of them all, we should have naturally expected that it would stand either at the beginning or at the end of the series: at the beginning, to teach us that all true moral excellence, personal and social, consisting, as it does, in obedience and conformity to God, is the natural and necessary result of a right state of mind and heart towards Him; or at the end, to show us that no temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, or charity, that is not connected with, that does not spring from, Christian godliness, deserves to be accounted a Christian virtue, or can, in any degree, contribute to the making our "calling and election sure."

¹ εὐσεβείαν.

On looking more closely, however, at the construction of the passage, we will find that godliness is just in its right place. Faith, virtue, and knowledge—in other words, an energetic enlightened faith, as describing the principle of Christian character and conduct, naturally takes the first place. In describing personal Christianity, as flowing from this principle, it was natural to notice its influence on the individual, as connected with the present state of things—a state of mingled enjoyment and suffering—making him temperate or moderate with regard to the one, and patient with regard to the other. And then—as there is a species of temperance and patience, which may be met with in worldly men, resulting entirely from natural principles—“godliness,” which, as well as temperance and patience, is the result of an energetic, enlightened faith, is introduced as at once giving a peculiar character to the Christian’s temperance and patience, clearly distinguishing them from, and highly raising them above, the natural qualities which resemble them, and often pass under their name, and giving completeness to the view of personal, Christian excellence: for what more complete idea can you form of personal excellence, than the union of temperance, patience, and piety?

There is not only, thus, an obvious propriety in making godliness the culminating point of personal excellence, there is also an important significance in making it the connecting link, as it were, between personal and social excellence.¹ It looks forward as well as backward. It stands in the centre between the two leading forms of personal excellence, temperance, and patience, and the two leading forms of social excellence, brotherly kindness and charity. It is the soul of both. Without godliness, neither temperance nor patience, nor brotherly kindness nor charity, in the true meaning of these words, can exist; and the qualities which often bear their name are not, and do not deserve the name, nor can they answer the purpose of, Christian virtues; for godliness is not only a distinct dis-

¹ Binney.

position and habit from all the others which are here mentioned, as they are from each other, it enters as an essential, component element into them all. The whole of the virtues recommended by the apostle, as the natural following up of an energetic enlightened faith, must be characterised by godliness. They must be a godly temperance, a godly patience, a godly brotherly kindness, and a godly charity.

Having thus accounted for the place which "godliness" holds in this series of Christian virtues, and having seen that, though not the place we would have naturally anticipated, it is the right place—the place best fitted for showing its intrinsic supreme importance, and its influence in the formation of the distinctive, Christian character—let us now inquire somewhat more closely, in what consists that *godliness* which the Christian must add to his personal virtues, and to which he must add his social virtues, which he must add to his temperance and patience, and to which he must add brotherly kindness and charity, if he would make his 'calling and election sure.'

Godliness is just the yielding obedience to the first commandment of the decalogue—a commandment which will be found to include all the other nine—"Thou shalt have no other God before Me,"—a commandment excellently explained in our Shorter Catechism, as requiring "us to know and acknowledge God as the only true God, and as our God, and to worship and glorify Him accordingly." The subject is very extensive, and, from our limited capacities, we need to look at it from various points of view, in order to obtain any thing like adequate conceptions of it. God, in His character and works—in His revealed will and providential administration—and man, in his constitution and circumstances, as a rational, dependent, accountable being, capable of action, enjoyment, and suffering—and the relations the latter stands in to the former, as the creature of His hand, and as the subject of His holy moral government, as guilty, depraved, and wretched, yet under an economy through which he may obtain pardon, and sanctification, and eternal happiness—all these must, in some measure, be understood by us in order to apprehend

distinctly what it is for man to be *godly*—what is the right state of the thoughts, affections, and conduct, of such a being as man with regard to such a being as God. To know and believe the truth respecting God, to love, trust, fear, believe, obey God, to submit to and worship Him, to seek and find happiness in Him, to be conformed to Him, to maintain fellowship with Him, supremely to desire His approbation, and steadily to seek the promotion of His glory, habitually to think of Him, and to look on every thing in its connection with Him,—all this is included in godliness.

The truth about God, known and believed, is the fundamental part of godliness. This is thinking rightly in reference to God. The substance of that truth may be thus stated:—“There is a God, infinite, eternal, independent and unchangeable, omnipotent, omniscient, all-wise, immaculately holy, inflexibly just and inconceivably kind—the creator, proprietor, preserver and governor of all things. This God is displeased with man on account of sin, yet disposed to pardon and save him through the mediation of His Son, whom He has set forth a propitiation through His blood. He is “God in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing to men their trespasses, seeing He has made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” “This is the true God,” to use the language of an English theologian,¹ “and there is none other but He, and if these great characteristics are denied, or any other assumed in their stead, a man is left without God; he may call himself a deist if he will, but his God is a mere idol of the imagination, and has no corresponding reality in the whole universe of being.” God is not known, if His glory in the face of Christ Jesus be not discerned.

And this truth must be apprehended in its evidence, as well as in its meaning, in order to the existence of godliness in the mind. We must know it, and be sure of it. It must not be to us, what it is to many, a mere creature of the imagination

¹ William Jones of Nayland.

or abstraction of the reason. We never think rightly about God, except when the truth in reference to His existence, and presence, and greatness, and goodness, and justice, and mercy, comes upon the mind with such a sense of their reality, as to produce an impression similar to that made by sensible objects; when, through the influence of faith, we, as it were, see what is invisible and feel what is impalpable.

Closely connected with—naturally resulting from, this believing knowledge of God—this right way of thinking about God, is a right way of feeling with regard to God, including the affections of supreme love, veneration and confidence. The godly man *loves* God. He acknowledges the reasonableness of the first and great commandment, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and all thy mind.” He considers God as infinitely excellent, and regards Him as the proper object of the highest esteem of which his nature is capable. All the qualities which make creatures objects of esteem appear to him to meet in God—without any drawback of imperfection and increased to infinity—so that he feels that He cannot be esteemed too highly, that He cannot be esteemed highly enough; and, sensible that He has manifested infinite kindness in what He has done and promised to do for him, he feels that he owes God a debt of cordial affection—of deep gratitude, which, an eternity spent in worshipping and serving Him, so far from repaying, can but inadequately acknowledge. The language of his heart is, “*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created.*”

Connected with this supreme love is supreme veneration, holy fear. The godly man, so far as he is a godly man—so far as he knows and believes the truth about God, and cherishes that supreme love which grows out of the truth known and believed, is delivered from that “fear” of God which “has torment” in it. He knows Him as “the God of peace,” the pacified Divinity, who was angry with him, but whose anger has been turned away. Still he regards Him with godly

fear. The grandeur of the Divine character is more strikingly manifested in the incarnation and sacrifice of the Only Begotten of God, by which the salvation of men is made consistent with, and illustrative of, the Divine holiness and righteousness, than in any, or in all, of the other works of God. "There," to use M'Laurin's burning words, "There shine spotless holiness, inflexible justice, incomprehensible wisdom, omnipotent power, holy love. None of these excellencies darken or eclipse the other, but every one of them rather gives a lustre to the rest. They mingle their beams and shine with united, eternal splendour—the just Judge, the wise Governor, the merciful Father. No where not only does mercy appear so amiable, but no where does wisdom appear more unsearchably profound, and justice wear a more terrible majesty." In every godly heart, an awful sense of God's infinite greatness and excellence, and a holy fear of offending Him, dwell along with the love which casts out tormenting fear. Wherever God is served acceptably He is served "with reverence and godly fear."

Joined to this love and veneration of God, and rising out of the same views of His character, is the next element of godliness I noticed—supreme confidence in God. The godly man is aware of his own weakness, and of the insufficiency of all creatures to sustain him and bless him. He knows and is persuaded of the all-sufficiency, the infinite power, wisdom, kindness, and faithfulness of God—that he is "able to do for him, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask and think;" and that He has promised to do so, and that "He is faithful that has promised:" and his settled trust finds appropriate utterance in the language of the Psalmist—"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? In the Lord I put my trust. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." Knowing God's name, he puts his trust in Him, and says—"Truly my soul waiteth upon God; from Him cometh my

salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength and my refuge is in God."

Thus loving, fearing, and trusting in God, it is natural for the godly man to believe what God reveals, because He reveals it; to do what He requires, because He requires it; to submit to what He appoints, because He appoints it. Whatever God says, he accounts undoubtedly true, for he knows that God cannot be deceived, and cannot deceive. He thinks no demonstration stronger than this: "God has said it; therefore it is, it must be, true."¹ Regard for God makes him very careful not to receive anything as God's testimony, without satisfactory evidence, lest he give to fallible man that which is due only to the infallible God. Let him but see clearly that a statement is indeed the testimony of God, and, however strange it may be, however opposed to the opinions of the wisest of men, or to his own previous opinion, he unhesitatingly "sets to his seal" that God is true—saying, "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

Whatever God commands, the godly man does, because God commands it. He accounts *His* commandments "concerning all things to be right." He recognises *His* authority to be paramount; and when the greatest among men command what is inconsistent with *His* commands, his language is, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to obey man rather than God, judge ye." "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." "O Lord, I am *Thy* servant."

Whatever God appoints, the godly man submits to, because God appoints it. He believes, that "His kingdom ruleth over all;" that nothing occurs by chance—that all comes forth from Him who "worketh all things according to the counsel of His will;" that He is "wonderful in counsel, excellent in working;" and therefore he says, however painful the event

¹ Chillingworth.

may be to his feelings, however opposed to his worldly interest, "The will of the Lord be done;" "Good is the will of the Lord;" "It is the Lord—let Him do to me what seemeth good in His sight;" "Not my will but His be done;" "Who shall say to Him, what dost Thou?" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

Another element in the godliness which is to be added to temperance and patience, and to which brotherly kindness and charity are to be added, is the worship of God. The worship of God is either internal or external. The internal worship of God is just the habitual cultivation of the sentiments and feelings we have been illustrating. Supremely to love, fear, and trust in Him—to be ever ready to believe what He reveals, because He reveals it—to do what He commands, because He commands it—and to submit to what He appoints because He appoints it: this is to worship with our spirits Him who is a Spirit, and to worship Him in truth. The ordinary state of a godly man's mind is thus silent, habitual worship; and he expresses this state of mind in the appointed offices of religion. He loves the habitation of God's house, and the place where His honour dwells. He dares not neglect the holy assembly for divine worship, as too many do. He goes into His tabernacle; he worships at His footstool; he is glad when it is said to him, "Let us go up to the house of the Lord." "The voice of rejoicing and salvation,"—of prayer and praise "is in the tabernacles" of the godly; and his family is kept beyond the reach of the curse that lies on "the families that call not on God's name;" and he "enters into his closet, and shuts his door, and prays to his Father who seeth in secret."

Still farther, in godliness there is implied the seeking and the finding happiness in God. The ungodly seek happiness everywhere but in God, and find it nowhere. Man's happiness is in God. "Formed *for* God," as Augustine says, "man cannot be at rest till he have come again *to* God." To know Him, to love Him, to be loved by Him, to

know that we are loved by Him, to be like Him, to think along with Him, will along with Him, choose along with Him, and enjoy along with Him—this is man's true happiness. The godly seek it and find. When God says, "Seek ye My face," their answer is, "Thy face, Lord, we will seek." When others say, "Who will show us any good?" they say, "Lord, lift up the light of Thy countenance on us. Thou hast given me more gladness than when their—the men of the world's—corn and wine abound." His favour to them is life, His loving kindness better than life. Their language is, with the inspired poet, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none in all the earth whom I desire besides Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Or with that other poet, all but inspired—

"Thou art the source and centre of all minds—
 Their only point of rest, Eternal Word!
 From Thee departing, they are lost and rove
 At random, without honour, hope, or peace.
 From Thee is all that soothes the life of man,
 His high endeavour and his glad success,
 His strength to suffer, and his will to serve.
 But O! Thou bounteous giver of all good,
 Thou art, of all Thy gifts, Thyself the crown:
 Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor,
 And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away!"¹

Conformity to God is the next element we mentioned as included in godliness. This is the idea which the English word most naturally suggests—*Godlikeness*. The godly man becomes the "partaker of a divine nature;" the "partaker of God's holiness." He is changed into God's image. In all the imitable perfections of the Divine character, he exhibits a resemblance—a real, however faint and distant, resemblance to God. He is a follower of God as a dear child; he is "holy as He is holy," not in the same degree, but in the same sense. He is forbearing and forgiving, as God is; and even as to the

¹ Cowper.

inimitable perfections of the Divine character, though there is no resemblance, there is conformity. To seek resemblance there is impious—to obtain it impossible. To affect to resemble God in independence and sovereign authority, were wickedly to affront Him; but even here, there is conformity in the godly. Profound, humble subjection is conformity to Him who is “the supreme and only potentate,” and a feeling of self-emptiness is conformity to Him who is essential fulness, and who filleth all in all. The first kind of conformity is the likeness of a bust or picture to the original. The second kind of conformity has been ingeniously illustrated by comparing it to the likeness of an impression to the seal which makes it—the convexity in the latter not so much resembling as conforming to—fitting in to—the concavity in the other.

Fellowship with God is another element in godliness. The godly man “walks with God,” as with one with whom he is agreed—“walks humbly” with Him, as one infinitely his superior. “Truly,” says the Apostle John, in the name of all the godly, “truly our fellowship is with the Father.” Fellowship or communion is expressive of two ideas—common possession and mutual intercourse. The godly man has the same views, the same affections, the same employments, the same satisfaction with God; and while he, in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, makes his requests to God,—God, in answer to his prayers, “blesses him with all heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.”

A supreme desire of God's approbation, and a habitual regard to the promotion of His glory, are also included in Christian godliness. With the views which the godly man has of the divine character, the approbation of God is one of the most satisfactory forms in which he can conceive of perfect happiness. In losing God's approbation, consists, he thinks, man's great misery as a sinner; and his highest hope is “the hope of God's glory,” that is, His complete approbation at last—the being, in every respect, what God would have him to be. He studies to “show himself approved of God.” With him “it is a very small thing to be judged of

man's judgment." He knows and feels that there is but One whose judgment is all-important—that is, the Lord. To promote His glory—to think, feel, and act himself, and to make other men think, and feel, and act, in a way corresponding to the infinite excellence of God—is his earnest wish and constant endeavour. Whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, he does all to the glory of God. His motto is, "None of us (Christians) liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live to the Lord; and whether we die, we die to the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

Finally, godliness implies in it a habitual thinking of God, and a looking on everything as connected with Him. Of man born of the flesh merely, it may be truly said, "God is not in all his thoughts." He is "alienated from the life of God by the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart." But of the godly man, so far as he is godly, it may be said that God is in all his thoughts: "His eyes are constantly towards the Lord;" he realizes His presence—he "sees Him who is invisible." One of these godly ones says, "How precious are Thy thoughts unto me (*i.e.* thoughts about Thee) how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand! When I awake I am ever with Thee." "I remember Thee on my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night-watches." When he looks on the heavens and the earth, he thinks of them as the work of God's hands—"My Father made them all." When he thinks of famine, pestilence, or war, and their horrors, he sees God's hand lifted up, and beholds the desolations He works on the earth. The rain is God watering the earth; the bright sunshine is His benignant smile; the abundant harvest is God's crowning the year with His goodness. Is he prosperous—"The Lord giveth." Are his enjoyments removed—it is "The Lord that hath taken away." When he considers actions or courses of conduct, the view that interests him most is, their being permitted, or commanded, or forbidden, by God. He has that serious mind of which John Foster speaks,

to which the thought of God comes second to almost every other thought. "The thought of duty performed suggests to him both the idea of a lawgiver and a rewarder; the thought of crime, of an avenger: the thought of sorrow, of a consolers; the thought of an inscrutable mystery, of an intelligence that understands it; the thought of that ever-moving activity that prevails in the system of the universe, of a supreme agent; the thought of the human family, of a great Father; the thought of all being, of a Creator; the thought of life, of a preserver; and the thought of death, of an uncontrollable disposer."

Such is an imperfect outline of that godliness which, together with temperance and patience, is the complement of that personal character which an energetic enlightened faith goes to form, and by realizing which the Christian makes his "calling and election sure." If you wish to have a fuller exhibition of what *godliness* is, I recommend you to read carefully the Book of Psalms and the Epistles of Paul, where you will find it embodied and alive. There you will find full-length portraits of the godly man.

Before proceeding to the consideration of the distinctive, Christian, social character—consisting in brotherly kindness and charity—it may serve a good purpose to say a few words in illustration of the manner in which "faith"—energetic and enlightened—leads to this godliness; how this godliness is connected with, and influences, the "temperance and patience" to which it is to be added; and finally, how this godliness goes towards making the calling and election of the Christian sure.

It is equally obvious, that nothing but the faith of the truth respecting God, could produce—"lead on"—the godliness which we have illustrated; and that this godliness is the natural and necessary result of such a faith. If there be not faith, godliness cannot exist. And the faith necessary to produce godliness requires to be energetic, for in depraved human nature, the tendency to ungodliness—the opposition to godliness—strengthened by temptation from the

world and the wicked one, is very strong, and requires something strong to overpower it; and this faith requires to be enlightened, for, as we have seen, godliness consists in a right state of mind, and heart, and conduct, in reference to God, viewed in the complete circle of His attributes, and in the whole tenor of His moral government. These must be known in order to true Christian godliness in its proper extent.

How godliness influences the temperance and the patience, which along with it form the complete, personal, Christian character, is easily explained. Temperance and patience apart from godliness, could not make the Christian's "calling and election sure." It is only so far as these principles are influenced by the truth respecting God, as the God of salvation, known and believed, that they are Christian virtues at all. Godliness gives a new character to temperance and patience. It, as it were, baptizes them, and gives them a Christian name. They become then principled, religious, Christian tempers. Godliness gives the man a satisfying portion in God—an inheritance in heaven, that makes it a comparatively easy thing for him to be temperate in all things, and furnishes him with supports and consolations—in the realized power, wisdom, faithfulness and kindness of God, and in His exceeding great and precious promises—which enable him to be not only "*patient*," but "*joyful in tribulation*."

It only remains, for the illustration of this part of the subject, that I shew how, in the cultivation and exercise of this godliness, the Christian makes his "calling and election sure"—affords evidence, both to himself and others, that he is one of the called and chosen of God.—To this godliness Christians were called and chosen. They were called and selected from "the world lying under the wicked one," that they might be "a holy nation"—a nation consecrated to God—"a peculiar people, that they might shew forth the praises of Him, who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light," by "denying ungodliness, and living godly, in this present evil world." The world is an ungodly world—and a man cannot be characterised by the godliness we have described,

without making it evident that he is no longer of the world, but that Christ has called him, and chosen him, out of the world. Such a man has the witness in himself, that he is called and chosen; and so far as his godliness is visibly manifested in a course of conduct different from that by which they who are not called and chosen are distinguished, and by which he was distinguished before his calling and selection—he makes his calling sure to others, as well as to himself.

It is of high importance that we should inquire, If we, in our personal capacity, are adding to our temperance and patience, godliness? If we are not only strictly moral, but truly—that is, Christianly—religious? Have we been taught by the grace of God, which bringeth salvation to all, to live not only soberly and righteously, but godly in this world? Have we known and acknowledged the only true God? and do we know and acknowledge Him as God, and as our God? Have we a growingly intelligent belief of the truth about Him? Do we supremely love, fear, and trust in Him? Do we implicitly believe, obey, and submit to Him? Do we worship Him with our spirits according to the Gospel of His Son? Do we seek and find happiness in Him? Are we conformed to His image? Do we seek to maintain fellowship with Him? Do we habitually think of Him, and look at everything in its relation to Him? Or, is the very reverse of this the truth? Instead of being godly, are we godless—ungodly; “Without God in the world;” ignorant of His true character, or grossly misconceiving it; not having the knowledge of God—not having the love of God in us—“alienated from Him in our hearts;” nay, “haters of God”—“having no fear of God before our eyes”—trusting in any thing rather than in Him; unsubjected to His authority—neither *believing*, nor *doing*, nor *enduring*, from a respect to it; strangers to spiritual worship—the worship of the mind and heart—and to communion with God, in the believing contemplation of divine truth, with the lively exercise of appropriate devout affection, and the reception of heavenly and spiritual blessings:

never thinking of God, except when the subject is pressed on our unwilling attention; and looking at things in every relation, rather than in their relation to God; instead of thinking, and feeling, and acting as if it were with God that we have to do, thinking, and feeling, and acting as if—were there a being in the universe with whom we have nothing to do—that Being were God?

This is substantially the truth with regard to every man by nature—it may be the truth with regard to some whom I am now addressing: for is there any reason for believing that we have all been born again? Oh! how full of folly, guilt, baseness, and misery is such ungodliness. What a monster in the spiritual world is the ungodly man! And what must be the end of this ungodliness? “Behold,” as Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” Ah! “where shall the ungodly and the sinner then appear?” “How shall they abide the day of His coming—how shall they stand when He appeareth?” Who, that has his spiritual senses at all exercised, can help wishing, with Foster, that “some spirit from the other world, possessed of eloquence that might threaten to alarm the slumbers of the dead, would throw himself in the way of these godless ones, and protest in sentences of lightning and thunder against the infatuation that can acknowledge that there is a God, and be content to forego every connection with Him, but that of danger.” Repent, repent, ye godless ones—else ye must perish. “For they that are far from God shall perish.”

But you may be brought near. Some as far off as you have been brought near. In the faith of the truth, come to “God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,” and the certain, blissful consequence will be—to this faith you will “add godliness.”

And let those who, while mourning the felt remaining

ungodliness of their fallen nature—groaning under the power of the evil heart of unbelief, leading them away from God—are yet conscious that the outline of the character drawn in the preceding part of these illustrations, is in some measure realized in them, gratefully acknowledge that by the grace of God they are what once they were not, and follow after godliness—seek higher and higher attainments in the knowledge of God, in conformity to Him, in fellowship with Him, in the enjoyment of Him. In proportion as they are godly, will they be holy and happy.

Live “godly *in* Christ Jesus.” Let your godliness be Christian godliness. In cultivating godliness, habitually look to *Christ Jesus*. Look to Him as your great exemplar. It has been justly said, that “While in one nature He was the true God, in another He was the most godly man that ever was in the world.” If you are not godly, the mind is not in you that was in Him. How did He know, love, venerate, trust, obey, submit to God—realize His presence at all times; in one word, live in God—to God! Look to Him for all that is necessary to make you godly. *In* Him—animated by His Spirit—you will “deny ungodliness,” and every day become more and more godly—godlike. “Without Him”—apart from Him—“you can do nothing.” And look to Him, also, for the acceptance of your very imperfect godliness. Our godliness cannot please God, or be acceptable to Him, but in Christ—on the ground of His all-perfect righteousness, and through the medium of His all-prevalent intercession. Thus—thus only—will you be enabled, under the influence of an energetic, enlightened faith, to add to temperance and patience godliness; or to use the words of the apostle on another occasion, to “cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the *fear of God*”—which is another name for godliness.

Happy is the man who feels in a growing, confirmed habit of godliness (to use the words of a great writer, repeatedly referred to already) as it were, “the grasp of the hand of God, which will never let him go; who can say, ‘I carry upon me

the eternal mark that I belong to God. I am free of the universe, and I am ready to go to any world to which He shall be pleased to transmit me—certain that every where, in height or in depth, He will acknowledge me for ever.”¹ “Whom have I in heaven but God, and there is none in all the earth that I desire beside Him. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.” Happy indeed is the man who is in such a case as this! Happy is the man whose God is Jehovah!

6. *By adding to godliness, brotherly-kindness.*

The sixth direction given by the apostle for making the “calling and election sure,” is, “add to godliness, brotherly-kindness. “Brotherly-kindness”² has, by some interpreters, been considered as descriptive of the disposition and conduct which the Christian ought to cherish and display towards all to whom, whether in the literal or figurative sense of the word, he stands in the relation of brotherhood—whether they are, in the strictest sense, brothers, as children of the same parents—or, in a wider sense, as those connected with us by consanguinity and affinity—or, in a wider acceptation still, as those to whom we are united by the bonds of friendship or the tie of a common country—or, in the widest possible sense, as belonging to the same race, the children of one common progenitor. That the word, however, is not to be so understood, is obvious from two considerations: first, that brotherly-kindness is here contra-distinguished from charity,³ which is love in the most general meaning of the term; and, secondly, that wherever the love of the brotherhood, or brotherly love, or kindness, is mentioned in the New Testament, it obviously refers to the peculiar love which Christians cherish and display towards each other as Christians.

This, then, is the Christian disposition which the apostle

¹ Foster.

² Φιλ. ἀδελ. Φίλων.

³ ἀγάπην.

exhorts them to "add to godliness;" and a few words in reply to the questions, What is this love founded on? What are its constituent elements? How is it to be displayed? what are some of its characteristic qualities? and Why does it receive the appellation of brotherly-kindness? will suffice for the illustration of this part of the Christian character.

This affection is founded on the Christianity both of its subject and object. It is an affection which only a Christian can cherish, and which he can cherish only towards one whom he regards as a Christian. The affection originates in the possession of a peculiar mode of thinking and feeling produced in the mind by the Holy Ghost, through the knowledge and belief of Christian truth, which naturally leads those who are thus distinguished, to sympathy of mind and feeling, of thought and affection, with all who, under the same influences, have been led to entertain the same views and to cherish the same dispositions: they love one another "in the truth, for the truth's sake that dwelleth in them, and shall be in them, for ever." It is based on relations, sentiments, dispositions, pursuits, trials, enjoyments, and hopes common to them as individuals, and peculiar to them as a class.

As to its elementary principles, while it includes goodwill, benevolent regard in its highest degree, it combines with them moral esteem, complacential delight, and tender sympathy. It does this in every instance; but the measure in which these elements are found, in different cases, depends on the measure of Christian excellence in him who loves, and in him who is loved. Every Christian loves every other Christian when he knows him; but the greater the attainments which the Christian has made in likeness to Him who is the supreme object and great exemplar of this kind of affection—the Elder Brother, "the first born among many brethren"—whether he be the subject or object of Christian love, the more does he put forth or draw forth its benignant influence. The liker I am to Christ, the more will I love all the brethren; and the liker a brother is to Christ, the more will he fix my brotherly regards on himself.

As to the manner in which this brotherly-kindness is to be manifested, generally speaking, it ought to be manifested as far as practicable, in cultivating a kindly, intimate intercourse with, and in endeavouring, by all appropriate means, to promote the true happiness of, its objects. The brethren are to shew their love to one another by sympathy and relief. They are to visit each other in their affliction. They are to “remember those who are in bonds, as bound with them, and them that suffer adversity, as being themselves in the body.” They are to rejoice with each other in their joys, and weep with each other in their afflictions. They are to “use hospitality to each other without grudging.” They are to “distribute to the necessities” of the indigent brother—not to say to him, ‘be ye clothed, be ye fed,’ yet give him not the things needful for the body, though they have this world’s goods. They are to be kind, tender-hearted—forbearing and forgiving each other; assisting each other in their labours—bearing with each other’s infirmities—aye, not only bearing with, but bearing them, helping them to bear them. They are to “seek not every one his own wealth”—well-being—“but every man also the well-being of his brother”—his well-being in all the extent of that word, and specially his well-being as a Christian man—his deliverance from ignorance, error, and sin, in all their forms, and in all their degrees; his progressive and ultimately complete happiness, in entire conformity to the mind and will of God; the unclouded sense of the divine favour, the uninterrupted enjoyment of the divine fellowship, the being like the ever blessed, holy, holy, holy One. For this purpose brotherly love will lead to mutual intercession—to admonition and reproof, when necessary, but always in a loving spirit. The Christian under the influence of this principle, will delight in his brother’s Christian attainments and triumphs, as if they were his own; he will never be ashamed of his brother, however low his place is in society, and however he may be frowned on or persecuted by the world—never be ashamed to call him brother.

As to the qualities by which this brotherly love should be

distinguished—it should be *sincere*. Christians are to love one another “with a pure heart;” their love is to be “without dissimulation;” they are to love not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth. Their love is to be such, as naturally proceeds from a pure heart—a love which can flow from no other fountain, founded on qualities which excite love only in a sanctified heart seeking for its appropriate objects such a happiness as only a sanctified heart can desire, by means which only a sanctified heart can suggest or employ.

This brotherly love should be *fervent*: “Have fervent charity among yourselves,” says the apostle in his first Epistle. “Love one another fervently.” The love must be *intense*: such as many waters cannot quench; and it must be permanent and constant—preventing wearying in doing good; so intense and persevering as to induce even the parting with life to gain its end. When circumstances call for it, the Christian brother, according to the loving as well as beloved disciple, should be ready to “lay down his life” for the brethren.

This brotherly love is, in this and other respects, to be like the love which the elder brother bears to all the brethren. This is His commandment, that they should all love one another as He has loved them all. Their love, like His, should be discriminative, sincere, spontaneous, copious, disinterested, active, patient, self-denying and self-sacrificing, considerate and wise, generously confiding and kindly forbearing, constant and enduring, holy and spiritual.

This brotherly love, too, ought to be characterised by *universality*. It is to be *exercised* in proportion to the closeness of the connection into which, from a variety of circumstances, we may be brought with particular Christians, but is to be *cherished* towards all who love our Lord Jesus, and whom our Lord Jesus loves. These are golden words of our Confession, and should be written on our hearts: “All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, being united to one another in love, have communion in each other’s gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and

private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. Saints, by profession, are bound to entertain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, should be extended unto all who in every place, call on the name of the Lord Jesus."

It only remains here, that we inquire why this peculiar affection receives the name of *brotherly* kindness. It is so called, because it originates, as we have seen, in the relation of spiritual brotherhood; and, like the affection between brothers, is so spontaneous, that the want of it would be something monstrous, and at the same time so wide, yet restricted in its objects, that it extends to every member of, but goes not beyond, "the *family* in heaven and earth called by the same name." Such is the brotherly kindness which must be added to godliness, in order to our "calling and election" being made sure.

It is easy to see how this, like all the other Christian dispositions and exercises here mentioned, is connected with the faith to which, like the rest, it must be added. Faith forms the relation in which the affection originates. Faith unites us to Christ, and thus connects us with Christians. It is His being our common *Elder Brother* that makes us all brethren. And it is faith, too, which furnishes us with all the motives to the cultivation and exercise of this brotherly love. This faith needs to be energetic—to have virtue added to it; for brotherly love requires to be powerfully sustained, because it has much work to do. It has to struggle with strong opposition, from within and from without. It has a *labour* to perform—"the labour of love;" it has much to do, much to suffer. It stands by faith, and the faith by which it stands needs to be strong. And the energetic faith to which brotherly kindness is added, requires also to be enlightened faith. "To virtue must be added knowledge;" for

it needs a well-informed mind, a sound judgment, to direct and guide the operations of brotherly love. A brotherly love, uninfluenced by an enlightened as well as energetic faith, may do much harm in seeking to do good, and, certainly, will gain but in a very imperfect degree its appropriate objects.

The connection of brotherly kindness with godliness is also abundantly apparent. There can be no brotherly kindness where there is no godliness. It is by God's becoming our spiritual Father that we become spiritual brethren. While I am ungodly, godly men are not my brethren; I am of my father the devil, and his children are my brethren. It is by becoming godly that I am brought into God's family; and if I am brought into the family, surely it is meet that I should cultivate family affections. I cannot love those who are begotten till I love Him who begets—and if I love Him who has begot, surely I ought to love them who are begotten. When I am godly, God is my Father, and all His children are my brothers. Ought I not, then, to love them? should not brotherly kindness be added to godliness?

How this brotherly kindness makes the Christian's "calling and election sure"—affords evidence to the Christian himself and others that he is indeed called and chosen, is easily explained. When the Christian is called, he is called into the fellowship of God's children; when he is chosen, he is "chosen to be before God in love"—"to walk in love as God has loved him." As to its evidencing the "calling and election" to the individual himself, the Apostle John says, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." And as to its evidencing the calling and election of the Christian to others, our Lord says, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

7. *By adding to brotherly kindness charity.*

We come now to consider the last of those Christian dispositions by the exercise and display of which the Christian's

“calling and election” are to be made sure—“*charity* :” and “to brotherly kindness add charity.”

Charity here is plainly not almsgiving, nor is it, what often absurdly receives the name, a disposition to think of men's character and spiritual state better than evidence warrants. Charity is love, and, contradistinguished as here from brotherly kindness, describes the affection which Christians ought to cultivate and manifest towards their fellow-men, though they do not belong to the Christian brotherhood—though they be aliens from the commonwealth of the spiritual Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, without God and without hope in the world—though they be in the world lying under the wicked one. Brotherly kindness is to be the social character of the Christian in reference to the church—charity or love, in reference to the world.

Here, as in the case of brotherly kindness, it may be well shortly to answer the questions: On what is this charity based? What are its constituent elements? What are its appropriate manifestations? What are some of its characteristic qualities?

Charity, like brotherly kindness, and indeed, like every right disposition and habit, is based on the divine command. Love to all mankind is most distinctly enjoined by God. It is the sum of the second division of the decalogue. If the first great commandment be, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind,” the second, which is like to it, is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” And if we ask, with the lawyer, “Who is my neighbour?” the answer is, Every man that lives, be he the most wicked and despicable of men—be he your most determined enemy. But, in speaking of the basis of this duty, I refer not so much to the divine command on which its obligation immediately rests, as to that on which the divine command itself is founded. Brotherly kindness is based on the peculiar relation which exists among Christians, as spiritually the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Love to mankind is based on all men being naturally the children of God, and the children of one common human progenitor. “Have we

not all one Father?"—God. "We are all the work of His hand"—"all His offspring." And as we have all the same divine Father, we have all the same human parents. Adam and Eve were the parents of all living, and so were Noah and his wife. "God has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." There is an obvious propriety that Christians should love all men on account of the relation they bear to God. Like the poor widow, of whom Mr Newton tells, who saved her crumbs to feed other people's chickens, "We should love to do good to God's creatures, for His sake who made them." And we should love them for the relation, too, which they bear to ourselves—partakers of the same nature, subject to the condemnation from which we have been delivered, capable of the salvation of which we have been made partakers.

Now, what are the elements of this love of Christians towards *all* men? They are obviously not the same as in the case of brotherly kindness. This is not the love of approbation or of complacential esteem; for a Christian cannot approve of, cannot delight in, worldly and wicked men. Its leading element is good-will—a sincere and ardent wish for their true happiness, especially in the form of cordial commiseration—deep pity, for the hazardous and miserable condition in which their guilt and depravity have placed them.

As to the appropriate manifestations of this love, I begin with remarking, that it must be manifested in abstaining from everything like injury to any man. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour." It *cannot* work ill to him. He who loves his neighbour cannot injure him, either in his person, or in his property, or in his relatives, or in his reputation.

But this love is not a mere negation—the absence of hatred producing the absence of injury. It is positive good-will—kind regard producing benefits. This love is manifested in thinking of, and feeling towards, all men, as kindly as possible, even though obviously not belonging to the Christian brotherhood. In human nature unchanged by divine influence, there is

indeed no spiritual good; but there may be much that is amiable, much that is morally estimable in unrenewed men. Some of these qualities are perhaps, in all men. It were absurd to deny that there are candour and truthfulness, and honour, and kindness, in some men plainly irreligious; and an enlightened Christian loves these men for such qualities just as his Lord loved the young man who had not yet entered, and would not enter, into the kingdom of God.

The love which Christians should cherish to unconverted men ought to be manifested chiefly in earnest, persevering endeavours to relieve their wants and miseries, and bring them into the possession of true happiness. Their endeavours to relieve the miseries of poverty and disease are not to be confined to the brotherhood. It is enough that the victim of poverty and disease be a man, to give him a resistless claim on the kind regard of a Christian, who has added charity to brotherly kindness and godliness.

“Not to the good alone we owe good-will:
In good or bad, distress demands it still.”¹

The wants and miseries of men, as guilty, depraved, wretched already, and in danger of becoming much more and irreparably wretched, are those which chiefly bulk in the eye of an enlightened Christian man, and call out his love, in the form of pity, to active exertions in order to their removal. It is love that makes him desire and endeavour to save souls from death. To provide for the ignorant the means of instruction, especially religious instruction; to seek the prevention or cure of immoral habits; to send the blessed Bible and the glorious gospel to benighted nations, that they may be turned “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ:” these are the appropriate manifestations of Christian love. For these and similar objects Christian love labours; and,

¹ Armstrong.

sensible how little human labour can do, love prays for all men "that they may be saved, and come to the acknowledgment of the truth."

As to the characteristic qualities of this love, they may all be described in one word. This love to the world of mankind, should resemble God's. It should be sincere and universal. God does not, cannot love the world, as He loves His own. Christians do not, cannot, love the world as they love the brotherhood. But God does love the world; He loves man as man; His love is philanthropy—the love of man; and so should be the Christian's. That a man is wicked, is no reason that I should not love him: when men were sinners, Christ, God's Son, died for them. He makes His sun to shine, and His rain to fall, on the unthankful and evil. It is no reason why I should not love a man, that he is my enemy: when men were enemies, they were reconciled to God through the death of His Son. God's love to the world is an *active* love. What human being does not enjoy innumerable fruits of His love? And this is the most remarkable fruit of His love—He gave His only-begotten Son to suffer and die, that *any* man—*every* man, however guilty and depraved, believing in Him, "might not perish but have everlasting life." Our love to man should be fruitful love, and one of its chief fruits should be the carrying to all men the soul-saving truth—that God loves the world, and that whosoever believes in His Son who died, the just in the room of the unjust, shall not perish. God's love to the world is *patient, long-suffering* love. Had it been otherwise, where would our guilty race have been?—Not in the land of the living, not in the place of hope. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." Our love to a perishing world should "suffer long and be kind;" our compassions should not fail. No obstinacy nor ingratitude should induce us to relinquish, or even to abate, our labours of love among our guilty, depraved, perishing brethren. They never can try us as we have tried God—we never can bear with them as He has borne with us.

Such is the charity which is to be added by Christians to brotherly kindness, that their "calling and election" may be made sure. "This love towards men, this love of men as men," to use the words of an eloquent living preacher, "of the entire race, as it exists immediately in the neighbourhood of the church, or fills "the habitable parts of the earth," in all lands, is not, as a Christian sentiment, to be a barren though beautiful idealism—a vague philosophic glow of fraternity, a feeling that utters itself in no deeds of valiant endeavour to better the world, but only in grandiloquent talk—talk, too, it may be, about anything but men's *highest* interests, or even in contravention of such. It is not to be this, but a real, deep, earnest, intense thing as to its nature: and a real, effective doer of work as to its expression."¹

The connection of this charity with the faith to which it, as all the other Christian virtues, is to be added—with the godliness of personal character, to which the social virtues are to be added—with the brotherly kindness, with which it is in the text more immediately connected,—may be unfolded in a very few words.

Without *faith*—the belief of the Christian revelation—the foundation of this charity cannot be seen, nor the motives to its cultivation and display felt. An unbeliever cannot by possibility be a *philanthropist*, in the sense in which we have explained it. He cannot feel sympathy for evils, the existence of which he does not believe; he cannot be expected to make exertions to prevent or relieve them. And the faith that produces and prompts charity requires to be energetic, for it has much to do and much to suffer in following out its objects; and it requires to be enlightened as well as energetic, for there is need of much knowledge both of man's nature and Christ's law, and a wise application of that knowledge to secure these objects.

Godliness is necessary in order to this charity, which is just love to men viewed in their relations to God—love to them

¹ Binney.

for the sake of God; and this charity is at once one of the tests of the reality, and one of the measures of the strength, of godliness or Christian piety.

It is only the man in whose bosom glows brotherly kindness, who can be the subject of a truly Christian philanthropy; and what looks like brotherly kindness, is in danger of turning out on examination to be nothing better than a modification of selfishness—an attachment to our own party—if it be not connected with the charity which leads us to do good to all men as we have opportunity.

Dr Henry More very beautifully illustrates the connection of this virtue with those to which it is to be added. "Having gained such a victory through divine grace over our lusts and passions (as is indicated in temperance and patience), and been transported with a high sense of thankfulness to our Divine Redeemer and benefactor (included in godliness), who wants nothing of our retributions Himself, the stream of our affections is naturally driven downwards to His saints who dwell on the earth, and profess the same religion as ourselves (in brotherly kindness). But the purified soul cannot stop here, but the quick flame of love mounts upward, and is reflected again downward, and vibrates every way, reaching at objects in heaven and in earth; and therefore, in her pure and ardent speculations (*i.e.* contemplations) of the Godhead in His unlimited goodness, and also her observations on the capacity of the whole creation of receiving good both from Him and one another, she overflows those narrow bounds of brotherly love, and spreads out that ineffably ample and transcendently divine grace and virtue, *charity*, universal love which is the highest accomplishment the soul of man is capable of, either in this world or in that which is to come; and thus at last becomes perfect as her Father in heaven is perfect, even in humble imitation of that God who is *love*."

How this charity makes the "calling and election sure," is very obvious. It is a plain proof that the mind is in us that was in Christ Jesus; and if we have His Spirit we are "His," "with Him, called, chosen, faithful."

We have thus finished our illustration of the apostle's answer to the question, *How* are Christians to "make their calling and election sure?" Possessed of faith, let them see that that faith be energetic and enlightened, and let that energetic, enlightened faith prove and manifest its existence and power in making them personally temperate, and patient, and pious, and in making them, socially, lovers of the brethren and true friends to all mankind.—To the practical bearings of that portion of the subject which has now come under our review, let us now briefly turn our attention.

What has been said lays a foundation for solemn self-inquiry. Have we that brotherly kindness and charity of which we have been speaking, and without which no man's "calling and election" can be made sure? Have we the spiritual faculty of recognising a Christian brother when we meet him? and when we do so, does our heart go out towards him? Do we love the brethren *as* brethren—love them for their characteristic relations and qualities? Do we love them in proportion to the degree in which they seem to us to possess these qualities, and are we glad to have an opportunity of manifesting our brotherly love? Have we a cordial, kind regard to all mankind? Do we love our neighbours—that is, every man—as we love ourselves, with the same reality and constancy? Are we disposed to do good to all men as we have opportunity? Are we especially affected with the spiritual wants, and miseries, and danger of our brethren of mankind? Do we pity and pray for them, and endeavour to pluck them as brands out of the fire?

If we have not such brotherly kindness, such charity, assuredly we are not among the called and selected of God; and unless a thorough change takes place in our mode of feeling, both in reference to saints and sinners, we cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Let those who are conscious that this is their case, seek to "purify their souls in obeying the truth"—*i.e.* in believing the Gospel through the Spirit; then will they have "unfeigned love of the brethren"—then will they, having become brethren, love all the brethren "with a

pure heart, fervently:" and, in the faith of the same Gospel, let them learn to be "followers of God, as dear children"—of Him who "so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son" to be their Saviour, and who "would have all men to be saved by coming to the knowledge of the truth"—by seeking to make known, wherever guilty, depraved, miserable man is to be found, that truth which makes known that Saviour.

Let those who have the testimony of their conscience that they have this brotherly kindness and charity, though by no means in the degree in which they ought to have them, be thankful to Him who has taught them sincerely to love the brethren, and deeply to pity the poor prodigals who, as was once the case with themselves, are wandering far from their Father's house. It was in the faith of the truth that ye became lovers both of your brethren in Christ and of your brethren of mankind. It is in the continued, growing faith of the truth that you are to grow in brotherly kindness and charity. See that your faith be increased, that you may abound more and more in all the appropriate expressions of these holy dispositions.

Brotherly kindness and charity obey the general law of habit, and are strengthened by exercise—we can never want for opportunities of exercising them. Real Christians are not so numerous as we could wish, but there is no such lack of them as to render it necessary that brotherly kindness should be in abeyance for want of proper objects. Cultivate intimate acquaintance with the brethren, and seek to get good from them and do good to them. Seek to make every good man you know better and happier for his intercourse with you.

And if there are opportunities enough for manifesting, and thus strengthening our brotherly kindness, surely the opportunities are still more abundant for showing our charity, our love for those of our fellow-men who are not yet the proper objects of brotherly kindness. How full of guilt, depravity and wretchedness—of crime, poverty, and disease—of ignorance, error, and fatal delusion, is our world! How

are our fellow-immortals perishing by millions—passing through the miseries of time into the miseries of eternity! To the ear opened by faith they are uttering a loud and an exceeding bitter cry: “Help, help—we perish! Have pity on us—have pity on us—O ye who say that ye are children of Him who loves the world, and who has, as you profess to believe, so strangely manifested His love to man, God the Saviour.” Where is our charity to *them*, where our love to *Him*, if we can resist such an appeal? Let us determine to do good to *all* men, and continue and increase our endeavours to do good, in the Christian sense of that phrase, both at home and abroad, as we have opportunity.

§ 4. WHY? MOTIVES TO COMPLY WITH THE EXHORTATION.

The motives by which the apostle urges those to whom he wrote to “make their calling and election sure,” by following the course he recommends, come now to be considered. These motives are drawn from their being furnished with everything necessary for prosecuting their high aim with success, from the bad consequences which would result from their neglecting it, and from the most blissful consequences which would result from the diligent and persevering prosecution of it.

I have repeatedly had occasion, in the course of these illustrations, to advert to the immeasurable superiority of the morality of the Bible above that of the schools of ancient and modern philosophy, in reference to its substance—how much wider in its range, how much deeper in its principles, how much more extensive and spiritual in its requisitions, how much purer, how much more consistent, how much more complete; and we are now to show, by example, that, in the power and appropriateness of the motives by which the morality of the Bible enforces its injunctions, it maintains a corresponding superiority above all its competitors. It has encouragements to present, it has evils to threaten, it has blessings to promise, which never could have entered into the mind of the philo-

sopher: and in proposing these to the mind, it exhibits them not as possibilities, nor even probabilities, but as absolute certainties. It speaks with the authority of God, when it proclaims that everything necessary for the discharge of duty is richly provided; that the neglect of duty leads to ruin, and that the performance of duty leads to happiness—true and unending.

1. *They are furnished with everything necessary to enable them to comply with the exhortation.*

The first motive presented by the apostle in the passage before us to urge Christians to ‘make their calling and election sure,’—by adding to their “faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity,”—is, that they are abundantly furnished with all that is necessary for enabling them to perform their duty in this way. This motive is unfolded in the third and fourth verses: “According as His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

In our excellent version of the Scriptures, this is one of the passages in which, though not a single word or phrase seems to have any difficulty connected with it, yet no very distinct impression of the meaning is left on the mind of even the most attentive and intelligent reader. There is an image before the mental eye, but we cannot distinctly discern the form thereof. We cannot make out a clear, consistent meaning—we do not see the drift of the passage; we do not apprehend what is the inspired writer’s object, or how what he says tends to what we may conjecture to be his object; we cannot translate the apostle’s words into clear, intelligible words of

our own. Wherever this is the case, there is reason to suspect that some of the inspired words or phrases have been misunderstood, or that the construction or connection of the passage has in some way or other been misapprehended.

It is not so much to the first of these causes that the difficulty in the case before us has originated; for although (as we have already had occasion to show) the phrase “to glory and virtue,”¹ should have been ‘by glory and virtue,’ referring as it does to the glorious power by which God makes His call effectual; and although ‘a divine nature’ would have been a better rendering than “the divine nature,”² of which no creature can, by any means, become a partaker,—the paragraph is, upon the whole, very well translated, considering its difficulty. It is not so much to the first of these causes that the obscurity which every intelligent reader feels is owing, as to the second. When the construction and connection of the passage is clearly apprehended, its meaning becomes clear, its object obvious, and we perceive and feel how well it is fitted to gain that object.³

From the pointing in the most accurate editions of our authorised version, it is plain that our translators connected the third and fourth verses with what goes before, and not with what follows after. They place a comma at the end of ver. 2, and a period at the end of ver. 3, whereas they should just have reversed these points. There is indeed but one sentence from the beginning of the third verse to the end of the

¹ διὰ δόξης καὶ ἀρετῆς.

² θείας φύσεως not τῆς θείας φύσεως.

³ One of the most absurd divisions I have ever met with, though not without a grotesque kind of ingenuity, is on this text, by an old English expositor. “Here we have—1. The fountain—where observe—the hope of the petitioner—*according as God has given*—the ability of the giver, *Divine power*, the liberty of the action, *given*—the necessity of the receivers, *us*—the universality of the gift, *all things*, etc. 2. The cistern, where observe, Who, *God*—what, *hath called*—whom, *us*—whither, *to glory and virtue*. 3. The pipe or bucket to draw or derive all to us—*through the knowledge of Him*.”—ADAMS.

seventh.¹ The particle rendered “according as,”² cannot here denote comparison, for there is nothing mentioned to which the Divine power, “giving us all things pertaining to life and godliness,” can be compared. The only sense of the particle that suits the connection is that in which it expresses a cause or reason; in which case it is of correspondent force with our ‘because’ or ‘since;’—as in the expression, Matt. vi. 12, “Forgive us our debts, *as* we forgive our debtors,” explained by Luke xi. 4, “Forgive us our sins; *for* we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.” It indicates the ground of the subsequent exhortation. The particle, strictly speaking, is superfluous, as the literal rendering of the words which follow is, ‘the Divine power having given us’—*i. e.* since the Divine power has given us. You will readily perceive the important bearing of what I have said in eliciting the meaning of the passage. ‘Because, or since, the Divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who has called us by a glorious power, by which are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of a divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust,—seeing all this is so—because such is the state of things—you ought to follow a certain course.’³ What that course is, is stated in the fifth, sixth, and seventh verses, connected with the tenth. The words (ver. 5) rendered strangely “and besides this”⁴ may be literally translated ‘with regard

¹ “Ver. 3 is the protasis of ver. 5, and ver. 4 an epeexegetical confirmation of ver. 3.”—Dr JOHN LILLIE.

² ὡς.

³ Should the third verse be connected with the second, still ὡς must be understood as = since, and the sense would be, ‘I pray that grace and peace may be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ our Lord—because the Divine power has given you all things that pertain to life and godliness, *through* the knowledge of Him,’ etc. It seems however, much better to connect the third verse with the fourth than with the second verse—to make it the beginning rather than the end of a sentence.

⁴ καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο.

to this very thing—*i.e.* life and godliness;’ or, ‘because of this very thing—that all things, etc., have been given to you,’ do ye also, giving all diligence, add to your faith, etc.; and then, giving all diligence, “make your calling and election sure.” The connection is thus clear, and the general meaning obvious: ‘Seeing God has given to us all things pertaining to life and godliness, in reference to this thing, do ye also, giving all diligence, add to faith, etc., and then make, etc.’ The words in the third and fourth verses are the statement of a reason or motive why Christians should do what they are commanded to do in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and tenth verses.

Some interpreters consider the *us* in ver. 3 and 4 as referring to the apostles, as distinguished from those to whom the Epistle is addressed, called *you* in the end of ver. 4 and 5. They suppose the apostle to refer to blessings conferred on the apostles for the benefit of those converted by them; but it seems far more natural, and it is quite in accordance with apostolic usage, to employ the word *us* of themselves in common with their converts—*us* Christians, not *us* apostles. What he here speaks of was not peculiar to apostles, but common to Christians, and the transition from the use of *we* to that of *ye* in the end of the fourth verse, is accounted for from the circumstance that the apostle is about to adopt the language of direct address.

Having thus ascertained that these two verses contain a motive to Christians to do what they are enjoined to do in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and tenth verses, let us now inquire what that motive is, and how it is fitted to serve its purpose.¹ The meaning and force of the passage may be thus given:—“The Divine power has given to Christians all things that

¹ The construction of the third verse is peculiar: ‘The Divine power having given to us.’ The best commentators are agreed that here, as also in the fourth verse, the perfect passive is used in an active sense. Had, instead of the hypothetic participial form, the direct form been adopted, it would have run: ἡ θεία δύναμις αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ πρὸς ζωὴν καὶ εὐσέβειαν ἡμῶν δεδόθηται.

pertain to life and godliness : he has done this by the knowledge of God—*i.e.* in giving them the knowledge of God He has given them all these things : those things that pertain to life and godliness are presented and conveyed to Christians in exceeding great and precious promises, and these promises are given that Christians may, by believing them, become partakers of a divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust ; and this is a powerful reason why Christians should “ give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, by giving all diligence to add to faith virtue,” etc.

Now, satisfactorily to unfold this motive, so that we may perceive and feel its force, it is necessary that we inquire what is meant by the Divine power—what by that knowledge of God which it gives us—what by “ all things pertaining to life and godliness,” and how these are given us by the divine power through the knowledge of God—what by the exceeding great and precious promises given to us by glory and virtue, a glorious energy equal to the divine power—what by becoming partakers of a divine nature—what by escaping “ the corruption that is in the world through lust,” the purpose for which the exceeding great and precious promises are given—how these exceeding great and precious promises are fitted to gain the end for which they are intended—and, finally, how all this is a strong motive to Christians to “ give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, by adding to their faith,” etc. The road is now plain before us ; let us endeavour to follow it, and may it lead us not only to a satisfactory apprehension of the meaning of the apostle’s motive, but to a strong and practical impression of its constraining power.

“ The Divine power,”¹ which is here represented as giving us all things pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge of God, is usually considered as the divine attribute of power, personified, and as equivalent in meaning to

¹ τῆς Θείας δυνάμεως.

‘God in the exercise of His power.’ I rather think that, instead of being the personification of a Divine attribute, it is an appellation of that Divine person who, along with the Father and the Son, exists in the unity of the Godhead. As the Son is the personal wisdom or word, so the Spirit is the personal power of God. There can be no reasonable doubt that, in Luke i. 35, the expressions “Holy Ghost,” and “Power of the Highest,” are two appellations of the same Divine agent; and in those passages where the power of God is represented as an agent—not a mere power, or influence, or act—it seems all but certain that the term ordinarily denotes the Holy Ghost: *e.g.*, “*The power of the Lord* was present to heal:”¹ “*The power* that worketh in us.”² “Stephen, full of faith and of *power*,” seems equivalent to, “Stephen full of faith and the Holy Ghost:”³ and “kept by *the power of God* through faith,”⁴ means preserved by the Holy Ghost through believing. Tradition informs us that Simon Magus, the Samaritan impostor, pretended to be the Holy Ghost; and it seems likely that it was in reference to this claim that the deluded populace said, “This man is the great *power of God*.”⁵ The sense is substantially the same, whichever of the views we take of the meaning and reference of the appellation, for God works all things *in His Son by His Spirit*.

This power gives Christians “all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of God.” What is that knowledge of God by which the Divine power gives us these blessings, and how is the communication of these blessings connected with this knowledge? The knowledge of God is the revelation of the truth respecting the character and moral administration of God towards men—what the apostle calls “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”—the revelation which God has made of Himself through the mediation,—in the person and work of His only begotten Son. “No man hath seen God

¹ Luke v. 17.² Eph. iii. 20.³ Acts vi. 8, 6.⁴ 1 Peter i. 5.⁵ Acts viii. 10.

at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." That knowledge may be viewed *objectively* as embodied in the truth as it is in Jesus—in the inspired statements of those "holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," or, *subjectively*, as dwelling in the mind and heart of him who has, under the influence of the same Spirit, been made to understand and believe these inspired statements. Both in the one case and in the other, God, by His Spirit, gives this knowledge—gives it in the Holy Scripture—for all Scripture is given by His inspiration—sheds it abroad *in* the heart of the believer by the Holy Ghost given to him, so that the testimony which was without is now within, and God is revealed not only *to* but *in* him.

And *in* this knowledge—*by* this knowledge, He "gives us all things pertaining to life and godliness." Here we must first inquire into the meaning of the phrases, "life and godliness,"¹ and "things pertaining to life and godliness,"² and then endeavour to show how all things pertaining to life and godliness are given to us by the Divine power through the knowledge of God.

It is very unprincipled interpretation to say, with one class of expositors, that "life and godliness" is just an expression synonymous with eternal happiness or salvation. Somewhat nearer the truth, but still not satisfactory, is the interpretation which makes life and godliness equivalent to a godly life.³ Holy character and conduct is, I am persuaded, the idea—the character and conduct more fully delineated in the 5th, 6th, and 7th verses. But *life* seems to refer to the principle, and *godliness* to the manifestation, of the holiness which the Christian must cultivate and exemplify, and without which his calling and election cannot be made sure.

Spiritual *life* is the capacity of, the tendency towards, holy action and enjoyment. Of this, man is naturally destitute.

¹ ζῶν καὶ εὐσεβείαν.

² τὰ πρὸς ζῶν καὶ εὐσεβείαν.

³ As Semler, who says it is a hendiadys = πρὸς ζῶν εὐσεβειότητην.

He is dead while he lives—"dead in trespasses and sins." He requires to be "quickened"—to be made capable of, and disposed to, holy action and enjoyment. *Godliness* seems here a general name for the manifestation of this life in such holy tempers and habits as are enumerated in the succeeding context.

The expression rendered "pertaining to," seems to signify, necessary for. Now, what are the things necessary to secure life and godliness for a being such as fallen man is? What is at once requisite and sufficient to make dead man spiritually alive—man "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him"—"without God in the world," habitually godly in his temper and conduct? Spiritual death is a penal evil, and cannot be removed but on the ground of an adequate atonement. A transforming spirit is as necessary as a propitiatory sacrifice, for there must be a change of character as well as of state—a real change as well as a relative one. To make men think and feel aright in reference to God, there must be a revelation of the truth respecting the Divine character, attended with such evidence as shall lead to that faith through which alone such a revelation can become operative on the mind and heart of man; and to make men act rightly in reference to God, there must be a clear statement of duty, accompanied with such an array of appropriate motives as shall lead to the regulation of the life according to that statement. These are the things which "pertain to," are necessary to, and sufficient for, "life and godliness."

Now, all these things "the Divine power has given us through the knowledge of God." That revelation, which has for its author the Holy Spirit—the power of God—and for its subject the character and administration of God, makes all these things known to man, and presses them on his acceptance. There we learn that by Messiah having been "cut off not for Himself," "transgression is finished—an end made of sin, and an everlasting righteousness brought in;" that "God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing to men their trespasses, seeing He hath made Him

who knew no sin to be sin in our room, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him;” that He, that Just One, having died in the room of the unjust, is “set forth a propitiation in His blood;” that God is the just God, and the Saviour”—“just and the justifier of the sinner believing in Jesus.” There, too, we learn that by Christ’s having become a curse for us, we are not only “redeemed from the curse” of the law, and “that the blessing of Abraham”—or a free and full justification, through believing—“has come on us” Gentiles, but also that “we may receive the Spirit by believing”—that Spirit which quickens the dead and purifies the unholy; that since Jesus is glorified, the Holy Ghost is given—shed forth abundantly on all believing men. There we have the truth with regard to God plainly revealed and satisfactorily attested—truth, the belief of which cannot but make men, in the measure of their faith, holy and happy. There, too, we have the perfect law of liberty, with its powerful motives, fitted both to teach us our duty, and to induce us to do it. And when, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, that revelation of God is understood and believed—when the knowledge of God, which was without us in the word, is thus brought into us—then we *actually* have, up to the measure of our faith, “*all things*” that are necessary to life and godliness. Believing we “*receive* the reconciliation”. “In Christ we *have* redemption through His blood”—we are “justified from all things”—“there is no condemnation for us.” “We are washed and sanctified”—transformed by the renewing of the mind—we “know the truth and the truth makes us free.” The law is put into our minds and written on our hearts, and we are taught by “the grace of God, which brings salvation to all, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Thus “has the Divine power given to us *all things*

that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of God.”

There is some difficulty in fixing the precise reference of the connective particle *whereby*, in the beginning of the fourth verse.¹ It seems most natural to refer it to the terms immediately preceding, rendered “glory and virtue,” words which I endeavoured to show mean “glorious energy”—that almighty influence which He, who is the Power of God, puts forth when He calls men from death to life, from darkness to light, and gives them all things that pertain to life and godliness.² The statement of the fourth verse appears to me explanatory of that of the third verse. The things given to us pertaining to life and godliness are given to us by the Divine power, through (or in) exceeding great and precious promises, and it is by the faith of these promises that the great end of these things being given us is gained. The design or tendency or effect of these exceeding great and precious promises is, “that we may become partakers of a divine nature, having escaped (or escaping) the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

The word *promises*,³ in the New Testament, not unfrequently signifies—the blessings promised, as when departed saints are said to “inherit the promises.” Here, however, the word certainly has its primary meaning. The Holy Spirit has given us exceeding great and precious promises.

The promises are termed great and precious from the magnitude and value of the blessings to which they refer—the things that pertain to life and godliness—to man’s highest life, and most important duties. Take the following as a specimen of these exceeding great and precious promises:—Of restoration to the Divine favour—“By His knowledge shall my Righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities;” “I.

¹ δι’ οὗ.

² As the thing is *one*, the connective *might* have been δι’ οὗ; but as the expression is plural, it is at least equally correct to use δι’ οὗ.

³ ἐπαγγελίαι. more usually ἐπαγγελίαι.

even I, am He who blotteth out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sin ;” “ I will forgive their iniquities, and I will remember their sin no more ;” “ If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus the Righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” Of transformation of character—“ I will pour out My Spirit unto you, I will make known My words unto you ;” “ I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.” Of enlightenment in the knowledge of truth—“ I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, that He may abide with you for ever ; and when He is come He will guide you into all truth ;” “ Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free ;” “ They shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest.” Of guidance in the way of holiness—“ An highway shall be there—it shall be called the Way of Holiness ; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein ;” “ He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in his paths ;” “ I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way in which thou shalt go ;” “ I will direct their work in truth.” These are promises to which, as relating to the things which we have seen pertain to life and godliness, the apostle may be supposed to refer. It is likely he had in view also those promises of complete and eternal holiness which are so often used as motives to the cultivation of holiness in the Scriptures—the all-comprehensive blessing, eternal life. “ Eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord ;” “ I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father who gave them unto Me is greater than all, and none can pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” Such are the exceeding great and precious promises given to *Christians* in the word of the truth of the Gospel—holding out to their acceptance the blessings they refer to.

Now these promises are given for an important practical

purpose. They are given to serve a double purpose—‘that by these we may become partakers of a Divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust.’ It would have better suited the genius of our language, and brought out more distinctly the meaning of the apostle, if the clauses had been transposed, and the words written—‘that we, escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust, might, by these, become partakers of a divine nature;’ or ‘that we might escape the corruption in the world by lust, and become partakers of a divine nature.’ Let us look at these two purposes, and inquire how the exceeding great and precious promises are fitted to serve them.

The first purpose in the order of nature is, “that we may escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.” There is corruption in the world; that corruption is through lust; Christians are naturally involved in this corruption; the exceeding “great and precious promises” are intended to deliver men from this corruption. When the Apostle Paul says, that “until the law sin was in the world,” he means that, during the period referred to, all were sinners. When Peter here speaks of corruption being in the world, he means that all mankind are corrupt. The account of the antediluvians is still the truth with regard to mankind, except in so far as they have been changed by Divine influence—“When God looked upon the earth, behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way on the earth.” “The whole world lieth in wickedness”—under the Wicked One. The race of man is a guilty and depraved race. This moral corruption is “through *lust*”—inordinate desire. It is in desires of what is forbidden by God that depravity manifests itself: and, by following out these desires, it is propagated and increased. Christians, in their natural state, are involved in this corruption; for “there is none righteous, no, not one.” They are, “by nature,” “dead in trespasses and sins”—children of wrath, even as others—walking according to the course of this world—fulfilling the desires (the lusts) of the flesh, and of the mind.” The old man is “corrupt, according to

the deceitful lusts." From this corruption they escape—they are delivered.¹ "*Such* were some of them"—such were all of them; but they are "washed." How have they been delivered? So far as agency is concerned, "by the Spirit of our God"—the Divine power. So far as instrumentality is concerned, by "the exceeding great and precious promises," understood and believed. When the promises are understood and believed, the desires get a new direction, which leads them out of the world—to God. The treasure being seen to be in heaven, the heart is there also; the affections are no longer set on things on the earth; the grace of God, bringing salvation to all, in these exceeding "great and precious promises," teaches them who believe, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live "soberly, righteously, and godly." "*Having* these promises," they learn to "cleans[e] themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God."

The second purpose (which is just a following out of the first) of "the exceeding great and precious promises" given to the Christian, is, that he may "become a partaker of the divine nature." *Nature* here does not mean essence, but disposition—moral quality; and the original expression is not *the* divine nature, but *a* divine nature. To become a partaker of a divine nature, is a phrase of similar meaning with that in the Epistle to the Hebrews,² "that we may be partakers of His holiness"³—become holy, and thus resemble God. It is a blasphemous dream, that men can ever become, as it were, part and parcel of God, by being absorbed into the infinite essence, from which, according to this system of interpretation, they first emanated, or by being deified in a manner corresponding to that in which, to use strange words, God was hominified in the Son. The divine nature here referred to is just the divine image, in which man was originally created, and to

¹ It is a good remark of the late Professor Scholefield, a good scholar and a good man: "Not having escaped its entanglement, but having escaped from it after being entangled."

² Chap. xii. 10.

³ εἰς τὸ μεταλαμβάνειν τῆς ἁγιότητος αὐτοῦ.

reproduce which is the great design of the restorative dispensation. It consists in "knowledge, righteousness, and holiness." It is the Holy Spirit who "creates us anew in Christ Jesus," after the image of the Creator; but He does this "by the exceeding great and precious promises." It is by understanding and believing the Gospel revelation that our mind is brought into conformity with God's mind—our will into conformity with His will; it is thus we become godly—Godlike, spiritually, heavenly minded—seeking the things that are above—loving what God loves—hating what He hates—choosing what He chooses—seeking and finding satisfaction in that in which He finds satisfaction. We must not, however, interpret the passage so as to hold that the escape from pollution must be complete before the participation of a divine nature commences. The two processes go on together. In the degree in which we *escape*, we *partake*; and in the degree in which we *partake*, we *escape*.

Such, then, is the apostle's account of the provision which has been made for Christians being holy in all manner of conversation. The Holy Spirit has, by the knowledge of God, given them all things that are necessary to a new life and a godly character and conduct—"having given them exceeding great and precious promises, that by these they might escape from the corruption that is in the world through lust, and become partakers of a divine nature." So furnished, can any thing be more reasonable than that they should "make their calling and election sure," by "adding to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity."¹ They are not required to perform impossibilities—they are not called to prosecute a warfare on their own charges—weak, empty in themselves, they are strong, complete in

¹ This is the force of *καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο*, strangely rendered by our translators *and besides this*: it is equal to *διὰ αὐτὸ τοῦτο* or *κατὰ κ. τ. λ.* since, in reference to this thing, for or, or on account of, this very thing. "add to your faith virtue," etc.

Christ. There is nothing wanting—all things are ready for their running with perseverance the race set before them, and in a patient continuance in well-doing, seeking for glory, honour, and immortality.

If such provision has been made for life and godliness—for obtaining a complete escape from the corruption that is in the world, and for becoming partakers of a divine nature, how strange and lamentable is it, that even genuine Christians are so deficient in holy attainment. Were they making the use they might and ought to make—of the infinite atonement—the complete reconciliation—the free pardon—the Omnipotent Spirit—the clear well-accredited revelation—the plain, good, just and holy law, with its powerful motives—what heights of excellence might they not attain? How should they be ashamed to think that, with all these advantages, there is still so much deadness, if not death, in them—so much departing from the living God, under the influence of the evil heart of unbelief—so much conformation to this present world—so little transformation by the renewing of the mind—so much likeness to the corrupt world lying under the wicked one—so little resemblance to their Father in heaven. Let them acknowledge, with contrition, that it is even so: “That they have not attained, neither are already perfect;” but let them not despair—let them resolve to use more carefully, than heretofore, the abundant provision which has been made for their indefinite progress in holiness; for there is no saying what measure of a divine nature we may obtain—how like God we may become, even here, in holiness and happiness—how much of heaven we may enjoy on earth; and let them determine to “do this *one* thing—forgetting the things which are behind, let them reach forth towards those which are before, and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

How utterly *inevitable* are those who, living under the Gospel dispensation, continue dead and ungodly—slaves of corruption—devoid of a divine nature. You, who are yet in

your sins—who have not been born again, *cannot* make use of the provisions made for the prosecution of true holiness, in the same way as the regenerate can. But why? Simply because you do not believe the Gospel, and they do. Not the less true is it, that all these provisions lie ready for your use in the Gospel, if you will but believe it. There is the infinitely valuable sacrifice of expiation; but it can avail you nothing, while you treat as a common thing the blood, by which alone expiation can be made. There is the free, full-sealed pardon, but you refuse to receive it. There is the all-powerful, free, good Spirit, but you do Him despite, rebelling against, and vexing Him. There is the voice of God, in a plain, well-accredited revelation, but you stop your ears and harden your hearts. There is the good, holy, and just law, but you break off its yoke from your necks. There are all the persuasive, and terrific motives, by which it urges to obedience, but you trample under foot equally the invitations of grace and the warnings of justice.

Even had there been no restorative dispensation at all, still the man who lives and dies in sin, would richly deserve his doom. But what an additional weight of guilt must press down to the nethermost depths of perdition him, who, with all the means of restoration to holy happiness within his reach, obstinately refuses to avail himself of them—who, with the means of obtaining an ever growing likeness to God, preparing him for intimate fellowship with Him for ever, prefers perfecting that character of depravity, which will make him a fit companion for the devil and his angels. Such men shall “utterly perish in their own corruption.” “If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall they escape who neglect so great salvation as that which the Divine power has given us, in exceeding great and precious promises? If he who despised Moses’ law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, counted the sanctifying blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and done despite to the

Spirit of Grace? What awaits such a person, persisting in such a course, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." God forbid that this should be the doom of any of us. But it must be the doom of every one of us who does not avail himself of the provision the Divine power has made for our deliverance from spiritual death, and depravity, and endless ruin. All things that pertain to life and godliness—all the unsearchable riches of blessedness, treasured up in "the exceeding great and precious promises," may be yours. But they can be yours only, if received and employed in the way of God's appointment; and they must be received now. To-morrow may see them placed for ever beyond your reach. *Now*—"now is the accepted time. *Now* is the day of salvation."

2. *That most lamentable consequences will result from not complying with the exhortation.*

Let us now attend to the second motive adduced by the apostle, drawn from the results of neglecting to comply with his injunction. These consequences are 'barrenness,' or rather idleness, unfruitfulness, blindness, the incapacity of seeing afar off, the forgetting that they had been purged from their old sins, the probability of their falling, and salvation (if attained at all) attained with difficulty—"salvation as by fire." In stating these consequences, the apostle has in view both those who, professing to have obtained "like precious faith with the apostles"—to have received grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, and to have been called and chosen of God—have, either through self-delusion, or in hypocrisy, made a false profession; and those who, though their profession is not false, yet come short in complying with the command, to make their "calling and election sure," by adding to "faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity." Some of the things, he says, are more applicable to the one, others more applicable to the other, of those two classes.

Barrenness, or rather idleness (for that is the proper signi-

fication of the word rendered *barren*¹)—is represented as the first result of neglecting the apostolic injunction. They who comply with the injunction are “*not idle*,” plainly implying that they who do not comply with it are “*ille*.” You will notice, it is not *idleness* generally that is here mentioned—it is idleness “in,” or in reference to, “the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”—idleness with regard to those employments in which the Gospel, which, when understood and believed, gives us the knowledge of Jesus, induces us to engage. The persons referred to are often busy enough about every thing but this, their most important business. Indeed, it is often their being so busy about other things that leads to their being idle with regard to this. Faith may be viewed as the motive power in the mind. Where there is no faith there will be no spiritual activity; where to faith energy is not added, dutiful exertion will be feeble and fitful; and, indeed, where any of the Christian graces enumerated are defective, there will be a corresponding want of activity in some department of practical Christianity. They are all requisite to form the habitual, consistent, active Christian. Idleness is a state of discomfort, and leads to other and worse evils. An idle Christian must be an unhappy Christian. He wants the satisfaction which God has, by the very constitution of our nature, connected with conscious dutiful exertion; he is constantly exposed to temptation to employ wrong the activity which he neglects to employ aright. The words of Dr Watts are applicable to others beside children—

“Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.”

He is contracting guilt by neglecting duty, and laying up a subject for painful, self-accusing, reflection. Idleness has much that is bad in it, for it argues dissatisfaction, either with our Master, or with our work, or with both. Beyond all this, it is to be recollected that the final doom of the idle, unprofitable servant is a very dreadful one. These are awful words:

¹ ἀργούς quasi ἀεργούς. Matt. xx. 3.

“Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed; thou oughtest, therefore, to have given my money to the exchangers, and then, at my coming, I should have received mine own with usury. Take, therefore, the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents; for unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath; and cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Unfruitfulness in the knowledge of Christ is the second bad result that is represented as flowing from not complying with the apostolic injunction. He who complies with it is “not unfruitful”—he who does not comply with it is “unfruitful.” To be unfruitful, which is the natural result of being idle, is to fail of serving the important, useful purposes which Christians are meant to serve—in securing their own personal improvement—in making their fellow Christians and their fellow men wiser, better, and happier, and in thus promoting the glory of God. These are “the fruits of righteousness which are to the praise and the glory of God.” This is being fruitful with respect to the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. “For the grace of God, which brings salvation to all,” is intended and calculated to teach men “to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this world;” and in the degree in which this end is not gained, the man who lives under the Gospel dispensation is unfruitful. He who wants faith cannot bring forth fruit at all; and he whose faith is not energetic will bring forth but little fruit. Comfort and holy usefulness go together. Even a true Christian, who is thus comparatively unfruitful, will smart for it—he will be “like the heath in the wilderness, which seeth not when good cometh;” and habitual continued unfruitfulness must end in destruction. Let the unfruitful ponder the parable of the barren fig-tree. Unfruitfulness must lead to its being cut down—or, what is scarcely less fearful, its being allowed to stand in the vineyard, and

wither away," with the curse lying on it, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth, and for ever."—"The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh on it, and beareth only briers and thorns, is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."

Blindness is the next evil, which the apostle represents as connected with not complying with his injunction—"He who lacketh these things is blind."¹ He shows that he is destitute of true spiritual discernment. He who has not faith at all is, in the matters of the spiritual world, utterly blind; for faith is, as it were, the organ of spiritual sight, that which enables a person to see the world that is unseen, and the God who is invisible: and he who hath *little* faith has but a weak spiritual sight—sees little, and even that little indistinctly. He does not see in the way in which it is desirable, either what is true or what is right, what is his duty or what is his happiness, and especially "he does not," as the apostle says, "see afar off."² Some have supposed the apostle's idea to be—'he winks'—he purposely shuts his eyes—he is wilfully blind. This is true, to a considerable extent, of all spiritually blind persons; but the meaning seems to be, he is shortsighted.³ He is occupied with things near at hand—he sees them, but not as they really are—and he is incapable of seeing distant objects, and consequently is not affected by them. He looks intently on "the things seen, and temporal"—but he does not see, for he does not look at "the things that are unseen and eternal." The man who "lacks faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity," while he is seeking worldly good, wealth, honour, and pleasure, is blind indeed, and does not see afar off—does not see to the end of these things—neither the eternal life, in which one course ends, nor the eternal death, in which another terminates. To be thus blind is a great misery, as well as a great fault. The blind knows not whither he goes, and is in great hazard of falling into the ditch.

¹ τὸ φθλός.

² μὴ ὀφθαλμοῦ, *midge-eyed*.

³ The Vulgate renders it "tentans manu," groping.

The next statement respecting the man who neglects to comply with the apostle's injunction is couched in somewhat remarkable language,—“He has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”¹ The words, literally rendered, are, “he has become forgetful of the purification of his old sins.” The person spoken of is supposed to have had, in some sense or other, his *old* sins purified—to have once known this, but to have now forgotten it. The phrase, purification of a man's sins, admits of a variety of interpretations. Our sins were purged or purified or expiated by the Son of God, “through” the sacrifice of “Himself,” before “He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” His atoning sacrifice may then be called the purging or the purification of our sins. What takes place on believing may be also called the purging or purification of our sins. Then we are united to the Purifier—then we are interested in the purifying power of His blood and Spirit—then we are “washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, by the Spirit of our God.” Baptism also may be called the purification of our sins, as it is an emblematical representation of the manner in which sin is purged, and as it is, when submitted to by an adult, a solemn profession of that faith which interests us in the atonement and Spirit of Christ, by which we are purified from sin. “Arise and be baptized,” said Ananias to Saul, “and wash away thy sins.”

It is doubtful how the phrase should be understood here. It may mean that the man who lacks the virtues Peter enumerates, acts as if he had forgotten the expiation or purging of sins by Jesus Christ, through the sacrifice of Himself—for he neglects the great purpose of that sacrifice. “He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.” If he had kept this, as he ought to have done, in remem-

¹ Λήθην λαμβάνειν = λήθην ποιείσθαι = λήθην ἔχειν, = μνήμην οὐ λαμβάνειν, all = λήθισθαι, ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι—oblivisci.

brance, he would have added to his faith virtue, and all the other Christian graces. Or it may mean—the man has, in consequence of not being diligent in adding to faith virtue, etc., lost sight of his personal interest in the atoning and sanctifying influence of the sacrifice and Spirit of Christ. Or—he acts as if he had forgotten his baptism—the truth which it emblematically exhibited and confirmed, and the solemn self-dedication and engagements which it involved. The use of the expression “his old sins,” *i.e.* his sins previously to his faith, or profession of faith, seems to confine our choice to the last two senses—and I rather think that the first of these exhibits the apostle’s meaning. The Christian who does not add to faith virtue, etc., is sure to lose sight of his being a forgiven and sanctified person, and fall into doubts whether he has been purged from his old sins by the sacrifice and Spirit of Christ. Like a man recovered from sickness, but falling back again into bad health, he will begin to doubt of his recovery, and to think of it as a dream. There is no retaining, in a course of spiritual declension, a well-grounded assurance of our own forgiveness. The self-deceiver, and even the declining Christian, often attempt to unite the two things, and some very mistaken hyper-Calvinist divines seem as if they were inclined to help them in this happily vain attempt. But God has so constituted human nature and the plan of salvation, that it is only living faith, a faith which proves its life and energy by its effects, that can give and sustain the “good hope through grace.” Surely the thought that our not adding to faith virtue, etc., is certain to shake our assurance of salvation, and excite painful doubts and fears, is a strong motive to “add to faith virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity.”

Still farther, he who does not comply with the apostle’s injunction is in danger of “*falling*,” whatever that may mean. “If ye do these things,” says the apostle, “ye shall never fall,” plainly implying,—“if ye do not do these things ye are in great danger of falling.” The man who does not “add to

faith virtue," etc., is in danger of falling into *sin*. He who does not make progress is likely to go back—he who neglects duty is in the high way of falling into *sin*. He is in danger of falling away—falling into *apostacy*. Not that any real partaker of "like precious faith with the apostles" shall be a cast-away: but the man who thought himself, and was thought by others, a true Christian, will fall away, if he do not add to faith virtue, etc.; and "if any," as the apostle says, "after they have escaped the pollution of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." "If they thus fall away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance." They are in danger of falling into *hell*. If men will live after the flesh they must die. It is only by mortifying the deeds of the body through the Spirit that they shall live. He who stands still is not likely soon to reach heaven. He who turns back turns back to perdition. It is only by a constant continuance in well-doing that men can obtain glory, honour, and immortality.

Finally, supposing, then, that the person referred to by the apostle is saved, it will be with difficulty, "as it were by fire." It is only of those "who do these things" that it is said—"and so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." If a man be "a partaker of like precious faith with the apostles," he will be saved, even although he should not have been so diligent in making the required addition to his faith as he might and ought to have been, but he will suffer loss—a loss, it may be, never to be made up.—Surely there is enough in these statements respecting the natural results of not complying with the apostle's injunction, powerfully to move every Christian mind to "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure" by "giving all diligence to add to faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity."

3. *That the most important advantages will be secured by complying with the exhortation.*

The last motive brought forward by the apostle, to induce Christians to comply with his exhortation, is derived from the advantages to be obtained by doing so. These are stated in contrast with the disadvantages flowing from neglecting it. The Christian who "gives all diligence to make his calling and election sure" by "giving all diligence to add to his faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity," will become active and fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; clear and far-sighted in reference to spiritual things; —he will habitually remember his having "been purged from his old sins;" "he will never fall, and so an entrance shall be ministered to him abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." A very few words will be enough to illustrate the nature of these blessings, show how they naturally result from compliance with the apostle's exhortation, and point out the force of the motive to such a compliance.

They in whom the virtues enumerated in the fifth, sixth, and seventh verses, exist and abound, are "made" (or become) "neither barren (neither idle) nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," *i.e.* they become very active and fruitful. They could not comply with the exhortation without being spiritually active; and their compliance with it increases their spiritual activity. He, in whom godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity abound, will see abundance of work for him in promoting the glory of God, in the edification of the church, and the salvation of the world, and feel a strong habitual wish to engage in it; while an energetic and enlightened faith will both urge to and guide him in the discharge of the work, temperance will shield him from many temptations to abandon or become slack in it, and patience will strengthen him to bear whatever suffering the performance of it may expose him to. Such a man will be

“stedfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”—not becoming “weary in well-doing”—not becoming “slothful,” but on the contrary, more and more “diligent in his business,” which is the service of the Lord. The soul of such a man is, as Howe says, “a paradise, a garden of God. Here He walks and converses daily, delighted with its fragrant fruits. The Lord Jesus is the Sun, and the knowledge of Him the quickening beams that cherish these fruits.”¹ Or in the words of the prophet,—“He shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall refrain from yielding fruit.”

This activity *is* fruitfulness, and naturally leads to increased fruitfulness. Such a man *is*, must be, *useful*. He is like “the earth, which—being often rained on, and drinking in that which falls on it, and bringing forth herbs meet for him by whom it is dressed—receives blessing of God,” and becomes more and more fruitful under His smile—being blessed and made a blessing;—“filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.”

Still farther, he who complies with the apostolic injunction is not, like him who neglects it, “blind and cannot see afar off.” On the contrary, his “spiritual sense, exercised in making a distinction between things that differ,”—truth and falsehood, good and evil,—becomes strengthened. A man’s knowledge of spiritual things grows with his spiritual experience. The holier a man is, the better is he likely to understand his Bible. Neglect of duty or commission of sin, benumbs spiritual feeling and bedims spiritual vision. It is the practical, progressive Christian that “knows the doctrine whether it be of God”—that understands what the natural man cannot receive or know—that attains to “the full assurance of understanding”—seeing clearly what less diligent Christians discern

¹ Bless. of the Right, p. 331.

but dimly—"seeing the King in His beauty, and beholding the land yet very far off."

Another point in which the Christian, in whom the virtues enumerated in the fifth, sixth, and seventh verses are and abound, differs from him who lacks, is deficient in these things, is, that he does not forget "that he has been purged from his old sins." He, by having a vigorous and enlightened faith, and which proves itself to be so by its effects, has a habitual, firm persuasion of the grand fundamental truth—the source of hope and holiness—that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has "purged our sins by" the sacrifice of "Himself"—and "washed us from our sins in His own blood." He retains a habitual impression of that truth, and of the obligations rising out of it, and, which we rather think is the apostle's leading idea, does not lose sight of his own personal interest in the great atoning sacrifice and sanctifying Spirit of the Saviour. The faith which shews its presence by its sanctifying power, proves its presence too by its conscience-pacifying, heart-tranquilizing influence. He is freed from harassing doubts and fears. He cannot doubt that, whatever he once may have been, he is now "washed, sanctified, justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." "Walking in the truth," he "knows that he is of the truth," and "his heart is assured before God." The man who *is* in good health and sound mind needs no other proof that he is not labouring under fatal disease.

Finally, he who does these things, and abounds in doing them,¹ shall never *fall*, but, on the contrary, shall persevere to the end, and not merely be admitted into the heavenly kingdom, but "have an entrance ministered to him abun-

¹ And abounds in doing them.—"What is meant is not the believer's present abundance, or his superiority to others, but his own continual growth in grace."—Dr J. LILLIE. "Veritatem celeriter sequitur abundantia."—BENGEL. The expression intimates equally that these things must be "in us;" and if they are, they must have been put *into* us, for they are not naturally there, and that it is not enough to have them—we must have them in abundance."—ADAMS.

dantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "He shall never *fall*." In the measure in which he does this, he shall be kept from error, sin, and spiritual damage—he shall be preserved from falling away—he shall be "kept by the power of God," through the faith to which have been added "virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity." So long as he keeps on steadily in this course, he cannot "turn back to perdition." This is the course, the natural end of which is "the salvation of the soul;" and in the case of the Christian who has been giving "all diligence to make his calling and election sure," by giving all diligence to add virtue, etc., this salvation shall not be "salvation as it were by fire."

The course prescribed by the apostle naturally leads to a peaceful, happy death, and a joyful introduction into the glories of immortality. Our Lord reigns in heaven. He sits "on the right hand of the Majesty on High"—"a Prince and a Saviour"—"Lord of all"—"having all power in heaven and earth." "His is the kingdom," and "that kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." "He shall reign for ever and ever." It is, indeed, said that He "will deliver up the kingdom to the Father," but that does not mean that He shall cease to reign, but that He shall *bring back* the kingdom to the Father, by putting down all opposing authority and power.¹ Into this kingdom Christians enter when they go to be with the Lord—to be where He is, both Lord and Christ, and to behold, and, so far as the thing is possible, share in His royal honours. For into this kingdom the soul of every Christian enters at death; and "when the end cometh," the whole redeemed church, having obtained the redemption of the body, shall, with their Prince at their head, be solemnly introduced, in the presence of the assembled intelligent universe, into the full possession of all the honours and felicities of "the kingdom prepared for Him and them from the foundation of the world." They who do the things enjoined by the apostle shall have

¹ See "Resurrection of Life."

“an abundant entrance ministered to them.” The figure has, it is supposed, been borrowed from the entrance of a ship into the harbour with all her sails set—with the full advantage of a fair wind and a rising tide; naturally enough, by contrast, suggesting the idea of those Christians who have been criminally lacking—have possessed, but not *abounded*, in these things—and who (through want of comfort, and by forebodings which, in such a case, are likely to haunt the death-bed; and, it may be, too, by something but darkly shadowed forth in the world beyond death), are like Paul’s companions in shipwreck, who escaped all safe to land, but after a sad struggle, “some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship.”

The meaning and force of the illustration have been most powerfully brought out by an accomplished living preacher: “Be careful to cultivate and display, and to lead forth as with constant gladness, in harmonious order, in all their becoming grace and beauty, those virtues that are to attend upon and adorn a religious life; and at the close of thy course thou shalt be met by an angelic choir, who shall hail thy approach to the divine land with ready gratulation, who shall gather about thee as an attendant company of heavenly forms, while all that surrounded thee on earth, the Christian graces, shall go with thee, a radiant train of glorious associates; thus shalt thou be ‘brought with gladness and rejoicing, and enter into the King’s palace—thus shalt thou ‘enter into the joy of thy Lord’ with choral symphonies and solemn pomp, as one whom He shall delight to honour.” Or, you may take another illustration from a vessel returning after a long voyage, and being received and welcomed by expectant friends. She has been absent for years—toiling and trafficking in every sea—touching at the ports, and trading in the markets of many lands. Thus approaching at last her desired haven—the harbour from which she set out, whence loving thoughts went with her as she started on her perilous way, and where anxious hearts are now wishing and waiting for her return. She is descried in the distance; the

news spread ; all is excitement ; multitudes assemble—pier and quay, beach and bank, are crowded with spectators as the little craft pushes on, and every moment nears her destination. There she is, worn and weather-beaten, it is true—covered with the indications of sore travail and long service, and with many signs of having encountered both battle and breeze. But all is safe. Her goodly freight is secure and uninjured ; her profits have been large ; the merchandize she brings is both rare and rich. She is coming along a sunny sea—leaping and dancing, as if she were alive. Her crew are on the deck, and, with straining eyes and palpitating hearts, are looking towards the shore. A soft wind swells the sails ; the blue heavens are bending over the bark, as if smiling on her course, while the very waves seem to run before her, turning themselves about as if with conscious joy, clapping their hands and murmuring a welcome. How she bounds forward ! She is over the bar. She is gliding now in smooth water—passing into port, and preparing to moor, and drop her anchor for the last time. While she does, there comes a shout from the assembled spectators—the crowds that witness and welcome her approach, loud as thunder, musical as the sea. Gladness and greeting are on every hand—eloquent voices fill the air. The vessel has received an **ABUNDANT ENTRANCE** : her crew have been met with sympathetic congratulations ; are surrounded by eager and glad friends, hailed with enthusiasm, embraced with rapture, and accompanied to their homes with exultation and song. How different had she come in a wreck, or struck on a rock ? lost her cargo, and her crew saved only with difficulty and peril ? and all this the consequence of some grave neglect—ignorance, or incapacity, carelessness, or presumption, which attach on them the blame of the disaster. Even in this case, they would have reasons for gratitude, deep gratitude, that they were saved at all. Stripped as they were, their friends would welcome them with love and joy ; but pity and sadness would mingle with that welcome—congratulation would sound like rebuke, or seem undeserved ; and the poor mariners would require time to be reconciled to themselves.

Some such difference may exist in the circumstances and feelings of the saved.”¹

How powerful, then, are the motives to comply with the apostle’s injunction ! All things are ready ; he who does not comply must suffer loss ; to him who does comply is secured a useful, honourable, happy life—a peaceful, probably a triumphant, death—and, after death, an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

When we reflect on the intrinsic excellence and reasonableness of the duties enjoined, and on the power and persuasiveness of the motives urging the performance of them, we do not wonder at the apostle’s emphatic repetition—“ Give all diligence ;” “ Wherefore the rather give all diligence.” The attainment of the objects here recommended to our desire and pursuit, deserves diligence—all diligence. The immediate object deserves to be sought with diligence. Is it not desirable to have our “ calling and election made sure”—to have satisfactory evidence that we are among those of whom it is said, “ Whom He doth predestinate them He also calls, whom He calls them He also justifies, whom He justifies them He also glorifies?” Are not the means by which alone this end can be secured worthy of being sought with all diligence ? What can be compared, for intrinsic value, with “ faith, and virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity ?” What is honour, wealth, power, learning, fame—aye, what are health and life in comparison with these ? These are invaluable blessings—intrinsically excellent, permanently precious. “ They cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for their price. They cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, and the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal them, and the exchange of them shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of the coral, or of pearls ; for the price” of holiness, of which they are component elements, “ is above rubies.” “ The topaz of Ethiopia

¹ Binney’s “ Tower Sermons.”

cannot equal it, neither can it be valued with pure gold." The smallest measure of true holiness outweighs, in real worth, the largest measure of worldly good. These blessings are, "in God's sight, of great price," and they are absolutely necessary to man's true and permanent happiness. Is it not worthy of every effort to escape from spiritual barrenness and blindness—from falling into sin—from falling into hell? Is it not desirable to be spiritually fruitful and far-sighted, to be preserved faultless, and at last presented to the Father Judge, by the Brother Redeemer, without spot, with great joy? If these things do not deserve our giving all diligence to obtain them, what can?

"Jewels to these are empty toys,
And gold is sordid dust."

It is only in giving all diligence that we are encouraged to expect these blessings. The slothful and idle are not in the way of obtaining them. They are, indeed, the gift of God, but they are to be expected only in a persevering course of duty. Those only who, "by a constant continuance in well-doing, look for glory, honour, and immortality," obtain "eternal life,"—"the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The general rule holds here—"Nought precious is obtained but what is painful too." The promises of Divine grace encourage to diligence, but supersede not its necessity. Without diligence we cannot become fit for heaven; and none are taken there but those who are fit for it. Moreover, the powerful obstacles, both from without and within, to our attaining these invaluable blessings, show how necessary it is that we give all diligence. Sin, that dwells in us, Satan, our great enemy, and the world, by which he seeks to ensnare, corrupt, and destroy us, are unremittingly active, and we need to give all diligence to oppose their exertions. *They* give all diligence; and is it fit that *we* should be idle?

What an encouragement, to know that provision is made both for our giving all diligence, and for our giving all diligence securing its objects. "Strengthened with all might

in the inner man,"—"strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," we may well be steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;" and assuredly, in this case, our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." "If, through the Spirit, we mortify the deeds of the body, we *shall* live." It is not less true, that "he that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption," than it is, that "he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." It has been well said, "In the world men spare no pains, decline no difficulties, fear no hazard, though they have nothing more than probability—often a low measure of it—to excite and encourage them in their undertakings, and shall we be insensible and motionless, shall we not give all diligence, who have nothing less than absolute security to encourage us in ours?" What would we have, what can we have, more than the word of Him who can do all things, but who cannot lie? Surely, then, every one of us should show 'the same diligence to the full assurance of hope, to the end that we be not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.'

These remarks will mislead, if they are not considered as addressed solely to those "who have obtained like precious faith" with the apostles. They only *can* give diligence towards the attainment of these blessings. Virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, and charity, cannot exist as *Christian* graces without faith; and the salvation of the soul—the entrance into, and enjoyment of, the everlasting kingdom—can be obtained only through faith and patience; it is "the end of our faith."

To those who are impenitent and unbelieving, our call—the call of our Lord, is, "Repent and believe the Gospel." Come into the way of holiness, that ye may walk along it; for it is the only way to true peace here—to perfect happiness hereafter. Nothing prevents your coming into the way but your own ignorance, unbelief, depravity, and wilfulness. "Behold, I set before you an open door which no man may shut." "Turn to the stronghold prisoners of hope." "Flee

for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the Gospel." Listen to the call of mercy, believe the testimony of God, embrace the promise of salvation, "receive the reconciliation," and then, under the influence of "the Holy Ghost shed forth abundantly, "through Jesus Christ the Saviour, on all who believe," "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (for then ye are among "the called, and chosen, and faithful")—by "giving all diligence to add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." Your fruit will thus be "unto righteousness, and the end will be everlasting life." "Consider what has been said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things;" and make you, indeed, "wise unto salvation."

PART II.—THE APOSTLE'S RESOLUTIONS, AND THE GROUNDS OF THEM.

2 Peter i. 12–21.—Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting *you* in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For 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 the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

THERE is a peculiar interest attached to the dying thoughts

and last sayings of wise and good men. That interest belongs, in a high degree, to the paragraph now read. The apostle, when he wrote these words, was "now such an one as Peter the aged." Calling to mind the words of his Lord, in which He had signified to him "by what death he should glorify God,"—"When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch out thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not"—and with the Cross full in His view and near at hand, anticipating the speedy accomplishment of the oracular prediction, "Thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me afterwards," he in spirit goes forth to take it up, that he may "bear it after Jesus,"—saying in effect, with his beloved brother Paul when waiting in prison in daily expectation of the stroke of the headsman's sword—"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." It is striking to notice with what unruffled tranquillity, not unmingled with the "desire to depart," the two apostles look forward to martyrdom, and how similar are their employments in the immediate prospect of it—Paul urging his beloved son Timothy to "endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, and give full proof of his ministry;" and Peter "stirring up the pure minds" of the brethren "by way of remembrance," that even "after his decease, they might be able" to be "mindful of the holy commandment delivered unto them by the apostles of the Lord and Saviour."

The paragraph presents us with two great topics for consideration—the apostle's RESOLUTIONS, and the GROUNDS on which these resolutions are based.

The apostle's resolutions are two—First, to be "always, so long as he was in this tabernacle, stirring them up by putting them in remembrance" of the truths stated in the previous context; and secondly, to "endeavour that, after his decease, they might still have these things always in their remembrance."

The grounds on which these resolutions rest are three—First, a deep sense of the truth and importance of the state-

ment he had just made in the preceding paragraph, indicated in the word "wherefore;"—Secondly, a knowledge founded on an intimation made to him by his Lord, that his death was near at hand: "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me;"—and thirdly, a firm conviction, grounded on miracle and prophecy, that in teaching the doctrine of Christ, he and his brethren had only declared divinely revealed truth: "We have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known to 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 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—or rather, we have the prophetic word more confirmed—whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place, till the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time (or as it is in the margin, at any time) by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

As the apostle's sense of the truth and importance of these statements, and his knowledge that his death was near at hand, viewed as grounds of his resolutions to keep his readers in remembrance of those things while he lived, and to make provision for their not forgetting them after his death,—owe all their aptitude to his conviction that, in teaching the doctrine of Christ, he was only declaring divinely revealed truth, there is an obvious propriety in giving the first place in our illustrations of these grounds to that which is last mentioned by the apostle.—Such is the outline which I wish to fill up in the sequel, and rude though it be, it may be of use in guiding my thoughts, and assisting your apprehension and memory.

§ 1. THE APOSTLE'S RESOLUTIONS.

Let us then, in the first place, briefly attend to the apostle's RESOLUTIONS—

1. *To keep them in mind of what he had taught them while he lived.*

And first, he resolves to stir up, so long as he lived, those to whom he was writing, by putting them in remembrance of the statements made in the preceding context—"I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth; yea I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance."

In this resolution our attention is naturally turned first to what the apostle resolves to do—"to put them in remembrance" of the things he had stated, which he calls "the present truth," though they "knew them and were established in them:" then to the object for which he meant to do this—to "stir them up:" then to the manner in which he was determined to do it—not perfunctorily but diligently—"I will not be negligent;" not occasionally but habitually—"always;" not for a limited time, but during life—"as long as I am in this tabernacle: and, finally, to the propriety of his forming and executing such a resolution—"I think it meet." A few words on each of these will suffice for the illustration of this part of the subject.

As to what the apostle resolves to do,—it is, as he says, "to put them in remembrance of these things." The expression "these things," plainly refers to the things spoken of in the preceding paragraph—the things respecting their peculiar character and condition as Christians—persons "who had obtained like precious faith" with the apostles, in the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (ver. 1); persons "who had received grace and peace through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord," and who needed to

have this grace and peace “multiplied” to them (ver. 2); persons who had been “called” (ver. 3) and “elected” (ver. 10) by God;—respecting their duty to “make their calling and election sure” (ver. 10); respecting the manner in which this was to be done—by “adding to faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, and patience, and godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity” (ver. 5-7); and respecting the varied and powerful motives which urge them to the discharge of their duty in this way—the abundant provision which had been made for this purpose (ver. 3, 4), the unhappy consequences which would result from neglecting this duty, and the happy consequences which would result from performing it (ver. 7, 11).

The statements made on these subjects are termed “the present truth.”¹ It has been common to suppose that the force of this phrase is, “*that* truth, which, owing to peculiar circumstances, is at the present time specially interesting and important,” and that the apostle refers to the doctrine ‘that final salvation is to be sought by, and expected in, a constant continuance in well-doing’—a doctrine which, important at all times, had a superadded importance imparted to it at this time from the Antinomian dogmas and practices which the false teachers, so graphically described in the second chapter, had extensively introduced. It seems, however, scarcely possible to bring this sense out of the original expression, which just means “the truth which is present with you”—being nearly equivalent to the Apostle Paul’s phrase, “the Gospel which I have preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand.”²

The persons to whom the apostle wrote knew these truths, and were established in them. They had been taught them, and had received, and continued to believe them, on what appeared satisfactory evidence. They “stood in the true grace of God,” which they had received not in vain, but

¹ *πασούση ἀληθεία.*

² Pott interprets it “*religio quam huc usque professi estis.*”

they needed to be cautioned "lest any of them," like so many others, "being led away with the errors of the wicked, should fall from their stedfastness." For men may forget what they know. They may be brought to doubt of what they now believe. The truth and its evidence may slip out of mind, and become as void of influence, as if they did not exist. The anxieties, the labours, the pleasures, the afflictions of the world, are in danger of thus drawing away the mind from the truth. What is not thought of cannot exert influence, and is in danger of being forgotten. Evidence needs to be often reviewed to have permanent power over the mind, and, in consequence of neglecting such a review, and allowing objections to enter into the mind and remain there unchallenged, what once was felt as absolutely certain begins to be thought of as doubtful, and ere long appears as if it were but a hallucination or a dream. The apostle was aware of all this, and hence he was resolved to keep those to whom he was writing in mind of the truth and its evidence, on subjects so closely connected with their most important duties and highest interests. He was convinced—with his brother Paul, who, though persuaded that the Roman Christians were "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another," writes boldly to them "to put them in mind"—that the Gospel must, in order to exert its saving efficiency, be "kept in memory." "Precept must be on precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line." And if this be neglected, men who have had the Gospel very plainly taught them, may, instead of being fitted to become "teachers of others, ere long need some one to teach themselves again what be the first principles of the oracles of God." Ministers of the Gospel should imitate the apostle. They are not to be everlastingly reiterating the same things; they do not need to do so—for the topics necessary to the right discharge of their functions as teachers are very numerous and varied—they have a wide field to expatiate in; they have inexhaustible stores out of which they may bring things new as well as old; but they are not to seek to

gratify the love of novelty, either in themselves or in their hearers, at the hazard of incurring the disapprobation of their Master, or endangering the souls of their people. It is a weighty observation of the honest and judicious Scott: "The frequent discussion of practical subjects does not prove acceptable to the majority in some congregations where the doctrines of grace are preached; so that ministers will often be tempted to omit them or to hurry them over in a general and superficial manner, which exceedingly tends to deceive souls and to diffuse a false and loose religion." Woe to the ministers who fall before such a temptation!—To speak the same things in reference to the doctrine and law of Christ, for Christian ministers ought not to be grievous. For their hearers it is not only safe but necessary. In order that anything be thoroughly learned and permanently remembered, there must be much repetition.

The object which the apostle had in view in thus putting those to whom he wrote in remembrance was, that they might be "stirred up:" "I think it meet to stir you up by putting you in remembrance"—"I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." Action is the end of knowledge. To know truth is in order to do duty. The apostle's object in stating and re-stating divine truth was not to make men ingenious speculators and dexterous controversialists. It was to make them active in doing, patient in suffering, the will of God—"good soldiers of Jesus Christ;" to waken them out of the dreams in which the stupifying influence of that most potent of all enchantresses, "the present evil world," is apt to make them indulge; to banish the languor of sloth—to prevent them from becoming "weary in well-doing;" to make them "give all diligence" towards the discharge of all duty; to make them "abound in the work of the Lord," "forgetting the things which are behind, reaching forth towards those that are before—pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Such was the object of the apostle in his resolution to put those to whom he wrote in mind of the great principles of Christian truth. It

was to stir up into active, vigorous exercise, every principle of action—gratitude, regard to interest, hope, and fear—to secure the great end—the abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As to the manner in which the apostle was determined to put them in remembrance, that he might thereby stir them up—it was to be, first—not performed only, but diligently and with all his heart—“I will not be negligent,” *i.e.* not merely, “I will not neglect to do it, but I will not be negligent in doing it.”¹ He was determined to seize every opportunity for this purpose. He was resolved to exemplify Paul’s exhortation to Timothy as to the right way of preaching the Word, “Be instant in season and out of season”—to press it on men’s attention whether they were willing or unwilling to listen—“whether they would hear or whether they would forbear,” *i.e.* refuse to hear. The duties of the Christian ministry must be energetically performed. The minister must throw his whole soul and heart into them. If he would have his hearers “give diligence”—“give all diligence” to do their duty, he must not be negligent in doing his. *He* who seems in danger of falling asleep, is not likely to stir up others.

Peter had too strong a sense of the authority of his Master, and too deep a sympathy with the hazards and miseries of mortal men, to be negligent in the discharge of his duties. And as he was determined to perform them not perfunctorily, but diligently, so was he to perform them, not only occasionally, but habitually—constantly. “I will put you *always* in remembrance.” I will not only now and then call your attention to these things, but they shall be the staple articles of my teaching: What is *essential* to the salvation of the sinner and the edification of the saint should be the ordinary theme of the Christian minister. There is something very far wrong in a Christian teacher’s estimate of his duties and responsibilities, if he can be heard, even for a very few Sabbaths in succession, without putting his hearers in mind of the great

¹ “Est *μείλιως*, says Semler, = dabo omnem operam quam possum.”

elementary principles of Christian faith and duty, by which both saints and sinners are most likely to be stirred up—the things whereby men live, and in which is the life of the soul.

Still farther, the apostle determines to execute the resolution to stir up men's minds by putting them in remembrance, not only diligently and habitually, but perseveringly: "as long as I am in this tabernacle, I will stir you up by putting you in remembrance. "So long as I am in this tabernacle," is a beautiful figurative expression for 'so long as I continue to live in this frail, mortal body.'¹ "Our earthly house of this tabernacle" is contrasted by the Apostle Paul with the resurrection body—"the building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The expression before us is just equivalent to "So long as I live, I will stir you up by putting you in remembrance." Peter had not long to live, and he knew this. He was old and feeble. But whatever strength he had, whether of body or of mind, he was disposed to devote it to the service of God and His Church. His jubilee, had he arrived at it, would not have found him desirous of emancipation from his Master's service. He had his ear nailed to his Master's door post, and wished to be His servant for ever. His desire was, that the executioner might find him engaged in putting the brethren in remembrance of the law of the Lord. It is not for us to choose for ourselves, yet I believe the true-hearted minister of Christ cannot help wishing that he may be allowed to die at his post—that, as the excellent Flavel has it, "our life and our labour may end together." So long as he has a voice he would wish it to be employed in warning sinners, and in stimulating, directing, comforting, saints. "Were I but able for it," said a dying minister of Christ, "I would willingly work as a common labourer six days of the week to be allowed to preach Christ on the seventh." Every Christian minister, who at all deserves the name, cordially sympathises in the

¹ This is a figure to be found in almost every language. Elsner, Alberti, and Wetstein on 2 Cor. v. 1, may be consulted for examples.

sentiment still more strikingly expressed by our great apostle, "To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." What a privilege!—to be allowed to commend Christ's excellencies on earth, down to the very period when we shall be allowed to commence our eternal celebration of them in heaven!

There is yet another thought expressed in the apostle's statement of his first resolution, and that is, his sense of the propriety of forming such a resolution: "I think it meet to stir you up by putting you in remembrance"—meet for *you*, meet for *me*. I think it meet for *you*; for you need to be stirred up, by being put in remembrance. Though you know the truth, you are in great danger of letting slip the things you have heard—of becoming weary and faint in your minds. I think it meet for *me*; for "should not the shepherd feed the flock?"—should not the steward superintend the household, and "give every one his portion of suitable food in due season?" It is meet especially for *me*—to whom the Lord said again and again, "Feed my sheep, Feed my lambs,"—"to put you in mind because of the grace," the high favour of apostleship "that is given me of God." It is meet for *me*, *so long as I am in this tabernacle*; for what is the use of life to *me*, who am His, but to serve Him. He is *the* Lord—my Lord; I am His servant, and yours, for His sake. In honouring Him, in edifying you, I wish to live and to die.

2. *To use means that they should not forget his instructions, when he was dead.*

The apostle's second resolution is, that he would endeavour that they "might be able after his decease to have these things in remembrance." It is a great comfort to an old Christian minister, anticipating approaching dissolution, that his death is to make little or no difference to the cause of Christ. The under shepherds are "not suffered to continue, by reason of death," but, blessed be God, "the Chief Shepherd," though

He too, once was dead, "dieth no more. Death can never again have dominion over *Him*." "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." The residue of the Spirit is with *Him* to whom the Father hath given the Holy Ghost not by measure. The God of Elijah can, if he so wills it, endow Elisha with a seven-fold measure of his master's gifts; and Solomon may accomplish that for which David felt it high honour, true happiness, to have been permitted and enabled to prepare.

" Though mortal shepherds dwell in dust,
 The aged and the young,
 The watchful eye in darkness clos'd,
 And mute the instructive tongue,
 The Eternal Shepherd still survives,
 New comfort to impart;
 His eye still guides us, and His voice
 Still animates our heart."¹

So, I doubt not, thought Peter, when within a short way of his bloody grave and his heavenly rest. "Behold I die, but God will be with you." "Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Yet love to his Master and the Church whom He purchased with His own blood—a desire to honour Him and edify them—makes him wish to speak even from the tomb and from the skies.²

¹ Doddridge.

² The view which the Rhemists give of this passage is a striking example of Romanist perversion of Scripture: "These words though they may be easily altered by construction into diverse senses not untrue, yet the correspondence of the parts of the sentence going before and following, give most plain this meaning—that as, during his life, he would not omit to put them in memory of the things he taught them, so after his death, which he knew should be shortly, he would not fail to endeavour that they might be mindful of the same: signifying that his care over them should not cease by death, and that, by his intercession before God after his departure, he would do the same thing for them that he did before, in his life, by teaching and preaching. This is the sense which the Greek Scholies speak of." Well might Benson say, "Surely it is a sign of a desperate cause, and that men are put to most wretched shifts

It is a wonderful thing, that by means of certain arbitrary characters, impressed on suitable materials, the thoughts and feelings of men may be embalmed—not dead, but alive—and, if there was originally enough of life in them, may continue to instruct and delight the successive generations of men, from age to age, to the end of time. Peter's spirit, not uninfluenced by the Holy Spirit, determined, that the Christian brethren whom he loved, should, by the use of this wondrous art, "be able, after his decease, to have these things always in their remembrance;" and in his two golden Epistles he has, for eighteen centuries, been uttering his "testimony and his exhortation" (1 Ep. v. 12) to the churches of the saints. Who can compute the amount of heavenly light and influence which, during these centuries, have streamed forth from these holy letters into the minds and hearts of the saints? As the dead whom Samson slew at his death were more than those he slew in his life, so the number that Peter has converted and edified since he left the earth, is incomparably greater than the seals of his apostolic ministry which he had while on earth, though he did what, probably, no man has ever done since—numbered three thousand converts on a single day by a single sermon. And who can tell how much Peter's happiness in heaven is increased, by the knowledge that his holy resolution is yet to serve its object, in promoting the edification and comfort of a world full of Christians during the lightsome ages of millennial glory?

Nor is the desire expressed in the apostle's resolution peculiar to him. It originates in principles which lie deep in the bosom of every right-hearted Christian minister—of every right-hearted Christian man. It has been justly remarked,

to maintain a party or faction, when they make use of such proofs. Here is not one word of departed saints interceding for the living; neither do the Scriptures anywhere intimate any such thing. St Peter's most obvious meaning is, that he was now writing a Second Epistle to leave with the Christians after his death, and to preserve the remembrance of such things always among them."

¹ 1 Ep. v. 12.

that "when a Christian grows old, and draws near to death, his sense of the value of Divine truth by no means diminishes as he approaches the eternal world, and from its borders surveys the past, and looks on to what is to come." When he remembers the benefits which the truths of religion have conferred on him in life, and feels the good hope through grace, with which they inspire him as he stands on the brink of the grave—in the neighbourhood of the judgment seat—and when he thinks what that Gospel, universally known and believed, would do, in transforming earth into paradise, and in making its inhabitants fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, the desire that the light of that truth may soon become universal like the light of the sun, swells into a passion, which finds its vent in David's last words, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory." And this desire naturally enough, expresses itself in more than words. He will, with the apostle, "endeavour that, after his decease, men may have in remembrance" those words of truth and grace, which were to him "spirit and life." He will do what he can that his children and children's children, to the latest generation, may know them, and love them, and live by them. He will, by the communication of his substance, contribute to the support of missionaries and the circulation of the Bible. He may not be able to write books, but, by contributing to associations for the publication and distribution of the best books, he will seek to be extensively and permanently useful.

"Every man," to borrow the language of a living writer, "every man who can write a good book owes it to the church and to the world to do it." If it be a very good book, the world will not willingly let it die, and it may not perish but in the funeral pile of the earth; and even though, like many good books, it should perish—during its life it may wipe away many a tear, relieve many a doubt, soothe many a sorrow, save souls from death, and hide multitudes of sin. Ministers of Christ, especially, should be animated with Peter's spirit—they should, as a matter of duty, from an early period of their ministry, begin to lay up, and finish with the utmost care.

what may be, when they have put off this tabernacle, a valuable and availing treasure to the congregation, to the church, and to the world. This would have a good influence on their own minds. It would add to the edification of their people, even now : and the number of really good books, by no means too great, would be increased.

It is not an unworthy ambition to share, though in far more limited measure, in the holy delight with which the knowledge that in heaven they are still honouring God by conducing to the salvation of men, must refresh the spirits of those just men made perfect, who wore on earth the ever to be honoured names of OWEN, and BAXTER, and HOWE, and BUNYAN, and LEIGHTON, and HENRY, and DODDRIDGE, and WATTS, and EDWARDS, and NEWTON, and FULLER, and WARDLAW, whose usefulness is likely to grow with the ever extending range of the English language, to the end of time. Who can tell of how much good a little tract, like M'Laurin's, "On Glorifying in the Cross of Christ,"—instinct with the living fire of genius and pure Christianity—has been and may yet be productive? aye, who can estimate the benefits which the nameless author of that incomparable narrative, "Poor Joseph," has conferred, and will yet confer, on mankind? "This little Epistle of Peter," as Barnes well says, "has shed light on the path of men for eighteen centuries, and will continue to do so until the second coming of the Saviour." It goes to soften the pang of separation between a Christian pastor and his flock—when he knows that, after his decease, they will be able to remember the things which he has taught them—and when they know that, even when dead, he will continue to speak to them, the pages as they peruse them, strangely reflecting the countenance and form hid in the grave, and echoing back a voice which they must hear no more for ever.—So much for the illustration of the apostle's twofold resolution—that he would not, so long as he was in this tabernacle, be negligent to stir them up, by putting them always in remembrance of the great principles of Christian truth and law; and that he would endeavour that they might be able,

after his decease, to have these things always in remembrance.

I conclude these illustrations with a single reflection, which seems, naturally enough, to rise out of the statements we have made. How benignant is the spirit of true Christianity, as manifested in the character of the Apostle Peter, as that is developed in the passage we have been illustrating! How benignant in its influence on himself, how benignant in its outgoings towards the church and the world! Peter was now an old—it may be a very old man; his life had been throughout a laborious one; his trials had been many and severe, and he was living every day in the expectation of a most painful and ignominious death; yet how tranquil, how happy is he! How calmly does he speak of putting off his tabernacle! The old worn-out apostle is one of the happiest men out of heaven. Happy in doing his Master's work, he would not exchange places with the Roman Cæsar—happy in the hope of soon entering into his Master's joy, though it must be through the agonies of crucifixion. The steady look he takes of the cross, most solemn but unblenching, when he says, "EVEN AS our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me," speaks plainer than words. "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." Past labours and sufferings excite no regrets; death at hand, in its most terrific form, rouses no terrors. Who can unfold—who can understand, the benignant power of the principle which, in such circumstances, can secure calm composure, entire satisfaction, both in the retrospect and the prospect? Christ known, dwelling in the heart by faith, trusted in, loved, enjoyed—was that living principle; and what are the external circumstances of destitution, suffering, and alarm, amid which that principle, which made Peter the aged so happy, cannot sustain and comfort?

And the spirit of Christianity proves its benignity, not only by its influence on the apostle's personal comfort, but by the

dispositions with which it filled him in reference to the church and the world. How has it counteracted the tendency to that indisposition to benevolent exertion—selfish indifference to the happiness of others, that is often the unamiable character of old age! How warm are his affections—how ready is he to expend his waning energies in the service of his brethren!

Peter is a proper model for aged Christians, and especially for aged Christian ministers. We admire—we love the benevolent, strong-hearted, active-minded, old apostle. Let us glorify God in him, and acknowledge what he was always ready to acknowledge—“By the grace of God I am what I am.”

We profess to be of the same religion as the Apostle Peter. Have we really drank into its spirit? Is the mind—is the heart in us that was in *him*? Are we, like him, ready to serve one another in love as brethren, in seeking to stir up each other, by being mutual remembrancers of what we are all too apt to forget? Have we, like him, a regard, not only to the present, but to coming generations of men, and of Christians? Are we desirous of serving our own generation by the will of God? and of still exerting, even when we have fallen on sleep, a beneficial influence on those who are to come after us? We are Christians only in the degree in which we are animated by such dispositions.

If we would be happy, useful Christians, like Peter, we must seek, like Peter, to have a familiar and intimate acquaintance with our common Lord and Master. That was the secret of his satisfied review of a life so full of labour—of his composed anticipation of a death so full of torture and of shame. ‘He is worthy for whom I have suffered—for whom I am to suffer all this.’ In the exercise of faith—in a devotional perusal of the Evangelical History, we may do much to obtain such an acquaintance. Let us, in this way, “company with” Peter and the other apostles “all the time that the Lord Jesus went out and in among them;” let us follow Him from the manger to the cross—to the throne. Let us seek to be with Him in the

holy mount, contemplating the honour and glory which He there received from the Father, and listening to the voice from the most Excellent Glory—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." Let us go with Him to Gethsemane—not to sleep—but to watch and weep with Him there. Let His words, *Follow Me*, never be forgotten by us. Let us hear them from the cross—let us hear them from the throne. It is because we forget Him that we neglect our duty and lose our comfort. We cannot be as happy, as amiable, as useful, as Peter, but by becoming, like him, thoroughly *Christian*.

And oh! how happy, how amiable, how useful, might we be in life; how calm, resigned, hopeful, triumphant, in death, were we but as thoroughly acquainted with our Lord Jesus, as we might be, with our means of knowing Him in the revelations of His word, in the influences of His Spirit. When we look at Christianity, as it appears in such men as Peter and Paul, and then look inward—who can help saying, If this be Christianity, am I a Christian? Much reason have we to be ashamed, but none to despair. Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Gospel, human nature, are the same as ever. Peter and Paul were just renewed men. It was not their miraculous gifts or high offices that made them so holy and happy. And He who created them anew in Christ Jesus to good works, can create us anew. There is no height of Christian happiness, holiness, amiableness, usefulness, to which it is presumption in any of us to aspire; and if we wish to know how these aspirations are likely to be gratified, we have only to look to the last verse of the Epistle—"Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be glory, both now and ever. Amen."

§ 2. THE GROUNDS OF THE APOSTLE'S RESOLUTIONS.

The grounds on which the apostle's resolutions were based, are stated in the twelfth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and following

verses: "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly-devised fables when we made known to 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 Most 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, till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

1. *His conviction that what he and his brethren had taught them was true.*

Let us proceed now to remark, that the principal foundation of the apostle's two resolutions was his conviction, on the ground of his having witnessed the performance of miracles and the fulfilment of predictions, that the testimony which he and his apostolic brethren had given forth, respecting the power and coming of Jesus Christ, was divinely revealed truth: "We have not followed cunningly-devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, to which ye do well to take heed; for the prophecy is not of private interpretation, having come not by the will of men, but holy men having spoken as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

For the satisfactory illustration of this principal ground of the apostle's two resolutions, it will be necessary that we attend first to the Apostolic Testimony—they “declared the power and coming of our Lord Jesus;” secondly, to the Ground of this Testimony—their having witnessed the performance of miracles and the fulfilment of predictions; and thirdly, to the Practical Exhortation, strengthened by appropriate reasons, to the diligent study of the Prophetic Word, with which the apostle concludes the paragraph.

(1.) *The Apostolic Testimony.*

Let us first consider the account we have here of the Apostolic Testimony. The apostles declared “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus.” It is, I think, universally admitted among interpreters, that, like “glory and virtue,” in the close of the third verse, the phrase “power and coming” does not signify two different things: as “glory and virtue” is equivalent to ‘glorious power,’ so “power and coming” is equivalent to powerful coming, or ‘coming with power.’ The apostles declared “the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Under the Old Testament economy the Messiah was known as “He that cometh,”¹ and John, in his First Epistle (chap. v. 6) says, “This is He that came—Jesus the Christ.” There are various comings of our Lord mentioned in the New Testament. A coming in the flesh; a coming in the dispensation of the Gospel, “preaching peace to them who are afar off, and to them who are nigh;” a spiritual coming to His own people, individually, and abiding with them; a coming to destroy His “murderers, and burn up their city;” and a coming for the complete salvation of His people, and the destruction of His enemies. Every one of these comings is a powerful coming—a coming in which power is manifested. The expression here obviously refers to one or other of what

¹ Psal. cxviii. 26.

may be called the principal comings of our Lord—His coming in the flesh or His coming to judgment.

Interpreters are divided in their opinions on this question. Many refer it to our Lord's second coming, and they have this to say for their view, that the word here rendered coming¹ is never used in the New Testament to describe the incarnation, but is confined to the coming at the destruction of Jerusalem, and at the end of the world. Little more, however, can be said for this view; whereas much may be said on the other side. The word in itself, meaning just "coming" or "presence," is as applicable to the first as to the last coming, and in the earliest Christian writers is used indiscriminately in reference to both; and, what chiefly weighs with me, the context seems absolutely to require us to understand it of His first coming. The apostle plainly means to give the evidence on which he and his fellow-apostles declared the powerful coming of the Lord Jesus, and states that it was (1.) that they had been "eye-witnesses of His majesty"—which seems to refer to the same thing as His powerful coming; and (2.) that they had the prophetic word more confirmed in reference to this powerful coming. This exactly suits the first coming. They were among those, who, Luke says, were "from the beginning eye-witnesses;" and could all say what Andrew said to Peter, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write;"—'we have seen the truth of the prophetic word confirmed by that wondrous conformity between its declarations and the leading traits in the character and events in the life of Jesus, which prove his Messiahship—a conformity evidencing equally the divine origin of the prophecy, and the divine mission of the Saviour.' The apostles were not—could not be—eye-witnesses of Christ's second coming, which is yet future, nor have the prophecies in reference to it been yet confirmed by fulfilment. Besides, the evidence brought forward bears but *indirectly* on our Lord's second coming—bears on it just in the

¹ παρουσία.

same way in which it bears on any doctrine taught by our Lord; and there is a manifest contrast stated between "cunningly-devised fables" and the apostles' testimony. Now, fables are narratives—not predictions. On these grounds, though I grant the passage has its difficulties, I prefer the interpretation that refers the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to His first coming.

It is a satisfaction to find that Calvin, who is as judicious an interpreter as he is a profound theologian, takes this view of the phrase. "It is not doubtful," he says, "that the apostle in these words meant to give a comprehensive summary of Christianity, as certainly it contains nothing but Christ, 'in whom are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' But he divides it into two parts, stating, first, that Christ was manifested in flesh, and then, what power and efficacy belonged to Him as thus manifested. Thus we have the whole Gospel, where we know that He who was promised of old as our Redeemer, has come from heaven, put on our nature, lived in our world, died and rose again; and when we see the design and end of all this, namely, that He should be God with us, that He might give us a pledge of our adoption; that, imbued with His Spirit, He might purify us from the defilements of the flesh, and consecrate us into temples to God; that He might raise to heaven us who were sunk to hell; that by the sacrifice of His death He might expiate the sins of the world; that He might reconcile us to His Father; that He might be to us the author of justification and life"—in all this manifesting power. This is His coming—His powerful coming.

The Apostolic Testimony was, 'Christ the Messiah—the promised deliverer—is come; Jesus of Nazareth is He; and His coming has been a powerful coming as the prophets predicted—a coming with power.' The grand distinctive doctrine of Christianity was this, "Jesus"—the Messiah "is come in the flesh"—"He that should come is come." "The spirit that confesseth this," says the apostle, "is of God; the spirit which does not confess this, is not of God, but is the spirit of Anti-

christ." This coming, indeed, commenced in the weakness of infancy in the manger at Bethlehem, and during the abode with us to which it was introductory, He was weak as one of us, and, ere He left our world, He was "crucified in weakness," powerless in death. Yet was it a powerful coming. "The power of the Highest" was put forth in the formation of that holy human nature in which, as in a tabernacle, He "dwelt among us." "God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power." He had "power to forgive sins." "His word was with power" over the elements—the winds and the waves obeyed Him; over the bodies of men—at His voice the dumb spake, the deaf heard, the blind saw, the diseased became whole, the dead lived; over the minds of men—He had but to speak the word, and men forsook all and followed Him; over evil spirits,—“with power He commanded the unclean spirits, and they came out of those possessed by them.” He exercised creative power—a few loaves and fishes becoming, under His hands, an abundant meal for thousands. "He had power," and He exercised it, "to lay down His life and to take it up again." He not only possessed power of the highest kind and in the largest measure, and exercised it, He communicated it—He gave His disciples "power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases." And even when He was weak yet was He strong: "Christ crucified was the power of God,"—powerful to expiate innumerable sins, and to save innumerable, otherwise hopelessly, lost immortals. On the cross He triumphed over principalities and powers, and in dying "He destroyed death, and him that had the power of death." Surely this was a powerful coming—a coming in power. To the question, "Who is this that cometh?" the reply is, "He that speaks in righteousness, mighty to save." This then is the Apostolic Testimony—'The Christ is come; Jesus is He; and His coming is a powerful coming.'

(2.) *The Evidence on which the Apostolic Testimony rested.*

Let us now consider the evidence on which this testimony rested. In delivering this testimony, the apostles "did not

follow cunningly-devised fables." The Gospel history, if a fable, was certainly not a cunningly-contrived one. It related to events that were said to have just taken place, and that were of a public character. The interests of the most influential classes were deeply involved in their proving its falsehood, and its extreme circumstantiality furnished them with the most abundant materials for prosecuting, with success, an exposure of its falsehood—if it was indeed false. It was, indeed, such a statement as no sane man would have made, if he had not been both thoroughly convinced that it was true, and that it had invincible evidence to support it; a statement which, if not true, was easy to be refuted, and the reception of which on any other supposition than that of its truth, was utterly impossible. In another sense, indeed, we may say, that if the Apostolical Testimony was a fable, it was a most cunningly-devised one; for, down to this hour, all attempts to evince its fabulous nature (and neither learning nor ingenuity have been spared in the endeavour), have not only been fruitless, but have tended to make the deception more complete, and its exposure more hopeless.

In testifying of "the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus," the apostles could not follow fables, whether cunningly-contrived or easily seen through, for they did not retail statements made by others; they merely declared that of which they themselves had been eye-witnesses. They had seen miracles performed; they had seen predictions fulfilled. Their language was, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the Life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness; and show unto you that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." "Of these things we are witnesses;" and "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

a. They had seen miracles performed.

“We were,” says the apostle, “eye witnesses of His majesty” during the period of His powerful coming or presence on earth. These words seem very nearly parallel with those in the Gospel by John, “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” “His majesty” is the true greatness which belonged to Him; the power and kindness manifested in His miracles; the wisdom, and holiness, and benignity, displayed in His doctrine, so “full of grace and truth;” the matchless magnanimity and self-sacrifice exemplified in His sufferings and death. They had seen Him walk on the stormy sea as on a marble pavement. They had seen Him with a look of majesty make a host of armed men go backward and fall to the ground. They had seen Him rise from earth to heaven, till a cloud of glory received Him from their sight.

The apostle specifies one particular occasion on which the power of His presence, and His glorious majesty, were very remarkably displayed. “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.” To perceive the full force of the apostle’s illustration, we must endeavour to bring the whole scene, to which he refers, before our mind. Such an event was of itself sufficient to give propriety to the epithet powerful, as applied to the coming of our Lord.¹

On a day towards the termination of His mortal pilgrimage, when “the time” was at hand “that He should be received up,” our Lord retired from the multitude who attended Him, and taking with him only Peter, James, and John, His bosom friends, ascended a mountain which tradition says was Tabor, whose ascent travellers tell us, requires

¹ Matt. xvii. 1-9; Mark ix. 2-8; Luke ix. 28-36.

the labour of a day. It was probably evening when our Lord and His three chosen disciples reached the summit. The Saviour retired to a little distance from His companions to engage in secret devotion. They (though no doubt they too betook themselves to prayer before surrendering themselves to repose), worn out with the fatigues of the day, soon sunk into sleep. It was otherwise with their Lord. "In prayers and supplications," He continued to pour out His inmost thoughts and feelings into the bosom of His Father. We cannot doubt that His prayers referred to His sufferings so near at hand, and to the glory which was to follow them—lately the subject of discourse with His disciples, and soon to be the subject of discourse with celestial visitants. We cannot doubt that they were materially the same as those recorded at an after period: "Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause I am come to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name." "Father, glorify Thy Son that Thy Son also may glorify Thee."

Him the Father heareth always. He was now heard in reference to what He feared. While He was praying, a wonderful change took place on His body. As from a fountain of pure uncreated light within, that body which was the shrine of divinity, became bright and beautiful, so that His countenance shone like the Sun, and even His garments became resplendent with an unearthly brightness. Immediately He was joined by two visitants from the celestial world, bearing in their radiant forms evidence of the bright region from which they had descended—Moses the giver, and Elijah the restorer, of the law to Israel.

Well has it been observed by a living German divine of distinguished genius and piety, "Since the gate of Paradise closed, heaven had not visited earth in such a manner as here on Tabor, well worthy henceforward of the name of the Holy Mount. What an assembly! The Son of the Highest clothed in glory and majesty; before Him two dignified ambassadors from the city of God; near them, though yet un-

conscious of their presence, Peter, James, and John, the pillars of the New Testament church; around, doubtless, a multitude of the heavenly host; and within hearing, the voice of the Eternal Father, whom no eye hath seen or can see. Where on earth was there ever a gathering like this? There had hitherto been wanting, even in the paradise of these glorified saints, the saluting the King of all kings as their kinsman and brother. Oh! when they beheld Him whose day they had for ages longed and looked for; Him by virtue of whose approaching sufferings they had so long worn their crowns beforehand; Him, the Lamb of God, whose sacrificial blood, so long before it was poured out, had blotted out their sins; a new heaven would disclose itself to them in such contemplation of their Saviour God."

The subject of discourse between our Lord and these envoys from His Father, was "the decease He was to accomplish at Jerusalem"—His departure from the land of life to the regions of the dead; His departure too from earth, to heaven; His death, and resurrection, and ascension—in one word, His return to His Father, through the dark rugged path of suffering and death, terminating in "the Path of Life," which, passing through these visible heavens, led Him into the immediate presence of His Father, "where is fulness of joy—to His right hand, where are pleasures for evermore."¹ These were the topics nearest the Saviour's heart, and nearest the hearts, too, of His celestial visitants.

How dreadful must have been that place—the house of God, the gate of heaven! The disciples were soon to feel this. The heavenly radiance and the sound of the voices of the celestial strangers, less familiar to their ears than the accents of their Master, probably broke their slumbers, and, on opening their eyes, they beheld to their amazement, their transfigured Lord and His two radiant companions. They plainly saw them; they distinctly heard them speak; and thus, as

¹ At once ἡ ἐξοδος, the departure from this world, the scene of his δουλεία, ministry; and ἡ εἰσοδος, the entrance into τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλείαν, the everlasting kingdom.

well as from our Lord's after statement, became aware who they were.

Respect, probably not unmixed with fear, kept them for some time silent, but at last Peter, yielding to the impetuosity of his nature, entranced in delight and astonishment, exclaimed, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles: one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias"—dreaming probably that here, on the top of Tabor, was to be the inauguration of the reign of Messiah the Prince, and here the gathering of the people to Him. It is evident "the decease to be accomplished," and "the resurrection from the dead," though plain to us, were mysterious sounds to Peter.

While the words were yet in Peter's mouth, a radiant cloud—the visible token, under former economies, of the immediate presence of Divinity—overspread them, like a glorious canopy. A holy awe came over the minds of the disciples when thus brought, as it were, into the presence chamber of the Great King, the Lord of hosts; and immediately there burst forth from the Excellent Glory a majestic voice: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him."

What glory and honour were then given our Lord Jesus Christ! He was proclaimed by God Himself to be a partaker of His Divine nature; the object of His entire approbation—His infinite love; while the ancient church, in the persons of Moses and Elijah, and the Christian church, in the persons of Peter, James, and John, were called on to attend to, believe, and obey Him—as the true revealer of the will of the Father, in whose bosom He had from eternity reposed.

The voice of the Almighty, so full of majesty, made the disciples fall with their faces to the ground. It seemed to say to them, "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord and for the glory of His majesty." The compassionate Saviour felt for their alarms, and, coming to the disciples, gently touched them and soothingly said, "Arise, be not afraid." On lifting up themselves from their prostrate

posture, they looked around, but the bright vision was fled: The glory had departed. Moses and Elijah had returned to heaven; but Jesus, restored to His ordinary appearance, remained. And this was enough, more than enough: when Jesus remains with His people, it matters but little who departs from them.

Such was the glory and honour which Peter and his companions saw “received from God the Father” by their Master. Such the voice from heaven which they heard on the Holy Mount. And this was but a specimen of what they saw and heard of the powerful coming and majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ. Had they not, then, in these events, which they had not heard of from others, but of which they had been eye and ear-witnesses abundant evidence of the truth of what they declared? And had not those who heard their statement abundant grounds also for believing it, in “God bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?”—This is the first ground on which the apostles themselves firmly believed the declaration they made, and called on others to believe it.

We, my brethren, have not been eye-witnesses of the majesty of our Lord Jesus, as that was displayed in the miracles which illustrated His “powerful coming.” But not the less can we safely adopt the language of the apostle—“We have not followed cunningly-devised fables,” when we make known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus—proclaim that the Messiah is come; that Jesus of Nazareth is He; that He has received honour and glory of the Father, and that a voice still comes forth from the throne on high—Hear Him, hear Him.

We cannot work miracles in confirmation of our statements. But it is not necessary we should. The force of miracles as evidence of a Divine revelation does not depend on their being seen, but on their being really performed, and our having sufficient evidence of the fact. The evidence we have in support of many of the most universally credited facts of history is not better—in many cases not so good—nor more abundant than we have for the actual performance of many, diversified, and

great miracles, in attestation of the Christian revelation. We did not see our Lord transfigured, but we have abundant evidence that He was. We did not hear the voice from heaven, but we have abundant evidence that the apostles heard it, and have accurately reported it to us. If we do not believe in His "powerful coming," and in "His majesty," and act accordingly—submitting to Him as our teacher, trusting in Him as our Saviour, obeying Him as our Lord and King—we must not seek to excuse our conduct by alleging want of evidence sufficient to lay a foundation for our reasonably doing all this. The cause of such conduct is not deficiency in the evidence; it arises from moral indisposition to the doctrines which, if the evidence be sufficient, we are bound to believe, and from dislike to the precepts which, on this supposition, we are equally bound to obey. This is the truth, and however the unbeliever may now succeed in disguising this truth from himself, it will glare on him with a terrific clearness when the consequences of having disregarded it are found to be awfully serious, and altogether irreparable.

It is pleasant to look back to Tabor—but it is still more pleasant to look forward to a more glorious transfiguration on a higher and holier mountain. Glorious as was our Lord Jesus on Tabor, He is still more glorious in the heaven of heavens; and though He is now "hid with God," the day of manifestation is at hand. Yet a little while (as He measures duration, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day), and not Moses and Elias merely, but all His redeemed ones—a multitude that no man can number, out of every nation and of every age, shall, when He is manifested, be manifested along with Him in glory. They shall stand with Him on the heavenly Mount Zion. It will, indeed, be good to be there! No need to erect tabernacles then! The abiding mansions are all ready.—Let it be our first ambition, brethren, to secure that we shall have a place in that happy company. Fellowship with Christ *now* is necessary to fellowship with Him *then*. Let us see to it that we now listen to the heavenly voice, "Hear ye *Him!* Hear ye *Him!*"

Attend to, believe, obey, imitate Him. In all the extent of meaning that belongs to the word, follow Him on earth, and you shall certainly follow Him to heaven. There *you* shall be transfigured. Not merely shall you in soul and spirit be like Him, seeing Him as He is, but your vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Beholding Him no longer as through a glass, but face to face, you shall be changed into His image, of which even the appearance on Tabor was but a shadow—from glory to glory—ever increasing glory. Amen.

β. They had seen Predictions fulfilled.

The second ground on which the apostolic testimony rested was the fulfilment of prophecy. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well to take heed, as to 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 is of private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

In these words there is more than one thing not very easy to be understood. For example—What is meant by the word of prophecy being “more sure?” More sure than what?—than the “cunningly devised fables?” This were but meagre praise;—than the apostolic testimony?—or than the miracles by which it was confirmed?—or than the voice heard on the Holy Mount? This were a magnificent eulogium: but is it a true one?—What is meant by no prophecy being of “private interpretation?” Does that mean, as the Roman Catholics say—No man may attempt to find out the meaning of prophecy for himself, but must receive implicitly the interpretation of an infallible church, speaking in her popes or councils? Certainly not. What, then, does it mean? These are some of the “things hard to be understood,” which we must attempt to explain—some of the obscurities which we must endeavour to remove.

“We,” here, refers to the writer and his apostolic brethren.

What they say was, no doubt, true of many beside them, but still it is plainly of themselves they speak here—"We," who "have the sure word of prophecy, to which *ye* would do well to take heed—"we," who have just said "we have not followed cunningly devised fables—we declared to *you* the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." "We saw His majesty"—"we heard the voice from heaven in the Holy Mount."

The phrase, "a more sure word of prophecy,"¹ literally rendered, is 'the word of prophecy,' or the prophetic word 'more sure.' The word of prophecy, or the prophetic word, means just that part of the Old Testament Scriptures given by inspiration of God, which is occupied with the prediction of future events, constituting a very considerable portion of the whole volume, though, no doubt, there is a particular reference in the apostle's mind to those parts of the prophetic word which referred to, and had been fulfilled in, the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus, and the seeing the fulfilment of which was one ground of the apostle's conviction that the Messiah was indeed come.

So far all is plain enough. But now comes something rather "hard to be understood." How is the word of prophecy "more sure?" How had the apostles this word more sure? Can anything be surer than the voice of Godhead from heaven? or, can that which is established in the heavens become more sure? Some interpreters get rid of the difficulty in a very easy way. They say that *more sure* stands for sure, or very sure: and there is no doubt that the word of prophecy is sure—very sure. No, there is no doubt of this, and no doubt that this mode of interpretation makes all plain, but then there is as little doubt that this is not what the apostle says. We cannot, without doing violence to the language, which certainly implies comparison, make out of his words anything but this: 'we have a more sure word of prophecy—or we have the word of prophecy more sure.' There is a comparison either between prophecy and something else, or between prophecy as it once was, and prophecy as it then was and now is.

¹ βεβαίωτερον του προφητικου λεγου.

Some have supposed that "the word of prophecy" is contrasted with "cunningly devised fables." Instead of following "cunningly devised fables," in declaring to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus, we have a more sure ground for our declaration—the word of prophecy. But it is not natural thus to connect the first clause of the nineteenth verse with the first clause of the sixteenth. Besides, there was no certainty, no sureness, in these "cunningly devised fables" at all: they were, by the supposition, *fables*—baseless statements. It was to say very little in favour of the word of prophecy, to say that it was surer than they. To bring it into comparison with them, was to degrade it. This cannot be the meaning.

Others have supposed that the comparison is between the evidence of miracles and the evidence of prophecy; and that the apostle's statement is, that *in the case before them* the word of prophecy gives a clearer confirmation than the majesty of which the apostles were eye-witnesses, or even the voice which they heard in the Holy Mount.

Those who suppose that the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ refers to His second coming, explain the words thus:—'From the majesty which we witnessed in Christ Jesus—from the voice we heard in the Holy Mount—what we have told you as to His second coming to raise the dead, to judge the world, and to complete the salvation of His people and the perdition of his enemies, receives confirmation—inasmuch as they indicated that He was a very glorious person. If the dead are to be raised—if the world is to be judged—who so fit as *He*? But then His miracles did not *proclaim* these truths. Even the voice on the Holy Mount did not announce this. But the word of prophecy is "more sure." It, in the plainest terms, frequently proclaims "His powerful coming." Hear how Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints." Hear how David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, sings—"He cometh, He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness and His

people with His truth." Hear the declaration of Malachi—"He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts—but who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?" Hear the prophetic word as uttered by Himself—"The Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him; then shall He sit on the throne of His glory." This is plausible, but not, we think, satisfactory; for though we doubt not that the Old Testament prophets, and our Lord Himself, explicitly predicted His second coming, and that these explicit declarations are completer evidence in reference to that event than the miracles, or the voice on Tabor, *viewed by themselves*,—it would nevertheless appear that "the powerful coming" referred to is not the second coming, but the first, to which, indeed, undoubtedly belong some of the passages in Old Testament prophecy, generally quoted as predicting the second coming.

It has been attempted to show that the proof from prophecy, of our Lord's having come as the Messiah, is more powerful, if not than miracles generally, at any rate than the miracle of the transfiguration, and the heavenly voice that accompanied it. It has been said 'that the prophecies are more *numerous*—each of them, when fulfilled, an obvious miracle; and that, by their number, they furnish a stronger proof than could be afforded by any single manifestation, however clear and glorious; and that the suspicion of delusion or imposition, which might be entertained in reference to such a miracle as the transfiguration and the heavenly voice, could have no place in reference to predictions recorded ages before the events in which they were fulfilled.' This, however, is utterly unsatisfactory; for the apostle is not speaking of what the miracle of the transfiguration and the word of prophecy were, as evidence to others, but of what they were to themselves. He is not speaking of the evidence which *they* had who heard the testimony, but of the evidence which he and his brethren had who gave the testimony—so that they knew, and were sure, that in proclaiming the power and coming of our Lord Jesus, they spoke the truth, and no lie—the very truth most sure: "We were

eye-witnesses"—“*We* have a more sure word of prophecy.” Now, certainly no fulfilled declaration of prophecy could be *to them* surer evidence that Jesus was the Messiah, and that He was come in power and great glory, than what they saw and heard on Tabor.

The most satisfactory interpretation of the words (thus rendered, “we have the word of prophecy more confirmed”) is that which considers them as stating the fact that, in the events of Jesus’ history, the apostles had seen many of the predictions of the ancient prophets manifestly fulfilled, and, by being fulfilled, more confirmed—made to appear more manifestly sure and stedfast than they were or could be previous to their accomplishment. In the same way the apostle¹ speaks of Jesus Christ “confirming”—making sure, “the promises made unto the fathers,” by fulfilling them. So far as truth is concerned, divine predictions are as sure before as after fulfilment; but fulfilment is the strongest evidence of their being really divine predictions, and the most, if not the only satisfactory proof that can be brought out of them, of the truth of the doctrines, in support of which they are pleaded as evidence. The prophetic word was more confirmed to the apostles than it had been to those who lived before the incarnation. And this confirmation of the prophetic word, by its seen accomplishment, afforded an additional evidence to that derived from the miracles which they witnessed, that they spoke but the truth when they declared to their fellow-men the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The prophetic word is not represented as a surer evidence than miracles generally, or than the miracle on Tabor in particular; but the prophetic word is said to have been more confirmed to the apostles than it was to those who lived before its accomplishment. And this prophetic word, confirmed by accomplishment, was to them a proof additional—he does not say stronger—to that which was afforded them, by what they heard and saw on “the Holy Mount,” of the truth of the testimony

¹ Rom. xv. 8.

they gave forth concerning "the power and coming of the Lord Jesus." It is thus that the prophets "ministered, not" so much "to themselves," as to "those who first preached the Gospel." *They* derived from the predictions an advantage which lay beyond the reach of the prophets themselves.

The minute conformity between what was predicted of the Messiah, and what actually took place in reference to Jesus, is so extensive, that a history of our Lord's life might, without much difficulty, be written in the language of the Old Testament prophets. He belonged to the tribe and family from which the Messiah was to spring—the tribe of Judah, the family of David. "It is evident our Lord sprung out of Judah," and was the Son of David: certainly his legal—probably, too, his natural—descendant. He appeared at the time when Messiah was to appear: when the sceptre was departing from Judah, and the seventy weeks of Daniel drawing to a close. He was born in the city where Messiah, according to the prophet, was to be born: and wonderfully was His Mother brought thither, that the prediction might be fulfilled—"Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting."¹ So runs the prophetic oracle of Micah; and here is the record of its fulfilment, "It came to pass that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, every one to his own city. And Joseph went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David that is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that while they were there the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; for there was no room for them in the inn."² Thus was born in the city of

¹ Micah v. 2.

² Luke ii. 1-7.

David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. Jehovah, by Moses predicted the rise of "a Prophet like to, but greater" than himself, whom all Israel was bound to hear and listen to: "Him shall ye hear:"¹ And from the Most Excellent Glory, again and again, came the voice identifying Jesus with that Great Prophet, "Hear Him, hear Him."²

Seven hundred years after Isaiah had, in the person of the Messiah, spoken, in spirit, these words, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,"³—Jesus Christ, after reading this passage, in the synagogue of His native city proclaimed, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears:" and many "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded from His mouth."⁴ The same illustrious prophet thus described the days of Messiah the Prince—"Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing."⁵ And when "John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Jesus, and said unto Him, Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said to them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who shall not be offended in me."⁶

Zechariah's prophecy, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee; He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass,"⁷ was fulfilled to the letter by the unconscious instrumentality

¹ Deut. xviii. 15-19.

² Matt. xvii. 5.

³ Isa. lxi. 1-3.

⁴ Luke iv. 16-22.

⁵ Isa. xxxv. 5, 6.

⁶ Matt. xi. 5, 6.

⁷ Zech. ix. 9.

of the disciples and the multitude. For "these things," says the evangelist, marking the verification of the oracle, "understood not His disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him."¹

In nothing, however, was the prophetic word more remarkably confirmed, than in the fulfilment of the predictions respecting the sufferings of the Messiah. "He is despised and rejected of men,"² said the prophet: and notwithstanding His words, so full of grace and truth, and His works, so full of power and mercy, what did the body of His countrymen say of Jesus? "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?—and they were offended at Him."³

It has been justly remarked by the learned and judicious Bishop Pearson (whose elaborate exposition of the creed, commonly called the Apostles' Creed, is worthy not only of repeated perusal, but of careful study),—that "if we compare the particular predictions with the historical accounts of His sufferings—if we join the prophets and evangelists together, it will most manifestly appear that the Messiah was to suffer nothing which Christ has not suffered. If Zechariah says, 'they weighed for My price thirty pieces of silver,'⁴ Matthew will show that Judas sold Jesus at the same rate: 'For the chief priests had covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.'⁵ If Isaiah say, 'He was wounded;'⁶ if Zechariah say He was 'pierced;'⁷ if the prophet David yet more particularly mention 'His hands and His feet'⁸ as pierced, the evangelists will tell how He was fastened to the cross, and Jesus Himself will show us the print of the nails.⁹ If the Psalmist tell us they should 'laugh Him to scorn, and shake the head, saying, He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him,'¹⁰ Matthew will describe the same action, and the same

¹ John xii. 12–16.

² Isa. liii. 3.

³ Mark vi. 3.

⁴ Zech. xi. 12.

⁵ Matt. xxvi. 15.

⁶ Isa. liii. 5.

⁷ Zech. xii. 10.

⁸ Psal. xxii. 16.

⁹ John xx. 27.

¹⁰ Psal. xxii. 7, 8.

expression ; for ‘ they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, ‘ He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him ; for He said, ‘ I am the Son of God.’¹ Let David say, ‘ My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me !’² and the Son of David will shew in whose person the father spoke it,—‘ Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani !’³ Let Isaiah foretell ‘ He was numbered with the transgressors ;’⁴ and you will find Him ‘ crucified between two thieves, one on His right hand and the other on His left.’⁵ Read in the Psalmist, ‘ In My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink ;’⁶ and you will find in the evangelist, ‘ Jesus, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst ; and they took a sponge and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed and gave Him to drink.’⁷ Read farther yet, ‘ They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture ;’⁸ and to fulfil the prediction, the soldiers will make good the distinction, ‘ who took His garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also His coat : now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said, therefore, among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be.’⁹ Lastly, let the prophets teach us that ‘ He shall be brought as a lamb to the slaughter ;’ and be ‘ cut off out of the land of the living ;’¹⁰ all the evangelists will declare how ‘ like a lamb’ He suffered, and the very Jews will acknowledge that He was ‘ cut off.’ And now, we may well conclude that ‘ Thus it is written, and thus it behoveth *the* Christ to suffer ;’ and what it so behoved Him to suffer, that He suffered.”¹¹—It is plain, from the prophetic word what things Messiah ought to have suffered, and equally plain that Jesus Christ suffered them ; so that “ those things which God had before shewed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled.”

That prophetic word of Isaiah, “ His grave was appointed

¹ Matt. xxvii. 39, 43.

² Psal. xxii. 1.

³ Matt. xxvii. 46.

⁴ Isa. liii. 12.

⁵ Mark xv. 27.

⁶ Psal. lxix. 21.

⁷ John xix. 28 ; Matt. xxvii. 48.

⁸ Psal. xxii. 18.

⁹ John xix. 23, 24.

¹⁰ Isa. liii. 7, 8.

¹¹ Luke xxiv. 46.

with the wicked, but He was with the rich in the state of the dead,"¹ was confirmed when "Joseph, a rich man of Arimathea, having begged the dead body of Jesus from Pilate, took it down from the cross, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock."² The predictions of Joel³ of the outpouring of the Spirit were confirmed by the miraculous occurrences of the day of Pentecost.⁴ The predictions of the ancient prophets that "the heathen should be given to the Messiah for His inheritance,"⁵ that "the isles should wait for His law," that "to Him should the Gentiles seek;"⁶ and our Lord's own prophetic intimations, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit,"⁷ "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Me,"⁸ were confirmed when "a great number of Greeks believed and were turned to the Lord,"⁹ when converts were numbered by tens of thousands,¹⁰ and when it could be said, "the Gospel is come to all the world,"—is "preached to every creature under heaven."¹¹

Surely the word of prophecy was more confirmed to those who witnessed these events in which it was verified, than it was to those who lived before their occurrence, or were ignorant of them. And the prophetic word, thus confirmed, was most satisfactory evidence to Peter and his brethren that the Messiah was come—that Jesus was He—and that His coming was a coming with power. With these facts before their minds, they could neither doubt the divine origin of the prophetic word nor the divine mission of Jesus, who was thus demonstrated to be "He of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write." They could not but believe; and believing, they could not but speak.¹²

Such convictions, grounded on what they had seen of the performance of miracles and the fulfilment of prophecy, lay

¹ Isa. liii. 9.² Matt. xxvii. 57-60.³ Joel ii.⁴ Acts ii. 2-4.⁵ Psal. ii. 8.⁶ Isa. xlii. 4, 11, 10.⁷ John xii. 24.⁸ John xii. 32.⁹ Acts ii. 5.¹⁰ Acts xxi. 20.¹¹ Col. i. 6, 23.¹² *Vide inf.*

a broad and strong foundation for the apostle's resolutions to leave no means untried to secure that they to whom he wrote should not, either during his life or after his death, forget the doctrine and law of Him who had been so clearly proved to be the Christ of God and the Saviour of men. The brief account here given of the grounds on which Peter and his brethren declared the power and coming of our Lord Jesus, exactly accords with the more extended statements contained in his discourses, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, chap. ii. 22-36; iii. 12-26; iv. 9-12. They dwell much on the word of prophecy, more confirmed by accomplishment.

Let us recollect that the same evidence (only greatly increased—for much of the prophetic word has been fulfilled since the apostle wrote, and thus is, or ought to be, more confirmed to us than it was to him)—the same evidence which convinced the apostles of the powerful coming of Jesus Christ, and, as exhibited by them, convinced so many more, is presented to our minds, and calls for our most serious consideration. The prophetic word is contained in the inspired volume, and the facts by which it is confirmed are to be found in the history of the world, and are as well established as any historical facts can be. The argument from prophecy for the truth of Christianity is one which requires a good deal of time and mental labour to master; for though its principles are simple and satisfactory, its details are exceedingly numerous and varied: but, when fully comprehended, they are calculated to make a very powerful impression on a candid and thoughtful mind. Moses and the prophets seem to re-echo the voice which was heard on the Holy Mount—"Hear Him! Hear Him!" and as ages roll on, the cry becomes louder and more impressive—"Hear Him! Hear Him!"

It is melancholy to reflect that, through the criminal neglect of the church, so large a proportion of our race have never heard either the voice of the prophets or the voice from heaven; and certainly not less melancholy to reflect, that so large a proportion of those who might hear these voices lend a deaf

ear to them, and act as if no voice had reached them, or had uttered an uncertain sound. We pity the heathen. Well we may. But a deeper pity, though connected with a deeper blame, is due to them who disregard the prophets, and even condemn the voice speaking from heaven. There is a day coming when such persons shall envy the heathen. Are we of the number? My brethren, we cannot escape from the responsibility connected with having the prophetic word more confirmed, and having the voice heard on Tabor pressed on our consideration. That responsibility, fairly responded to, will lead to faith, obedience, and salvation: contemptuously disowned—dishonestly treated—it will certainly end in confirmed unbelief, and redoubled damnation. “He that hath ears let him hear.” “He that is wise shall be wise for himself; but he that scorneth, he alone shall bear it.”

3. *Practical exhortation based on the second ground of the Apostolic Testimony, “to take heed to the prophetic word.”*

Having represented the confirmed word of prophecy, as one of the great foundations of his own faith in these words, the apostle now proceeds to recommend to those to whom he was writing, to study the prophetic word, and enforces his recommendation by some very cogent reasons. He tells them that they “do well to take heed” to it, for it is “a light shining in a dark place; that no prophecy of the Scripture is of private interpretation; that the prophecy came not “of old time,” nor at any time, “by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Those to whom the apostle was writing were students of the Scriptures, and he encourages them to prosecute the study. This form of expression, though not formally, is substantially an injunction of duty, and furnishes a good illustration of the character of Peter's writings. They are remarkably free from assumption—from the putting forward of even the best founded claims of peculiar attention to himself. Though he had high authority, he assumes no imperious air. How different from the wicked impostors who, in later ages, have pretended to be his successors,

and shamelessly claim infallibility and supreme authority on the most baseless pretences. He had learned humility, and studied to obey his Lord's command, "strengthen thy brethren." In his writings he is not like Paul, the great teacher and reasoner. His epistles are, as he himself describes them, composed of a beautiful mixture of testimony and exhortation.¹

The word of prophecy to which the apostle directly refers, is undoubtedly the Old Testament predictions in reference to the Messiah, confirmed by accomplishment. But we should err, I apprehend, if we confined his recommendation to "take heed," within so narrow a compass. Prophecy is a system. It is the same word of prophecy that refers to coming as to past events. It was Peter's wish that they should study unfulfilled as well as fulfilled prophecy: and we may—I rather think we ought, on the same general ground, to consider what is here said as referring to the predictions of the New Testament as well as the Old—the predictions of Jesus himself and His beloved disciple, of Peter himself and his beloved brother Paul. Whether the Apocalypse was published or not at this time (which is a doubtful matter), certainly we do well to take heed to a book of which it is written, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." Indeed, all that is said in the verses now before us, is equally true with regard to the whole completed canon of divine revelation, of which the prophetic word forms so important a part—"All Scripture given by inspiration of God being profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness"—though, no doubt, having a special force in reference to the predictions fulfilled and unfulfilled.

Let us thus, then, briefly consider, first, Our duty in reference to the word of prophecy—inspired Scripture—as recommended by the apostle; and secondly, The reasons by which he enforces his recommendation.

¹ ἔγγραφα, παρακαλῶν καὶ ἐπιμαρτυρῶν.—1 Pet. v. 12.

a. The exhortation, "Take heed."

Our duty in reference to the prophetic word—the inspired volume—is to "take heed" to it.¹ Those to whom Peter wrote treated the prophetic word in this way, and he encourages them to persevere in this course: "Ye take heed" to the confirmed word of prophecy; and "ye do well" in doing so. Any other course would be an affront to the Author of the prophetic word, and an injury to yourselves.

To take heed to the inspired writings, certainly implies that we peruse them. To read them is the least and lowest token of real respect we can show them. Not to read what purports to be, and what we profess to believe a Divine revelation, is certainly the very reverse of taking heed to it. Yet, are there not many who are not professed infidels (though even *they*, if they would act like rational beings, would give heed to—would read, and read with attention, these extraordinary writings)—who habitually neglect reading the Scriptures? who have, indeed, never read the whole of the Bible—never read any of it very carefully? who are very ignorant even of the letter of the confirmed word of prophecy?

But a man may read, and read regularly the inspired writings, and yet not give heed to them. It is astonishing with how little exercise of the mind many men contrive to read the Bible, it may be regularly once at least every day, though of all books in the world, there is no book equal to the Bible, apart even from its inspiration, for stirring the mind, and engendering thought. We must seek to understand the meaning, reference, and design of the contents of the sacred volume, and this is what cannot be done without close attention and considerable thought.

¹ Some interpreters, among others Dr Ash, in his generally judicious "Notes on the New Testament," would connect *προσέχουτες* with *ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν* in the end of the verse; but this trajection is liable to two strong objections—there is nothing to mark the intervening clauses as parenthetical, and the phrase *προσέχειν ἐν καρδίαις ὑμῶν* is singular. The passages referred to by Dr Ash are not parallel—Matt. ix. 4; Luke ii. 51.

We must, in seeking to understand it, never forget that it is a divine revelation—a divine revelation addressed to us, intended to serve important practical purposes. We do not rightly take heed to the Word of God, if we do not take care that these purposes are answered. We do not take heed to the facts and doctrines of the Bible, if we do not believe them, and allow them to have their fair moral influence over our character and conduct. We do not take heed to its warnings, if we do not guard against the courses which they denounce. We do not take heed to its precepts, if we do not make them the rule of our conduct. We do not take heed to its promises, if we do not trust them and follow the course in which alone the promised blessing can be obtained. That this is the kind of taking heed required in the text is indicated when it says, We are to take heed to the confirmed word of prophecy, “as to a light shining in a dark place.” We are to use it to cheer our hearts and guide our steps; and to say with the Psalmist, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.”

Thus should we ‘take heed’ to every part of Scripture given by inspiration of God. That part of it which is occupied with prophecy ought by no means to be overlooked. Both fulfilled and unfulfilled prophecy has strong claims on our careful study. Fulfilled prediction is one of the great pillars on which the edifice of revealed truth rests; and unfulfilled prediction is intended and fitted to awaken expectation, and stimulate both by hope and fear to the cultivation of Christian character, and the discharge of Christian duty. No part of inspired Scripture requires more ‘our taking heed,’ if we mean to derive advantage from it. But heed is given in a right way to the prophetic word, by him only who seeks to turn it into an instrument for promoting personal sanctification. When I read the confirmed prophetic word in the first promise, I do not take heed to it if I do not believe it; and, believing it, do not trust in the great Deliverer, the seed of the woman, who

has bruised the serpent's head, set myself to co-operate with Him in the destruction of the works of the devil, and cherish the hope that "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under my feet shortly." When I read the confirmed word, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," I do not take heed to it if I do not seek to be myself blessed in Him, and do all I can that all nations may participate in His saving benefits. When I read the confirmed prophetic word in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, I do not take heed to it if I do not, in the full assurance of faith, say, "In Him I have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin;" and, with an unreserved heart, devote myself wholly to Him who devoted Himself wholly for me.—These may serve as specimens of the right way of taking heed to fulfilled prophecy: and as to unfulfilled prophecy, I do not take heed to the predictions in reference to the conversion of the Jews and Gentiles, if I do not pray and labour to gain these objects. I do not take heed to the predictions respecting the man of sin, if I do not carefully keep myself at a safe distance from every part of that system of delusion, and error, and superstition, and wickedness, and exert myself to prevent the extension of its influence, and the deliverance of its victims. I do not rightly take heed to the prediction about the coming of the Lord, if I do not learn to long for—to pray for—to haste to the accomplishment of this glorious hope. I do not properly take heed to the prediction of the end of the world, contained in the third chapter of this epistle, if I am not led to say in my heart, "What manner of person should I be, in all holy conversation and godliness;" and if I am not "diligent, that I may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless." Let these remarks suffice for the illustration of our duty in reference to the prophetic word—the inspired Scriptures.

β. Motives.

Let us now turn our attention to the reasons which the apostle assigns why we should perform this duty—why we

should "take heed." These are thus stated by him: the prophetic word is as a "light that shineth in a dark place, till the day dawn, and the day star arise in our hearts;" and "no prophecy is of private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time, nor, at any time, by the will of man, but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Let us attend to these reasons in their order.

1. *The usefulness of the prophetic word.*

The first reason assigned by the apostle why Christians should take heed to the prophetic word is, that it is "a light shining in a dark place, till the day dawn, and the day star arise in their hearts." The first thing to be done here, as in every case where truth is conveyed in figurative language, is to endeavour to form a correct idea of the imagery employed. It is night—the day has not dawned—the day star has not appeared—the place is dark. The idea conveyed by the original word is *foul, parched, sultry, suffocating*, as well as *dark*. It brings to the mind some region so overhung by rocks, as to be almost cavernous. In this dark, airless place, there is but one light. It shines, and will continue to shine till the day break, and the sun rise, when, as a matter of course, it will be no more needed. This seems to be the image; and the keeping of it in mind will assist us in deciding which of the various interpretations given to the words before us is the true one. Another thing which may be useful for the same purpose, is to apprehend distinctly the object of the apostle in making this statement; and there can be no doubt that this was to furnish a reason why those to whom he wrote, should take heed to the prophetic word. It is also right to remark here, that the clause, "till the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts," may be connected either with the words, "ye do well to take heed," marking the period during which the study of the Scriptures must be continued; or with the words immediately preceding, thus forming a part of the image, "a light shining in a dark place, till the day dawn, and the day star arise." In the view I am disposed to take of the

passage, it refers to the whole statement, including both these references.

Interpreters vary considerably in their views of the reference and meaning of these words. Some consider them as referring to a state of things past, others as referring to a state of things present and future, when the apostle wrote. Those who consider them as referring to the past, render the passage, as no doubt it admits of being rendered, "a light which shone in a dark place, till the day dawned, and the day star arose in your hearts." They suppose that the apostle refers to the state of things previous to the coming of our Lord. The pagan world was a very dark place—a dreary desolate region—"a land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death." It was full of ignorance, depravity, and misery. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people;" and though there was "light in the dwellings of the children of Israel," still even they were in a dark place. All their light came from the lamp of inspired truth shining among them; and that light guided and cheered those who took heed to it. Whatever true knowledge of God, true holiness, true happiness, were enjoyed, were derived from that light; and it became brighter and brighter. How much more light does Isaiah give than Moses! Still it was shining in a dark place—the great body even of the Jews were unenlightened, and those who saw best saw but through a glass darkly. At last—the Sun of Righteousness arose, with healing under His wings, bringing light and health into the dark unwholesome place. The darkness was past, and the true light shone—the Light of Israel, the Light of the world. "The people that sat in darkness saw a great light; and upon them who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death the light shined."

Now this is all truth, and truth beautifully expressed by the words, "A light shining in a dark place, till the day dawned and the day star arose in your hearts." But there are insuperable difficulties in accepting of this as the true interpretation of the passage. For, first, the prophetic word did

not, as the figure intimates, cease to shine when the day dawned and the day star appeared. It became brighter than ever; and instead of those who lived under the light of the New Testament dispensation being excused from studying the Old Testament revelation, they are urged to take heed to it as, in some points of view, fitted to be of more use to them than to those to whom it was originally given. And, secondly, we scarcely think that the apostle would have urged, as his first reason for our studying the prophetic word, that it had been very useful during a period which was now passed; because, had this been the apostle's meaning he would probably have said, not *your* hearts—but *our* hearts: agreeably to these words of his beloved brother Paul, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts”—in the hearts of us apostles—“to give (for the purpose of diffusing among others) the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.”

The great body of later interpreters consider, and, I think, rightly, the words as referring to what was both present and future when the apostle wrote. The place is still a dark place; the light is yet shining there, and will continue to shine, until the day dawn and the day star arise; and then, when no longer needed—though not extinguished, it will “pale its fires” to the blaze of a purer, brighter light.

Some have supposed that the words are used in reference, not to Christians generally, but to a particular class of men not uncommon in the primitive age—devout, inquiring men, whose minds had been stirred up by the statements of the apostles, but who had not arrived at full faith in Jesus as the Christ. These men, like the Bereans, searched the Scriptures, to ascertain whether what the apostles stated was so. Now, it has been supposed that the apostle says to these men, “Ye search the Scriptures—ye do well in doing so—they testify of the Messiah, and they testify of Jesus as the Messiah. Your minds are yet dark, but the prophetic word is a light—take good heed to it, and if you do, it will end in Jesus rising before your minds as the Star of Jacob, the Sun of Right-

eousness." To this interpretation, however, there are strong objections. We have no evidence that the apostle was addressing this class. On the contrary, we have clear evidence that he was not addressing them: he was addressing men who had "obtained like precious faith" with the apostles—who knew the things spoken of in the first paragraph of this chapter, and were "established in the present truth." That is not the description of mere inquirers. Then, as in the former case,—when, in this sense, the day dawned, and the day star appeared—the light which shone in a dark place still continued to shine, and it still continued to be their duty, not only as much as before that event, but still more, to take heed to it.

Others have supposed that the persons addressed are—as is, indeed, plain—true Christians, and that what the apostle said is this: 'In the present state, in which there is so much darkness in the world, in the church, in the hearts even of the most enlightened, it behoves Christians to study the prophetic word, that they may become more and more established in the faith of the truth; and if they do so, the Holy Spirit will discover to them the true glory and excellency of the Gospel—they will have in their hearts, as it were, the dawn of the heavenly day. Jesus, the bright and Morning Star, will be formed in them the hope of glory; so that, looking to the light of prophecy and other external evidences of the truth of Christianity, will, if not needless, become less necessary. The inward witness will take the place of the outward witness.'—This interpretation, though strongly urged by so good and judicious a man as Mr Scott, seems to me anything but satisfactory. Christians are never to seek, never to hope, to find in themselves anything which will supersede the necessity of studying the prophetic word—the inspired Scripture, in its meaning and evidence. There is no true light within, that does not proceed from the light without, brought into the heart by the operation of the Holy Ghost; and Christians are not to look forward to any period when they may dispense with the duty of carefully taking heed to the sure word of prophecy. I believe that the Christian who

has most light within is the Christian who keeps up the most constant and intimate intercourse with the light without—Christ in the Word. The light within, if not a reflection of this light without, whatever it be called—reason, the Christian consciousness, the unwritten word, the inward, not the historical Christ—will be found to lead but to bewilder—to dazzle and to blind.

The view which seems to me best to harmonize with the apostle's object and with the general analogy of faith, while it does no violence to the words of the inspired text, is that which considers the dark place as the present world, during the Christian dispensation, viewed either in reference to the church as a body, or to individual Christians; and the day breaking, and the appearance of the Day Star, as referring—according as you take one or other of these views—to the introduction of the final state of glory at our Lord's second coming, or to the introduction of the individual saint at death into the light of the celestial state.

This world is a dark place—full of the darkness of ignorance, and error, and sin, and misery—unbroken darkness in heathen regions—predominating darkness, even in those countries where the light is not unknown. The kingdom of the god of this world is the kingdom of darkness; and even the visible kingdom of our Lord—the Church—though a region of light when compared with the world lying in darkness under the wicked one, is but very partially illuminated. How much ignorance, error, and sin, are to be found within its limits! How else should there be so much division, so much difference of sentiment, so much alienation of affection! What indistinct apprehensions of divine truth—what strange misapprehensions with regard to each other prevail among Christian churches! How just the prophet's description—“We grope for the wall as the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noon-day as in the night.” The only true light, either in the church or in the world, is that inspired book of which the prophetic word forms so large and so important a part. We expect no new revelation. Things

can become better, with regard to the world and to the church, in no other way than in men learning to give more earnest heed to the written—spoken word. In this way, both the world and the church will become more and more enlightened; but perfect light will not be obtained “till the day break and the shadows flee away,” at the second coming of Him who is the Light of the world, and who will then introduce His collected perfected people into a state of perfect knowledge, purity, and happiness—where they shall no longer “see through a glass darkly,” or know only in part; but where they shall “see face to face,” and “know as they are known”—being made like Him who is *light*—“seeing Him as He is.” “There shall be no night,” no darkness “there.” Then will there be no more need to take heed to the sure word of prophecy—no more need to study the inspired volume: the light of revealed truth will be lost in the light of celestial glory. “The sun shall be no more their light by day, neither shall the moon give light unto them. The Lord shall be unto them an everlasting light, and their God their glory.” Meanwhile, *till* that glorious period, the prophetic word—the inspired book—is the light of a dark world and an imperfectly enlightened church; and, till then, Christians will do well to take heed to it.

The words admit of an easy application to the case of the individual Christian, as well as to the state of the world and of the church. Not only has the Christian a dark world around him, but within him there is a little, very imperfectly enlightened world. It was once all dark. Once he was darkness, now he is light in the Lord—enlightened with the light of the living God. And he became thus enlightened just by receiving the word of truth into his mind and heart, and by understanding and believing it, under the influence of the Good Spirit—“The entrance of God’s word gave light.” Still there is much ignorance, error, sin, and discomfort, in every Christian. The light which shines *within* shines in a dark place. To have more light, he must obtain it from *without*—from that inspired book—which is

the reservoir of heavenly light; for "the commandment is a lamp, and the law is a light." And it must be brought into his heart not without, but by, the study of Scripture, under the guidance of the Good Spirit. Thus is the Christian to become more and more enlightened—the light so diffusing itself, that there shall be no part dark in him. Thus is he to grow in knowledge, in holiness, and happiness, by taking heed to the prophetic word—the written revelation. But so long as he is here, in the region of darkness, he never will be fully enlightened. But blessed be He who has made the light to arise on us, the Christian is not to continue here for ever. Death, which consigns his body to the darkness of the grave, opens to the separated spirit the gate of light and life—introduces it into the pure light of paradise—where there is no error, no sin, no suffering. "The Lord God shall be his everlasting light, and the days of his mourning shall be ended." The blessed Bible—the word of prophecy—the volume of inspiration—has now served its purpose. Led by it, the Christian is now in the land of perfect light. In a sense far higher than that in which the words can be applied to any state of knowledge and happiness attainable here below, "He walks in the light of the Lord," "with whom is the fountain of light," and "in His light he sees light"—beholding His face in righteousness, and being satisfied with His likeness. This is what taking heed to the inspired word will assuredly lead to. Following any other light will have a different result. "They who kindle a fire, who compass themselves about with sparks, may walk in the light of their own fire, and in the sparks which they have kindled." But what saith the Lord? "This shall ye have of My hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." Do not they "do well," then, who take heed to the prophetic word? Is it not the dictate of an enlightened regard to our own interest, and that of others, that we should do so?

Here we see, then, how the world—how the church—how individuals are to be made what they ought to be. It is the light of divine truth, enshrined in the inspired word, that is

the appropriate and only effectual means of gaining these ends. The only way of enlightening a dark world is the carrying the torch of revelation throughout it, and the calling on its inhabitants to use that only true light for its appointed purpose—to guide their feet in the way of peace. And how is the church to become what she should be, but by quenching or turning away from the false lights of tradition, human authority, and vain philosophy, and taking heed to the light shining in a dark place as the sure detector of what is false and wrong, and the only discoverer of what is true in doctrine, and right in worship, polity, and general conduct? In every movement towards supposed, it may be real, improvement, let us say—"To the law and to the testimony"—if there be light in these reformers, they will be able to show that what they propose is according to the written word; if they speak not according to the law and testimony, it is a proof that there is no light in them. And how are we, as individuals, to secure ourselves from all the evils, present and future, rising out of that darkness without and within, which is our own natural element, but by thankfully availing ourselves of the day-spring from on high, which has found its way to our dark world, into our dark hearts—yielding ourselves up unreservedly to its guidance. The light shining in the dark place is Christ speaking in His word; and "he who followeth Him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "His path will be like that of the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

But what will become of him who, though the light shines in darkness, will not take heed to it? To him the day will never dawn—the day-star will never arise in his heart. The dark place will become darker and darker. His feet shall stumble on the dark mountains; and, when he looks for light, it will turn into the shadow of death. He who, by refusing to take heed to the light shining in the dark place, shows that he loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil, shall find too late that the darkness he loves leads to a darkness out of which he would gladly escape,

but never shall be able—to that dark place in which no light shall ever shine—“the outer darkness, where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth”—“blackness of darkness for ever and ever.” “Yet a little while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light, lest the darkness come upon you”—the moonless, starless, unending night of hopeless misery. Take heed to the light now shining in a dark place, else it must come to this, God only knows how soon, how suddenly. Take heed—what I say to one I say to all—take heed. Once more, careless sinner, thou hast been warned: it may be only this once more. Despise, neglect this warning: down may come the thunderbolt. The bow is bent; the arrow is on the string: in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye—it may transfix thy heart. “He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” Take heed to the light shining in a dark place!

II. *The divine origin of the Prophetic Word.*

I proceed now to the consideration of the other reasons why the apostle recommends Christians to “take heed” to the prophetic word. “Ye do well to take heed” to the prophetic word, “knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not of old time,” or ‘at any time’ “by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

“Knowing this first,” is just equivalent to ‘seeing you are aware that what I am about to state respecting prophecy is a first principle, a primary and important truth.’ What that truth is has long been, and still is, a subject of controversy among interpreters. All admit that the apostle is giving a reason why Christians should take heed to the word of prophecy—the written word. Some suppose that the reason is twofold, arising partly out of the difficulty of rightly interpreting and the hazard of misinterpreting the prophetic word, which make it necessary that they should take heed to it; and

partly out of the divine origin of the prophetic word, which gives it an authoritative and infallible character, and makes it imperatively obligatory on them to take heed to it: and they consider the apostle as further stating that the second reason rises out of the first,—viewing the 21st verse as assigning the reason for what is said in the 20th, as well as containing an additional reason for performing the duty recommended in the 19th. Others are of opinion that the reason given is strictly *one*—the divine origin of the prophetic word; and that the 21st verse is not a reason *for*, but an explication *of*, what is contained in the 20th. This last mode of viewing the passage, seems to me the just one, and the reasons for which I account it so, will naturally come out in our inquiry into the meaning of the passage.

The words, “no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation,” admit of and have received a considerable variety of interpretation. The expression, “no prophecy of Scripture,” is just equivalent to, ‘no portion of the prophetic word,’ which, while not excluding a direct reference to what is peculiarly prophetic—prediction, I consider as in effect synonymous with ‘no part of inspired Scripture.’¹ The term translated “interpretation,”² occurs in the New Testament in this place only, and but seldom in any part of the extant Greek writers. It is used to signify *interpretation* of dreams or oracles, and admits, from its etymology, of being also rendered “disclosure.” “The English word, private,” as Bishop Horsley very justly remarks, “does but very darkly, if at all, convey to the understanding of the English reader the force of the original word to which it is meant to answer. The word denotes that peculiar appropriation of the thing to which it is joined, to some thing,” or person, “previously mentioned or referred to, which is expressed in English by the word *own*, subjoined to the pronouns of possession.” In the expressions rendered, “our *own* power”—“His *own*

¹ “Understand by *prophecy of Scripture*, that which is contained in the Holy Scriptures.”—CALVIN, OWEN'S Translation.

² ἐπιλύσιμος

blood"—“a prophet of their *own*,” the word is the same as that which is here rendered by *private*.

In the sense of *interpretation*, the declaration may be considered as referring either to the prophet who gave forth the prophecy, or to the prophecy itself, or to the reader, whom the apostle encourages to take good heed to it. In the first case, the meaning would be ‘the prophet cannot interpret his own prophecy.’ Within certain limits that is true, and the fact stated in the 21st verse is the reason why it comes to be so. The prophets did not, in many instances, fully understand their own predictions, *i.e.* they did not in many cases distinctly apprehend the time when, or the events in which, their predictions were to find their accomplishment. Noah certainly did not perceive all that is meant in his remarkable prophecy: “Japhet shall dwell in the tents of Shem.” Daniel on one occasion says, “I heard but understood not.” And our apostle, in the first chapter of his first Epistle, states distinctly that “the prophets, when the Spirit of Christ which was in them did testify beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, inquired and searched diligently what, and what manner of time the Holy Spirit did signify:” and this rose out of the fact that the revelation they made was one *made to them*—given them to utter and record—a fact which did not necessarily imply that they should fully understand it. Yet, at the same time, I do not think that it could be truly said with regard to the prophets, that in *no* case could they interpret their own predictions. In many cases the meaning of their predictions must have been perfectly clear to them; and it may be very fairly doubted if in any case they were employed, like the false prophet’s ass, to utter words to which they themselves attached no meaning. In every case they probably attached to the words ideas, and the right ones so far as they went; though in very many cases there was far more in their prophecies than they were aware of. This first view, then, is untenable, as being inconsistent with truth, and also incongruous with the context; for surely it would be no great

encouragement to us to attempt the interpretation of the prophecies, that it baffled the prophets themselves.

If the expression "private interpretation," be considered as referring, not to the prophets but to the prophecy itself, then the meaning comes out—'no prophecy of Scripture is of self-interpretation'—*i.e.* furnishes the means of understanding itself. This is a statement which may, like the one we have just disposed of, be upheld within certain limits. There are many particular prophecies which, viewed apart from the system of prophecy, cannot be rightly interpreted; and unfulfilled prophecies generally, are so expressed as to remain, to a certain degree, obscure till their accomplishment. But while this is true, it is equally true that the inspired writings generally, and even very many of the predictions properly so called, are expressed in the plainest language; and nothing is necessary, in order completely to understand them, but that they be read with a moderate degree of attention and intelligence, so that it cannot be said with truth that *no* prophecy of Scripture, no divine oracle, is of self-interpretation. The Bible, viewed as a whole, is certainly a self-interpreting book, and the same character belongs to very many of its portions separately considered. That there are difficulties in interpreting the Bible generally, and the prophecies in particular, is undoubted; and this fact furnishes a reason why we should take heed to the prophetic word; yet still, we should scarcely have expected that the apostle would urge this as a principal reason for its careful study. "A light shining in a dark place" is not, as some seem to have thought, intended to indicate the obscurity of the prophecies. The place is dark, but the light is not dim, it is bright and easily discerned. If it were not so, how would it serve its purpose?

The third reference of the phrase "private interpretation," that which makes it look not to the prophets nor to the prophecies, but to the students or interpreters of the prophetic word, does not, I apprehend, bring out a more satisfactory meaning. Without doubt, individuals are not, in interpreting Scripture, to act *arbitrarily*, and give to particular passages

whatever sense may please their fancy, or seem to be necessary to support some favourite dogma. Holy Scripture, like any written composition, is to be interpreted according to the general laws of interpretation, modified by the circumstances of the case. But though arbitrary interpretation was a common fault among Jewish interpreters (as it has been too common in all ages among Christian interpreters), yet it would seem a strange thing for the apostle to embody a caution against this practice in giving a reason why men should take heed to the prophetic word.

In certain quarters, however, the words have been very generally considered as directed, not so much against *arbitrary* as against *individual* interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. They have been represented as condemning the liberty of private judgment in reference to the meaning of Holy Writ. This is the view which Romanists take of the passage: they find in it the sanction to their doctrine, that the Church is the only authorised or safe interpreter of Scripture; or, as the Rhemish annotators remark on this text, that "the Scriptures cannot be rightly expounded of every private spirit or fantasie of the vulgar reader, but by the same spirit by which they were written, which is still resident in the church," *i.e.*, the Church of Rome.

The baselessness, impudence, and absurdity of such a claim, is well exposed by the able prelate whom I have already referred to. "The claim of infallibility, or even of authority to prescribe magisterially to the opinions and consciences of men, whether in an individual, or in assemblies and collections of men, is never to be admitted. Admitted? It is not to be *heard* with patience, unless supported by a miracle: and this very text of Scripture is manifestly, of all others, the most adverse to the arrogant pretensions of the Roman pontiff. Had it been the intention of God that Christians, after the death of the apostles, should take the sense of Scripture, in all obscure and doubtful passages, from the mouth of an infallible interpreter, whose decisions, in all points of doctrine, faith, and practice, should be oracular and final, this was the

occasion for the apostle to have mentioned it—to have told us plainly whither we should resort for the unerring explication of that prophetic word, which, it seems, so well deserves to be studied and understood. And from St Peter, in particular, of all the apostles, this information was in all reason to be expected, if, as the vain tradition goes, the oracular gift was to be lodged with his successors. This, too, was the time when the mention of the thing was most likely to occur to the apostle's thoughts; when he was about to be removed from the superintendence of the church, and was composing an epistle for the direction of the flock, which he had so carefully fed, after his departure. Yet St Peter, at this critical season, when his mind was filled with an interested care for the welfare of the church after his decease—upon an occasion which might naturally lead him to mention all means of instruction that were likely to be provided—in all these circumstances St Peter gives not the most distant intimation of a living oracle to be perpetually maintained in the succession of the Roman Bishops. On the contrary, he overthrows their aspiring claims, by doing that which supersedes the supposed necessity of any such institution.”

Instead of referring his readers to any infallible human interpreter, the apostle calls on them, each for himself, to take heed to the prophetic word, “as to a light shining in a dark place.” It would, indeed, have been strange, if Peter here had stated a principle so opposite to that of his beloved brother Paul. “I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say.”—“Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.” It has been very justly said, “If the people are not to understand for themselves, they must not understand at all: for no man can judge with another man's understanding, any more than he can see with another man's eyes.” Besides, it were strange for the apostle to enforce his recommendation, that every man should take heed to the prophetic word, by telling him in effect that the less heed he took for himself to the written word, and the more completely he gave himself up into the hands of certain *infallible* interpreters of that word, it would be the better for him!

It appears to me impossible to bring out of the words a satisfactory meaning, if "interpretation" is held to be the true sense of the original term. I therefore go along with those interpreters, the judicious Calvin at our head, who consider the word as meaning *disclosure*, or *utterance*. In this case the reference cannot be either to the prophecy or to the student of prophecy—but must be solely to the prophet himself. No prophecy of Scripture is of self-disclosure. The Scripture prophecy comes forth, not from an impulse originating in the prophet himself. It comes forth from an impulse from without—an impulse from above. The Prophecies are not the dreams of an excited imagination. They are not the wise conjectures of "old experience," which, as the poet says sometimes,—

"does attain
To something like prophetic strain."¹

Far less are they crafty inventions, intended to serve selfish purposes. They were not given forth in the exercise of the common faculties of human nature, or under any of the ordinary influences to which men are subjected.²

Their true character is farther described in the words which follow. They were not of *self*-disclosure, but of *divine* :—As the evidence from miracles did not rest on "cunningly-devised fables," so the evidence from prophecy did not rest on oracles originating either in fraud or enthusiasm. In the one case—there was the testimony of eye-witnesses respecting events of a decidedly miraculous character, and in the other the fulfilment of undoubted Divine prediction. "For the prophecy came not in old time"—or rather, as you find it in the margin, "came not at any time"—"by the will of man ;

¹ Milton.

² This mode of exegesis (1) satisfies the universal term in the proposition *πᾶσα προφ.*; (2) explains the use of *γίνεσθαι*, which, as Camerarius says, "ortum significat; (3) intimates that the light which shines in a dark place did not originate there; (4) furnishes a strong motive, *γινώσκων*, for taking heed; and (5) draws after it (*γάρ*) the more explicit statement of ver. 21. No other interpretation meets all these points."—Dr JOHN LILLIE.

but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Prophecy, in the strict sense of the word—prediction of future events—cannot come by the will of man. No man, without Divine illumination, knows the future certainly. Man may calculate and conjecture as to future events, but he cannot prophesy. When he has tried it he has generally made only a mortifying display of his own ignorance and folly. The Supreme Ruler claims the future as His peculiar domain, and when men attempt to intrude into it, he appropriately punishes them, by "frustrating the tokens of the liars, and making the diviners" appear to be what they are, "mad:" by "turning the wise backward, and making their knowledge foolish." The prophets, in speaking, were not regulated by their own suggestions, but by suggestions presented to their minds from a higher source.

And the whole body of revelation has the same character. The books of the Old Testament, and those, too, of the New, were not the result of human, but of Divine will. Human will, like human understanding, was exercised in their composition and publication; but it was human understanding and will entirely under the control of Divine understanding and will. The inspired writers did not write without or against their own volition; but they wrote just what, and as God willed them. They did not act—like the false prophets spoken of by Jeremiah,¹ who spoke a vision out of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord—of whom Jehovah says, "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied."

"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The prophets were "men of God—or "God's men"—men admitted to a peculiar intimacy with Him—to whom He revealed, as it were, His secrets—His confidential servants, whom He employed in making known His will to others. They were "holy men of God"—with scarcely an exception,

¹ Jeremiah xxiii. 16-21.

they were so in the ordinary sense of the word holy. They were, and it was obviously proper that they should be not only good men, but eminently good men—men distinguished for their piety and purity of character—men to whom the description given of Levi by Malachi was applicable—“They feared Jehovah, and were afraid of His name: the law of truth was in their mouth, and iniquity was not found in their lips: they walked with God in peace and equity, and turned away many from their iniquity.” It would have been a shocking incongruity had it been otherwise. Such men were Moses, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and, indeed, all the prophets whose writings we have in Scripture. We know, from the cases of Balaam and Saul, that prophetic influence could be brought to bear on the minds of bad men; but, without an exception, those who were habitually, or even frequently, its subjects, appear to have been men of high religious and moral excellence. It may, however, be doubted if that is the primary idea here. The proper signification of the word “holy” is separated—set apart. They who spoke and wrote prophecy were men set apart for the purpose. Prophecy was not a profession a man could adopt at his pleasure. No man could take this honour on him but those chosen of God to the office of prophet, as Aaron was to the office of priest, and hence called “the *saint*,” the sanctified of the Lord. Instead of prophecy coming by the will of man—men, separated, sanctified by God for the prophetic office, spake, when they gave forth prophecies, not as their own reason or imagination dictated, but “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

The Holy Ghost is that Divine Person, who, along with the Father and the Son, exists in the unity of the Godhead. To Him, in Scripture, direct Divine operation on the human mind is usually ascribed. He was the true author of prophecy. What David the prophet says might be said by all the prophets—“The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue.” The expression “moved” is a strong one—carried away—moved as a vessel is by a strong wind. In ordinary cases inspiration seems to have gently carried the

human will along with it, but in cases of reluctance the will was overborne. Thus we find Jeremiah, under the inspiring influence, exclaiming, "Thou hast over-persuaded me"—for that is the meaning of the word unhappily rendered *deceived*—"and I was *over-persuaded*; Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily; every one mocketh me. Then I said I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name; but His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary of forbearing, and I could not stay." The general sentiment is, the prophetic word is not so properly the word of the inspired man as of the inspiring Spirit. It is not so much the word of man as the word of God.

This is true of all the contents of the Bible. With regard to the writings of the Old Testament, Paul's testimony is, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." With regard to those of the New, Peter conjoins, as of equal authority, the words spoken before of the holy prophets, and the commandments "of us, the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and Paul thus declares the character of his teaching, and that of his apostolic brethren—"My speech was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, which God has revealed to us by His Spirit—not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in words taught us by the Holy Ghost."

You see, then, how powerful a reason for taking heed to the prophetic word is folded up in the 20th and 21st verses. What God reveals must be worth attending to. It may be expected to require, and it must deserve at once the most reverent attention, and the most implicit faith. It is not human conjecture—or statement—or reasoning; it is Divine revelation, and therefore unfathomably deep, infallibly true, and supremely authoritative as the rule of faith and duty. It cannot be disregarded without consummate folly and deep guilt. To disregard it is the very reverse of right, wise, or

safe. The serving its purpose, “as a light shining in a dark place,” depends on being not of self-disclosure, but the work of men who “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” It could not have served this purpose if it had been otherwise—and being so, it cannot but serve it in the best way. Like the Author of light, from whom it comes, revelation is clear, steady, unchanging—clouds may prevent us from seeing it, but nothing can dim its intrinsic lustre. It is a true light, making every thing enlightened by it appear to be what it is—a portion of the light in which He, who can make no mistake, sees all things.

What the prophetic word—what the inspired Scriptures—were to those to whom the apostle wrote, they are to us—with this difference, “we have the prophetic word” even “more confirmed” than they had it. Many predictions have been accomplished since then: and we have much more inspired Scripture than they had—a larger, as well as a clearer, Bible. At that time a church was rich, that had a single Gospel and one or two of the Epistles: and the amount of evidence for the divine origin of the Scriptures generally has, since that time, been greatly increased. It is still increasing. If *they* did *well* to take heed to the prophetic word, surely *we* will do *very ill* if we do not. Reverent study of the inspired word is at once the symptom of a healthy, and the means of producing a vigorous Christianity. Among the good signs of our time is a growing disposition to take heed to the Word of God. May it increase abundantly, to the spiritual improvement of individuals, and to the prosperity and advancement of the church of God! A well understood Bible is the only basis of a sound theology, an enlightened piety, practical godliness, solid comfort, and extensive usefulness. It is this that “makes the man of God—the Christian minister perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work;” and it is this alone which can make any man “wise to salvation, through faith that is in Christ.”

I have thus, at considerable length, considered the apostle’s principal ground for his two resolutions—that those to whom he wrote should, while he lived, be reminded of the things which

he had written, and should not be suffered to forget them after he was dead—namely, the firm conviction he had of the truth of the testimony which he and his apostolic brethren had been led to give of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus—resting on their having been eye-witnesses of miracles performed and prophecies fulfilled; and I have also explained the recommendation which he connects with the statement of this evidence—to “take heed” to the prophetic word, “as a light shining in a dark place”—being, indeed, an infallible revelation of the Divine will.

2. *His deep impression of the importance of what he had stated to them.*

Another reason on which the apostle grounds his resolution is, his deep impression of the importance of what he stated to them; for this led him to form the resolution to do every thing in his power, that while he lived they should not forget them, and that, even after his death, they should remember them. This idea is folded up in the word “wherefore,” at the beginning of the 12th verse. Since these things are so, “I will not,” etc.

He was persuaded, in the judgment of charity, that they were true Christians; and therefore could not but take an interest in them as brethren, and especially as a part of the charge his Lord had given him when He said, “Feed my sheep.” He considered them as having obtained “like precious faith” with him and his apostolic brethren (ver. 1); as possessed of grace and peace, though requiring both to be multiplied (2); as having been “called by a glorious power” (3); and as having been not only called, but also chosen of God (10). He was convinced that the glory of their Lord, and their own true happiness, were closely connected with their “making their calling and election sure” (10). He was equally persuaded that this could be done only by their acting out the character which the faith of the Gospel, where genuine, naturally forms—by “adding to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to

temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity" (5-7). He knew that they had been furnished with everything that was necessary to enable them to enter on and prosecute this course—"all things that pertain to life and godliness exceeding great and precious promises" (3, 4). He was aware of the very deplorable consequences which would result from their abandoning this course, or even slackening in it—spiritual lassitude, barrenness, blindness, hazard of falling (8, 9). He was equally aware of the glorious consummation to which such a constant continuance in well-doing, as he recommended, would certainly lead—spiritual alertness, fruitfulness, far-sightedness, and, ultimately, "an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (8-11); and he was well acquainted with the many powerful temptations, from without and from within, which tended to make them forget and neglect these duties.

With such feelings towards them—such convictions respecting them, and what he had said to them—how could he but resolve that no exertion on his part should be wanting to keep them in memory of that doctrine and law of Christ, by which, if they continued in the faith of the one, and under the guidance of the other, they should certainly be saved—by which alone they could be saved—These considerations are as true now as they were then, and should tell on the resolutions and exertions of every minister, and especially every old minister, in reference to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made him overseer.

3. *His persuasion that his death was at hand.*

Still, another reason on which the apostle grounded his two resolutions, was, that he knew—for the Lord had told him—that his death was at hand. "Knowing," says he, "that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." There can be no doubt that here the apostle refers to a singularly interesting incident, recorded in the 21st chapter of the Gospel by John.

“ So, when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My lambs. He saith to him the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep. Verily, verily I say unto thee, When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This,”—adds the sacred historian—“This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God.”

It is quite possible that our Lord had, about the time this epistle was written, revealed directly to Peter that the period for the fulfilment of this enigmatic prediction was at hand; but it seems more probable that it was the growing infirmities of advanced life which told the apostle—now such an one as Peter the aged—he could not have long to live, and made him anticipate as near, that death on the cross, by which he was to be made conformable to his Lord, and by submitting to which he was to glorify God. He had now but a short time in which, by personal exertion, he could promote the cause of his Master, and the holiness and happiness of his Christian brethren; and a meeting with his Lord was at hand, more solemn than even that on the banks of the Sea of Galilee, an interview at which his account must be given how he had executed the charge, then so impressively given in its triple repetition, “Feed My flock—feed My lambs—feed My sheep.” He felt that the time for work was all but over, and the time of account, aye, and recompense, very near. He was anxious to do as much good as possible in that short time. He was desirous of creating means of posthumous usefulness, that he might not cease to

do good when he ceased to live—that the church and the world might be the better for him, till the end of all things. He wished that the pangs of the cross might not be embittered with the recollection of unfaithfulness, of opportunities of usefulness neglected or misimproved; and though very conscious that his salvation was to be a glorious triumph of sovereign mercy, an illustrious proof of the power of atoning sacrifice and regenerating grace—he was desirous that he might not be ashamed at his meeting with his Master, but receive a full reward, and be welcomed with “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Was it wonderful that, in these circumstances, “he should not be negligent” to put the brethren always in remembrance of the doctrine and law of the Lord—to stir them up, by putting them in remembrance, “so long as he was in this tabernacle,” and to endeavour that, after his decease, they might have these things always in remembrance.

Thus ought all aged ministers and all aged Christians to act, when the increase of the infirmities of decaying nature, and the diminishing number of those who began life and labour with them, give warning that the time of their departure is at hand. They should open their hearts to the influence of such intimations, for they come as really from the Lord, as the stern announcement to Eglon, “I have a message from God unto thee.” Nothing but necessity should lead old ministers to leave the field of active exertion. An incurable disease is heaven’s messenger, to tell us we must soon die; and old age is a disease which no physician can arrest in its progress, and for which the well-stored repositories of the apothecary furnish no remedy: He who has reached three score years and ten has had his full allowance of life—die when he may, he has had full warning—and if he have any hope beyond death, he has little temptation to wish to protract what he is taught to expect is likely to be “but labour and sorrow—evil days—years in which he will say I have no pleasure;”—yet the deep-felt conviction of even this must not make God’s labourer cease to work—the Christian soldier lay aside his weapons.

Though to some degree they may be constrained to withdraw from labours to which they have become unequal, let them, in the way they can, be the more diligent in doing something to promote the interest of the present and coming ages. Old ministers and old Christians, if they have been enabled to maintain consistency through life, have peculiar means of usefulness, which they should take care to improve to the uttermost. Without obtruding the results of their experience where they are not desired, they should not withhold them when they are likely to be useful. They should endeavour to imitate Moses, and Joshua, and David, and Peter, and Paul, in being useful to the very end of life. "What their hands find to do, they should do it with the might" that remains to them, though that might may be but feebleness, compared with what it once was, "for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither they go." The "word of Christ should dwell in them richly," and "in all wisdom they should admonish" their brethren. They should drink into the Spirit of their Master, whose meat was to do the will of His Father, and to *finish* His work, and whose whole life illustrated His saying, "I must work the work of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh, in which no man can work."

I feel, my brethren, that I am now preaching to myself, and I ask your prayers that the instruction may serve its proper purpose; that during the necessarily brief period of life and service that remains to me (may they end together!), I may be enabled to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, and to endeavour that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. The time in which I can do you good, and you can derive good from me, is now near its close. The time of account for both of us is at hand. "The Judge standeth before the door." It will be wise in me to preach every sermon I address to you as if it were to be the last, and wise in you to hear as if you were to hear my voice no more. We must soon part—may it be amid the hopes and consolations of the Gospel! We must meet again—may it be at the right hand of "Him who is ready to judge

the quick and the dead!" May we be enabled so "to look to ourselves," that we lose not those things for which so many discourses have been preached by me and heard by you, but that we may together "receive a full reward." "The Lord grant unto us that we may find mercy of the Lord in that day"—"the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

ADDITIONAL DISCOURSES.

ADDITIONAL DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE I.

HOW CHRISTIANS MAY KNOW THAT THEY ARE OF THE TRUTH, AND MAY ASSURE THEIR HEARTS BEFORE GOD.

1 JOHN iii., 19-22.—And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

THE First Epistle of John is a very remarkable composition. It is unique among the New Testament writings. It has more the appearance of a written exhortation than of a familiar epistle. While, on a cursory perusal, it may appear to be a collection of desultory and unconnected remarks, it is found, on a more careful examination, to be an expansion of one great thought—‘Fellowship with God through Christ Jesus, the foundation and means, the sum and substance, of holiness and happiness, is the great end of the Christian revelation.’

From the Epistle¹ opening with a reference to a statement which the apostle had previously made to those to whom he is writing—a statement which, from the description, appears to have contained a more detailed account of the great facts respecting Jesus Christ as “the Word of life,” (that is, as he explains the term, “the manifested life,”² the revelation of the

¹ Chap. i. 1-4.

² Ver. 2.

Living One—the revealed Living One), a fuller statement of who He was, what He became, what He taught, and what He did, than is to be found in the Epistle itself;—there is considerable probability in the conjecture that it was intended to accompany the fourth Gospel to those churches for whose use it was primarily written. For what more accurate description than that which is contained in the first four verses of this Epistle could be given of that wonderful book, which, commencing with a declaration of “what was from the beginning” “concerning the Word of life,”—that He was “in the beginning;” that then He was “with God”—“was God;” “that all things were made by Him;” “that in Him was life,” and “that life the light of men”—goes on to declare that this Word “became flesh, and dwelt” in the midst of His chosen disciples, who “saw His glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;” records many things they had heard of, and from, and had seen done by, Him; and ends with the declaration, that all was written for this purpose, that they who read it “might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing, they might have life through His name.”¹

In this brief but precious treatise, the leading truths of Christianity, though often adverted to, are not largely stated and illustrated. It is taken for granted that those who are addressed understood and believed these truths; and it is with Christianity as an inner life, rather than as a Divine economy of events, or as a doctrinal statement in reference to this economy, that the epistle is chiefly occupied. It is pre-eminently the experimental and practical book of the New Testament—a book, therefore, which men who have not, through believing, experienced the effects of the truth, can but very imperfectly understand, and still more imperfectly relish; but—for these very reasons which render it obscure and unpalatable to “the natural man”—it is a book specially fitted, as it is intended, to interest and delight “the spiritual man”—

¹ Chap. i. 1-4, 14; xxi. 31.

to promote the comfort and improvement of those who "know the truth," and have been "made free" by it.

Fellowship with God, the sum and substance of that holy happiness for which man was made, is the great subject of the Epistle:—fellowship with God—its nature, as community of mind, choice, will, affection, aim, operation, and enjoyment;¹ its basis—reconciliation through the mediation of the Son, and transformation through the operation of the Spirit;² the manner in which it is obtained by the individual—the belief of the truth as it is in Jesus;³ the means by which it is to be maintained—persevering faith and progressive holiness;⁴ the causes which tend to interrupt and destroy it—error and sin, and the undue influence of the present state of things, especially of intercourse with the unbelieving and ungodly part of mankind.⁵

It has been most justly remarked that, in the illustration of this subject, we do not find "the rich variety in the development and expression of ideas, and their remote relations, which we find in Paul. Here, on the contrary, are a few essential truths repeated over and over again in simple words, which, as they fell from the lips of Christ Himself, had stamped themselves deeply into the susceptible spirit of John, and had become as it were, ingrown into his own peculiar nature."⁶ Yet, with all the apparent inattention to logical order which marks the Epistle, every statement in it will, I apprehend, be found to take its place under one or other of the heads just indicated; and though the illustrations often run, as might be expected on such subjects, into each other, the continuous stream of thought can be in most cases dis-

¹ Chap. i. 3, 4, 6, 7, 8; ii. 3, 4, 5, 10, 20, 29; iii. 6, 7, 24; iv. 7, 8, 11, 13, 16.

² Chap. i. 7; ii. 1, 2, 20, 27; iii. 24; iv. 2, 9, 10; v. 12, 20.

³ Chap. i. 3; iii. 23; iv. 15; v. 1, 10, 11, 12, 13.

⁴ Chap. i. 7; ii. 3, 5, 6, 10, 24, 25, 27; iii. 6, 7.

⁵ Chap. i. 6, 8; ii. 4, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 26; iii. 6, 8, 10, 12, 13; iv. 1-6; v. 4, 5, 19.

⁶ Neander.

cerned without much difficulty, and the leading divisions marked.¹

One of the short sections into which the Epistle divides itself now lies before us—chap. iii. 19-22: “Hereby we know that we are of the truth,² and shall assure,” or persuade, “our hearts before Him; for if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, and whatsoever things we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

The substance of this statement seems to me to be this—Christians maintain fellowship with God in filial, confidential prayer, by employing the truth which they believe to quell the accusations of conscience, which would destroy that fellowship; and when the conscience, pacified by the truth believed, no longer condemns, they humbly, yet confidently, ask of God what the truth has encouraged them to expect—“the supply of their need,” “all heavenly and spiritual blessings;” and have in their increased holiness the answer of their prayer, and evidence in the whole of this spiritual process that they are indeed “of the truth”—that they are the “children of God,” born of the truth, that incorruptible seed, and that this seed remains in them; that “the truth makes them free—free indeed,” giving them “access to God,” and “boldness in His presence,” and enabling them to “walk at liberty, keeping His commandments.”³

¹ The following partition may be of use to the student of the Epistle:—Intro. 1-4. Part I.—i. 5-ii. 14; § 1, i. 5-ii. 11; § 2, ii. 12-14. Part II.—ii. 15-iii. 18; § 1, ii. 15-17; § 2, ii. 18-28; § 3, ii. 29-ii. 13; (1) ii. 29-iii. 10; (2) iii. 11-18. Part III.—iii. 19-v. 12; § 1, iii. 19-23; § 2, iii. 24-iv. 6; § 3, iv. 7-v. 13; (1) iv. 7-13; (2) iv. 14-19; (3) iv. 20-v. 5; (4) v. 6-13; (5) v. 14, 15. Conclus. v. 16-21.

² ἀληθία does not here mean *truth* and *sincerity* in the general sense, but as in 2 John 1, 2; 3 John 3, 4, 8, “the truth of the Gospel.”—LÜCKE.

³ Hoogeveen, Morus, and Nüsselt agree in considering the words “God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things” as containing the

I am quite aware that a very different meaning has been brought out of these words by some interpreters. Looking at the twentieth and twenty-first verses as if they stood by themselves, announcing two statements antithetic to each other, and unconnected with what goes before and what follows after—they have considered the twentieth verse as intimating that, if a man's conscience accuses him of sin, he ought to recollect that that condemnation, however severe, is still far beneath the truth: sin is worse than it appears to the conscience; the sinner is more to blame, and in greater danger, than conscience is aware of. Conscience, however well-informed and honest, is far inferior to God, both in discerning what is *sin*, and what *sin is*—"God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." If conscience condemns, must not God also condemn, and condemn with a degree of severity as much exceeding that of conscience as His knowledge and holiness exceed ours?¹

On the other hand, the twenty-first verse is supposed to convey this statement—"If our conscience does not accuse or condemn us—if it acquit us of all known and wilful sin—then we have confidence towards God—we are not afraid of being punished by Him."

The sentiment which the 20th verse is thus supposed to contain is substantially just; and well would it be for the thoughtless sinner, if, when his conscience accuses and con-

thought that assures, quiets the mind, when the heart condemns. Erdmann, in his lately published commentary, strongly supports this view, p. 138, etc. :—"Dens ut consolator majorem corde condemnante se manifestabit paterna erga nos caritate, cui gratia peccata nostra, et culpam extinguens inhabitat. Deum nobis ex ipso genitis patrem propitium et gratum esse per Christum nos expiantem, summa est sententia totius orationis superioris. Majorem vim habet potestas gratiæ patris, quæ peccata, quorum conscientia nos arguit, propter sanguinem Christi nos purgantem et expiantem nobis condonat (i. 7, 9; ii. 1, 2) quæque filiorum Dei, quorum de conditione sola hic sermo est, certum refugium et fons consolationis nunquam exhauriendus manebit."

¹ Speaking of such interpreters, Andrea, in his elaborate dissertation, says tersely, "Absint tales a conscientis teneris magistri."

condemns him, he would, instead of endeavouring to quiet his rising alarms by the dishonest shifts of fallen human nature—such as the hurry of business, the intoxication of pleasure, and all the endless variety of palliations and excuses—follow out the thought to its fair consequences, till the terrific magnitude and certainty of his danger stand out in a form approaching to the reality, and act as a means of “shutting him up to the faith,” by convincing him that he is “shut up under sin,”—hopelessly condemned if not graciously forgiven; making him see that there is but one way of escape—“no evasion for him” but by fleeing for refuge to lay hold on “the hope set before us in the Gospel;” making him restless till he find the only safe rest—rest in Christ.

But we have only to look at what precedes and follows, to see that this is not at all the sentiment in the apostle’s mind. The person he is speaking of is a believer; one who is “of the truth,” seeking to “assure his heart before God”—seeking “confidence towards God.” It is not ‘if a man’s heart,’ but, “if *our* heart.” Did the words embody the sentiment commonly supposed to be in them, they would appear quite irrelevant. The apostle’s purpose here is not to awaken or sharpen the sleeping conscience of the sinner, but to tranquilize and console the anxious conscience of the saint.¹

The sentiment supposed by some to be contained in the 21st verse, “if our heart condemn us not, we have confidence towards God,” is, I am afraid, worse than irrelevant. Suppose it to be a general statement, applicable to all men, unregenerate and regenerate, let us see what we can make of it. Is it true of an unregenerate man that, if his conscience do not condemn him, he may safely assure his heart before God, and have confidence towards Him? Alas, alas! his conscience too often condemns him not, when it should condemn him. The Pharisee’s conscience not only did not condemn him, but acquitted him: had he cause to assure his

¹ Lücke.

heart before God? He had, indeed, a kind of confidence, which he had much better have been without; he justified himself, but God condemned him. And do you think the poor Publican had no confidence before God? He had none in himself, but had he been without confidence in the grace of God, think you he could *so* have cried "God be merciful to me a sinner," as "to go down to his house justified?"

Here the interpreters who refer, unwarrantably we think, the 20th verse to the unregenerate, apply the 21st to the regenerate man, but find that even with regard to him they can understand it only with very serious limitations. Let us see what they make of it.

It is readily admitted that it is of high importance that every believer should, like the apostle, "herein exercise himself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man;" and when false accusations are brought against him, it is high consolation to be able to say, "our rejoicing is this, that with simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world,"—maintaining "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man," especially towards those who may think worst of him. But does this testimony, even when most distinct, lay a *foundation* for the Christian's assuring his heart before God? Is it *this* that gives him confidence towards God, when he goes to Him in prayer? Was it this that gave Paul, who had this testimony in a very high degree, his confidence before God? He who meets not all these questions with a strong denial, knows little of the Gospel, little of Paul, little of Christian experience. "Before God," nothing gave Paul, nothing can give any man, confidence but this, "Christ died for us according to the Scriptures"—"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

It has been supposed that the reference is to the testimony of conscience in respect to the law of love mentioned in the context: 'If our conscience does not condemn us of the

violation of this law, then we have confidence towards God.' But this, while it strangely narrows what has all the appearance of a general statement, surely does not mend the matter. Still the question comes back, Can an enlightened conscience testify to any man that he is free from breaches of the law of love?—a law which is spiritual and exceeding broad; and, Can any testimony of a conscience, whose spiritual perspicacity and sensibility are both imperfect—a conscience only partially informed, and possibly somewhat improperly biassed—give a man what the apostle is obviously speaking of, a true, safe “assurance of heart before God?”—a well-grounded “confidence towards God?” Nothing but the finished work of Christ, brought before the mind in the testimony of God by the Holy Spirit, can do this. A Christian man knows, that “if he be regarding iniquity in his heart, God will not hear him”—that indulged sin is inconsistent with assurance of heart before God, and confidence towards Him; and if he be a well-informed Christian man, he also knows the cause of this: to wit, that the truth, which alone can give confidence before God, is not before his mind. If it were, he could not regard sin in his heart, for the sanctifying uniformly accompanies the pacifying influence of the truth.

“The Cross, *when* seen, is death to every sin;”

but it is only *WHEN* seen, that it can exert its full influence. When the conscience testifies to general sincerity—does not accuse of any known sin unrepented of, and unforsaken, and not sedulously guarded against—still there is here no ground of confidence before God.¹ Whatever I am, I have been a sinner; I deserve the displeasure of God—I never can deserve anything else; there is much wanting, there is much

¹ It is astounding to find Neander thus interpreting the words—“A condition of the inner man is here presented wherein man can bring quiet to his conscience in the view of God the Holy Judge; wherein he need not fear the accusings of conscience, through which speaks the judicial voice of God, inasmuch as conscience can convict him of no discord

wrong with me, notwithstanding all this sincerity; and there is more than a possibility that, as it is a man giving testimony in his own cause, the testimony may be unduly favourable. No, no—I must have another kind of testimony—a greater witness, even Him “who knoweth all things,” to lay a foundation for “assuring my heart before God”—for “having confidence” towards him.

I think enough has been said to show that the ordinary interpretation of these words is altogether untenable. What, then, do they mean? Let us see whether the sense we have given them does not come naturally out of the words, and is not supported by other passages of Scripture, as well as by the facts of Christian experience.

It is of importance to remark, that the connective particle, rendered in the text “hereby,” and in other places “by this,”¹ while it may refer either to what has been said or what is to be said, seems generally used in the latter way in this Epistle; for example, chap. ii. 3, “Hereby we know that we know Him.” How?—The answer follows: “if we keep His commandments; chap. ii. 5, 6, “Hereby know we that we are in Him.” How?—The answer follows: “He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked;” chap. iii. 10, “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil.” In what?—The answer both goes before and follows. It goes before: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.” It follows after: “Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother;” chap. iii. 16, “Hereby do we perceive the love of God.” How?—“Because *He* laid down

between his profession and course of life, but he is conscious to himself of fulfilling the conditions of salvation ordained by God.” It is so far satisfactory to find him saying in the next page, “A reliance on human righteousness, as available before God, can by no means be meant here,” but it is not very easy to reconcile the one statement with the other. “First Epistle of John practically explained,” pp. 221–223. Lücke comes nearer the truth.

¹ ἐν τούτοις.

His life for us;" chap. iv. 2, "Hereby know we the Spirit of God." How?—The answer follows: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God;" chap. iv. 9, 10, "In this was manifested the love of God—herein is love." In what?—The answer follows: "Not that we loved Him, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" chap. iv. 13, "Hereby we know that we dwell in Him, and He in us." How?—The answer follows: "He has given us of His Spirit."

The passage before us is not an exception from this general usage. The whole of the paragraph contains the evidences of our being of the truth: "Hereby we know that we are of the truth," and "*hereby* shall we assure our hearts before Him." How?—The answer follows. If this be admitted, then it is plain that the same class of persons is spoken of throughout—the persons addressed throughout the whole Epistle—those who are of the truth—believers—those who are in fellowship with God, who not only say that they abide in Him, but really do abide in Him. How do these persons show that they are "of the truth?" How do they "assure themselves before God?" How do they obtain "confidence towards God?" The answer to the second and third questions is the answer to the first, and that answer is to be found in the twentieth, twenty-first, and twenty-second verses.

The question, then, which the text thus brings before the mind, and to which it furnishes a satisfactory answer, is, How does a man who is "of the truth" "assure his heart before God?"—obtain and "maintain confidence towards God?" And how does the way in which he assures his heart, and finds confidence, prove that he is "of the truth?"

You may observe that it is not the Christian in the abstract that is spoken of—it is individual Christians seeking fellowship with God in a particular exercise, the exercise of prayer. They are desirous of obtaining certain benefits, "heavenly and spiritual blessings," from Him, and they know that these are to be obtained by believing prayer. In order to this they must "assure their hearts before Him"—they must

“have confidence towards Him;” for they know that unbelieving prayer—a strange collocation of terms—is mockery and insult, and can do God no honour, man no good. They therefore seek to “assure their hearts” before Him, to obtain “confidence towards God.” They cannot otherwise have free access. It is a “fully assured faith” of the truth respecting the character of God as the God of salvation, that alone can enable a man to “go boldly to the throne of grace.”

The apostle supposes that, from whatever cause, the heart of those whom he is addressing condemns them—their conscience condemns them: that is, as I apprehend, not only tells them that they have sinned, but that they are under condemnation—that God has righteously condemned them, and will not, cannot revoke His just sentence. This tends to destroy that assurance of the heart—to prevent that confidence towards God, which the truth, when first believed, produced, and which belongs to what may be termed the normal and healthy state of the man who is “of the truth.” The conscience, if it is honest, must testify to every man that “he has sinned”—that he “has sin;” for “if *we*,” even we Christians, “say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,” and instead of being “of the truth,” “there is no truth in us;” and “if we say that we have not sinned we make Him a liar, and His word, “which is truth,” “is not in us.”¹ Such a testimony does a man good—makes and keeps him humble; but is not inconsistent with, nay, is necessary to “good hope through grace”—the assuring the heart before God—the having confidence towards God. The destruction of false hope is necessary to the attainment and maintenance of true hope; it is when we have no confidence in the flesh that we have most entire confidence in the grace of God, and in the infinite virtue of His Son’s atonement, and the omnipotent energy of His Spirit’s influence. But when the conscience testifies that we are not only sinners, but unpardoned sinners—not only liable to condemnation but

¹ Chap. i. 8-10.

condemned, then the heart cannot be assured—then there can be no confidence towards God. A criminal, consciously guilty, even if he only fears that he is condemned, cannot have an assured heart—cannot have confidence in the presence of his offended sovereign and judge.

The apostle is speaking here of true Christians only—of those who are “of the truth.” But the state of mind here described is not peculiar to *them*. “A condemning conscience” is a state of mind into which all men are liable to fall. Its elements are to be found in every human being. All men are sinners; all, with scarcely an exception, are in some measure aware of this, and that they, therefore, deserve blame and punishment. And when this truth is, by any means, brought strongly before their minds, when their guilt and danger are seen in the light of the requirements and sanctions of the Divine law, their hearts are troubled; if the truth regarding the way of salvation through Christ is not clearly apprehended, they have no confidence towards God, and instead of going to Him as the source of happiness, they retire as far as possible from Him as a source of danger and suffering. When our first parents’ conscience condemned them, the voice of God filled them with terror, and they sought to hide themselves from His eye amid the trees of the garden.

Before showing how those who are “of the truth” get rid of the troubled heart and “the fear that hath torment” connected with the accusing conscience, it may serve a good purpose, to advert to the manner in which those who are not of the truth conduct themselves, “when their heart condemns” *them*. The methods they adopt are very various, but all very different from that which is adopted by those who are “of the truth.” Some seek relief in denying that there is in reality any such distinction as that between moral good and evil—duty and sin—saying in their heart “there is no God;” others in the notion, that though there may be such a thing as sin, it is not the fearfully bad and the fatally mischievous thing that the Bible represents it to be: others

in endeavouring to find palliations and excuses for their own sins ; others in God's supposed absolute benignity, which incapacitates Him from making any of His creatures permanently miserable, especially for merely yielding to principles which He has Himself implanted in them ; others in weighing their good works against their bad ones, and finding that, if the former do not outweigh the latter, they bring the balance so nearly to an equipoise, that they can have no reasonable fear of severe or lasting punishment ; others in the presumption that they have been converted, for, though conscious of living in sin, they think that at some former period of life they experienced deep remorse for sin, followed by ecstatic joys, and, abusing the doctrine of perseverance, conclude that they are safe, on the principle, "once in Christ, always in Christ ;" and others still, who have imbibed the monstrous and loathsome dogmas of Antinomianism, in holding that they are in every sense free from the law—that what is sin in others is no sin in them—that being not under the law, but under grace, where no law is, there can be in them no transgression, for sin is the transgression of the law. It is not at all an uncommon thing for men to be permitted in all these ways, to find the delusion they are seeking. Their foolish hearts are so darkened as "to believe a lie ;" and, in consequence of doing so, they get relief from the terrors of a partially enlightened, awakened, and accensing conscience. In this way many come to say to themselves, "peace, peace," "when there is no peace," and contrive to pass through life but little troubled with a condemning conscience, though utterly destitute of spiritual religion, and even living in the habitual neglect of known duty, and in the habitual commission of known sin, till, awakened in good earnest by the stroke of death,

"They read their sentence at the flames of hell."

"For he who *will* be cheated, to the last
Delusions strong as hell shall bind *him* fast."¹

¹ Cowper.

In such cases, men cannot be said to “assure their hearts *before God*,” or to have “confidence towards Him;” for they do not realize the truth with regard to His existence, and true character, and their connection with Him as their moral Governor: they are not, in their own feeling, “before God” at all. In the presence of this truth understood and believed, such delusions can no more exist, than combustible matter continue unconsumed in the day of God, “wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” When this truth is forced upon the unregenerate mind, the condemnation of conscience is not so easily got rid of: “A certain fearful looking for of judgment” lays hold of the sinner;

“The conscience then performs its proper part,
 And writes a doomsday sentence on his heart:
 His hours no longer pass unmarked away,
 A sad importance saddens every day;
 He hears the notice of the clock, perplex'd,
 And cries, perhaps Eternity strikes next:
 Sweet music is no longer music here,
 And laughter sounds like madness in his ear:
 His grief the world of all her power disarms,
 Wine has no taste, and beauty has no charms.”¹

He now feels that he is “before God”—that he has to do with the holy and just One—and that “it is a fearful thing to fall into His hands.” Out of this abyss of mental misery, there is but one way of safe escape—the fleeing for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before the sinner in the Gospel. If this course is not followed, the man must either drag on a miserable life under the burden of a heart-crushing despondency, or he must have recourse to the opiates which infidelity administers, or to the intoxication which the sweet but poisonous cup of that enchantress, “the present evil world,” is so potent in producing.

Let us now consider how the man who is “of the truth,”

¹ Cowper.

conducts himself when "his conscience condemns him." For even a genuine Christian—a man who has in the faith of the truth found peace (to say nothing of the strange effect which bodily disorder sometimes produces in the mind), may be "condemned" by his heart, in consequence of "letting slip" the conscience-pacifying, purifying, soul-saving truth, and by giving way to doubtful or sinful dispositions, by neglecting known duty, and committing known sin. An irrepresible conviction may be forced upon his mind that he is an unforgiven sinner—the object equally of the judicial condemnation, and of the moral disapprobation of God—so that while he realizes God's presence, his heart is not assured but alarmed. "When he remembers God he is troubled," and, instead of having confidence, "his spirit is overwhelmed," he walks in darkness and has no light. The light of divine love shines as clear as ever, but a thick cloud, raised by unbelief and sin, makes it to him invisible: "his iniquities have separated between him and his God, and his sins have hid His face from him." He cannot, he dare not pray; he has no access "with boldness through the one Spirit to the Father." He cannot doubt that he is not pardoned, and he has sad fears that he never will be, never can be pardoned. In his own estimation, he is laid "in the lowest pit—in darkness, in the deeps." "God's wrath" seems to "lie hard on him." He is "afflicted and ready to die." He "suffers God's terrors and is distracted." "His fierce wrath" seems to "go over him, and His terrors to cut him off" from happiness or hope, and he says, "The Lord has cast off for ever; He will be favourable no more; His mercy is clean gone for ever; His promise fails for evermore." All sensible, comfortable fellowship with God is suspended, and it seems as if it never could be renewed.

Now, how does the spiritual man obtain relief from this state of mind? I will first tell you how he often attempts to obtain relief, and usually fails, and then show, by explaining the words before us, the course which he ought to take, and which, sooner or later, he is sure to take, and be successful,

under the influence of the truth which, even when obscured, still abides in him.

When a true Christian comes, from the causes specified above, to be in doubt and alarm in reference to the safety of his spiritual state, he is very apt to have recourse to self-examination. He commences an inquiry whether he has, in his past history and conduct, in his habitual dispositions and aims, the "marks and evidences" of being in a converted and, therefore, safe state.

Now, I have no doubt that self-examination is an important duty, and that the conscientious performance of it, like that of every commanded duty, is one of the means of preventing a Christian from falling under the power of a condemning conscience. It is well fitted to repress pride, to produce and strengthen humility, to stimulate to vigilance, to destroy a false, and confirm a true peace of mind, and to enable us to derive from the Holy Scriptures the appropriate warning, guidance, and consolation, which our circumstances require. But self-examination is not fitted, nor is it intended, to enable the Christian whose heart condemns him, to assure his heart before God, or to obtain confidence towards Him. Let a Christian examine himself ever so carefully, and ever so long, he will not find in himself a ground of hope towards God—a solid foundation for assurance of heart, which seems just another word for "assurance of hope." He will find nothing in his character and conduct, that meets the demands of the divine law; he will find that he cannot make atonement for his sin; that his obedience to the holy, spiritual, and exceedingly broad law of God, is very imperfect, and his violations of it innumerable and inexcusable. The more he examines, the more clearly will he see that "his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and that innumerable iniquities compass him about." With the strong light of the law blazing, the farther he descends into himself, the more is he confounded at the discoveries he makes; and oh, how dreary is the waste of past life, both inward and outward, when surveyed by the

fires of Sinai! When, in these circumstances, the sentence from Ebal sounds loud and awful—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"—what can conscience do but echo, however reluctantly, "Amen," I am the man? Besides, the question of supreme importance to him, is not so much, Am I in a safe state? to which conscience says No, as, How may I obtain salvation, and the assurance that I shall be saved? No self-examination will ever enable us to answer that question.

It is, moreover, of much importance to remark that the state of a Christian's mind when conscience is condemning him, is one which, above all others, unfits him for the proper discharge of the duty of self-examination. A state of agitated feeling is ill-suited for a calm and patient weighing of evidence, so necessary to a sound judgment and safe conclusion. The Christian whose heart condemns him, is in almost equal danger of making too much and too little of the evidences of his being in a state of conversion. It is the man with a humble hope of eternal life, who alone dares to look in the face, all that a thorough self-examination is sure to bring out, as to the number, and heinousness, and aggravations of his transgressions, and as to the number and foulness of the abominations that lodge in his heart.

And should the Christian succeed in getting such a view of the evidences of his being in a converted state, as for the moment quells his fears, on how uncertain a basis does such assurance of heart—such confidence before God rest? He who knows anything like the truth respecting the deceitfulness of the human heart, will tremble at the thought of trusting to its testimony in a matter so weighty as hope for eternity.¹

¹ "Nothing short of a Divine testimony and assurance could have induced the awakened sinner to entrust Christ with his eternal welfare; and nothing less will sustain the confidence of a believer who has obtained a clearer and ever-increasing insight into the preciousness of the redemption of his soul, or preserve him from distracting doubts and fears amidst

Having thus shown how unsatisfactory is likely to be the result of a Christian resorting to self-examination for relief when his heart condemns him, let us now endeavour to show you the more excellent way, which the apostle, I am persuaded, indicates in the words before us: "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things."

There is some difficulty in the construction of these words, as they stand in the original text. You may connect them with the word "assure" or 'persuade,' in the previous verse, thus: 'if our hearts condemn us, we will persuade them before God that He is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things; or reading them, with our translators, as a separate sentence, you may supply from the preceding verse the obvious ellipsis—thus: "If our heart condemn us, *we know* that God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things."¹

I have already shown, satisfactorily I trust, that these words cannot mean what they are very often understood to mean, and what, taken by themselves, they may mean: 'that

the temptations and infirmities by which he feels himself daily surrounded and oppressed. Wo to his peace of mind, and to his hopes of maintaining the struggle against the devil, the world, and the flesh, escaping the evils of life, and triumphing over death and the grave, if his confidence were built on anything but the word of the Eternal, who hath confirmed it by His oath, "that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, they might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them." Wo to the continuance of his peace, if it were based on any act, exercise, or attainment of his own—if it ebbed and flowed under a secondary influence, and if, after being relieved, quickened, and cheered by direct communications from the Fountain of Light, he were doomed henceforth to receive all his comfort by reflection from his own experience."—M-CRUE, SERMONS, xv. p. 272.

¹ The repetition of the particle *ἄρα* is a difficulty in the way of the first mode of interpretation, though we have a similar instance in Eph. ii. 12, and such a construction is not uncommon in the classics. Erdmann produces four from Xenophon's *Anabasis*. The use of the same particle in different senses, in so close a connection, is a difficulty in the way of the second.

when our heart condemns us, we may well be afraid, for all that it says about our guilt, is nothing to what God knows; and if the lashes of conscience are so terrible, what will be the unrebated strokes of Him who is greater than our conscience?' Most assuredly that is a thought which will not "assure the heart before God," nor "give confidence towards Him."¹

What, then, do these words mean? They describe the Christian whose heart condemns him, as seeking and finding relief from the condemning testimony of the awakened conscience, in the acquitting, justifying testimony of God, who is "greater than," superior in authority to, the conscience, and greater in knowledge also, for "He knows all things." The man who is "of the truth," appeals from the lawgiver in the breast to the Lawgiver on the throne, pronouncing His judgment in the word of the truth of the Gospel. He appeals from the sentence of the deputy of God in his own bosom, imperfectly informed, and having a subordinate and therefore limited authority, to God Himself, the supreme and only Potentate, who knows all things.

And what does he find there? He finds Jehovah the supreme Lord thus proclaiming His name: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." And though "He will not," though He cannot, "by any means clear the guilty," without satisfaction to the injured rights and honours of His holy and righteous government, He is yet justifying guilty men "freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom in the Gospel He hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood,"

¹ "Primum omne Joannis consilium cernitur in tranquillandis verorum Christianorum animis. Sed quid consolationis est, ac non potius terroris augendi causa in his 'Si ipsa nos condemnet male factorum conscientia; multo etiam severius erit Dei judicium cui omnia, etiam haec quae ipsi ignoramus, aut nobis non vertimus vitio, patent et perspecta sunt'?"—NÖSSELT.

declaring—manifesting—“His righteousness”—His method of justification—in which He appears at once “the just God, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” He testifies, “I, even I, am He who blotteth out transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sin.” “God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing to men their trespasses, seeing He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin in their room, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” “With God there is mercy, with Him is plenteous redemption.” “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, might not perish but have everlasting life.” “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth from all sin.” He has died, “the Just in the room of the unjust.” He has been “wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities, the chastisement of their peace has been on Him, and by His stripes they are healed.” “If any man sin, God is faithful and just to forgive him his sins, and cleanse him from all unrighteousness; for there is an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.” He has “finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness.” He has “purged men’s sins by Himself.” He has “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” “It is finished.” “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” “Delivered for men’s offences, He has been raised for their justification.” “God has raised Him from the dead, and given Him glory, that men’s faith and hope might be in Him.” “The God of peace brought again from the dead Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep.” “God was angry, but His anger is turned away.” “Return to Me, backsliding children, I have redeemed you.” “I will heal your backslidings, I will love you freely.” “I am pacified toward you for all the iniquities you have done.”

This is the testimony of God, and He is *greater* than our heart. He is in every way greater. Here the reference is to superior authority and knowledge. The conscience is pos-

sessed of only subordinate—He of supreme authority. The conscience may be mistaken, but He cannot err. The conscience may justly condemn on its own grounds, while *He* justly acquits and justifies on *His* own grounds, which conscience cannot know unless He reveals them. And *His* acquitting sentence is of more authority than *its* condemning sentence. And as *He* exceeds the conscience in *authority*, so He does in *knowledge*. “He knows all things.” Conscience knows much of us, and might know more. Conscience knows, too, to some extent, the requisitions and sanctions of the Divine law; but it knows not what is in the Divine mind—naturally, it is not at all aware of the plan of mercy. God knows all our sins in all their heinousness and aggravations; but HE knows, too, all “the purpose of mercy which He has purposed in Himself.” HE knows better than conscience the unfathomable depths of our guilt; but He knows, too, what conscience does not know at all, the deeper depths of His own mercy. Conscience can only testify to what it knows. It goes beyond its proper limits when it testifies, either that sinning man can or that he cannot, be forgiven. It knows he is condemned—justly condemned. It knows this, and from its own resources can know nothing more. It has no right to say whether he may not be pardoned, or if so, on what terms. On these points God has a right to judge; He can give, and has given, a testimony, and this is the testimony—“That God hath given to guilty man eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” When this testimony of God is believed, the condemning testimony of conscience is silenced. Sprinkled with the blood of the infinite atonement, the conscience of the believer in Jesus is pacified, and ceases to condemn—nay, it echoes the testimony of God—it justifies him. It says, “If God be well pleased why should not I? I was angry because I thought HE was angry. His anger is turned away, and so is mine.” “There is no condemnation to him who is in Christ Jesus.” “Who shall lay anything to His charge? God justifies. Who shall condemn? Christ died and rose again,

and is at God's right hand, and maketh intercession for him." It is not for me to "reply against God."¹

Thus does the man who is of the truth assure his heart before God "when his heart condemns him." And as he does this entirely by "*the truth*" understood and believed, he shows that he is indeed "of the truth," just as those who endeavour to assure their minds in any other way show that they are not of the truth.

"When I my wicked heart survey,
And course of life from day to day;
There's nought to meet my wretched view
But sin, and death, its proper due.

But honour, praise, and glory rise
To Him who reigns above the skies!
To pardon guilt of deepest stains,
Unbounded mercy ever reigns.

Jehovah's Fellow—wondrous grace!
Assumed our nature—took our place;
His blood upon the cross was shed,
And He was numbered with the dead!

¹ "The happy period which was to strike off my fetters, and afford me a clear discovery of the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus, was now arrived. I flung myself into a chair near the window, and seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was the twenty-fifth of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans—'Whom God hath set forth a propitiation for sins, by faith in His blood,' etc. Immediately I received strength to believe, and the full beam of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made, for my pardon and justification. I believed and received the peace of the Gospel. Unless the Almighty arm had been under me, I think I should have been overwhelmed with gratitude and joy. My eyes filled with tears, and my voice choked with transport. I could only look up to heaven in silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder. How glad should I have been to spend every moment in prayer and thanksgiving. I lost no opportunity of repairing to a throne of grace, but flew to it with an earnestness irresistible, and never to be satisfied."—COWPER'S Narrative.

See from the dead the First-born come!
 The Lord of Life has burst the tomb!
 To all the world, from this bless'd hour,
 Declared the Son of God with power.

This is enough—'tis all we need;
 The Lord of Life is risen indeed;
 The vilest wretch that breathes the air
 Has now no reason to despair.

Our joy and boast henceforth shall be
 In Him who died upon the tree;
 For the great work He finished there
 Preserves from doubt and dark despair!"

This is the first step in the process by which the Christian makes it plain to himself that he is "of the truth." Let us now look at the second step.

When the conscience, thus sprinkled by the blood of atonement, in the belief of the testimony of God, is pacified, and no longer condemns, the Christian has "confidence before God." "Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God."

It is of great importance that we keep steadily in view what I have already had occasion to remark, that these words are not to be considered as an isolated statement, nor *merely* as the antithesis of the statement which precedes them, but as a farther illustration of the manner in which a Christian manifests himself to be "of the truth."

When the Christian has "assured his heart before God" in the belief of the truth that God who is manifested in Christ as holy light, holy love, the God of peace, the just yet justifying God, is "greater than his heart," which was condemning him, and knows all things, his heart condemns him no longer. His conscience no longer pronounces him under condemnation, an object of Divine displeasure. On the contrary, the conscience going along with the declaration of the Gospel, says to the believer, "In Christ thou hast redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, accord-

to the riches of His grace," "whereby He has made thee accepted in the Beloved."

"His heart condemns him not." These words do not intimate that the conscience, sprinkled by the blood of atonement, and brought into harmony with the voice of God in the Gospel, becomes less perspicacious, less tender, or less honest. The conscience that does not condemn, is saying to the pardoned sinner, more distinctly and impressively than ever, "Thou hast sinned"—it keeps his sin "ever before him." He has clearer and more extended views than he ever had of the evil of sin, and of the number, heinousness, and aggravations, of his own sins. Sin, his own sin, never seemed so loathsome and mischievous as when viewed in the light of the Divine holiness and love, shining with meridian splendour in the cross of Christ. He never saw so clearly the extent and spirituality of the law's requisitions, and the fearful severity, as well as perfect justice of its sanctions—till he saw the one exemplified—and the other endured, in the obedience and sufferings of Him who is "the propitiation for his sins." When he is made to know the Lord in His true character as Jehovah, the Saviour, instead of thinking lightly of sin, instead of palliating or excusing his own sin, "he remembers, and is confounded, and never opens his mouth any more because of his shame, when the Lord God is pacified towards him for all the iniquity he has done."¹

This is quite in accordance with "the heart not condemning" the person. Indeed, any assurance of the heart before God, that leads men to think lightly of transgression, and to act as if they might safely tamper with temptation or commit sin, must rise from entirely false conceptions of the Divine character. In such a case it is not God's voice that has quieted the convictions of conscience. He never says, "Thou shalt have peace though thou walk in the imagination of thine own heart." "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." This is not the peace of God, it is the torpor of

¹ Ezekiel xvi. 63.

the conscience—one of the surest symptoms of the approach of the second death.

But when the heart ceases to condemn, and, on the contrary, acquits, in consequence of its being assured of the boundless knowledge and power of the redeeming God, the consequence is, "we have confidence towards God." To have confidence towards God is something more than to have the heart assured before God. It is not only to be freed from fear, but to be filled with trust. It is not only to be at "peace with God," but it is to have "access with confidence to Him;" "to rejoice in hope of His glory,"—that is, in hope of obtaining His full and entire approbation, and to "joy in Him," as our all-sufficient portion. The rejoicing and the confidence of hope go together. The believer has a joyful confidence in God as his Father in Christ, and humbly, yet doubtfully, expects that He will bless him with "all heavenly and spiritual blessings;" that He will "supply all his need according to His own riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." And this confidence rests entirely on "the truth," which shut the mouth of his condemning conscience—the truth respecting the character of God, made known in the person and work of His Son, revealed in the word of the truth of the Gospel. "It rests," as has been well said, "on a foundation about which there is no uncertainty, which is at all times equally and unchangeably sure, even the truth that God is what He is; and while the Word—that reveals His distinguishing character and glory as the just God, and the Justifier of the ungodly, with whom there is forgiveness, yea, plenteous forgiveness, and to whom salvation belongeth; unto whom no sinner can come, upon whom no sinner can call, without being accepted of Him and saved by Him—while that word stands true to my conscience, I want nothing more to "assure my heart before Him," to bring me to His mercy-seat, with the boldness of a child, and with the sacrifices of praise for His unspeakable gift."¹ The man "knows God's name," and

¹ John Walker.

therefore "puts his trust in Him." He has looked to Him, and been enlightened by the light of His glory in the face of Christ Jesus, and he "rejoices in His name all the day, and is exalted in His righteousness," glorying in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he has received the reconciliation."

This is substantially the account which the Apostle Paul, in the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, gives of the way in which a man "assures his heart before God," and obtains "confidence towards Him." "Righteousness"—a justification—"shall be imputed to us if we believe on Him that raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification;" that is, who was delivered "on account of" our offences, which were the ground of our condemnation, and was raised "on account of" our justification—*i.e.* on account of that which justifies us; and what is that but His own finished work, the "one righteousness" which He wrought out in our room?¹ "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God"—our hearts are assured before Him—"through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have also access," and confidence before Him, "by faith in this grace wherein," or whereby, "we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation"—suffering for the cause of Christ, "worketh" in us believers "patience"—perseverance, and this perseverance "works experience"—trial or proof of the reality of our faith, and this experience "worketh hope which maketh not ashamed"—cannot be disappointed. It strengthens hope, not by adding to or shifting from the foundation on which it rests, but by showing that we have built on the right foundation. And this "hope will never make ashamed"—never disappoint, because "the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost given to us." Our hope cannot disappoint us, for God loves us, and He rests in His love; and we know that

¹ ὁμοίως, with the accusative, has the same sense in the two clauses of Rom. iv. 25, and that its proper sense.

He loves us, for the Holy Ghost enables us to believe the love of God to men—manifested in His giving His Son to die for us while we were yet sinners. Thus does the non-condemning conscience—the acquitting conscience—give us “confidence before God.”¹

This portion of Christian experience is very impressively brought out in the following verses, which, though they have little claim to poetic merit, will find an echo in every Christian heart:—

“When to my sight the Lord shines forth,
I’m filled with awe and fear;
Thy justice, with uplifted arm,
O’erwhelms me with despair.

Not former signs of grace can then
Relieve my troubled heart;
Ah! past experiences of love
Add torture to my smart!

What shall I do? My prayers and tears
Are sinful in Thy sight;
Removed, alas! from Thee as far
As darkness is from light.

¹ John Bunyan, in that wonderful book the *Pilgrim’s Progress*—wonderful as a creation of genius; not less wonderful as an accurate view of Christian doctrine, and a graphic picture of Christian experience—has embodied the sentiments we have been illustrating in the incident that befell Faithful after he had passed through the wicket gate, and had fairly commenced his pilgrimage. In consequence of listening too readily to the suggestions of “Adam the first, who dwells in the town of Deceit,” he was overtaken by “one who came after him swift as the wind, even Moses, who knows not to shew mercy to those who transgress his law.” No sooner did he overtake poor Faithful than “it was a word and a blow,” and down he knocked him, and laid him for dead. “When I had somewhat recovered, I cried him mercy,” says Faithful, “but he said, ‘I know not how to show mercy,’ and with that knocked me down again. He had doubtless made an end of me, but that one came by and bade him forbear. I did not know Him at first, but as He went by I perceived the holes in His hands and in His side: then I concluded that He was our Lord. So I went up the hill.”

Is there no room for mercy left ?
 Is grace for ever gone ?
 I'll mind the years of Thy right hand,
 And wonders Thou hast done :

When to be one with sons of men
 Immanuel did not scorn,
 And when from Jesse's humble house
 The Holy Child was born.

I'll mind the greatness of that love
 Which glowed within His breast,
 When all the wrath of God for sin
 His holy soul oppressed :

When God's own well-beloved Son
 Went mourning to the grave,
 And died beneath the curse, that grace
 Might dying sinners save.

This sign of love my soul relieves ;
 'Tis ease from all my pain ;
 I will not dread to see the Lord,
 For Christ the Lamb was slain !”

In thus obtaining confidence before God, the Christian shews that he is “of the truth ;” for it is only in the belief of the truth that such confidence can be obtained, and only in the degree of the true faith of the true Gospel can this confidence exist.

But the Apostle's account of the method in which they who are “of the truth” come to know that they are of it, is not yet concluded. It appears in the way in which they are enabled to “assure their hearts before God,” “when their hearts condemn them.” It appears, too, in the manner in which they obtain “confidence towards God,” “when their heart does not condemn them.” The next step in the process is—Having obtained “confidence towards God,” they who are “of the truth,” “go boldly to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace” suitable to their

need; "careful for nothing," because trusting God for everything, they make their requests known to Him "by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving."

It deserves to be noticed that prayer is not enjoined *here*, though it is in many other places of Scripture. It is not even said directly, that they who have obtained confidence towards God engage in prayer. That is supposed, as something which, in the circumstances of the case, will—must take place of course. If a man does not pray, that is a plain proof he is "not of the truth." If a man does not pray in faith, that, too, is a proof that he is "not of the truth." But if a man, through the truth believed, has "obtained confidence towards God," how can he help praying?—praying, as it were, without ceasing? "The chasm is now closed which seemed to separate him from The Being who is over all worlds, infinite in greatness and holiness. He has received the spirit of adoption, and turning to Him, with filial confidence, he can say, 'Father!'" Though his conscience does not pronounce him in condemnation, but, on the contrary, accepted in the Beloved, it tells him that he has sinned, and that "sin dwells in him," and that, "in him, that is in his flesh, dwells no good thing." He knows that God can give him what he wants; that He alone can give it him. What he wants and desires, above all things, is more thorough fellowship with God in holiness and happiness. He knows that "this is the will of God, even his sanctification." He is confident that God can make him perfectly holy and happy, and that He is more disposed to give this sum of true blessing than he is desirous to obtain it. How, then, can he but pray? And on thus praying, he knows that he is "of the truth," for, were he not "of the truth" he could not thus pray; and being "of the truth," he cannot but thus pray; and thus the Spirit of adoption witnesses to the man's spirit that he is a son of God, "born of the truth."

But what the apostle directly refers to here, as evidence that the Christians are "of the truth," is the fact that their prayers are answered. "And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him,

because," or rather *for*, "we keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight."

The words "whatsoever we ask," must be limited by the context. Even true Christians may "ask amiss," and in that case it is a mercy to them that they "ask and receive not." But whatsoever they ask in the exercise of that confidence which springs out of the faith of the truth, which delivers from a condemning conscience—whatever they ask in the faith in God's promise, nothing doubting, they assuredly will receive. "He who prays in the name of Christ is moved and guided by the Spirit of Christ in prayer. He can ask for nothing but what is in accordance with the will of God; can, with assurance, ask nothing but what the Spirit makes known to him as corresponding to the Father's will."¹ God does not say to any of His children, "the spiritual house of Israel," "Seek ye My face in vain." When they open their mouths, He fills them. "This is the confidence that they have in Him"—and He never disappoints their confidence—"that if they ask anything according to His will, He heareth them." Whatsoever, says our Lord, "ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ask anything in My name, I *will* do it. Whatsoever ye ask the Father in My name, He will do it. Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you: for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him."

But the Christian has not only the promise on which he is "caused to hope," he has also the fulfilment of it. He knows his prayers are answered, "for he keeps God's commandments, and does those things which are pleasing to Him." These words are often misunderstood. They are considered as asserting that the Christian's obedience is the cause why his

¹ Neander.

prayers are heard, as if there could be *such* obedience till the heart be assured—till the man have confidence towards God—till, in the exercise of this confidence, he have asked as the most desired and valuable of God's gifts, that he would give him true happiness in true holiness. The words describe the evidence that the Christian's prayers according to God's will have been heard—just as our Lord speaks of the great love of the woman who was a sinner, not as the cause, but as the evidence of her forgiveness: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, *for* she loved much." It was a proof that her sins were forgiven, and that she felt they were many, that she loved much. And just so, here, the proof that our prayers for holiness are answered, is that "we keep His commandments, and do the things which are pleasing in His sight."

No man will ever yield a cheerful, unreserved obedience to the Divine law, unless under Divine influence graciously bestowed. The believing prayer of the Christian is—"Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts. Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes. Give me understanding, and I will keep Thy law. Make me to go in the way of Thy commandments." In answer to that prayer, God enlarges his heart, and the result is he keeps God's law continually, habitually—he delights himself in the commandments which he loves; he entreats God's favour with his whole heart, and the answer of his prayer is found—"I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." The Christian, in the full assurance of faith, asks of God His Holy Spirit, and in the confidence of being heard, and under the influence of the truth—which has at once stilled the terrors and jealousies of a guilty conscience, and triumphed over the enmity and worldliness, and love of sin in his depraved heart—he "serves God without fear, in righteousness and holiness,"—"walks at liberty, keeping God's commandments;" feels that God "grants him His law graciously," and teaches him to find his pleasure in his duty; and in all this he cannot but see the answer of his prayer. This is what I prayed for, and I have got it; and none but God could have given it to me. He

promised this, and enabled me to depend on the promise—and now He has fulfilled it: “Faithful is He who hath promised, who also has done it.” My prayer was, “that He would make me perfect in every good work to do His will, working in me that which is well-pleasing in His sight,” and I, by His grace, “keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.” Knowing and believing that He hears us, we cannot but recognise, in our cheerful, happy, though still very imperfect obedience, the operation of His Spirit and the answer of our prayers, and cannot doubt that, *in this*, “we have the petitions that we desired of Him.”

And this crowns the proof that we are “of the truth:” for nothing but the truth believed could produce such obedience, and such obedience is the natural and necessary result of the truth really understood and believed: “Hereby do we know that we are of the truth.”

It is thus that the Christian’s life of fellowship with God in holy happiness begins, is prosecuted, and ultimately reaches perfection; and thus, when interrupted, is it re-established. “The truth as it is in Jesus,” understood and believed, delivers from the demoralizing and misery-producing influence of a condemning conscience, produces a new grateful reception of a free and full forgiveness, restores confidence before God, leads to believing prayer for all heavenly and spiritual blessings, and yields, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, a holy happy life of childlike obedience. The truth, and the truth alone, known and believed, does all this as its natural result—the truth not lying dead in the letter, but made spirit and life by the good Spirit leading us so to attend to its meaning and evidence, that intelligent faith is the consequence. This is the only certain way to God, to peace, to holiness, to heaven: “This is the way, walk ye in it.”

How accurately and beautifully is the process described by our Christian poet, who himself had passed through it:—

“His conscience, like a glassy lake before,
Lash’d into foaming waves, begins to roar;

The law, grown clamorous, though silent long,
 Arraigns him—charges him with ev'ry wrong—
 Asserts the rights of his offended Lord ;
 And death or restitution is the word.
 The last impossible, he fears the first,
 And, having well deserved, expects the worst.
 Then welcome refuge, and a peaceful home :
 Oh for a shelter from the wrath to come !
 Crush me, ye rocks ; ye falling mountains hide,
 Or bury me in ocean's angry tide.
 The scrutiny of those all-seeing eyes
 I dare not—And you need not, God replies ;
 The remedy you want I freely give :
 The Book shall teach you—read, believe, and live !
 'Tis done—the raging storm is heard no more ;
 Mercy receives him on her peaceful shore ;
 And Justice, guardian of the dread command,
 Drops the red vengeance from his willing hand.
 A soul redeem'd demands a life of praise ;
 Hence the complexion of his future days.
 Hence a demeanour holy and unspeak'd,
 And the world's hatred as its sure effect.”¹

Brethren, this is the way in which we must be saved. This is the way in which our calling and election must be made sure.

“ Oh how unlike the complex works of man,
 Heaven's easy, artless, unencumber'd plan !
 No meretricious graces to beguile,
 No clust'ring ornaments to clog the pile ;
 From ostentation as from weakness free,
 It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
 Majestic in its own simplicity.
 Inscribed above the portal, from afar,
 Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
 Legible only by the light they give,
 Stand the soul-quick'ning words—*Believe, and live !*
 Too many, shock'd at what should charm them most,
 Despise the plain direction, and are lost.
 Heav'n on such terms ! (they cry, with proud disdain)
 Incredible, impossible, and vain !
 Rebel, because it is easy to obey ;
 And scorn, for its own sake, the gracious way.

¹ Cowper.

These are the sober, in whose cooler brains
 Some thought of immortality remains ;
 The rest, too busy, or too gay, to wait
 On the sad theme, their everlasting state,
 Sport for a day, and perish in a night ;
 The foam upon the waters not so light.”¹

Alas, alas, and is it indeed so? Must they—will they thus perish? Surely “madness is in the hearts of men.” Oh that they were wise, that they understood this!

To the sinner we proclaim, “Turn, turn, why wilt thou die.” Beware of seeking light from the gloom of a condemned conscience, in the sparks of any fire thou canst kindle. The end of that “is the blackness of darkness for ever and ever.” “This shall ye have of My hand,” saith the Lord, “ye shall lie down in sorrow.” Look to HIM, and be ye lightened. “Look to Me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth.”

And we call on the Christian, tortured by a condemning heart, and seeking in vain relief in himself, to listen to the Holy, Holy, Holy One, proclaiming, “I, even I, am He who blot out your transgressions *for my own sake*, and I will not remember your sin. I will heal your backsliding, I will love you freely.” The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, the propitiation for sin, cleanseth from all sin. If we confess our sins over the head of that blessed victim, “God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” In believing *this*, we enter into peace—we assure our hearts before God—we obtain confidence towards Him—we ask of Him what is agreeable to His will. He heareth us, and, in answer to our prayers, “He makes us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us what is well pleasing in His sight.” And thus, in the cheering sunshine of the Divine favour manifested in the word of the truth of the Gospel, hoping continually, we will go in the strength of the Lord; strong for work and warfare, singing in the good ways of the Lord, making mention of *His* righteousness, even of His only; walking without

¹ Cowper.

weariness, running without fainting, going from strength to strength, till we appear in Zion before God. In following the course indicated by the apostle, we shall know that we are of the truth; our calling and our election will be made sure; we shall be kept from falling, and at last an entrance shall be ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

DISCOURSE II.

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION, AND HOW TO OBTAIN IT.

2 Tim. i. 12.—“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.”

THERE are few mental habits, the possession of which is of greater importance to the happiness of the individual, and the display of which is surer to draw forth the admiration of his fellow-men, than fortitude. It has been justly said the coward dies a thousand times—the brave man only once. Pity, seldom without some mixture of contempt, is the sentiment with which the character and conduct of the timid are generally regarded; and it is the man who remains calm, self-possessed, and intrepid amid sufferings, perplexities, and hazards, who, by the universal suffrage of mankind, is honoured with the appellation great.

Few men have possessed this quality in a higher degree than the apostle Paul, or have been placed in circumstances more favourable for its manifestation. His words were true to the letter: “We stand in jeopardy every hour.” Hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, bonds and imprisonment, the faithlessness of professed friends and the inveterate malignity of powerful and active enemies—in one word, danger and death in their most repulsive and alarming forms—these were the tests to which his fortitude was habitually subjected during the whole of his apostolic life. And it stood the trial—severe, varied, and protracted as it was. None of these things moved

him. They could in no degree change his resolution, or induce him to alter his course. His determination to gain his object at all hazards remained unshaken—unshakeable. He was now, when he wrote this epistle, “such an one as Paul the aged”—very near the close of that life which had been to him in reality—what to most of us is but a rhetorical emblem—“a great fight of affliction”—a mortal combat. He was now probably in one of the dungeons of the Mamertine prison, laden with chains, expecting death—death by the hand of the public executioner. It might be postponed for months, it might take place to-morrow. In these circumstances, with what deep solemnity, with what undaunted heroism, does he realize to himself the situation in which he was placed! “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.”

Such a manifestation of fortitude, apart altogether from the merits of the cause in which it is displayed, excites in every unsophisticated heart a sentiment of admiration. This is an instinctive feeling irrespective of the judgment of the reason, or even the action of the will. From the constitution of our nature, however, it is soon followed by an inquiry into what has called forth this fortitude which we cannot but admire; and if it be found that the man is brave in a cause which does not deserve support, and for reasons which will not bear examination, the feeling of admiration, if not extinguished, is greatly modified, by that of regret that such energy should not have been better directed, and that so strong a will had not been guided by a sounder mind. But if, on the other hand, it appear that the cause is one for which no sacrifice, however expensive, can be considered as too great, and that the strength of resolution, the tenacity of purpose, the utter disregard of pain or danger,

are more than warranted by the importance of the interests involved, the instinctive feeling rises into a higher and more abiding emotion : admiration blends with respect and esteem, and takes the form of veneration. Such is the effect produced on our minds when we trace the apostle's fortitude to its source. And when we find that he was engaged in a cause embracing all the great interests in the universe ; that his energetic action, his constant endurance, had their springs in firm convictions—high expectations ; and that these in their turn rested on well-established truth, clearly perceived and firmly believed ; his temper and conduct appear as reasonable as they are noble. *They* become, indeed, less objects of wonder—but *he* becomes even more the object of admiration.

The true account of the apostle's fortitude is given in the words which I have chosen as the subject of discourse :—" I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." He does not say who He was whom he believed, nor what it was he had committed to Him. It has been happily said, " He names neither the trustee nor the trust—the depositary nor the deposit." Timothy readily understood the reference, and so do we. " He whom I have believed," and " that which I have committed to Him," are more familiar than household-words : they are heart-words with all who have been taught of God, and made " wise unto salvation."¹

The text is in no ordinary degree interesting as a graphic picture of the apostle's state of mind in the midst of suffering, in the prospect of death—a state of calm, firm, joyful expectation of future blessedness ; but it is still more interesting when viewed as containing what may be called the Natural History of that state of mind—an account of the manner in which it had been produced—of the steps of the process by which he had arrived at so enviable a result. He had believed Christ—that was the first step : he had committed to Him

¹ Dr M'Crie.

a precious deposit against the great day of final settlement—that was the second: he entertained the most confident expectation that the deposit was safe, and that He was able to keep it—that was the third: and finally, his confident expectation rested on a sure foundation—He knew whom he had believed.

We have all a very deep personal concern in this matter. It is of primary importance to our happiness that we should have the same confident, joyful, well-grounded expectation which Paul had; and it will appear clearly, on our considering the subject, that the way in which he obtained it is as open to us as it was to him; that it can be obtained in no other way; and that it is certain to be obtained by all who duly seek it. He who really believes Christ will, must, cannot but commit to Him that which he counts most valuable; having done so, he will obtain the joyful persuasion and hope, that what *he* has committed to Christ is perfectly safe; and in what he knows of Christ he will have what is sufficient to convince him that this persuasion has a firm foundation, and that this hope shall never make him ashamed.

I. Let us begin, then, at the beginning. The foundation of Paul's strong, well-grounded confidence of final and complete salvation was laid in his believing Christ; and any expectation we may cherish in reference to final and complete salvation, is delusory, if it do not rest on the same ground—spring from the same root. No man, unless he believe Christ, can have a well-grounded expectation of final happiness.

It is obviously, then, a very important question, What is it to "believe Christ?" The apostle terms Christ "Him whom I have believed"—that is, 'I have believed Him, I do believe Him.' To believe is to credit, to count true. To believe a statement is to count it true. To believe a person is to count true what that person says, because he says it. There are two expressions used in Scripture in reference to saving faith—'to believe in Christ,' and 'to believe Christ.' The latter

is used here. These expressions are of kindred signification—but the last is more definite than the first. ‘To believe in Christ’ may signify to believe the truth about Christ—as to believe in the resurrection is to believe the truth about the resurrection; or it may signify to believe the truth Christ speaks—as to believe in Moses is to believe the truth spoken by Moses. ‘To believe Christ’ can properly signify nothing but to believe what Christ says, because Christ says it. He who does this will, as a matter of course, trust in Christ and hope in Christ—just as he will, as a matter of course, love Christ and obey Christ; but trust and hope are not faith any more than love and obedience. Words generally, as a matter of course, are to be considered as used in their proper signification, and should never, without good reason, be interpreted in any other.

There was a time when the Apostle Paul did not *believe* Jesus Christ. He counted Him an impostor, and reckoned His doctrine falsehood. Jesus Christ’s having said any thing was enough to prejudice him against it. It seemed to him all the less likely to be true that Jesus Christ had said it. But this was before Paul really knew Jesus Christ. It is possible that he might have seen Him during some of his visits to Jerusalem—but he never knew Him till in the way to Damascus he “saw that Just One, and heard the voice of His mouth” speaking from the midst of the excellent glory—the symbol of the Divine presence, and saying to him, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” He believed, he could not but believe, that saying—he counted it true because spoken by Him; and henceforward Paul counted true every thing that Christ said, and asked no better reason than that Christ had said it.

Christ not unfrequently spoke to Paul after his conversion, in the course of his apostolical labours—directing and comforting him; and whenever He spoke, Paul believed Him. But the belief here spoken of probably does not refer so much, if at all, to these sayings of our Lord—certainly it is not to be confined to them—as to the sayings of our Lord recorded by

those who heard them—sayings in which we have just as deep an interest as he had, and which lay the foundation for him who believes them, to commit all that he thinks most valuable to Christ's care.

If we wish to know what Paul believed when he believed Christ, we must know what Christ said, and it may serve a good purpose to notice some of these sayings; for it is only by attending to their import that we can see the connection between believing and trusting Him so as to commit to Him our all. We must know the *matter* of faith in order to our understanding the *influence* of faith.

Christ had said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." "The Son of man is come to save that which was lost." "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." "The Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins." "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth." In answer to the high priest adjuring Him to say whether He was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, He replied, under the sanction of an oath, "I am. And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." He had said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth in Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." He had said,

“ Whatsoever things the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” “ As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son.” “ The Father Himself hath sent Me, and borne witness of Me.” “ I am the bread of life. He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.” “ All that the Father hath given Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” “ I came down from heaven to do the will of Him that sent Me; and this is the Father’s will, that of all that He hath given Me I should lose nothing; that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on Him should have everlasting life; and that I should raise him up at the last day.” “ The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” “ If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink: He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” He had said, “ Before Abraham was, I AM.” “ I am the good Shepherd, and I give My life for the sheep; and My Father loveth Me because I lay down My life that I may take it again.” “ I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father, who gave them Me, is greater than all, and none can pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” “ I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.” He had said to His disciples, “ In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go away, I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” “ If ye love Me, keep My commandments.” “ Without Me,” apart from Me, “ ye can do nothing.” “ Because I live, ye shall live also.” Finally, He had said, “ If any man *will* be My disciple, let him deny”—renounce, “ himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”

These are some of Christ’s sayings, to which the apostle’s

exhortation to the Ephesian church may be considered as referring, when he says, that he had showed them "how they ought to remember the words of the Lord Jesus." With these and many more words of our Lord Jesus, the apostle was, doubtless, well acquainted—they were ever in his mind; and in every one of them he believed Christ. He counted every one of them "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance," just because it was the word of Christ. The sum and substance of these sayings was this: 'I am the divinely appointed, divinely qualified, divinely accredited, divine Saviour of men—their only, their all-sufficient Saviour; and I claim from those whom I come to save, undoubting faith, entire reliance, implicit obedience, unqualified submission.'

To count those statements true, because they are the sayings of Christ, is the faith of the Gospel. Thus Paul believed, thus all Christians believe, thus should all men believe Christ.

This faith is, from the nature of the case, appropriating, for it is impossible really to believe these truths without believing them in reference to ourselves. The man does not believe Christ who believes a gospel in which he himself has no interest, for Jesus Christ never gave such a gospel: and this faith of Christ naturally, and indeed necessarily, leads to devotement to—reliance on Him.

II. This brings me to the second step in the process towards that state of firm, undoubting persuasion of final happiness to which the apostle had attained, and which we all must feel to be so desirable. Having believed Christ, he "committed to Him" a precious deposit against, or till, the great day of account. Some excellent scholars and divines identify the belief in the first clause, with the committal in the second—but had this been the apostle's meaning, it seems likely that *cognate* words, at any rate, would have been used in both cases. The committal seems the result—the natural, the certain, the immediate result of the believing. The belief,

the committal, and the persuasion are all very closely connected.

What that deposit was it is not difficult to discover. What, indeed, could it be but *himself*—"soul, body, and spirit?" He gave *himself* to Christ, that He might transform him by His Spirit, employ him in His service, and bless him with His salvation. He committed body and soul to His disposal, in life and in death, and for ever, to be animated by His Spirit, regulated by His laws, protected by His providence, and made happy in the enjoyment of the salvation that is in Him with eternal glory.

This precious deposit was committed to Christ in the prospect of "*that day*." The day here so emphatically designated is plainly "the day in which God will judge the world in righteousness"—"the day of the revelation of His righteous judgment"—in which He will "render to every man according to his works." Looking forward to that day, the apostle was aware that, as a sinner, what was most precious to him—*himself*—must be lost if left to the care of himself or any created being, and therefore, encouraged by what Christ had said and he had believed, he committed himself to HIM as a deposit—to be kept safe *till* that day—and *in* that day.

This committing of himself to Christ, that He might use him in His service and bless him with His salvation, is, like the faith in which it originates, not to be considered as a passing act, but as an abiding habit of mind. The apostle every day was yielding himself to Christ as His servant, and his members and faculties to Him as instruments of righteousness in His service; and he was every day, too, expecting and seeking his happiness *in* Christ—*from* Christ.

Now, this committing of *himself*, this depositing with Christ his all—naturally, necessarily, grew out of his believing Christ. Jesus Christ had said plainly that He had given Himself a ransom for him; and believing this, he could not but see that it was most reasonable and right that he should give himself to Christ. He saw he was Christ's property, for He had redeemed him with His blood, and he durst not withhold what

it was plain He highly valued, else He would not have given such a price for it. Believing, because Christ had said it, that HE “died, and rose, and revived, that He might be the Lord both of the dead and living,” he could not but act accordingly, and feel that he should not live to himself—that he should not die to himself; but that, living or dying, he should think, and feel, and act, as if he were, indeed, the Lord’s. Believing that he had been bought with a price, he was persuaded that he was not—that he could not be—his own, but HIS who had bought him, and that he ought to “glorify HIM in his body and in his spirit, which were HIS.” He believed what Christ had said to him, “If any man *will* be My disciple, let him deny”—that is, let him renounce—“himself.” He *would* be, he was determined to be, Christ’s disciple. God had wrought in him thus to will—led him, drawn him, and therefore he renounced himself—gave himself up to Christ, to be guided, governed, saved by Him—putting entirely at His disposal, *himself*—all he was, all he possessed—in all circumstances, throughout all duration. Christ had said to him, “Thou art a chosen vessel unto Me”—“Thou art *Mine*;” and from the bottom of his heart Paul was constantly replying, “Lord, I am Thine—Thou art my owner, my Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve.”

And this is substantially true of every one who, like Paul, believes Christ—counts what Christ says true, because Christ says it. His self-renunciation, his committing of himself as a deposit to Christ, will just be according to the measure of his faith. Jesus Christ, the Divine Saviour, says, in the believed word, to the believing sinner, “I have redeemed thee—thou art *Mine* :” and how can he help replying, “Into Thine hand I commit my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.” The truth, in believing which Paul committed himself to Christ, was not merely, nor mainly, the peculiar revelation made to him; it was the “the word of the truth of the Gospel,” addressed to us as well as to him. What was peculiar in his case was chiefly that he had evidence additional to, and somewhat different from, what we have: but we have

abundance of evidence; and it is not the kind and measure of evidence, but the nature of the truth believed and the reality of the belief, that directly lead sinners to the committing of all to the Saviour. "It was as a sinner—the chief of sinners—that Paul committed himself to Christ 'in believing;' and it was as a believer, and on grounds common to all believers in every age, that he expresses his persuasion 'that He will keep that which he had committed to Him.'"¹ Having thus committed himself to Christ, that he might serve Him and be saved by Him, in consequence of having believed Christ—the apostle declares that he is "persuaded that Christ is able to keep that which he has committed to Him till that day."

III. This is the third topic which comes under our consideration. And here I will endeavour to explain what was the apostle's persuasion, and then show that, as the committing of himself to Christ naturally resulted from his belief of Christ—so this persuasion as naturally rises out of these combined—his believing Christ, and his committing himself to Christ.

His persuasion was, that Christ was "able to keep that which he had committed to Him against that day." I am convinced we should very unduly narrow our ideas of what was the object of the apostle's persuasion were we to confine the meaning of these words "able to keep" to the idea of physical ability or mere power. The phrase is often used in Scripture of such qualifications as will certainly secure the event referred to. The expression, "God is able to make him stand," is equivalent to God will, shall make him stand. "God is able to make all grace abound towards you," is equivalent to God 'will—shall make all grace abound towards you.' "Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can think," is equivalent to Him who will do exceeding abundantly above all we can think. "Him that is able to keep you from falling," is equivalent to Him who will keep you

¹ Dr M'Crie.

from falling. In like manner here the apostle does not seem to mean merely that Christ had *power*, if he were disposed to exert it, to keep His deposit, but that He had every qualification for keeping it—everything necessary to His keeping it safely. It is equivalent to “I am persuaded my deposit is safe, for He to whom it is committed is such a person as cannot but take good care of it.”

Now what was it that the apostle expected in the *keeping* of his deposit by Christ against that day? He was persuaded that Christ would take good care of him, soul and body, in life, in death, in the grave, and in the state of separate souls. He was persuaded that He would “never leave him—never forsake him;” that He would perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle him;” that He would guide him in the path of duty; that He would fit him for the discharge of it; that his Lord’s “grace would be sufficient for him, and his strength be perfected in his weakness;” that he should be protected from or sustained under, and delivered from all afflictions; that “all grace should be made to abound” to him; that he should be enabled to glorify his Lord, whether in life or in death; that he should be “kept from falling”—kept faithful to the death; that nothing should ever “separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus; and that he should be made more than a conqueror through Him that loved him. He expected that death, whenever, and in whatever form it came, should be a great gain; that “the earthly house of this tabernacle,” when taken down, should in due time be replaced by “a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;” that when “absent from the body” he should be “present with the Lord”—with Him where He is, beholding, and, so far as the thing is possible, sharing His glory; and that, at the appointed season, “the Saviour from heaven, the Lord Jesus, should change his vile body into the likeness of His own glorified body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself. Finally, he expected that in the great day of judgment, the entire deposit committed to the Saviour should be produced—immeasurably improved

under His care, and be presented to the Father, the Great Owner, "without spot and blameless, with exceeding joy," meeting His entire approbation. Ah, how different would have been the result had he retained the deposit in his own hand, or given it in charge to any but the Saviour! This was the apostle's expectation.

When it is said he expected that his deposit was to be kept "against" or *till* "that day," we are not to conclude that it should then be resumed or pass into other hands. Any change which would make the apostle less "Christ's" than he had been ever since his conversion, would have been regarded by him as anything rather than an object of hope. The deposits the Saviour has taken so good care of in life and death and in the separate state, will be, "in that day," "made up" by Him as His jewels, into a diadem of immortal beauty, which shall be His "crown of glory and rejoicing" throughout all eternity.

The apostle was persuaded that his deposit would be thus kept; for he was persuaded that He to whom he had committed it was possessed of all the qualifications which could secure its being thus kept—all the power, wisdom, kindness, and faithfulness necessary for this purpose.

As the committing of the deposit to Christ naturally results from believing Christ, so the persuasion that the deposit is safe as naturally results from the faith of Christ and the committing the deposit to Him united. It is not the recollection that I once believed Christ—that I once committed myself to Him—pleasant though such recollections are, and useful as they may be,—it is not these that give the persuasion that the deposit is absolutely safe. It is the believing and the committing as present exercises of the mind that are fitted to produce this result. If I believe what Christ says in reference to those who commit themselves to Him, and if I at the same time do commit myself to Him, the persuasion naturally—necessarily, rises in the mind, that my deposit is safe. I am conscious I am committing myself to Him; I believe what He says, because He says it. And what does He say?—"I

give unto My sheep eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father, who gave them Me, is greater than all ; and none is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one." How *can* he who thus believes, and thus commits, but be persuaded that the deposit is safe ? Wherever there is this faith and this committing, there will be a proportionate measure of this persuasion ; and the more simple is the faith, the more unreserved and habitual the committing, the firmer will be the persuasion ; and to seek for such a persuasion while not believing Christ, or not committing ourselves to Him, is to seek something that cannot be found—and if it could, would do us harm instead of good.

It is not, however, the recollection of the fact that I have believed Christ, and that I have committed myself to Him ; it is not even the present consciousness that I believe Christ and am committing myself to Him, that is, properly speaking, the foundation of my persuasion that my deposit is safe. Without these I could not have this persuasion—but the true grounds of the persuasion lie deeper than these : they are not in *me* at all, they are in "*Him* whom I believe"—to whom I have committed my all. It is because "I know *Him*" that I have this confidence in Him. So says the apostle, "I know Him whom I have believed," and therefore "am persuaded."

IV. This is the fourth and last topic which our text calls on us to consider. You will observe that the apostle does not say—"I know that I have believed," or even "I know that I believe." He could have said both, but neither was to his present purpose. There are men who are always seeking for evidence that they have believed, or do believe, in order that on *this* they may build the persuasion that all is safe. This is a hazardous and round about course, and indicates in many cases that men are thinking more of themselves than of the Saviour—are in quest of comfort rather than safety, of enjoyment rather than salvation, of sensible satisfaction rather than spiritual improvement. It is the object of faith, not faith

itself, on which such a persuasion can be legitimately based. "The grounds on which a believer entertains a hope of eternal salvation, are substantially the same with those on which he was first induced to rest for pardon and acceptance."¹ Nor does the apostle say, "I know what I have believed—what I do believe," though he could have said this also,—for he was a very intelligent though an implicit believer; and his persuasion was founded on *what* he believed. But he here presents the ground of his persuasion, not in the form of abstract propositions, but of the living subject of these propositions. CHRIST is the ground of his persuasion, that in believing *Him*, committing himself to *Him*, he is absolutely safe: "I know WHOM I have believed." *His* essential perfections and *His* mediatorial qualifications—what *He* is, what *He* has shown Himself to be, assure me that believing Him—committing myself to Him—I shall not, cannot perish. While *He* continues what He is, and what I know He is, I am sure I am safe; and He whom I have believed—He to whom I have committed my deposit, is no stranger to me: "I know *Him*." My faith, though implicit, is not blind; my persuasion, though strong, is not unwarranted.

The apostle knew Jesus Christ to be "God over all, blessed for ever"—"God manifest in the flesh"—the "Sent and Sealed of God," to whom God had given the Holy Spirit not by measure. He knew Him as "the Mediator between God and man," who had "given Himself a ransom for all"—whose "blood cleanseth from all sin"—and who makes intercession for those for whom He has made expiation. He thus knew Him to be possessed of all the qualifications which are necessary to make Him the safe depository of man's highest interests.

More particularly, he knew Him to be possessed of infinite *power*; in His original nature "the mighty God;" as Mediator, having "power over all flesh"—"all power in heaven and earth"—"power by which He can subdue all things to Himself." He knew Him to be possessed of infinite *wisdom*; in His original nature the all-wise God; as Mediator, pos-

¹ Dr M'Crie.

sessed of perfect knowledge and unerring prudence—filled with “the spirit of good understanding in the fear of the Lord.” He knew Him to be infinitely *faithful*; in His original nature “the God who cannot lie,” who “keepeth the truth for ever;” as the Mediator, “the faithful and true Witness,” “in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen to the glory of God by us.” He knew Him to be infinitely *kind*; in His original nature, the God who is “love,” whose chosen name is “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin”—“rich in mercy:” and who, as Mediator, had so loved men as not to love His own life to the death in order to obtain their salvation,—who “loved His chosen people so as to wash them from their sins in His own blood, and to make them kings and priests to God and His Father.”

He knew all this, for he had “heard of it in the word of the truth of the Gospel” which, under Divine influence, he had believed: and he had, moreover, the witness in himself that Jesus Christ was indeed all this. He had experienced His *power* in conquering his own enmity, and in protecting him from very powerful foes. He had experienced His *wisdom*, in the revelations He had made to him, and in His guiding him by His Spirit amid all the difficulties of his strangely chequered course. He had experienced His *faithfulness*, in the fulfilment of many a promise, and especially of that comprehensive one, “My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” He could say from experience, “all men have not faith,” “but the Lord is faithful.” He had experienced His *kindness* in countless forms. His grace had been to him “exceeding abundant”—forgiving all his iniquities, healing all his diseases, redeeming his soul from destruction, crowning him with loving-kindness and tender mercies. Thus knowing *Him*, how could he but put his trust in *Him*? Having believed in this all-accomplished Saviour, and having committed his all to Him, how could he but be persuaded that He would keep for him that which he had committed to Him?

And in like manner, every man who, like Paul, has believed—is believing Christ, and has committed—is committing, his all to His care, shall find that, just in the measure of the personal knowledge he has of Jesus Christ, as He manifests himself in His word, and in His saving operations on his own mind and heart—just in the measure of his knowledge of Him as powerful and wise, faithful and kind—he will rise above all distressing doubts and fears as to his final salvation, and rest in the persuasion that “He whom he has believed” is “able to keep that which he has committed to Him till that day.” It was a measure of the knowledge of Christ which led the apostle to believe Him and commit himself to Him; it was this knowledge, ever growing, which kept him believing Him, and committing himself to Him; and it was this knowledge of *Him* that gave him the persuasion that the deposit was safe. And in this the apostle was “a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Christ to life everlasting.” How does this fact show “the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord!” How should it make us anxious that we may know Him—follow on to know Him—“grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹

And now for the practical improvement of these important statements.

In the way of caution and reproof, they are fitted to be

¹ “This assurance differs essentially and totally from all blind impulses, all enthusiastic imaginations, all sudden impressions made on the mind, but of which the person can give no intelligent or satisfactory account. It is not the result of dreams or visions. It is not produced by immediate suggestions of the Spirit. It is not grafted on texts of Scripture, ill understood and broken off from their connection, which have been forcibly injected into the mind, or selected by a kind of spiritual lottery.” “This persuasion cometh not of Him that calleth you, Christian; but is to be suspected of delusion, nourishing pride and self-conceit, and creating a fanciful and presumptuous confidence, accompanied with a feverish tumult in the affections, which bursts out into extravagance of sentiment and irregularity of conduct, and then gradually subsides to the point of freezing indifference and incredulity.” . . . “Nothing short of a Divine testimony and assurance could have inclined the awakened sinner to en-

profitable for "correction and instruction in righteousness," to many professors of Christianity and even not a few true Christians. The persons referred to are exceedingly desirous of obtaining absolute assurance of the safety of their state for eternity; and we cannot certainly altogether blame them for this; but we do blame them for the plan which they adopt for gaining their object. If they could be but sure that they had at any time believed Christ—if they could be sure that at any time they had committed themselves to Christ—they think they would be quite happy, because quite safe. There are three great objections to this course: first, it is a very difficult thing to obtain certain trustworthy recollections of past states of mind;—secondly, if we had them, Scripture teaches us to expect peace, not in the thought that we have believed, but in believing;—and thirdly, to make our recollected, or even our consciously present state of mind the *ground* of our confidence, is in some measure to put ourselves in the room of the Saviour, or at least to make a ground of confidence partly out of His work, and partly out of our faith and its effects.

The passage before us teaches us "a more excellent way." Christ known as the powerful, wise, faithful, gracious Saviour, is the ground of our hope; and it is in presently believing Him, presently committing ourselves to Him, that we are to expect that He will give us the persuasion that He whom we have believed, and to whom we have entrusted our all, will assuredly keep that which we have committed to Him till that day. Blessed Saviour, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee." See, Christians, that you believe *Him*, commit your-trust Christ with his eternal welfare; and nothing less will sustain the confidence of a believer, who has obtained a clearer and ever-increasing insight into the preciousness of the redemption of his soul, or preserve him from distracting doubts and fears amidst the temptations and infirmities by which he feels himself surrounded and oppressed." . . . "The clearer that the believer's views are of the object of his faith, the firmer, of course, will be his assurance."—Dr M'CRIE'S Sermons, xv. pp. 269, 270, 272, 274.

selves to *Him*, and seek more and more to know *Him*. That is the safe path of holiness and peace.

How much to be pitied, as well as blamed, are those Christians who, by seeking peace and confidence in another way, at once dishonour the Saviour and damage their own spiritual interests, exposing themselves alternately to the hazards of a false confidence and the anxieties of an ill-founded despondency!

How much more to be pitied and blamed are those who, under the Gospel revelation, live and die without having, in many cases without seeking, any solid ground of hope for eternity! Oh what is to become of those who do not know Christ—who do not believe Him—who never have committed to Him their all: who are without hope in reference to eternity, or if they have a hope, have one that, in the hour of trial, will be found—instead of a living hope—like “the giving up of the ghost,” and will end in a disappointment which will make them ashamed world without end! Self-destroyers, have merey on yourselves. Seek the knowledge of Christ, the Saviour—the Saviour of the world—ready to save you coming to Him; believe Him, commit your all to Him, and then there will rise up in your mind, as “a well of living water springing up unto eternal life,” a persuasion founded on Christ—on Christ alone—on His excellencies and His work, His grace and His promise, that all is well, all is well for ever—a persuasion ever growing with your growing faith, and your more entire committing of your all to Him. This is the only way of getting to heaven at last, and of obtaining in the meantime the well-grounded hope of getting there.

How full of pleasing reflection is the subject which we have been considering in reference to the true disciples of Christ—those who have parted with all that they may secure all—both those of them who wake and those of them who have “fallen on sleep,”—both those of them who are alive and those of them who are dead!

Those of them who are in this world are in the midst of dangers of various kinds, but they are safe. They have committed themselves to the care of the Saviour, and He will

keep that which they have committed to Him. He will "keep them from the evil" that is in the world. He will keep them from the evil *one*, the god of this world. The lion of hell shall not be allowed to devour or even hurt them. He will keep them from the evil *ones*, the men of this world. He will keep them from the evil things of this world,—from suffering, so far as it is an evil thing—from *sin*, which is essentially *an evil, the evil, thing*. "He will give His angels charge concerning them to keep them in all their ways." "All His saints are in His hand"—and "He will keep the feet of His saints." He will "keep their spirit, soul, and body." They are "His purchased possession," and it has cost Him too dear to be easily parted with. So safe, so absolutely safe, amid all the hazards of mortal life, are all who, believing in Christ, are committing themselves to Him.

"Concerning them who are asleep," they are safe too—their *bodies* safe from all suffering in the grave, "the place where the Lord lay"—resting in hope of a resurrection like His. "My dead body," says He, "they shall arise." Of all that the Father has given Him, of all that His people have given Him,—and by both the whole man was committed to Him,—"He will lose *nothing*, but will raise it up at the last day." And their *spirits* are safe in the blissful region of happy separate souls—"the spirits of the just made perfect"—with Him to whom they were committed in life and in death—where He is with His Father and their Father, His God and their God. There they are ever near Him, under His special care, "fed and led by Him to living fountains of waters." And the hour cometh when the separated portions of the *deposit* shall be reunited; and as the fully ripened fruit of all His labours and sorrows, they shall be, if possible, more the objects of His peculiar care and love than ever. "Yea," says He, "they shall be *MINE* in that day in which I make up My jewels."

If Christians but realized these truths, could they be so much "shaken in mind or troubled" by any thing that can befall them here below, as they often are? could they shrink,

as they often do, from putting off this their tabernacle, "as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed us,"—parting with mortal life as reluctantly as if they were parting with life immortal, and as if the life parted with, as well as the better life retained, were not a portion of the deposit which they had committed to Him who is able to keep it against that day?—Could they shed such bitter tears, as they often do, over the graves of those who by dying have escaped beyond the sphere of danger, and suffering, and death? These are abundant consolations, these are good hopes. There are those here who need them just now; and there are those here, too, who may, who ought, thankfully to avail themselves of them.

When our Christian friends die, and when we come to die, we should, if we are Christians, remember that our Lord is but exercising the power which we cordially acknowledged to belong to Him when we made Him our depositary—when we surrendered soul, body, and spirit to Him. He is taking care of what has been committed to Him: He is in the best way managing those precious deposits. Let us trust Him. If we know Him whom we have believed as we ought, we could not but trust Him. He cannot mistake. He has done, He will do, all things well. And when, at *that day*, He, as it were, restores to us "our own with usury,"—gives us back ourselves in body, soul, and spirit, oh how changed from what we were when we committed ourselves to Him!—we will most gratefully acknowledge this, and immediately returning to Him the deposit He has so faithfully kept, so marvellously improved, we will say, "It is all Thine own," "we are Thy workmanship;" "We are not our own, we are bought with a price;"—throughout eternity we will glorify Thee with these perfected spirits and in these glorified bodies, for they are THINE. To Him who redeemed us to God by His blood, and who has kept that which we committed to Him—to Him who washed us from our sins in His blood, and has kept us by His Divine power through faith to the salvation that is in Him with eternal glory, be blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever.

DISCOURSE III.

THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN ECONOMY, AND THE MEANS OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT.

2 Cor. iv. 6.—For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

THE Holy Scriptures are often treated, by those who profess to consider them as an authentic record of communications from God, in a manner which would be justly considered as disrespectful, in reference to communications from a human superior or friend. In this remark I do not refer to that utter neglect of the perusal of the sacred volume, or that habitual inattention in perusing it, by which so many, who acknowledge its Divine original, are characterized and disgraced: I refer to a habit which prevails extensively among another and a better class of Christian professors,—men who really venerate and love the Scriptures, and who regularly and devoutly peruse them, with an honest purpose of thus becoming wiser and better,—the habit of interpreting them rather by the sound than by the sense—of considering detached sentences, clauses, and phrases, without a reference to the design of the sacred writer, as manifested by the connection in which they are introduced, and of resting satisfied with being able to attach to a passage something like a meaning which accords with the general system of revealed truth, without being much concerned whether this be the precise meaning which the holy man, moved by the Divine Spirit, or rather the Divine Spirit, who moved him, intended to convey.

That such a mode of treating the Holy Scriptures is unbecoming, must be apparent on the slightest reflection. How would any of us relish a similar treatment of a communication, on a subject which we deemed important, made by us to an inferior or a friend? That it is hurtful to the best interests of those who indulge in it, must be equally obvious. Every passage of Scripture has its own meaning, and is intended to produce its own effect; and it is only when I understand its appropriate meaning that I can derive from it its appropriate influence. That such a mode of treating the Holy Scriptures is not uncommon, will be readily acknowledged by all who have turned their attention to the subject; though the extent to which it prevails, and the mischiefs which it produces, are, I believe, much underrated.

The ordinary manner in which the passage, which I have chosen as my text, is explained, appears to me a striking exemplification of that method of interpretation to which the above remarks refer. These words are generally considered as descriptive of the nature and origin of that most important of all mental revolutions which takes place, when a man, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is brought to understand and believe the truth in reference to God, as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ; and taken by themselves without any reference to the design of the discourse, of which they form a part, the words are very well fitted to describe that change. But if we look at the passage in its connection, we must be persuaded that it refers not to the conversion of a sinner, and the means by which it is effected, but to the design of the apostolic ministry, and to the manner in which those who were invested with it were qualified for accomplishing that design.

A great part of this epistle is occupied in defending the authority and dignity of the apostolic office, with which Paul had been invested. This forms the chief subject of discussion from the fourteenth verse of the second chapter, down to the beginning of the seventh chapter. The apostle readily admits that, in themselves, he and his brethren were utterly unfit to

fill the high office to which they had been called, and to obtain the inappreciably important objects for which it was intended. "We are not sufficient to think anything as of ourselves;" but he as distinctly asserts that, with the endowments divinely furnished them, they were every way qualified for the discharge of the duties, and for gaining the ends, of their holy vocation: "Our sufficiency is of God."¹ He then goes on, according to his manner, to "magnify his office;" and after a most instructive comparison and contrast between the ministry of Moses under the law, and the ministry of the apostles under the Gospel,² he asserts that, if, notwithstanding these statements of the truth as it is in Jesus, there were men who remained ignorant of its meaning, and unacquainted with its salutary influence, the fault was to be imputed not to the Gospel, nor to their mode of stating it, but entirely to the depravity of these men's own minds, strengthened in its operations by diabolical influences.³ "Having received such a ministry,"—being thus divinely qualified for the discharge of its duties,—“we faint not,” we shrink not from the difficulties or dangers connected with their discharge; we attempt not to screen ourselves by a mutilated or unfaithful deliverance of our message. On the contrary, by a clear and full statement of the truth, we approve ourselves faithful to God and man.⁴ Our situation, though an important, is a subordinate one. "For we preach," or proclaim, "not ourselves" as lords; "we preach," we proclaim, "Jesus the Lord;" and we proclaim "ourselves servants"—your servants, "for Jesus' sake."⁵ The text follows,—“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;” *i.e.*, “we proclaim Christ the Lord,—we proclaim ourselves His subordinate agents for your advantage; for God, by an energy, equally divine as that by which He called light out of darkness, has illuminated our minds in the knowledge of His glory, as it has been manifested

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 5.² 2 Cor. iii. 6-18.³ 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.⁴ 2 Cor. iv. 1, 2.⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 5.

in the person, and doctrine, and work, of Christ Jesus, for the express purpose of our illuminating others with this knowledge." Such seems to be the obvious meaning of these words when considered in their connection: and they naturally bring before our minds two very important, interesting, and seasonable topics of consideration. First, the grand object of the Christian dispensation,—the giving the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;—and, secondly, the grand means of accomplishing this object,—the divinely inspired apostolic ministry. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts," etc. Allow me to turn your attention to these two closely connected topics in their order.

I. Let us, then, in the first place, consider the apostle's account of the great design of the Gospel dispensation. It is "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The language is figurative. "The knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," is metaphorically represented as light; and the apostles are represented as enlightened themselves by this light, that they may enlighten others. "The glory of God" is the manifestation of the Divine excellencies; "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," is the manifestation of the Divine excellencies which was made in the person, and doctrine, and work of Jesus Christ; and "To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," is just equivalent to, to diffuse among men the knowledge of that manifestation.

The manifestation of the Divine excellencies is the great end of the universe of creatures. God has "made all things for Himself." In all that He does (and we know, "He worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will), He "manifests forth His glory," He shows Himself to be what He is,—inconceivably great and excellent. He cannot act at all without showing forth His power and His wisdom; and He cannot act, in reference to intelligent moral beings,

without showing forth His righteousness and benignity; so that “the heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork: day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. Though there is no speech, nor language—though their voice is not heard, yet their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” And with regard to His providential dispensations, He manifests Himself as wise, and holy, and righteous, and good, in all His ways.

Every manifestation of the Divine excellence deserves the devout attention of every intelligent being, within whose sphere of mental vision it is made, and is fitted to exert a favourable influence on the character and happiness of such as devoutly attend to it; but the most complete and striking manifestation which the Divine Being ever made of His excellencies, and that which is fitted above all others to exert a favourable influence over the minds of those who are called to contemplate it, is that referred to in the text,—“the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

The Divinity was manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was what no other divine messenger had ever been; He was an incarnation of the Divinity,—He was “God manifested in the flesh,”—He was “the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.” He and the Father were so “one,” that “he who saw Him, saw the Father.” He was “the eternal, living, One who was with the Father, manifested to men;” so that the wisdom He displayed was divine wisdom,—the power He put forth, divine power,—the benignity He manifested, divine benignity.

As there was a manifestation of the Divinity in the *person* of Jesus Christ, there was also a manifestation of the Divinity in His *doctrine*. “No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” In that wondrous scheme, the outlines of which are contained in the following statements of our Lord:—“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth

on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life ; for God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life; for God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved"—in this wondrous scheme—in the development of the "mystery which was hid in God from the foundation of the world"—what a glorious light was diffused over the Divine character ! how boundlessly powerful, how unfathomably wise, how immaculately holy, how inflexibly just, how infinitely benignant, does the Divine Being appear !

The manifestation of the Divine excellence chiefly referred to, however, in our text, seems to be the manifestation made in the *work* of the God-man, Jesus Christ—in what He did, and suffered, and obtained, for the salvation of a lost world. The aspect in which we are called to contemplate the Divinity, is "God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; not imputing to men their trespasses, seeing He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The whole of the incarnate Redeemer's work was, as it were, a proclamation, more distinct than that made to Moses of old, of the name of Jehovah. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; who while He will not, while He cannot, by any means "clear the guilty," without satisfaction to the injured honour of His character and government, hath set forth His Son "a propitiation, declaring His righteousness in the remission of sins;" declaring that He is a "just God and a Saviour;" just, and the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." This certainly was by far the most illustrious display ever made of the Divine character. To use the words of the greatest of our Scottish theologians: "Here shines spotless justice, incomprehensible wisdom, and infinite love, all at once. None of them darkens or eclipses any of the rest. Every one of them gives a lustre to the rest. They mingle their beams, and shine

with united eternal splendour: The just Judge, the kind Father, the wise Governor. No other object gives such a display of all these perfections; yea, all the objects we know give not such a display of any one of them. Nowhere does justice appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom so profound.¹ Here we see a divinity, the "Father of lights," *full orb'd in the complete round of His attributes*, looking down from heaven with purest, yet mildest radiance, on a redeemed world. "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other." "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" O "the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe!" O "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of that love which passeth knowledge!" In this manifestation of the glories of divinity, the rays of unsufferable brightness which issue forth from the high and holy place which forms the abode of Deity, and which, unmitigated, would blast our vision with excessive light, are intercepted, as it were, in their way to our distant region of the universe, by the cloud of the Saviour's humanity, and so softened into the mingled beauties of the bow, which is the emblem of peace and mercy, that the mental eye can rest on them with unmingled satisfaction and ever-growing delight.²

This display of the Divine glory is the grand subject of the Gospel revelation and to make it generally known, is the great design of all the arrangements of the Christian economy. To enlighten an ignorant, and to reclaim a rebellious world, by an exhibition of the grandeur and grace, the infinite venerableness, and amiableness, and kindness, of Him "of whom are all things, and by whom are all things," as these excellencies were manifested in the person, and doctrine, and work of His incarnate Son—this is the sublime and beneficent design of the Gospel dispensation.

II. Let us now proceed to consider, in the second place,

¹ McLaurin.

² Bishop Hall.

the grand means by which this great purpose is accomplished—the divinely inspired apostolic ministry.

That “the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” may be diffused, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,” says the apostle, “hath shined in our hearts.” When it is said that God had shined in the hearts of the apostles, the meaning is that God had revealed to the apostles the truth with regard to His own character, as manifested in the person, and doctrine, and work of Jesus Christ; and the descriptive appellation, “He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,” seems introduced to suggest the idea, that their knowledge of “the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ,” was as really the effect of divine supernatural agency, as the production of light in the first creation. What they spoke was “the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God had ordained before the world to their glory; what eye had not seen, what ear had not heard, and what it never could have entered into the heart of man to conceive, but which God had revealed to them by His Holy Spirit.” They did not state their own mind; they had “the mind of Christ.” They were “in Christ’s stead;” and having received “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” they communicated it to others, “not in words, which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost taught them,” being “ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

The most satisfactory account of the manner in which the apostles were fitted for gaining the great end of the Christian dispensation, the diffusing “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” is contained in the concluding verse of the preceding chapter, which is indeed a very striking commentary on our text, and furnishes a fine proof by example, that Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. “But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”¹

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

These words have usually been explained as referring to the process of sanctification through the knowledge and belief of the truth in the case of all true Christians; and considered without any reference to their connection, they seem very well fitted to give an interesting, and just, and useful view of that important doctrine; but if we look at them in their reference to the design of the apostle, and the object of his discourse, we will see plainly that they describe, not the way in which depraved men become holy, but the way in which the Christian apostles became "able," or qualified, "ministers of the New Testament"—persons fitted to diffuse "the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

After asserting that God, "of whom are all things" in the new economy, had made him and his apostolic brethren "able ministers of the New Testament," he proceeds to compare, or rather to contrast, their ministry under the Gospel, with the ministry of Moses under the law. In instituting this comparison, he very happily avails himself of a remarkable fact in Moses' history. The visible glory of Jehovah produced a radiance on Moses' countenance, which made it necessary for him to veil it. The facts referred to are recorded in Exod. xxxiv. 29-35: "And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, (when he came down from the mount), that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while He talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone: and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But when Moses went in before the Lord, to speak with Him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that

which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with Him."

The manner in which the apostle applies this fact to his purpose is eminently beautiful. A spiritual revelation of the glory of God was made to Moses' mind, as well as a material exhibition of eminent splendour to his eyes. As his countenance, when irradiated by this heavenly light, shone on his countrymen, so the revelation made to his mind, was to be reflected to their minds; but in the manner in which that revelation was made, there was an *obscurity* of which the vail with which he covered his face was a striking emblem. That revelation was intentionally, to a certain extent, obscure, "so that they" to whom it was given "could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished;" *i. e.* they could not distinctly or fully understand the design or meaning of that economy which had now passed away. And, indeed, says the apostle, even yet this obscurity continues with regard to the great body of the Jews, and must continue "till they turn to the Lord;" *i. e.* the Lord, the Messiah, who is "the end of that which is abolished;" for "Christ for righteousness to every one that believeth, is the *end* of the law," and He is "the *Spirit*" of that literal economy. When they come to Him "the vail" will be removed, and they will be able distinctly to apprehend the glory of God as revealed to Moses. But no such obscurity belongs to the apostolic mode of reflecting that fuller display of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," which had been made to them. On the contrary, "they all, with unvailed face," *acting as mirrors* (for that seems the force of the word which is rendered by our translators, "beholding as in a glass;" and by other learned men, "reflecting as from a mirror"¹), *acting as mirrors* in reference to "the glory of the Lord," "in the face of Jesus Christ," who is the image of God, *i. e.* receiving and re-

¹ κατὰ τὴν ἰδέαν.

flecting the image, “are changed into the same image,” or “*according to the same image, BY glory*” (for it deserves notice, that it is the same particle that is rendered *from* here, that is rendered *by* in the last clause of the verse; and as there can be no doubt that it is rightly rendered there, and as that last clause is plainly explanatory of that which preceded, it seems right that the same rendering should be adopted here), “they are changed by glory,” *i. e.* the glory of God in the face of His Son; “unto glory,” that infinitely glorious object shining on their minds as mirrors, makes them also luminous and glorious, and fits them for “giving”—communicating, and diffusing the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. The concluding words are better rendered in the margin, “the Lord, the Spirit”—obviously referring, as they do, to the words in the 17th verse, “now the Lord is that Spirit;” and they intimate to us that it was by “the Lord, the Spirit”—the end and meaning of the Old Testament revelation—that the apostles were fitted to be able ministers of the New Testament, His mind becoming their minds; and thus they in their measure becoming images of Him, as He, in an infinitely higher way and degree, was “the image of God.”

Such is the view which the apostle gives of the manner in which a divinely inspired apostolic ministry was rendered the effectual means of gaining the great object of the Christian dispensation—the giving “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” And accordingly we find that Christ, and God in Christ, are the grand themes of their ministry. They turn away the attention of men from themselves. They say, “Why marvel ye at this, or why look ye so stedfastly on us.” Behold HIM—behold HIM—behold the great Prophet, the true High Priest, the Divine King! and behold GOD IN HIM reconciling the world to Himself.

The great duty which rises out of these statements is an implicit submission of mind to the apostolic testimony. There are men who profess a very high veneration for “the words

of the Lord Jesus,"—who avow that they hold, in no such estimation, "the commandments of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour,"—who seek all their articles of belief in the four gospels, and consider the epistles as occupied, in a good degree, with matters of inferior and temporary importance, or things of "doubtful disputation." Nothing can be more remote from the truth than this opinion. It has been justly remarked, that the Son of God came from heaven, not so much, personally, to make a complete revelation of the Gospel, as to be the subject of that revelation, by doing and suffering all that was necessary for the salvation of mankind. Just before He left the world He made this declaration:—"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come;"¹ a declaration plainly intimating that He had not fully declared the doctrines of the Gospel, but left that to be done by the Holy Spirit, to those men whom He appointed for the purpose of laying the foundation of His spiritual kingdom. If we would understand Christianity aright, then, we must study, with peculiar care, the apostolical epistles. They absolutely require, they richly deserve, they will abundantly repay, the most careful study: and in studying them, let us never forget that these men had the mind of Christ, and that it is by our understanding and believing what they reveal, that the mind that was in Christ is to be in us also. This is the substance of the apostolical testimony, and this is the avowed design of it. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with

¹ John xvi. 12. 13.

us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."¹

The apostolic ministry had its peculiar honours, and, as embodied in the inspired writings of those who filled it, is still promoting the edification of the Church of Christ, and will continue to do so to the end of the present order of things. According to the promise of their Lord, they still sit on their thrones, judging the tribes of the spiritual Israel: and "what they bind is bound in heaven, and what they loose is loosed in heaven." For ordinary ministers to assume their peculiar honours, or to pretend to possess their distinguishing gifts, is either shameful imposture, or wild fanaticism. But still it is true that, in their own measure, and in their own station, the ordinary ministers of Christ are intended and fitted to further the great object of the Christian revelation—"the giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God;" and to them, within certain limits which it is not usually difficult to trace out, is applicable much of what is said of the apostolic ministry.

The very interesting passage which I have attempted to illustrate, is replete with instruction of this indirect kind, both in reference to what ought to be the character, and what is the duty, of the ordinary Christian minister, and what is the duty of those who enjoy his labours.

With regard to the character of the Christian minister, they suggest this truth—one of infinite importance to those who fill the ministerial office—that he ought to be one in whose heart "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," has shone, not, indeed, by the inspiring influence of the Holy Spirit, but by His spiritually enlightening influence. He ought not merely to be a person well versed in theology as a science, but he ought to be a person who, under Divine influence, has been made to understand and believe "the truth as it is in Jesus;" one by whom the great subjects of His ministry are not made mere topics for ingenious speculation, or

¹ 1 John i. 1-3.

themes for eloquent declamation, but are felt to be pre-eminently realities, and who can honestly say, "I believe, and therefore speak." That a truly spiritual Christianity is necessary to a man's being a minister, or even to his being, to a certain extent, a useful minister, is more than I am prepared to assert; but surely he who possesses such a Christianity has prodigious advantages, as a professional man, above him who wants it, for whom—however learned and eloquent, and apparently successful, he may be—it had been better that he had occupied any station in society rather than that which he does occupy; aye, for whom "it had been better that he had never been born." Those to whom the ministry of reconciliation was originally committed, were men who had themselves been "reconciled to God through Christ Jesus;" and so ought to be all their successors.

With regard to the duties of the Christian minister, much important truth is suggested by the figure which the text employs, as illustrating the way in which the apostolic ministry was useful in gaining its object, and which, within certain limits, is equally applicable to ordinary Christian teachers in all ages. If they are to do good they must be *mirrors*. They must receive, and reflect, the image of God. They are not to expect to receive new revelations, as the apostles did, but they are to study the revelations *they* received, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They are to add nothing—they are to withhold nothing. They must not exaggerate—they must not extenuate. What they receive they must deliver; and deliver as they receive it. The primary excellence of a mirror is its truth—its receiving and reflecting the image of the object as it really exists. If it gives colours, however beautiful, which do not belong to the object, it deceives. The manner in which the mirror is set is a matter of very inferior consequence; but if the curious cutting on the glass, or the richly ornamented frame, draw away the attention from the object which the mirror represents, they had better not be there. To know "the truth," the whole truth, "as it is in Jesus," and to state clearly and impressively the truth—the whole truth as it is in

Jesus—these are the great primary duties of the Christian teacher.

But the passage suggests instruction, not only to those who fill the office of the Christian ministry, but to those who enjoy their labours. It is your duty, my brethren, to wait on our teaching. But when you come here, you ought not to come to hear what a man like yourselves will say; but “to hear what God the Lord will say.” We hold up the mirror to you. We would turn away your attention from ourselves to the great subject of our ministry. Your eternal salvation, and your present comfort and improvement, depend on your habitually “looking to Jesus,” the image of the invisible God, and thus becoming conformed to His mind, imbued by His Spirit. It is our wish to be “highly esteemed” by you “for our work’s sake,” and nothing is dearer to us than the good opinion of enlightened Christians, except the approbation of our conscience and the smile of our Master; but we would not, though we could, occupy in any degree the place which is His due. As you value your own interests, and as you wish for our success, never forget that “we preach not ourselves,—lords, “but Christ Jesus *the* Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

The caution can scarcely be too frequently repeated, “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?” The fact, that I am standing here as your pastor to-day reads a silent but an energetic commentary on the passage I have just quoted. “Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?”—“All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which, by the Gospel, is preached unto you.”¹

¹ This sermon was preached on the Lord’s Day immediately after the author’s induction into the pastoral charge of the United Associate Congregation of Broughton Place, and the reference is to his predecessor, the Rev. James Hall, D.D., whose friendship he had long enjoyed, and highly esteemed.

It is melancholy to think, that the most "burning and shining" inferior "lights" in the firmament of the church must set, and often do set prematurely, in the darkness of the grave; but it is delightful to reflect, that not merely does "the Sun of Righteousness," "the express image" of "the Father of lights," shine for ever unobscured in the heaven of heavens, but that the glorious concentration of His beams, in the book of revelation, still continues to illuminate our dark world, and shall rise higher and higher in the sky, till it pour a flood of transforming effulgence over all the nations, covering the whole earth with the glory of the Lord, and till the glorious consummation—the object towards which the desires of all the good and wise in the universe have been steadily and earnestly pointed since the commencement of time, shall be fully accomplished, and "GOD BE ALL IN ALL."

DISCOURSE IV.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S REQUEST TO HIS PEOPLE, ON
THE COMMENCEMENT, AND TOWARDS THE CLOSE OF HIS
MINISTRY.¹

Eph. vi. 19.—Praying with all prayer—for me, that utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel.

It is just fifty years since I preached from this text to the congregation of Biggar, my first pastoral charge. It was a solemn season to them and to me. It was the commencement of a ministry which has stretched out to a length little anticipated, and which must be drawing near its close. I lay the discourse then delivered before you to-day; for, on reflection, I could not think of any way in which, in the circumstances in which we are placed, I was likely to do more good, either to you or to myself.

Prayer is an important religious duty. Like all duty, it has its foundation in the will of God, and that will is revealed in the constitution of man, which is the work of God's hand, and in his circumstances, which are the result of God's providence. Dependent, weak, ignorant, and guilty, and conscious of all this, it is obviously right, reasonable, and becoming in man, to acknowledge, with sentiments of veneration and gratitude, that great Being to whom he owes existence with all its comforts; to supplicate Him, who is infinitely

¹ Preached at Biggar on 9th Feb. 1806, and at Broughton Place, Edinburgh, 10th Feb. 1856.

powerful, to protect him from danger; Him who is infinitely wise, to instruct Him in all necessary knowledge, and guide him into its right use; Him who is infinitely benignant, to pardon his sins, and deliver him from those evils, felt and feared, to which they have exposed him.

The duty of prayer, which thus obviously arises from the constitution and situation of man, is unequivocally enjoined in the Holy Scriptures, that clear, well authenticated revelation of the Divine will. Its nature is there fully explained, and its performance powerfully enforced: "Trust in the Lord at all times, ye people; pour out your hearts before Him: God is a refuge for us. Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Men ought always to pray and not to faint. Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, make your requests known unto God. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask Him?"

It is not, however, to the duty of prayer in general, that your attention is now to be directed: I mean to confine myself to the illustration and enforcement of a particular species of mutual intercession.

Man is not formed to live in solitude. Experience confirms the declaration of the Creator—"It is not good for man to be alone." There are powers of action and enjoyment in human nature which can be drawn out into exercise only by the influence of social relation and intercourse. Out of the connections generated by these principles, rise many of man's duties: and among these, to the mind enlightened by Divine revelation, mutual intercession will appear to be not one of the least important. The Holy Scriptures, while they represent mankind as brethren—children of the same family, and connected by a common nature and common interests—teach us to express our sentiments of mutual attachment, not merely by personal kindness, but also by recommending our fellow-

men to the favour and protection of our common, great and beneficent, Parent. Bound, as we thus are, to pray for all men, we are laid under additional obligations to make supplication for those with whom we are more intimately connected. A father, a brother, and a friend, have claims to peculiar regard in our addresses to the throne of the heavenly grace.

Besides these natural relations, there are various kinds of connections voluntarily formed, which give rise to peculiar modifications of the duty of mutual intercession. Of this species of connection there is none more important than that which takes place among the members of the Christian Church. The relation by which they are bound together is of the most intimate and tender nature. They are all members of Christ, and, in consequence of this, all members one of another. Accordingly, we find Christians frequently and warmly exhorted to the duty of mutual intercession—"Confess your sins one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed;" "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto, with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Strong as are the obligations under which Christians lie to pray for all their brethren, there is a variety of circumstances which may give particular members of the holy society a claim to a superior interest in the prayers of the faithful; and of these circumstances, the investiture with the office of the holy ministry is confessedly the most important. This duty of prayer for ministers is clearly implied in the passage I have read; and its enforcement shall, for reasons which must be obvious to every one, form the principal subject of the following discourse: "Praying for me, that utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel."

In the sequel, I will shortly illustrate the propositions which seem naturally involved in the words of the apostle. These seem to be the three following:—First, That "to make known the mystery of the Gospel," is the great duty of a Christian minister. Second, That in order to the proper discharge of

this duty, utterance and boldness are necessary. And Third, that those who enjoy his ministrations, ought to pray that he may be enabled to do his duty in the appointed way.

I. The first proposition implied in the text is, that "to make known the mystery of the Gospel," is the great duty of a Christian minister.

The term "Gospel" signifies good news; and, in strict propriety of language, is descriptive of the glad tidings of peace and mercy to mankind, through the substitution, obedience, and death of the incarnate Son of God. It is here, however, and in many other passages of Scripture, used for the whole system of truth revealed in connection with this message of mercy.

This revelation is here represented as a mystery—"the mystery of the Gospel." The term "mystery," in common language, describes any doctrine which transcends the comprehension of the human faculties. In this sense of the word, there are many mysteries in the Gospel. Of these we have examples in the existence of Divinity in a plurality of persons, without division of essence—and in the union of the Divine nature with the human in the Saviour of mankind, without confusion of essences or multiplication of persons. While a most reasonable faith assures us that these things are—for God has said so—human ingenuity in vain attempts to explain *how*.

The mysteriousness of our religion has often been brought forward as an objection against its truth, by those whose character and conduct naturally indispose them to admit its truth, or by those who, led astray by the delusive light of a vain philosophy, have rashly conceded an unlimited empire to human reason. The analogies of nature, however, furnish us with satisfactory answers to this objection. Everything around us, both in the material and sentient world, is ultimately mysterious. We can collect a variety of facts in regard to it, and class them under general heads; but we can go no farther—we must resolve these general facts—these laws of nature, as

they are termed—into the good pleasure of the Almighty. We cannot doubt that they *are*, but *how*, and *why*, we are utterly ignorant. When these pretenders to science shall have explained the mystery of their own being, or even unfolded the reason of the organization of the most trifling weed which springs out of the earth—*why* it should have been what it is, and nothing else; when they shall have explained, what they cannot doubt, the existence of time, and space, and motion—the defenders of revelation may think themselves called upon to assign a reason why, in a system embracing the whole moral administration of God, comprehending the universe, and reaching from eternity to eternity, anything should be found to baffle the comprehension of man.

The duty of the Christian minister, with regard to such mysterious subjects is, faithfully to state what he finds in the Holy Scriptures. Reasoning and minute inquiry in relation to them, except so far as is necessary to ascertain the precise meaning of the inspired writers, is out of place. Men of the most enlarged understandings, and deeply versant in the art of reasoning, have indeed engaged in these occupations, but they have only shown that the highest endowments and acquirements are worse than useless when injudiciously employed. It is most fitting that human reason should occupy a place inferior to Divine revelation. It is the proper business of Reason to investigate the claims of revelation to a divine origin, and to inquire into the meaning of the terms in which it is expressed; but when these have been ascertained, nothing remains for her but firmly to believe and humbly to adore.

But the word “mystery,” is most frequently used in Scripture to point out a truth which, though formerly unknown, and perhaps undiscoverable by the unassisted powers of man, may yet, when revealed, be in a good measure understood and explained. Under this head may be classed almost all the distinguishing doctrines of the Christian religion. That God is merciful to sinners through the mediation of His Son; that Christ Jesus has, by His obedience and suffering, ob-

tained pardon and salvation for men ; that the bodies of mankind shall be raised from a state of death and corruption, and re-animated by their former souls ; that the righteous shall enjoy a state of endless happiness, and the wicked be subjected to an eternity of punishment—are truths which, though not discoverable by human reason, may yet, when revealed, be in a good measure comprehended and reasoned from. To illustrate these doctrines in their various connexions and dependencies, to point out their bearings on the duty and happiness of mankind, and to repel the objections of adversaries, form the great work of Christian ministers. They are appointed to declare the whole counsel of God in reference to the salvation of man—to confute gainsayers, and to build up believers in the knowledge, and faith, and comfort of the truth, as it is in Jesus.

It is more than probable, from the connection in which our text is introduced, that the apostle had immediately in his view that peculiar “mystery of the Gospel”—the admission of the Gentiles to an equal participation of the benefits of the new dispensation of Divine grace with the descendants of Jacob. This, though revealed *plainly*—as we are apt to suppose, who live when the prophecies and symbols have been illustrated by events—was yet felt to be a thing hard to be understood by a large proportion of the members of the Jewish Church. Hence it is termed “the mystery which was hid from former ages and generations, but is now made manifest to the saints.” This important and delightful truth must be made known by every Gentile minister, as it lays the foundation of his office. Had not Jesus “destroyed in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments contained in ordinances”—had He not “blotted out the handwriting that was against us,”—He, by His servants, could never have “come and preached peace to us who were afar off, as well as to them who were nigh.” It is owing to the same circumstances, that “we, who were afar off, are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of faith.”

II. The second proposition implied in the text is—that “utterance and boldness” are necessary in order to the proper discharge of the ministerial office.

The term “utterance,” which is precisely synonymous with the phrase “door of utterance,” in the parallel passage in the Epistle to the Colossians, is a rabbinical expression, and refers at once to a liberty to preach, and to a facility in communicating, the truths of the Gospel in an accurate and perspicuous style.

When our apostle wrote this epistle, he was a prisoner at Rome, in consequence of his appeal to Nero the Emperor. This situation could not fail to be in a high degree irksome to the apostle’s active mind, even though his sorrows were lightened by the kind attentions of the centurion and the captain of the guard, whose hearts, unhardened by the scenes of cruelty incident to their profession, prompted them to mitigate the rigours of bondage by the soft offices of humanity.¹ The sphere of his usefulness, and, consequently, of his happiness, was thus greatly narrowed; and he here supplicates the prayers of the Ephesian church, that he might soon be allowed to recommence his labours in the extensive charge committed to him by the Holy Ghost.

The leading principles of a man’s mind will manifest themselves in the most disadvantageous circumstances. Paul diligently improved the partial liberty allowed him—he “received all that came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concerned the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence.” For the proper discharge of this duty, even in his present situation, and still more so in the more extensive sphere of action after which he so ardently longed, he well knew that the gift of utterance was absolutely necessary.

That this power of utterance—a faculty of communicating knowledge, in an accurate, perspicuous, and energetic manner—is still of the utmost importance to a Christian minister, is a truth too obvious to require, or indeed admit of, much illus-

¹ Acts xxviii. 16, 30.

tration. The greatest stores of knowledge must be useless to the world if their possessor be incapable of communicating them. Some of the greatest and best men in every age have laboured under this disadvantage. From a defect in the organs of speech, or from a natural timidity, they have been incapable of doing justice to their own conceptions. Moses was slow of speech, and not eloquent; and in our own age and country, there are not wanting instances of men who, though by their writings they have instructed and delighted the world, have yet, from a deficiency in their powers of utterance, been incapable of acting their part well, even in common conversation.

It is not uncommon, among a certain class of well-disposed men, to disparage the eloquence of the pulpit, and to represent the cultivation of this talent as implying a diffidence in the peculiar influences of the Holy Spirit. But there is, surely, no incompatibility between a careful use of the means calculated to promote an end, and a humble dependency on divine agency in order to make these means accomplish the desired effect. And perhaps we would not be guilty of any breach of that charity which thinketh no evil, were we to impute to the propagators of this opinion, a weak envy of that excellence which they find it an easier task to decry, than to imitate. The Apostle Paul does indeed frequently speak with the utmost contempt of that tinselled eloquence which prevailed among the sophists of Greece and Rome, the aim of which was rather to exercise the ingenuity, and to amuse the fancy, than to instruct the mind, or to impress the heart. But Paul would have ill exemplified his own rules, had he enjoined a careless and slovenly oratory, for we find in his writings many specimens of eloquence the most sublime and affecting; and his mode of address was so animated and pleasing, that the idolaters of Lystra conceived that Mercury had descended to the earth, and hailed our apostle as an incarnation of "the god of eloquence." This qualification, though certainly subordinate, is by no means unimportant in the character of a minister. He is ill fitted for the ministry

of the Gospel, who is not "apt to teach," and who does not "seek out acceptable words."

For the continuance and improvement of this ministerial talent, the Christian people ought to offer up fervent prayers in behalf of their teacher. True eloquence is one of the good gifts which cometh down from above from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. "For who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, the deaf, the seeing, and the blind? Have not I, saith the Lord?"

But a facility in communicating the truths of the Gospel is not the only requisite mentioned by the apostle, for the proper discharge of the ministerial office. "Boldness" is necessary, in order to make known the mystery of the Gospel.

A certain portion of this quality of mind is necessary in order to enable a man to acquit himself well in every situation of life. "We are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Vicissitudes and calamities, in endless succession, alarm and perplex us. Every individual of our race has a share of sufferings allotted him, which he must either encounter with intrepidity and rise above, or sink down the hapless victim of despondency and sorrow. There are, however, situations which require a more than ordinary exertion of this endowment. In such a situation, Paul and his apostolic brethren were placed: "I think," says he, "that God hath set us forth, the apostles last, as it were, a spectacle to the world, and to the angels, and to men. We both hunger and thirst, and are naked and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and are accounted as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things." To persist in teaching a system of doctrine which was treated with contempt equally by the learned Greek and the bigoted Jew, and to pursue with unremitting energy a course of disinterested benevolence, while their generous exertions were rewarded with reproach and persecution, required no common share of this noble principle.

Happily for us, the Christian minister, in our country and age, is exposed to no such dangers. Under the protection of

a mild and enlightened government, we enjoy the liberty of observing the ordinances of our God according to the mode which we think enjoined in the Scriptures. Still, however, to the reflecting mind, it will appear that a considerable portion of fortitude is necessary to complete the character of the Christian minister in every age. The truths inculcated by him are in direct opposition to the leading principles of depraved humanity, and a faithful exhibition of them can scarcely fail to procure him enemies. Bad men will always hate him who tells them the truth. Knowledge, in its progress in this country, has wrested the sword from the hand of bigoted zeal: but ignorance, pride, and enmity, still exist in the unrenewed heart, and naturally lead men to oppose the exertions of the faithful minister. The conduct enjoined on him by duty in cases of discipline, may be expected sometimes to irritate those who are immediately concerned. His motives will be misrepresented, his conduct condemned, and his character traduced. In these and a variety of other instances which might easily be particularised, it is impossible for a minister without fortitude to preserve his conscience unsullied, and his usefulness unimpaired.

This, as well as the former blessing, can be obtained only from God. He can, by placing before our minds the awful responsibilities under which we are placed, and the glorious rewards which await the faithful servant of Christ in a future world, raise us above being agitated by the hopes and fears of the present world, and enable us resolutely to persevere in the performance of our duty, heedless alike of its smiles and of its frowns.

III. The third proposition involved in our text is,—that those who enjoy the advantages of the Christian ministry, ought to pray that their teachers may be enabled to perform their duty in the appointed way.

It is not uncommon to hear the ministerial office represented as a sinecure, and its duties as few and easy of accomplishment. These are the declamations of ignorant, design-

ing, or unprincipled men. To a rational thinker, whatever may be his opinion as to the truth of our religion, the function of a Christian teacher, when conscientiously discharged, must appear in a high degree laborious and difficult.

I know no better way of setting the truth of this remark in a clear point of light, than by a cursory review of these duties, and the temptations which are apt to prevent us from performing them aright.¹

Public preaching is the leading duty of the pastoral office. The doctrines of the Gospel, the precepts of the law, their mutual connection, and their influence in transforming the character and regulating the conduct, are the principal topics which the Christian preacher is required to explain and enforce. In order to acquit himself honourably in performing this part of his duty, he must be well acquainted with the Christian system of belief and morals, and with the sources of all true theological knowledge—the original Scriptures of the Old Testament and the New. To obtain this knowledge, careful meditation and study are obviously necessary, and even these will avail but little if, to a correct acquaintance with the principles of the system taught in Scripture, he do not add a deep-felt experience of their influence on the heart.

In explaining the doctrines of the Bible, he must endeavour to state them fully, accurately, plainly; to free them from common misapprehensions and misrepresentations; to unfold their mutual relations, dependencies, and uses; and so to meet and repel the objections of adversaries, as that the candid inquirer after truth shall be satisfied, and the captious sceptic, if not convinced, reduced to silence. This cannot be done to purpose without hard study; while, to unveil the workings of the human heart, that mystery of iniquity, to trace the secret foldings of the understanding and the heart, to investigate the sources of error and of vice, which must be done in order to efficient preaching, require a knowledge of human character,

¹ In the illustration of this particular, I have availed myself of Dr Erskine's admirable "Discourses on the Difficulties of the Pastoral Office."

and a careful attention to human life, which are not of easy attainment.

The difficulties attending the preaching the Gospel are greatly heightened by the character of many of those to whom it is addressed. The leading principles of our religion are in direct opposition to the strongest affections of our corrupted nature. In a country where Christianity is nominally the national religion, many of the hearers of the Christian minister, far from being lovers of holiness and sincere inquirers after truth, are to be found among those who are enslaved by their corrupted passions, alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, lovers of darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. These men are enamoured of their disease, have no desire to recover, and shun the only medicine as poison. The physician of the soul has difficulties to which the physician of the body is a stranger.

Besides this unhappy bias of human nature—in forming an estimate of the difficulties of the Christian ministry—we must take into the account the diversities of the tempers, characters, habits, and situations of mankind. The careless must be roused, the unwary counselled, the ignorant instructed, the doubting established, and the wine and oil of heavenly consolation must be poured into the wounds of the bleeding heart. How difficult must it be to minister to each of these classes, according to their respective wants—to distribute to each of them his portion of food in due season! It requires no superior powers of mind to display, in pulpit discourses, such an acquaintance with critical and literary subjects, as will amaze the less informed part of an audience—"to preach so as to show the extent of our reading, or the subtlety of our wit, to blazon these in the eyes of the unthinking, with the beggarly accounts of a few words which glitter, but which convey little light and less warmth:" but regularly, week after week, to compose discourses replete with evangelical truth—with sentiment clearly stated, properly arranged, suitably illustrated, and wisely improved, so as to come home to men's business and bosoms—requires an expenditure of time

and labour, of which the bulk of our hearers can form no adequate estimate.—These remarks, not to mention the difficulty of committing a discourse thus composed, to memory, and delivering it with becoming dignity and interest, may suffice to show that proper evangelical preaching is by no means that easy attainment which some men imagine.

But our preparations for, and our discourses from the pulpit, form, you well know, a small part only of our duty as teachers of Christianity. Catechising though a laborious, is an important part of ministerial work. This duty, though not to be confined to the young, has, however, a peculiar reference to them. “Feed My lambs,” is an important injunction laid by the Great Shepherd on all His followers. The importance of early instruction in the doctrines of the Gospel is abundantly apparent. Let me shortly direct your attention to its difficulty. To fix the mind on subjects to which it is naturally averse, to instil religious instruction into the mind as capacities enlarge, to repeat the same sentiments, and often the same words, again and again, till they are known and remembered—to feed with milk those who cannot bear strong meat—require no ordinary share of knowledge and prudence, of patience and of tenderness.

Private visitation of the flock is the third great part of a minister's duty. When properly managed, this must be productive of the happiest consequences; but I apprehend that properly to manage it is no easy task. The minister of Jesus ought to, and when he acts in character will, manifest a generous interest in the welfare of his people, and do everything in his power to induce them to impart to him their joys and their sorrows, their perplexities and their fears, that he may be enabled suitably to counsel and comfort them.

The success of our visits depends much on the circumstances in which families are placed. In the day of prosperity the heart expands with gratitude, and it is the part of the minister to direct it to its proper object. The period of affliction is, however, best calculated for communicating religious instruction. It is then that our visits bid fairest to be accep-

table and useful. But when to probe the wound, and when to pour in the balm, is the important question. Too frequently, ministers are sent for with no other intention than that they may speak words of consolation, and soothe the parting spirit with the hopes of religion, whatever may have been the tenor of the former life. It is painful to a man of compassionate heart to see a fellow-immortal trembling on the verge of eternity, while he cannot in conscience present to him the consolations of a Gospel, obviously neither understood nor believed. But it is still more awful—to say peace, peace, where there is no peace, and dismiss men to the tribunal of divine justice with a lie in their right hand. It is a great relief to a minister to know that in the very worst cases he may, he ought to, preach the Gospel, and hold up to the dying sinner the all-sufficient Saviour and the finished salvation.

Besides these duties, there are others, such as reconciling differences, and reproving, both publicly and privately, which are arduous; but to prevent prolixity I shall only further remark here, that ministers are required to be “examples to the flock” in every Christian grace and excellence. They are required “in all things to show themselves patterns of good works, in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned.” To the obligations which lie on all men to do their duty, many are superadded in the case of ministers. “Take heed,” says the apostle Paul to Timothy, “take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.”

A minister must not only carefully avoid every moral impropriety, and cultivate every moral grace—he must scrupulously abstain from every *appearance* of evil. His character ought not only to be unspotted, but unsuspected. It is often difficult to fix the precise boundaries of what is right and wrong, proper and improper. It is dangerous in any man, and particularly in a minister of religion, to venture into the debateable land. The solitary traveller may choose the shorter path, though it may appear difficult and dangerous, but it is cruel and criminal

for the leader of a band of children or blind people to conduct them into hazards with which they may be unable to struggle, still more so if it be all but certain that many of them will stumble and fall. To pursue this prudent, and what many would call precise, mode of conduct, requires a mind superior to the fear of the world's dread laugh, when it utters those words in which it concentrates its contempt and malignity—"Saint, puritan, precisian, hypocrite." Enough has, we trust, been said to illustrate the difficulty of the pastoral office from the very nature of its duties, let us now shortly attend to the temptations which have a tendency to divert us from the proper discharge of our office. These are of various kinds. They take their origin either in ourselves or in others.

Ministers as well as their people, labour under the influence of "sin that dwelleth in them." They are laid under a necessity of discharging the duties of their office at stated times, without any regard to the languor or dulness of their dispositions. In this way there is a great danger of their acquiring a habit of thinking and speaking of salvation and eternity without suitably correspondent emotions. That word which, when accompanied by the Divine Spirit, is sharp and powerful, becomes to themselves a dead letter. And they are in danger of worshipping God externally, while their hearts are far from Him, introducing others to the holy place, while they themselves stand without.

That superiority of knowledge which ought to distinguish the minister is apt to produce exalted opinions of his own talents, and to lead him, in his ministrations, to regard the display of his knowledge, the acuteness of his intellect, the accuracy of his judgment, and the delicacy of his taste, rather than the informing of the understandings, or the affecting of the hearts of his people. When, in these circumstances, he meets with popular applause, it requires no common supply of grace to teach a minister to think of himself soberly, and not more highly than he ought to think.

In some ministers there is a natural timidity—a want of proper confidence—an excessive sensibility, or rather morbid

sensitiveness—which, operated upon by indwelling corruption, produces obstacles of a different kind in the way of the proper performance of their duty. Such men sink under the pressure of a burden which they feel too heavy to be borne. The Comforter, who should relieve their souls, is far away. They go mourning without the sun—the grasshopper becomes a burden, and they drop into an immature grave, the victims of melancholy.

It were endless, however, to point out all the difficulties which are thrown in the way of ministerial duty by those corrupt propensities which still linger behind in the regenerated heart. We shall conclude by adverting to the temptations which arise from the conduct of others.

Satan, the chief of apostate spirits, the great enemy of God and man, directs his fiery darts with peculiar force against Christian ministers. He smites the shepherd, that he may the more easily make a prey of the flock. In this world of depravity and guilt he but too easily finds agents to accomplish his malignant designs. Men of the world, though they must inwardly esteem the character of a consistent minister, yet not unfrequently attempt to allure him into improper compliance, that they may silence their reprover, and even quote his conduct as an extenuation of their own folly or guilt. In mingling in the scenes of social life, they sometimes endeavour to seduce him into levities unworthy his character, which, though they may secure him their applause, rob him of a portion of his moral power to benefit them and others. He may be placed in situations where he must observe many things worthy of reprobation, yet where it is difficult, without a large portion of prudence as well as fortitude, to conduct himself aright, to discover “the time to keep silence,” and “the time to speak.”

After a long course of labours and faithful services, the minister of Christ not unfrequently perceives but few good results of his labours—all things seem to remain as they were in the beginning—he that was unclean is unclean still. This melancholy consideration is apt to produce despondency,—a

despondency which is also often greatly increased by his finding that, instead of receiving the Gospel as the word of God, his hearers are employed in endeavouring to discover faults in his sermons or conduct.

These cursory remarks on the difficulties of the pastoral office, by one who is still a stranger to them, except from observation, but who has thought it his duty to look as closely at them as a mere observer may, must convince every one, we trust, that the Christian ministry is by no means that easy office which too many, inadvertently and foolishly, imagine.

The design of these observations is obvious, and the inference we would have you to draw from them is easy. Since our difficulties are so numerous and important, brethren, pray for us, that our Divine Master may make His grace sufficient for us, and perfect His strength in our weakness. "For we are not sufficient of ourselves to do any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God."

A second motive to enforce the duty of prayer for the ministers of Christ is, "that prayer is the means appointed by God for obtaining every blessing."

It is the confidence of the Christian minister, amid his toils, that in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom, and knowledge, and that out of His fulness he may receive, and grace for grace. He believes, and he rejoices in the belief, that Christ is exalted as the head of the church, which is His body, "to give pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

In order to obtain these blessings, those means must be employed which are appointed in the Holy Scriptures. Of these means prayer is one of the most important; and on its performance is frequently suspended the enjoyment of the most important blessings—"Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find." For the blessings promised to the children of Israel, "I will yet be inquired of to do it for them, saith the

Lord God." Men, proud of their reason, and forgetting that the Deity has a right to confer His favours, in the manner which seems good to Him, have brought forward a variety of objections against this wise and gracious arrangement of Providence. Most of these are unworthy of notice; but there is one which has often been urged with the appearance of reason, and has been the occasion of troubling the minds of weak and tender Christians. The doctrine of the efficacy of prayer is said to be inconsistent with the unchangeableness of the Divinity. Our God, indeed, is "the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," and He never alters His mode of procedure on account of the entreaties of men. But, in his decree, the means and the end are so conjoined, that the one cannot be obtained without the other. Besides, the unchangeableness of God is His unvaried acting in the best manner, and secures that the performance of a duty shall always be attended with the promised effect.

That the prayers of the faithful have often been attended with remarkable success, we have abundant evidence in the Holy Scriptures. By the heavenly influence of prayer, the army of Amalek was overthrown, and the sun and moon stayed in their career to witness the defeat of the enemies of God. The age of miracles is now gone by, but still "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." "If but two of you," says our Saviour to His disciples—"if but two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father, who is in heaven; for where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

That important advantages result to ministers from the prayers of their people, is plainly taught in the Holy Scriptures. For what reason does our apostle so frequently solicit the prayers of the churches, but that he knew they were the means appointed by heaven for the communication of those important blessings of which he stood in need. The prayers of the faithful loosed the fetters of the venerable Peter, burst asunder the doors of his prison, and restored him to liberty.

Our apostle, when similarly situated, expresses to Philemon his trust, that he would be "given to him, through his prayers;" and to the Philippians, his conviction that his ministry and sufferings should turn to his salvation, "through the prayers of the church and the supply of the Spirit of Christ."

As the same advantages will still flow from the same conduct, we beseech you, brethren, that you "pray for us, that the word of God may have free course to be glorified."

A third motive to induce Christians to pray for their ministers is, that the proper performance of this duty has a direct and powerful tendency to promote their own welfare.

The Christian ministry is one of those good gifts which were conferred by the Great Head of the church for the advancement of the happiness of His people. Those invested with this sacred office are not selected from the rest of mankind, that they may be "lords of God's heritage," but that they may be "helpers of their faith;"—"for the perfecting the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The happiness of the Christian people, their edification in holiness and comfort, must depend, in a considerable degree, on their minister's right performance of his duties; and this, as we formerly observed, is to be sought for and obtained by careful prayer to the God of all grace.

The design of God in appointing the Gospel ministry is not frustrated, nor the reward of faithful ministers endangered, by their want of success. They may seem to "labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely their judgment is with the Lord, and their work with their God." "In them that perish," as well as "in them that are saved," they "are unto God a sweet savour of Christ." But how foolish is the conduct, and how appropriate, but severe the punishment, of those who, by their sinful abstinence from this duty of prayer for ministers, provoke God so to withhold His blessing from Gospel ordinances, as that to *them* they are fruitless!

When, in consequence of the prayers of the faithful, the good hand of the Lord is with His minister, how delightful

are the consequences ! The minister and his people live together as heirs of the grace of life. "The word of the Lord hath free course, and is glorified"—"The name of the Saviour is glorified, according to the grace of our God."

Abstracted from the consideration of the direct answer of these prayers, the performance of the duty has a happy influence on the minds of the Christian people. It has been observed, by an excellent writer, that "intercessions have an effect on social virtue." The prayers of a minister for his people lead to tenderness, and diligence, and condescension. They subdue pride, impatience, and languor, in the work of the ministry. His soul is stirred by the elevating thought, that he is "a worker together with God."¹ An effect somewhat analogous to this is produced on the minds of Christians, by prayer for their minister. Those devotional feelings, which ought always to be exercised in prayer, are such as best fit us for the reception of Divine truth ; and he who has, in his closet and family, on the morning of the Lord's Day, prayed, with proper dispositions of mind, for the blessing of God on his minister, will be more inclined to hear what God the Lord will speak by him, than to exert his critical ingenuity, in order to discover faults—a practice, though not uncommon, fraught with the most dangerous consequences to those who give themselves to it. As then you value your own happiness, "brethren, pray for us."

A variety of other motives might have been adduced, but these shall suffice. A few remarks on the peculiar circumstances of the present occasion, shall conclude the discourse. A disposition to talk of a man's self, disagreeable in any man, is peculiarly ungraceful in the occupier of the pulpit. "Christ Jesus, and Him crucified," ought to be the principal subject of discourse here ; and he is ill acquainted with his duty who rejoices not to lose himself in so glorious a theme. There are circumstances, however, which may not only apologise for, but actually require a degree of egotism. In such circumstances

¹ Charters.

I conceive myself now to stand. A connection has lately been formed between this congregation and me, intimate in its nature, awfully important in its consequences with regard to both, and which, on the one part, in all human probability, will be loosed only by the hands of mortality. I feel myself in a new situation ; new prospects open on my view ; new hopes and new fears agitate my breast. I am with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling, lest I shall not find you such as I would, and lest I shall be found of you such as ye would not. When I consider the arduous task to which I am appointed, the awful consequences which result from unfaithfulness, the long and reputable course which my venerable predecessor, who used to occupy this place, has run, my heart is ready to sink within me, and I exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But I am reassured when I read, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Were I to follow the impulse of my feelings, I should, in the language of a prophet, say "Ah, Lord, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child. But I trust I may, without presumption, appropriate the address to the youthful Jeremiah : "Say not, I am a child, for thou shalt go to all to whom I send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak."

The course which your minister has this day begun may be either a long or a short one. This is in the hand of the wisest and best of Beings, and we are willing to remain ignorant of it. But let it be your earnest prayer and mine, that it may be spent in the faithful service of our one Master, that its termination, whenever it arrives, may neither be inglorious nor unhappy. He earnestly supplicates an interest in your prayers. Send up your warmest addresses before the throne of mercy, that He may make His grace sufficient for me, and perfect His strength in my weakness; that He may strengthen me with all might in the inner man; that He may enable me to do the work of an evangelist among you, and make full proof of my ministry.

On the other hand, your pastor is not ignorant that you have a right to an important place in his prayers. "God forbid,

that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you," by the assistance of my Master, "the good and the right way." In imitation of the first and greatest minister of the Gentile church, I will bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, "That He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the height and depth, and the breadth and length, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." Amen.

Such, at the commencement of my ministry, were my convictions, regarding the extent and difficulties of the pastoral office, the responsibilities of those who occupy it, and the importance of the prayers of those who are its objects, to the right discharge of its duties. They have not been diminished during its course—on the contrary, they strengthen and deepen as I approach its close.

How imperfectly these convictions have been worked out, I am deeply sensible. In looking back, I wonder at the kind reception my imperfect labours have met with from my brethren, to whom I have been called successively to minister. And, in looking forward, I can only cast myself on the mercy of my Divine Master,—“looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

What success has attended my labours—and it were ingratitude in me to complain of an utterly fruitless ministry—I attribute, in subordination to my Master's blessing, in a large measure, to the prayers of my people. I trust these prayers will not be intermitted, though their object must now be somewhat altered.

“I beseech you, then, brethren, for the Lord Jesus' sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me, in your prayer to God for me,” that I may be faithful to the end; that I may not be left in any way to dishonour my Master, nor

weaken the testimony I have given to His cause; "that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God;" that I may have, if it please God, a quiet dismissal; and, to crown all, that I may "find mercy of the Lord in that day," and "an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And for "my true yokefellow," who, now for twelve years, has, to my great comfort and your great advantage, served with me as a son in the Gospel, join with me in supplicating a long, a happy, and a fruitful ministry, a prosperous course, and a glorious close.

It is probable there may be some hearing me who are looking forward to the sacred office. It would be strange if I did not feel a peculiar interest in *them*. As a proof of this interest, I would press on their most serious consideration the importance of due preparation for that office, which they are aspiring to, and I am about to lay down; and I prefer doing this in the words of another—the venerable Dr John Erskine; for while his words exactly represent my convictions and feelings, the sacrifices he made in choosing the Christian ministry as a profession, and his remarkable diligence as a student, combined with the singular worth and wisdom, which made him so bright an ornament of the Established Church of Scotland during the latter half of the last century, give the declaration and advice a weight and value, to which no expression of the result of my experience could justly lay claim: "I have no cause to repent my choice of a profession. But I do lament that I entered on the sacred function ere I had spent one-fourth of the time in reading, meditation, and devotional exercises, which would have been necessary in any tolerable degree to qualify me for it."—"Ye who now enjoy the golden season of youth, be careful to improve it to better purpose. The advantages you now have for acquiring gifts and grace may never return in any future period."

It is my earnest desire that the fervent prayers of the Church may draw down such a communication of heavenly grace on the rising ministry, that their labours and success may exceed

those of any age since the apostolic, and adequately meeting the demands of the interests of the church and the world, ever rising as the accomplishment of the mystery of God approaches, may hasten on the millennial glory. It is high honour and true blessedness to be enabled to do anything towards so glorious a consummation.

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