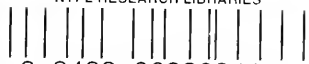


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THE
POSTHUMOUS WORKS

OF THE

LATE RIGHT REVEREND

JOHN HENRY HOBART, D.D.

BISHOP OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH
IN THE STATE OF NEW-YORK.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM BERRIAN, D. D.

RECTOR OF TRINITY CHURCH, NEW-YORK.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto 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, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

THIS scene which the prophet unfolds, exhibits almost all the characters that compose the subjects of human misery; we behold the poor, the broken-hearted, the mourner, the captive; and surely this scene will call forth the compassion of the Most High. It is calculated to awaken our liveliest sympathy; and we hear a personage who appears bearing from the Most High a commission of mercy; and thus he unfolds its interesting import:

“ The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto 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, and the day of vengeance of our God; to

comfort all that mourn ; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness ; that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.”

No doubt can exist with respect to the personage who thus delivers his gracious commission ; the evangelical prophet contains the most minute delineations of the character and offices of Jesus Christ ; we cannot, therefore, hesitate instantly to refer to him a passage which so well suits the gracious and compassionate character and office of the Saviour of the world. The correctness of this application is established by our Lord himself. Soon after he commenced his ministry, by preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease, entering, as was his custom, a synagogue at Nazareth, to unite in the worship there celebrated, he was called to officiate as a reader, and opening the book of the prophet Esaias, which was presented to him, he found the place where this passage was written ; and having read it, he expounded it, and proclaimed to the people wondering at the gracious words which proceeded out of his lips, “ This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears.” He thus declared that he was the gracious Personage pointed out in the passage of the evangelical prophet.

Applying then this passage to Jesus Christ, we behold,

1. His solemn inauguration to office ; and,
2. The gracious functions with which he was invested.

The consideration of these particulars will lead to remarks suitable to the present occasion, of admitting to the office of the Christian ministry.

1. We behold the inauguration of Christ to his divine offices. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me."

But did he not, from all eternity, possess the Spirit without measure? The eternal Word, was he not with God from the beginning, or ever the world was—was he not God? The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, is he not the Almighty? The brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, did not the eternal Son make the worlds? The King of kings and Lord of lords, is not his throne for ever and ever? Yes—and therefore at his name every knee bows, and every tongue confesses that he is Lord.

But this eternal Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; the brightness of the Father's glory took upon him the nature of man; and he was thus made flesh, and clothed with our nature, that he might become the Mediator between God and man, the Saviour, the Intercessor, the Prophet, the Priest, and the Ruler of his redeemed people. Not, therefore, in his character of "God over all" did he receive the anointing of the Spirit, but in that character of the Son of man which he assumed when he was born of a virgin. By the Spirit of the Lord was he inaugurated to the office of Mediator between God and man.

The Holy Ghost was the agent in this august solemnity.

In the eternal counsels of love towards man, it

was ordained that all the persons of the Godhead should be occupied in the work of his redemption: and thus, while we adore God the Father as the Author of that stupendous scheme by which mercy and truth met together, and God the Son as the Saviour by whom this redemption was effected, we acknowledge God the Holy Ghost as the divine source of all those gifts and graces which qualified the man Christ Jesus for his office as Mediator, and sinful man, which he came to redeem, for the participation of the blessings of his kingdom. The Spirit of the Lord rested on Jesus Christ; and by this Spirit was he consecrated to the mediatorial office.

In allusion to the mode by which consecration to office was performed among men, and particularly among God's chosen people, Jesus Christ was said to be "anointed." "The Lord hath anointed me."

Anointing with oil which was the produce of a tree esteemed of superior glory and excellency, and which was a liquor pure, delicate, and incorruptible, was frequently practised among the nations of the East, and especially among the Hebrews. As a religious ceremony, it designated both persons and things to sacred purposes. A holy anointing oil, consisting of the most precious spices and perfumes with the oil of the olive, was appointed by God to be used by Moses for the anointing of the tabernacle, of the ark, and of the sacred vessels, to sanctify them, and to make them most holy; and for the anointing of Aaron and his sons, to consecrate them, that they might minister unto the Lord in the priests' office. With this holy unction were the prophets, kings, and priests of the Israelites designated to their sacred functions.

Highly proper was it, therefore, that he who, in his character as Mediator, was to be the Prophet, the Priest, and the Ruler of his people, should be consecrated to these holy offices by a sacred unction. Precious and fragrant was the oil which, shed on Aaron's head, went down to the skirts of his clothing; precious and fragrant was the oil of gladness by which, when Solomon was advanced to the regal dignity, the people rejoiced with great joy; but infinitely more precious and fragrant than these was the *unction* of the Holy One, that "oil of gladness" by which Jesus Christ was "exalted above his fellows:" it was the unction of the Spirit of the Lord. Jesus received this unction of the Spirit when, at the incarnation, the Holy Ghost came upon the blessed virgin, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her; and he also received this divine unction when, at his baptism, the Spirit of God descended like a dove and lighted upon him. By this unction of the Spirit he was not only solemnly vested with the mediatorial office, but endued, in his human nature, with all those divine gifts and graces necessary to discharge its exalted duties.

The man Christ Jesus was thus solemnly inaugurated, not with the most precious unction by which designation is made to human offices, but by the Spirit of the Lord: the heavens open, and this Spirit descends upon him without measure—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. And hear him thus declaring his divine commission: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me."

2. We are thus led, in the second division of this discourse, to contemplate the various offices which our blessed Lord was commissioned to execute.

The preacher of good tidings to the meek.

“The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek,” or, according to the evangelists quoting this passage, as translated by the Septuagint, “to preach the Gospel to the poor,” to those whose humble condition in the world presents fewer obstacles to the receiving of the self-denying precepts which he inculcated than the rich and great would have to encounter, and disposed them to listen with eagerness to the joyful news of happiness in a better life; while those who are encircled with splendour and immersed in pleasure, think it good for them to be in this world.

“To preach the Gospel to the poor,” especially to the poor in spirit, the meek, and humble, who, labouring under a sense of their guilt and wretchedness, listen with eagerness to the glad tidings of salvation, and discarding all prejudice and pride, receive with meekness the incomprehensible, but glorious doctrines of their divine Teacher.

Behold Jesus Christ fulfilling this part of his commission. He first opened his divine message to fishermen of Galilee—to publicans and sinners. He listened to the cries for mercy from the blind beggar by the way side. He pronounced pardon and peace on the penitent suppliant who, in deep abasement and affectionate piety, washed his feet with the tears of contrition. Hear him pronouncing the benediction—“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

Again : He was commissioned to be the herald of the acceptable year of the Lord, of liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, or the recovering of sight to them that are blind.

By the sound of the trumpet throughout all the land, was the year of jubilee announced to the Jews. This was the joyful year, when all servitude was abolished, all debts remitted, and all forfeited inheritances restored. A more joyful jubilee, a more acceptable year was proclaimed by Jesus Christ—a year of spiritual jubilee to all mankind, announcing deliverance to those enslaved by sin and Satan, so that they recover their spiritual vision, discerning the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—proclaiming remission of sins to the guilty race of mankind, and a restoration to the forfeited inheritance of heaven.

Jesus Christ fulfilled this divine commission ; he proclaimed this acceptable year ; saying to the miserable captives of sin and Satan, “ Thy sins are forgiven thee.” He poured not only upon the sightless eye-ball the light of day, but on the dark and benighted soul the more grateful light of his own glory ; and he passed “ through the grave and gate of death ” to his throne of everlasting dominion in the heavens, announcing, “ I am he who was dead, but now liveth for ever, and hold the keys of death and hell. And to him that overcometh will I give to sit on my throne for evermore.”

Jesus Christ, by those whom he commissioned to be the heralds of his Gospel even to “ the end of the world,” still proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord—the day of salvation. By his word, and by the power of his Holy Spirit, dispensed

through their ministrations, he still looses from the captive of sin his galling fetters, and opens the light of spiritual and eternal day to those who were bound in darkness and in death. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, unto them hath the light shined."

3. Christ was commissioned to be the comforter of the broken-hearted, of all that mourn in Zion.

"The Lord hath anointed me to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Jesus Christ discharged these interesting offices. In his journey of benevolence he soothes those sorrows not to be healed by human skill—the sorrows of the heart. The affectionate sisters, mourning their departed brother, hear the divine voice, "Lazarus, come forth," and the tenant of the tomb is restored to their embraces. The bereaved widow, following to the grave with tears and lamentations an only son, is arrested by a voice of more than human power, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise."

Jesus Christ bound up the broken-hearted—yes, to all whose hearts are broken by sorrow, and who mourn under the numerous afflictions which assail them in the world, this compassionate Saviour, in the exercise of his divine commission, addresses the words of celestial consolation—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But especially to those who mourn under a sense of sin, does he bestow the

comforts of his mercy. Those mourners in Zion, confessing their guilt, and bowed down under the burden of their sins, Jesus Christ comforts with a sense of pardon, with lively confidence in his mercy, with an animating view of his grace and love, with joy in the favour of their reconciled God and Father—"Your faith hath healed you: go in peace." Comforted by their divine Lord, they shake off the ashes of humiliation, and receive the "beautiful crown" of rejoicing; the oil of gladness, shedding upon them its refreshing fragrance, allays their sorrows; and arrayed in splendid apparel, the emblem of the joy that fills their hearts, they are no longer oppressed by the spirit of heaviness; they rejoice in the Lord, they joy in the God of their salvation; they sing praises for evermore unto him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood.

4. Jesus Christ perfects his gracious offices towards his people, by becoming their sanctifier, planting them in righteousness, enabling them to bring forth the fruits of holiness to the glory and praise of God.

This part of his commission is thus expressed: "That they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

Imperfect indeed would be the commission of the Saviour, if it only extended to release believers from the guilt of their past sins, and to refresh them with a sense of pardoning mercy. In order to receive the comforts of God's favour, and attain the glories of their heavenly inheritance, they must

be renewed in the spirit of their mind, they must be sanctified in soul and body, they must be established in holiness. Thus, then, Jesus Christ is commissioned by the Father to sanctify those who believe in him, that they may be a peculiar people zealous of good works. For this purpose he engrafts them on himself, the true vine; he takes them from the barren soil of nature, and plants them in the garden of the Lord, that holy church, where, through the channel of the ministry, the sacraments, and ordinances, they receive the purifying and invigorating streams of divine grace, refreshed and strengthened by which they become as "trees planted by the water side, bringing forth fruit in due season." The wilderness of nature becomes "a fruitful field, which the Lord hath blessed. Instead of the thorn, there comes up the fir-tree; and instead of the brier, the myrtle-tree: and the desert and solitary place rejoices and is glad." The deformed and hateful vices of the flesh are succeeded by the beautiful and glorious virtues of the Spirit; and believers, sanctified in soul and in body, flourish as trees of righteousness, bringing forth the fruits of holiness. God is thus glorified; for by his grace they are "planted" in Jesus Christ, in whom only they are justified; by his grace only they are created anew unto good works; and finally, by his grace only they overcome, and in the "end" obtain "everlasting life." All the glory of their salvation must therefore be ascribed unto Jehovah, their righteousness, their strength, their Redeemer.

5. There is still another part of the commission of Jesus Christ. He was not only the herald of

the “acceptable year of the Lord,” but of “the day of vengeance of our God.”

That day, when, coming in his wrath to execute his judgments upon the Jewish nation, there was great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world; great distress in the land; the brother betraying the brother to death, and the father the son; children rising up against their parents, and causing them to be put to death; false prophets arising, and deceiving many; nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places; fearful sights and great signs from heaven; Jerusalem encompassed with armies, and trodden down of the Gentiles; of her temple, adorned with goodly stones, not one stone left upon another; her people falling by the edge of the sword, and led away captive into all nations; cursing, vexation, and rebuke came upon them; they were made a hissing, a by-word, and a reproach among all nations. These were the days of vengeance; because Jerusalem would not know, in the day of her merciful visitation, the things that belonged to her peace.

But there is a day of the Lord still more great and terrible. The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall; upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him;—the shout of the archangels, and the blast of the trumpet, like the sound of mighty

thunders—"Wo! wo! the day of vengeance is come."

Brethren, this day of vengeance may be to you the day of mercy; for Jesus Christ is anointed to "publish good tidings to the meek," "to preach the Gospel to the poor." Be ye poor in spirit, meek and lowly of heart; be ye humbled under a sense of your spiritual weakness, devoutly submitting to the will of God,—and to you shall salvation come. He is anointed to "bind up the broken-hearted, and to comfort them that mourn in Zion." If ye then feel the anguish of a heart wounded with the sense of your sins, and the apprehension of the terrors of divine justice, deploring the malady of sin which infects your hearts, and confessing that there is no health in you, he who was commissioned to bind up and comfort, will apply to your broken hearts the consolations of his mercy.

He was anointed to "preach deliverance to the captives;" and, oppressed with the galling chain of your iniquities, and bending under the burden of your sins, go unto this Deliverer of the soul, thus labouring and heavy laden, and he will give you rest.

He was anointed to proclaim "the opening of the prison," or "the recovering of sight to them that are blind." Blind by nature to spiritual things, seek the illumination of this Sun of righteousness, and he will arise upon you with healing under his wings; he will open your eyes to discern and to enjoy celestial truth; he will guide you through the temptations of the world in the way of holiness; and he will animate you with the prospect of entering, when your course is finished, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

He was anointed to "set at liberty them that are bruised." Bruised as ye are in your spiritual conflicts, by the rod of your great adversary, by the temptations with which he assails you, resolutely fight the good fight of faith under the banner of this great King and Captain of your salvation, and you shall finally beat down Satan under your feet. Death being swallowed up in victory, with your divine Leader, you shall overcome the world; for he is anointed to proclaim "the acceptable year of the Lord," that year of spiritual jubilee in which remission of sins, release from condemnation, and restoration to the privileges of adoption and grace, are offered to all who truly repent and believe. For grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

This subject admits of an interesting application to the present occasion, of admitting to the office of the Christian ministry.

It is the distinguishing dignity of this office, and it will constitute also its tremendous responsibility, that it resembles, in its origin, and in many of its important functions, the priesthood of Jesus Christ. As the Father sent him, in his human nature, to be the Prophet, the Priest, and the Ruler of his people; so he sent his ministers, to the end of the world, to be the instructors, the priests, and the governors of his church. He glorified not himself to be a High Priest, but he that said unto him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;" so they, the ministers of his church, take not this honour to themselves, but are called of God, as was Aaron, by an external commission. He received the anointing of the Spirit; and they receive, by the laying

on of the hands of that apostolic succession in which the power of ordination is vested, the gift of the Holy Ghost, that gift of office by which they become vested with power to minister in holy things. And their sacred functions cannot be more forcibly and accurately delineated than in the words of the commission given to their divine Lord, “to preach good tidings to the meek, 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, and the day of vengeance of our God; and to comfort them that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.”

Interesting and affecting display of the functions of that ministry, to the lowest order of which, that of deacon, which was instituted by the apostles, under the authority of the Holy Ghost, and handed down to this time, the person present is now to be admitted.

In the discharge of the responsible and interesting functions of your holy office—duly called thereto, as you will now be, by a commission from the divine Head of the church—bring to your aid, as far as may be in your power, all those talents and attainments which are now to supply the absence of those miraculous gifts of the Spirit which astonished and converted an unbelieving world. But remember, more powerful even than all mysteries and all knowledge, in subduing the nations to the

faith, was the display, in the primitive heralds of salvation, of that charity that edifieth, that holy spirit of love which excited in their souls every pure and humble grace, and adorned their lives with every virtue.

This anointing of the Spirit you must receive. You must continually exhibit, with increasing lustre, the virtues that adorned your divine Master, if you would successfully discharge the duties of your ministry.

The order of deacon, to which you will now be admitted, though a most honourable, responsible, and important, is still but the lowest order of the Christian ministry, to which appertains only some of the powers of the priesthood. You will bear this in mind, that you may be excited to qualify yourself, by the continuance of those studies which you have hitherto diligently and, we hope, profitably pursued, for the superior office of the priesthood; and especially it will be incumbent on you, in this inferior office, to cultivate that modesty and humility which peculiarly belong to your station, and which will eminently adorn it.

In the inimitable language of the form prescribed by the church, and by which you will now be set apart to the holy office of deacons, let me exhort you to be modest, humble, and constant in your ministrations; to have a ready mind and will to observe all spiritual discipline; and preserving the testimony of a good conscience, to continue stable and strong in your Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Pray to this divine Lord for all these things; and in his strength, imitating his zeal, his fidelity, his incessant labour, his unvarying tenderness and humility, execute your holy office. And may you

be the instrument of turning many to righteousness—of building up that church which your Lord purchased with his blood; and finally, may you receive from that divine Master whom you have humbly served, the approving sentence which awards you a crown of glory.

Christians, be it your object to apply these sacred functions, exercised among you, to the salvation of your souls. By this ministry ye become Christians; ye are “The planting of the Lord;” you are translated by baptism into that holy church, where you are abundantly watered, in the word and ordinances, by the dews of heavenly grace. See that ye flourish as “Trees of righteousness,” bringing forth all the fruits of holiness, of meekness, of temperance, of patience, of godliness; that thus ye may glorify the Lord, by displaying the efficacy of that grace which he dispenses to you.

Thus the day of vengeance will be to you the day of mercy.

When the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and when the proud, the obdurate, the impenitent, the ungodly, all that do wickedness, shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, you shall experience the glories of the day of mercy. Translated to the Zion of the Lord, you shall receive the treasures of a kingdom which endures for ever. There the Saviour, become the King of glory, shall fully complete his gracious commission in all his redeemed. There the broken-hearted shall be healed; for everlasting peace shall refresh them. There the captive shall rejoice in his complete redemption; for he shall enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God. There the

blind shall rejoice in the glories of perfect vision ; for the Lord will be unto him an everlasting light, and God himself an eternal glory. There the bruised shall no longer tremble under the rod of his spiritual oppressors ; for sin, death, and Satan are bound in everlasting chains at the feet of the great Conqueror. There commences the eternal jubilee of rest, and freedom, and peace, and felicity to the ransomed of the Lord ; and there their songs of praise will be for ever offered to their Saviour, their Deliverer, the mighty One of Israel, the King of kings and Lord of lords ; to whom, in the church on earth, be ascribed all honour, power, majesty, and dominion, world without end.

SERMON II.

ON ORDINATION.

1 TIMOTHY iii. 13.

They that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree.

THE Son of God, in that human nature which he assumed for the salvation of mankind, is constituted the Head and Ruler of all those who believe in his name; and it has pleased him that they should be associated in a visible society, constituted with certain officers and ordinances, in order that, by communion with these officers, in the devout participation of these ordinances, they may become assured of their interest in his merits, and be established in those holy graces and virtues which will qualify them for the enjoyment of the blessings of his salvation.

This spiritual society in which believers in Christ must be united, and which is ruled by these officers, and which possesses these ordinances, is styled in the sacred writings, “the church,” “the church of the living God;” and it is constantly exhibited as that body of Christ to which all must be united who would derive from its divine Head those spiritual blessings which he has purchased by his merits, and which he dispenses through the instrumentality of the ministry and ordinances of this his mystical body.

It must be apparent, from the very nature and the objects of this society, that it is not temporal, but spiritual in its character; not human, but divine in its origin and destination. The officers who are set over it, must therefore be spiritual in their powers and duties, and the commission divine by which they exercise their functions. Originating in no human source, this commission can proceed only from that divine Personage who is the head over all things to his church, and to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth.

When he constituted that visible society "the church," to which were to be applied the merits of his precious blood, and which was to be sanctified and ruled by the Spirit of his grace, he delegated the apostles to send others as he sent them, by an external commission, to be the instructors, the priests, and the rulers of his spiritual family, "alway, even unto the end of the world."

The apostles were, at the first, the sole officers of the Christian church; with them, and with them only, rested the power of constituting the officers of that spiritual kingdom which they were commanded to establish, and of conferring that commission, without which there can be no authority to minister in holy things. "Our blessed Lord glorified not himself to be a High Priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." And the apostle expressly declares concerning the office of ministering in holy things, "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron;" and Aaron was designated by an express commission. Whatever, then, may be the intellectual or spiritual qualifications of any man—let him be learned as Ga-

maliel, or holy as Aaron, the servant of the Lord—he will not be authorized to take upon him the functions of the ministry, until he receives an external commission for the purpose from the great Head of the church, and the only source of power in it, through that order of men whom he hath constituted successively to convey it “alway, even unto the end of the world.” For the ministry, as originally constituted, must be unchangeable: it is of divine authority; and the apostles alone being empowered by their blessed Lord to constitute the ministry, its divine authority would necessarily be lost by any change in their appointments. They established, as their successors in their standing prerogatives of commissioning to the ministry and governing the church, a particular order of men: among these were ranked Timothy, at Ephesus, and Titus, at Crete; and also the seven angels, as they are styled in the book of Revelation, or messengers of the Asiatic churches. From these, through their successors, has been transmitted to the present day that external commission which is necessary in order to minister in sacred things.

This order was *first* called Apostles, or, as the word in the original signifies, messengers; but afterwards, the name Apostles was confined to the disciples of our Lord. Their successors then took the title of Bishops, or overseers—which is applied to the elders, or presbyters, not as having the superior powers of the apostles and their successors, but in reference to their being vested with the oversight of their respective flocks. This superior order of bishops, in all places and at all periods, from the time of the apostles until within these two centuries, has exercised the functions of ordina-

tion and supremacy in government. If they had not been originally vested with these functions, an attempt to usurp them would have been marked by the decided resistance of those over whom they thus claimed lawless dominion. The usurpation, in all places where the cross of Christ had been planted, in the extreme regions of Europe and Asia, and in the sequestered vallies of the Indian Peninsula, so as to leave no trace of equality in the ministry, would have been morally impossible; and if effected, it would have constituted an era memorable for a radical change in the apostolical constitution of the ministry, and an era that would have been prominent and easily distinguished, and not, as now, to be sought for in vain on the page of history.

Subordinate to this first order of the ministry, we trace, in the apostolic history, the appointment of elders, or presbyters, who, as before observed, were originally also called Bishops, or overseers, in reference to their oversight of their respective flocks, and not to their oversight of other clergy, and of several congregations, constituting a diocese. This superintendence over the inferior clergy and congregations appertained to the superior order, first styled Apostles, and then Bishops. When the title *Bishops* became appropriate to this first order of the ministry, the second order became known by their other title, Presbyters, and afterwards by the term *Priests*. This last appellation has respect to their spiritual oblation of the body and blood of Christ, under the symbols of bread and wine; and this oblation was regarded as equivalent and analogous, in the Gospel, to the sacrifices of the Jew-

ish law, the offering of which appertained to the priests.

In this power of celebrating the holy communion, the order of priests is principally distinguished from that of deacons, the third order of the ministry.

There seems great *expediency*, independently of its divine authority, in this distinction and gradation of the orders of the ministry. As they rise in their functions and their responsibility, the inferior grade becomes a test of qualification as well as a mean of preparation for the higher; and they have each their appropriate functions more or less restrained, the inferior in subordination to the higher, and all in subjection to that divine Head of the church from whom all their power is derived. Moving thus in distinct, and subordinate, and dependent spheres, and yet in entire unison, they exhibit, in the spiritual world, that variety, and yet that order and harmony, which, in the natural universe, reflect so much lustre on the wisdom and the power of the great Creator. But it is the peculiar recommendation of this distinction and gradation of office, and that which gives it the force of indispensable obligation, that it was established by Christ and his apostles, who were the head and the founders of the church.

Our present business is with the inferior grade—of deacons, to which the persons present are to be admitted. That deacons are an order of the ministry, is apparent from the circumstance that they were set apart by the laying on of hands, which was the mode of conveying ministerial authority. It is recorded also, in the Acts of the Apostles, that they preached and baptized; but it does not

appear that they celebrated the holy communion, or pronounced the sentence of absolution and benediction, which functions have always been considered as peculiar to the priests' office.

If deacons, as an order of the ministry, had not been originally constituted by the apostles, it is in the highest degree improbable that they would have been received in all churches, in all places, and at all times. If preaching and baptizing had not been powers originally vested in them, by what influence could they have obtained these exclusive prerogatives of the higher order of the ministry?

The inspired record exhibits the exercise, by deacons, of several of the powers of the ministry. The Samaritans were converted to the faith of Jesus, and admitted into his fold in baptism, by Philip the deacon. The illustrious preacher of the Christian faith, whose blood first ascended to heaven as a testimony of fidelity even unto death in his divine Master's cause, was Stephen the deacon. These distinguished heralds of the truths of salvation, and others, were set apart to the office of deacons by prayer and laying on of hands, which were ceremonies that indicated designation to spiritual functions. They were originally constituted, indeed, in especial reference to the charge of the poor; but it is equally certain, from the inspired history, that they exercised some of the functions of the ministry. In the apostolic epistles, deacons are enumerated as one of the orders of the ministry, and directions given as to their qualifications and duties.

It is one of the marks of the apostolic character of our church, that she has retained the office of deacon, with the functions appertaining to it in the

apostolic age—the charge of the poor and the impotent, where provision is so made; and especially the spiritual duties of assisting the priest in divine service; of aiding him in the administration of the eucharist, by the distribution of the cup; of admitting into the church by baptism; of reading practical expositions of Christian doctrine set forth by the church, called Homilies; and of preaching the word of God, when licensed by the bishop.

The peculiar circumstances of the church in this country, the number of vacant congregations, and the paucity of clergymen, render it necessary that deacons should be placed by the bishop who has the direction of them, not as assistants to priests, which is their appropriate station, but as in some measure pastors of congregations. Whatever be the station which they occupy, they are to be considered by the people as one of the orders of the ministry, had in estimation for their work's sake, and followed in the godly admonitions and truths which they deliver from the word of God.

For the faithful discharge of these important functions of the ministry, they must bring *literary*, *theological*, and spiritual qualifications.

Destitute as the church now is of miraculous gifts, it is by talents and learning alone that divine truth can be elucidated and enforced; and by the graces of style and the force of eloquence must it be rendered interesting and impressive, and urge its way to the understanding and the heart. There are now no fishermen of Galilee who can speak in every language the wonderful works of God, and exercise that inspiration of the Spirit which understandeth all mysteries and all knowledge. *Talents*, natural or acquired, must now perform the work

of an evangelist. Natural talents alone may effect a great deal ; unite with these extensive and accurate learning, especially theological, and you form, as it regards literary qualifications, the perfect minister.

Human talents and human learning are now the ordinary means by which the Divine Spirit convinces gainsayers, converts sinners, establishes the faithful. The weapons of human science have been employed to subvert the faith ; from the same armoury must the Christian minister furnish himself to defend it. The stores of erudition, the graces of style, and the power of eloquence, supply the champion of literary truth, and of the public weal, with the means of accomplishing the great objects to which he is devoted. Let not these high and efficient instruments of intellectual power be neglected by the advocate of divine truth ; let them not be discarded from subjects whose sublimity and importance are worthy of their highest efforts. God, judgment, eternity—the bliss of heaven, the torments of hell—the Son of God made man, suffering, dying, rising from the grave, ascending to heaven, sending forth his Spirit, ruling the world, coming to judgment, awarding the eternal destinies of the human race—these are the topics which the Christian minister enforces, and which are surely worthy of all the most vigorous efforts of the understanding, and most lively affections of the heart. Those truths of redemption into which angels desire to look—those precepts of salvation which are a light to our feet and a lamp to our path—those promises which, unfolding the glory that is to be revealed, raise to heaven the hair of sorrow and the dust—these awful and sublime to-

pics, in all their variety and richness, it should be the especial study of the Christian minister to explain and enforce; for in explaining, and with holy fervour enforcing them, consists his office as the herald of salvation.

But whatever may be his literary and theological attainments, if he is destitute of *spiritual qualifications*, the labours of his office will be a drudgery, his work will be neglected, his ministry will be dishonoured, and he will fall under the condemnation of bringing to the altar of his God a heart which is corrupt, and hands that are defiled. He must shine forth with an understanding enlightened from above, a heart renewed to holiness, and a life an example of all that is dignified and all that is lovely in Christian duty. Thus will the Christian minister preach, in his *character* and in his *life*, with an eloquence calculated to warm every heart into the admiration, the love, and the pursuit of that holiness which is set forth not only by the tongue of the preacher, but in the life of the man.

We have good reason to trust that this will be the eloquence of those persons who are now to be commissioned to the order of deacons. Having passed through the Theological Seminary of our church with great reputation, they bring, we are happy to say, to this holy office those literary, theological, and spiritual qualifications which will adorn their ministry, and we hope, render it honourable to themselves and a blessing to the church.

Bear in mind, my young friends, that your office in the church, though a most honourable, responsible, and important, is still an inferior office. The

constant impression of the subordinate station which you occupy, will excite you, by diligently pursuing your studies, to qualify yourselves for the superior office of the priesthood, and to cultivate that modesty and humility which peculiarly belong to your station, and will therefore most eminently adorn it.

In the inimitable language of the office prescribed by our church, by which you will be admitted to the order of deacons, let me exhort you to be modest, humble, and constant in your ministrations; to have a ready mind and will to obey all spiritual discipline. Preserve the testimony of a good conscience; continue stable and strong in your Lord and Master Jesus Christ; so well behaving yourselves in this inferior office—using the office of a deacon well, you will purchase to yourselves a good degree, an honourable rank in the church—you will be found worthy to be called into the higher ministries of the church. Pray to God for all these things. It is the unction of the Holy One enlightening, sanctifying, and strengthening you, that must fit you for the work before you. Never lose sight of the great object of the ministry—to save the souls of men; and this must be done, not by the vain speculations of philosophy, not by erudite disquisitions, not by ingenious dissertations, not by the portrait of virtue drawn by the pencil of human fancy, but by the exhibition, in their simplicity and purity, of the doctrines of the cross. There is no honour more exalted, none that will obtain brighter trophies on earth, none for which are reserved higher rewards in heaven, than that of faithfully preaching the cross of Christ. It was the resolution of the apostle—be it yours—“ God

forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Finally, be instant in prayer, be watchful, be diligent; and God will enable you to fulfil your ministry—to turn sinners to righteousness, to edify the church; and eventually your reward will be a crown of glory. May God grant this for Christ’s sake; to whom be ascribed all honour, power, majesty, and dominion, world without end.

SERMON III.

CONSECRATION OF A CHURCH.

GENESIS xxviii. 16.

Surely the Lord is in this place.

Is this so? Is that Being who stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth—whose throne is that heaven, and whose footstool is this earth—before whose glory the archangel veils his face—at the foot of whose majesty the cherubim casts his crown—Is he here? Does that presence, which, vast as infinity, cannot be contained even by the heaven and the heaven of heavens, and which, when we would seek to cover ourselves with the darkness, turns the night into day—does that presence fill this temple? Yes—God revealed the gracious promise of mercy to the patriarch in the visions of the night. Excited and awed by this manifestation of the divine glory, he exclaimed—“ Surely the Lord is in this place.” And the same Almighty Lord fulfilling the promise, “ In whatever place I record my name, I will come unto thee, and will bless thee,” and thus revealing, in this temple set apart for his service, his truth, his mercy, and his grace, in the *word* which is to be preached, in the *worship* and the *ordinances* that are to be celebrated, and in the *ministry* by which these are to be dispensed,—the same sentiment of excited and deep awe which solemnized

the mind of the patriarch, should fill our souls—
“ Surely the Lord is in this place.”

Brethren, did this truth, in all its powerful energy, sink deep into our hearts—did we realize that, in this house, those divine truths are to be authoritatively proclaimed, which, if received in faith, will make us wise unto salvation—that here are to be offered the confessions, the supplications, the praises, which, coming from penitent, humble, and grateful hearts, that Lord who is here in the midst will hear and accept—that the divinely constituted ambassadors for Christ are here to proclaim the messages of reconciliation which will convey pardon and consolation to the contrite and sorrowing, and the stewards of the mysteries of God, to open, in his ordinances, those fountains of grace, from which flow health and salvation to the corrupt and the lost—did we indeed believe, with the full conviction of our minds and the excited feelings of our hearts, that certainly, as we here assemble in God’s name, he is here, in this especial manner, present, dispensing, in the services of this sanctuary, his truth, his grace, and his mercy—oh! how would the overwhelming sentiment prostrate our souls in the deepest awe!—God the Lord, whose glory fills the heavens, dwells in this temple made with hands—God the Lord, who chargeth the angels with folly, is here in the midst of us, children of the dust, of mortality, of sin. Lord of heaven and of earth, thy condescension as much transcends our comprehension as it exceeds our deserts. “ Surely the Lord is in this place.”

1. Let then the truths of his sacred word be here faithfully delivered and humbly received.

They are here delivered in the presence of the Almighty Lawgiver who originally promulgated them, the inflexible Judge who will vindicate them with the sanctions of eternity. With that awful presence surrounding him, in the very temple of the Most High, at the very footstool of the eternal throne, shall the servant of the Lord withhold any of these sacred truths, weaken their force, or pervert their meaning, in the gratification of the pride of his own reason, or in accommodation to the caprices or the passions of his guilty fellow-men? Let him reverently open here the living oracles of truth, and let him speak as they speak, pronouncing error, and guilt, and depravity on the wisest and the best of the sons of men. They may speculate as to the cause of the malady—they may lose themselves in the labyrinths of endless doubt, in the aspiring attempt to reconcile its existence with the holiness and goodness of an omnipotent Creator; but the fact forces itself on their reluctant conviction—man is diseased by sin; and the speculation and the doubts which assail the attributes of the Being who permitted the parent of our race, in the exercise of free agency, to plunge himself and his posterity in all this wo, confirms the fact, that a creature thus rising against the government of his Creator, must be weakened and depraved. But his weakness and depravity (thus is vindicated the justice of the Eternal) are man's misfortune, not his crime until he neglects or rejects the all-sufficient means that are provided for his recovery, and for his exaltation to greater glory than that which transgression forfeited. It is in faithfully unfolding that wonderful plan which infinite wisdom and goodness devised for restoring favour, and holiness,

and immortality to a ruined race, that the servant of the Most High exchanges the painful task of humbling the soul under a sense of its deep guilt, of its subjection to sin, of its exposure to that eternal wrath which sin justly merits, for the animating and delightful office of proclaiming salvation—salvation in that blood of Christ which washes away guilt, though deep in its dye as scarlet or as crimson; which raises, by the power of the Almighty Spirit, from the death of trespasses and sins, the new life of righteousness and holiness; and which thus, through grace as unmerited as it is supreme and all-sufficient, translates the children of wrath from their bondage to corruption, into that state where they become the sons of God by adoption, and the associates of the angels of heaven in immortal purity and blessedness.

The herald of the Most High, mindful that he here proclaims it (awful responsibility!) in the more especial presence of the Being who commissions him, will not dare to doubt the truth of the message intrusted to him, and which is fraught with consolation, and with hope, and with everlasting triumph to the guilty but penitent souls of the flock for whom he is charged with it.

If indeed he chooses to speculate, difficulties will gather around him, and confound his understanding and his hopes. But he knows not—(what does he know?)—the essence of the Spirit that so brightly and powerfully stirs within him; he knows not the essence of that uncreated Spirit that breathed into him immortal breath; he knows—(I repeat it, what is it that he does know?)—only the *surfaces* of things, only the *facts* of nature. Let him not expect to know more than the

facts of revelation; let him not attempt to penetrate the glory that dazzles the gaze of the seraph when he comes near the throne, or to lift the veil from those secrets of Providence and of grace into which the cherubim dare not look; oh! let not man rush, where angels tremble. And if that God who has commissioned him, demands that his servant should faithfully proclaim, in their characteristic simplicity and energy, the great truths of his holy word, will he not expect from those to whom this word is addressed, from you, people of the congregation, the humble reception of it? Has he attested this word by signs, and wonders, and mighty works? Does it come, bearing every truth, every precept, every promise that can enlighten, that can direct, that can cheer the dark, the wandering, the desponding? Does it point the way, does it supply the strength to go through the errors, the sorrows, the sins of this mortal pilgrimage, to the regions of truth, of purity, of immortal bliss? Are there those whose commission and whose duty it is to offer and to enforce this blest word of reconciliation—to beseech you in the stead, and by the mercies and the merits of their divine Master, to lay down the weapons with which you war against your Maker, and to accept pardon and favour from your Almighty Sovereign? and will you, when the Sovereign Lord of heaven and of earth thus authoritatively dispenses the gracious offers of salvation, heedlessly neglect, or, with the more impious purpose of perseverance in the career of sin, boldly contemn and reject the merciful overture?

For what purpose, and in what character, brethren, do we come to this sacred temple? Not to

speculate on things abstruse, as philosophers—not, as the votaries of learning, to have its rich stores opened to our wondering gaze—not, as the admirers of genius, to witness and to extol its lofty flights—not, as the men of taste, to have the feelings delighted by the exhibitions of fancy, or overpowered by the tide of eloquence. Ah! my brethren, here we appear in a station to which are levelled all the human race; here we appear in that undistinguished mass, where the high and the low, the rich and the poor meet together: our station here is that of outcasts, on account of sin, from the divine favour; and here all mingle as sinners obnoxious to divine justice. We ought to know the mode of recovery from this state of degradation, of restoration to the forfeited favour of him who, the only source of felicity, can alone dispense happiness to us. The word of God points out that mode. If philosophy, learning, genius, taste, eloquence, explaining, elucidating, adorning, enforcing the truths of salvation, can bring them with greater conviction on the understanding, and fasten stronger their hold upon the heart, let the minister employ them, let the people welcome them, as grateful auxiliaries; but miserable substitutes are they for the pure and simple truth as it is in Jesus—miserable comforters are they to the soul which, wounded with a sense of sin, sends forth from every agonized feeling the inquiry, “What shall I do to be saved?” With one who proudly excelled in them all, let the servant of the sanctuary count them all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; and, my brethren, with the same great model for people as well as ministers, let your wishes and

your aim, in this sacred place, be excited by that sensibility to your weakness and your demerit, and that lively view of the mercy and the grace displayed in the plan of redemption, which will unite all your faculties and affections in the holy resolution, "God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"The Lord is in this place."

2. Let, then, his worship be here devoutly performed by minister and people.

Jehovah is in every place. Of this infinite, this all-pervading Being, it may be said with poetic beauty, and more than poetic truth,

"His temple is all space;
His altar, earth, sea, skies."

But, in condescending accommodation to the nature of man, who, in every concern of interest, and especially in the invisible and intangible matters of the spiritual and eternal world, seeks something definite, precise, visible, something marked by time and place, to aid his conceptions, to elevate his affections, to confirm his hopes, to fix and engage his faculties, it has pleased his all-merciful Maker to appropriate certain places where worship is to be rendered to him, to fix certain times for these acts of homage, and to institute certain rites, exhibiting, enforcing, and conveying spiritual blessings. One of these places is now this holy temple; holy, not in the sense of material sanctity, but in relation to the holy exercises of religious worship, and to the holy ordinances which are here to be performed and administered, and to the holy Being who has here promised to accept that worship, and

to accompany those ordinances with his purifying grace. Regarding, then, this edifice as thus the consecrated habitation of the Lord, in which he delights to dwell and to dispense his spiritual blessings to the humble worshippers of his name; and especially viewing this Christian sanctuary as the place where will be fulfilled, in the conveyance to the faithful of all the blessings of salvation, that promise of the divine Redeemer of our race, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" may we not apply to this temple the glowing strains with which the psalmist of Israel celebrated the less glorious temple of a dispensation preparatory to and shadowing that to which this sanctuary is devoted, "O how amiable are thy tabernacles, thou Lord of hosts!" And shall we not, ministers and people, joyfully obey the summons that, at stated times, urges and invites us—"O enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise." "O come, let us worship, and fall down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." But let devotion, let humility, let reverence mark both ministers and people in the worship of the sanctuary; for "the Lord is in this place." Let them both be grateful, that in a solemnity of such awful moment as that of the public homage of assembled Christians to the Majesty of heaven and of earth, the matter and the language of the confessions, supplications, and praises, in which they invoke and celebrate his name, are well ordered, drawn in part from the pure treasures of primitive times, enriched by the contributions of the wisdom and the piety of succeeding ages, animated by a spirit as fervent and reverential as that which warms

and awes the “rapt seraph;” its aspirations poured forth in words as simple, and pure, and fervent, and pathetic, as uninspired lips can utter. Let it be the object of the minister to be simple, and pure, and fervent, and pathetic in the tones and manner by which he seeks to engage the suppliants and worshippers before him in the various exercises of this inimitable service, and to fulfil one of his highest and most important duties, that of expressing the confessions and the supplications, and animating the praises of the people; and by reading the divine word, and absolving and blessing them in the name and by the authority of his Master, bring them near to God. And for this purpose, let him *feel*—in confession, that *he* has sins that are to be forgiven—in supplication, that *he* has wants to be relieved—in thanksgivings and praises, that *he* has been crowned with benefits that call for grateful homage to that Lord of all, whose goodness demands all praise—and in reading the divine word, and in absolving and blessing, that while he is the unworthy instrument of conveying divine truth, pardon, peace, and grace to the humble and contrite, *he* needs the voice of the Master who commissions him, to shed truth upon his own mind, and to convey pardon, and peace, and grace to his own guilty conscience and corrupt soul. Let him *feel* especially that “the Lord is in the place” where he thus worships, and his affections will be awed, his manner will be solemnized, his whole soul will be occupied in that homage which he offers to his God, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises. The recognition of that presence will stamp with no ordinary criminality every mutilation of that liturgy which, in that awful presence, we pro-

mised to preserve entire—every presumptuous introduction of our own effusions into that full and impressive service by which the wisest and the best of men have deemed it an honour and a privilege to be regulated, and which the most solemn obligations guard from this unhallowed freedom. For every assemblage of her members for public worship, the church prescribes her morning and evening prayer; and in every place where that assemblage is held for this sacred purpose, God is especially present. The reasons which urge a prescribed form for public worship, apply to all occasions of this nature; the law of the church makes no exceptions. Inconsistency is the least censure to which a different course is justly subject, and this course of mutilation and of unauthorized prayers unavoidably and powerfully tends to destroy the respect and affection for a service which is thus rudely treated. If general, it would terminate as at a memorable period of the history of the church from which our church is descended—it did terminate in the demolition of that liturgy which is not only the best manual of rational, sober, and fervent devotion, but a most powerful guardian of the distinguishing and fundamental doctrines of salvation, through the merits and grace of a divine Mediator. Let then the people also, as they prize these doctrines, revere, and cherish, and guard from violation the liturgy that expresses them with such clearness, and strength, and pathos, and sends them forth warmed with the pure and fervent spirit of devotion. Let the pure and fervent spirit of the services here celebrated animate their affections when they here come into the presence of the Lord. With errors to be corrected, with sins

to be forgiven, with necessities to be relieved, with benefits to be acknowledged—with friends, with families, with their great Christian fold, with their country, with the whole human race for whom to intercede—they should unite in this service with hearts excited by penitence, by humility, by gratitude, by the holy spirit of universal love. Their voices, in the responses which enliven its strains, should speak the language of their hearts. Reverence should chasten their devotion, for the Lord whom they worship is great and terrible; faith and hope should enliven their supplications and praises, for he is good—in his Son Jesus Christ, merciful to their sins. Let them feel the language which they, or the minister of the sanctuary utters for them—let them feel that the Lord is in the place where they are worshipping, and a pure, and holy, and acceptable homage will ascend to his throne.

“The Lord is in this place.”

3. Let, then, its ministrations and ordinances be duly celebrated and honoured.

For it is in these that he particularly manifests his presence. These are the divine bands that keep together that society of faithful men which, thus associated under divinely appointed ministers and ordinances, constitute that church which is denominated the body of Christ, the body which it is said he purchased with his blood, the body, of which he is represented as the head; to the members of which, through the word which its ministers proclaim, the declarations of forgiveness which they authoritatively pronounce, the sacraments and ordinances which they celebrate, he applies the

merits of his death for the pardon of their sins, and the influences of his Holy Spirit for the sanctification of their disordered natures, and for their exaltation to the bliss of that heavenly kingdom of which they are made heirs. This is that holy society which, by its divinely appointed ministers, and sacraments, and ordinances, becomes the mean and the pledge to the penitent, and the humble, and the faithful, of those blessings of the Christian covenant, pardon, and grace, and immortal life, to which sinful man by nature has no claim—which, merited for him only by the sufferings and death of the Son of God, he must accept on those conditions which his offended Maker prescribes, and receive through the channel of those ordinances which his divine Lord hath constituted.

The Almighty Lawgiver indeed is not restrained by his own institutions—which, however, are indispensably binding upon those on whom they are imposed. He may and will dispense with them in all cases where a compliance with them shall be found impracticable, or the neglect of them occasioned by involuntary error; for he is not a hard Master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed. But one thing appears absolutely and universally indispensable to salvation, which, the free gift of God in Christ, the benevolent heart delights to think he will confer on every man who, according to his abilities and opportunities, to the measure vouchsafed to him of external light or internal illumination, sincerely seeks to know and to do the will of the Being who made him—this is the essence of that faith which believes that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; this alone is ab-

solutely, in all cases, indispensable to salvation. Still, charity must not dispense with truth.

Our duty is to seek what are the institutions which God has prescribed as the means and pledges of his mercy and grace, and humbly and reverently to receive them. It is infinite condescension on his part, and demands our gratitude, that he bestows on us the visible tokens of his favour; that, through his power, simple and easy observances convey to the humble, and penitent, and believing such incalculable benefits. It is in the reverential and devout administration of the sacraments that the servant of the sanctuary is made the dispenser of the blessings of pardon, and of grace, and of life eternal. It is in the devout and humble reception of these sacraments that these blessings are assured to the faithful, that the declaration is verified, "The Lord is in this place."

May this declaration be verified to you, my reverend brother, the minister of this church, and you, the people of his charge—verified in your experience of the purifying, consoling, and exalting power of the word which is here to be preached, the worship which is here to be celebrated, and the sacraments and ministrations which are here to be dispensed. Past observation authorizes the strong and gratifying expectation, that the duties assigned to my valued presbyter who is here to officiate, will all be discharged under the awful impression of the conviction that involves every motive which can excite or awe, that "the Lord is in this place." We hope, we are confident, that the word of God will here be proclaimed with fidelity, his worship devoutly performed, and his ministrations and ordinances duly celebrated by him who has given

such full evidence that he knows his high duties, and that, through God's grace, he will perform them. But what if the people of his charge be not influenced by the same awakening and solemn sentiment? Alas! the word, the worship, the ordinances, and the ministrations of this temple will then only tend to their condemnation. Brethren, we hope better things of you. With most laudable zeal, and taste, and art, and singular liberality, worthy of the highest praise, and which we hold forth to imitation, you have erected an edifice which will be the pride of our church and the ornament of our city, in that grand, and imposing, and majestic style of architecture which is calculated to awaken and cherish the feelings of solemnity and awe. Let these feelings be heightened and confirmed by the consideration of the invisible Majesty which fills this sanctuary. "The Lord is in this place." Never enter this temple but with this conviction; never let its awful energy cease to operate on your minds. The Lord is present, to hear your confessions, to answer your supplications and intercessions, to accept your homage and your thanks. The Lord is here present, to bless to you his holy word, to make the ministrations and ordinances of this sanctuary the means and pledges to you of pardon, of holiness, of life eternal. Alas! when we contrast our imperfection and unworthiness with the majesty, and holiness, and justice of that God who here invisibly dwells, and who witnesses and will bring into judgment our sins, we are led to exclaim with the patriarch, under similar emotions—"How dreadful is this place!" But when we turn the strong vision of faith to the mercy-seat which is here invisibly erected, and behold the great

Mediator Jesus Christ sealing our pardon, and the divine Sanctifier, even the Holy Ghost, dispensing his all-powerful grace, the feelings of dread and of terror subside into the holy emotions of peace and of hope—we delight to visit this temple, to behold here the fair beauty of the Lord; and if our pardon be indeed secured by lively faith, and our souls be indeed renewed in righteousness, this “house of God” will prove to us the “gate of heaven”—the vestibule that opens to that celestial Zion, to which the Lord is an everlasting light, and God himself an eternal glory; and where, receiving continual accessions of truth, of holiness, of felicity from the infinite source of perfection and good, we shall exclaim, in the transports of grateful love and adoration—“Surely the Lord is in this place.” God grant, my brethren, that, by the services of this earthly sanctuary, purified from sin and adorned with all the graces of the Spirit, we may meet and abide in that blest place, in the fruition of the divine glory, for ever and ever.

SERMON IV.

CONSECRATION OF A CHURCH

PSALM xxiv.

The earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is; the compass of the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and prepared it upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall rise up in his holy place? Even he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; and that hath not lift up his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him; even of them that seek thy face, O Jacob. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? it is the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? even the Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.—*Prayer Book Trans.*

THIS psalm, sublime in its sentiments, magnificent in its structure, and beautiful in its imagery, was composed by David, and sung by the priests and Levites, on the joyful event of carrying the ark of the Lord, which had hitherto wandered from place to place, to its settled habitation on Mount Zion. The whole nation of Israel, headed by their king, and by the priests and Levites, bore in splendid procession the ark of the Lord,—while this psalm, chanted in alternate strains by the sacred choirs, and accompanied by the triumphant and

exhilarating sound of psalteries, of harps, and cymbals, welcomed the entrance of the hallowed symbol of the presence of Jehovah into the tabernacle prepared for it.

But the analogy of Scripture, which uniformly considers all the leading events and institutions of the Jewish, as typical of corresponding events and institutions in the Christian dispensation—and the superior force and meaning which this sublime psalm derives, when, beyond a dispensation which was soon to pass away, it is applied to one which was the consummation of all others, and to last for ever—and the uniform testimony of the church in every age, justify us in considering this psalm as presenting to us the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, ascending with the host of the redeemed, and with attending angels, to the gates of the celestial Zion.

It is with this view of the evangelical import of this psalm that our church directs the ministering servants of the sanctuary to employ it when they come to announce that the Saviour, the Lord Christ, hath taken possession of the place set apart to his honour and worship—here recording his name, raising his mercy-seat, erecting his throne of grace, and promising to dwell and to have his delight there.

To explain this psalm, and to urge its evangelical meaning, cannot be unsuitable to the present solemnity, which has now made this house the temple of the Lord of hosts, the King of glory.

The following truths it successively presents to our grateful and triumphant faith :

1. The infinite condescension and goodness of the Sovereign Lord of the universe, in blessing

with his peculiar presence and favour the church of the redeemed.

2. The necessity of vital universal holiness to qualify his people, the members of this church, for the enjoyment of the blessings of his favour, and the everlasting glories of his presence.

3. *Lastly.* It quickens the virtue and zeal, and heightens the consolations and triumphs of the faithful, by the exhibition of the glorious ascension of their victorious Redeemer, the Lord of hosts, the King of glory, to that celestial and eternal kingdom to which he will finally advance his obedient people.

1. The first truth which we infer from this psalm is, the infinite condescension and goodness of the Lord of the universe, in blessing with his peculiar presence and favour the church of his redeemed.

“The earth is the Lord’s, and all that therein is; the compass of the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and prepared it upon the floods.”

These words declare the sovereign dominion of Jehovah over the world; for he hath made it; and by setting to the seas and “floods a decree which they cannot pass,” hath seated the earth upon stable and unchanging foundations.

But these verses are to be considered as an appropriate and emphatic introduction to a psalm which is designed to celebrate the presence of God with his chosen people. We lose sight, then, of the distinguishing character and meaning of these words, unless we contrast them with the pervading sentiment of the psalm. And the interesting and impressive inference which results from this com-

parison is, that if God is the Almighty Lord and Ruler of the universe, supporting it by that sovereign power which at first created it, extending his supreme dominion over all the creatures he has made, his condescension and mercy must be most exalted and distinguished in marking by his peculiar presence and favour a portion only of the human race—the nation of the Israelites, and finally, the church of his redeemed.

The forefathers of the Jewish nation he had selected as his peculiar favourites, guiding them by his counsel, consoling them by his favour, protecting them by his power, and animating them by the most splendid promises. When the arm of oppression bowed their necks to the yoke, and the “iron entered into their soul,” when the land of Egypt was moistened by the tears which a cruel bondage forced from them, the Most High made bare his arm, and by the most signal exertions of power effected their redemption. Through the horrors of a trackless wilderness he led them, their ever-present Protector and Guide: and though loud and frequent murmurs repaid the displays of his power and favour, though discontent raised against him the impious standard of rebellion, ingratitude could not extinguish the love of Jehovah for Israel whom he had redeemed, and provocations reiterated and aggravated could not excite him to pour upon them the flood of merited wrath: the promised land of which he spake to their fathers, beheld them in the possession of every blessing, temporal and spiritual, which a bountiful God could shower down on his chosen servants and people. While the Gentile nations, in the inscrutable dispensation of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his

own will, enjoyed only that glimmering light of divine truth which reason and tradition afforded, the nation of Israel were surrounded with the blaze of divine knowledge; for "God was in the midst of them;" the glory which was visibly displayed in Mount Zion, the seat in which he delighted to dwell, shed its irradiating beams, its enlightening, consoling, and protecting power, through every part of this highly favoured land.

How wonderful the condescension of the Lord of the universe! "Behold," said Moses to the children of Israel, "the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God; the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them; and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day."

In the development of the inscrutable but gracious plans of God's providence, the Christian church succeeded to the consummation of all those privileges which had been bestowed on the Jewish Zion.

"Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people:" led captive by their lusts, in subjection to sin and Satan, the human race were degraded by a bondage infinitely more severe and disgraceful than that which oppressed the Israelites in the land of Egypt. From this ignominious thralldom God hath delivered the Christian church, which is now the Zion of the Lord: and the redemption was achieved, not by the most distinguished human personage, not by the most exalted seraph that ministers at the altar of heaven,—but by him who was with God, who was God—the eternal and incarnate Son. The redemption also

was effected by sufferings the most poignant, and by victories the most exalted. The precious blood of the Almighty Deliverer dyed his celestial garments; infinite in efficacy, it quenched the wrath which had been kindled against a guilty world.

It is of the great multitude of his redeemed that Jesus Christ now reigns the almighty and victorious King; and the members of his mystical body the church, which he loved, and for which he gave himself, derive from the enlightening word, the evangelical worship, and the divine ordinances of the Christian sanctuary, mercy, grace, and salvation. God is now in the midst of the Christian Zion: his glory encircling her, dispenses to her light, consolation, protection, everlasting felicity.

Infinite condescension in that Almighty Lord who holds the sceptre of the universe, to distinguish with the rich blessings of mercy and favour his chosen people, the members of the church which his eternal Son redeemed.

Professing Christians, members of this church, on whom has shone this light of salvation, of which many of the nations are yet destitute, the emotions of gratitude cannot be too ardent to that Almighty Lord who bestows upon you these distinguished mercies. Let not the murmurs of presumption arraign the goodness of the Sovereign of the universe in confining to a portion of mankind the knowledge of his revealed will, and the overtures of his mercy and grace in his Son Jesus Christ. By the creatures whom he has made, by the sinners who have rebelled against him, all his favours must be unmerited. He who, like the potter, has power over the clay, to make one vessel to honour and another to dishonour, may distribute his spi-

ritual like his temporal blessings, when, and where, and how he pleases. But it is the rule of his justice, it is the declaration of his mercy, that he judges his accountable creatures according to what they have, and not according to what they have not; and that therefore, in every nation destitute of Gospel light, they that fear God and work righteousness according to the knowledge and ability which they have received, will be accepted by that just and merciful Being who is no respecter of persons. Through the merits of that great sacrifice which was offered for the sins of the whole world, the intercession of him who tasted death for every man, the sincere and honest services of those who never heard of the Saviour's name will be rewarded with degrees of felicity suited to their attainments, in that house in which are many mansions, in that firmament where one star differeth from another star in glory.

But how inestimable the privileges which we enjoy, as members of the Christian Zion, in that glorious light of God's revelation by his Son Jesus Christ, which dispels the gloom and quiets the fears of erring reason, and guiding us here to superior virtue, conducts us to more exalted felicity in the kingdom of heaven! What fervours of devout, humble, and holy gratitude should be offered to the Sovereign Lord of the universe, who hath fixed among us the habitation of his holiness, the church, which his presence animates, which his word enlightens, which his ministry and ordinances quicken and purify, which the Spirit of truth and of grace sanctifies and consoles! But,

“Who shall ascend into this hill of the Lord?
or who shall rise up in his holy place?”

Who can be considered as faithful members of the church on earth, worthy to be admitted to the richer and immortal glories that crown the church triumphant?

“He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; and that hath not lift up his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him; even of them that seek thy face, O Jacob.”

2. The qualifications of devout members of the church—the necessity of vital universal holiness to qualify his people for the enjoyment of the blessings of his favour, and the everlasting glories of his presence, are expressed in these verses, and is another truth set forth in this psalm.

Holiness, which, seated in the heart, and purifying and animating all its faculties and affections, controls and regulates the whole conduct, is an essential qualification of the members of Christ's church; it is that cardinal point towards which all its institutions and ordinances tend. That the church may be holy, the Redeemer cleanses it by his purifying blood; that the church may be holy, he illuminates it by his divine word; that the church may be holy, he sanctifies it by his renovating Spirit. To quicken its members from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, its divine Head imposes on them, in the initiatory sacrament of baptism, the most awful and affecting vows—binding them to the subjugation of all the passions of corrupt nature, to the acquisition of all the virtues of the new man in Christ Jesus; and he again imposes

on them these holy vows, in the apostolic ordinance of the laying on of hands. To excite and nourish its members in holiness, he subjects them to the instructions and the worship of the sanctuary, where their souls are humbled under a sense of sin, urged to the entire renunciation of its unhallowed dominion, and raised, in vigorous faith, love, and devotion, to the contemplation and supreme pursuit of all the virtues that assimilate them to the holy Being whose glory is unveiled before them, and at whose throne they are prostrate, and to the practice of whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report. To quicken in its members that immortal seed which will spring up and bring forth the fruits of piety and virtue, he, the divine Restorer of the soul, waters it by his life-giving blood, and strengthens and supports it by his spiritual and invigorating body; demanding and accepting the presentation of the whole man a living sacrifice to him—requiring and receiving the solemn pledge to abound in all those good works which he hath prepared his faithful members to walk in.

To remain then in error when these sacred lights are shed around us; to cleave to the world, and its sensual passions, and its sensual enjoyments, when the most solemn obligations, the most powerful aids, the most persuasive motives call on us to renounce them; to remain in subjection to sin, in thralldom to the great adversary of God and holiness, when the powerful grace of the Redeemer hath begotten us to the means of the most exalted virtue, to celestial and immortal hopes,—is to display the most perverse folly, and the most criminal

insensibility and presumption, and to incur the most aggravated guilt. Unholy members of the church, they who name a divine and holy Master, and do not depart from iniquity, but give themselves up to the suggestions and sway of their corrupt passions, are guilty of renouncing the most solemn obligations, and of rejecting the most exalted privileges and hopes. They who, regenerated in baptism, admitted into a state of salvation marked with the blood of Christ, set apart by the seal of his Spirit, adopted as God's children, yet fail to acquire the renewing of the Holy Ghost, the renewing of the mind, shining forth in all holy affections, in all virtuous acts, are guilty of trampling under foot the blood of the Son of God; they are guilty of doing despite to his Spirit; they are guilty of casting from them the glories of their heavenly birthright. "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy," is the language which may be addressed with more awful and impressive force to Christians, now the "elect of God, than it was to the Israelites, God's chosen of old. Blessed with a purer and more spiritual dispensation, in which all those divine truths and promises which the types and shadows of the law faintly set forth, shine forth in the most splendid lustre; beholding in that precious blood which flowed from the divine victim on the cross, the most tremendous display of divine wrath, and the most splendid, and affecting, and endearing discovery of divine mercy; possessing, in the almighty energies of the Holy Ghost dwelling in them, the abundant, unfailing means of spiritual life, the celestial armour with which to defend and to conquer; and looking to heaven, their home, the great recompense of reward,—Christians are

urged to holiness and virtue by the most solemn vows, the most powerful aids, the most impressive and persuasive motives. For that heavenly kingdom, where they are to be for ever kings and priests of God—for that church triumphant, where God, the Judge of all, and Jesus, the Mediator of the covenant, unvail their full glory, where the host of angels and glorified spirits unceasingly present their hallowed adorations,—holiness is an indispensable qualification. Into this holy place of the Most High nothing can enter that is unholy and unclean.

“Who then shall ascend into that hill of the Lord? or who shall rise up in that holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; and that hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour.” He who is pure in the thoughts of his understanding, in the resolutions of his will, in the purposes, and wishes, and exercises of his affections, and in the acts of his life—he whose “heart” is thus the seat of purity, and whose “hands” never defile themselves with iniquity—he who hath not “lift up his soul” to those “vain” and deceitful enjoyments which too often occupy the place of God in the heart, as the idol of its affections; but who, under a habitual reverence of the Lord whom he serves, cherishes the sentiments and strictly observes the rules of piety and justice.

This is that happy man who shall “receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.” This is the man who, having, under the guidance and grace of God his Saviour, preserved his heart pure and his conduct upright, shall finally participate in the everlasting

blessing and favour of the Lord. "This is the generation of them that seek him," this should be the character of all those who "seek the face," who aspire to view, in the heavenly sanctuary, the lustre and glory of the God of "Jacob." Oh, my soul, with what ardour of desire, with what supreme vigour of exertion shouldst thou seek those holy graces that alone will render thee meet for these eternal and glorious rewards!

As the animating truth which is to quicken our piety and virtue, our consolations and triumphs, the last portion of the psalm displays,

3. The glorious ascension of our victorious Redeemer to that eternal kingdom, to the glories and bliss of which he will finally advance his obedient people.

The assembled congregation of the children of Israel with the voice of joy and shouting bore the ark of the Lord to its destined habitation. Ascending, in long and magnificent procession, the hill of Zion, and arrived at the gates of the tabernacle, the bands of priests and Levites demand admission for the ark of Jehovah. An inquiry is made by the priests who guard the sacred sanctuary, concerning the character and office of him who claims admittance; and in return, the priests and Levites who bear the ark declare the sovereign dominion and glorious majesty of that Lord, the symbol of whose presence is now to be placed in the sanctuary of Mount Zion.

This sublime scene is symbolical of an event infinitely more splendid and glorious, and which claims our rapturous contemplation and elevated faith.

The Lord of life and glory, Jesus, the Son of God, Jesus, our Saviour, our Lord, having trod the wine-press of divine wrath, having triumphed over the powers of death and hell, prepares to take possession of a heavenly temple in the Zion above. Rising from that tomb whose barriers he burst, and shaking off the habiliments of corruption, he ascends, attended by the church of the redeemed, in splendour and majesty to the heavenly courts. Inspired with sublime confidence in the power and glory of their incarnate God, his redeemed people demand that the everlasting doors should be thrown open to their victorious Saviour. They shout forth the animating cry—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Be ye open, O ye gates of the sanctuary; stand wide open, ye durable doors; and the King of glory, the Conqueror of death and hell, shall enter, and commence his glorious and eternal reign. "Who is this King of glory?" exclaim the astonished host of heaven, the ministering spirits of the celestial Zion. "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle," triumphantly respond the attendants of the Saviour. The Lord, of almighty power and resistless dominion, the Lord, whose victorious arm hath dispersed his adversaries, and wrought everlasting salvation. Therefore, "lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." *Speedily* open, O ye gates of Zion; be ye *open, wide open*, O ye doors which never shall decay; and the King, whose glory filleth the universe, shall take possession of his celestial courts. "Who is this King of glory?" again demand the guardians of the heavenly

sanctuary; and again respond the attendants of the Almighty Conqueror, "The Lord of hosts"—the *Lord*, who created the universe, who now by his resistless power hath redeemed it, hath rescued the fallen race of man from the thralldom of sin and death—"he is the King of glory." He is the Almighty King, who comes to claim his divine glory, who comes to advance his church and people to immortal felicity, who comes to awaken in your celestial courts the songs of praise to the Lamb that was slain, to the victorious Conqueror who bought his people with his blood. Triumphant ascension of the Lord of life! Immortal felicity of the church of the redeemed! Glorious and eternal throne on which the Saviour exercises the sceptre of power and of love! Thither, O Christians, in heart and mind continually ascend. To these blissful mansions the mercy of your Saviour invites you; to these immortal glories the victorious grace of your Redeemer is ready to conduct you.

This neat, impressive, and beautiful sanctuary, reared by pious enterprise and public-spirited zeal—this house, which bears the appropriate and interesting appellation that recalls the glorious event which the psalm we have been considering celebrates—the "ascension,"* has now become the dwelling-place of the great King, of Jesus the Saviour, the Lord of life and glory. Its ministrations, its worship, and its ordinances will afford you the light that will guide to the heavenly Zion, the mercy that will refresh and console the contrite

* This refers to "the Church of the Ascension," in the city of New-York, at the consecration of which the sermon was preached.

spirit, the grace that will convert and renew the corrupt and disordered soul, and qualify it for those celestial courts on which the victorious Lord hath entered, where he is preparing for his faithful people a place also. Be ever glad, then, to come to this house of the Lord, to behold and to feel, in his word, his sacraments, his worship here ministered, his power and glory; that so (this is our prayer—this should be your desire and aim) you may go from strength to strength, until at length, before the God of God, Jesus the King of glory, you appear in the heavenly Zion.

Risen, Christians, as you are with your Saviour Christ, set not your affections, devote not your supreme desires to a perishing world, from which you must soon be separated. Seek those joys that never will decay, that flourish for ever in that heavenly kingdom where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Seek, earnestly seek, through the power of his Spirit, that purity of heart, that holiness of life, which will render you fit, through his merits, to “ascend into the hill of the Lord, and to stand up in his holy place;” to ascend into the everlasting mountain where Jehovah hath fixed his habitation, and to stand up in that holy place where Jesus, the King of glory, reigns for ever, dispensing joys unutterable and without end.

But what will be the destiny of the ungodly—of those whose hearts are not pure, whose hands are not clean, who have lift up their hearts unto vanity, and sworn deceitfully? Alas! instead of ascending the celestial hill of the Lord, they shall be turned into hell with all the nations that forget God. Instead of standing up in the holy place of the Most High, they shall dwell where is the de-

vouring fire, and make their bed where are everlasting burnings. According to the moral constitution of nature, as well as by the righteous decree of the Sovereign of the universe, the ungodly cannot stand in the judgment, neither sinners in the congregation of the righteous. A day, a fearful day is at hand, when they will behold the righteous ascending the hill of the Lord, while they must descend to the place prepared for the devil and his angels.

Now then, all ye who are enemies to God by wicked works, we beseech you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God. Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Supplicate the influences of the Divine Spirit, and seek their quickening and sanctifying power in the ministrations and ordinances of Christ's church, that you may have clean hands and a pure heart—may not lift up your minds unto vanity, nor swear to deceive your neighbour. Then you too shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and stand up in his holy place: you too shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of your salvation. Your lot shall be here with the righteous, in the light of God's countenance; and your final portion shall be also with them—in the presence, the life-giving, joy-inspiring presence of the King of glory; to whom be ascribed all honour, power, majesty, and dominion, world without end.

SERMON V.

ON BAPTISM.

JOHN iii. 7.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

It was a spiritual change, a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness, which our Saviour enforced on Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, as an indispensable qualification of being his disciple. Of this change, indeed, baptism was constituted both a mean and a pledge—imposing on those who receive it the obligation of dying unto sin and rising again unto righteousness—conveying to them, as members of Christ's mystical body, into which it admitted them, the grace by which this spiritual renovation is to be effected, and pledging to them, on the fulfilment of the conditions, all the blessings of the Christian covenant. For in another part of this conversation with Nicodemus, our Saviour declared, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This use of water as the mode of admission into new and spiritual relations, was a ceremony at which a learned Jew ought not to have expressed astonishment; for washing with water was the significant emblem employed to receive proselytes from the Gentiles into the fold of God's chosen people. And therefore there was

great justice and force in the remark of our Saviour to the Jewish ruler—"Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?"

In a certain sense, then, every baptized person undergoes a change of spiritual condition—is born again. He is entered by baptism into a new state—into the Christian church. New obligations, the obligations of the Christian covenant, are imposed upon him. He enjoys a claim, on the fulfilment of these conditions, to new privileges, the privileges of the Christian covenant; and the Holy Spirit, which animates that mystical body of Christ into which he is admitted, is pledged to him to enable him to fulfil all the new obligations, and to secure the new privileges imposed and conferred upon him. Thus, in that sacrament which the apostle styles the washing of regeneration, he who receives it is born again.

But in a more enlarged, and in the full sense of the expression, every baptized person must be born again: for there is "a renewing of the Holy Ghost" entirely distinct from the regeneration of baptism, of which this sacrament may or may not be the mean and pledge. In the case of the adult indeed, who is properly qualified by that grace which, given to all men, and going before, as well as co-operating with every good work, enabled him to exercise true repentance and saving faith, the reception of baptism conveys to him the sanctifying power of the Divine Spirit, and pledges to him its continued influences. The adult who receives baptism without the necessary qualifications, is wholly destitute of the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, and is in no other sense born again, than as he is admitted into the Christian church, is bound by the

obligations of the Christian covenant, and become, as a member of the mystical body of Christ, the subject of that grace which, while it enables him to repent, and to turn to God, increases, while he resists it, his guilt and his condemnation. The infant, in virtue of the declaration of the Saviour, that "of such is the kingdom of God," receives in baptism a full title to all the privileges of the Christian covenant, among which is the gift of that Divine Spirit which, as soon as the corrupt passions of nature exercise their sway, furnishes the means of counteracting and subduing them, and of acquiring the holy graces and habits of the new man. The "renewing of the Holy Ghost," in the death unto sin and rising again unto righteousness, is that completion and consummation of the baptismal regeneration which alone fully entitles a person to the title of being a new creature.

This renewal of the affections of our fallen nature, and this exhibition of every holy grace, and practice of every virtue, afford the only evidence of the operations of the Divine Spirit in the soul. These operations are incomprehensible, except as to these their effects; and thus known as to their power or their effects, their transcending our comprehension constitutes no sound objection to their reality. For the agency of the wind is inscrutable; it is known only by its effects. This was the analogy of our Saviour. "Marvel not I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Since, then, baptismal regeneration confers only a conditional title to the blessings of the Christian

covenant, and pledges and conveys only that grace which is necessary to the fulfilment of these conditions, it is a misapprehension, or a misstatement of this doctrine, which represents it as denying or superceding the necessity of that spiritual change which it sets forth and enforces, and for which it affords the means; and which is denoted by "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," the becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus.

In the following discourse it shall be my object to enforce *the necessity of this spiritual change*, as it regards man in his *general character*, and in the *particular circumstances* in which he may be placed.

I. In his general character, man must be born again, must undergo a spiritual change, as a fallen and corrupt creature.

Not that all his powers and propensities are totally depraved; for, on the contrary, all his powers and propensities, in their original destination and nature, are wise and good. The misdirection of them, and the excessive indulgence of them, in consequence of the fall, constitute man's depravity. His understanding is now liable to be perverted, and so far from intuitively and invariably discerning and attaining divine truth, is incapable of spiritual discernment without the enlightening influences of divine grace. His will, instead of choosing constantly and uniformly the objects of duty which an enlightened conscience presents, fixes its choice on the sinful pursuits and pleasures which corrupt appetite presents to it: and the affections of the human soul, instead of lifting themselves to the adoration, the love, and the service of him who,

possessed of every perfection, and exercising upon man his boundless goodness, claims man's supreme homage—instead of indulging in the lawful objects of temporal pursuit and gratification in that moderation which reason and the divine law prescribe, the affections of the soul are devoted to the things of time and sense, forgetful of the higher pursuits and joys of a spiritual and immortal existence. Blind to spiritual truth, and incapable of spiritual good, except as he is enlightened and sanctified by the Divine Spirit, it is apparent that fallen and corrupt man requires the renewing agency of this divine Guide and Sanctifier. On account, then, of the misdirection and abuse of his powers and propensities, his state by nature, independently of divine grace, is characterized as a state of blindness, impotency, and sin. “The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God.” “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” “We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves.” This is the language of Scripture. What is the language of fact? Who are they that understand and relish the sublime and holy truths of the Gospel? Who are they that exhibit a uniform and consistent course of piety and virtue? Who are they that not only “do justly and love mercy, but walk humbly with their God”—revering and loving his attributes, serving him in righteousness and holiness, submitting to his institutions and ordinances? Are there any who thus merit the character of holy and righteous men—none but those who, in humility and sincerity, have invoked, and, in the use of the prescribed means, have received, the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Divine Spirit? Fact, then, as well as Scripture,

enforces the necessity of a spiritual change in man, as a fallen and corrupt being.

The same truth would be forced on the conviction of each individual, by the faithful examination of his own heart and conduct. Are there no passions which thy reason and thy conscience condemn, which are exercising their corrupt power in thy bosom, and exciting in it uneasiness, shame, remorse? Are there no vices derogatory to the purity of thy nature, which are habitually cherished? Have any efforts of reason and resolution subdued these passions and conquered these vices? On the contrary, do they not defy the utmost strength of unassisted nature? Hast thou been able to attain that purity of heart, that meekness of temper, that humility of spirit, that devotedness to thy supreme Creator and Benefactor, that uniform rectitude of conversation and conduct which reason and conscience enforce, and the law of God enjoins? Self-love may attempt to blind and to flatter thee; and yet, successful as may be her efforts, she cannot conceal from thee the lamentable fact, that, under the guidance, and with the efforts of thy own reason and strength, thou art, in a greater or less degree, under the dominion of corrupt passion, and far, very far from those holy attainments that mark the righteous man. What, then, should be the conclusion? That thy corrupt nature must be purified by a power superior to thine own, by that agency which in mercy God has provided for the sanctification of his fallen creatures—the renewing of the Holy Ghost. “Thou must be born again.”

II. But from man, in his general character, we

shall see the necessity of this spiritual change, in reference to the peculiar circumstances in which he may be placed. Baptized in infancy, he may have, from infancy, faithfully fulfilled his baptismal engagements; or he may have superficially attended to them; or he may have neglected them, without indulging in gross transgressions; or he may have entered on the course of impiety and profligacy. Baptized in adult age, he may have come to this ordinance in repentance and faith, and since persevered in his pious course; or he may have, in a measure, apostatized from his baptismal covenant; or he may have come to this ordinance in a state of impenitence or insincerity. Baptized neither in infancy nor at adult age, he may still be without the Christian fold.

Under all these varying circumstances, there will be a propriety in addressing to mankind the language—"You must be born again." And reversing the order in which we have stated them, let us begin with the case of him who has never received baptism, and who is still without the Christian fold.

1. Do you contend that the baptism of water is unnecessary? How is it possible to evade the force of the declaration of Christ, and the exhortation and practice of his inspired apostles, all establishing, as plainly as words and facts can establish, the necessity of being baptized with water, and by this washing of regeneration placed in a covenant state, and entitled to the renewing influences of the Spirit of God?

Do you admit the necessity and obligation of baptism, and yet neglect it? Can there be safety, think you, in this inconsistency in acknowledging-

the necessity and obligation of baptism, and yet neglecting it? Perhaps you are destitute of the qualifications of repentance and faith. Can you be safe in this condition? Safe! While impenitent, you are exposed to God's wrath. Safe! While unbelieving, you practically reject the great salvation which God hath purchased for you. How shall you escape?

2. But you may have come to this ordinance in a state of impenitence and insincerity.

Awful profanation! You have indeed trampled under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, which this holy sacrament is designed to apply to the soul, an unholy thing. Your lips pronounced vows which your heart rejected—pronounced them, not to man, but to God. Perjury is a crime light when compared with yours. Repent, God hath not yet withdrawn his Spirit from you. The name and the obligations of Christian are imposed upon you, and you are within the fold of the Redeemer. These circumstances, indeed, will only aggravate your guilt and increase your condemnation, if you continue impenitent. Repent, then, and by the aids of that grace which, through the mercy of God, strives in the hearts of all men, and is pledged to all the members, however unworthy, of the mystical body of his Son, escape from the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. You must be born of God—changed and renewed from your present state of ungodliness, impenitence, and impiety, to contrition, to holiness, to devotedness to God.

3. Have you apostatized from the vows which, in your own persons, you deliberately made at baptism? You have forfeited the renewing of the

Holy Ghost, and you must be born again, born again by your restoration to those humble and holy tempers and graces, and those good works from which you have fallen. You cannot violate your vows to the High and Holy One with impunity—he will not be mocked. Turn to him by repentance, and by imploring the sanctifying influences of his Spirit; lest, provoked by your hardened apostacy, he pronounce the irreversible sentence—“Ye shall not enter into my rest.”

4. Blessed is the state of those to whom, coming with penitence and faith, baptism was fully the mean and pledge of the death unto sin, and the new birth unto righteousness; and who since, in dependence on the Divine Spirit, and in the use of all the appointed means in communion with the church, have advanced in the great Christian work of mortifying their evil and corrupt affections, and are daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living. Even they, however, in a certain sense, must be born again; that is, the great work of renovation must advance in their souls. Every day the power of the old man of their fallen nature must be weakened in victory over some passion and temptation; and every day the new man must acquire greater vigour, in the increase of their graces and virtues.

5. Baptized in infancy, have the duties then imposed, and the privileges then conferred, been disregarded and contemned; and have you lived without God in the world, disregarding his authority and laws, and devoted only to the indulgence of your sinful passions? You have been entire strangers to the renewing of the Holy Ghost; and, as it respects that renewing, you must be born

again. Remember, the vows of baptism, reasonable and beneficial, are as binding on you as if you had personally assumed them. The grace and privileges of baptism, conferred on you when you were of the number of those little children of whom Christ said, "of such is the kingdom of God," it has been your guilt to contemn and to reject. For these things assuredly God will bring you into judgment. Towards those who have never heard of a Saviour, or who have had no opportunity of coming into his fold, there may be room for mercy. But what mercy can they expect, who, embraced within the fold of the covenant, wilfully forsake it; and, subjects once of mercy and grace, and even heirs of heaven, have renounced their celestial privileges and become the votaries of sin, and live as if their portion were only in the world?

6. There are some inattentive to their baptismal engagements and privileges, while their character and conduct display sobriety and decency.

To them the exhortation will apply—"You must be born again"—transformed by the renewing of your mind. You may not have to answer for gross transgressions—glaring vices may not distinguish you; but your hearts are not right with God; you find there no supreme devotedness to him—no lively sensibility to his mercy through a Redeemer—no deep conviction of that subjection to sin from which divine grace only can deliver—no earnest desire to obtain that holiness which only can qualify for his presence—no steadfast resolution to seek his favour as your satisfying portion. Until these dispositions, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, are formed in your souls, your baptismal engagements are not fulfilled, your baptismal pri-

privileges are not secured; and were you summoned to the tribunal of your Redeemer and Judge, it would be your condemnation that these engagements and privileges were neglected and contemned.

7. There is a still more numerous class of Christians who profess to observe the engagements of baptism, and whose desire and hope it is to secure their baptismal privileges.

With this view, they cultivate general decency and propriety of conduct; they cherish a general fear and love of God, and confidence in his mercy through a Redeemer; they observe the worship and ordinances of the temple: and yet we find them making a low estimate of Christian duty—setting their affections principally on the world, cherishing but superficial views of the plan of salvation, of the fulness of the Redeemer's merits, of the all-sufficiency of his grace, and of the necessity of that transformation of the affections by which only they can be truly turned from sin to holiness, from the world to God. They "must be born again." The grace which was received in baptism they must cherish and improve by meditation, prayer, and all other pious exercises, until they become renewed in the spirit of their minds, until their God, their Redeemer, their Christian duties, their Christian hopes have the supreme place in their affections, and control and regulate their life.

8. *Lastly.* This we have reason to believe is the state of some who, through the blessing of their heavenly Father, devoted to him in baptism before sin exerted its dominion over them, have, as the powers of their minds and the affections of their hearts unfolded, subjected them to that Divine Spi-

rit whose guidance and sanctification were pledged when they were called into the state of salvation.

Through the knowledge of that Lord and Saviour in whose merits they were interested, and whose grace they received in the sacrament by which they were born from their natural condition into the privileges of his covenant, they have escaped the pollutions of the world, and in the constant exercises of repentance, and faith, and evangelical obedience, have fulfilled the conditions on which their baptismal privileges were suspended. Their spiritual renovation has been constantly and gradually proceeding under the influences of the Holy Spirit accompanying and rendering effectual their diligent use of all the means of grace, their constant endeavours to walk worthy of their Christian calling. But even they are to cherish a constant sense of the indispensable importance of that spiritual change denoted in the injunction of their Lord—"Ye must be born again." Their spiritual birth indeed commenced in baptism, and their spiritual life has since been preserved, and quickened, and advanced by the agency of that Divine Spirit which, in prayer, and in all the ordinances of the church, they have invoked and received. But it should be their frequent and solicitous inquiry, whether all the graces and virtues of the new man are constantly increasing in strength and lustre, whether their spiritual life is growing brighter and brighter unto the perfect day; and mindful of their natural impotence, and of the power of the numerous temptations which assail them while they are diligent, watchful, resolute in the work of their salvation, their constant dependence should be placed on the influences of that Divine Spirit by

whom only they are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, and who alone is able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of the Divine Glory.

Universal, then, my brethren, is the obligation of that change from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from Satan to God, which is denoted by the injunctions—"Ye must be born again"—"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." As it respects a conditional title to the privileges of the Gospel, and the unmerited gift of that grace by which, in the fulfilment of the conditions, these privileges may be secured, all who were baptized were born again—regenerated in baptism. But this baptismal regeneration, so far from superceding, is designed to denote, and to enforce, and to render practicable that spiritual renovation, that renewing by the Holy Ghost, which consists in abolishing the whole body of sin, and in acquiring the holy tempers and graces of the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. And the necessity of this spiritual renovation is founded on the *fact*, that man is a sinful creature—and on the immutable and eternal *truth*, that without holiness no man can see the Lord. Sinful man, then, must be made holy, or he cannot see or enjoy the presence of a holy God.

Whether, then, this spiritual renovation has taken place in your souls, brethren, is the most important inquiry on which you can engage. It is not sufficient that you were regenerated, that you were called into a state of salvation in baptism, and, as members of Christ's mystical body, endued with that Spirit which animates this body, to be the principle of your spiritual life. Unless this Spirit

has exerted in you its renewing and sanctifying power, you are guilty of resisting it. Unless your baptismal privileges have been secured by the exercise of true repentance and a living faith, they will profit you nothing. Baptismal grace and baptismal privileges, indeed, will increase your condemnation, if they have been resisted and contemned.

Peculiarly urgent, then, upon you is the obligation to become, not only in profession, not only sacramentally, not only in conditional title, but in heart and in life, new creatures in Christ Jesus. For if you continue under the dominion of corrupt nature, the slaves of your sinful lusts and passions, in addition to the guilt of resisting and contemning those offers of salvation made to all men, and that divine grace which strives in the hearts of all men, will be incurred by you the aggravated guilt of resisting that salvation, and contemning that grace which the Redeemer purchased for his church, his mystical body, and which were offered and conveyed to you under the seal of God himself. There may be mercy for Sodom and Gomorrah, but not for you. "Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye must be born again."

SERMON VI.

FOR CONFIRMATION.

PSALM cxxii. 4.

For thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord, to testify unto Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.

Prayer Book Translation.

SOLEMN, edifying, and interesting were those holy rites in which all the tribes of Israel, in compliance with the “testimonies,” the injunctions of the law, assembled, at stated seasons, in the holy city, and before the ark of the testimony, (so called, as containing the tables of the testimony, or law,) testified to the assembled nation their allegiance to the Lord of hosts, and commemorated his mercies.

The Christian church has a rite, in which the young members of her fold, at stated periods, assemble in those sacred courts where God dwells, in the ministration of the word and ordinances, to renew the engagements by which, in baptism, they were devoted to the service of the Lord their God, and to receive a renewed title to the blessings of his salvation.

This act of consecration to God in the ordinance of confirmation, which we are at this time to witness, is

SOLEMN, EDIFYING, and INTERESTING.

The act of devotion to God in the ordinance of confirmation is SOLEMN—

As it regards the *act* itself—the *almighty* Being in reference to whom it is performed—the *rite* in which it is celebrated—and the *place* in which this rite is administered.

It is *solemn*, as it regards the *act* itself.

The act would be solemn, that, pledging to important temporal duties, and to the pursuit of valuable worldly objects, would require eager attention, unwearied assiduity, and untiring perseverance. Where the objects are important, and the powers and labours great which are to be exerted in the acquisition of them, a degree of solemnity surrounds the act, by which individuals separate themselves from all inferior views, and devote all their faculties and their efforts to those momentous objects of worldly ambition. The scene in which a number of virtuous individuals should pledge themselves to labours, to privations, to sufferings, to the most arduous duties, in order to advance, to defend, and to secure some temporal objects deeply involving their prosperity and happiness, could not be witnessed but with feelings of awe.

What is the scene this day exhibited? A band of Christians come forward to perform their vows, to testify their allegiance to the Lord, the God who made, preserves, and redeems them—to resolve to renounce and to shun, more than the greatest temporal evil, whatever that holy Being to whom they devote themselves has forbidden, and to pursue, more than the dearest object of their present worldly attachment, whatever he has commanded—to promise to consult, with a fidelity more devoted than that which the nearest earthly

friend could call forth, his interests and honour—to employ in his cause, in the ways of his laws, and in the works of his commandments, all their faculties, their souls, their bodies, their spirits—and to count not even their lives dear unto themselves, so that they may finish their course with joy, and obtain that inheritance of glory which, amidst the strongest enticements of the earth, they resolve to make the object of their highest and holiest ambition. What solemn feelings are excited by a devotion thus arduous, thus self-denying, thus holy and supreme!

But the *character of the Being* to whom this devotion is made, renders the scene still more impressive.

He is that living and true God, the infinite perfections of whose nature demand for him this high homage. The exalted goodness which he has displayed in the creation, preservation, and redemption of those who, in this holy act of obedience, acknowledge their supreme obligations to him, encourages this devotion which is his due. But these are considerations which render the act most solemn; for the Being to whom it is made possesses a *justice* which never spares the guilty, a *holiness* which cannot look on sin, an *omniscience* from which the shades of darkness can be no covert, and an omnipotence which shakes the foundations of the earth. To take the name of this just, this holy, this omniscient, this almighty Being into our lips, and to say, ‘Lord, we are thine; to thee we vow allegiance; thee only we acknowledge; thee only we will serve; our vows to thee we will perform,’ is indeed the highest, the most acceptable act of duty, but it is the most awful that the

human thought can conceive, or the human purpose execute.

Nor is the solemnity diminished by *the nature of the rite* in which this high act of duty is performed. It is ranked by an inspired apostle, under the denomination of the laying on of hands, among the principles of the doctrine of Christ. It thus bears that divine authority which elevates it above any rite, however important, of mere human origin. It comes down to us with the imposing sanction of all preceding ages; which no modern institution, however interesting, can claim. It is a rite in which saints and holy men offered vows to their God and Saviour—a rite in which our fathers testified their allegiance to the Lord, and in which we bring our children to assume the ties that bind us to our common Father, and Saviour, and God, and make us the common heirs of immortality.

Nor again does it lessen the solemn feelings which this holy act of devotion to the Lord, made in a rite of divine institution, is calculated to excite, that the assembled congregation witness it in the *sanctuary*—the *place* where the High and Holy One hath inscribed his name, where he hath set his ministering servants to receive the offerings of homage to him, and to dispense the treasures of his mercy and grace—in the temple which he more especially fills with his presence—where, at this moment, his holy eye beholds the transactions and the worshippers in this assembly, and where the vows are to be made that will be recorded in the books that will be opened at the great day. The nature of the act of devotion, the character of the Being to whom it is offered, the rite in which it is made, and the place where that rite is celebrated,

are all calculated to impress the mind with the deepest solemnity.

The act of devotion to God in the ordinance of confirmation, is as EDIFYING as it is solemn.

Edifying, in regard to the *persons* who perform it, and to *all others*.

Edifying to the *persons* who perform it; for it brings before them, in the most impressive manner, all the great truths of religion, and engages them to the belief of these truths. It exhibits to them the nature and perfections of the adorable Godhead; the relations which they sustain to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; the all-sufficiency of those merits of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ through which alone they can be justified; the efficacy of that intercession of the great Mediator through which alone all their prayers must be offered, and their highest acts of obedience rendered acceptable; the power of that grace by which their erring and corrupt nature is to be enlightened and purified, temptation vanquished, and every act of holy obedience to be performed. Then they are called to consider the nature of that spiritual society of which they were made members by baptism—the orders and authority of the ministry set over it to proclaim its messages of truth and salvation, and to dispense its sacraments, the means and the pledges of mercy and grace—and the exalted destiny designed for them, as the members of this mystical body of the Lord, in the glory which he has gone before to prepare for them in his kingdom above. These are the articles of the Christian faith professed for them in baptism, which

are now presented to their devout consideration, and to the belief of which, as constituting their perfection, and consolation, and happiness, they are called. Highly edifying is a solemnity which thus tends to make those who are the subjects of it fully and practically acquainted with those truths which alone can make wise unto salvation.

It is edifying still further, as it impresses upon them their *Christian duty*, and engages them to perform it. Their duty to God, recognising him as their Maker, to whom they owe the deepest homage—as their Preserver, on whom they should profess constant dependence—as their Benefactor, who claims, for the countless mercies which he bestows, their liveliest gratitude—as the Almighty Sovereign, who demands their unreserved and constant obedience—as their heavenly Father, to whom they should render confidence and submission—as their Judge, who will bring them to an account. Realizing his constant presence with them, his holy inspection of their conduct, they will fear to sin, even though the darkness of night may conceal the transgression from the world. The High and Holy One, who is able to save and to destroy, they are resolved alone to fear, and him only to serve. Impressed with the majesty of that name, before the glory of which cherubim and seraphim make obeisance, they guard against even the light and frivolous mention of it, and shudder at the profanity which connects it with the gross imprecation. Taught to regard homage to this first and best of Beings as equally their duty and their privilege, his sacred courts, where his perfections are adored, his grace invoked, and his favour supplicated, are the objects of their earnest desire, and their holy

choice; here they resolve to be present, with the emotions of penitence, with the impressions of reverence, with the lively exercises of faith, and among the assembled congregation to bow before the Lord, and to worship the God of their salvation.

In the renewal of their baptismal vows, the obligations of love and gratitude are also presented, which they owe to the Saviour who redeemed them, to that eternal Son of God who, for their sakes, left the highest heavens, and sojourned upon earth—laid aside the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and took upon him the body of flesh—forsook the praises with which the heavenly host cease not to adore him, and encountered the scoffs and the contradictions of sinners—and finally, amidst the contumelies and revilings of his bitter enemies, sustained the death of the cross. Impressed with the mingled emotions of awe and of gratitude for this mysterious display of infinite compassion in the Lord of life, they cherish confidence in the fulness of that atonement which he made for their sins, and trust in his merits as the only ground of acceptance with their Maker and their Judge; and they resolve to live to the glory of him who gave himself for them, and to seek, by the fidelity of their devotion to him, and their uniform obedience to his commands, to testify the sincerity of their love for the Benefactor of their souls, and the fervours of their gratitude to that compassionate Redeemer who loved them even unto death.

At the period of their renewal of their baptismal engagements, the various duties also of justice, of benevolence, and of mercy to their fellow-men in

general—of honour, of obedience, of gratitude, of affection to those with whom, by nature, or the institutions of society and the church, they sustain the most important relations—and of temperance, of soberness, and of purity, by which they are to preserve their bodies and their souls from corruption, disgrace, and misery,—are exhibited to the young disciples of Christ, and they are engaged to the practice of these duties by the most solemn resolutions and the most powerful motives.

For it is not the least edifying view of the scene which confirmation exhibits, that the everlasting destiny of those who are the subjects of it, and their immortal character and hopes, are then most forcibly impressed upon them. ‘Disciples of Christ,’ is the language which is then held forth to them, ‘while you enlist under the banner of your crucified Lord, and renew your vows of devotion to him, look at the eternal glories with which he is preparing to crown your triumphs in the holy warfare to which he calls you—to reward your self-denial, your zeal, your sacrifices, your fidelity in his service. Look also at those stores of vengeance which he will pour forth on the apostates from his cause, and on those who have neglected or dishonoured it in the preference of some corrupting pursuit of worldly ambition, or in the devotion to some unhallowed object of sensual indulgence. Yours, then, is a most momentous destination—yours a service which should engross your souls. The favour or the wrath of him who bears the glories and the terrors of omnipotence—felicity with him in his presence in heaven, or wo among the outcasts in those prisons of the accursed from which there is no redemption,—is to be your final portion.

Arouse then your souls to a holy ambition to attain the glories that are set before you; fill them with awful dread of that wrath which will be executed on those who, by their sins, put their Saviour to an open shame, violate their vows to him, and disgrace his sacred cause. Keep constantly in view the judgment to come, where the divine Redeemer, in whose service you are engaged, distributes the rewards or the punishments of eternity. Let no calls of worldly ambition, no allurements of sensual pleasure draw your supreme attention from those scenes where the award of your Judge will fix your doom of happiness or misery for ever. Let not the earthly joy that most delights and animates you, cause you to forget, that, as the denizens of that heavenly Zion, where the Lord is an everlasting light and God an eternal glory, you have pleasures in anticipation, in comparison of which the brightest worldly joy fades away—pleasures that flow from the infinite source of all felicity, and that last for ever.'

What enduring, what ennobling, what holy impressions is such a solemnity calculated to seal on their minds—a solemnity, too, in which God, we trust, dispenses to the humble and sincere those renewed supplies of his grace, by which they are enabled faithfully to profess the truths, and resolutely to discharge the duties, and to secure the privileges of their Christian calling.

Nor is it alone edifying to those who are immediately engaged in it. You who hear the vows by which the disciples of Christ pledge themselves to his service—you who witness them, in the exercise of an enlightened and firm resolution, engaging to discharge the obligations by which nature, and

reason, and conscience, and religion bind them to the homage and obedience of their Maker, by which the most powerful dictates of gratitude and duty impel them to show forth the praise of the Saviour who hath redeemed them—you who behold them, unseduced by those blandishments of pleasure, and undismayed by those scoffs of scepticism, so alluring and so appalling to the susceptible heart of youth, assuming the badge of a crucified Saviour, and resolving, in his strength, to resist and to overcome all the temptations with which the world, the flesh, and the devil are armed against them—you who see them, rising in vigorous faith above the dearest joys that can attach them to the earth, and fixing their holy view on the heaven that is their home, resolving there to place their best thoughts and liveliest affections, there to have their treasure and their hearts—can you witness such a solemnity and not be edified? this exhibition of Christian faith, of virtuous resolution, of holy zeal, and not feel the excitement of some kindred emotions of pious fervour? Perhaps the obligations that bind you with them to the service of that Being who, in every view, from the infinite perfection of his character and the exalted relations which he sustains towards us, claims our supreme devotion, have not yet been thus publicly acknowledged and renewed in the rite which has the sanction of God and of the church. And shall no purpose be now formed to discharge this great duty to which you see others advancing with pious resolution, and putting your indifference and apathy to shame? Perhaps these vows have been assumed, and have since been neglected or violated. Shall not the present solemnity recall them, in all the strength with which

they should have uniformly impressed you, and lead you to form the immediate and immoveable purpose to return unto the Lord, and to render to him that uniform, faithful, and holy obedience which reason, and conscience, and the most solemn obligations enforce? Perhaps the vows which in humble sincerity you assumed, have, as far as human infirmity admitted, through the aids of divine grace granted to your prayers, conveyed through the channel of the ordinances of the church, and furthering your pious resolutions and endeavours, been discharged, so that no duty to God or man, no personal virtue, is wilfully violated or neglected. May not even you, Christians, sincere and active as you are in the exercise of the Christian graces, and in the display of Christian obedience—may not even you, from the holy devotion of others to the cause in which you are engaged, draw some excitement to zeal, some confirmation of your virtuous purposes, some increase of the fidelity and ardour with which you pursue your holy course? Will not they who come to engage with you in the service of your Lord and Master, and in the pursuit of the things that belong to their eternal peace, have your blessing and your prayers?

For surely no scene is calculated to excite more INTERESTING emotions, than that which is exhibited when the ministers of the Most High, and the congregation of the faithful, are assembled to receive and to witness the vows by which the young disciples of Christ pledge themselves to the service of their Lord and Redeemer.

Interesting, whether we consider the *persons*

who come forward to this consecration of themselves to God, and the *purpose* for which they come; or the *effect* which the solemn act will produce upon their characters and destiny here and hereafter.

They come forward, principally young disciples of Christ, ingenuous, susceptible, the purpose of worldly ambition as yet perhaps scarcely formed, the desire for the pleasures which are opening upon their view in the world which is before them, not yet perhaps matured—they come forward, the members of Christ's body, nurtured in his fold—they for whose salvation the church solicitously offers her prayers, and for whom she invokes the benediction of her Lord—they to whom society looks with deep interest for the examples that are to adorn, for the virtues that are to strengthen and defend her hallowed institutions—they, your *friends*, for whose welfare you are solicitous; your *kindred*, whom you cherish with so much lively affection; your *children*, on whom you have bestowed so many cares, so many exertions—may I not say, so many prayers?—whose future welfare and happiness call forth so many warm and tender feelings, so many anxious and lively anticipations: dear in so many views, bound to us by so many ties, they come forward for the noblest and most holy purpose—to testify their devotion to their God, to him who made them, who redeems them, who sanctifies them, that they may be fitted for the enjoyment of his presence for ever—they thus come forward, that, fortified by the holy vows which they now make, and strengthened by the divine grace which they now receive, they may advance in their Christian course, resisting the temptations that

assail them, and finally obtain the end of their calling—the salvation of their souls. How deeply interesting a solemnity which will have the most important influence on the temporal and eternal character and conditions of those who engage in it! There cannot surely be a heart that views the scene with apathy, in which it calls forth no emotion of solicitude or affection, and which is not prompted to offer the prayer for the benediction of heaven on those who, engaging in the service of their God and Saviour, in the course of Christian duty, aim at securing the inheritance of glory which is set before them.

The holy impressions of the scene through which they now pass, retaining power over their minds through all the future stages of their life, will, by God's blessing, make them virtuous and happy here, and lead them to the consummation of felicity hereafter. But if these sacred impressions prove like the morning cloud and the early dew, and pass away, with these will pass away the present honour, and purity, and peace, and the everlasting perfection and felicity of those who thus forget and violate the pledge of devotion to their God.

In this view, as conducing either to holiness and happiness, or to sin and misery, here and hereafter, how interesting the solemnity which you are now to witness! Realize it, brethren, that it may have your prayers. Realize it, you who are to engage in it, that it may excite all those serious emotions, those pious feelings, those elevated and holy views which its sacred importance demands. You are to testify your allegiance to the Lord; you are to covenant to serve him, to perform your vows to him.

Most solemn the consecration, most serious the engagement: but it is your duty, your indispensable duty; hesitate not to perform it—hesitate not, for it is your heavenly Father who calls you to his service, he who, knowing whereof you are made, and remembering that you are but dust, will regard you with the tenderest compassion, and ever extend to you his guidance, protection, and succour. Hesitate not, it is your Saviour who calls you to come to him—he who shed his blood for you, who still in heaven intercedes for you, and who will never withdraw from you, till you wilfully forsake him, his grace, his favour, and his love. Hesitate not; the glories of heaven, where all the virtuous principles of your nature will be purified and exalted, and all your virtuous joys consummated for ever, invite you. Hesitate not; the miseries of hell should alarm you: for if, deeming too great the sacrifices and the exertions which Christian duty demands, you neglect your Christian vows, and pursue those sinful joys of a world which you must soon leave, the miseries of that state to which you are doomed will have no change, no termination. Come forward, then—solemnly engage in the course of Christian duty to which you are pledged by baptism—renew your title to your Christian privileges—ininitely more exalted are they than any which the world can bestow, because they are satisfying and enduring. Come forward and secure the infinitely exalted privileges as members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

SERMON VII.

FOR CONFIRMATION.

PSALM CXXIX. 8.

I will keep thy statutes.

THIS pious resolve of the psalmist we would seek to induce those to adopt, who having been consecrated to God in baptism, are called to ratify and confirm their vows in the ordinance of confirmation, which is shortly to be administered.

It is not among the least of the advantages of the ordinance of confirmation, that it is calculated to draw the attention, at stated periods, to those everlasting concerns which, amidst the occupations and the enjoyments of life, are often forgotten or neglected. When a solemn call is made on baptized Christians to assume the engagements by which they were originally entered into covenant with God—when the momentous duties and the high privileges of their calling in Christ Jesus are presented before those who bear his name, and who have been pledged to his service—the appeal is powerfully calculated to excite their serious reflection, to withdraw their attention from the world, and to impress on them the infinite importance of an attention to the things which belong to their eternal peace.

In the solemnity of confirmation, also, those who, in the sacraments and ordinances of the church,

have assumed the obligations, and received a title to the privileges of their Christian adoption, are reminded of the momentous force of these obligations, and of the exalted nature of these privileges: it is calculated to impress on them their great guilt, as far as they have violated these obligations and contemned these privileges; and in this case also, of the indispensable necessity of their returning unto God, resolving no longer to live in violation of their Christian duties, and in neglect of their Christian privileges. The call, especially on the young members of Christ's fold, to assume their Christian obligations, has a tendency to awaken them to a sense of the supreme importance, above all worldly concerns, of making their Christian calling and election sure.

At the period of the administration of this ordinance, Christian parents and others must feel, in more than its usual force, their awful responsibility for the spiritual welfare of those whom Providence hath placed under their charge—those immortal beings, whose happiness or misery, through a never-ending existence, in no small degree depends on their instructions and care. And at this season also, the ministers and pastors of Christ's fold must be impressed with their accountability for the flock committed to them, and particularly for those young members of it whom they perhaps admitted into this fold at the sacred font, and whom they behold arrived at a season of life when generally the course is taken which leads through the ways of sin and sensuality to the chambers of misery, or through the paths of holiness to the glories of God's kingdom above.

It is a strong sense of this responsibility which

excites the earnest solicitude, that all they who have not received the ordinance of confirmation, should embrace the present opportunity of ratifying, in that holy rite, their baptismal engagements, in order that they may have assured to them their baptismal privileges.

The considerations which urge the reception of the ordinance of confirmation, arise from its *origin*, from the *duties* which it imposes, and from the *privileges* which it confers.

1. It traces its *origin* through the practice of the universal church to the apostolic age, in which it was considered as a divine institution. No ceremony of merely human authority would have been ranked, as the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews ranks this institution, among the principles of the doctrine of Christ. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." The expression "laying on of hands" evidently designates that particular rite which, it appears from the Acts of the Apostles, was practised by them, and in which, by this gesture, God's grace and favour are assured to baptized Christians; for the expression follows in the passage, the "doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." In the enumeration in that passage, there is no doctrine or institution which is not necessary to all Christians, and the laying on of hands therefore cannot be an excep-

tion. It must mean that rite in which Christians, from the first ages, renewed their baptismal engagements, and were certified of God's favour and goodness.

There will be hazard therefore, imminent hazard in neglecting an ordinance to which God has set the seal of his authority. There will be great irreverence in disregarding what the apostles and saints of the first ages, and the great body of Christians in every age, have valued as one of the ordinances of the church of their Redeemer, one of those inestimable means and pledges by which they were made, through faith, the subjects of his grace and the heirs of his glory. Apart from its benefits, the single circumstance that it is an institution of God, an ordinance of his church, will mark with impiety, with guilt and hazard, the wilful neglect of it. As it is the ordinance appointed for the renewal of the vows of baptism, our renewal of these vows in any other mode cannot exempt us from the duty of receiving this ordinance. On this single principle, then, of its being a divine institution, we urge the reception of it. The lesson of obedience to whatever our Maker and Almighty Lawgiver and Sovereign and Judge imposes on us, merely because he does impose it, is the dictate of reason. The duty of submitting our understandings and wills to him who has a supreme right to direct and command both, is the most useful lesson which we can practise. In the heart which is thus humble and obedient, will flourish all those virtues which adorn our nature, which perfect the Christian character; which produce in this life serenity and peace, and in the life to come a feli-

city which it is not permitted the eye to see, the ear to hear, nor the heart to conceive.

If it is the institution of God, we neglect it at our peril; the High and Holy One will not be thus insulted in the neglect of his ordinances with impunity. Let not any, then, indulge the common, but dangerous opinion, that their participation of any of the ordinances of religion is left entirely to their discretion; that they may or may not receive them, as they please. We cannot neglect any divine institution without guilt, and without subjecting ourselves to the displeasure of him who, as he is able to save, is able also to destroy.

2. But the consideration of the great *duty* which the ordinance of confirmation imposes, strengthens the obligation to receive it.

This *duty* is—the devotion of ourselves to God, our Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, in all the powers and affections of our souls—the devotion of our understandings to the doctrines of that Gospel which he has prescribed, of our wills to the works of his commandments, and of our affections to his service, confiding in his promises, and supremely pursuing his everlasting glory. It is a devotion which implies that, in all our thoughts, words, and actions, we acknowledge our obligations and our responsibility to him, our Maker, Sovereign, and Judge; and that we unceasingly and supremely desire and aim at serving and pleasing him, from whom we derive our being, from whose bounty we receive all our enjoyments, and who only can be our strength and refuge when every other strength and refuge will fail us, in the

season of adversity, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.

This devotion does not entirely forbid the pursuit and enjoyment of the things of the world; but its holy requisitions are incompatible with a supreme devotion to temporal objects, with a regard to the attainment and enjoyment of them, as constituting the chief end of life; these, while they are pursued in reference to the discharge of the relative and social duties, and to purposes of innocent gratification, should always be held in subordination to those objects which should supremely occupy our thoughts, desires, and exertions—the service of God, the enjoyment of his favour, and the salvation of our souls. The devotion of ourselves to God, which we make in the ordinance of confirmation, pledges us to resist all those allurements and temptations with which the great enemy of our souls, the evil world, and our sinful nature assail us, and by which they would seduce us from that love and obedience of God which is our highest duty, and in which alone we shall find unalloyed and full felicity. Yes,

This devotion of ourselves to the service of God, serious as it must appear, serious and difficult as it undoubtedly is, is still our duty, our highest duty. In this oblation of ourselves to him, and in this habitual obedience to his laws, consist the perfection and dignity of our nature, our true peace and enjoyment in this transitory world, and, what is of infinitely more importance, our felicity in that world, on which, distant as it may now appear, we must soon enter, which is to be subject to no change, which is to endure for ever. In the ordinance of confirmation, to which those who have

not received it are now called, this devotion of themselves to God is made, which is urged by so many imperious considerations, which is so necessary, in every view, to their present and immortal peace. Now you are called (I address those who have not received this holy ordinance) to make a solemn decision, a decision on which depend, not the momentary interests of the present life, but those of a life that will never terminate—you are now called on to decide, Whom will you serve? To whom will you devote yourselves? Who shall engage the homage of your hearts and the service of your lives? “If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” If the world can afford you full and lasting felicity, and if you can make the world your portion for ever, there will be some reason for your choice of it. But, flattering as may be the colouring which the imagination casts upon the scenes of the present life, it is impossible that you can delude yourselves with the expectation that perfect and enduring happiness is to be found in any thing which a fleeting and disappointing world can afford.

Make, then, a decision, the decision of true wisdom—a decision which will secure your virtue, your real honour, your permanent felicity in this life—and hereafter, a glory, an honour, a felicity which shall endure for ever, and that shall infinitely exceed all that you can now desire or conceive. Resolve in sincerity to devote yourselves to the service of your God.

3. The consideration of the privileges which the ordinance of confirmation will assure to you, presents still further motives to induce you to receive it.

The blessings which reflection will teach you are of the most value, are surely not temporal blessings; for your attainment of many of them is uncertain; the tenure by which you hold them is precarious; the enjoyment which they afford is alloyed and unsatisfying; and even were they certain in the attainment, permanent and satisfying in the possession, their duration is but for a few years. The only blessing which in the view of your sober judgments will appear of real value, must be certain in the attainment, sure in the tenure, satisfying in the enjoyment, lasting in the duration; and none but those which are spiritual and immortal, which, derived from the service of God and the conformity of our souls to the image of his holiness, terminate in the fruition of his glory, can be of this description; and your title to these blessings, conferred in baptism, you may now secure in "the laying on of hands," which certifies to those who sincerely and faithfully devote themselves to God, his favour and goodness.

Let me beseech you to consider what is your character and condition. Alas! we all daily transgress the laws of God, our Maker, Preserver, Benefactor, Sovereign, and Judge, and therefore need his forgiveness; our hearts are exposed to the intrusion of evil thoughts, desires, and passions, and we therefore require those influences of divine grace which only can create clean hearts and renew a right spirit within us; we are hourly exposed to temptations, and therefore need that divine strength by which alone we can resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with a pure heart and mind love and obey God; death, possibly immediate, certainly not very remote, awaits us, and in

the grave which receives our bodies, must be buried all that can here interest us.

Is it not, then, the dictate of true wisdom to seek that inheritance in heaven which fadeth not away—a resurrection from that grave which receives us, to life and glory, through the power and the grace of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? But these are privileges which no human efforts can secure, to which no human virtue can lay claim. As our Almighty Maker and Judge can alone bestow these blessings, they must be his free gift—he may bestow them in what way he pleases; and he does graciously vouchsafe to bestow them in that covenant of mercy which in his Son Jesus Christ he hath established. A seal of this covenant, the sacrament of baptism, conveys a title to these blessings, and thus translates those who by nature are children of wrath, destitute of all title to the favour of God, and exposed to his displeasure, into a state of salvation, in which they become members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. In this sense, as born again into a state of covenant-relation to God, baptized persons are said to be regenerated with water and the Holy Ghost, and to have received the forgiveness of all their sins. But our title to the blessings of the Christian covenant, conferred in baptism, rests on important conditions—on the devotion of ourselves to God in the exercise of repentance for all our transgressions, and of lively faith in him whom God hath set forth as the Saviour of the world, producing obedience to his laws.

You who have been baptized, and have not received the ordinance of confirmation, are now called to make, in penitence, in faith, in humble

resolutions of obedience, this devotion of yourselves to the service of your God. This solemn renewal of your baptismal covenant will be accompanied, in this holy ordinance, with the solemn conveyance to you, on the part of God, by the instrumentality of his authorized minister, of all your baptismal privileges—of his mercy, that will blot out your transgressions—of his Holy Spirit, that will sanctify your corrupt natures, aid you in the discharge of duty, and support you in all your trials—of his almighty power, by which you shall overcome your last and terrible enemy, even death, and by which, shaking off the bands of corruption, and rising from the darkness of the tomb, you shall enter on immortal life and glory.

These blessings, exalted as they are, and unworthy as we are of enjoying them, may be attained by you; your heavenly Father, in condescension to the weakness of your nature, assures them to you by an ordinance of his own appointment, by the instrumentality of those whom he hath commissioned to be ministers to you of the blessings of this great salvation. Is it possible, then, that you can hesitate as to receiving the ordinance which assures to you these exalted privileges?

Baptized Christians, of whatever age, but especially the young, who have not thus renewed your baptismal consecration to God, I beseech you to consider that the vows of God are upon you. By the law of your nature, you are bound to serve the God who made you; by your condition as creatures, you are in the hands of him who is able to save and to destroy. The obligations to which nature thus binds you to the service of the God

who made, and preserves, and is to guide you, were imposed anew in the sacrament of baptism. These vows, reasonable and necessary to your perfection and happiness, you are now called on to ratify and confirm; you are solemnly called to do so, by God and by his church. Your heavenly Father offers to you his mercy, his favour, his grace. If you should reject these blessings, your life, disgraced and degraded by error, by sensuality, by sin, will produce only shame and remorse, until it terminate (such is the righteous decree of the Sovereign of the universe) in the worm that never dies, in the fire that never will be quenched.

But now your heavenly Father allures you to his service by the prospect of that glory laid up for you in heaven, which, when this world and all its joys have faded away, will increase in lustre and enjoyment through everlasting ages. If you disregard these powerful motives, by what considerations shall I urge you? Remember, a day will come, when, for every privilege which you have neglected, for every offer of mercy which you have contemned, for every mean of grace which you have failed to improve—yes, for the present offer of grace and mercy, if you refuse it—God will bring you into judgment. And surely it will be a fearful thing thus to fall into the hands of the living God.

Oh, then, resolve to live in the service and to the glory of God; go from this sacred temple resolved to devote yourselves to that God and Saviour who will be your guide even unto death, and your portion for ever and ever.

Fathers, mothers, all who have influence over

others, endeavour to excite and to cherish this pious resolve in those who are the objects of your solicitude and care; for remember, for them also you must render an account. Aid them and us, O merciful Father, by that Spirit which quickens unto life; and bring them and us from the ordinances and services of this earthly temple, to the vision and enjoyment of thy perfections and thy everlasting glory in thy temple above.

SERMON VIII.

FOR CONFIRMATION.

ROMANS xiv. 8.

Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

THIS passage most forcibly represents the interesting relation of the Christian to his God and Saviour. He is the property of that Lord by whom he was created and redeemed; to this Lord his life is devoted in the faithful discharge of the duties of his Christian calling; and then dying, he is the Lord's; that Lord to whom he is devoted, will be in this conflict the support of his soul, and its portion through eternal ages.

In reference to the ordinance of confirmation which is this day to be administered, it was my object to exhibit, in some of the preparatory lectures delivered during the preceding week, that Christian life which baptism denotes, and to which confirmation renewedly pledges us. The view proposed of the Christian life, was in its *commencement*, its *progress*, and its *termination*.

The Christian life commences in *baptism*, when its obligations were imposed and its privileges conferred; and it renewedly commences in confirmation, when its engagements are publicly assumed by those who were baptized in infancy, when they come to the years of discretion. And at this commencement of the Christian life, the exercises

proper for those who publicly devote themselves to God, in the laying on of hands, are, an humble acknowledgment and confession of the weakness and corruption of their nature, and of their actual transgressions; trust in that mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, which is then to be assured to them; a serious conviction of the necessity of that spiritual change implied by “dying unto sin and rising unto righteousness,” denoted by the sacrament of baptism, the obligations of which we then assume; and earnest supplications for the influences of that Divine Spirit by which, in union with our own endeavours, this change is to be effected.

The Christian life, in its *progress*, may be considered with respect to its character, the principle by which it is animated, the agency and means by which it is maintained, and the consolations and hopes with which it is supported and rewarded.

The *character* of the Christian life (to which baptism and the ordinance of confirmation devote us) is *holy*—holy, in the renunciation of all sin, in the exercise of all holy affections, and in the discharge of the duties of a holy life. The *principle* by which the Christian life is animated, is *faith*, that faith which so fully and so strongly realizes all the great truths of the Gospel, as to make them operative upon the heart and the life, in renewing and reforming them, and leading to the cultivation of all Christian virtues, and the faithful discharge of every moral duty. By the *agency* of the Holy Spirit,—acting according to the constitution of the human mind, and not to be distinguished from its operations, blessing, to our conquest over sin and our advancement in holiness, the use of moral means, of prayer, of pious reading and meditation,

diligence and watchfulness, and holy resolutions, and dispensed especially in the sacraments, ordinances, and ministrations of the church,—is the Christian life maintained, and the principle of faith rendered effectual, in our conquest over the passions of corrupt nature, and over the temptations of the world, and in our daily progress in the holy graces and virtues of the Christian course. And *the consolations and hopes* which, in his progress through the arduous duties of the spiritual life, the Christian enjoys, are, the favour and protection of his divine Lord and Master; the assurance, under the sense of his sins, that he has an Advocate with the Father, through whom his sins are forgiven; and, under the temptations of the world, a firm confidence in the favour and grace of his almighty Guardian, and the enlivening prospect of the eternal and unspeakable glory which is prepared for him.

These were the views of the Christian life in its *progress*, which were presented and enforced with a particular reference to those who are preparing publicly to commence (in the laying on of hands, the appropriate ordinance for the purpose) this life, already sacramentally begun in baptism, and perhaps actually entered on in private devotion, in the worship of the sanctuary, or in the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

I propose, at the present time, to consider the Christian life in its *termination*, as calculated to confirm the pious determination of those who now propose publicly to enter on it, and to impress on all Christians its unspeakable importance.

The termination of the Christian life may be regarded in reference to the scenes of *death*, of *judgment*, and of *eternity*.

Death terminates the Christian life, as it respects its probationary character in the present world.

Judgment terminates it, as it respects its final rewards or punishments, by which it is fixed in the unchanging periods of *eternity*.

1. *Death* terminates the Christian life, with respect to its probationary character in the present world.

Its duties are finished, its trials ended, its sorrows terminated, its probation closed, and death seals it up to the judgment of the great day. What is the state of the Christian at this awful period, when, as it regards the probationary character of the Christian life, he beholds it terminated? what are his views as it regards the past? and what are his supports under the present conflict?

In the retrospect of his past life, does the *view of his sins* afflict him? Alas! he perceives them numerous, and perhaps aggravated. Even if the first exercise of his reason acknowledged the obligations of that Christian covenant into which he was entered at baptism, and the first feelings of his heart were directed in grateful affection to the God who made and blessed him, and the Saviour who redeemed him; and if, in no subsequent period of his course, did he relinquish that service of his God and Redeemer on which he entered in the season of youth; if manhood found him zealous in every good work, and old age shed forth the mild but steady lustre of the Christian graces,—still, he could not live and not sin. There have been omissions of duty, if not actual violations of the divine law; there have been defects in his best intentions, coldness in his warmest affections,

wanderings (O how many!) in his most devout supplications, and imperfections in his most holy works.

But perhaps the retrospect of his life affords a picture more strongly marked with the dark colours of imperfection and sin. The early desires and affections of his heart, instead of being offered to his God and Saviour, were occupied with the pleasures of the world; manhood found him still careless of the things that belong to his eternal peace, and in the indulgence of the sinful passions of his nature, habitually violating, if not the laws of honesty, and of justice, and of truth, the dictates of piety, of purity, and of sobriety; and perhaps not until he approached the last stage of life did he awake to a sense of his Christian obligations, and, turning from the ways of sin and folly, devote himself to the service of God.

At that solemn hour when the world is receding from his view, and the scenes of judgment and eternity opening upon him, conscience brings before the Christian the imperfections and sins of his past life; but they do not shake his serenity nor destroy his peace. He has humbled himself on account of them, repeatedly and deeply, at the footstool of his God; he has confessed and deplored them with lively contrition; he has renounced them with shame and abhorrence; faith in the blood of his Saviour has restored peace to his soul; rejoicing in the view of the fulness of divine mercy, he has silenced the accusations of conscience, and evincing, in his humble and faithful devotion to God, the sincerity of his penitential emotions and resolutions, he has confided in the gracious acceptance of his sincere but imperfect

services. Though then, in the weak and agonizing moments of death, the deficiencies and sins that marked his course rise to the view of the Christian, he knows that he has secured his interest in the intercession of the all-powerful Advocate with the Father, and that he will be accepted, not on account of his own righteousness, but on account of the merits of that Redeemer to whom he hath committed, in humble penitence and faith, the salvation of his soul.

In that retrospect of his past life which death brings before the Christian, does he dwell on the numerous *temptations* that have assailed him? He lifts his soul in thanks to that God who hath given him victory over them. Sometimes, indeed, he may have been seduced (who has not been thus seduced?) by their treacherous blandishments, sometimes cast down by their violent assaults; but for a moment only he left the path of duty, for a moment only was he held captive to sin; he returned with redoubled vigilance and activity to that service of his God which constituted his duty and his delight; he rose from his temporary fall with renewed ardour, to repair, by increased zeal and holiness, the injury which he inflicted on his Christian profession, and to restore, by more signal acts of piety and virtue, the brightness of his Christian character, which temptation had tarnished. Through the grace of his divine Master, he has overcome—he has resisted the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with a pure heart followed his God and Saviour; and now he rejoices that death will terminate his conflicts, and give him rest.

Is the meditation of the Christian, at the hour of

death, directed to the *conquest which he has made over his sinful passions?* They have, indeed, been but imperfectly subdued; perhaps conscience, if faithful to her trust, will admonish him that some favourite passion he has not sedulously watched and controlled, and that still, in a degree, it holds dominion over his soul. He will be humbled in penitential sorrow, but not in despair; for his Christian course witnessing his faithful struggles, through divine grace, with all the evil passions that contended for mastery over him, and his success in bringing them into subjection to those holy principles and spirit by which he is supremely regulated, he confides, that the Master who knows whereof he is made, and remembers that he is but dust, will not condemn him because he has not fully obtained that victory, which cannot be complete until, the body of sin being destroyed, his corruptible has put on incorruption, and his mortal immortality.

In those serious reflections which approaching death suggests to the Christian, does he review the progress which he has made *in the cultivation of the Christian graces?* This progress is indeed imperfect; in no respect has he fully attained perfection. Alloy diminishes the lustre of his brightest virtues; yet, kindled by the Spirit of God, and cherished by his sincere, and continued, and faithful exertions, they have shone forth with increasing splendour, and conforming him to the image and example of his divine Lord, now furnish him with the joyful confidence that this Lord will not cast him off.

And a further confidence of his acceptance is inspired by the review which, at the solemn mo-

ment of his departure, the Christian is led to take of his *fidelity in the service of God*. Here, too, there is much to confess and to lament; for, alas! the service which the most holy Christian renders, is imperfect in degree, sometimes inconstant, and always more or less contaminated by false and worldly motives. Yet still, animated by a lively sense of love and duty to his Almighty Maker, Preserver, and Benefactor, the God who hath redeemed him by the blood of his Son, and sanctified him by the grace of his Spirit, and conferred on him a title to the heavenly inheritance, it has been the supreme desire of his heart to glorify, by the devoted service of his life, his God and Saviour. In the emotions of deep humility he will indeed exclaim, ‘In many things, O my God, I have offended thee; the homage which I have rendered has been divided between thee and that world which has possessed too strong a hold on my affections; my love to thee has not been equal to the infinite excellence of thy nature, and has fallen short of my own desires and resolutions; my obedience to thy commands has been sometimes interrupted by the seductions of the world, and always more or less weakened by its erroneous principles and corrupt spirit; my gratitude has been far from adequate to the claims of thy goodness, displayed in the countless blessings which thou hast bestowed upon me, and utterly unequal to that entire and lively tribute demanded by thy unspeakable love for me, in my redemption by thy beloved Son.’ Yet, while a sense of imperfection and unworthiness thus draws forth from the Christian—in that serious moment when, about to leave the scenes that have occupied him in the world,

his spiritual state alone engrosses him—the language of humiliation and confession—the consciousness that in simplicity and sincerity he has sought to serve his God and Saviour, and in some good degree has discharged the holy duties of the Christian life, will inspire him with confidence and hope. ‘Thou, my God and Saviour, who knowest my heart, knowest indeed its weakness and imperfections, but knowest with what sincerity and fervour of desire it has endeavoured to serve thee. In all its afflictions, it has sought thee, as its only refuge; in all its joys, given thanks to thee for its felicity; and in all its wanderings, returned to thee, as its only satisfying portion. All the actions of my life are spread before thee, my Lord and Master. Alas! many of them testify to my weakness, and forgetfulness of my obligations to thee; all of them, if weighed in the scales of thy justice, thou wilt find wanting. Yet, blessed be thy grace, which inspired me with good desires, and enabled me to bring the same to good effect, thou wilt accept the imperfect but holy course of obedience by which I have sought to serve thee.’

These are the emotions of humble, but firm and satisfying confidence, with which the Christian, taking a retrospect of that Christian life which death is about to terminate, reposes himself upon his God and Saviour.

And they afford him full supports under the conflict to which he is called.

A conflict, indeed, which weak and sinful nature cannot view without dismay. We instinctively shudder at the pains and agonies of dying; we instinctively, and with every impulse of the soul, turn from the stroke that will separate us from all that here

interests us, from kindred and friends, from wealth, and pleasure, and felicity, and launch us on eternity. Reflection, which sometimes lessens the magnitude of other evils, only serves to increase the horror of dying, and to magnify the terrors of the stroke that terminates our course here, to introduce us to an endless state of being. Christian faith alone can support the soul in that conflict under which nature sinks; and this faith supports the Christian. He has arrived at the close of his earthly course; the retrospect of that Christian life which is now terminating, though affording no ground for boasting, yet testifying to the sincerity of his devotion to his Lord and Master, inspires the confidence that the Redeemer, whom he has served, will fulfil his gracious promise, and will be with him, to redeem him from death, and to ransom him from the power of the grave. The sting of death is sin; but that grace of God in Jesus Christ which hath enabled him to vanquish sin, hath plucked this sting from death: the enemy is harmless; he is but the messenger that calls the Christian home—terminates the cares, the sins, the sorrows, the temptations that harassed his life here, and translates him to a life of never-ending purity, peace, and joy, in the mansions of his Father's house.

Brethren, from this conflict there is no escaping; and we know not at what moment we may be summoned to it. Ah! different from the picture which has been exhibited to you of a holy Christian course, is your course marked by indifference to the obligations of your Christian calling, or by the constant violation of them? Does it exhibit none of that penitence, of that holiness, of that engagedness in the service of God, to which the most so-

lemn obligations bind us, and the most powerful motives urge us? We have then forfeited our baptismal privileges—the favour of God, and our interest in the mercy and love of the Saviour. In the conflict with death we shall be forsaken by him who alone can strip death of his terrors; the view of our sins, and the reflection on our guilt, will increase the pains and agonies of dying. A wounded spirit who can bear, even when health and prosperity fortify the soul?—a spirit wounded by sin who can bear, when death also inflicts his sting?

But if you continue faithfully engaged in the exercises and duties of the spiritual life, the scenes of death which await you, you should contemplate without dismay; for your Redeemer will conduct you through them. “Fear not,” will be his language to you at the hour of your last conflict—“Fear not, for I am with you; I, who was dead, but am alive again, and hold the keys of death and hell. Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God.”

Young Christians, we hold forth to you the termination of that Christian life on which you are to enter, in reference to the scenes of death; not to alarm you, but to confirm you in your holy resolutions of entering on the service of your God and Saviour, of fulfilling the holy engagements to which your baptismal covenant pledges you. Since the conflict with death is inevitable, it is surely your wisdom and your duty to prepare for it. Since you may be called to this conflict in a day and in an hour which you think not of, it is your indispensable wisdom and duty *immediately* to prepare for it; and the preparation is in your power. The preparation for death, too, is the preparation for

an honourable, a useful, and a happy life. It consists in the faithful discharge of those vows of devotion, of love and obedience to your God and Saviour, which you made, or which were made for you in your baptism. Sincerely assume these vows; and be it hereafter your study and endeavour to discharge those duties of the Christian life which they enjoin—and you need not fear death—whenever he comes, he will be a messenger of peace to you.

Nor need you then fear those more appalling scenes, in reference to which the termination of the Christian life is to be considered,

2. The scenes of *judgment*.

Awful are these scenes. The coming of the Son of man—the blast of that trump which sounds through the universe—the burning up of the earth—the melting of the elements—the passing away of the heavens—the dead, small and great, standing before God—the opening of the books—the wailing of the nations. Appalling scenes! dismaying events! Are they imaginary? Are they exaggerated? In the language in which they have now been set before you, they are described in the word of God. These scenes, these events will come to pass: you and I, my brethren, will, must witness them; and we may witness them undismayed. Have we entered on the Christian life? Faithful to the obligations which it imposes, have we renounced all sin, and followed after holiness—imbibing the pure and heavenly spirit of him by whose name we are called, and to whose service we are devoted—studying to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and to walk in all his

commandments and ordinances blameless? The judgment of the great day will have no terrors to us. He who sits on the judgment-seat, mighty in power, is the Redeemer whom we have served, and who now comes to glorify himself in the salvation of his redeemed. "Come, ye blessed of my Father," is the language with which he will welcome us to the possession of the kingdom prepared for us before the foundation of the world. The last day need have no terrors for the faithful followers of Christ—it is the day of their redemption.

The ungodly, and the nominal professors of his name, whose Christian course has been marked by the indulgences and sins of their corrupt nature and an evil world, the last day will be to them indeed the day of terror; it is the day that seals their misery for ever. "Depart, ye cursed," is the sentence with which they are doomed to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Who that reflects on this termination of the Christian life, as it respects those who have faithfully discharged its duties, and those who have violated its obligations, can be indifferent in which way it will terminate, as it regards himself? For consider,

3. *Lastly.* Its termination, as it regards the scenes of *eternity*.

The Christian life, when its holy obligations have been faithfully discharged, will terminate in the enjoyment of the bliss of heaven—a bliss, to the full conception of which our present powers are inadequate. Those powers will then be enlarged in their capacities and in their operations, and perfected in their enjoyments. Truth, clear

and pure, will delight the understanding—good, supreme and perfect, occupy the operations of the will—excellence, infinite and eternal, entrance the affections; for the understanding, the will and the affections will then be exercised in the contemplation of God—of his glory, as far as a created being can contemplate its ineffable effulgence—of his glory, as displayed in the glorified human nature of his eternal Son—of his glory, as manifested in his works, in his counsels, in his dispensations, in the exalted intelligences whom he has created—all which will be the subjects of contemplation and the source of bliss to the saints in heaven. Their glorified bodies will administer to the felicity of their beatified souls; and in the circles of the just made perfect, with whom they surround the throne of God, knowing as they are known, they will find all those with whom in holy faith and love they served the God of their salvation in his temple below; and, through the revolutions of eternity, no change awaits them but an *increase of bliss*.

On the contrary, the Christian life, when its obligations have been contemned, and its holy character deformed by sinful indulgences, and its duties violated, what is its termination in the scenes of eternity?—in misery for ever!—in misery, by the *uncontrollable nature of things*; for the unholy soul must be miserable—in misery, by *the voice of justice*; for he who, called to be the son of God and the heir of heaven, has spurned from him these celestial privileges, trampled under foot, in his career of sin, the Son of God, and, devoted to the indulgence of his sinful passions, counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing; he who would have none of the counsel, of the mercy, of the

grace, of the love of his heavenly Father and Redeemer, and of the bliss of heaven—justice pronounces that he ought to be miserable; and the *decree of God*, holy, just, and almighty, pronounces—miserable *for ever*. *Misery for ever*—no change through the revolutions of eternity, but an increase of unutterable anguish to the soul, of intolerable pain to the body—the worm never dying, the fire never quenched.

If these scenes do not impress you, brethren, by what considerations can you be urged to make your calling and election sure, to fulfil the obligations of your Christian life in holiness and righteousness?

You who are now publicly to enter on the Christian life in the ordinance appointed for the purpose; never lose sight of the termination of your course, in happiness for ever, or in misery without end. Keep steadily in view heaven, the reward of your faithful devotion to your God and Saviour, and be animated to attain its glories. Think of the misery that awaits your disobedience, your violation of your Christian duties, and your neglect of your Christian privileges. Ask, ‘What will the pleasures of sin profit me, if their end is misery for ever?’ Remember, that, whether living or dying, you are the Lord’s; you are his, for he created you; you are his, for he hath redeemed you; you are his, for to him you were devoted in baptism. In the lively sense of your obligations to him, of his claims upon you, you will now publicly acknowledge that you are his, in renewing the engagements and your title to the privileges of that covenant in which you were devoted to him. Making this acknowledgment in the sincerity of your hearts,

he, the Lord of heaven and of earth, will receive you as his own ; he will watch over, defend, bless, and save you. Continuing devoted to him, through the Christian course that is before you, in the discharge of its duties, when that course is terminated, he will claim you as his in death—his chosen ones, over whom death and the grave shall have no power ; he will claim you as his in that day when he decides the destinies of mankind ; and he will claim you as his, admitting you to the vision of his glory, to the participation of the fulness of bliss in his presence, through the ages of eternity.

SERMON IX.

FOR CONFIRMATION

JOSHUA xxiv. 21.

We will serve the Lord.

SOLEMN was the assembly, when, seated in the promised land, after the various dangers and changes through which they had passed, all the tribes of Israel, with their elders, and heads, and judges, and officers, were gathered together, and presented themselves before God. Interesting was the scene, when their noble leader, “waxed old and stricken in age,” about to terminate his arduous course, recounting the signal deliverances and blessings which the Lord had dispensed to his people, submitted to them the choice of the service of the vain gods of their fathers, or the gods of the nations among whom they dwelt, but announced the inflexible resolution, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” And most animating and impressive the response which rose from all the assembled tribes of Israel, after reiterated cautions as to the difficulty of the service to which they pledged themselves, “Nay, but we *WILL serve the Lord.*”

You will witness this day a scene scarcely less solemn and interesting: you will behold the young members of the tribes of the spiritual Israel—the children, the relatives, the friends of many of you

—the young Christian brethren and sisters of us all—gathered together, and presenting themselves before God, to renew that covenant with him which they made, or which was made in their name, in the holy sacrament that marked them to his service. And, instructed and admonished as they have been in the holy nature of this covenant, in its all-sufficient aids, in the threatenings and the promises which sanction it, and now called on for their determination and their choice, I trust you will hear from their interesting ranks the animating and impressive resolution—(Gracious God, as thou wilt hear and record it, accept and bless it!)—“We will serve the Lord.”

My young friends, this is a noble, it is a wise, it may prove a happy resolution. It is noble; for it is made in opposition to pleasures that allure, to difficulties that threaten, and to temptations that assail you. It is wise; for it is the highest wisdom of intelligent creatures to serve the Being who made, who governs, and who is to judge them, and who alone is the fountain of goodness and of happiness. And it may prove a happy resolution; for, if carried into effect through the whole of your mortal course, it will be attended with God's peace and favour here, and followed by the fulness of his felicity hereafter.

God grant that it may be a resolution of *serious consideration*, of *determined intention*, of *unreserved devotion*, of *sincere penitence*, of *deep humility*, of *entire dependence*, of *active faith*, and of *lively hope*.

May it be a resolution of *serious consideration*.

Whom should you serve, if not the God who made, preserves, governs, and blesses you, and obedience to whose laws constitutes the advancement and the perfection of all your powers, and the peace and felicity of your nature? Whom should you gratefully obey, if not that divine Redeemer, who, in effecting your deliverance from that bondage to sin and death to which our fallen race is subjected, and your exaltation to immortal glories, passed through those raging floods of trouble which finally overwhelmed him in the bitterness of death? To whom should you be devoted, if not to that divine Sanctifier, whose light illumines the darkness of human reason, and whose power induces on the depraved soul the celestial virtues of a new nature? To the Godhead, the three eternal and incomprehensible Persons that subsist in Jehovah, the one living and true God—thus your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier—you were consecrated in your baptism; and if you refuse to acknowledge the consecration, to renew the vows to which it pledged you, you cast off your allegiance to the Lord of all beings, the Author of all goodness and felicity; and forfeiting the everlasting blessings of his favour in that heaven of which he made you heirs, you incur, in that place to which his justice would doom you, that wrath which destroys for ever both soul and body.

Not, then, a formal compliance with decent custom—not the heedless imitation of the example of others—but a sense of the obligations of duty and of gratitude that bind you to God, the force of those motives of everlasting happiness and misery that are the awful sanctions of the covenant of your baptism, and a deep conviction that the sal-

vation of your souls is the great business and the highest concern that can engage you--these, the result of serious consideration, and appealing most powerfully to your understandings and your hearts, have, we trust, excited and animated the resolution which you will now profess—"We will serve the Lord."

Let it be also a resolution animated by a *determined intention* to fulfil it.

The nature of the service which this resolution respects—the obedience which you are to render to God, your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, consisting in the renunciation of every sinful indulgence and practice that corrupts the heart and degrades the character, and in the attainment of every virtue that can purify and exalt the soul, and the discharge of every duty that can render holy the life; the momentous object also which is at stake, the salvation of the soul, its happiness or misery in an endless state of existence, and the numerous allurements and temptations which must be resisted and overcome in the great warfare in which you engage—all demand that you enter on it with the most serious resolution. It is essential that the vigorous determination be made to employ all the faculties of your minds and the affections of your hearts, and the efforts of your will, in that work which is alone worthy of this supreme engagedness—the service of the Lord, and the attainment of the bliss of eternity.

To make the vow of allegiance to God, and of obedience to him, without the firm intention of fulfilling it, would be worse than useless—*useless* it would be, for the resolve would pass away al-

most with the unmeaning breath that uttered it, the divine and spiritual objects at which it aimed would be forgotten, and no efforts would be aroused in a service the performance of which was never designed but with superficial intentions, soon dissipated by the allurements of the world: and *worse* than useless would be the resolve of devotion to God, that is not animated by the firm and vigorous determination to fulfil it; for he is a God who, as he cannot be deceived, will not be mocked with any vows but those which, coming from the heart, engage all its intentions, its desires, and determinations in the holy performance of them.

Be it, then, your earnest intention, your firm determination to fulfil the vows of Christian duty which you now make. Why should you hesitate? Your reason, your conscience acknowledge the obligation of these engagements, their indispensable necessity to your real happiness in this life, and your escape from the awful wo threatened to the disobedient, and your possession of the unspeakable felicity promised to the righteous in the endless existence on which you must enter. Through God strengthening you, you can perform what is thus your highest duty and interest. Determine, resolutely determine to do so—"We *will* serve the Lord."

Let this be the resolution of *unreserved devotion*.

Within the wide scope of this resolution are to be embraced all the engagements of the Christian covenant, in their largest extent and their most rigorous meaning—every doctrine which is to be believed, every sin which is to be renounced, every temptation which is to be resisted, every precept

which is to be obeyed. The infinitely perfect and almighty Being whom you promise to serve, would be insulted by the offer of a heart whose affections are imperfectly devoted to him, or of a life divided in its homage and obedience between him and the world. His demand is—"Give me thy heart." Reasonable and just demand; for, the infinite source of perfection, he is worthy of our supreme devotion; and, the Author of all our enjoyments, it is just in him to demand it. It is the declaration of the eternal Son of God, of him who is finally to decide our eternal doom—"No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." It is his injunction, through an inspired apostle—"Love not the world, nor the things of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Do not mistake him; we do not absurdly put that literal construction upon these precepts which would render them hostile to the indulgence of those relative and social affections which, the dictates of nature, and sanctioned and enjoined by reason and religion, are the ornament, the solace, and the happiness of man; or to forego those worldly pursuits which are not more necessary to the support of life, than to individual and social improvement and happiness; or to relinquish those worldly pleasures which, not corrupting in their nature, may be the source of innocent enjoyment, as they often are of salutary relaxation from the duties and the cares that burden and perplex us. But still we must not *serve* the world; *it* must not become our *master*; *we* must not become its *slaves*; we must not be *engrossed* by any of its pursuits, or absorbed in any of its pleasures. God must be supreme in his dominion over our hearts,

and in the obedience which he claims through the whole course of our lives. When, then, the resolution is made to serve him, let the affections of reverence, of gratitude, and of love be supremely directed to him, the greatest and the best of Beings, the source of all good, the Author of all your mercies in time, of all your hopes for eternity. Let every sin be renounced, as offensive to his holy nature—every temptation resisted, which would seduce you from your allegiance to him—and every indulgence relinquished, which would draw your thoughts and affections from the love and the pursuit of the satisfying favour of your God. In the ways of his laws, whatever duties they may enjoin—in the works of his commandments, whatever sacrifices they may exact—unreservedly resolve to follow. All the truths of his Gospel, which constitute it the power of God unto salvation, glad tidings to the sinful and the guilty, embrace and cherish with the highest powers of your understanding and the liveliest feelings of your heart. “We will serve the *Lord*.”

Let this be the resolution of *sincere penitence*.

The solemn declaration exempts from its condemning denunciation no age, as it does no character or condition—“There is no man that liveth and sinneth not.” The fallen and corrupt nature which we inherit, becomes our fault, our crime, as well as our misfortune, when we cherish its sinful dictates, and yield to its unholy impulses. It is true, (for God is just as well as holy,) we shall be judged only for the deeds done in the body—for the things which *we* have *done*, whether they be good or evil. But, alas! we have all done the things which we

ought not to have done, and left undone the things which we ought to have done. Even you, my young friends, who, through the good providence of God, and his grace blessing your own resolutions and endeavours, may have escaped, in a good degree, the pollution which is in the world, and may not have been seduced into its corrupting pursuits and pleasures, nor led to any habitual and flagrant violations of the laws of your God—even you, inquiring of that honest witness, conscience, and holding the faithful mirror of truth to the course of your past lives, will perceive, will feel, and will acknowledge that some things you have done which you ought not to have done—alas! that many, many things you have left undone which you ought to have done. Unhallowed thoughts have been sometimes indulged, unlawful desires sometimes cherished, words sometimes uttered, and actions sometimes committed contrary to God's laws: and O how far have the most innocent and virtuous among you fallen short of that supreme love, homage, gratitude, and holy obedience by which we are bound to the Lord of all things, the God who made, the Saviour who redeemed, the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us for heaven! Comparing what you owe to your Almighty Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, with what you have rendered to him, you must be deeply penetrated with the conviction of how greatly, in reference to these sins of *omission* alone, you have offended, and how much you have to be forgiven. Let, then, the deep exercises of penitence for the violations of that Christian covenant, whose duties, the original law of your nature, were imposed on you in baptism, mark now the renewed and per-

sonal assumption of them ; let the sober, but the lively sorrow that penetrates your hearts, urge to the humble confession to your heavenly Father of the sins which you lament, and to earnest supplications for pardon, through the merits of him in whom your offended God is well pleased ; and let the sorrow of the heart, the confession and supplication of the lips, be accompanied by the only and the infallible evidence of their sincerity, and the only pledge that the confession will be accepted, and the supplication answered and blessed, earnest desires and endeavours hereafter to avoid the things that are contrary to the Christian profession which you assume, and to follow after those things that are agreeable to its holy requisitions, and pleasing to that almighty Being to whom you devote yourselves. Under the strong and lively impression of these exercises of penitence, let the resolution be now offered—" We will *serve* the Lord."

But let this be the resolution also of *deep humility*.

Not a humility which represses the exertion of your own powers, and rests inactive, in the presumptuous opinion that we are to be sanctified and saved by the overpowering energy of almighty grace, independently of our own most zealous and persevering endeavours. This opinion, the refuge of careless indolence, of sinful supineness, or of presumptuous error, would utterly subvert the character of man as a moral agent, and render him no longer a fit subject of rewards or punishments ; it is not more contrary to the constitution of human nature, to all its principles and all its

feelings, than it is to the whole tenour of those sacred writings, which, in almost every page, utter or enforce the injunction—"Work out your salvation." But the humility with which we should engage in this momentous concern, recognises also most entirely the force of the declaration—"It is God who worketh in you." It feels the value of this animating promise in the conviction, that "without God we can do nothing." As *creatures*, we can do nothing without his sustaining and co-operating power; as *sinner*s, we can do nothing without his quickening and sanctifying grace. The conviction is the result not only of those numerous declarations of Scripture which avouch the truth, not only of the view of our relation as creatures to that Creator whose power alone upholds their intellectual and moral faculties, but of the consciousness of our own hearts, and the experience of our own lives—alas! these force on us the humiliating and lamentable fact. Our own hearts testify the strength of the passions that have hurried us to sin, or proved invincible by our own resolves, and the waywardness of our own thoughts and desires, which no efforts of our own minds could restrain. The course of our lives affords mortifying proof how little human sagacity can guard against temptation, and how weak the barriers which human strength can oppose to its assaults. It is not in man to direct his ways; it is not in a blind and erring creature to guide his footsteps; it is not in the captive to sin to break his chains; it is not in the slave of corrupt passions to say to the tempests that sweep over his soul, 'Be still.' Thou alone, Almighty God, canst direct our goings and lead our footsteps: thou alone, by the power of thy

Spirit, canst release the spiritual captive, and by the word of thy grace calm the tumults of the guilty soul.

It is this humbling conviction, my young friends, that your sufficiency is not of yourselves, which should at all times impress your hearts, and which should most deeply influence them, when you solemnly and publicly profess the resolution to "serve the Lord."

With this deep feeling of humility let there be united that of *entire dependence*.

Let the sense of your own weakness and inability lead you to a cordial reliance on the all-sufficient grace of the Spirit of God. Invisible and incomprehensible, but most powerful are its operations, enlightening the understanding, rectifying the will, purifying the affections; exciting penitence, establishing faith, animating hope, kindling divine charity; quickening the supine, confirming the doubtful, cheering the sorrowful, strengthening the weak, sanctifying the unholy, adorning the faithful people of God with every grace, and making them fruitful in every good word and work, and conquerors over every temptation; shedding abroad in their hearts, through the testimony of a good conscience, the love of God, a sense of the divine favour, and thus affording an antepast of the celestial joys to which he is conducting them. What can erring, and sinful, and tempted creatures need, which they will not find in the abundant, all-sufficient, and effectual grace of the Spirit of God? Let its sacred influences be sought in humble prayer to him who gives to those who ask him, in the ministrations and ordinances of that

mystical body of Christ for which this Spirit was especially purchased, and which it most powerfully animates. Let this Spirit be thus implored with humility, with earnestness, with perseverance, with an honest determination, a faithful endeavour to cherish and improve its hallowed suggestions, impulses, and aids; and in the victories over sin and temptation which it will achieve, in the graces which it will establish in the soul, in the sanctity with which it will invest the whole man, in the uniform and elevated piety and virtue which it will abundantly produce, in the new creation from sin to righteousness which it will effect, there will be full evidence, evidence which the incredulous cannot doubt, nor the gainsaying resist, that "God's grace is indeed all-sufficient," and that his strength can be made perfect in the weakness of nature.

Impressed, then, with the conviction of the utter inability of unassisted reason and unaided human strength in the great work of your salvation, in making you new creatures in Christ Jesus, let your entire dependence be placed on that Holy Spirit by which you are to be renewed and sanctified, and enabled to fulfil the obligations of your Christian covenant. In earnest invocations for his holy influences, let the resolution be offered which he has excited, and which he only can give the strength to perform—"We will serve the Lord."

Let this be the resolution of lively *faith*—

Of faith in all the articles of Christian doctrine to which you are pledged, but especially of that which is the great foundation of your hopes as sinners, that "God the Son hath redeemed you;" that he has made that great atonement whereby

you are released from the penalties of the violated law of God, and placed in a state in which you may obtain everlasting life. Let this truth, that, through the merits of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, those sins are pardoned for which no efforts of your own could atone, and those imperfect services which his grace alone enables you to render, accepted and rewarded with the bliss of heaven, not to be merited by any human services, be the subject of your most lively and grateful contemplation at this time, when this pardon is to be assured, in the ordinance which they receive, to those who in humble penitence pledge themselves to those services. You come now to the living God; you come solemnly to promise to serve him, him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, who is a great God and terrible; in the language of the leader of Israel, testing the sincerity of the vows of the people, "he is a holy God, he is a jealous God, he will not pardon your transgressions and your sins." Ah! this is the alarming, this is the discouraging language with which we would seek to repress resolutions of obedience to the High and Holy One, made only in your own strength, trusting for acceptance to your own merits. But no, my young friends, you will not thus approach unto the most high God. Your own righteousness—alas! it is but imperfect, imperfect in motive, in extent, in degree—what can it do, were it perfect as that of the cherubim, towards cancelling the penalty due to the least transgression which you may have committed, or towards meriting those rewards of glory which, infinite in degree and eternal in duration, transcend the most exalted virtues of a finite creature? Your own strength—

alas! what can it do, when weak reason misleads, when violent passions impel, when powerful temptations rush upon you? No; you come with the same affecting expressions of humility and trust with which, in another ordinance, I hope you will one day appear before the Lord—"Our trust is not in our own righteousness, O God, but in thy manifold and great mercies in Jesus Christ, thy Son." You come not trusting in your own *strength*, but adopting, from the heart, the sentiment which the servant of the Most High utters for you and for himself—"Our help is in the name of the Lord." No consciousness of imperfection, no sense of unworthiness, no view of the divine majesty, holiness, and justice, while you come unto God through this new and living way which he hath appointed, even faith in his Son Jesus Christ, should deter you from the devotion of yourselves to him in the resolution, "We will serve the Lord."

And the resolution may then be made under the animating influences of a lively *hope*.

Your trust staid upon your God—your reliance on the merits of your Saviour—your confidence on his grace—the resolution made, with infirmity indeed, but *seriously, firmly, unreservedly, humbly, contritely*, to serve the Lord—how animating the prospect before you! The favour and gracious goodness of your God, that favour which is life, that goodness which is better than life, are assured to you. The Holy Spirit will ever be with you, to guide, to sanctify, to console you. The hand of your heavenly Father will ever be over you, to protect and to bless you. And if, led in the knowledge and obedience of his Word, daily increasing

in his Holy Spirit more and more, you continue his obedient children in this life, you will continue his *for ever*. The ages of eternity, in their ceaseless revolutions, will bring with them to you accessions of felicity; this felicity, in its feeblest lustre, lowest degree, eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor can the heart of man conceive it. In that intensesness and that fulness to which, by continual progress, it will be exalted through the endless series of ages—ah! the renewed powers of a celestial nature can alone enable us to realize it, the enlarged capacities of a celestial nature alone enable us to enjoy it.

You who now propose, in your sincere devotion to God, to secure your title to these privileges, what an animating prospect for you! Brethren, what an animating prospect to us all! Would that I could say so! But, alas! there are some here who will witness a resolution made, which they never made, which they do not design to make, or have made only to neglect and violate. But why thus decline to make the resolution of devotion to the service of their God? or, if made, why should they neglect or violate it? The service of the Lord, to which reason and religion call them, is a reasonable service; for it is in all respects congenial with the dictates of reason—it is perfect freedom, freedom from guilty fears, from turbulent passions, from lusts that war against and degrade the soul. Great peace have they who are engaged in it—peace, from the assurance of the divine favour here, from the hope of the fruition of the divine presence hereafter. *They* fear not the changes of *time*; for they have the promise of him who rules all the events of time, that all things

shall work together for their good. *They* fear not the events of *eternity*; for *there* is laid up for them a crown of glory. *Eternity they* indeed have cause to fear, who here make no preparation for it in the humble and faithful service of their God; and on that eternity, banish the thoughts of it as we may, we *must* enter. Let that service, then, which alone can prepare us for it, be the choice of us all. Let the resolution be now offered seriously, firmly, unreservedly, in penitence, in humility, in dependence, in faith, in hope, in that hope in God and in the glories he has promised that will never fail; let the resolution be made not only by the young and interesting flock who are specially called to make it, but by all; so that from this assembly, as from the congregated tribes of Israel, the voice of holy resolution may ascend to the throne of heaven—"We will serve the Lord." Hear it, merciful Father; accept it, gracious Lord; bless it, O our God, bless it with thy favour and grace, with the fulness of thy glory.

SERMON X.

FOR THE HOLY COMMUNION.

LUKE xxii. 19.

This do in remembrance of me.

My brethren, the festival is approaching, at which the faithful are called to celebrate, in the holy supper, the glad tidings of redemption through a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

The church also has been witnessing a joyful spectacle; she has beheld her young members cherishing with pious fervour those baptismal vows which consecrated them to the service of the Lord, and with holy resolution renewing these vows in the ordinance of confirmation. She feels a lively solicitude that they may complete their Christian character, that they may secure their title to their Christian privileges, by complying with the injunction of their Lord and Master—"Do this in remembrance of me."

How many, who have become members of Christ's fold in baptism, and have had their baptismal privileges confirmed to them in the imposition of hands, stop here, as if they had fulfilled their Christian obligations; unmindful of that injunction of their Lord and Master, which calls them to partake of the communion of his body and blood—"Do this in remembrance of me."

Let me then earnestly impress on those who have hitherto failed to comply with this injunction, the considerations that should urge them to the performance of it.

1. To the participation of the holy sacrament of the Lord's supper we are urged by the authority of a divine command.

As our Creator, Sovereign, Benefactor, Redeemer, and Judge, almighty, just, holy, and good, God possesses every possible claim to our obedience; it is our duty to receive and to revere every institution which has the sanction of his authority. Shall we reply against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou prescribed this? Is it not presumption even to doubt the propriety or utility of those institutions which are enforced by the authority of that Being whose will is the law and the perfection of the moral universe? The holy sacrament of the supper claims our reception, by the sanction of a divine command. It was instituted by him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, the King of kings and Lord of lords: it is prescribed by him to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth; who will reign until he hath put all things under his feet; and who will finally come with the host of heaven, and with the power and majesty of the Eternal, to take vengeance on his adversaries. It cannot be a light thing to neglect an institution enforced by his command—to contemn an ordinance enjoined by the authority of the Son of the Highest.

It is an error to regard the sacrament of the Lord's supper merely as a rite instituted by the church to instruct and edify her members. It claims

a higher origin, and is enforced by more powerful sanctions. It is enjoined, in the most explicit and urgent manner, by him who once came to visit us in great humility; but at whose tribunal, in his glorious character as the Judge of the world, we must finally appear to answer for our conduct, and to receive our eternal doom. Our reception of it cannot, then, be a matter of indifference. We are solemnly called to participate of it by the *command* of our Maker, our Redeemer, our Benefactor, our Sovereign, and our Judge.

2. To the participation of the Lord's supper we are also urged by the claims of *gratitude*.

He, in remembrance of whom this rite is to be celebrated, is the Son of God, who, enjoying the unspeakable glory of the Godhead, descended to this world of error, of sin, and of sorrow, to enlighten and console us in our passage to that heavenly kingdom which he hath opened to us. The holy communion is to be received in remembrance of him who hath unfolded to us the perfections of God the Father; who hath delineated those graces and virtues that prepare us for the happiness of heaven; who hath opened to us a way of access to the throne of our offended Judge; who, by his obedience, by his sufferings, by his precious blood shed upon the cross, and by his rising again, hath accomplished our redemption from the bondage of sin and death, and made us heirs of immortality. In this ordinance we are called to commemorate him who is our Instructor in truth and virtue, our Saviour from everlasting wo, and our Guide through the doubts and sorrows of life to eternal blessedness and glory. More endearing relations cannot

claim our gratitude; more exalted blessings we cannot commemorate.

3. A regard to our *spiritual welfare and happiness* urges what the authority of a divine command and the claims of gratitude enforce.

This rite, instituted by our Lord, as an affecting memorial of his sufferings and death for our redemption, is the mean and pledge to those who worthily receive it, of the mercy, the grace, and the favour of their Redeemer and God. When they partake, in repentance and faith, of the symbols of his body and blood, they partake of all those spiritual blessings which, by the offering of his body and blood, he purchased for them. The holy rite in which this body and blood is spiritually received, conveys to the humble and contrite the pardon of their sins; it is the mean by which, when assailed by the enemies of our salvation—the lusts of the flesh, the temptations of the world, and the wiles of the great adversary—we obtain strength to resist and to overcome them. In this pledge of the favour and compassion of our God, when oppressed by the sorrows of the world, we receive those consolations which the world cannot give nor take away; and in this pledge of life eternal we obtain strength to combat our last enemy—to despoil death of his sting, and the grave of his victory—and, through the darkness of the tomb, to pass to the inheritance of glory.

These are the blessings of which this sacrament is the mean and pledge to those who in true penitence and faith receive it. Christians, a regard, then, to your spiritual and immortal welfare unites with the authority of a divine command, and with

the claims of gratitude, to urge your participation of the supper of your Lord.

Have we no sins which need forgiveness? In the midst of the difficulties and temptations of the world, shall we reject the guidance and assistance of our heavenly Father, and refuse those consolations which, in the night of adversity and in the hour of death, can be our only refuge? Shall we reject the aid of that great Captain of our salvation who hath vanquished death and hell, and, destitute of all support, enter on the dark valley of death? Shall we contemn those infinite merits of our Saviour, which, in the day of judgment, will be our only shield from the terrors of divine justice? Surely, brethren, we are not prepared for all this. Let us then come to the supper of our Lord, lest all this guilt be incurred by us, when the authority of a divine command, the claims of gratitude, and a regard to our spiritual and immortal interests, urge us to the devout reception of the holy communion of the body and blood of our Saviour.

There are other considerations, however, connected with our personal character and example, of no small importance.

4. To the duty of receiving the holy communion we are urged by a regard to consistency of conduct, as professing Christians.

We profess to believe in the divinity of the mission of the gracious Author of our religion, and to receive him as a Teacher sent from God—we profess to acknowledge him as the way, the truth, and the life, and to derive from the instructions of his Gospel the knowledge which we possess of our

spiritual character, of the perfections of God, of the rules, the aids, and the rewards of piety and virtue—we profess to rest on the merits of his sufferings and death, and on the efficacy of his intercession, all our hopes for time and for eternity—and yet we neglect the distinguishing rite of his holy religion—a rite enjoined by him, as the memorial of his inconceivable sufferings for us, and as the mean and pledge of the exalted blessings which he bestows. How can we answer to the world—it is a more important inquiry, how can we answer to our consciences and to God for this inconsistency of conduct ?

5. The obligation to support religion by our example, also enforces the duty of coming to the Lord's table.

It is religion alone which can impose effectual restraints upon the passions of men, and exert a purifying influence on their morals. How important then is the duty, merely from our character as good members of society, to give to religion, at all times, the support of our example ! But we withhold this support, when we neglect its most important and distinguishing institution—an institution, the devout reception of which alone can entitle us to the privileges of a Christian. If, then, we wish to give to that religion which is the only basis of the present and future welfare of man, the support of our example ; if we wish to avert the reproaches of our Lord himself, that by our neglect of his holy institution we have not only destroyed our own souls, but, thus sanctioning, by our example, the neglect of others, contributed to their destruction—we shall not fail devoutly to partici-

pate of the holy communion, and thus evince to the world that we are real and consistent believers in the Gospel of Christ, and letting our light shine; and thus shall we avoid the tremendous guilt of contributing, by our evil example, to the perdition of others.

“Do this in remembrance of me.”

What pleas can we offer for the neglect of a duty to which we are urged by so many powerful considerations?

Do we plead the danger of receiving unworthily? Reflect, my brethren, on the inconsistency of this plea. We are afraid of receiving the Lord's supper unworthily, but we think lightly of the guilt which we incur, and of the punishment to which we expose ourselves, by our neglect of an institution enforced by a divine command. These apprehensions of unworthy receiving are sometimes founded on a misinterpretation of the text of the apostle, when he declares, that “he who eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.” The word translated *damnation*, does not mean eternal perdition, but temporal judgments; and these were inflicted upon the Corinthians for a sin, of which no Christian in the present day, it is to be supposed, will be guilty—the not distinguishing between the elements of the Lord's supper and their common food—the not “discerning the Lord's body,” and feasting at this holy rite in a riotous and tumultuous manner. “For this cause,” says the apostle, in his remonstrance with them, “many are sick among you, and many faint.”

But this plea of unworthiness, if well founded, which separates us from the Lord's supper, will also

separate us from the favour of God and from the hopes of heaven. The qualifications for this holy ordinance are the indispensable qualifications for future blessedness. This holy ordinance is indeed designed to excite and cherish in our souls those virtues and graces which will qualify us for eternal joys. If, then, my brethren, we are not fit to come to the Lord's table, are we fit for heaven? And if we are not fit for heaven, where will be our eternal abode? Alas! shut out from the heavenly feast, our portion must be in outer darkness, where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. In preparing then for the Lord's supper, we prepare for heaven. If we are unworthy to join with our brethren in the banquet of that most heavenly food in the church on earth, can we be fit to join with them in celebrating the everlasting festival of love? "Repent ye truly for your past sins; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ; amend your lives, and be in charity with all men: so shall ye be meet partakers of these holy mysteries." And then alone can you enjoy, what it should be the business of your whole life to secure, a title to the everlasting favour of your God.

Do we plead, in extenuation of our neglect of the Lord's supper, that the business, the cares, and the pleasures of the world now engross us?

But, shall the business, the cares, and the pleasures of the world prevent us from attending to the care of our souls, from advancing the present and everlasting perfection of our natures? Shall worldly pursuits prevent us from obeying an injunction enforced by divine authority, by the highest claims of gratitude and interest, by every consideration that can affect our present or our immortal

character and destiny? Brethren, this excuse will not bear the test of sober reflection; it will not bear the test of our own conscience; it will not bear the test of that tribunal at which we shall receive our final doom. "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Do we plead, in justification of present neglect, our intention to perform, at some future period, an indispensable duty?

But is it wise to postpone an indispensable duty, when delay increases the guilt of disobedience and the difficulty of the performance, as well as our indisposition to it, and our indifference in the neglect of it? Ah! this plea may continue to delude us, until we are summoned to the bar of God.

Brethren, let us dismiss every vain and criminal excuse, and prepare for obeying, with true penitence, faith, and devotion, the affectionate injunction of our Lord and Master—"Do this in remembrance of me."

You who, in the ordinance of confirmation, renewed your vows of obedience to your Maker and your Benefactor, to him who bought you with his blood, let me impress upon you, that, laudable as has been this display of pious zeal, it will be ineffectual, unless you go on unto perfection. You must perform the full measure of Christian submission. You must obey the injunction of your Lord, by participating of the memorials of his body and blood. This devout participation alone will preserve in your hearts the sentiments of piety; and this alone will secure to you that heavenly guidance and grace which are necessary to lead you through the temptations of the world. Oh,

then, disappoint not the hopes of your friends, of your parents, who cherish the pious wish of beholding in you a seed to serve their God, when their heads are laid in the dust. Disappoint not the hopes of your ministers, who, looking forward to the day when they must render an account of their stewardship, desire earnestly to present you before their Lord and Master, and say, 'Behold us, and the children whom thou hast given us.' Disappoint not the hopes of the church, who longs to behold in you those who shall for ever tread her sacred courts in her triumphant state in heaven, and join in the jubilee of adoration and praise. Forsake not the service of him whose service is perfect freedom; forsake not those ways of religion where are pleasantness and peace. Remember the doom of apostate Christians; it were better for them never to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them; there remaineth for them only a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.

Ye, then, whose youthful or whose mature years are passing in neglect of the fundamental duty of your Christian profession, reflect on the guilt and danger of contemning that ordinance which is the memorial of the love and the pledge of the mercy of the Author and Finisher of your redemption. Resolve to discharge, without delay, a duty to which every consideration urges that can affect you as rational and immortal beings. Be persuaded no longer to live in disobedience to the injunction of your Lord, and in indifference to the concerns of your salvation; return to your God, and resolve, through his grace, to devote

yourselves to his service. In the holy supper commemorate the love of him through whose intercession alone you can be saved—who alone can conduct you through the changes of this mortal state, and lead you in peace and safety through the valley of death to the mansions of eternal rest.

Christians, disciples of a crucified Redeemer, show forth the loving-kindness of the Lord who bought you; humble, penitent, and grateful, celebrate the praises of him who loved you even unto death; and on that holy festival when you commemorate his rising again for your justification, receive by faith the memorials of his mercy, and your souls and bodies shall be nourished and strengthened unto everlasting life.

Many persons, and particularly the young, regard the supper of the Lord with so much awe, that they are fearful of approaching it. But whatever solemnity there may be in the ordinances of religion, this solemnity was designed to repress a rash, not to discourage a sincere reception of them. There is no act of religion which is not solemn and awful. It is an awful and solemn act to come into the presence of a holy and just God, who fills heaven with his glory, and to worship before him. It is an awful and solemn act to take upon us, in the presence of this holy and just Being, our vows of devotion to him. It is an awful and solemn act to come to the Lord's table and spiritually to participate of the body and blood of our divine Lord. But the solemnity of these acts cannot lessen their obligation, and ought not therefore to discourage the performance of them. Does the solemnity of public worship deter you from the courts of God's house? Did the awful solemnity of the public consecration

of yourselves to God in the ordinance of confirmation, prevent you from discharging this great duty? Solemn as may be the renewed surrender of yourselves to your God and Saviour, sealed by the memorials of his body and his blood, it is his command, it is your duty, and ought to be performed.

God graciously invites us to his table, and holds forth all those promises of mercy and of grace that are calculated to encourage and animate us. He appears there as our reconciled God and Father in Jesus Christ, offering us those memorials of his love, and pledges of his grace, that are calculated to call forth all our pious affections, and to nourish and strengthen our frail and sinful nature to everlasting life. He presents himself there as our Saviour, who bought, with no less a price than his own blood, our redemption from sin and death, and our title to immortal glory. He asks a return for this infinite love; he calls upon us to celebrate it in the supper which he instituted. He makes it our interest, our eternal interest, to render this return; for he offers to seal and to assure to us, in his holy supper, our pardon, our adoption into his family, our title to his grace and favour, to the inheritance of glory. Is it possible that a tribute can be denied to him, urged by the united impulses of duty, of gratitude, and of interest?

Are the qualifications for this holy ordinance too serious and rigorous? It is a mistake, a great mistake, to consider these qualifications as different from those which made you worthy recipients of the laying on of hands. This ordinance you received, or ought to have received, in penitence, in faith in God's mercy, in resolutions of a new and holy life. And what but penitence, faith, and re-

solutions of a new and holy life, are the qualifications for the Lord's supper? What says the church, in the exhortation at the celebration of the communion—"Repent ye truly for your sins past; have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men; and, above all, give most humble and hearty thanks to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ." These are the dispositions and resolutions required of those who come to the Lord's table. And were not these in effect the dispositions and resolutions with which you were exhorted to receive the laying on of hands? If you were not deterred from the one ordinance on account of the holy qualifications necessary, there can be no reason for your withdrawing from the other—from an ordinance which, while it does not insist on greater qualifications, admits to greater privileges, even to a spiritual participation of that body and blood offered and shed for our redemption, and the powerful pledge to us of pardon and of life.

What was the act which you performed in confirmation? A solemn renewal of your baptismal vows—a devotion of yourselves to the service of God. And what is the act required of you in the Lord's supper? "We offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee." You have made this surrender of yourselves to God in the laying on of hands; the renewal of it is all that is required of you at the holy table. You were not too young to devote yourselves to your God and Saviour in the one ordinance, you

cannot be too young to devote yourselves to him in the other. Ah! why should the youthful heart, that most acceptable offering to God, be withheld from him? Why should the youthful heart, glowing with all the lively sensibilities of our nature, be withheld from that God and Saviour who alone can save it and make it happy? Why should it be left to that world which can never confer on it felicity—which will infallibly corrupt it, and make it miserable—miserable here and hereafter?

Christian parents, desire no greater blessing for your children than to see them sincere and humble guests at that holy table, where their Lord appears, to refresh them by his mercy, to sanctify them by his grace, to preserve them to everlasting life.

Young disciples of this gracious Master, you are already consecrated to his service; cast not away the badges of your devotion to him—the symbols of his body and blood. You have once confessed him before men; renounce him not, when he requires, as the test of your devotion, your participation of the memorials of his love, and the pledges of your redemption. What will the whole world profit you, if you lose your souls? Make it your supreme object to save them; and for this purpose come with penitence, with faith, with resolutions of a new and holy life, to your God and Saviour, at his table. He will pardon, bless, and protect you; and if you will not tear yourselves from him, he will be your guide unto death, your refuge and portion for ever and ever.

SERMON XI.

FOR THE HOLY COMMUNION.

PSALM cxvi. 18, 19.

I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord's house.

UTTERED by a pious Israelite, this declaration was a resolution to celebrate, in the ordinances of the temple, the goodness of God, and to perform his vows of love and duty.

For Christians is appointed, in the supper of the Lord, an ordinance, in which they are enjoined, by solemn memorials, to celebrate the infinite mercies of God displayed in the redemption by his Son Jesus Christ; and to perform their vows of love and duty, by offering themselves, their souls and bodies, a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice to the Lord God of their salvation.

The resolution of the devout Israelite will, we trust, be that of persons of different descriptions at the ensuing festival, when we shall see them paying their vows to their God and Saviour in the courts of this his holy temple, and in the most solemn ordinance to which it is appropriated.

“ I will pay my vows unto the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord's house.”

Let us hope that this, expressive of a resolution to participate of the Lord's supper, will be the

resolution of those who have hitherto lived a life of sin.

If they would but consider their weighty obligations to that Being whom, as their Creator, they are bound to adore and serve—as their Sovereign, to obey—as their Benefactor, to love—as their Judge, to fear, they would feel and acknowledge how great is their criminality in their present course of rebellion against him; and the consciousness of their guilt, and the apprehension of the wrath that awaits them in that future world in which they are to account for their conduct in the present, should be increased by the reflection that, in despising and neglecting the salvation of the Gospel, they are trampling under foot the Son of God, doing despite to his Spirit, and counting the blood of his covenant an unholy thing. Oh! how thankful should they be, that the Almighty Sovereign whom they have contemned and offended, hath not cut them off in the midst of their iniquities! For then—it is the denunciation of his justice, and his truth and his power will assuredly execute it—their portion would have been with the ungodly, in that place where the smoke of torment ascends for ever and ever—where the weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth never cease—where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Ye who live a life of sin—and all live a life of sin, but those who, transformed by the renewing of their mind, delight in the service of God, in the exercise of holy love to him, studying supremely to keep his ordinances and obey his laws—ye who live a life of sin, the gracious Being whom you have offended, God, your Creator, Sovereign, Benefactor, Judge, is not yet provoked to seal up his mer-

cies in displeasure. In that holy supper which proclaims his infinite love, in the exhibition of the sufferings and death of his only-begotten Son whom he gave for you, he addresses to you, not the stern denunciations of justice, but the persuasive exhortation of mercy—"Why will ye die?" why will ye die, when here, at this altar of salvation, you may enjoy the pledges of eternal life! From that altar issues the voice of infinite love and compassion—"Look unto me and be saved." It is the voice of him who was once crucified for us, and whose death and passion the service of the altar symbolically renews. Yes, sinners, the compassionate Saviour of the world is interceding for you, while you are neglecting and contemning him. He presses on your acceptance the mercy which you reject. He offers you, in the symbols of his body and his blood, pardon for the sins that deserve eternal wrath, and grace to sanctify that corrupt nature which fits you only for the place of wo. Look then unto him in penitence, in faith, in holy resolutions to serve him, and be saved. The remembrance of your sins should be indeed grievous unto you, the burden of them intolerable: but hear the voice that issues from the altar—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." To that altar then go, beseeching the Lamb of God to wash away your sins in his most precious blood, and imploring the Spirit of grace to renew and change your souls, and there perform those vows of love and of duty which you owe to your compassionate and forbearing Saviour and God.

The same course we would earnestly press on those who, though they profess the Christian name, and have assumed the Christian obligations, yet

most inconsistently are indifferent to the spirit and duties of their Christian calling, and unconcerned with respect to those interests that should supremely engage them—their immortal interests and hopes. Distinguished, by the regularity of their deportment, from profligate sinners, they display many virtues: justice characterizes their dealings, tenderness and fidelity mark the various relations of life, and sobriety and purity guard them from corrupt indulgences. But these virtues are dictated only, or principally, by natural impulses, or by considerations of personal or social expediency: the vital principles which are to animate these virtues, in order to render them acceptable to God, are wanting. A supreme regard to the authority of him, their Almighty Lawgiver, and a lively faith in his Son Jesus Christ, as the only Saviour, are the principles which must control and sanctify every moral virtue; or, so far from being pleasing to God, it has, in reference to this its deficiency, however, in the abstract, it is right and excellent, the nature of sin. These superficial and nominal Christians are defective in a lively view and practical experience of the nature and efficacy of the distinguishing and fundamental truths of the Gospel. Deluded by the idea that mere moral decency and correctness of deportment will satisfy the demands of their merciful Judge, they have never been led to consider the odious nature of sin, nor their unhappy subjection to it; nor, of course, to feel the necessity of that renewing of the mind, that change of heart, that sanctification of the soul, by which the affections are turned from the service of the world to the obedience of God, and every thought and desire is regulated by a

regard to his authority and his laws. Unaffected by the infinite love of God displayed in the redemption, and insensible of their need of their Saviour's merits for their pardon, and of his holy and all-powerful grace for their guidance and sanctification, and unmindful of the supreme obedience which they owe to their Almighty Sovereign, they regard with indifference the Lord's supper enjoined by divine authority, in which this love is commemorated, and those merits and this grace applied and conveyed. But ought persons who are thus unmindful of their Christian obligations, and insensible to the holy claims of their Christian calling, to remain easy and indifferent, and to feel themselves secure as to their eternal interests? God, their Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Sovereign, and Judge, to whom they are bound by the most varied and the strongest obligations, and who, in the infinite perfections of his character, presents the most powerful claims to their homage and obedience, has commanded them to give him their heart; and will he permit that heart to be principally devoted to the world? He has required them to love him supremely; can they neglect the command without guilt and without punishment? He who seeth the heart, and who judges there the motives and the real characters of men, has enjoined the purification of its corrupt affections, and its subjection to his laws; and will he who cannot be deceived, and who will not be mocked, be satisfied with mere decency of deportment, with honesty and sobriety of life, while the affections are still fixed on the world, and the heart is a stranger to the purifying efficacy of divine grace? He has made the primary condition of salvation, faith in

his Son Jesus Christ, whom he hath set forth as the Saviour of the world; and can it be supposed that he will view without displeasure those who, unaffected by this stupendous display of infinite love, disregard this Saviour, and neglect his infinite merits, his divine grace? This Redeemer, who hath suffered and achieved so much for us, hath enjoined, as the commemoration of his love and the pledge of an interest in his merits, the participation of that holy supper, in which, under simple but appropriate symbols, his sufferings and death are set forth; and can it be supposed that those who profess his name, may with impunity neglect this sacred institution, and violate the earnest and tender injunction of their dying Lord and Master? This Saviour, whose sufferings for us, and whose merits and grace we disregard in the ordinance in which, by affecting symbols, they are displayed, is now our Ruler, and will finally be our Judge. Oh! on that great day when he sits in judgment on the assembled nations, let not the tremendous charge be brought against any of us, that we viewed with indifference those sufferings which made him in an agony sweat drops of blood, and in death cry out as one forsaken by his God; that we have neglected those symbols of his body and blood which, exhibited on the altar, renewed the scene of his labours, of his sorrows, of his love for us, even unto death, and were the pledges of those infinite blessings which his love for us purchased. Yes, the redemption set forth in the symbols of the altar, exhibits truths and blessings calculated in the highest degree to interest our understandings, to warm our affections, and to call forth our most vigorous obedience. God the Father is ex-

hibited as so loving us, miserable sinners, as to give his Son for us; the Son of God is set forth crucified for us; the holy elements, memorials of his love, and symbols of his body and blood, convey to the penitent soul the blessings of pardon, of holiness, of eternal life. In the devout reception of these symbols we shall be certified of the favour and goodness of God, and that we are heirs, through hope, of his everlasting kingdom. Let not transitory and imperfect pleasures engross us, when these exalted and eternal blessings are proffered to us; let us no longer act inconsistently with our profession, unmindful of its holy injunctions, insensible to its affecting claims. In this state of indifference and neglect of our God and Saviour, we have cause for gratitude that he has not summoned us to that dread account for which we are thus unprepared, and which would terminate in our condemnation for ever. The symbols, and pledges, and means of salvation, in the elements of that holy supper which we have hitherto treated with indifference and neglect, are still offered to us; and the Saviour whose infinite love we have disregarded, still beseeches us, through the merits of his blood, to be reconciled unto God. In the lively emotions of penitence, in a deep sense of our need of his merits for the pardon of our transgressions, and of his grace for the purification of our souls, let us resolve to go to the altar, and pouring forth our thanks for that mercy which hath spared us, notwithstanding our insensibility and ingratitude, that infinite love which still extends to us the blessings of pardon and of life, surrender ourselves, our souls and bodies, a living sacrifice to our God. These precious symbols of divine

mercy and love will seal our pardon—will convey to us peace and joy—a peace which the world cannot give nor take away, and a joy which, arising from a sense of the favour and love of the greatest and best of Beings, will be perfected in his presence, with whom is the fulness of felicity, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

But there is another class of persons, who, though prepared, by their general disposition and habits, for partaking of the Lord's supper, have hitherto abstained from it.

Their neglect does not arise from indifference to this holy ordinance, and to the obligation of receiving it; nor from insensibility to its affecting nature, as a memorial of the love of their Saviour; nor to the important blessings which it conveys. Theirs is the neglect of timidity, not of indifference or scorn. They are deeply impressed with the sense of the importance of securing the salvation of their soul; it is their strong and earnest desire to obtain the mercy and favour of God; they feel that, as sinners, they have need of the merits and grace of a Saviour; they acknowledge the necessity of a change in their corrupt affections, and of a new and holy life, both as an evidence of love to God and of fitness for his holy presence in heaven. In a good degree they act consistently with these impressions and feelings, by studying to live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world. But they do not become guests at the table of the Lord; they separate from their brethren who come to feed on the banquet of that heavenly food. In their view, it is surrounded by a fearful and holy majesty, which intimidates them, and keeps them from

approaching it. And yet they are the very persons who should be attracted by the infinite mercy and grace which this holy memorial of their Saviour's love displays. They who, while they are studious to serve and to please God, are conscious that in many things they offend; they who, while they earnestly seek his mercy and favour, are depressed by a sense of their great unworthiness; they who, while they cherish the sentiments of love and gratitude to the Redeemer who died for them, are yet fearful that they are not worthy to celebrate his love at his holy table—are the very individuals who are prepared for making the celebration, and for receiving the means and pledges of salvation. It is to allay the fears, to quicken the graces, to fill with peace and joy the hearts of the sincere, the humble, the penitent, that this ordinance is designed. At his holy table Jesus Christ appears, not the severe master, exacting to the uttermost the service which is his due; not the rigid judge, punishing with inflexible justice every aberration from duty; but the tender and compassionate Saviour, pardoning the frailties, pitying the weaknesses, cherishing the lowly virtues of those who come to him as their refuge and salvation. Humble Christians, dismiss those fears that keep you from the table of your Lord. While you neglect what your judgment and your conscience assure you is your duty, you ought not to be at ease, for your eternal interests are not at stake. While you separate from your brethren who come to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food, you lose the divine nourishment and consolation which it conveys. The desires of the heart your Saviour knows, and will accept. These are fixed on him. Perform

then your vows of love and duty to him in the ordinance of his own appointment, and you will be nourished and strengthened to everlasting life.

To those who are customary attendants at the Lord's table, we address the exhortation: Take care that your attendance there be not merely the result of habit; let it be dictated by the powerful sentiments of duty, of gratitude, and of love to your God and Saviour. When you present yourselves before him, and become guests at his table, let all your Christian virtues be in lively exercise. While you examine yourselves more or less minutely as circumstances admit, and resolve to resist those temptations to which you may have in some degree yielded, those sins to which you feel you are most liable, and to cherish those Christian dispositions and duties in which you are most deficient, always bear in mind that your strength in this arduous work must be from on high, and that you must come to the Lord's table as sinners, whose trust is not in your own righteousness, but in God's manifold and great mercies and grace. Let your faith be steadily fixed on the great atonement made by the offering of the body and blood which are set forth at the holy table. When you receive the memorials of the love and mercy of him who died for his enemies, sacrifice on his altar all your wrathful passions. When you commemorate the love of him who died for you, return this love by the only tribute in your power—the oblation of yourselves to his service. And realizing the inestimable blessings of pardon, of grace, and of life, which your Saviour, by the death and passion which you commemorate, hath procured for you, gratefully and joyfully participate of the sym-

bols by which these blessings are conveyed and assured.

The invitation to come to this heavenly feast, to the Lord's supper, the distinguishing mark and privilege of Christians, we address to persons of all ages.

The warm and ingenuous heart of youth, one would suppose, would be most alive to the display of love and mercy which the cross of their Saviour affords, and prompted to pour forth its grateful effusions at that altar where this love and mercy are commemorated. But, alas! some among the young are deterred by that false shame which prevents them from making that public profession of religion which is most honourable to their understandings and their hearts, and which would save them from the awful denunciation of their Saviour and Judge at the last day—"Whosoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."*

The love of gaiety and an excessive devotion to pleasure deter others from the discharge of one of the first duties of Christians—the acknowledgment of the Saviour at his holy table; and others who are disposed to this solemn profession, think that it should not, or need not be made until more mature age. Oh! let the young be exhorted to act up to the solemn injunction of remembering their Creator in the days of their youth; and let them be distinguished here for what will lead to eternal honour and felicity hereafter—for sobriety, and

* Luke ix. 26.

cheerful devotedness to God, and not to frivolity, dissipation, and devotion to the world; and let them cherish their virtuous resolves, and fortify themselves against temptation, by participating of the pledges of mercy and grace in the supper of the Lord.

Those who have assumed the vows of their Christian profession in the ordinance of confirmation, we especially exhort to go on in the happy course on which they have entered, and to perform their vows by participating of the Lord's supper. This duty is imposed on them by one of those commandments which they solemnly assumed at their confirmation; and the assumption is registered in those books which will be opened at the last day; and which, proclaiming vows performed or vows violated, will assign to them the destiny of felicity or wo. This is the awful consideration that enforces, I may say, with the voice of eternity, the duty of making our Christian calling and election sure. For if after death is the judgment, and if death comes in an hour when we think not of it, who can be easy or unconcerned while in the habitual neglect of those commandments and ordinances in which he promised to walk, and in conformity with which will be found his present honour and peace, as well as his eternal felicity?

I beseech those then, who, from a concern for their eternal salvation, have assumed the vows of their Christian calling in confirmation, to prepare to secure that salvation, by receiving, in penitence, humility, and faith, the supper of the Lord. In the devout feelings which a sincere participation of this holy sacrament inspires, in the divine suc-

cours which it conveys, they will find their only security against the temptations to which they are exposed, their full consolation under all the changes and trials of life, and an increase of every virtuous enjoyment which may brighten their course. How can they answer to their consciences, how can they answer to God for the neglect of this their bounden duty, this richest source of consolation, of grace, and of happiness? How will they answer to the Redeemer who died for them, when he sits in judgment upon them, for their inattention to his last pressing injunction—"Do this in remembrance of me?"

The season of manhood is the season of reflection, of sober deliberation, of wise determination, and yet how many does the rapid flight of time hurry through this important season, who never reflect on the things that belong to their eternal peace; or who never deliberate on the guilt and the danger of living only for the world, and neglecting their God and eternal interests; or who have never determined, in the impulses of gratitude and duty to that Lord who hath made and who hath redeemed them, to perform their Christian vows in the courts of the Lord's house, in the sacrament of his supper! But surely, where such obligations impel, where such interests urge, want of reflection, of sober deliberation, of wise determination, cannot be without excuse, will not escape punishment.

What shall we say to those who have grown old in the service of the world, and have not engaged in the service of God; who have been, times without number, invited to participate with their brethren of the symbols of salvation, and are yet

strangers to the heavenly feast? Another invitation is given. It may be the last.

Sincere Christians, in whatever circumstances you are placed, it is your bounden duty, as it is your inestimable privilege, to participate of the symbols of the body and blood of your Saviour, and over these sacred memorials to thank and praise him who hath prepared for you, in his heavenly kingdom to which he hath ascended, a felicity unspeakable in degree, and endless in duration. If you are surrounded by worldly comforts and blessings, let the holy table be the altar on which you offer the grateful tribute of your hearts to your heavenly Benefactor and Friend. If you are oppressed by sorrow and calamity, at the altar, the mercy-seat of your God, pour forth your griefs, and invoke the consolation and succour of him who, though in faithfulness he afflicts you, hath promised never to leave you nor forsake you; and who hath prepared for you that inheritance of glory and of bliss never to be sullied, never to be alloyed by sin or sorrow. At the altar let your affections be raised to that place to which your Saviour has ascended; that where he is, you may thither also ascend, and reign with him in glory. In the hour of sickness and of death, the hour that must come to all, take the symbols of the body and blood of your Saviour, and in the fulness of faith call on him; and in this hour of death, in the day of judgment, he will save and deliver you.

SERMON XII.

FOR THE HOLY COMMUNION

PSALM LIX. 4.

Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee.

EVERY act of devotion, every approach unto God in the ordinances of religion, is calculated to enoble, and purify, and exalt the powers of the soul. By the law of our nature, we are assimilated to that moral excellence which we frequently and ardently contemplate; and it is the natural tendency of goodness to raise pleasurable sensations in the mind that beholds it. When, then, we supplicate and praise that Being who is infinitely holy, we are powerfully excited to love and to imitate that holiness which we thus fervently adore; and when, in the exercises of faith and devotion, we approach unto that Being who is transcendently good and lovely, we experience those pleasures which the contemplation of excellence and goodness is always calculated to inspire. The living God, the exhaustless fountain of felicity, dispenses blessedness to the soul that humbly and devoutly approaches unto him. "Blessed is the man whom he chooses, and causes to approach unto him."

But of all the acts of religious homage, that in which the Christian approaches unto God in the sacrament of the supper, is the most ennobling in

its tendency, and produces the purest and most elevated joys; for this sacred ordinance exhibits God to our contemplation in his most exalted characters, and it dispenses the mean and pledge, to the humble and penitent believer, of every spiritual blessing.

Let me then, at the present time, when you are called to approach unto God at his holy table, invite your attention to—

1. The characters in which he there displays himself—and to the blessings which he there dispenses.

In the sacrament of the supper, God is displayed as a holy and just Sovereign punishing transgression; and also as our merciful Father in Christ Jesus, providing an expiation for sin, and extending pardon to the penitent.

On that holy table a victim is set forth under the most expressive symbols. The bread is broken, the wine is poured out, to denote that this victim is bruised for our iniquities, is wounded for our sins: the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all. The victim, whose death, as the penalty of transgressions not his own, is thus set forth, is the Son of the Father in the person of man. Incomprehensible truth, but certain as the voice of inspiration. What an awful exhibition, then, in the symbols of the holy table, of the infinite sacrifice which sin required, and of the tremendous punishment which sin received! What an awful monition comes from that altar!—If the Lord thus smites the man that is his fellow, when constituted the representative of our guilt—if the eternal Sovereign of the universe thus spared not his own Son,

will he spare the transgressor whom this tremendous exhibition of divine justice does not move to repentance?

But not only as a holy and just Sovereign are we called to contemplate the Lord God in the sacrament of the supper—he excites our grateful faith and love, as that merciful and gracious God who has provided an atonement for transgression, and who extends pardon to the penitent.

The death of the almighty Victim shown forth on the altar, is not merely the punishment which God, holy and just, exacts as a necessary reparation to his violated laws, and in fearful display of his rigorous holiness and his inflexible justice: for as his authority is sustained, and his holiness and justice are asserted, by the death of an all-perfect victim, this death becomes a full expiation for sin, and the holy and just Sovereign of the universe can consistently exercise the attribute of mercy in dispensing pardon to the transgressor.

It is on the holy table that this great sacrifice, this full, and free, and perfect oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, is most expressively set forth. *There* is represented and commemorated, under the bread broken and the wine poured forth, Jesus Christ, the very Paschal Lamb which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world. What a tremendous display, indeed, of the holy indignation of the eternal Jehovah against sin, which demanded a victim of this infinite dignity and merit! The infinite dignity and worth of the victim prove also the fulness and sufficiency of the expiation; and we can now approach unto God as that merciful Father who is in his Son Jesus Christ reconciling

us unto himself. We commemorate at the holy table, the sacrifice of that Lamb of God whose blood cleanseth from all sin. Participating with true penitence and faith of the bread and wine of the altar, we partake spiritually of the blessings which that offering of his body and blood procured for us; and one of the principal blessings purchased for us by the offering of this body and blood, is pardon, full and free pardon, of all the sins which we have confessed and renounced.

Oh! then, let us approach unto the holy table, as unto that mercy-seat where God hath promised to meet us, to dispense pardon to every penitent offender. Surely we cannot be insensible of our need of forgiveness; surely we cannot think that we have not so sinned as to have rendered ourselves obnoxious to the displeasure of the righteous Sovereign of the universe—not so sinned as to need, in humility and penitence, to supplicate forgiveness from our offended Maker. Let our hearts and our lives, my brethren, answer. Have we sincerely and supremely revered, loved, and served him, who is the all-glorious and perfect Author of our being, the gracious Preserver and Benefactor of our lives, the merciful Redeemer of our souls—who is supremely worthy of our reverence, love, and service? Have we always faithfully fulfilled the laws of justice, of benevolence, and of mercy? Have we never transgressed the rules of temperance, of purity, of meekness, of humility, of forbearance, of forgiveness?

Who among us, brethren, will say that he is pure from the stains of sin? Who among us will avow that he can stand, were God to sit in judgment upon him? And if we have transgressed, we surely

need the forgiveness of that almighty Being whom we have offended, in whose hands we are, at whose tribunal we must render an account. Let us go then to that holy table, humble, penitent, and grateful, and its sacred symbols will assure us of the full remission of our sins, of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. We approach God, in the holy supper, as our reconciled God and Father, and are assured of our restoration to his love and favour.

The sacramental elements are pledges not only of pardon, but of the love and favour of that almighty Being with whom, through sin, we were in a state of enmity. Do you doubt the value of this blessing of restoration to the favour of God? Contemplate then your condition in a state of impenitence and sin. Obnoxious to the wrath of the dread Sovereign whom you have offended; subject to the remorse and fears of guilt; anticipating still more dreadful punishment in that future world where the retribution of the Eternal overtakes the transgressors of his laws—do you look up to the throne of an almighty Judge? Justice pronounces your condemnation—“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Do you look forward to a day of account? You hear the sentence—“Depart from me.”

But the holy table holds forth the pledges of mercy and grace, and inspires peace and hope. Its sacred symbols assure to those who in faith partake of them, the gracious promise—“I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” It is the voice of the Lord of heaven and earth which speaks in the memorials of the body and blood of his Son—“I will be your God.” In all difficulties,

I will be your Guide; through all dangers, your Protector; in all trials, your Comforter; under all changes, your Friend, your Father, never leaving you, nor forsaking you. By my mercy you shall be refreshed; by my grace sanctified and comforted; by my power protected. All things shall work together for your good. The sense of my favour shall accompany all the bounties of my providence, and exalt their enjoyment to you. In the trials of life you shall behold the hand of a gracious and tender Father; and your faith and your patience shall shine forth with bright and glorious lustre. The darkness of adversity shall be enlightened by those hopes which are inspired by confidence in the wisdom and goodness of your God, the Lord and Ruler of all things; and even death, appalling to frail nature, and bearing dismay and wo to the sinner, shall to you be stripped of his terrors; for to you he shall come the messenger that summons you from the sins and sorrows of the world to endless glory and bliss. "I will be your God." Realize, penitent and faithful Christians, the full import of this promise; realize that so certainly as in penitence and faith you partake of the symbols of the body and blood of your Lord, the power, the mercy, the grace of your heavenly Father are pledged for your guidance, your comfort, your salvation. Realize all this, and offer at that holy table, which assures these blessings to you, the vows of love and duty to your God; for the offering of yourselves, your souls and bodies, a living sacrifice to him, is still an inadequate tribute for those blessings of reconciliation, and peace, and joy, which in this holy ordinance he assures to you.

3. God, whom we approach with penitence and faith in the holy supper, assures to us, by the symbols of the body and blood of his Son, life eternal.

These sacred elements, conveying to us the power of the body and blood which they represent, nourish and strengthen us to everlasting life; they are the pledges not only of the guidance, the protection and favour of our heavenly Father while we sojourn upon earth, but of blessings beyond the grave; assuring us, in the language of the expressive office of the church, that we are heirs, through hope, of his heavenly kingdom. Jesus Christ, by his death, hath destroyed death; and by his rising to life again, hath restored to us everlasting life—opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers. He hath instituted in his holy supper, memorials of these his spiritual triumphs, pledges of these his eternal blessings. The bread and the wine, symbols of the body and blood of him who is the resurrection and the life, divine power makes the pledges that our bodies, sinful and frail as they are by nature, shall be purified, nourished, and exalted to everlasting life.

My Christian brethren, we receive at the holy table the pledges that God will not only be here the strength of our hearts, but hereafter our portion for ever. Let us then, when we partake of the holy elements, realize, by faith, the immortal privileges which they assure to us; let us rejoice in the confidence, that if, in true penitence and lively faith, we partake of that holy sacrament, and continue to do those good works which God has prepared for us to walk in, the blessings of eternal life shall certainly be ours—the sorrows of time shall be succeeded by the glories of eternity. Ad-

mitted into the holy presence of God in heaven, we shall unceasingly adore him, and be filled with ecstasy at the contemplation of his perfections, his works, and his dispensations. In that heavenly kingdom of which we are heirs, we shall be united in visible and endless communion with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for ever contemplate and adore him in the splendour of his glorified human nature, and for ever derive from him the fulness of felicity. In this church triumphant we shall also be associated with the host of angels and archangels; with the blessed company of prophets, and apostles, and martyrs; with the spirits of the just made perfect. Corruption having put on incorruption, and mortal immortality, and our vile bodies changed and fashioned like unto the glorified body of the Redeemer, we shall again see, and know, and love all those whose Christian virtues here excited our admiration, and with whom we were here united in the bands of Christian affection and fellowship.

Oh! in this view, what a source of joy and consolation, raising us above the empty pleasures, and leading us to disregard the comparatively light afflictions of the present life, is the supper of our Lord! Its divine memorials are pledges to us of all that our souls in their most eager aspirations can desire, of all that can contribute to our perfection and bliss through the ages of eternity.

These are not visionary speculations, enthusiastic and unfounded hopes: they are the sober truths of God's word. This word assures us that the body and blood of Christ purchased our redemption; and that they who worthily partake of the bread and the cup, are partakers of the body and

blood of their divine Lord—of all the blessings which the offering of this body and blood purchased for them. These blessings are, the pardon of sin, the grace and favour of God, and everlasting life. In the mysterious counsels of Jehovah, these blessings are purchased for sinful man by the meritorious sacrifice of Jesus Christ. According to the institution of this divine Personage, the bread is the communion of his body, and the cup the communion of his blood: the worthy participation of these holy symbols, therefore, pledges certainly to us all these blessings of his meritorious cross and passion. In partaking, then, sincerely and devoutly of this holy communion of the body and blood of our Lord, we can cherish with inexpressible joy the exalted assurance, that God is our reconciled God and Father in Jesus Christ; that he pardons all our sins, blesses us with his favour, and that, our God and our guide unto death, he will be our portion for ever and ever.

Is it possible that these are truths—truths certain as the word of God, unfailing as the promise of him who changes not—truths in which, subject as we are to sin, to sorrow, and to death, we have the deepest interest? and yet are there any professing Christians who act as if they were not truths, or truths in which they had no concern? Alas! there are those who are called by the name of Christ, and yet wilfully abstain from that holy table on which are set forth the memorials of the body and blood of their crucified Lord, and who refuse to receive the pledges that are offered to them of pardon and of grace—of that favour of their God which alone can render this life happy, and the ages of eternity blest.

My Christian brethren, who thus abstain from the table of your Lord, you deprive yourselves of succours, of consolations, and of hopes, that would prove to you a safeguard under temptation, a support in sorrow, and the only source of satisfying and permanent felicity. But well would it be if there were no other consequences of your separating yourselves from this holy feast. The victim symbolically set forth on the altar, is the beloved Son of the Father; and he is suffering the fearful penalty of your transgressions. It would seem that you regard not this awful display of the divine displeasure against sin, and the sufferings of him who died to purchase your redemption from it; for you refuse to participate of the holy symbols that show forth his death, that commemorate his love. Can you then have any reasonable hope of participating of the merits of that death, of the blessings of that love? And what must be the condition of those to whom the death of Christ brings not salvation, nor his love life eternal? You refuse to participate of the pledges of that salvation, of that life eternal, in the memorials of your Saviour's sufferings and death, of his infinite love for you; and what hope can you cherish of inheriting that salvation, that life eternal, which are the purchase of his death, the fruits of his infinite love? In the affecting expostulation with which the church seeks to arouse you to a sense of your duty and your eternal interest, "Consider earnestly with yourselves, how great is your ingratitude to God, and how sore punishment hangeth over your heads for the same, when ye wilfully abstain from the Lord's table, and separate from your brethren who come to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food." If

you say you are unworthy, and therefore are afraid to come, to you will apply the exhortation of the church—"Wherefore then do ye not repent and amend?" Consider, whatever unfits you for the table of the Lord, will render you unfit for heaven.

Christians, who, in obedience to his command, meet your Lord and Master at his holy table, when you contemplate the infinite sufferings of the victim there set forth, consider the awful indignation of the Sovereign of the universe against sin, for which those sufferings were an expiation; be impressed with a deep sense of its enormity, and be excited constantly to guard against its solicitations, and to avoid even the appearance of every thing that may dishonour your holy profession and put your Saviour to an open shame.

But it is also your duty and your privilege there to contemplate that gracious God whom you have offended, as assuring to you, by the most affecting pledges, the memorials of the body and blood of his Son, that he grants you the forgiveness of your sins; that, as your reconciled God and Father, he will guide, sustain, and comfort you, under all the conflicts and sorrows of this state of your probation, until he brings you to that eternal rest where your labours shall cease and your trials terminate, and where his favour shall be your portion for ever. While you enjoy the certain pledges of blessings thus exalted, blessings that unite you to your Saviour, that console and refresh you with the pardoning mercy and protecting and sanctifying grace of God your heavenly Father—blessings that elevate your views above the brightest joys of this mortal scene, to the infinitely brighter glories

of that heaven which is to be your everlasting home; while you enjoy the certain pledges of these blessings, what should hurt you, or make you afraid? what should restrain the full indulgence of holy joy? Are not all things yours—yours, purchased for you by the death and passion of the Son of God—yours, conveyed and pledged to you in the lively memorials which he instituted? Are not all things yours—all things working together for your good, destined and controlled for your eternal good, whether life, or death, or angels, or principalities, or powers, or things present, or things to come? But take heed lest, through the weakness of nature, your faith fail—lest, through the seductive allurements of the world, your zeal and ardour in your Christian course languish and abate; and take heed lest the holy graces and virtues of your Christian life be sullied by the unhallowed influence of worldly tempers, pleasures, and pursuits; take heed lest thus gradually sin usurp dominion over you, and you fall short of your heavenly inheritance. Yet you have the assurance that greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. Your Saviour is divine and almighty; look to him for guidance, for strength and protection; watch, and pray, and labour with all diligence in the great work of resisting and subduing the evil passions of nature, of acquiring and perfecting all the graces and virtues of your Christian calling. And that you may thus be fortified, and cheered, and advanced in your course of Christian duty, frequently approach unto God, with humility, with penitence, with faith, with charity, in that holy supper where, while he renews your title to his mercy and favour, he confers that

grace which alone can enable you to render unto him true and acceptable service. Thus approaching unto God, you shall experience the blessedness of those whom he chooses—even pardon, and peace, and holiness here—and the perfection of felicity in his heavenly kingdom.

SERMON XIII.

ON THE LITURGY.

I CORINTHIANS xiv. 15.

I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.

It had become common in the church of the Corinthians, among many of their teachers, who were endowed with the miraculous gifts of speaking different languages, to deliver their instructions in a language not understood by the congregation whom they addressed. Even the prayers in which it was expected that the people should join, were offered up in an unknown tongue. This they did from a principle of ostentation, to magnify themselves by displaying their gift of speaking different languages. This custom, so repugnant to the design of instruction and public worship, the apostle condemns and exposes in the chapter from which my text is taken—"I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also."

In reference to the particular occasion on which these words were used, their meaning is:—I will not only pray according to the miraculous gifts of the spirit, but in a language intelligible to those who hear me.

Considering these words, however, as a standing direction to the church, they enjoin that the public worship should be conducted in a way best calcu-

lated to be understood by the people, and to answer the purposes of devotion.

Among Christians, at the present day, two opposite modes of celebrating public worship prevail. Some denominations of Christians prohibit in their public worship all set forms, and direct the minister to deliver only what are called extempore prayers, those which, if not in a great measure unpremeditated, contain such sentiments, and are clothed in such language, as the officiating minister may think proper: and thus the public prayers vary according to the varying talents, dispositions, and views of different ministers. But, in other denominations of Christians, the important duty of regulating public worship is taken from individual ministers, and a form of prayer or liturgy is settled by the authority of the church, and made binding on the clergy and people; and in their assemblies for worship, no other prayers are allowed than those which have been thus previously composed and prescribed.

Brethren, we are called by the good providence of God to be members of a church which, forbidding all extempore and unpremeditated praying, has adopted for her public services a liturgy, or form of prayer. It is of consequence, therefore, that we should be well informed in those reasons which induce a preference of a form of prayer for public worship, in exclusion of every other. This information is necessary, that our attachment to the forms of our own church may not be the result of education merely, but of sound examination and reflection; and that, being thus fortified, we may be able to give an answer to those who object to the mode of worship which prevails among us, and

to rescue our liturgy from the imputations which may be cast upon it. And I am particularly induced to call your attention to this subject at this time, because, having recently insisted on the dispositions and views with which we should hear the word of God read or preached, the investigation now proposed will naturally lead to some remarks on the manner in which we should discharge that principal and most important duty in our assembling together—the worship of God.

Let me therefore claim your attention while I lay before you—not with a view to censure others, but to justify ourselves—briefly and plainly the arguments—familiar perhaps indeed to many of you, but not therefore less necessary to be insisted on—which justify a preference of forms of prayer for the public service of the church.

These arguments may be drawn—

From Scripture ;

From antiquity ;

From the reason of the case.

I. The arguments in favour of forms of prayer may be drawn from Scripture.

All the acts of public worship recorded in the Old Testament, were conducted according to a set form. In the fifteenth chapter of Exodus is recorded a solemn prayer or thanksgiving, used by Moses and the children of Israel, for the miraculous destruction of Pharaoh and his host, who were overwhelmed in the Red Sea. Let it be observed, this was not sung by Moses alone : all the children of Israel, and Miriam the prophetess, and the people that were with her, audibly joined in this solemn act of homage and thanksgiving. It

could not therefore have been an extempore, or unpremeditated effusion; unless we suppose that all the children of Israel, as well as Moses, were inspired, and all miraculously burst forth in the same expressions of praise and worship. This hymn of praise, therefore, must have been composed by Moses, and taught to the congregation of Israel. Here, therefore, in the first example of public worship recorded in Scripture, a set form was used.

In proceeding on through the Old Testament, we find, in the sixth chapter of Numbers and twenty-second verse, a form of blessing was prescribed to Aaron and his sons, which they were to use whenever they blessed the children of Israel. In the tenth chapter of Numbers and thirty-fifth verse, a form of address is inserted which Moses always used when the ark of the Lord was taken up to go forward, and when it rested. In the twenty-first chapter of Deuteronomy and seventh and eighth verses, is set down a form of prayer which the elders of a city, near to which a person should be found murdered, the murderer being unknown, were to use as a prayer of expiation for the murder. At the offering of the first fruits, mentioned in the twenty-sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, a set form of prayer, most solemn and affecting, was prescribed by God. Many of the psalms were composed for the service of the temple at Jerusalem; and the worship of the Jewish synagogue always has been, and is still, conducted according to precomposed forms.

From these facts the following questions naturally arise. If set forms of prayer were displeasing to God, would he thus have enjoined them on his

people Israel? If they were, as they are sometimes odiously styled, lip service, offensive to the Almighty, would he not have reproved his people for using them, as he did for every abuse of his service? If unpremeditated or extempore prayers were more acceptable to God, how does it happen that we find no examples of them in the customary offices of the Jewish worship?

It may be said that these examples are all from the Old Testament; and that, as the Jewish worship was an external ceremonial institution, examples from it cannot have any force with Christians under the more spiritual dispensation of the Gospel. Let us see, therefore, whether the New Testament does not give countenance to forms of prayer.

Our blessed Lord, without doubt, attended the service of the Jewish temple and synagogues. Among the many charges which his implacable enemies, the scribes and Pharisees, alleged against him, we do not find that of a neglect of public worship. Disposed as he was to fulfil all righteousness, and bound, in his character as surety for man, to obey the whole law, it cannot be supposed that he would have neglected the sacred duty of worshipping God. By thus joining in the Jewish worship, in which set forms were used, he proved at least that they were not displeasing to him.

We have, however, unequivocal testimony that he preferred and enjoined them.

When his disciples (Matthew vi. and Luke xi.) requested him to teach them to pray, as John also taught his disciples, he prescribed to them that remarkable form which has obtained the name of the Lord's Prayer. It certainly was not his inten-

tion to forbid the use of all other prayers but this short and comprehensive one; yet, undoubtedly, by prescribing a form to his disciples, he signified his preference of such prayers as were previously composed. Besides, the word of direction, translated in St. Matthew "after this manner pray ye," signifies, in the original, "thus," "in these words," and is so elsewhere translated.* Our Saviour then enjoined that prayer as a form for perpetual use, according to the phraseology with which the evangelist St. Luke represents him as introducing it—"When ye pray, say."

It is to be observed, that the disciples asked our Lord to teach them to pray. If he had meant to recommend extempore or unpremeditated prayers, instead of giving them a form, would he not have confined himself to directions merely as to the matter and style of their prayers? Indeed, if he designed that his ministers, in succeeding ages, should trust to the impulse of the occasion, or to the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, when assembled for the purpose of prayer, where was the necessity of any directions, since, in the former case they would not be attended to, and in the latter would be superseded by divine influence? It must be evident that the disciples in asking, and our Saviour in prescribing a prayer which was not only to be a form of standing obligation, but a model, according to which other prayers should be constructed, signified the importance of the greatest care and attention to the matter and the style of our prayers, and gave the sanction of their authority to set forms, which, being precomposed,

* Matt. ii. 5; vi. 9.

will ensure that propriety of sentiment, and that dignity and purity of expression, so necessary in addresses to Almighty God. Accordingly, in all the instances in Scripture of joint or public prayer, there is every reason to believe that set forms were used.

In the first chapter of the Acts, when the apostles were assembled for the purpose of supplying the place of Judas, it is said that they prayed—and the prayer is recorded—which circumstance, as well as there being no mention of any leading voice, would lead us to suppose that it was a form in which they all audibly joined. In the fourth chapter of the Acts it is stated that Peter and John, on their return from prison, went to their company and “reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord.” Now that the prayer which they used, and which is recorded, was previously composed, is evident from the expression, “they lifted up their *voice* with one accord;” which implies that they all audibly joined in the prayer; and this they could not have done, unless it had been precomposed.

But if we pass from Scripture to the—

II. Practice of the primitive church—

We shall find that forms of prayers were in general use among the early Christians; and this circumstance indicates their apostolic prescription. In the writings of the ancient fathers of the church, the public prayers are styled “common prayers,” “solemn prayers,” “constituted prayers,” which titles denote that they were set forms. The Heathen historian Pliny, in his letter to the emperor

giving an account of the Christians, uses an expression which is quoted as proof of their acknowledging the divinity of Christ, but shows also that they used a form of prayer—"They meet together to sing a hymn to Christ as God;" or, as the original may be translated, to "say a form of prayer to God;" and the latter translation is to be preferred, as more completely designating the object for which Christians met together, which surely was more than merely to sing a hymn. Many of the prayers used at an early period in the celebration of the holy eucharist, have been handed down to the present, and are incorporated in the office of our church for the administration of this holy sacrament. Set forms of prayer having thus universally prevailed in the primitive church, without any record of the precise time of their introduction, their institution must be referred to the apostolic age, and must be coeval with the existence of the Christian church. On the contrary, we ascertain the precise time when extempore prayers were introduced. No instances of their use in public worship occurs until the period of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, when the intemperate zeal of some of the reformers, which led them to depart as far as possible from the church of Rome, swept away liturgical services, as the rubbish of papal ignorance and superstition. In the heat of their zeal, they did not consider that forms of prayer were used in the primitive church, before its worship was alloyed by the corruptions of popery.

If the worship of the church had been originally conducted in the extempore mode, it is unreasonable to suppose that so remarkable a change as

that to a set form, would have been introduced without great opposition, and without a particular record of the change. The universal prevalence of forms of prayer at an early period, without any evidence of their being an innovation, proves their apostolic origin.

Forms of prayer, thus authorized by Scripture and antiquity, are further recommended by their intrinsic advantages. To enforce them on the ground of their—

III. Superior excellencies—was the third point proposed.

1. Forms of prayer will be more intelligible than extempore prayers.

It is essential to sincere devotion that the prayers should be intelligible to the congregation: they must pray with the understanding, or they will not offer an enlightened and acceptable devotion. In extempore prayers there cannot be the same security for perspicuity and propriety as in precomposed forms. If the minister trusts entirely to the impulse of the occasion, he must use those words which come first into his mind, for he has no time to consider and make a choice. And if he previously compose his prayers and commit them to memory, the congregation hear a form as much as when it is read to them from a book. But, even in this case, with all his care and attention, it is hardly to be supposed that all the expressions in his prayers will be understood by all his congregation immediately on hearing them: the mind then being occupied with ascertaining the meaning of some doubtful expression while the minister goes on with his prayer, the devotion of the wor-

shipper is interrupted, and the fervour of his pious feeling is chilled. This inconvenience may not be felt by those who pass over any unintelligible expression and go on with the minister; but it can hardly be said that such persons "pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also." Here then is the great advantage of forms of prayer: they are composed, not by one man, but by a collection of men most eminent for their talents, learning, and piety. The greatest simplicity and plainness, consistent with the sublimity and solemnity so indispensable to public prayers, can thus be attained. If there should be expressions obscure or difficult, these may be carefully studied at leisure, and those whose duty it is to give information may be consulted. The meaning once ascertained, no new difficulty arises, and the people are not troubled with ascertaining the import of the novel expressions that may occur in extempore prayers. A set form of prayer it is in the power of every Christian individual frequently to read over with serious attention, and thus fully to ascertain its meaning, and thus to be impressed with its force and propriety, and to imbibe its spirit. He thus can come to public worship fully informed in the prayers that are to be used: his understanding and his heart have been previously affected with their simplicity, sublimity, and excellence. He is thus prepared cordially and sincerely to join in them—to offer unto God a reasonable and devout service—to "pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also."

2. There is a further advantage in forms of prayer: they secure a correct devotion, by excluding all improper expressions, which lessen

the dignity, solemnity, and fervour of public worship.

It is of the highest importance that, in addresses to Almighty God, the Maker and Ruler of heaven and of earth, the greatest propriety of language should be preserved. All quaint and familiar phrases, all low or common figures, all swelling and pompous epithets, and all other expressions that may offend the correct taste or judgment, or excite irreverent emotions, should be carefully excluded. The style of public prayers should be plain, indeed, but dignified, simple, yet sublime. Is it probable that an individual minister, if left to form his own prayers, will never offend in any of these particulars? Or whatever may be his talents, his judgment, his taste, and his piety, is it probable that his prayers will be equally excellent with those that are the productions of the united talents and care of the most eminent, learned, and pious clergy of the church? To compose prayers that are suited to the general and particular exigencies of Christian people, which, while they are intelligible to the humblest capacity, are calculated to engage and gratify a cultivated taste and feeling, and especially such as are fit to be offered up to the awful Majesty of heaven, is not a task of easy performance. This, then, is a highly important advantage of set forms of prayer. Being carefully and deliberately composed by the authority of the church, all those extravagancies and improprieties of sentiment and language are excluded that destroy the dignity, sublimity, and fervour of public worship.

3. It is another important advantage of forms of prayer, that they prevent the particular opinions

and views of the minister from entering into the prayers of the congregation.

Public prayers should be suited to the state and circumstances of Christians generally, and should not therefore express the peculiar views and opinions of individuals. But is it to be supposed that prayers composed by an individual minister will not receive a colouring from his peculiar sentiments and feelings? Will he not, indeed, deem it his duty to mould his prayers according to those religious sentiments which he has embraced? According to one system of religious doctrine, his public devotions will exhibit God principally as a Sovereign, electing a portion of mankind for his glory to everlasting life, and dooming others to eternal death; and while his prayers insist strongly on the guilt and corruption of human nature, they will magnify that irresistible grace by which the elect are efficaciously converted, and their salvation placed beyond all contingency. But if the minister who conducts the devotions of the people have embraced a contrary extreme of religious opinions, maintaining the purity of human nature, and the ability of man, by his unassisted strength, to work out his salvation—rejecting the divinity and atonement of the Saviour, through whom we receive forgiveness, and by whose grace we are sanctified, and enabled to perform good works—his prayers will accord with his religious creed, and thus contaminate and frustrate the devotions of the congregation.

The particular disposition and state of feeling of the minister will also affect his public prayers. If his temper be grave and melancholy, he will exhibit in his devotions the majesty and justice of

God; if it be lively and cheerful, he will dwell only on the divine goodness and compassion. Sometimes, under a deep sense of his peculiar sins and infirmities, he may express himself in terms of abasing contrition that are not suited to the general state of the congregation; and at other times, elevated by his own ardent emotions, he may burst forth in strains of fervid devotion, in which the more sober feelings of others cannot accompany him. In all these cases, where either the particular opinions of the minister, or his peculiar disposition or state of mind, affect his public prayers, the whole congregation may not be able cordially to unite with him, and thus the great object of public worship will be in part defeated. But, in prescribed devotions, all these inconveniences may be avoided. They may be composed with such judgment and care, as to exhibit those general exercises of piety in which all should partake, and thus enable all to "pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also."

4. It is another excellence of forms of prayer, that they unite the people with the minister in the performance of the service.

In the extempore mode of worship, the people never audibly unite in the public service, not so much as to say *amen* to the prayers offered up in their behalf. How much more rational, interesting, and edifying is public worship, when both minister and people prostrate themselves before the throne of grace in contrite confession of their sins, unitedly rehearse their belief in the great truths of their common salvation, invoke by alternate supplications the Divine favour and blessing, and in respon-

sive strains recount the praises of their God and Saviour!

5. *Lastly.* It should not be omitted as a distinguishing excellence of forms of prayer, that they ensure sound doctrine, they secure the devotions of the people from heretical opinions, and thus constitute a safeguard to their faith.

When forms of prayer recognise the great truths of the Gospel, the people are assured of always offering a pure and acceptable worship. Heresy may taint the sermon, but, while the minister is controlled by a pure form of prayer, it can never corrupt the worship of the people. A preacher in the pulpit disguising, concealing, or denying those sacred truths which, in all the simplicity, and force, and tenderness of language, he has previously held forth, as the leader of the devotions of the congregation, in the services of the desk, exposes himself to the charge of an impious inconsistency which few can have the hardihood to encounter, and the guilt of which none can contemplate without dismay. Wo to the declining church, it has been well said, and it may well be said, that is destitute of a liturgy; for then the devotions of the people, as well as their instructions, are infected by the poison of heresy; and they must yield to its corrupting influence, or cease to pray as well as to hear in the assemblies of worship. What an invaluable safeguard to your faith, brethren, is that inestimable liturgy, which, drawn from the pure fountain of inspiration, presents those divine truths of redemption, in the love of God the Father through the mediation of his eternal Son Jesus Christ, for which confessors sustained persecutions, and mar-

tyrs death, with a simplicity, force, and pathos which, engaging the conviction of your understanding and the interest of your affections, will lead you to resist the solicitations of heresy, however insinuating the form in which it may allure you!

Finally, then, brethren, remember that though to hear the word of God with those humble, holy, reverential, and obedient dispositions which its sacred and interesting nature demands, is an important object for which you appear in this sacred temple, to offer to the God who made and redeemed you, the homage of your hearts, in its prayers and praises, is a duty, for which no attention, however earnest, to the word here read in preached sermons, will be accepted as a commutation. That infinite and eternal Being who is the source of all excellence and glory, requires our homage, not as necessary to his all-perfect happiness, but because it promotes the perfection and happiness of our own natures. With the services of his church, the mean and pledge of his covenanted mercy and grace to our sinful race, he hath connected our advancement in holiness and virtue, and our preparation for his heavenly kingdom. Vain is our hope of ever taking part in the praises of heaven, if we do not delight in the worship of God on earth. And what will avail us all the enjoyments of the present life, if, at the awful close of it, our souls, destitute of devout affections, must be banished from the presence of God? Let us then be persuaded to omit no opportunity of uniting with holy sincerity in the services of the church, and those graces and virtues will be quickened and strengthened in our souls, by which we shall be prepared for enjoying the ineffable and everlasting bliss of the

heavenly courts. We have reason to bless God, that in his good providence we enjoy a form of service so admirably fitted to all the purposes of devotion—so reverential in its adorations—so humiliating in its confessions—so consoling in its exhibitions of God's grace and mercy in Jesus Christ his Son—so various, so pertinent, and so affecting in its supplications—so enlivening in its strains of praise. Of those to whom much is given, much will be required. In proportion to the excellence of the means of worship which we enjoy, will be our guilt and our condemnation, if we neglect them, or fail to improve them. Let us then delight to enter the courts of the Lord, to confess our unworthiness, to invoke his forgiveness, to supplicate his favour, and to magnify his name. And especially when his holy table presents to us the memorials of his mercy and the pledges of his everlasting favour, in the symbols of the body and blood of him who died for us, let us not refuse to come to the holy celebration—but in the mercy, the grace, the consolation, the holiness which this sacred feast conveys to the penitent and faithful, receive that spiritual nourishment which strengthens to everlasting life; and then this house of God will be the gate of heaven.

SERMON XIV.

TO PARENTS.

DEUTERONOMY vi. 7.

Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.

THE statutes and the judgments, the commandments and the ordinances which God gave unto Israel, the people were thus commanded to “teach diligently unto their children.” The injunction is most earnestly and forcibly expressed. “These words which I command thee this day,” says the divinely commissioned legislator of Israel, “shall be in thy heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” He had previously expressed the same injunction—“Teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons;” and he afterwards urges the solemn admonition—“Ye shall lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall *teach them to your children*, speaking of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

The injunction of the legislator of Israel is afterwards ranked among those maxims which the inspired wisdom of one profoundly acquainted with

human nature dictated. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old," (*generally*, without doubt, is meant; for no maxim applicable to human nature is without exception,) "he will not depart from it."* And it is the admonition of a divinely commissioned apostle, that parents should "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."†

To urge the duty which these precepts enjoin, would at any time be proper: it is particularly seasonable now, when your attention is directed to the public method of instruction by catechizing which the church prescribes, and when an opportunity will soon be afforded of presenting your children for receiving the holy ordinance of confirmation.

There *must* be *wisdom* in these admonitions, as to the religious education of children; there *must* be *efficacy* in the system which they prescribe—for they are the voice of *inspiration*; and whether or not we see the reasons of them, let us remember, that, as the command of our divine Lawgiver, they are binding upon us. That instruction in worldly knowledge is necessary, no one would be guilty of the gross absurdity of denying for a moment; and can that knowledge which is, above every other, important, be an exception? Must the various facts and truths of secular science be early displayed before children, and must they be kept in ignorance of those which concern their nature and character as spiritual and immortal beings? Must they early be taught to serve, to love, to fear, to obey, and to thank their earthly parents and bene-

* Prov. xxii. 6.

† Eph. vi. 4.

factors; and must no emotions of reverence, of love, of fear, of gratitude, no act of obedience be directed to their heavenly Father, to their almighty and merciful Saviour? And must they be instructed in the various arts of advancing themselves in that world in which, at the longest, their sojourn is so short; and no attention be paid to the means of securing their happiness, and averting their misery, in that world in which they must live for ever? The case is too plain to admit of a moment's doubt; and the importance of urging the religious education of children is increased in proportion as, at the present day, the disposition to enlarge their worldly knowledge and accomplishments excites the apprehension that religious instruction may thus be excluded, or not receive its due share of attention.

Some of the particulars in which the religious education of children consists, I propose to lay before you now, and at some subsequent opportunity.

1. Their dependence upon God, and their obligations to serve him, should be diligently impressed upon them.

The sentiment of dependence may be easily excited in the young mind. Accustomed to derive every thing from the bounty and care of their parents, children may be made sensible that they are indebted for all their enjoyments to other exertions than their own. They should be taught that the supreme power from whom every good thing comes, is that almighty Being who made them and all things, and whom, therefore, they are bound to revere and serve. When their hearts are softened by the attentions and caresses of parental

fondness, let this favourable moment be embraced to direct their excited feelings to that heavenly Father who hath provided for them their earthly protectors, and who regards them with an affection infinitely more exalted than that which can animate a human breast. If they love the earthly parent who so kindly provides for their comfort and happiness, may not the glow of affection be easily and naturally turned to that good and gracious Being who is the Father of all his creatures, who satisfies them all with good, and who, beyond the imperfect and interrupted joys of the present life, hath provided for those who love him, those good things which it hath not entered into the heart to conceive? While, by the display of the infinite goodness and the tender mercies of their gracious Maker, you excite them to serve him, strengthen the sentiment of grateful duty by impressing on them that this beneficent Lord of all things possesses a power which none can resist, and a justice which none can escape; and that, while his justice will require the punishment of their wilful disobedience, his power can render that punishment tremendous in degree, and eternal in duration.

2. While the consideration of the goodness, the justice, and the power of their Almighty Maker impresses on them the duty of obeying him, it is necessary still further to confirm this sentiment, by teaching them to bear in mind constantly his holy presence with them.

What a most powerful effect will be produced upon the tender sensibilities of youth, by those awful truths that are calculated to impress so deeply the mature feelings of manhood, that there

is a great, and holy, and just Being, invisibly, but constantly, surrounding us; that he discerns every secret emotion of the heart, and notes every action of the life; and that, while his goodness will prompt him to reward every virtuous endeavour to please him, his justice will punish every wicked deed!

Let then the young be taught that it is in vain to attempt to hide any thing from that God with whom they have to do; that he is about their path, and about their bed, and spieth out all their ways—no where can they go from his presence, nor hide themselves from his Spirit; for the darkness is no darkness with him, but the night is as clear as the day; the darkness and light to him are both alike. With these simple but awful truths operating on their minds, how natural will be the inquiry—Shall I dare to transgress, when the omniscient eye of God is upon me? Shall I indulge sinful thoughts and emotions, when the Sovereign of the universe searches my heart? Shall I think to cover with the darkness of night unlawful pleasures, when the almighty Being who now surrounds me, will bring into judgment every secret thing?

3. With their duties to God the Father who made them, those should be enforced which result from the consideration of the obligations which they are under to God the Son, who hath redeemed them.

The infinite condescension and love which the Son of God displayed in taking upon him our nature, and in suffering and dying for the salvation of sinful man, are subjects particularly calculated to excite and interest the ardent feelings of youth. If the contemplation of disinterested and exalted affection, if the view of deep distress, if the exhibi-

tion of great and glorious deeds call forth their gratitude, their sympathy, their admiration, how powerful must be these impulses, when they behold the Son of God so loving them as to give himself for them—so suffering as to sweat drops of blood, and to expire on the cross—and so displaying almighty power as to redeem the fallen race of man from sin, from Satan, and from death, and to lead his faithful followers to seats of glory eternal in the heavens!

Let your children be taught that for them the Son of God came down from the glory of heaven, encountered these aggravated sufferings, and achieved these glorious victories; and that they may thus feel the deep interest which they have in these great truths, endeavour to create the conviction that they are sinners, who need redemption. For this purpose, remind them of the sinful passions of their disordered nature, which are constantly urging them to gratifications destructive to their own purity and peace, and offensive to the holy Being who made, and who is to judge them; and call them to review the improprieties of conduct which may have marked their comparatively innocent lives. And then, when reflection and conscience awaken the sense of guilt, urge the awful truth, that their infinitely just and holy Maker—so just, that he cannot spare the guilty; so holy, that the heavens are not clean in his sight, and that his angels are charged with folly—must view with displeasure their hearts corrupted by evil passions, and must punish the wilful transgressions which have marked their lives. Then unfold to them the gracious plan of salvation which God, who is rich in mercy, hath devised for reconciling

to himself his sinful creatures: his own eternal Son, assuming human nature, sustains the penalties of sin, and renders perfect obedience to the divine law; thus vindicating the justice and holiness of God, and rendering it possible for him to be just, and yet to justify his sinful but penitent creatures. Let them realize the affecting truth, that for them the Son of God thus gave himself; that to "redeem them and all mankind" was the object of all that he did and suffered—of his agony and bloody sweat, of his cross and passion, of his precious death and resurrection, of his glorious ascension. Impress upon them, that in that heaven to which he has ascended, he is still their compassionate and all-powerful Guide, Intercessor, and Comforter; that, through his merits and intercession, all their confessions, and supplications, and services will be heard and accepted; that whatever may be the changes and the trials to which, in this state of probation, they may be called, he will be with them, to succour and comfort them; and that, even through the dark valley of the shadow of death, he will conduct them to the joys of his presence, to the glorious kingdom of their heavenly Father.

These are the truths which will take hold on the affections of the youthful mind, which lay the most powerful restraints on sinful passion, and present the most animating motives to piety and virtue.

Say not that these mysterious truths are above the comprehension of the youthful mind. Not more so than the being and providence of God, his inspection and government of human actions. Close against the young the sacred truths of the Gospel, because they are mysterious; and for the

same reason you must shut against them the volume of nature; you must stop their progress in every intellectual pursuit, for mystery meets them at every step. The sublime events of the incarnation, the sufferings and death of the Son of God for the redemption of the world, are incomprehensible as to their nature and the mode of their accomplishment; but as to their efficacy, their practical tendency, the rules and motives of conduct resulting from them, they are congenial with the dictates of sound reason, they interest the finest and most powerful feelings of the heart, and they lead to a course of pure, fervent, and persevering virtue. Cavil as we may, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ" will still remain the indispensable condition of salvation; and the penalty will stand in all its appalling force—"He that believeth not, shall be damned." This principle of faith in Jesus Christ as the divine Mediator through whose blood alone we have redemption, is that which excites the highest fervours of piety, and the most holy acts of obedience. See its efficacy among the primitive Christians. It was at the cross of Christ that they poured forth the floods of penitential sorrow; it was with the cross of Christ that they allayed the pangs of an awakened conscience; it was from the cross of Christ that they derived that strength by which they overcame the world, and passed through the flames of persecution to that paradise which their crucified Saviour blesses with his presence. The same principles alone can now produce the same exalted effects. Disregard the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel, reduce its Author to the level of a mere inspired teacher, and his instructions to a code of moral precepts,

and you divest it of its strongest appeals to the feelings and the hopes of guilty man, of its most powerful incentives to holiness, arising from the animating principle of love and gratitude to God the Father, who gave for us his only-begotten Son, and to God the Son, who came into the world to save us sinners. Impress then on the young, as our church has done, the duty of believing not only in God the Father who made them, but in God the Son who hath redeemed them, and you engage their warmest affections in the service of the God and Saviour who thus loved them.

3. In the further progress of Christian instruction they must be taught the necessity of their dependence on the grace of God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies them and all the people of God.

And that they may feel the necessity of this dependence, they must be led to consider their natural weakness, the strength of their sinful passions, and the number and the power of the temptations to which they are exposed in the world; and at the same time they must be taught to view the holiness and the strictness of the laws of God, the constancy of that faith, the sincerity of that love, the unreservedness of that resignation, the universality of that obedience which God requires as necessary to his favour. The inquiries may then readily be pressed upon them—Can you, by your own powers, successfully oppose the temptations which find advocates in the passions of your hearts? Can you, by your own resolutions and endeavours, acquire those holy graces and virtues which are so opposed to those indulgences to which corrupt nature prompts, and which exact the subjection of

the whole soul to the perfect will of God? No; this victory over the world is to be gained only by supernatural strength; this conformity to the law of God is only to be acquired by that power which comes from on high. You must, indeed, exercise constant circumspection and vigilance; you must cautiously shun the seductions of sinful pleasure; you must engage all your powers in the great work of your salvation. But vain will be your efforts without the grace of that Divine Spirit who sanctifies you, who secretly and incomprehensibly puts into your minds good desires, and enables you to bring the same to good effect; who alone can direct and govern your hearts and bodies in the ways of God's laws, and in the works of his commandments; and who only is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory.

4. For the discharge of all the duties which they owe to God, their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and for devotion to all the duties of their Christian calling, the most animating motives may be presented to them, in the consideration of their Christian privileges, as the "heirs of the kingdom of heaven."

The fatal delusion which frustrates the salvation of so many, is an inordinate regard to the present world. They consider it as the only source of happiness, and thus devote themselves supremely to its pursuits and enjoyments. They stop at the commencement of their existence, not looking forward to the endless ages which stretch before them. They waste on the perishing scenes of a *moment*, the thoughts and exertions which should

be employed on the destinies of *eternity*. And thus, alas! they exchange the immortal felicities of heaven for pursuits and pleasures which terminate in everlasting misery. Would you save your children from this tremendous destiny, you must animate them with a lively sense of their exalted privileges as heirs of the kingdom of heaven. You must teach them, that the hopes of those who are permitted to aspire after the eternal felicities of God's presence, should not be bounded by the highest enjoyments of this perishing world; that it is the extreme of folly in immortal beings to forego everlasting joys for temporary gratifications, and to incur, for a few years of corrupting pleasures, miseries intolerable and endless. You must teach them, that all the pursuits which agitate the hopes and fears of the world are of no avail but as subservient to their eternal salvation; and that they will indeed have lived in vain, if it shall appear that, at the close of life, they have made no provision for their eternal home. You must urge them by every motive which can cherish their hopes or rouse their fears, to devote themselves to the work of their salvation as the great business of life, and to seek with supreme solicitude the favour of God their heavenly Father, whose children they were made in the sacrament which ranked them among the members of Christ, and to seek those satisfying joys for which, as heirs of the kingdom of heaven, they are destined.

Thus impressing on them the habitual recollection of their eternal destiny, and teaching them to act as candidates for an immortal existence, as those whose inheritance is in heaven, undefiled and fading not away, you will send them forth into the

world fortified against its temptations, prepared to contemn those frivolous and corrupt gratifications which so often occupy the thoughts and the time, and prostrate the talents, and blast the prospects of youth. You will have inspired them with those hopes which the world cannot confer, and which the world cannot take away; and which, leading them to virtuous attainments, to the vigorous and faithful discharge of the duties of life, will secure to them the favour of their heavenly Father, will supply them with rich consolation under the adversities which may assail them in this changing world, will support them in the hour of death, and, through the Saviour's merits, inspire them with humble confidence even at the tribunal of their almighty Judge.

Teach then these things, and aid the church and its ministers in teaching these things to your children. You cannot commence the important work too soon. The character, the dispositions, the habits of the future man are in no small degree formed by the impressions made upon the child; and as soon as the child is capable of receiving impressions, surely diligence and care should be applied, that among those impressions should be those of religion and virtue. Aid the wise provisions which the church has made for impressing divine truths on your children, by causing them to learn their catechisms at home, and by attending to recite them to the minister, whereby the instruction is more deeply impressed, and security afforded to him that the learning of the catechism is not neglected. Let it not be said that catechetical instruction is a mere exercise of memory—that the children cannot comprehend it. This is an

erroneous sentiment. The truths and duties of religion may be understood by children so far as is necessary to excite their affections, to inform them what they ought to believe and to practise; and farther than this they need not know. With regard to the essence of the Divine Being, to the mode by which certain truths relative to the plan of redemption, and to divine and spiritual things, are possible and real, the sagest philosopher sinks to a level with the humblest child—they are equally ignorant. Still the truths themselves may be understood, though not comprehended—their practical results may be known and felt; and it is even useful early to store the infant memory with those religious truths, which the mature mind may afterwards more fully understand. The memories of children will be filled with knowledge of some kind—Why should that which will make them wise unto salvation be excluded? Let then no endeavours be spared to teach the truths of religion, the duties of their Christian calling, to your children; and for this purpose see that they receive that apostolic ordinance of confirmation, where the obligations of their Christian calling are assumed, and its privileges renewed to them. For thus only can you lay the foundation of their future usefulness and honour—of their happiness in this life, and their everlasting happiness beyond the grave. They are a trust—how important and responsible!—committed to your care: and remember, that for this trust, as for every other, you must render an account—and how awful that account!—it is of the souls of immortal beings—it is not to man, but to God.

SERMON XV.

ON THE DUTY OF DOING GOOD TO ALL MEN, AND
ESPECIALLY TO OUR CHRISTIAN BRETHREN.

GALATIANS vi. 10.

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

THIS injunction of the apostle finds a responsive answer in the dictates of our judgments and the feelings of our hearts. The mutual dependence of the individuals composing the great family of mankind, is an indication that if one member suffer, all the members should suffer with him. No one, in this sense, lives for himself; but is bound to do good, as far as he has opportunity, to all men. To this course of universal benevolence he is prompted by those powerful feelings within him which attach him to his fellow-men, as partakers of the same nature, the same wants, and the same sorrows.

But there is a portion of the great family of mankind to which Christians are bound by stronger ties than those which unite them to the mass of the human race—the household of faith, that spiritual family who, in the faith of the same Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, are gathered into the same fold, under the protection and guidance of the same Holy Spirit, and in the enjoyment of the same blessed hope of eternal life. These are those

brethren in Christ Jesus to whom we are bound especially to do good; and the highest good that we can do for them, is to provide for them as we have opportunity, and they have need, all the means of religious instruction and consolation provided in the word, the ministry, the ordinances, and the worship of the Gospel, as professed in apostolic and primitive purity by that branch of the Christian church of which we are members.

Let me then, my brethren, at this time, illustrate this duty—the duty of extending our church among those who, destitute of its ministrations and worship, are desirous of enjoying them.

1. In extending our church, we extend a rational system of religion.

Rational, not in the sense of excluding from our belief every religious doctrine which transcends the comprehension of our feeble faculties, and defies the grasp of our finite intellect. A revelation from heaven, in its very character as a revelation, must include what the highest efforts of reason could not discover, and from the subjects of which it treats—the uncreated mind, the invisible and eternal realities of a future world—must demand belief in much that no finite understanding can comprehend. It is in the highest degree irrational to expect, in the sense in which the term is in these last days used, as denoting the exclusion of every thing from our belief which we cannot comprehend, a rational system of religion.

But though reason, exercising her legitimate powers, will implicitly receive divine truths well attested, however they may transcend her comprehension, she ought not to be called on to receive

any which, on the very face of them, contradict her strong and honest dictates. And we hold it as a distinguishing excellence of our church, that she does not make this arbitrary demand of us. She avows indeed, as the cardinal truth of the Christian revelation, as the lamentable characteristic of our nature which rendered that revelation necessary, the subjection of all men, through the disobedience of their progenitor, to error and to sin; but she does not go to the irrational extreme of subjecting all men, merely on account of that transgression of the first of the race, in which they had no participation, to the awful curse of eternal damnation. In accordance with Scripture, and with the eternal and immutable rules of justice, she pronounces this tremendous sentence only on actual personal transgression—only on those who, when light has come into the world, choose darkness rather than light; and when the means of recovery from error and sin are offered to them in the mercy and grace of the Gospel, perversely neglect and reject the proffer. She adores with reverence the inscrutable determination of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, to call successively certain portions of mankind to the knowledge of his revelation in Jesus Christ; thus predestinating them to all the means and all the blessings of salvation; but she does not, contradicting every view which revelation exhibits and reason confirms of the just and merciful character of the Ruler of the universe, make him the partial dispenser of the blessings of eternity, the irrespective awarder of its tremendous woes; believing that, signalized as are God's elect, the great body of professing Christians, in this life, with eminent and

superior means of spiritual improvement, and exalted therefore as they may be hereafter to brighter states of glory; still all those, in every nation, who seek to know and to do the will of the invisible Being who made them, will not seek him in vain, but, through the merits of him who died to purchase redemption for all men, will be accepted according to what they have, and not according to what they have not.

She hails, too, as an inestimable gift of God to man, that supernatural light which incomprehensibly, but effectually, guides our benighted faculties in the discovery and reception of divine truth; and that powerful grace of the Spirit of the Most High, which transforms and renews in righteousness our depraved affections, turning them from sin to holiness, from the world to heaven: but she does not countenance all the wild and unseemly sallies of fanaticism, nor sanction its presumptuous claims to sensible impressions of this supernatural light, and sudden and violent impulses of this all-powerful grace; these she teaches her members to seek in the diligent use of the appointed means of their conveyance—pious reading, and meditation, and prayer, and the ordinances of the church; and she impresses on them the necessity of improving this light and grace to their spiritual illumination and sanctification, by the humble, and diligent, and persevering exercise of all the powers of their minds in the search of truth and duty, and in the works of righteousness.

In extending then our church, you extend a system of doctrine which is in all respects accommodated to the spiritual wants of mankind, and accordant with the enlightened dictates of reason.

2. You extend also, in their purity and power, the distinguishing truths of the Gospel—evangelical doctrine.

None can go further than our church does in maintaining the demerit of man, the inadequacy of his brightest virtues to stand before the blaze of that glory which confounds the cherubim—of his best performances to encounter that justice, the weight of whose awful sentence could be borne but by the Son of God: none can cherish with more reverential ardour those incomprehensible but glorious truths concerning the Divine Nature, which proclaim the Persons of the Godhead as the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of fallen and sinful man: none confounds more entirely all the vain boasting of human pride, in ascribing all our hopes of pardon here, and acceptance hereafter, solely to the merits and intercession of that divine Personage whom it has pleased God to constitute, in our nature, as the Redeemer of the world: and none lays deeper the great foundation of all genuine acceptable righteousness in the operations of that Holy Spirit, by which we abolish the whole body of sin, and rising as new men in Christ Jesus, with renewed affections daily proceed in all virtue and godliness of living.

These truths of the Christian system, fraught with peace, and holiness, and celestial hope, are not only exhibited in the didactic and technical terms of articles of faith—they glow in the devotional language of a liturgy. Thus, then—

3. In extending our church, you extend an unrivalled form of religious instruction and devotion.

For the liturgy is as perspicuous a manual of

evangelical truth, as it is an animated formulary of evangelical devotion. All the great truths of the Christian system which constitute it the power of God unto salvation, shine forth in that liturgy with the light and the heat of the sunbeam, engaging the understanding in the cordial reception of these truths, and exciting the affections with ardour and with delight to cherish them. Dispensing this to a congregation of worshippers, you furnish them with an exhibition, in the most simple, pure, and animated language, of all those divine truths which they are to believe, of all those holy duties which they are to practise: you present to their reverential homage God the Father in all his infinite attributes and exalted relations: you call on them to offer their supplications and their praises through the intercession of the eternal Son, the one great Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ; and you direct their confidence and their hopes to that Divine Spirit, of whose only gift it cometh that they can render true and acceptable service: you engage them in all the varied acts of worship, diversifying confession with praise, supplication with intercession, the highest strains of devotion with the finest portions of inspired instruction: you carry them through all those events of redemption, as sublime in their nature as beneficent in their results, beginning with the tidings of the coming of the Son of David, and ending with his exaltation to heaven; and the first pledge of his kingly dominion, the dispensing of the Holy Ghost; and the acknowledgment, in the unity of the Godhead, of the glory of the eternal Trinity: you admit them into the Christian fold by a formulary, which states, in terms as strong and animated as they are scrip-

tural and primitive, the obligations of that Christian covenant which they then assume, its inestimable privileges of redemption and grace which are then proffered them: you invite them to renew their baptismal vows in an ordinance ranked by an apostle among the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and powerfully tending to instruct and to edify those who receive it: you call them to the table of the Lord in exhortations which warn the presumptuous and persuade the thoughtless; and in confessions as humble as the broken heart can suggest, or the trembling lips utter—in supplications as fervent, in praises as ardent as the most humbled soul can feel, or the most impassioned spirit send to heaven—you prepare them for feeding spiritually on those emblems which, in the most sublime acts of adoration, oblation, and praise, have been consecrated to set forth that body and blood which give life unto the world. It is that Book of Common Prayer, for dispensing which you are now called on to contribute; and it is that Book of Common Prayer only, which, in this varied, sublime, rational, and interesting manner, exhibits the great truths of that sacred volume with which, as its best and appropriate associate, the Society which this day asks your aid hath connected it in their benevolent contributions. It is this liturgy which, in that parent church which first compiled it from the purest records of the primitive ages of Christianity, is its glory in prosperity, as it was its best consolation and safeguard in adversity; and it is this liturgy which most powerfully contributed, during those civil commotions which well nigh overwhelmed our infant and feeble Zion, to preserve her, depressed indeed, but not shorn of that

strength and lustre in which she is now advancing, we trust, to a name and a praise in our land.

4. You extend with our church the blessings of an apostolic ministry.

For "how can they preach, except they be sent?" is a question which came with earnestness and force from the lips of an inspired teacher; and how can they be sent, except by those who have received authority from the divine Head of the church to send labourers into his vineyard? is a question which carries with it its own solution; and who have authority to send, but those who, in succession, have received it from those whom the Saviour commissioned for this purpose, and promised to be with them to the end of the world? That authority, even varying sects acknowledge, is possessed by the church of which you are members; and in extending it, therefore, you extend that ministry which Christ and his apostles constituted, which the holy men of the first ages of Christianity adorned in their lives and consecrated in their deaths, and in union with whose ministrations we are united to the mystical body of Christ, and exercising a true faith, are united in living fellowship to him, its everlasting head.

And in extending our church, you not only extend a rational religion, an evangelical system of doctrine, a well ordered form of worship, an apostolic ministry; but—

5. *Lastly.* An excellent form of ecclesiastical polity, providing, in perfect congeniality with our civil system, a checked and balanced legislation, by the co-ordinate powers of its bishops, clergy,

and laity—the two former in person, and the latter by delegation, in diocesan conventions; and the laity and the clergy by delegation, and the bishops in person, in separate branches, in the general legislative body of the church—a system which secures, as far as human provisions can secure it, in a single executive in every diocese, an energetic, stable, and responsible administration of ecclesiastical business and discipline.

In extending then our church, you act the part of good citizens by extending a system congenial—more so (it is capable of proof) than any other, and as much so as is practicable—with the permanent and not delegated exercise of the authority of the ministry, with those civil constitutions which, imperfect as in some respects they may be, (for imperfection alloys all things human,) are our just pride, because they are the best security for personal rights, private independence, happiness, and the public weal.

Surely then, my brethren, you cannot hesitate as to the mode by which it is your duty to promote the spiritual interests of your fellow-men: it is by extending, as you have opportunity, and as you have the means, that church to which you have the happiness to belong; for thus you diffuse a rational digest of religion, a sound form of evangelical doctrine, a scriptural and primitive liturgy, an apostolical ministry, a correct form of ecclesiastical polity.

The highest good, then, which you can do to your fellow-men, and especially to those of the same household of faith, is to devote, as opportunity offers, your talents, your time, your example, your influence, your worldly substance, to the ex-

tension of your church. I am confident there is not among you an individual so insensible to those considerations of reason, of feeling, of the divine law, which urge the duty of doing good, as in no respect to labour to promote the welfare of others, and especially to relieve the temporal wants of his fellow-men. And yet, after all, laudable and essential as is that charity which does good to the bodies of men, which relieves their temporal necessities, how limited in its operation, how inferior in its effects, to that benevolence which relieves the wants of the soul, which provides for that higher part of our nature which is to survive when all that can in this world gratify or afflict us shall have passed away like the shadow of the morning. In diffusing among your fellow-men the power and the hopes of religion, you provide them with the only effectual solace under those ills which no human power can avert, and no human benevolence remove; you exalt them in all those relations that distinguish them as men and as citizens, and you open to them the fountains of spiritual and everlasting felicity in that state of being which is to be their final abode. If it be a duty of Christian benevolence to seek to improve the temporal condition, to elevate the temporal character, to supply the temporal necessities of your fellow-men; must it not be a still higher duty of the same benevolence, to seek to improve their spiritual condition, to elevate their spiritual character, to supply their spiritual necessities? for they are destined to live, according to their spiritual character and condition here, in a state of endless felicity or wo. You may be the instruments, by your benevolence, of saving souls from death.

The church, my brethren, with which you are connected, has been exhibited to you in those high claims which her rational and evangelical doctrine, her primitive and unrivalled liturgy, her apostolic ministry, her judicious ecclesiastical polity, entitle her to. The peculiar circumstances in which your church is placed, most powerfully urge the duty of liberal contributions for extending and preserving her in all her characteristic excellencies. In our cities she is respectable in the number and in the worldly advantages of her members—in this city, eminently so; but in many of the numerous villages and districts of our wide-spread country, she is not to be found; in others, a few of her dispersed children still acknowledge her; and in those where she is organized, her congregations, with some exceptions, are not large in regard to numbers, nor powerful as to pecuniary means. The causes of this may be found in the facts that the eastern and middle states were originally settled by a non-episcopal population, and that elsewhere a variety of unpropitious circumstances reduced her to a state of extreme depression. In some places in our southern districts, where once she flourished, she is scarcely known; in others, she has only imperfectly recovered from a feeble and depressed condition. Many are her children who, scattered through the immense regions of our rapidly-settling wilderness, anxiously seek to enjoy again her fostering care, her spiritual nurture; and experience proves, that frequently it is only necessary to exhibit her in her genuine character among those who are strangers to her, to command their esteem, their confidence, and their choice. Her spiritual guardians, those who are

intrusted with her apostolic ministry, are not deficient in the desire, and, I trust, not in the effort to extend her hallowed influence, to carry her doctrine, her ministry and services to her destitute sons in the new regions of our country, and to those who, having heard of her praise, are ready to give her a cordial welcome. But what can her spiritual guardians and pastors do, brethren of the laity, without your co-operation—not only in your counsels, in your personal influence and labours, but, above all, in your pecuniary means? Pecuniary means are wanted to perfect and establish the institution which the wisdom of the church has devised for educating a learned, orthodox, and pious ministry—to enable those ministers, as missionaries, to establish our church in the new settlements of our country—to furnish those who are destitute of them with the sacred Volume and with the Book of Common Prayer—to disperse books and tracts calculated to unfold and inculcate the evidences and the doctrines, the precepts and the institutions of the Gospel, as professed by our church.

From whence are those means to come? I hope you will not say—From the wealth of Trinity Church. I would hope that this very unfounded suggestion had ceased to chill the rising sentiment of benevolence, to close the opening hand of liberality. That wealth, brethren, was once amply dispensed, and its memorials are found in many of the edifices for worship that adorn our city and some of our villages, and in other useful establishments for religion and learning: but her profusion involved Trinity Church in serious embarrassments, and since the period in which he who addresses

you has had the charge of this diocese, that wealth has ceased to be distributed; all her resources have not been more than adequate to provide for the heavy expenses of her own establishment, for the payment of the interest of her debt, and for the essential measure of its gradual extinguishment. And if those resources were in full and unembarrassed operation, how many are the claims upon them, urged by the new congregations which are rising up in this city, which is extending beyond all anticipation! Would it be possible for that wealth, were it double what it can ever be, to answer these demands, and to extend at the same time the requisite aid to the various districts of this immense state?

It is for these your destitute and suffering brethren in the new settlements of the diocese that we ask your liberality. Believe me—I speak from personal observation—your bounty is not unnecessarily bestowed; it is not wasted on those who are able, but unwilling, to help themselves. During the period in which my personal observation has extended through the diocese, the number of clergy and congregations of our church has nearly trebled; and in every case of the erection of an edifice for worship, and of the support of the clergyman, the contributions have been liberal to an extent in many cases constituting a large proportion of the actual wealth of the individual. It is refreshing, it is in the highest degree gratifying to me thus to behold the evidences of the liberal zeal of the members and friends of our church throughout the diocese: but, alas! the pleasure has been alloyed by numerous calls for aid which I could not say would be answered, and by the sad reflection that

numerous opportunities of establishing our church were irretrievably lost.

It is honourable to our church, and the information must be gratifying to you, that whenever she can gain a dispassionate hearing, her claims to pre-eminent excellence are acknowledged, and she is gradually extending through the new settlements of the state. I have seen edifices erected that would not disgrace our city, in new settlements of the state: I have seen the neat spire or the Gothic tower shooting up amidst surrounding forests: I have heard the strains of our holy service chanted forth by a devout, and in some cases, numerous congregation, in edifices neat and commodious, and sometimes elegant, where I once traversed a silent wilderness: and this has been often done by Episcopalians, not entirely of education, but of choice and conviction; I have received the evidences that this choice and conviction were serious and final, in their presenting themselves with reverence and devotion for the apostolic rite of confirmation. In cases not a few, nearly all those who have thus publicly united themselves to our church, belonged originally to other denominations of Christians. And to what human means, under God, is this gratifying increase of our church to be ascribed? Very principally to our missionary and religious tract institutions, and to the Bible and Common Prayer Book Societies. But for these institutions, this interesting scene could not be exhibited to you; the distant members of our church would have implored in vain for her hallowed ministrations; confined would have been the borders, and few the sons of our Zion. We must in justice acknowledge that these institutions

have been nurtured by your bounty ; but the same sense of justice leads us to lament that a more liberal bounty has not extended our means of doing good, and that the benefactions of the Episcopalians of the *city* are not commensurate with the urgent calls upon their pious benevolence, nor, it is to be feared, in all cases equal to those by which other denominations of Christians laudably seek to promote their respective systems of religious truth.

The cause of this limited benevolence ought not to be ascribed to a destitution of the principle ; no ; the Episcopalians of this city are as generous on ordinary occasions as they are wealthy, yielding to none in liberal beneficence. But perhaps they are too indiscriminate in their beneficence, too regardless of that obvious policy which would lead them to concentrate all their efforts and all their contributions for the advancement of religion to the institutions of their own church, which, in her rational and evangelical doctrines, her admirable liturgy and services, her apostolic and well constituted ministry and government, exhibits the Gospel in its primitive lustre, in its purest and most attractive form.

The institutions, then, which design to support and extend this church, so worthy of your admiration, confidence, and affection, are those which you should patronize by your influence and your wealth ; these should be the almoners of that bounty by which you discharge the duty of doing spiritual good to all men, and especially unto those who are of the household of faith.

One of these institutions, the Auxiliary Bible and Common Prayer Book Society, now solicits

your contributions. Its object is to dispense Bibles and Common Prayer Books. The circumstances that have encroached upon its funds and involved it in debt, are detailed to you in the report which has been laid before you. One of them is, the necessity of correcting, by a standard copy, their plates of the Bible; and they are now enabled to present a singularly correct edition of the sacred volume. Another merit of this society consists in its having, at an early period, supplied the church, by means of stereotype plates, with a cheap edition of the Book of Common Prayer, and with an extensive gratuitous distribution of it. This gratuitous distribution is essential to the progress of our church. Every person belonging to that church should possess a Prayer Book. In our new settlements, the pecuniary resources of the people necessarily are almost entirely applied to providing the means of subsistence, and to extricating themselves from the debt which they have incurred in the purchase of their farms. The expense of providing every member of a family with a Prayer Book would fall too heavy upon them; and in many cases, the present of a Prayer Book to a person who, though able, may not be disposed to purchase one, by affording him an opportunity of becoming acquainted with her service, has a favourable effect in removing his prejudices against our church, or in confirming and establishing a rising attachment to her.

The individuals who have the management of this institution have long been known, and long valued, as laborious and active agents in this and the other societies of our church. They have not been sparing of their pecuniary means—they

have not been sparing of their exertions and their time. God, I trust, will not forget their work and labour of love. Nor, my brethren, if you cooperate with them, will he forget yours. I am persuaded you love your church—you love her for her rational and evangelical doctrines, her admirable liturgy, and for all the other claims which she possesses to the full confidence of your understandings and the warm affection of your hearts. On this, and on every similar opportunity, you give the best evidence of your affection to her, in furnishing the means of extending to those who are destitute of them, but who desire to possess them, her hallowed institutions. These institutions you enjoy under the most favourable circumstances, at comparatively a very small pecuniary cost. Think of your less fortunate brethren, who, struggling with the numerous difficulties and deprivations of a new country, are either entirely destitute of the ministrations of the church, or obtain them at a cost far beyond their means. Pity and relieve them, by furnishing them with instructive tracts, by dispensing to them the volume which contains the word of life; next to that volume, the first of uninspired compositions, the faithful digest of the truths of that volume, the best companion of public devotion, the dearest blessing of the churchman—the Book of Common Prayer. Give efficacy to all your other exertions, by sending to them missionaries. It must be obvious, that, without missionaries, vain are all other methods of extending our church. Bibles, and Prayer Books, and tracts will not supply those public means of religious instruction and grace which the ministry only can furnish: and be assured—it is not a random assertion,

thrown out to excite a temporary glow of benevolence, it is founded on my personal knowledge—be assured, it is utterly impossible for Episcopal congregations, in many places, to support a minister without extraneous aid; and so extensive is the field of distribution, that the sum allotted to each missionary is so small, that, with the contributions of the people, it affords him but a scanty support. And yet who is entitled to higher estimation than the missionary, who has to seek after his scattered flock, and by constant and laborious attention to form them into congregations, and then to excite them to build a place of worship, and to guard them from the influence of erroneous opinions or enthusiastic practices, that would draw them from the sound and sober principles of their church? I state confidently the opinion, that we only want the means of aiding in the education and support of ministers, to establish our church in many places where, without these means, the hope of doing so must be relinquished. Surely to no object can your bounty be more beneficially bestowed than to sending the truths and ministrations of the Gospel of salvation, as set forth in the church that engages your esteem and confidence, to those of your brethren who are destitute of them, to those who earnestly desire to enjoy, and who will bless the beneficence that grants the much prayed-for boon. There will be a time when wealth can no longer minister to your temporal comfort, or consequence, or gratification. By the pious use of it, make to yourselves friends of this false, this uncertain mammon, that when you fail—and fail we all must—in that hour that separates us for ever from the world, you may be received into everlasting habitations.

SERMON XVI.

ON THE DANGER OF FORSAKING THE SERVICE OF THE
LORD.

ISAIAH i. 28.

They that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.

BRETHREN, there are probably none among us who have not been devoted to God in baptism, and on whom have not thus been imposed the name and the obligations of Christians; and there are doubtless few among us who, in the ordinance of confirmation appointed for the purpose, have not publicly assumed the vows of baptism, and thus personally pledged themselves to the service of the Lord. There are some among us (alas, that their number is not greater!) who, commemorating the death of their blessed Lord and Master in his holy supper, "have offered and presented themselves, their souls and bodies, a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto God."

But man is bound by the law of his nature to obey that almighty Being by whom he was made an intelligent and immortal creature. Every discovery which reason opens to him of the transcendent perfections of the Lord of the universe, urges the duty of offering to this great and glorious Being the homage of his heart and of his life. Every day's preservation increases his obligation to serve his gracious Preserver: and as he advances into

life, daily sustained by the power and blessed by the bounty of that benignant Benefactor who satisfies him with good, gratitude joins her voice to the voice of reason and nature, and loudly commands him to show forth, by the obedience of his life, the praises of his God.

Devoted, then, as we all are to the Lord, and bound by the most solemn obligations to serve him; and yet liable, through the corruption of our nature and the power of temptation, to forget and to violate our engagements, it is of the utmost importance that we constantly bear in mind the *guilt*, the *folly*, and the *danger* of forsaking the service of the Lord.

It is the awful denunciation of the prophet—
“They that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.”

The guilt—the folly—and the danger of forsaking the service of the Lord: this is the subject to which I now call your attention.

I. The guilt of forsaking the service of the Lord arises from the considerations—

1. That we thus violate the general obligations of reason;

2. And that we also violate our own express and solemn engagements.

1. In forsaking the service of God, we violate the general obligations of reason.

If we refuse to the eternal Maker and Preserver of the universe the homage and obedience which are his due; if, however free we may be from gross irregularities, we are still in heart devoted to worldly pursuits, and strangers to the influences of divine grace purifying our hearts and raising our affec-

tions to things above; if, by open and repeated transgressions of the laws of God, we set his authority at defiance—we are guilty of contemning the most solemn obligations which reason can impose; we violate the laws of that Almighty Creator who formed us after his own image, and can in an instant recall that life which he gave us—of that gracious Preserver who guards us from the numberless dangers to which we are exposed, who keeps our souls in life, and suffers not our feet to be moved—of that merciful Benefactor who bestows on us all our blessings and enjoyments, crowning us with mercy and loving-kindness. If, then, we violate those obligations to God which reason most solemnly sanctions, and forsake his service, which enjoins no duties but those which promote the perfection and purity of our nature, and yield the highest joys of which our souls are susceptible, surely we act contrary to our character as reasonable beings. Let us then take heed lest we forsake that service of the living God which reason approves, and which is the perfection and the felicity of our nature; and wherever the world, by its temptations, its ridicule, or its persecutions, would seduce us from our God, let us call to mind that, in forsaking his service, we shall incur the guilt of violating obligations sanctioned by the strongest dictates of reason and nature.

2. And we shall also violate our express and solemn engagements.

If we have not acknowledged, in some solemn act of religion, the force of those obligations by which reason binds us to the service of God, we labour under the imputation of the greatest folly, ingratitude, and guilt. But our parents or spon-

sors most probably devoted us in baptism to the service of God; and the vows then made for us, most reasonable and conducive to the perfection of our nature, we are bound to discharge. And have we not assumed these vows in the ordinance of confirmation, or at the supper of the Lord? Christians, we are solemnly pledged to the service of God: take heed lest we forsake him. Tremendous is the guilt of violating the vows of our Christian vocation, and thus putting him to an open shame who died for us, and grieving that Holy Spirit of God whereby we were sealed unto the day of redemption. Glaring is the impiety which can renounce the service of the God of goodness, and enlist under the banner of the prince of darkness—which can forsake those paths that lead to peace and to the glories of heaven, and pursue the way that leads to misery, to the chambers of hell. Tremendous the presumption, which can brave the power, the justice, the vengeance of the living God.

II. For not less conspicuous than the guilt, are the *folly* and *danger* of forsaking the service of the Lord.

1. We shall thus incur the reproaches of our own minds;
2. We shall lose the esteem of the pious; and,
3. We shall forfeit the favour and incur the just displeasure of God.

1. If we forsake the service of God, we shall incur the reproaches of our own minds.

God has stamped on his laws such traits of excellence, and has so fitted them to the powers

and affections of the human mind, and they are so fruitful of peace, and joy, and felicity, that reason must approve of them, and conscience, enlightened and uncorrupted, must delight in them. The language of the inspired psalmist concerning the law of God, is the language of reason and conscience—"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom unto the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, and rejoice the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth light unto the eyes. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb."

What reproaches of conscience then must they encounter, who cast off laws thus reasonable and full of consolation! The remorse and misery inseparably connected with transgression, must be aggravated by the constant recollection of those pure and holy joys which they have forfeited. Conscience, reminding them of a God insulted, of a Saviour contemned, of vows violated, of immortal felicity rejected, will perpetually excite the emotions of shame, of regret, of fearful apprehension. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

2. They who forsake the service of God, forfeit the esteem and confidence of the pious.

Man is impelled by every principle of his nature to intercourse with his fellow-men; and in this social intercourse he would be miserable, were he denied a place in the affections of those with whom he associates, and pointed at by the finger of scorn. Behold in this principle the folly of those who renounce their allegiance to their God. While ranged in the ranks of the pious, they took counsel toge-

ther as friends; and, however forsaken by the world, or pursued by its reproaches and persecutions, the servant of God would find consolation in the sympathy and support of those with whom he was united by the ties of Christian esteem and confidence. The world with its sorrows and calamities need not intimidate or depress him while supported by the friendship and affection of the righteous, those excellent of the earth for whom God governs all the events of time, and for whom he is preparing the glories of eternity.

But when the servant of God leaves his heavenly Master, he separates from those whose confidence and support constituted his honour and his consolation. How can he meet the condemning countenances of those who, once witnessing his plighted vows to their God, now witness those vows broken and contemned? What shame and what remorse will their reproaches, which conscience will suggest, and which conscience will sanction, convey to his soul! Faithless Christian, in forsaking thy God, thou hast forsaken the best of masters, the most tender of parents, the most faithful of friends—thou hast trampled under foot the Saviour who wrought thy redemption by his tears and by his blood, and hast lied to that Holy Ghost whom thou didst often invoke to seal and to strengthen thy pious vows—thou hast blotted out thy name from the book of life, and hast cast from thee thy title to thy heavenly inheritance—alas! to the crimes of the basest ingratitude and of perjury to thy Maker, thou hast added the grossest folly. False to thy God, thou canst not escape the censures of the pious, the reproaches of conscience, and the vengeance of thy eternal Judge.

It is this last consideration which most strikingly displays the FOLLY and the DANGER of the conduct of those who forsake the Lord.

3. They forfeit the favour, they incur the wrath of the Almighty Sovereign and Judge of the world.

“They who forsake the Lord shall be consumed.”

Alas! what can the faithless, the apostatizing Christian interpose against the sentence of destruction! He had solemnly vowed allegiance to God, and wilfully violates his engagements; the comforts and joys of the divine favour he deliberately renounces; the blood of that Saviour which cleanseth from sin, and which spoke peace to his conscience, he tramples under foot; and prefers, to the light and joy arising from the promises of the word of God, and from the prospect of the glories of the world to come, the service of sin and the bondage of Satan. Perdition surely is his due—it is his choice—and how dreadful that perdition, the judgment of the last day will disclose.

Brethren, there are none among us, I trust, who have not assumed the name and the obligations of Christians; and yet are there not some who live in the habitual neglect of their Christian obligations—who, by a life of thoughtless gaiety, of sensual pleasure, of sinful indulgence, dishonour that holy name wherewith they are called? Alas! they are of the number of those who are forsaking the Lord, who are drawing back unto perdition. From walking in the counsel of the ungodly, and standing in the way of sinners, they will soon fearlessly sit in the seat of the scornful. Brethren, if we are thus forsaking that service to which reason, conscience, and the word of God call us, and to which the most solemn obligations bind us, before the

sentence of destruction is executed upon us, let us repent and turn unto the Lord. The day of our probation is not yet terminated—justice has not yet closed against us the door of mercy: the miseries of hell may yet be shunned—the glories of heaven may yet be secured. God is yet waiting to be gracious unto us: let us return unto him, lest he shut up his mercies in everlasting displeasure; for “they who forsake the Lord shall be consumed.”

But there are those of whom better things are hoped: there are those who, satisfied of the reasonableness and excellence of their Christian obligations, and impressed with the supreme importance of securing the salvation of their souls, are desirous to serve their God and Saviour; and who, not ashamed of the cross of Christ, have confessed him before men, and in the ordinances of his church renewed their vows of devotion to their Lord and Redeemer. Disciples of Christ, to you the solemn caution applies—“Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” And you also should bear in mind the awful denunciation—“They that forsake the Lord shall be consumed”—“they who draw back, draw back unto perdition.” You are satisfied that the service of God is a reasonable service—your duty, your privilege, and your felicity. You are impressed with the solemn conviction that the business of your salvation is of supreme importance, and that every other concern should be subordinate to the most interesting object of making your Christian calling and election sure. To gain the whole world and lose your own soul would, in your estimation, be the extreme of folly; and your own experience confirms the conclusions

of reason and the declarations of the word of God, that the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness, and that the yoke of the Redeemer is easy and his burden light. What then should seduce you from the service of God, or tempt you to leave the wise course in which you have engaged?

Shall you be induced to forget your Christian obligations, or to neglect or contemn your Christian hopes, by the ridicule of the thoughtless or the scoffs of the ungodly? What! will ye be afraid of the revilings of those whom the moth shall eat up as a garment, and the worm devour as wool, and forget God your Maker? Constantly bear in mind that solemn declaration of your Lord—"Whosoever is ashamed of me before men, of him will I also be ashamed before the angels of God: and whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father in heaven."

Shall the business or the pleasures of this world induce you to forsake the service of your God? What is the world, when its riches, its honours, or its pleasures, in which ye trusted, vanish away? What is the world, when its sorrows enter into your souls? What is the world, when death is severing your hold upon it, and urging you into eternity? Oh! let not the world, its business, or its pleasures, which are vain and transitory, seduce you from the service of your God, from your duty and your felicity, and lead you to perdition: "for they who forsake the Lord shall be consumed."

Christians, let us constantly look beyond the present moment to the end of our course. Shame and misery await us, if we yield to temptation, and forsake our God. Glory and honour everlasting will be awarded us, if we continue his faithful

servants. Let us then “persevere in well doing,” animated by the assurance, that “in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

But let us remember, that exposed as is our frail and corrupt nature to numerous and powerful temptations, the grace of God only can keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of his glory. This grace then let us invoke by habitual and fervent prayer, in the worship and ordinances of his church, and by the constant and devout participation of that holy supper which is the means of its conveyance to the soul; and which, displaying, in the most affecting manner, the love of our God and Saviour, our Christian obligations and our Christian hopes, affords the most animating incentives to perseverance in our Christian course. Let us then make God our strength, and the most high God our refuge, and he will be our guide and our defence; with every temptation he will make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it; and when our course of probation is closed, the joys of his favour which now refresh us, will terminate in felicity exalted as that God who dispenses it, and lasting as eternity.

But if we forsake his service, shame and remorse will, sooner or later, embitter to us all our enjoyments; and in the world to come we shall bewail our guilt and folly under the tortures of the worm that never dies, and the fire that never is quenched. For it is the denunciation of God by his prophet—“They who forsake the Lord shall be consumed.” God hath said, and it shall come to pass.

SERMON XVII.

THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

EPHESIANS iv. 12.

For the work of the ministry.

THE apostle, in the passage from which the words of the text are selected, exhibits Christ's ascent into heaven, and the important consequences of this event. He became Head and Ruler of his spiritual kingdom, and he set apart various orders of men for "the work of the ministry."

It is my design on this occasion of administering holy orders, to lay before you a brief view of the constitution of the Christian ministry, particularly in reference to the office of a priest, to which the reverend person who has for some time officiated among you in the office of a deacon, the lowest grade of the ministry, is now to be admitted.

They who perform "the work of the ministry," taken from among men, are liable to all the imperfections and infirmities of our fallen nature. It would be a fundamental error, however, to confound the office with the person, and to consider the former as human in its origin, its powers, and its duties. It has pleased that divine Personage who is constituted the Head and Ruler of all who believe in him, to ordain that they should be associated in a visible society constituted with officers and ordinances, in order that, by communion with

these officers in the devout participation of these ordinances, they might become interested in his merits, and be established in those holy graces and virtues which will qualify them for the enjoyment of the blessings of his salvation. This spiritual society, ruled by these officers, and possessing these ordinances, is styled, in the sacred writings, the Church, and is constantly exhibited as the "body of Christ," to which men must be united, in order to derive from their divine Head the spiritual blessings which he has purchased, and which he dispenses.

This society, it must be apparent, is not temporal, but spiritual in its nature and privileges—is not human, but divine in its origin and destination. The officers who are set over it must, therefore, also be spiritual in their powers and duties—and the commission divine, by which they exercise their functions. Originating with no human authority, the commission for the ministry can proceed only from that divine Personage who "is the Head over all things to his church," and to whom "all power is given in heaven and on earth."

When he constituted that visible society the church, to which were to be applied the merits of his precious blood, and which was to be sanctified and ruled by the spirit of his grace, he delegated the apostles to send others as he sent them, by an external commission, to be the instructors, the priests, and the rulers of his spiritual family "always, even to the end of the world."

The apostles were, at the first, the sole officers of the Christian church: with them, and with them only, rested the power of constituting the officers of that spiritual kingdom which they were com-

manded to establish, and of conferring that commission, without which there can be no authority to minister in holy things: for whatever may be the qualifications of any man—let him be learned as Gamaliel, and holy as Aaron, the servant of the Lord—yet he will not be authorized to take upon him the functions of the ministry until he receives an external commission for the purpose; for, as the apostle declares, “no man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron;” and Aaron was visibly commissioned to his sacred function. And our blessed Lord glorified not himself to be a high priest; but he that said unto him, “Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.”

The ministry, as the apostles constituted it, must be unchangeable—for the ministry is of divine authority; and the apostles alone being empowered to constitute it, its divine authority would be lost by any change in their appointments. They established as their successors in their standing prerogatives of commissioning to the ministry and governing the church, an order of men, among whom were ranked Timothy at Ephesus, Titus at Crete, the seven angels, as they are styled in the book of Revelation, or messengers of the Asiatic churches. From these, through their successors, has been transmitted to the present day, that external commission which is necessary in order to minister in sacred things.

This was the order first called Apostles, (or, as the word in the original signifies, messengers.) But afterwards the name Apostles was confined to the twelve disciples of our Lord; and their successors took the title of Bishops, or Overseers, which

is applied in the New Testament to the elders or presbyters, as having the oversight of the flock; and they are the order who, in all places and at all periods, (until little more than two centuries since,) have exercised the powers of ordination and of supremacy in government. If they had not been originally vested with these powers, an attempt to usurp them would have been marked by the decided resistance of those over whom they thus claimed lawless dominion. The usurpation, in all places where the cross of Christ had been planted—in the extreme regions of Europe and Asia, in remote Egypt, and in the sequestered vallies of India—so as to leave no trace of any equality in the ministry, would have been morally impossible; and if it had, it would have constituted an era memorable for a radical change in the apostolic constitution of the ministry—an era that would have been prominent, and easily distinguished; and not, as now, to be searched for in vain on the page of history.

Subordinate to this first order of the ministry, we trace, in the apostolic history, the appointment of elders or presbyters, who were originally called also Bishops or Overseers, as having the oversight of the flock; but this name afterwards became appropriate to the first order of the ministry. This is the order which is called, in ecclesiastical language, Priests, because they celebrate that which the Gospel has proportionably to the Levitical sacrifice, the offering of which belonged to the priests—the spiritual oblation of the body and blood of Christ under the symbols of bread and wine. And in this power of celebrating the holy communion, the order of priests is principally dis-

tinguished from that of deacons. These are also an order of the ministry, as they were set apart by the laying on of hands; and it appears from the Acts of the Apostles that they preached and baptized, having all the powers of the ministry but the celebration of the holy communion, and the pronouncing the sentence of absolution and benediction, which are peculiar to the priest's office.

The nature of the priest's office, and the duties of the people in respect to it—its necessity, and the estimation in which it should be held—I proceed now to consider, with reference—

1. To the worship and ordinances of the church;
2. To the preaching of the word;
3. And to parochial duties.

1. The reciprocal duties of a minister and his congregation, in reference to the worship and ordinances of the church.

It has pleased God, in accommodation to our nature, most powerfully affected by appeals to our senses, and in order to impress us with more clear and lively views of the spiritual blessings which he dispenses, to constitute visible signs and seals, sacraments and ordinances, by which the blessings of his mercy and grace are certified and conveyed to us. In the services of the church, offering homage, supplication, and praise to the Father of our spirits, we thus hold that communion with him, whereby our souls are purified from the dross of worldly feelings, elevated above the transitory objects of time, and consoled under the changes and trials of this sublunary state, with the foretaste of the glories that await us in an enduring, and pure, and perfect existence. Quickening and che-

rishing the holy dispositions and graces of our hearts, the worship and ordinances of the sanctuary on earth, in which God vouchsafes to dwell by the communications of his grace, prepare us for the enjoyment of those displays of his glory with which the High and Holy One fills the temple that is eternal in the heavens.

In this view of the exalted nature and tendency of the worship and ordinances of the church, how important is it that the steward of these sacred mysteries, the organ of the people in their supplications to the throne of grace, the servant of the Most High, commissioned to bless the people in his name, should be diligent and faithful in the administration of the ordinances of the church, and should unite reverence, humility, and fervour in conducting the worship of the sanctuary. While he is impressed with a deep conviction of his unworthiness, and cherishes a lively view of the mercies of the God of his salvation, he should be penetrated with a profound sense of the exalted glories of that Being whose worship he is celebrating; all the affections of his soul should be awakened when, in the services of the temple, he approaches the majesty of that God whose glories cherubim and seraphim cannot worthily celebrate; and his manner, grave, unaffected, but fervent, should be calculated to excite in the worshippers the exalted spirit of devotion which animates his own heart, when he invokes and adores the God of all goodness and mercy.

But in vain will prove the most reverential and faithful ministration of the worship and ordinances of the church, unless the congregation unite in rendering homage to God in the worship of the temple,

and devoutly seek to obtain a title to his mercy and the influences of his grace in the ordinances of that church, union with which, as the body of Christ, is the divinely constituted mean of union with him, its head. Christ is the Head of the church, the Saviour of the body, as the apostle declares; and united to the body, we are united, in the exercise of penitence and faith, to the divine Head, from whom flow all the blessings of grace, and consolation, and eternal life.

If then, while in deep solicitude for their salvation, the ministering servant of the Most High invokes, for the assembled congregation, the grace and mercy of God their Saviour; if, while humbled with the emotions of penitence, he pronounces the penitential confession, and, animated with the view of the Divine goodness and mercy, offers the sacred hymns of praise; if, while he is engaged in exercises the most awful and interesting, the congregation are unaffected by solemnities in which they ought to take the deepest interest; if, while he offers to them, in the ordinances of the church, the inestimable blessings of mercy and grace, they refuse to come to the holy feast which he spreads before them—they do more than contemn the ministrations of a worm of the dust—they contemn the most high God, whose commission he bears, and whose ordinances he dispenses; they do more than deprive themselves of the inestimable consolations which are derived from communion with God in the worship of his holy temple, and exclude themselves from his fold on earth: rejecting the pledges of his favour and love, and the means of his grace and mercy, they render themselves unworthy to be admitted to his presence, and to

enjoy the light and glory of his countenance in his celestial temple; and their portion will be in outer darkness. Brethren, take heed lest, by neglecting the worship and the ordinances of the sanctuary, this condemnation be incurred by you.

2. Important also are the duties of the Christian minister and his congregation, in reference to the preaching of the word.

Watching over his flock as one who is to give account, the Christian minister will faithfully dispense to his people the word of life. The preaching of the word is one of the divinely constituted means of awakening the careless, of consoling the depressed, and of advancing the servants of God in the holy graces and virtues of their high vocation. Preach the word; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering, was the solemn injunction of Paul to Timothy. If the minister of Christ is negligent, or inattentive, or careless in dividing to his people the word of truth, how can it be expected that they will be acquainted with the doctrines of salvation, with the principles of that holy society, that body of Christ with which they are united, and thus be able to resist the assaults of heresy and schism? Heavy is the wo denounced against him, who, having assumed the sacred office of a dispenser of the word of God, neglects to declare with zeal and faithfulness the truths of salvation.

It is then the duty of the divinely commissioned servant of the Most High to unfold the whole counsel of God—to proclaim it with plainness, with force and fervour. It should be his first care to make men sensible that they are fallen and guilty

creatures, unworthy of God's favour, and unfit for heaven—obnoxious, on account of their wilful sins, to God's displeasure, and fitted for destruction. Then, under the sense of their guilt and misery, they will be disposed gratefully to receive the doctrine of salvation through the merits of that Saviour who must be displayed to them as the Word made flesh, paying, in the sacrifice of the cross, the infinite price of their redemption. They must be taught that there is salvation in no other; but that in him, the Son of God, there is fulness of redemption and grace. They must be taught, that to become partakers of this salvation, they must exercise a true and lively faith—with the heart as well as the understanding embracing the joyful truth, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

But the faithful minister of Christ, while he thus makes faith the leading principle of salvation, must be careful to maintain the necessity of good works as its fruits, and of that spiritual change which, renewing the soul to righteousness, can alone qualify it for the presence and enjoyment of God. Viewing, agreeably to the dictates of reason and the declarations of Scripture, the faith which is the principle of salvation, not as an irresistible, but a moral principle, he will inculcate the necessity of cherishing it, of preserving it, and of calling it into active exercise, by diligence, by resolution, by watchfulness, and especially by the participation of the ordinances of that church to which, as the body of Christ, all his faithful members must be united, and in which they are quickened, sanctified, and comforted, by that Holy Spirit which he bestows upon it. It is a truth generally overlooked,

almost wholly, I may say, disregarded in the present day, but which prominently appears in the writings of inspired apostles, and which was earnestly cherished by the primitive Christians, that by communion with the church, the mystical body of the Redeemer, by the participation of its apostolic ministrations and ordinances, in the exercise of penitence and faith, must communion be maintained with its divine Head. The nature of this church of Christ, therefore, and of those sacraments and ordinances by which communion with it is to be maintained, and the orders and authority of that ministry by which these sacraments and ordinances are to be administered, and this spiritual society governed, are important parts of the plan of salvation, which it is the indispensable duty of the Christian minister to explain and enforce. With unceasing solicitude he will call on those who are without the fold of the Redeemer, to enter into it by baptism, that they may thus be translated from their natural state into a state of salvation. The young, who, by this holy sacrament, were made in infancy members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven, he will diligently prepare, by catechetical instruction, for ratifying their baptismal privileges in the laying on of hands. He will earnestly exhort all the members of Christ's mystical body to maintain their communion with him, its divine Head, by devoutly participating of the life-giving symbols of the body and blood of their Lord. And he will excite them, by every motive of gratitude, duty, and interest, by the hopes of heaven promised to the faithful, by the fears of hell denounced against the disobedient, to walk worthy of the vo-

cation wherewith they are called, and to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things; and to exhibit with increasing lustre, in the progress of their Christian course, all the graces of the Spirit, by which only they can be fitted for the inheritance of the saints in light.

In the illustration and defence^d of divine truth, and in the addresses and exhortations of the sanctuary, he will seek to exert all the powers of reasoning, and all the force of elocution, that he may both convince the judgment and permanently engage the affections of the heart.

But whatever may be the fidelity, the zeal and earnestness with which the minister of Christ discharges the duty of preaching the word, if those to whom he dispenses it, value the addresses of the sanctuary solely or principally as they gratify the fancy, the taste, or the passions; if, while, as the messenger of the Most High, he denounces the terrors of a violated law, unfolds the truths of the everlasting Gospel, and proclaims the promises of mercy to a lost race; if, while he is enforcing truths of infinite moment, the conduct of those to whom he ministers is marked by indifference, inattention, or levity—his preaching will be in vain—alas! it will be worse than in vain; for his divine Master hath declared—“Whoso heareth you, heareth me; and whoso despiseth you, despiseth me.” If, however attentive they may be in the sanctuary to the exhortations which he delivers, they permit the business or the pleasures of the world to dissipate the serious thoughts and pious resolutions which were excited and formed—in vain to them will prove the preaching of the word. For, concerning these negligent and unprofitable hearers, God hath

pronounced a fearful sentence—"Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all 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 cometh 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 would not choose the fear of the Lord: they despised all my counsel; and would none of my reproof; therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

3. *Lastly.* Important and interesting, in respect to parochial duties, is the priest's office, and the relation which the people sustain to it.

In his intercourse with his flock, the Christian pastor should be an example not only of a blameless, but of a holy life. He should exhibit not only a character in which malevolence can detect no stain, but one which attracts universal esteem, by the lustre of those holy, and mild, and benevolent graces which adorn it, and which endear him to his people, not only as their guide and pastor, but as their friend. Shunning that sanctimonious piety which, as it haughtily stalks abroad, seems to say to every one in its progress—"Stand off from me, for I am holier than thou;" he will seek, by the cheerfulness, and the kindness, and the condescension that distinguish his deportment, to diffuse happiness in every circle in which he moves, and

to heighten those innocent joys of social and domestic intercourse which, while they unbend and relax, refine and exalt the mind and the heart. But, never losing sight of the sacred nature of that calling which ranks him as a worker with his divine Lord in the salvation of the souls of men, he will not descend to the commission of slight indecorum, still less will he degrade the sanctity of his character by approaching the precincts of unhallowed indulgence. Steadily keeping in view the object to which the most solemn vows have devoted him, the turning sinners to righteousness, he will permit no opportunity to escape in which, without infringing on the laws of courtesy and propriety, (for religion does not dispense with them,) he may impress some religious truth, or enforce some moral precept. The constant tenour of his life and conversation, the fervour of his zeal, the fidelity of his labours, will all evince that the service to which his divine Lord calls him, occupies his supreme solicitude; that the advancement of that church which the Redeemer purchased with his blood, and which is the fold in which the sheep of Christ are secured from the snares of error and the paths of sin, and nourished and prepared, in truth and holiness, for the glories of the heavenly rest, is the object which engrosses the highest powers of his understanding, and the most elevated affections of his heart.

Behold the faithful minister in the discharge of his parochial duties. Behold him mild, for his blessed Lord was gentle; yet, when duty demands, like that Master, resolute. You behold him humble, for his Master was meek and lowly; yet, when the interests of his Master are concerned, zealous and

dauntless. His well-timed admonitions awe the profane ; his affectionate warnings awaken the impenitent. Soothed by the consolations which, in that tenderness that breaks not the bruised reed, he administers, the dejected and afflicted are led to repose on the mercies of their Father in heaven, and find rest to their souls. Excited by those invitations which are warmed by his own experience of the fulness of mercy in Jesus Christ, the weary and the heavy laden, repairing to the cross of the Saviour, are eased of the burden of their sins. Animated by those exhortations which are dictated by a lively view of the exalted character and destiny of Christians, they are urged to press forward to higher attainments and to brighter hopes. He comes to the chamber of sickness, emphatically the messenger of the Most High, bearing the cross of his Saviour ; alarming the impenitent by the view of that blood shed for him which he has trampled under foot, but directing the desponding soul of the penitent to that Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. At the bed of the dying Christian, like an angel of mercy, he is seen animating the departing spirit to enter with hope and with triumph the valley of the shadow of death. Here is the most exalted station, here the highest triumph of the Christian minister. Through the grace of his Master, he is made the instrument of exalting a soul that was lost, to the glories of eternity.

What character more exalted and interesting than a minister of Christ, who is faithful in the discharge of his elevated duties ? and what propriety and force in the exhortation of the apostle—
Very highly in love to esteem him who thus devotes

his time and his talents to the highest interests of his flock. His affectionate labours it is their duty to reward by every expression of kindness and attention. In order that his ministrations and duties among them may conduce to their edification and comfort, they should be also mindful of the apostolic admonition, to "be at peace among themselves:" for discords and divisions are not only opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, not only unworthy of the character of those who, members of Christ, are members one of another, but are destructive of the happiness of a congregation, and render inefficacious the labours of the most faithful minister. His grateful flock should know him who thus unceasingly devotes himself to their spiritual good—know him, not only in rendering to him every mark of respect, of honour, and affection, but in the noble and generous aim to secure every temporal comfort for him, who, in his devotion to their eternal interests, and in his turning all his cares and studies towards the high duties of his sacred calling, is bound to lay aside the study of the world and of the flesh. Next to intercourse with heaven, to that communion with his Lord and Master from which flow those elevating joys which the world can neither give nor take away, the affectionate attention and support of his people constitute the highest consolations of the Christian minister, under the difficulties and anxieties, the perplexities and trials of his arduous course. Happy the minister who thus faithfully watches over the souls of his people! Happy the congregation who thus know the minister who labours among them, and esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake! Discharging faithfully their reciprocal du-

ties, they flourish under the blessing of that gracious Lord whom they serve in his church on earth, and are thus prepared for a translation to those courts of the church triumphant, where the worship and service of the God of their salvation will be no more alloyed by imperfection, by sorrow, and sin ; but, perfect and pure, will dispense a happiness transcendent as the infinite glories which they behold, and lasting as eternity.

SERMON XVIII.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

ECCLESIASTES vii. 2.

It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.

THE present life is a state of probation for an eternal existence—it is a pilgrimage to a permanent and enduring country beyond the grave. Suited to this character of life are the different changes that mark our condition. One while the house of feasting opens to us its joyous courts—prosperity casting upon us its rays, gladness is diffused over every prospect, and the lively emotions of pleasure and felicity are awakened in our breasts: the business and pursuits of life are crowned with success: health and plenty pervading our dwellings, they resound with the voice of joy and peace. But some dispensation of Providence changes the house of feasting into the house of mourning. The plans concerted with the greatest prudence and foresight, from which we promised ourselves the plentiful fruit of emolument and happiness, are blasted by the stroke of disappointment: our families, the abode of health and pleasure, are invaded by disease; the dearest connexions are severed from us; and the sighs of

sorrow succeed the strains of joy—the house of feasting is become the house of mourning.

Pleasant indeed is it to take up our abode in the house of feasting—to enjoy all the comforts and the luxuries of life, without being subject to the corrodings of care, to the shocks of disappointment, or to the blasts of affliction. But the house of feasting is not the school in which to learn the lessons of heavenly wisdom: its fascinating charms and its luxurious pleasures tend to attach us to a world which we must soon leave—to make us forget that tribunal at which we must render an account of our actions—and to put far off that eternity on which we must speedily enter. Too often engrossed with the joys that in constant succession present themselves in the house of feasting, we forget our dependence as creatures, and our guilt as sinners; we live only for pleasure; we are devoted to the indulgence of our passions; and God and eternity enter not into our thoughts.

Better then, surely, is it to go to the house of mourning. In the disappointments and the afflictions which we there view, we behold the vanity of the world and all that in the world can interest us; and convinced of the folly of setting our affections on sublunary joys that are so fleeting, we are excited to seek the permanent and satisfying felicity of the kingdom of God.

“It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.”

The salutary lessons, then, of the house of mourning—the end of all men—these let us lay to heart.

1. In the house of mourning we may learn the vanity and uncertainty of human life.

When all our plans succeed according to our wishes ; when wealth and honour elevate us to the summit of enjoyment ; when health inflames our desires, and excites to the indulgence of the passions ; elated with the joys of the house of feasting, we are apt to forget our dependent and humble condition. It is the language of our hearts—"Our own arm and our own strength have gotten us this wealth." Occupied solely with the gratification of our passions, to which health excites us, and the means of which prosperity affords, we bury, in the unceasing round of pleasure, the recollection of the shortness and vanity of life, of the solemn account, and the eternal destiny to which we are hastening.

From this dangerous condition, into which uninterrupted prosperity too often deludes us, the stroke of adversity seems necessary to recall us to serious reflection, to just views of our character and of our destiny. When the superstructure of prosperity, which we supposed would defy the storm, falls beneath its blast ; when health, which was carrying us along the current of pleasure, is interrupted, and disease invades our bodies and dries up the springs of enjoyment ; when our relatives, our friends, or our acquaintance, fall beneath the stroke of death ; when the house of feasting is thus changed into the house of mourning ; how impressive the lesson of the vanity of life, and of the uncertainty of all its prospects ! and how forcible the call to us to prepare for the summons which in an unexpected hour may snatch us from the midst of worldly enjoyment, and place us in the

scenes of eternity! Salutory, then, may prove the house of mourning: there we may lay to heart the vanity and uncertainty of human life, of all its concerns and all its pleasures, when supremely pursued and immoderately enjoyed. How vain that inordinate love, that supreme pursuit of objects, which, in the moment of rich fruition, may be torn from us! how vain those projects of worldly prosperity which the hand of disappointment may in a moment frustrate! how vain that secure confidence in life and its enjoyments, which so many changes interrupt, so many sorrows alloy, and which the stroke of death may in an instant terminate! "Surely man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain: he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them. Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away."

Discontented seclusion, indeed, from the duties and the innocent relaxations of life, is not a dictate of reason nor a demand of religion. The experience of the uncertainty of human life and the vanity of its joys, should not abate our ardour in the discharge of its duties, nor our thankful enjoyment of its blessings, when a gracious Providence puts them within our reach. The house of mourning should not excite in us a disgust for the joys of the house of feasting—it should only weaken our inordinate attachment to it: it should not make us despise the bounties of our heavenly Benefactor—it should only prevent us from resting upon them as our supreme good. From the disappointments and afflictions which fill the house of mourning, we should draw the salutary lessons, that we are strangers and pilgrims upon earth; that our hea-

venly Father designs, by the discipline of affliction, to prepare us for immortal joys; that we are not, therefore, to expect uninterrupted prosperity in this changing scene; that we are not to set our affections supremely on those transitory pleasures that may occasionally illumine our path; but while with thankful hearts we repose on the goodness of our heavenly Benefactor and Father, and enjoy his bounties, we are to keep our hearts steadily fixed on the heavenly inheritance for which he hath destined us, and supremely engaged in the pursuit of its undecaying and satisfying joys.

2. The house of mourning is calculated to excite in us a conviction of our unworthiness in the sight of God.

That by our sins we have offended our Almighty Maker and Sovereign, and provoked his just displeasure, is a truth which the faithful testimony of conscience will instantly sanction. But, alas! the prosperous scenes of the house of feasting too often elate us with a proud confidence in ourselves, make us repugnant to the humiliating truth of our weakness and guilt, and confirm us in our forgetfulness of God and rebellion against him. The afflictive dispensations of Providence, wresting from us those props of worldly happiness on which we reposed, are designed to teach us our impotence and dependence, and to excite in us a sense of our folly and our guilt in the pursuit of the vain enjoyments of the world, while we neglected the reasonable and satisfying service of our God. Under the shock of disappointment, under the apprehensions of sickness, under the approach of death, the world is unable to comfort us; and we must turn from its

disappointing and treacherous allurements to our only refuge, our unfailing Protector, God. Then, when we feel our need of his favour and protection, the ingratitude and guilt of our disobedience to him will rise to our view. This, then, is the moment for fixing in our minds that deep sense of our unworthiness which will lead us with humble and penitent hearts to implore the forgiveness of our offended God.

If, notwithstanding the warnings of God's providence, we continue in a state of sinful security, insensible of our guilt and danger; if, when God would reclaim us to his service, we despise his warnings and reject the overtures of his mercy—have we not cause to apprehend that his wrath will not delay the execution of the sentence of his justice? In a state of impenitence, are we prepared for the summons of death? While our souls are loaded with unpardoned sins, can we encounter that tribunal where inflexible justice will by no means spare the guilty? Our only shelter from the Divine displeasure is in the merits of that Redeemer whom God hath set forth, in infinite compassion, as a propitiation for the sins of the world. To him, an unfailing covert from the tempest—to him, a sure hiding-place from the storm—let us flee without delay. Let us confess our sins; let us deplore our guilt; and “return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon us; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon us.”

3. *Lastly.* When overwhelmed by the sorrows of the house of mourning, we learn the value of trust in the goodness and mercy of God.

Mercy guides even the arm of his indignation.

It is the gracious purpose of his judgments to reclaim the impenitent; and their final destruction is delayed till the warnings of his justice and the persuasives of his mercy have been repeatedly and obstinately contemned. The afflictions by which he seeks to awaken impenitent sinners, are accompanied by the gracious assurance, that if they return to him, "though he hath torn, he will heal; though he hath smitten, he will bind up. Let then the merciful goodness of God, O sinner! lead thee to repentance. Despise not the gracious voice of thy heavenly Father, who, in the midst of judgment remembering mercy, invites thee to repose under the shadow of his wings. Return to those merciful arms which thou hast so long resisted, but which are still stretched out to receive thee, and thou shalt be sheltered from the apprehensions that agitate the guilty, and refreshed with divine and unfailing consolations. For Jehovah is the everlasting Father and Friend of the righteous: "he will keep them as the apple of his eye;" "he will hide them as in the hollow of his hand." "In the time of trouble he will keep them in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle will he hide them: he shall set them up as upon a rock." "Though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, they shall fear no evil: his rod and his staff comfort them." "The Lord of hosts is with them, the God of Jacob is their refuge."

Let then the servants of God, under all the afflictive dispensations to which in this state of probation they are exposed, repose with full faith on the goodness and mercy of that Lord who is their refuge and their portion. Let them cast their care upon God, for he careth for them. They "shall

not then be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day." "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the cattle shall be cut off from the fold, neither shall be any herd in the stall: yet they will rejoice in the Lord, they will joy in the God of their salvation."

Happy are they, brethren, who in the house of mourning learn that heavenly wisdom that maketh wise unto salvation; who are taught by the afflictive dispensations of Providence the vanity of the world, and are thus led to choose God as their refuge and their portion! When their heavenly Father dispenses to them the blessings of the house of feasting, enjoying them in thankful moderation, they glorify him, the beneficent Giver, and celebrate his unfailing goodness and love. The disappointments and sorrows of the house of mourning will not overwhelm them with despondency, nor excite the murmurs of discontent: for it is the Lord who giveth them their blessings—it is the same all-wise and all-merciful God who taketh them away—and, animated by lively confidence in his goodness, they exclaim, when he takes away what he gives—"Blessed be the name of the Lord!" Secure of the favour of that Almighty Jehovah who hath promised to make all things work together for their good, they repine not at the present, however afflictive—they look forward to the future with composure and with hope. Through the changes and trials of their earthly pilgrimage, he who never slumbereth nor sleepeth.

he whose goodness is infinite, whose power is almighty, will be their Guide and their Guardian; and beyond this scene of their probation, clouded as it is by cares and sorrows, they look, with the steady eye of faith, to the unclouded glories of their heavenly home. They know that if their earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, they have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Yes; there remaineth a rest for the people of God—a rest from the wearisome cares, the painful apprehensions, and the poignant afflictions of this state of probation—a rest which sin does not disturb, which sorrow does not alloy, which death does not invade—a rest where God diffuses his eternal and satisfying love. Heavenly Father, admit us to this never-ending rest; and in regard to all the allotments of this mortal pilgrimage, the language of our souls shall be—“It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth to him good.”

SERMON XIX.

AN EPIPHANY AND MISSIONARY SERMON.

ISAIAH lx. 15—22.

Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day: neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.

THIS chapter affords a lively specimen of the sublimity and majesty of sentiment—of the elegance, dignity, and variety of imagery—and of the energy, beauty, and sweetness of language, which render so delightful and interesting the evangelical strains of the prophet Isaiah.

Many of the prophecies, it has often been remarked, have a double signification. They de-

scribe, in events relative to the Jewish nation and the Zion of Israel, corresponding but more glorious events in the mystical Zion—the Christian church.

The prophecy contained in this chapter may be considered as primarily addressed to Jerusalem at the period of the captivity. Her temple was destroyed, her walls were razed to the ground, and her people were led captive by the tyrant of Babylon. From this state of darkness and affliction the prophet calls upon her to arise, and to shine forth in her glory, as the Zion of the Lord: for he consoles her by the assurances, that, aided by Cyrus and his several successors, her stately palaces should be rebuilt, and her temple rise in glory from its ruins; and thus “the sons of strangers should build up her walls, and their kings should minister unto her.”

But the singularly sublime and elevated imagery employed in this prediction, denotes a state of glory and prosperity far more transcendent than any to which the Jewish nation was advanced after their return from captivity. Warmed as the heart of the prophet must have been by the view of the prosperous fortunes of his countrymen, it is apparent that even this enlivening theme was merged in one of infinitely greater transport—the glory of the Christian Zion; when, from “the darkness that covered the earth, and the gross darkness that rested on the people, the Lord should arise upon her, and his glory should be seen upon her; when the Gentiles should come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising; when the sun should no more be her light by day, neither for brightness should the moon give light unto her: but the Lord

should be unto her an everlasting light, and her God her glory.”

This day, in the manifestation of Christ to the wise men of the East, and in the homage rendered to him by these representatives of the Gentile nations, may be considered as affording a pledge of the fulfilment of those gracious predictions relative to the interest of the Gentile nations in the blessings of the Redeemer’s merits, and to their accession to his spiritual kingdom.

And this day, my brethren, does the church seek to make you instruments in the more complete fulfilment of these gracious predictions, by exciting you to contribute the means of promoting the extension and purity of the spiritual Zion.

The concluding part of this chapter, commencing at the verses which I have read, very fully predicts the accession of the Gentiles to the church, and its glory and prosperity. An explanation of this part of the chapter, therefore, will afford an opportunity of observations suited to the present festival, and to the charitable collection to which your attention is called.

The first verse of the passage which I have recited to you, predicts that the church, which had been subjected to the most grievous affliction and persecution, should be exalted to a state of unexampled prosperity—

“Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.”

Jerusalem, at the period of the captivity, was “forsaken and hated;” all that “passed by clapped their hands at her, hissing and wagging their

heads at the daughter of Zion." Yet was she freed from the rod of the oppressor, and rebuilt and beautified. In a certain degree this prediction was fulfilled, as it respects the temporal Zion: it will be more strikingly fulfilled, when the nation of the Jews, so long exiled and dispersed, shall be gathered to the Christian fold, and dwelling again in their own land, shall, agreeably to another prediction of this prophet, "build the old wastes, and raise up the former desolations;"* and when, released from the bondage of sin and unbelief, and constantly employed in God's service, they shall be "named the Priests of the Lord, and shall be called the Ministers of our God."

But more illustriously still will this prediction be fulfilled, in those days when the Lord, having mercy upon the Christian Zion and her faithful members, now in this state of trial and suffering under the opposition and persecution of the ungodly, shall exalt them above the scorn and malice of their enemies, giving them peace and triumph; so that all nations being united to her spiritual fold, he will make her "an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations."

The prediction is continued in the next verse—

"Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

The accession of the Gentiles, and the affection and devotion of the converted nations to the church, are here, and in many other passages, expressed by their wealth and power being made tributary to

* Isaiah lxi. 4.

her service—"Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings."—"Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers."—"The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah: all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense."—"Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves."—"I will extend peace to her as a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream." These figurative predictions were in part fulfilled, when, at the coming of Christ, salvation was proclaimed to the Gentiles, who, as well as the Jews, were admitted into covenant with God. These shall be more illustriously accomplished when, the Jews being come in with the fulness of the Gentiles, all the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ; and enjoying his protection, his favour, and his salvation, shall know that "he the Lord is their Saviour and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

As in the days of Solomon the king of Israel, gold and silver were in such abundance that "the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were all of pure gold, and silver was in Jerusalem as stones;" so in those days of that greater than Solomon, whose kingdom that of Solomon prefigured, the prosperity and glory of the church are denoted by these emblems of worldly wealth and grandeur—

"For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron."

The peace and purity which should prevail in the spiritual reign of the Messiah, and the righ-

teousness which should distinguish the officers of his kingdom, are set forth in the next words of the prediction—

“ I will make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders.”

In those days of peace and prosperity which prophetic vision discloses, all internal commotion shall be entirely subdued in the spiritual Zion: the desolation and wasting of foreign war shall cease; violence shall no more be heard in the land; and the protection and defence of Jehovah, more impregnable than walls and bulwarks, shall surround her; and instead of the noise of war and tumults, the voice of praise shall be heard at her gates; so that “ she shall call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.”

The exalted blessings which the church should enjoy from the grace and favour of her God, are displayed in most sublime and beautiful imagery—

“ The sun shall be no more thy light by day: neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.”

The most beautiful imagery is here employed to denote the spiritual prosperity and felicity of the church. What dazzling glory is poured upon the face of nature by the luminary of day, when its rising beams disperse the shades that concealed her beauties! How soft and soothing the

prospect on which the luminary that gladdens the night sheds her mild radiance! But superior in majesty and lustre will be that glory which will shine in the spiritual Zion when the days of her mourning are ended. This glory will be perpetual as it is splendid; for it is the glory of a sun which never goes down, and of a moon which never withdraws itself: "for the Lord will be an everlasting light to this his Zion, and her God her glory."

The prophet proceeds to describe the character and privileges of the members of the Christian church in this her state of prosperity—

"Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified."

Christians, planted in the church at baptism by the "hand," by the grace and power of God, nourished and guarded as the "work of his hands," by the influences of his Holy Spirit, *may* become righteous, and glorify God by thus letting their light shine before men. And when the church, during her sojourn upon earth, shall attain that state of holiness and blessedness which is the subject of this glowing prediction of the prophet, her members *shall* be all righteous, and God shall then be *fully* "glorified" in them.

The rise and rapid progress of this kingdom are predicted in the concluding verse of this passage—

"A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time."

This prediction is already in part fulfilled. The cross went forth from Jerusalem borne by a little band of fishermen of Galilee, and the nations en-

listed under this despised banner. The heralds of salvation, "*little*" as it regards numbers, learning, wealth, or power, proclaimed the words of the everlasting Gospel unto all lands, and gathered unto their Master a great flock in all parts of the world. The humble, the despised Jesus of Nazareth, "*little*" to the eye of carnal reason, as it regards parentage, station, and power, received, as the Head and Ruler of a kingdom that never shall be moved, power, and might, and majesty, and dominion; "a little one has become a thousand, and a strong one a great nation." More gloriously is the prediction yet to receive its accomplishment in those days, the joyful hope and expectation of God's people, when the Lord's house shall be exalted as on the tops of the mountains, and all nations shall flow into it; and when the little "stone" spoken of by the prophet Daniel, shall become "a great mountain, and fill the whole earth." "A little one shall thus become a thousand, and a strong one a great nation:" for Jehovah hath said—"I the Lord will hasten it in his time."

Having thus explained to you this sublime and beautiful prediction, let me call your attention to the observations which occur.

1. And, in the first place, we should be impressed with wonder and gratitude at the view of the distinguished blessings which God vouchsafes to his church, and the glory and prosperity which he designs for her.

From all eternity it was resolved, that for the church, for all those who should believe in his name and submit to his statutes and ordinances,

the Son of God should assume a body of flesh, and should encounter suffering and death. The privileges and the glory of this spiritual Zion were typically displayed in the privileges and glory of the temple on Mount Zion, and were the splendid theme which occupied the joyful strains of the prophets. In the fulness of time, the church is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. This church is cleansed by the blood of the Son of God, and sanctified by his Spirit. She is all-glorious within, enjoying the light of divine truth, the knowledge of God's will, the messages of his salvation, the comforts of his grace, the joy of his holy promises. "Her clothing is of wrought gold;" her services and ordinances are arranged in order and beauty: they convey pardon to the penitent, grace to the weak, consolation to the afflicted, holiness and joy to her faithful members. This daughter of Zion, protected and blessed by God her Saviour, sustained the shock of persecution: she rose more pure and glorious from the sea of suffering which threatened to overwhelm her, and received kings for her nursing fathers, and queens for her nursing mothers, enjoying the riches of the Gentiles. She sustained a shock more dangerous than the assaults of persecution, from the charms of worldly ease, splendour, and prosperity. Though for a while relaxing in the ardour of her faith and the strictness of her obedience, and partially enveloped in the shades of ignorance, idolatry, and superstition, she at length aroused from her slumbers, and emerged from the night of papal darkness and corruption into the light and purity of primitive truth and order. This is the Lord's doing; let it

be marvellous in our eyes. Verily God has been gracious unto Zion: the glory of the Lord has risen upon her: let us rejoice and be glad.

2. But especially we should be penetrated with gratitude that God has extended to us the blessings of his kingdom, the privileges of his Zion.

Salvation did not only come to God's people of old—Christ is not only the hope of Israel—he is manifested as a light to lighten the Gentiles, and is come for salvation to the ends of the earth. This Sun of Righteousness is to run a course as extensive as the sun of the firmament; but he is to diffuse infinitely brighter light, and infinitely more joyous splendour. In the unsearchable counsels of him who, ordering all things according to his own will, orders all things in infinite wisdom and goodness, the time has not yet come, the command has not yet gone forth, and the Sun of Righteousness has not yet penetrated with his healing beams every benighted corner of the earth. Many are the nations which still sit in darkness and the shadow of death. We have cause therefore for the most devout and lively gratitude, that we are among those favoured nations of the Gentiles who have come to the light of the Sun of Righteousness. While many nations are bowing in superstitious and ignorant worship to dumb idols, the work of their own hands, and propitiating, by the homage of human victims, the altars of a sanguinary Moloch, we are worshipping the Father of our spirits in spirit and in truth, and drawing near to him with holy confidence and affection, by that precious blood which speaketh peace.

3. Great then, brethren, is the obligation upon us diligently to improve our spiritual privileges. There is a maxim of reason and of justice—and it is a maxim uttered by him who is finally to sit in judgment upon us—“Of those to whom much is given, much will be required.” In regard to those to whom little is given—those who enjoy only the feeble lights of natural reason, conscience, and tradition—the requisitions of the merciful Judge of all will be abated; their wickedness and crimes will be punished with few stripes; their piety and virtue, debased as it may be by superstition, will yet be accepted, doubtless, so far as to admit them among the least in the kingdom of heaven, in that house where there are many mansions. But of us, to whom much is given, much will be required. To us are given the word of God, its instructions, its threats, its promises--the ministry of reconciliation, their exhortations, their warnings, their invitations—the ordinances of the church, which dispense illumination, sanctification, comfort, and offer us a title to heaven. Oh! what will be our guilt, what ought to be our condemnation, if these privileges are abused or neglected! Let it not be our condemnation, that “light has come into the world, and that we have chosen darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil.” Let us remember the condemnation of the unprofitable servant, who hid and neglected the talent committed to him.

See then, brethren, “admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s religion,” that (to use the excellent language of the church) you “avoid all those things which are contrary to your holy profession, and follow after such things as are agreeable to the

same;" that having "the hope of being the sons of God and heirs of eternal life" through Jesus Christ, you "may purify yourselves, even as he is pure." Then, though you may not behold the future glory of the church on earth, you shall most assuredly behold the glory of the church triumphant in heaven; and now "knowing God by faith, shall, after this life, have the fruition of his glorious God-head."

4. Blessed, indeed, will they be who shall see those days, when the glory of the Lord shall arise in full splendour upon Zion, and all the gracious predictions concerning her be fully accomplished—when "the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto her, and the forces of the Gentiles come unto her;" when "violence shall no more be heard in her land, wasting nor destruction within her borders; but her walls shall be Salvation, and her gates Praise."

But more blessed will they be, who, through a holy faith and obedience, shall obtain an admittance into that celestial Zion, whose people "are all righteous, inheriting the land for ever;" that city which has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

But, my brethren, it would display a coldness and hardness of heart utterly incompatible with the feelings of gratitude for the spiritual privileges which we enjoy, and would prove our utter unworthiness of these privileges, if we were insensible to the duty of extending them to those who are destitute of them. It is the impulse of gratitude, it is the dictate of benevolence, it is the command

of God, that we make provision for the wants of our fellow-men; and that we labour in our several vocations, and according to our several opportunities, to promote his glory and the salvation of mankind, by advancing in the world the kingdom of his dear Son. In this way only can we contribute to the highest interests of man in this life—to his still higher felicity in the life to come: in this way only can we enjoy the reward of turning many to righteousness, and become the happy instruments of contributing to usher in those glorious days, when “the knowledge of God shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea;” and when, “from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, his name shall be great among the heathen; and in every place incense shall be offered unto his name, and a pure offering.”

We of this church, and of these congregations, have loud calls upon us for these labours of Christian benevolence. Many of our congregations in different parts of the state are, from various causes, in a destitute and suffering condition—deprived of the stated services of a clergyman, and unable to support a stated ministry. Many, too, are the members of our church, who, in remote districts of the state, are “scattered,” like ancient Israel, “upon the mountains,” and are “as sheep that have no shepherd.” Accustomed in the old settlements, from which they have removed, to the stated services of our church, their present destitute condition is rendered more painful by the remembrance of the days which are past, when they went to the house of God with such as kept holy-day. No longer do they hear the joyful invitation—“Come, let us go into the house of the Lord;”

the joyful sounds of the sanctuary still vibrate on their ears; but these sounds, heard no more, are fast dying away. No more do they accompany the servant of their Master in the confessions and supplications of the sanctuary, nor unite with him in the praises which ascend from its courts to the God of their salvation. No more do they hear from the lips of the man of God the words of truth—when bowed down by their sins, receive the authoritative declaration of pardon. Alas! no more are their children washed in the regenerating fountain of baptism; no more do they break at the altar the bread of life, nor celebrate there the infinite love which purchased their redemption. Oppressed with spiritual want, they pour forth their tears and their entreaties. I have seen and I have heard them. Brethren, they pour forth their prayers and entreaties to you. You, who hear the Gospel proclaimed, have compassion on those who never hear the joyful sound—you, who are blessed with the services and ordinances of God's church, have compassion on those who are destitute of these sources of mercy and grace—you, who are nourished and protected in the fold of salvation, take compassion upon those who wander as sheep having no shepherd. They entreat you, as men, to establish among them those religious institutions which are necessary to nourish and preserve social order. They entreat you, as Christians, to extend among them that Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. They entreat you, as churchmen, to aid in establishing among them that church which holds forth this Gospel in its most pure, primitive, and affecting form. They do not wish to make your bounty tributary to any selfish views.

I know that, to the best of their ability, they contribute to the support of the Gospel among them—often, indeed, when compared with their means, their contributions are unusually liberal; but their numbers are small, and their means comparatively diminutive. The fund for the support of missionaries is formed almost entirely of the contributions of the congregations of our church. These contributions have not hitherto been adequate to the support of a sufficient number of missionaries. Unless these contributions be increased, the present number of missionaries must be diminished, support withdrawn from many of them who have laboured with much self-denial and zeal in the vineyard of their Master, and the progress of our church in the new settlements arrested. So important did this fund appear to the convention of our church, that they have directed the amount of the contributions in the various congregations to be put on record in their printed journals. It certainly is desirable that the contributions of congregations should be first in amount, that stand first for respectability and wealth; but, brethren, more especially is it desirable, that, in the most important act of Christian benevolence, the diffusing the blessings of the Gospel, you should not be unmindful of the command—“While we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto those that are of the household of faith.”

SERMON XX.

HEARING THE WORD.

JEREMIAH xiii. 15.

Hear ye—for the Lord hath spoken.

THAT almighty Being whose throne is the heavens, and whose footstool is the earth, hath yet promised his especial presence in the assembly of the saints below. He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, vouchsafes to dwell, by the ministry of his word, his sacraments, and his ordinances, in temples made with hands. The invocations of his ministering servants and people have this day ascended to the throne of him who heareth prayer; and in this temple, we trust, he hath recorded his name, and here he will come and bless the congregation of his worshippers.

For his worship, indeed, this sanctuary is primarily devoted. To excite men to the duty of homage and supplication to their God and Saviour, and to form in them the dispositions that fit them for this duty, are the great objects of the instructions which will be here delivered. Still, preaching, that is, hearing the word of God authoritatively read, or expounded, or enforced, as a mean to this important end, is a divine ordinance, an appropriate exercise of the sanctuary; and therefore, not only for celebrating his holy sacraments, for offering to his glorious Majesty the sacrifices of prayer

and thanksgiving, and for blessing the people in his name, but also for hearing his holy word, is this place consecrated to the Lord. And in regard to what in this place the authorized servants of the Most High may “deliver out of God’s holy word, or agreeably to the same,” may be applied the admonition of the prophet to Israel—“Hear ye—for the Lord hath spoken.”

The message relates not to the evanescent concerns of the present life; it is not the message of erring, impotent, and perishing man; “the Lord hath spoken,” that Almighty Being by whom are settled the destinies of eternity—“hear ye.”

Hear it—

I. With humility;

II. With reverence;

III. With earnest attention;

IV. With contrition united with lively gratitude;

V. With lively faith;

VI. With a firm resolution to apply it to the purposes of your salvation;

VII. With prayer for the enlightening and quickening influences of God’s Holy Spirit.

These are the dispositions with which we should hear the word of God.

We should hear the word of God—

I. With humility.

1. For its Author is divine; and,

2. Its truths are incomprehensible.

We should hear the word of God with humility—

1. For its Author is divine.

Human records may be turned over by the bold hand of criticism; genius, aspiring and unlicensed,

may blot from the page of human composition whatever tends to humble its pride or offend its caprice : but when God unfolds the volume of his will, and draws the curtain from his infinite counsels, let the unhallowed presumption be repressed that would measure the secrets of eternity with the line of human reason, and let the pride of genius be prostrated before the glories of the Divine nature. “ Shall the thing formed reply against him that formed it ? ” The God who called us into being, who saves us from sinking into the oblivion from which he raised us, has a supreme right to bind by his laws the creatures whom he made and preserves ; and he who is the infinite source of truth, and in whom centre infinite goodness and infinite wisdom, may surely claim the submission of his intelligent creatures. “ The Lord hath spoken ; ” and shall we, whom his power created and his goodness preserves, presume to judge of the fitness of the truths and the laws which he, our Almighty Sovereign, imposes ? That reason by which we presume to scan his truths and dispensations, is an emanation from him, the eternal source of light and knowledge, the infinite and eternal mind ; and its perfection consists in its submission to the truths and the will of the perfect and glorious Being from whom it derives its origin.

When, then, brethren, the truths of God’s word are proclaimed, let us reflect on the glory, the majesty, and the power of its divine Author, on the supreme dominion which he exercises over us, and on his full and sovereign claim to the homage of our reason and the submission of our will. What are *we* ? Sprung from the dust, and destined for corruption—to-day boasting of our strength, to-

morrow sinking to the tomb—how infinitely varied the errors and the prejudices which pervert our researches! how feeble are our most exalted faculties—utterly incompetent to penetrate into the essences of things, and satisfactorily to account for the most simple phenomenon that arrests our attention! Surely it is not for us to raise our feeble understanding against the most high God, to exercise proud and presumptuous doubt on the counsels and will of the Eternal. No; let us hear the word of God with humility; for—

2. Its truths are incomprehensible.

It relates to subjects that confound the vision of the most exalted seraph, and into its mysteries angels desire to look. It reveals to the finite understanding of man the nature and perfections of the Godhead. It unfolds to his limited vision the counsels of eternity, and the immeasurable plans of Providence. It directs his view to the stupendous truths of redemption in the incarnation of the Son of God, and points his contemplations to the transcendent destinies of the eternal world. Is it to be expected that subjects so spiritual and sublime should be brought down to the comprehension of human reason? Can the finite mind grasp that infinite essence that pervades all space? Can our feeble faculties bear the dazzling view of those glories before which fades away the splendour of the worlds?

Brethren, let us receive with humility those truths which cherubim and seraphim are unable to comprehend; and let it be our sole object to draw from them those principles and precepts that will make us wise unto salvation.

We should hear the word of God—

II. With *reverence*.

1. For its subjects are of awful importance ;
2. It is clothed with divine majesty and power ;
3. It is enforced by everlasting sanctions.

We should hear it with reverence—

1. For its subjects are of awful importance.

They unfold the everlasting destiny of man, and the will and counsels of that Almighty Being who governs, and who will judge the universe, and his eternal plan for the salvation of his fallen creatures. If any subjects should impress us with reverence, surely they are these. As ignorant, dependent, sinful creatures, we stand before our Almighty Maker and Judge ; and when he opens to us the volume of his will, when he displays his adorable nature and perfections, when he pronounces the terms on which alone we can escape the sentence of his justice, shall we indulge in thoughtless levity ? shall we exercise capricious criticism, or raise the unhallowed scoff ? Feeble and unworthy may be the agents, O God, through whom thy truths are proclaimed ; but they are thy truths, and thou wilt vindicate their authority in the punishment of the irreverence with which they may be received. Yes ; we should hear the truths of God's word with reverence—

2. For they are clothed with divine majesty and power.

My brethren, if the throne of the Eternal were now displayed in this temple—did those glories that cast awe into the ranks of angelic spirits, shed here their effulgence—did the voice that once shook the mountain of Sinai, now, in this sanctuary, proclaim the laws and the denunciations of

the Sovereign of the universe—would there be one in this assembly unmoved, one on whom fear would not fall, one whom God's excellency would not make afraid? The voice of Jehovah is heard in this sanctuary; he speaks with majesty and power in the truths of his holy word, which are here with authority proclaimed. And that Almighty Lord who is jealous of his honour, that omniscient Being who cannot be deceived, and who will not be mocked, will not fail to note, and at that day when he sits in judgment, to punish the indifference or irreverence cast upon the truths of his word. Hear them then with reverence—

3. For their sanctions are everlasting.

The reverent and obedient hearers of his word God hath promised to crown with everlasting glory—against the thoughtless and presumptuous contemners of it he hath denounced everlasting wo. The truths of his word, then, are armed with the sanctions of eternity; the messages which it contains will seal our destiny in the unchanging state beyond the grave. Let us then, brethren, when in this holy place we are called to hear the word of God, carry our view forward to that eternal scene on which we must enter; and let us recollect that the truths of God's word which we hear, will there determine our destiny of happiness or wo. Received with penitence and faith, they will restore us to the everlasting favour of God; or if we continue impenitent and unbelieving, will be the means of our condemnation. Considering then the truths of God's word as involving the unchanging destiny of our immortal spirits, let us hear and receive them with submissive reverence. Restraining every vain desire for inferior excellencies, and repressing the

suggestions of a censorious temper, let us be principally solicitous to hear proclaimed, in their affecting dignity, and simplicity, and fidelity, the truths and duties of salvation ; and let us reverently receive them as the injunctions of that Almighty Being by whose authority we are bound, to whose justice we are obnoxious, and who is able to save and to destroy.

The same considerations that urge the necessity of our hearing the word of God with humility and reverence, impress the duty also of hearing it—

III. With earnest attention.

But this duty may be more particularly enforced from the *interesting* nature of the truths of salvation.

1. They enlighten us in that knowledge which is, above all other, interesting—the knowledge of God ;
2. They provide the means of our deliverance from the dominion and guilt of sin ; and,
3. They only console us under the ills of life.

We should hear the truths of salvation with earnest attention ; because—

1. They only can enlighten us in that knowledge which is, above all other, interesting—the knowledge of God.

The truths of God's word are designed to lead us to the knowledge of his perfections and will ; to lay open, as far as is necessary to our duty and our happiness, his counsels and dispensations in the government and redemption of the world ; and to display, in all his divine attributes, that infinitely great and good Being, whose favour is life, whose

loving-kindness is better than life. And shall we bestow our most keen attention on the researches of science, on plans of temporal policy, and on the means of worldly aggrandizement and pleasure, and turn an unwilling or listless ear to the truths that relate to our eternal peace—to the attributes and will of the Being who made and who is to judge us? Ah! the discoveries of science, unless religion guides and sanctifies them, will be extinguished in the darkness of the grave; there will be whelmed the stately structures of wealth, the splendid edifices of pleasure. The truths, and the treasures, and the joys which the word of God discloses, will alone survive the ruins of time, and flourish in enduring perfection. Hear, then, with eager and earnest attention, this sacred word, and it will lead you in the way of peace, and conduct you finally to the fruition of the light of God's countenance in his kingdom above.

Hear the truths of God's word with earnest attention; for—

2. They provide the means of our deliverance from the dominion and guilt of sin.

Sinful passions and principles exercise dominion over us; conscience brings before us the deficiencies, the infirmities, the transgressions of our past lives; there is a tribunal where the Almighty Being is to decide our doom, who hath denounced indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish against every soul of man that doeth evil. Should we not anxiously seek for the overtures of mercy, and for the means of redemption? These are held forth in that sacred word which is promulgated in the services of the sanctuary. Let us hear, then, with earnest attention, its interesting truths; for they

proclaim to us, in the merits of a divine Saviour, a propitiation for our transgression, and in his grace, the means of deliverance from the burden of sin and death.

We call you also to hear with earnest attention the word of God; for—

3. It affords the only unfailing consolation under the ills of life.

In vain shall we attempt to shut out adversity by the mounds of wealth; in vain shall we seek to look down upon calamity from the pinnacle of honour; in vain shall we hope to find a refuge from sorrow and disappointment in the circles of pleasure. Adversity breaks down every barrier that wealth can oppose, undermines the loftiest throne of grandeur, and throws bitterness into the richest cup of pleasure. The mansion which religion sanctifies and defends, is alone secure from its assaults: there the weary and heavy laden, sheltered from the blasts of calamity, exult in the calm of eternal peace. Oh, then, let us eagerly listen to those divine instructions that will provide for us, in the favour and protection of God, an unfailing refuge, and a very present help in time of trouble.

We should hear the word of God—

IV. With contrition united with lively gratitude.

This sacred word declares our guilt in the sight of our Almighty Maker, whose power none can withstand, whose justice none can escape. It displays the infinite demerit of sin, in the sacrifice that propitiated it—the death of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten and well beloved Son of God. It reveals the alarming truth, that the Almighty Je-

hovah, from whose presence we can no where flee, from whose Spirit we can no where hide ourselves, registers at his tribunal our thoughts, words, and actions, and will finally bring them into judgment before an assembled universe. While it sanctions the decisions of our own conscience that we are sinners, it discloses the stores of indignation and wrath, of tribulation and anguish, that will overwhelm the guilty. Shall these awful truths be heard by us with coldness, with indifference, or with scorn? For what, indeed, are we then prepared, but for that portion of the ungodly, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched? Let then the word of God, proclaiming so loudly the guilt and the punishment of sinners, excite us to that offering of a broken and contrite heart which God hath declared that he will not despise.

And while our hearts, when the truths of God's word are proclaimed, should be awakened to holy contrition, they should be also penetrated with emotions of devout gratitude.

For the very message which proclaims our guilt and the awful punishment to which we are obnoxious, bears also the consoling assurances of mercy; disclosing to us, in the sacrifice of the cross, in the succours of divine grace, full and plenteous redemption. "God, who is rich in mercy," (this is the consoling declaration of his holy word,) "for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins." When, then, we hear proclaimed those heavenly instructions that enlighten and purify our souls, and those divine promises of

mercy and grace that lead us to the presence of God, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore, let the tribute of lively gratitude ascend to our God and Saviour for the inestimable blessings of the word of salvation.

The word of God should be heard—

V. With lively faith—

Faith in the power and truth, and in the goodness and mercy of its Almighty Author. “Hath he said, and shall it not be done? hath he spoken, and shall it not come to pass?” Hath God enjoined on us his laws; hath he promulgated his awful threatenings; hath he displayed his enlivening promises? and will he not enforce his laws; will he not execute his threats; will he not fulfil his promises? “Is God a man, that he should lie; or the son of man, that he should repent?” Let us then regard all the declarations of his word as certain and unchangeable. Let us hear, as if his awful threats were at the moment to be executed upon us; let us hear, as if at the moment we were to receive the fruition of his gracious promises; let us hear, with this lively and vigorous faith, the word of God, and it will prove to us the power of God unto salvation, redeeming us from sin, consoling us under sorrow, and animating us to the highest acts of Christian duty, and triumphs of Christian hope.

And the word of God must also be heard—

VI. With a firm resolution to apply it to the purposes of our salvation.

We should hear it under the constant recollection that its truths are not designed to be the

subjects of curious and fruitless speculation, to amuse the imagination, and to excite a temporary interest in our feelings. On the contrary, we should bear in mind that their important, their only object, is "to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God."

Let it then be our care always to hear the instructions of the sanctuary under the impression of this truth, and always to seek to derive from them some light, some aid, some consolation, towards confirming our faith, regulating our hearts and conduct, brightening our hopes, and bearing us up in our journey to our heavenly rest, under the changes and trials of this our pilgrimage on earth.

And lastly, that the word of God which we hear may be effectual to our salvation, we should—

VII. Pray earnestly for the enlightening and quickening influences of his Holy Spirit.

"Without God we can do nothing." "While we endeavour to work out our salvation, he worketh in us both to will and to do." The doctrine of divine illumination and assistance is calculated in the highest degree to give ardour and perseverance to our exertions. For what is impossible to him who is strengthened by the power of the Most High? Let us then pray earnestly to him for those aids of his Holy Spirit which he never withholds from those who ask him. Let us pray that by his grace he would remove from our minds all those prejudices that would obstruct the reception of the truths of his word; that he would impress us with a strong and lively conviction of its divine origin and awful importance; that he would dispose us to receive, with humble reverence, with

earnest attention, with grateful, penitent, and obedient hearts, its renovating and consoling truths; and that he would cherish them in our souls, as the source of virtue, of consolation, of peace and joy. Make us thus, O God, the hearers of thy holy word; and, bringing forth the fruits of holiness, our end will be everlasting life.

But, brethren, let not the solicitude with which I have endeavoured to urge you to be humble and obedient hearers of the instructions of the sanctuary lead you to the erroneous opinion, that to hear these instructions is the only object of your attendance in this sacred place. "My house shall be called the House of Prayer," is a divine declaration, which establishes the important truth, that the purposes of public worship, of prayer and praise, are the paramount objects of the house of God. To use the language of one who always speaks with a discrimination, a propriety that give his words the weight of decisive authority—one whom the common consent of more than a century denominates the "judicious Hooker"—"As teaching bringeth us to know God is our supreme truth; so prayer testifieth that we acknowledge him our sovereign good." "Prayers are those rich presents and gifts which, being carried up to heaven, do but testify our dutiful affection, and are, for the purchasing of all favours at the hands of God, the most undoubted means we can use." "Concerning the place of assembly, although it serve for other uses as well as this, yet seeing that our Lord himself hath to this, as to the chiefest of all other, plainly sanctified his own temple, by entitling it the House of Prayer, what pre-eminence of dignity soever hath been, either by the ordinance, or through the

special favour and providence of God, annexed unto his sanctuary, the principal cause thereof must needs be in regard of common prayer."

God, my brethren, requires not from us our homage as necessary to his all-perfect felicity, but because it promotes the dignity, perfection, and happiness of our own souls. With the services of his church are connected our advancement in piety and virtue, and our preparation for his heavenly kingdom. Vain must be our hope of taking part in the prayers of heaven, if we do not delight in the worship of God on earth.

My brethren, would you be established in every holy grace and virtue, and would you be prepared for partaking of the ineffable bliss of the heavenly courts, unite, at every opportunity, with sincerity and reverence, in the worship of the earthly sanctuary. It is our privilege to enjoy a form of public service admirably fitted for all the purposes of devotion; solemn and reverential in its adoration of God; penitent and humiliating in its confessions of sin; comforting and enlivening in its view of the divine mercy in Jesus Christ; various, appropriate, and affecting in its supplications for the supply of our temporal and spiritual necessities; animating and fervent in its offices of praise and thanksgiving. Enjoying these distinguished advantages, we shall be without excuse, if we fail to worship God with zeal, and fervour, and reverence, and devotion. Let us then enter his temple with hearts impressed with reverence for his great and glorious name—with lively views of his mercy, his power, and his goodness—with a recollection of our unworthiness, of our many and great necessities; and "let us worship, and fall down; let us

kneel before the Lord our Maker." "Praise the Lord, O our souls; and all that is within us, praise his holy name." The services of the church on earth will thus prepare us for the perfect and blissful services of that church and temple which is eternal in the heavens. That such may be the issue to every worshipper in this temple, God of his infinite mercy grant.

SERMON XXI.

ON UNDUE SOLICITUDE ABOUT OUR WORLDLY CONDITION.

MATTHEW vi. 34.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow.

THIS precept appears at variance with the constitution of human nature. Man's thoughts, desires, hopes, and fears are fixed on the objects around him: however prosperous may be his present state, he either beholds in the gay visions of hope, brighter joys yet to be realized; or sees in the gloomy scene which a melancholy fancy paints, future evils clouding his course. The calamities which oppress him are either mitigated by the hope of a speedy deliverance, or increased by the apprehension of still greater evils which the future may disclose; and however he may be occupied with the business of to-day, his mind contemplates with solicitude that which is to succeed. It would appear, therefore, impossible for man, thus swayed by desire, by his hopes and his fears—thus eager, active, and aspiring—to “take no thought for the morrow.”

But let us ascertain the meaning of this precept, and it will appear conformable to the constitution of human nature, and essential both to our virtue and to our peace.

Like many other passages in this sermon of our Saviour, it is a strong expression, obviously not to

be understood literally: it must be interpreted according to the dictates of common sense, and to other declarations of the sacred writings; and thus interpreted, it evidently prohibits only an undue solicitude about our condition in the world, and the events which may befall us. It does not interdict the formation of plans for our temporal comfort and advancement.

What, then, does it not prohibit—and what does it forbid?

1. It does not prohibit us from forming plans for the future.

2. It does not prohibit us from guarding against possible evils.

3. It does not prohibit us from seeking any lawful advantages or enjoyments.

1. It does not prohibit us from forming plans for our future condition.

To form comprehensive plans of action, on an enlarged view of our interests and duties, is the dictate of true wisdom. He who acts only for the present moment, and not in reference to his future condition, and to future contingencies, cannot indulge the expectation of success in his plans. The support and the enjoyment of life, and its numerous connexions of kindred and society, all impose on us the obligation to seek, according to the opportunities which may be presented, and in due subordination to the higher objects of an eternal world, our advancement and happiness in the present. These cannot be secured but by the exercise of that prudence and that foresight which look beyond the present moment, and judiciously plan for the future. Diligence and industry in providing

for the time to come, so far from being prohibited, are enjoined. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard," says the voice of inspiration; "consider her ways, and be wise." "Not slothful in business" an inspired apostle hath ranked in the same station with being "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" and the curse of apostacy is denounced against him who neglects a diligent provision for the wants of those dependent on him. "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." That thought for our worldly condition, therefore, which leads to a prudent provision for it, our Saviour could not design to prohibit.

2. Nor, secondly, could he design to prohibit us from guarding against possible evils.

This is a most powerful impulse of nature. Evils indeed are allotted us in this state of probation, as part of that mysterious but merciful discipline which is to purify us from sin, and render us meet for those eternal joys for which our nature is destined. But our duty consists in the patient endurance of the evils which befall us, and in the profitable improvement of them—not in courting them: this would be an impious intrusion on the prerogatives of the Sovereign Disposer of events, who, in his holy providence, allots and regulates the evils of the world. The calamities which, for purposes infinitely wise and good, he absolutely decrees shall befall us, no foresight nor prudence can avert. But there are other evils which are suspended on our own conduct. These may be warded off by prudence and foresight. The exercise of these, therefore, in guarding against possible

calamities, could not be prohibited by the precept of our Saviour, which we are considering.

3. Nor, lastly, could he design to prohibit us from seeking any lawful advantages or enjoyments.

These are necessary to our welfare and happiness in the present world; and our welfare and happiness, he, whose "tender mercies are over all his works," who "openeth his hand and filleth all things living with good," is infinitely desirous to promote. The worldly advantages also which we possess, increase the means of our usefulness, and enable us to advance the welfare and happiness of others. In every view, therefore, we are not only permitted, but it is our duty to seek all those advantages and enjoyments which are sanctioned by religion and virtue. But we cannot seek them without thinking of to-morrow. So far then as we contemplate, without immoderate solicitude, the lawful advantages and enjoyments which in our future course we may obtain—so far as we diligently employ, in the acquisition of them, all those means which are not contrary to the laws of God or man—we do not violate the precept of our Lord—"Take no thought for the morrow."

This precept, then, does *not* prohibit plans for the improvement of our worldly condition, sedulous care to avoid future evils, and diligent endeavours to obtain lawful advantages and enjoyments.

But it does prohibit—

1. An inordinate devotion to any worldly plans.
2. An immoderate apprehension of contingent evils.
3. An excessive solicitude about any future advantages or enjoyments.

1. Indulge not an inordinate devotion to any worldly projects—

Give not up to them the whole of your thoughts, your affections, and your time; devote not to them even such a portion of your attention as will interfere with the paramount concerns of your soul, and of that spiritual and eternal world in which you have the deepest interest; let them not even so far occupy your thoughts and feelings as to involve you in perplexity and trouble. No worldly projects, in their most successful issue, can repay a man for that anxiety which often enervates his body, enfeebles his mind, wastes his spirits, and thus disqualifies him for enjoying the worldly advantages which at this immense sacrifice he may have obtained—ah! infinitely far short do they fall of repaying him for that loss which, by his devotion to them, he has incurred—the loss of the favour of his God and the hopes of heaven—the loss of his soul. “For what will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

2. Indulge not an immoderate apprehension of contingent evils.

Restrain that timid and melancholy fancy which dresses in their most terrific garb the real evils of the world, and calls up ideal ills; repress these exaggerations of imagination; contemplate the calamities which may possibly befall you no longer than is necessary to rouse you to a full sense of the necessity of providing against them, and to enable you to discern the best means of averting or mitigating them. Adopt these means, and then dismiss from your mind all immoderate concern about those contingent evils—they may never come.

To the best of your ability you have prepared against them—leave the issue to him who orders all things for good.

3. Indulge not an excessive solicitude about any future advantages or enjoyments.

View them not in those fascinating, but illusive colours, with which imagination delights to deck joys that are to come. Hold before these worldly pleasures the mirror of truth, and behold them dispensing indeed happiness, but not without alloy. Check, then, an immoderate solicitude for these imperfect joys; dwell not upon them till they inflame your passions—till they become indispensable to your happiness. Then the possibility of failing in the pursuit will work up your soul into the frenzy of solicitude; your thoughts, your feelings, your time will be engrossed by them; your peace, your honour, your virtue, your religion will be the sacrifices, perhaps the unavailing sacrifices, offered to obtain them. Ah! fatally will you violate the precept—“Take no thought for the morrow.”

In general, then, this precept prohibits an immoderate solicitude about our worldly condition; repressing an inordinate devotion to any worldly projects, an immoderate apprehension of contingent evils, an excessive solicitude for the attainment of even lawful advantages and joys.

The precept prohibiting an immoderate solicitude about our future condition in the world, is reasonable—it is essential equally to our virtue and to our peace.

For an immoderate solicitude about our present or future condition in the world, is *unnecessary*—is *unwise*—is *criminal*.

1. It is *unnecessary*.

As it regards each individual, he may be immediately summoned to leave the world, about his condition in which he is so solicitous. Thou art perplexing thyself with projects for thy future advancement and pleasure; thou art indulging anxious fears concerning the evils which the future may disclose; thou art immoderately solicitous lest the emoluments and joys which thy fancy paints in the prospect of to-morrow, should elude thy pursuit; and yet, to-morrow to thee may never come; all thy projects, thy fears, thy solicitude may ere that be hushed; the silence of this night's slumber may be to thee the silence of death. What an impressive lesson of the folly of an immoderate anxiety concerning the things of time!

Wise is the admonition of our Lord—"The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." The events of the future are hidden from us; we may therefore be indulging a foolish solicitude concerning things which may never happen. If the future brings its cares and its calamities, it will also bring the prudence, the patience, and the resolution to sustain and to encounter them. In this sense, it will "take thought for the things of itself." Many are the evils which a timid and gloomy imagination beholds in the future, which the future never discloses, or discloses stripped of the principal terrors with which imagination had clothed them. How unnecessary and absurd, then, to disquiet ourselves with the dread of ideal evils, with an immoderate anxiety concerning the future! This can neither ward off the evils which we dread, nor secure the blessings which we desire. It rather incapacitates us for the exercise of that prudent

foresight which only can in any degree influence the events of the future. When we have adopted every mean which prudence suggests for guarding against threatened danger, or for securing a desired blessing, we are to dismiss all anxious feelings; these will neither remove the danger nor procure the blessing. All that is in our power we have done in the dictates of a prudent foresight; the issue must be left with him who holds in his hand the course of human events; and *we* must "take no thought for the morrow."

This immoderate anxiety is not only *unnecessary*—

2. It is *unwise*.

For it destroys our present comforts, and increases our present evils. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Where, indeed, is the individual who has not found this declaration verified in his own experience? who, in the cares, the disappointments, and the satiety which attend the day of prosperity, and in those bereavements and afflictions which to so many embitter the night of adversity, does not find cause for the exclamation—"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof?" The uncertainty, indeed, of our present enjoyments, and the possibility of greater evils being laid upon us than those which we now sustain, should so far occupy our minds as to wean us from an inordinate attachment to the world, to lead us to fix our affections on "the things" which, though "unseen, are eternal," and to make him our friend who only "in the time of trouble can hide us in his pavilion." But why should we mar the innocent joys of the present, by an immoderate solicitude

lest the future should deprive us of them? Why should we add to the cares and troubles of the present, the cares and troubles of the future? Why should we collect all the possible evils of life in one accumulated burden, and then groan under the intolerable weight? Why should we madly draw aside the vail with which, in order that we may enjoy the present, a merciful Providence hath concealed the future; and by a prospect of the miseries which await us, fill our bosoms with despondency, with disquietude, and fear? “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

This immoderate solicitude is not only *unnecessary* and *unwise*—

3. *Lastly.* It is *criminal*.

It is a distrust of the providence of God. He it is who orders all events to subserve purposes infinitely wise and good. The blasting, the mildew, the locust, the caterpillar; the lightning that consumes; the tempest that desolates; disease, and pestilence, and famine, and the sword, and death itself, are all but the instruments of his will; and to all of them he can say—“Thus far shall ye go, and no further.” Reigning over all in righteousness and mercy, no event can befall us which he does not design or overrule for our good—either to rouse us to repentance, or to perfect us in faith. Ah, then, what a criminal distrust do we discover of his gracious providence, when we indulge in immoderate anxiety concerning any of the events of the world! Let us “cast our care upon him who careth for us,” who hath promised to “sustain us.” Let us “commit our ways unto the Lord, and put our trust in him,” who hath promised to “bring

it to pass, and to make all things work together for our good." "Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," and "mercy and truth go before his face."

But this immoderate solicitude concerning the events of the world is also criminal; for it weakens, and will finally extinguish all the graces of the Christian. Faith, which would lead his aspiring soul to his God, his Saviour, to heaven, to eternal joys, is pressed down by those concerns of time which engross him. In the midst of the chilling damps of worldly anxiety and apprehension, the flame of divine love is extinguished: the holy graces of the Christian are tarnished by those cares, those anxieties, those worldly emotions that occupy him. Ever solicitous for his temporal condition; ever busied in some plan that promises future aggrandizement or pleasure; ever apprehensive of future evil, or solicitous about future good; his desires, his hopes, his fears become bound to the world; he forgets that he is a stranger and sojourner in it; he forgets that the life about which he is so anxious, fleeth away as a shadow—that the future, which he dreads as pregnant with some dire calamity, or hails as the dispenser of some exalted good, may never come to him; he forgets death, judgment, eternity; he forgets his God, his Saviour, his everlasting home. Ah! brethren, shun that inordinate solicitude concerning worldly objects, which may prove fatal to your faith, your holiness, your eternal peace.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow." Neglect not, indeed, to provide for your worldly welfare, and, as far as human means can be efficacious, to avoid the evils, and to obtain the lawful

advantages and enjoyments of the world ; but pursue all these objects under that lively sense of the superior importance of spiritual things, and in that humble dependence on the providence of God which will save you from an immoderate anxiety concerning them. Habitually bear in mind the uncertainty of life, that you may perceive the folly of being unduly solicitous concerning evils which will soon terminate, and joys that will prove transitory. Disturb not your present comforts, nor aggravate your present evils, by apprehensions and anticipations concerning the future, which may never be realized. Flee for refuge from all worldly anxieties and fears, to confidence in God, in the wisdom, the goodness, the omnipotence of his providence. If indeed you are at enmity with him by wicked works, you have cause to tremble at his judgments. "There can be no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" no peace here, no peace hereafter. But if you have been reconciled to him by humble penitence and faith in the merits of his Son Jesus Christ, and through the sanctifying power of his Spirit, what is there in this world that should agitate your spirits? Why should *you* be anxious concerning your treasure upon earth, when you have a treasure in heaven that faileth not? Why should you be solicitous concerning the honour of the world, when in heaven an enduring crown of eternal glory awaits you? Why should you be agitated with hope and fear concerning the perishing objects of the present life, when in heaven you have an inheritance that fadeth not away? Why should your soul be disquieted, and cast down within you, at the apprehension of worldly calamity, when "the Lord of hosts is with you," when "the God of

Jacob is your refuge?" Why should you faint under your tribulations that are but for a moment, when they are working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? Let yours be the holy affiance of the prophet—"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."*

* Hab. iii. 17, 18.

SERMON XXII.

GOD'S PRESENCE IN HIS TEMPLE.

HABAKKUK ii. 20.

The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

THE heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain that High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity; yet it has pleased him to have his habitation among the sons of men, and to dwell in temples made with hands. Under the Jewish dispensation, there was a temple consecrated to the service of Jehovah, in which he more particularly dwelt; and it is the promise of our blessed Lord—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." To the Christian sanctuary, then, the declaration of the prophet may be applied—"The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him."

On the awful and interesting subject of the presence of God in his holy temple, we are naturally led to consider—

I. The characters in which he dwells there, and in which we are to worship him;

II. The particular methods in which he manifests his presence; and,

III. *Lastly*. The dispositions with which we should worship him.

I. In considering the presence of God in the sanctuary, we are led, first, to contemplate the characters in which he dwells there, and in which we are to worship him.

God claims our worship in his holy temple, as the one supreme Maker and Lord of the universe—as our all-bountiful Preserver and Benefactor—as our merciful Redeemer—as our almighty Sanctifier—as our eternal Judge.

1. He claims our worship in his holy sanctuary, as the one supreme Maker and Lord of the universe.

In this sublime character, God demands our most profound adoration. This beautiful fabric of the world must have been the work of an Almighty Architect; and man, the noblest being that adorns it, traces his origin to that God in whose likeness he was made. In this sanctuary, then, we are called to adore Jehovah, as the sovereign Maker and Lord of the universe: here he is invisibly seated on that throne from which proceeded the fiat which called into existence universal nature—that throne which infinite majesty and power sustain, and which exercises the sceptre of universal dominion. Here, then, “let us worship, and fall down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” “Of old he laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of his hands. They shall perish, but he shall endure; they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shall he change them, and they shall be changed; but he is the same, and his years shall not fail.” “The gods of the heathen are dumb idols; but it is the Lord who made the heavens. Ascribe unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, ascribe unto the Lord

glory and strength. Ascribe unto the Lord the honour due unto his name; bring presents, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him all the whole earth."

2. We are to worship God in his temple, as our all-bountiful Preserver and Benefactor.

The Being who made the world, can alone sustain and bless it. On that Almighty Benefactor from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, we are dependent for all that we need, and all that we desire; and, all-gracious and merciful, it is he who opens his hand and fills us with good. What place, then, so proper as the temple consecrated to his name, in which to adore his power which sustains us, and his goodness which gives us all things to enjoy? In the temple the song of praise should ascend from the daily subjects of his bounty: we are to "enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise;" we are to be "thankful to him, and to speak good of his name;" for he is "the Lord, the God who helpeth us, and poureth his benefits upon us."

3. We are to worship God in the Christian sanctuary, as an all-merciful Redeemer.

This is the most interesting character in which we are called to worship him: for, brethren, conscience testifies that we have all sinned; and reason teaches that, as sinners, we are obnoxious to the justice of that Being whose laws we have transgressed. Reason pronounces that we are guilty; but reason could point out no means of expiation. Hecatombs were offered to expiate man's guilt—rivers of blood flowed to wash away his sins: his "first-born was given for his transgression—the

fruit of his body for the sin of his soul." Alas! the sin of the soul still remained—still excited agonizing fears in the bosom of guilty man. That Almighty Being only, to whom man was accountable, could prescribe the means of his pardon: and "God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life." How invaluable, then, are the services of the Christian sanctuary, in which we are called to behold God as in Jesus Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and to adore and praise him as that merciful God who "blotteth out our iniquities, and remembereth our sins no more!"

4. We are to adore and supplicate God in the sanctuary, as the Sanctifier of our corrupt nature.

No man who knows himself, the weakness of his understanding and the strength of his passions, can hesitate to acknowledge his need of a superior power to enlighten him in the knowledge of spiritual things, and to bring his sinful passions into subjection to the Divine law. The restoration of man from the ruins of the fall, is like creating him anew, and requires an exertion of the same almighty wisdom and power which at the first called him into being: the same voice which at the first spoke light out of darkness, can alone shed on the darkened understanding the light of divine truth, and restore the corrupt soul to purity and rectitude. God our Redeemer, is also our Sanctifier; and in the Christian temple he dispenses his grace. In the Christian temple, therefore, we should supplicate him, who only can raise us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, and by whose holy inspiration alone we can think those things that

are good, and by whose merciful guiding perform the same.

5. God is to be adored in the Christian sanctuary, as the Almighty Ruler and Judge of the world.

Here we bow before his throne of righteous dominion; for, infinite in power, he will detect and punish the most concealed vices of the heart; and, infinite in goodness, he will notice and reward the humble services of his faithful people. In the sanctuary we adore him as the Almighty Judge, who will punish the impenitent with everlasting destruction from his presence, and exalt his people to the seats of celestial glory.

In the most interesting and in the most awful characters is God presented to our worship in the Christian sanctuary. We worship him as the Maker, the Benefactor, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier, the Judge of men; clothed with those majestic attributes that inspire awe, and surrounded also with those engaging perfections that awaken our love.

II. But what are the means by which he manifests his presence in the Christian sanctuary?

The same admirable order that pervades the economy of nature distinguishes the dispensation of grace. In the natural world, God exerts his power and accomplishes his purposes by subordinate agents, who each performs the part allotted it in the vast machine, with undeviating regularity and certain effect. The dispensation of grace, the work of the same Almighty Jehovah, is conducted by the instrumentality of offices and institutions, by which God displays his power, and dispenses his grace and mercy. As the ministers of his plea-

sure in the mysterious plan of redemption, he separates a body of men, on whom he confers a divine commission, whom he strengthens and consoles by the promise of his protecting power, and to whom he commits the word of reconciliation, the ministration of the ordinances that are to be the channels of his grace: they are constituted the officers of the sanctuary, dispensing the word, conducting the worship, and administering the ordinances by which God manifests his presence.

1. God manifests his presence in the Christian sanctuary, in his holy word.

This word is "a light to our feet and a lamp to our path;" it contains all those truths, precepts, threats, and promises, that constitute it the power of God unto salvation; and when promulgated with authority in the Christian sanctuary, it penetrates the thoughtless and secure with conviction, illuminates with divine knowledge the darkened understanding, enlivens with heavenly consolation the afflicted spirit, strengthens the feeble and tempted soul, and implants holy tempers and graces in the hearts of the ungodly. When the word of God, promulgated in the sanctuary, proves thus quick and powerful, we behold and feel the presence of God in his earthly temple.

2. God manifests his presence in the Christian sanctuary, in the *worship* which is there celebrated.

When the congregation follow the minister through the various offices of evangelical worship—when the emotions of penitence are expressed in humble confession—when, as needy and sinful creatures, they invoke, in reiterated and alternate supplications, the mercy and grace of God, their Redeemer and Sanctifier—when his praises ani-

mate their hearts, and alternately burst forth in the sublime strains which the church has provided—when, engaged in these sacred exercises, their souls are filled with the humble but lively joys of devotion, they experience the manifestation of God's presence in his holy temple.

3. But particularly does God manifest his presence in the sanctuary, by the ordinances which are there administered.

These are the means and pledges of his mercy and grace. In the sanctuary, the subjects of sin, the children of wrath, the heirs of mortality, coming with true repentance and faith, are translated, by the sacrament of *baptism*, into that fold of the Redeemer, his mystical body the church, where his mercy encircles them, his grace guides and sanctifies them, and makes them heirs of glory. They are confirmed in their title to these celestial privileges, and advanced to still higher degrees of grace, in the laying on of hands, that ordinance of confirmation in which they personally seal their baptismal vows. In the sanctuary is spread that holy table, in which, under lively symbols, Christian believers commemorate the stupendous sacrifice of the cross, and spiritually participate of that life-giving body and blood which preserve their bodies and souls unto everlasting life. Thus, in the divine grace and mercy dispensed in the ordinances of the sanctuary, is Jehovah present in his holy temple.

By the power which accompanies his sacred word, by the evangelical blessings of his worship, and by the renovating efficacy of his ordinances, does God manifest his presence in his holy temple, and fulfils the gracious assurance—"In all places

where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and will bless thee."

III. With what dispositions should his worshippers appear before him?

1. With deep reverence for his glorious majesty.

"God is to be feared in the assembly of his saints; he is to be had in reverence of those that are round about him." My brethren, the God in whose presence we are here placed, before whose throne we here worship, is almighty in power; he is infinite in holiness; he is inflexible in justice; he is terrible in his wrath. Angels regard him with awe, cherubim and seraphim hide their faces, they cast down their crowns before him; and shall we rush unawed into his presence? Jehovah, whom we worship, exercises that power which at a word brought the universe into existence, and at a word can reduce it to nothing: he possesses a holiness before which the heavens appear unclean; he exercises that justice which no art can elude, that justice which will execute the threats of eternal vengeance. Jehovah, thus powerful, thus holy, thus just, now fills this house with his presence: he searches every heart, he records every action. Great God, thy fear should fall upon us; thy excellency should make us afraid.

2. We should worship God in his holy temple with a deep sense of our unworthiness.

An inspired prophet beheld in the temple the glories of God; he saw Jehovah on a throne high and lifted up; the sense of his unworthiness rushed upon his soul, and prostrate, he exclaimed—"Who is me, for I am an unclean man!" Brethren, the same Jehovah has in the Christian sanctuary erected

his invisible throne. We can no where, indeed, go from his presence, or hide ourselves from his Spirit; but in this sacred temple we are more immediately exposed to his holy scrutiny. Our souls, marked by so many sins and follies, are brought into the searching light of divine glory. Jehovah is here invisibly seated on a throne high and lifted up: he holds that sword of justice which will by no means spare the guilty, and he denounces the eternal wo that will be the portion of the ungodly. Prostrate before him, who can refrain from the exclamation of the prophet—"Wo is me, for I am an unclean man!"

3. But with a sense of our unworthiness we should also unite, in the worship of the sanctuary, an humble trust in the Divine mercy.

«Did not mercy soften by its radiance the terrors of God's holiness and justice, ah! where is the sinful creature that could approach him? But he is good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all such as call upon him; and in the sanctuary he has erected his mercy-seat; here, through the intercession of Jesus Christ, our divine Mediator, we may approach the God whom we have offended, and find pardon and peace.

4. And, lastly, we should worship God in his sanctuary with lively desires for his favour and grace.

It is the object, and it is the inestimable tendency of the services of the Christian sanctuary, to enlighten and purify our affections, to exalt us to a holy resemblance of the God whom we worship, and to lead us from strength to strength, until we attain the grace and glory of the celestial courts. In the services of the sanctuary God is

displayed to us in all his glorious attributes—the greatest and the best of Beings, infinitely holy, infinitely good, the only source of felicity and glory. Thus contemplating him, every desire of our souls should be awakened for the attainment of his grace and favour. “As the hart desireth the water brooks, so should our souls pant for the living God.” But, alas! error, imperfection, sin cloud the lustre and alloy the joys of the earthly sanctuary. After the unclouded lustre, the unalloyed bliss of the sanctuary eternal in the heavens, we should aspire. “O send out thy light and truth; let them lead me, let them bring me to thy holy hill, to the presence of God, my exceeding joy.”

These are the dispositions which should animate you, my brethren, when in this holy temple you draw near to worship God, your Maker, your Benefactor, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier, your Judge. The form of public prayer which is celebrated in this temple, is calculated to excite these holy dispositions, and provides the best means of indulging them. Let not the holy tendency of this service be defeated by your negligence or coldness: join in it with your voices as well as with your hearts. Always carry with you the recollection—“The Lord is in this holy temple.” Before you enter this sacred place, solemnize your thoughts and affections by the recollection—“The Lord is in his holy temple.” Bring with you into this holy edifice the recollection—“The Lord is in his holy temple.” Every moment of your stay in it, bear on your minds the recollection—“The Lord is in his holy temple.” Let this recollection check every worldly and unholy thought, every irreverent look

and action; and let profound reverence, unfeigned penitence, humble faith, and ardent affection—let holy solemnity and order characterize the worship which you here offer to the Lord of hosts. Though you can no where go from his presence, nor hide yourselves from his Spirit, you are here more immediately exposed to his view; and when engaged in his worship, he more particularly notes your conduct; and remember, he will bring every thing into judgment at the last day. My brethren, it is a solemn consideration, which cannot too frequently occupy our minds; for soon we must leave this world, and shall be called from the courts of this earthly temple. Let us, therefore, constantly avail ourselves of the privilege of worshipping God in this his house of prayer, and seeking his favour and grace in the ordinances of his sanctuary. Thus we shall be prepared for an admission into that temple whose services are clouded by no imperfection or sin, whose joys are alloyed by no sorrow—that temple to which the “Lord is an everlasting light, and God himself an eternal glory.”

SERMON XXIII.

ON THE CHURCH.

EPHESIANS v. 23.

Christ is the Head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body.

THIS declaration of the apostle conveys to us a most clear and forcible idea of the intimate connexion which subsists between Christ and his church—and Christians, as members of this church. Not more close the union between the head and members of a natural body, than that which subsists between Jesus Christ and the members of the church, that spiritual body, of which he is the Head and Saviour.

It is, indeed, a truth established by the whole tenour of the apostolic writings, that the blessings of salvation are ordinarily conveyed through the instrumentality of a church, of which Christ is the Head and Saviour; and that, by union with this church, penitent believers are made partakers of all the benefits of his death and passion. “The Lord added to the church such as should be saved.”—“Christ is the Head of the church: the Saviour of the body.”—“We are one body in Christ; members of his body.”

To inquire why God hath instituted a church with officers, sacraments, and laws, and made this

church the ordinary channel of his mercy and grace to a fallen world, cannot be necessary or proper. It is our duty, as creatures and as sinners, to submit to the institutions of our Almighty Sovereign and Judge, and to repress that arrogance which would address to the Lord of heaven and earth the expostulation--“What doest thou?”

Let me direct your attention to the inquiries, in which we are deeply interested—

What are those blessings which Christians derive from Christ by virtue of their union with the church, which is his body? and,

What are the means by which this union is maintained?

I. The blessings which Christians derive from Christ by virtue of their union with the church, which is his body, may be summed up in the following:—

1. Pardon of sin, through the merits of his blood.
2. Spiritual life, holiness, and protection, through the power of his grace.
3. A title to that inheritance of glory to which the church will finally be exalted.

1. By their union with the church, Christians become entitled, in the exercise of penitence and faith, to the pardon of sin, through the merits of Christ's blood.

In the inscrutable plan which God has provided for the salvation of man, the sufferings and death of an Almighty Victim are appointed, as an atonement for our sins, and as a satisfaction to his justice, and a vindication of the honour of his violated laws. Jesus Christ is, in a certain sense, as the

apostle declares, "the Saviour of all men;" that is, through the efficacy of his atonement, all men are put into a capacity of salvation; and, through the merits of his blood, those, in every nation, who fear God and work righteousness, will be accepted with him. But still Christ is emphatically "the Saviour of them that believe:" "the Head of the church: the Saviour of the body." Where the Gospel is revealed, man, in order to be saved, must not only renounce and forsake his sins, and earnestly endeavour to serve God in holiness of life; but he must exercise a lively faith in the merits and grace of him who is set forth as the Saviour of the world. Faith is the principle by which we must be interested in the blessings of salvation, and by which we must produce those fruits of evangelical righteousness which will render us acceptable to God.

Yet, when we are thus qualified by lively repentance and faith, in order to be assured of an interest in the Redeemer's merits, we must become members of that church to which, as its merciful Saviour and Head, he communicates the efficacy of his precious blood. Christ, we are told, "gave himself for the church," and "purchased it with his own blood." "The Lord added to the church such as should be saved."

In union with the church, then, we are assured of our interest in the merits of that blood which was shed as an atonement for sin—in the merits of the death and passion of him who is "the Head of this church, the Saviour of this body."

2. The church is the mean and pledge of the sanctifying, consoling, and strengthening succours of divine grace.

Through this grace, indeed, which extends to all men, they are all quickened to the principles and powers of a spiritual life. But, by union with the church, the body of the Redeemer, must the spiritual life which they derive from him, and for which they are dependent upon him, be preserved, and advanced in strength and perfection. "By one Spirit," saith the apostle, "we are all baptized into one body," and thus enjoy the spiritual influences which proceed from the divine Head of this body. It is as members of his body that we are united to him, its Head; and from him, in the exercise of prayer, and in the participation of the ordinances of his mystical body, we derive the influences of that grace by which all sinful affections are made to die in us, and all things belonging to the Spirit to live and grow in us; by which we shall be guided through all difficulties, succoured under all temptations, and finally exalted to an inheritance of glory that never fades away.

3. This everlasting inheritance of glory is the consummation of all those blessings of which the church is made the mean and pledge to us.

"The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." By his transgressions, man has forfeited the favour of his Maker, and become obnoxious to death. "Dust he is, and unto dust he must return." But, "by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, we are begotten again to a new and lively hope." The immortality which was lost in Adam, is regained in Christ. The Son of God, the Redeemer of our fallen race, having vanquished death and triumphed over the grave, ascended into heaven, and took possession of a kingdom of glory and bliss that shall never have an end, in order

that to this same state of glory and bliss he might finally exalt the church, his mystical body: and as members of this church, therefore, Christians are styled "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, of everlasting glory:" and where the Head is, there the faithful members shall finally be also. United by faith to Christ, in the communion of that body of which he is the Head and Saviour, we are said to have "come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and unto God, the Judge of all; and unto Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; and to the spirits of the just made perfect; and to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven."

It is in virtue, then, of our union with our divine Head and Saviour by the participation of the ordinances of his mystical body, that we can triumph in the glorious hope of being finally exalted to those seats of immortal glory which our Saviour hath gone before to prepare for us. And though, as strangers and sojourners upon earth, sorrow and calamity may now assail us, and the course of our pilgrimage may lie through difficulties and temptations; yet we can rejoice in that blessed hope, which the world knows nothing of, of being for ever with the Lord, in the enjoyment of the inestimable bliss of his presence. Mighty in power, the Judge of quick and dead, he will come to exalt the church, which is his body, from its present suffering and militant state, to the glories of his heavenly kingdom; and all its faithful members shall then partake of its triumphs, and in its immortal strains celebrate the grace and power of that Almighty Saviour through whom they have vanquished the adversaries of their salvation.

Behold, then, brethren, what exalted blessings are conveyed and pledged to us through the church. The merits of the Redeemer's blood is applied to us, and thus we are assured of the forgiveness of our sins; the influences of his Holy Spirit are bestowed upon us, by which we are renewed to holiness, and strengthened to resist temptation, and to overcome in our Christian warfare; and it is as faithful members of Christ's church militant on earth, that we become heirs of the glory and bliss of his church triumphant in heaven.

It would be great presumption, indeed, to confine salvation to the Christian church. God is not "a hard master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed;" and therefore, where the Gospel is not proclaimed, he will not exact, as the condition of salvation, communion with that church into which men have no opportunity of entering. The influences of that grace which Christ hath purchased for all men, may extend where it is not made known, or conveyed, by visible signs and pledges; and those who endeavour to act according to the dictates of reason and conscience, will finally be judged according to what they have, and not according to what they have not: but the rewards conferred on them will not be as great as those adjudged to those faithful members of Christ's mystical body, who, through their communion with the church, enjoy the means and pledges of his grace and mercy.

Still, wherever the Gospel is proclaimed, the church is the appointed mode of salvation; for it is that mystical body, of which Christ is the Head and Saviour, to which he applies the merits of his blood, which he sanctifies by his Spirit, and which

he will exalt, with its faithful members, to immortal glory.

II. In this view of the Christian church, great is the importance of our obtaining a correct knowledge of it, and highly momentous our being in communion with it: it will therefore be necessary and proper to point out the means by which we are made members of the church, and by which our communion with it is to be maintained.

The appointed mode of admission into the church, by which, on the express or implied conditions of repentance and faith, we receive a title to the blessings of salvation, is baptism. It is the express declaration of Christ—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It was his commission to the apostles, to "go and baptize all nations;" and it is the unequivocal declaration of the apostle—"By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." And that children may thus be admitted into covenant with God is evident, from our Lord's declaration—"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."

By baptism, then, we are made members of Christ, admitted into his church, and united to him as our divine Head and Saviour, from whom alone we must derive pardon, holiness, everlasting life.

It is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as the characteristic of the primitive disciples, that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer." By steadfast faith in the apostolic doctrine; by steadfast submission to apostolic authority; by

“breaking of bread,” by which is meant the participation of the holy eucharist; and by joining in the public prayers and worship, the first disciples maintained their communion with the church; and surely these, brethren, must be the means by which our communion with the church is to be maintained.

1. By steadfast faith in the apostles’ doctrine.

The foundation of this doctrine is the declaration, that “God, having raised up his Son Jesus Christ from the dead, sent him to bless us, in turning away every one of us from his iniquities.” Redemption from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ, and from its power by his grace, was the consoling doctrine which the apostles proclaimed to a fallen world. That there is but one God, subsisting, in an ineffable and incomprehensible manner, in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; that Jesus Christ is the Son, the only-begotten and eternal Son, of the same nature with the Father; that for us men, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, and having suffered in our fallen nature, finally shed for us on the cross his precious blood; that, raised from the dead by the power of God, he is now exalted in his human nature to power and glory; that having sent the Holy Ghost to guide and sanctify us as the members of the church, that spiritual body of which he is the Head and Saviour, he will finally exalt us to everlasting life in his heavenly kingdom—these are the great outlines of that evangelical doctrine which, expressly and clearly delivered in the inspired writings, has been preserved in the creeds of the universal church recited in the church of which we are members.

Brethren, it is our duty to receive and cherish this system of doctrine, by faith in which only we can be assured that we are in communion with the church, and of course entitled to the blessings of Christ's death and passion, conveyed and pledged to us through this his mystical body; but let our faith be that lively principle which works by love, and purifies the heart, and leads us to keep the commandments of God; for this is the only faith which, in the communion of his mystical body, will vitally unite us to the Redeemer, and assure to us the privileges of his church, the blessings of pardon, of grace, and of everlasting life.

2. Our communion with the church must be maintained by submission to the apostolic ministry.

From Jesus Christ, as the Head of the church, the Saviour of the body, must all power in it necessarily proceed. From him to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, must the authority of the spiritual officers of his church be derived—the authority to proclaim the terms of acceptance, to bless the people in his name, and to administer the sacraments, ordinances, and discipline of that mystical body of which he is the Head and Ruler. And his ministers must be called by a divine commission; for “no man,” saith the apostle, “taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” We find that Christ sent his apostles, as the Father had sent him, to be the instructors, the priests and rulers of his church; and they were to prescribe the mode by which their spiritual authority was to be continued “always, even to the end of the world.” That the apostles instituted divers orders of the ministry, and reserved to the first order the power of transmitting,

by ordination, the ministerial authority, we have not only the testimony of Scripture, (in the cases of Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus at Crete,) but the unequivocal testimony and usage of the universal church. As, therefore, the first Christians maintained communion with the church by continuing in the apostles' fellowship, we must maintain this communion by fellowship with those orders of the ministry which the apostles constituted, and which, therefore, are vested with apostolic authority; and attending devoutly, according as we may have opportunity, on their ministrations, we shall continue living members of that spiritual building "which, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."

3. We must maintain our communion with the church by the devout participation of the Lord's supper.

The ordinance of confirmation, or laying on of hands, which is ranked by the apostle among the principles of the doctrine of Christ, has been practised from the apostles' times, for the purpose of confirming, to baptized Christians, the privileges of the baptismal covenant, on their confirming or renewing their baptismal engagements. They are then prepared, in the exercise of penitence and faith, for the participation of the symbols of the body and blood of Christ, in that holy supper which he instituted. He gave himself to be the life of the world; and the cup of blessing is the communion of the blood of Christ, and the bread is the communion of the body of Christ. By the participation of the symbols of his body and blood in that holy supper which he instituted, his merits and grace are applied to us, to renew, and strengthen.

and console, and nourish our souls and bodies to everlasting life. They, therefore, who live in the habitual neglect of this sacred ordinance, reject the instituted means and pledges of conveying and assuring to them pardon, and grace, and everlasting life—the blessings purchased for them by the merits and death of that divine Redeemer, whose infinite love for them they refuse to commemorate in the ordinance which he hath appointed to show forth his death till he come. How great is their ingratitude to the Lord who bought them, and what hazard to their salvation, when they neglect to receive the symbols of that body and blood which only giveth life unto the world!

4. *Lastly.* Our communion with the church must be maintained by publicly joining in its prayers and praises.

For it is in the worship of the sanctuary that we render unto God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, the homage which is due to him; and confessing our guilt and weakness, supplicate his forgiveness and blessing. “Where two or three,” says the Saviour, “are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” The Redeemer dispenses to the faithful worshippers in his sanctuary, the consoling and sanctifying communications of his mercy and grace; and they are prepared, by the holy services of the church on earth, for uniting in that exalted jubilee of adoration and praise which will be for ever celebrated in the church triumphant.

Brethren, by thus continuing steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers, you will maintain your communion with the church, and thus your union

with him who is the Head of the church, the Saviour of the body.

But constantly bear in mind, that the purpose for which Christ gave himself for his church, and called you into its holy fellowship, was that he might purify you unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works—that he might restore you from the bondage of sin and Satan, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And unless the gracious purpose of your Redeemer's death and passion, the purpose for which, in the ordinances of his mystical body, he dispenses his grace, be accomplished in you—unless the body of sin be destroyed, and the new man, with his heavenly graces and virtues, be raised up in you—unless you seek to be holy, as that divine Redeemer who hath called you is holy, and, following his example, walk worthy of your holy vocation—your admission into his church, and your title to the glorious privileges of the Christian covenant, will only increase your guilt and your condemnation. Made members of Christ's mystical body by baptism, it is our duty publicly to assume our baptismal engagements in that ordinance which is ranked by an apostle among the principles of the doctrine of Christ. If we fail to do this, and if we habitually and wilfully violate the holy vows which were then made, we shall be guilty of contemning the glorious privileges of our Christian calling; of trampling under foot the Son of God; of counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith we were sanctified, an unholy thing; of doing despite to God's holy Spirit; of casting from us our heavenly birth-right—how great will be our guilt! and how tremendous will be our condemnation!

Now, then, let us give all diligence to make our calling and election sure; to apply and improve the grace vouchsafed to us as the mystical body of the Redeemer; so that we may continually mortify our corrupt affections, and daily proceed in all virtue and godliness of living. And then we may rejoice in the blessed hope, that when our divine Head and Saviour comes as the Judge of the world, he will translate us, the faithful members of his church on earth, to a kingdom that shall never be moved, and to seats of glory that are eternal in the heavens.

But what shall we say to those who have neither part nor lot in this matter—who, having never been admitted by baptism into the church of Christ, are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise? Surely, if their separation from that body, of which Christ is the Head and Saviour, be the consequence of voluntary error, of wilful neglect, (and of this, brethren, not we, but their divine Master is to judge,) it will be their condemnation, that they were called into the fold of their Redeemer, to be nourished to everlasting life by the means and pledges of salvation, and that they refused to enter in, and be saved.

SERMON XXIV.

THANKSGIVING.

PSALM I. 14.

Offer unto God thanksgiving.

THE duty of offering thanksgiving and praise to Almighty God, results from the acknowledgment of his being, his attributes, and his providence. To believe in his existence, and not to adore him who is the glorious fountain of being; to acknowledge that he is infinite in power, in wisdom, in justice, in holiness, in goodness, and in mercy, and yet not to render him homage for his great and glorious attributes; to behold him ruling over all, opening his hand and filling all things with good, and yet to be silent and insensible when his mercies are dispensed to us, would be contrary to the dictates of reason and the feelings of nature.

The Almighty Being who governs in righteousness the universe, which is the work of his hands, who is God over all, blessed for evermore, claims our homage, from the excellence of his character and the supremacy of his power. The powers of our minds discern and acknowledge the charms of moral perfection; our hearts are warmed by the displays of exalted goodness; an ingenuous sentiment of nature always impels us to thank the benefactor who loads us with favours; surely, then,

the offering of homage to him who is the glorious source of all perfection, the centre of all goodness, and the all-gracious Benefactor of the universe, will be a dictate of reason and an impulse of the heart. "It is good to sing praises unto our God; it is pleasant; and praise is comely."

Why were we made capable of knowing the infinite and eternal source from which all our blessings flow? Why does revelation assure us, and reason confirm the truth, that we are indebted to a superior power for all the enjoyments of life, even to that Almighty Being who is the Author of every good and perfect gift? There is no sentiment of the human heart which is not designed by our all-wise Creator for some useful and beneficent end; and for what purpose could the sentiment of dependence, so deeply seated in our nature, be designed, but to prompt us not only to supplicate the bounty, but to praise the goodness of that Almighty Benefactor who dispenses to us all our blessings? In those moments of difficulty and danger, when bowed down by affliction and depressed by sickness, when assailed by the malice of our enemies, and deserted by our faithless friends, to whom does an irresistible sentiment of nature urge us to flee, but to that infinitely gracious Being who is the guardian of the oppressed, and the refuge of the miserable? And shall we implore his succour, and yet be insensible to his goodness? Shall we experience his mercy, and yet refuse to render him the tribute of praise? Selfish and degraded indeed is man's nature, if, while it prompts him to flee to the throne of the Almighty in the hour of danger, it does not also excite him, in the season of deliverance, to bless that gracious Being who redeemeth

his life from destruction, and crowneth him with loving-kindness and tender mercies.

There is no sentiment which is universally acknowledged as more amiable and noble than that which prompts us thankfully to acknowledge the favours which we have received, and to bless the benefactor whose disinterested exertions have been devoted to our service; and shall we generously and promptly acknowledge the favours which we have received from our fellow-men—shall we bestow veneration and gratitude on the earthly parent, whose painful watchings, whose assiduous exertions and unwearied care protected us from danger, soothed us in sickness, and surrounded us with comforts—shall we delight to blend with the emotions of affection, the feelings of gratitude to the friend of our bosoms, whose generous devotion to us has been paid at the sacrifice of his own comfort? Surely we cannot exercise these feelings towards our earthly benefactors, our earthly parents and friends, and withhold the tribute of gratitude from that heavenly Benefactor who surrounds us with good, that heavenly Parent who is the Preserver of our lives and the Father of our spirits, that Almighty Friend who sticketh closer than a brother, who will never leave us nor forsake us, not though we pass through the valley of the shadow of death.

The discharge of the duty of praise engages all the noble and amiable affections—admiration, esteem, gratitude, love, in their highest fervour, are excited; no feelings are awakened but those of delight, no affections are in exercise but those which animate the praises of angels, and constitute their ineffable bliss. Prayer humbles us under

the mortifying sense of our dependence ; intercession reminds us of the wants and weakness of those dear to us ; confession casts us in the dust as condemned sinners, and overwhelms us with shame and sorrow ; but in the sacred exercise of praise, no emotions are excited but those of pleasure : the soul forgets her distance from the throne of God, she raises herself from the dust where her sins had prostrated her, she mounts to the throne of the Eternal, and enjoys while she celebrates his infinite love.

And praise is an exercise which will never cease. The beatified spirit, satisfied with the fulness of God, has no longer need to supplicate his bounty. In those celestial courts where happiness flows to all, there can be no call upon her to intercede for others. Transformed into the divine image, and placed beyond the possibility of sinning, she has no transgressions to lament and confess. Her only employment will be praise.

The duty of praise, then, is enforced by the dictates of reason and the feelings of nature. It is a duty noble and exalted in its character and tendency, constituting the endless joy of the blessed in heaven. It is a duty also enforced by the command of God—"Whoso offereth me praise," saith the High and Holy One, "he honoureth me." "Ascribe then unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, ascribe unto the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe unto the Lord the honour due unto his name ; bring presents, and come into his courts." "Offer unto God thanksgiving."

The dispositions which enter into the duty of praise should constantly animate our hearts ; we should praise our God alway ; "his loving-kindness

we should set forth in the day-time, and his faithfulness in the night season. For it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.”

It is proper, however, that there should be stated seasons for the more solemn discharge of this duty, for the more particular review of the mercies of our heavenly Benefactor, and for a serious consideration of the returns that are due to him.

And, my brethren, we are called at this time to the discharge of this duty under circumstances particularly interesting. The propriety of an annual day of thanksgiving to Almighty God for the fruits of the earth and the other blessings of his merciful providence, has been always recognised by our church, which has prescribed a particular service for this solemnity; but it has been difficult to induce, among Episcopalians, a general observance of a day not regarded by the rest of the community. The people of the state, however, now come forward, in obedience to the voice of their chief magistrate, and exhibit the edifying and interesting spectacle of a Christian community pouring forth their united homage and praise to Almighty God.

Let us on this occasion, then, review the *general* and the *particular* mercies of God that demand the tribute of praise.

1. The offering of praise should be rendered to God for his mercies as they shine forth in the works of *creation*.

“The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth forth his handy work.” The order, the harmony, and the beauty that reign through the universe, proclaim the glory of him who in

wisdom hath made all his works. The earth is full of his mercy: and “man was put into this temple of God as the priest of nature, to offer up the incense of thanks and praise for the mute and the insensible part of the creation.”* Man alone, of all the creatures of this world, is gifted with understanding, with sensibility, with imagination, and with speech, that, thus elevated in the scale of being, he might feel his weightier obligations to praise and magnify that God who thus made him after his own divine and glorious image; and man was thus distinguished, that he might give utterance to the tribute of praise from the works of nature, and bear its silent but affecting homage to the Lord of all. Man, the favoured creature of heaven, alone on this earth bearing the image of the Almighty—all his works fulfilling in unvarying harmony their respective destinations, and shedding forth glory and beauty, proclaim their Maker’s praise—be not thou silent, thou on earth the noblest of thy Maker’s works—thou whose soul can ascend to heaven, and know, and love, and serve the divine Author of thy being—thou whose spirit, thousands of ages after this world is swept from the face of creation, will be infinitely distant from its highest perfection and happiness—nature calls to thee to lend her thy voice to praise her glorious Maker: take her tribute of homage, mingle it with thine own offering of praise, praise kindled at thy soul, which, knowing best the goodness of thy Maker, can best declare it, and let the incense of adoration ascend to the throne of him whose goodness is over all his works.

* Atterbury.

“O then give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.” “Praise ye the Lord: for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.”

II. The mercies of God, as exhibited in the plan of redemption, demand also the offering of praise.

The creation of the world displayed the infinite power and glory of the Maker and Lord of all things: the redemption of a fallen world, the renovation of man, dead in trespasses and sins, was a work of equal power and glory, and more illustriously exhibited the mercy of the Lord of the universe. Loud was the song of the sons of God, when, on the morn of creation, the Almighty Maker had finished his work and pronounced it good: more enrapturing that chorus of the heavenly host which proclaimed—“Unto man a child is born, unto man a son is given: the Prince of Peace; a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.” “Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, and good will to men.”

The blessings of Providence, that extend only to our perishing bodies, and are confined within this narrow period of our existence, afford a display of the goodness of the Lord that demands the tribute of gratitude and praise. What lively emotions of gratitude, what ardent aspirations of praise should be rendered to him, for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world by his SON

Jesus Christ—for those means of grace that renew our disordered souls—for that hope of glory which ensures to us endless felicity!

When thy soul, O man! is agitated with a sense of guilt—when offended justice lifts up against thee her avenging sword—where would be thy refuge, if the voice of mercy did not direct thee to that Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world? When thou art depressed by the sense of the frailty and corruption of thy nature, and art dismayed by the numerous temptations that beset thee, where would be thy solace, if the voice of the Son of God did not announce to thee—“My grace shall be sufficient for thee: my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness?” When the experience of the disappointments, the cares, and the ills of the world, lead thee sometimes to exclaim, in bitterness of spirit—“Vanity of vanities; all is vanity:” in that hour when the shades of death encompass thee, and thy anxious eye seeks to catch some ray of hope through the gloom that envelops the world beyond the grave—what despair would overwhelm thee, if the Son of the Highest, returning victorious from the work of redemption, had not proclaimed—“O death, I have been thy plagues; O grave, I have been thy destruction!” “Where I am, there my faithful followers shall be also; even in those mansions of my Father’s house, where there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there is pleasure for evermore.”

Let, then, the tribute of adoration and praise be rendered to God our Redeemer, who forgiveth all our sins, who healeth all our spiritual diseases, who opens to us the gate of life and immortality. “Praise the Lord: for it is good to sing praises

unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.”

III. But, my brethren, not only for these general mercies of creation and redemption, but for the particular blessings of his Providence, should the tribute of praise this day ascend to our heavenly Benefactor.

He who made the world in wisdom, ruleth it in righteousness; his voice regulates the countless orbs that roll through infinite space, and his eye notes the sparrow that falleth to the ground. The kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the Governor among the nations. Of him, and through him, and to him are all things; and in him we live, and move, and have our being. In all our ways, then, we are to adore and praise the holy providence of God. For though he sometimes lays justice to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and sweeps the earth with his judgments; yet this is styled his strange work; and in the midst of judgment he remembers mercy, and will make all things work together for good to them that love him. If, then, even in his judgments, we have cause to bless him who retaineth not his anger for ever, but delighteth in mercy—if, in those calamities which agitate the world, and in those events that, prospering the plans of the wicked, darken the prospects of the righteous—if, even in those afflictive dispensations which turn the dwellings of joy into the houses of mourning, it is our duty submissively to adore him whose judgments are right, and who in faithfulness has afflicted us—how lively should be our emotions of gratitude, how loud the voice of praise,

when his hand is opened only to fill us with good, and his loving-kindness follows us all our days!

Has he cast our lot in a pleasant land, and given us a goodly heritage—a land yielding in abundance all the comforts of life—blessed of heaven above, and of the deep that lieth beneath—a land of wheat and barley, where we can eat bread without scarceness, and where enjoying, in an unrivalled degree, the blessings of civil and religious freedom, there is none to hurt us nor make us afraid? Has he who regulates summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, notwithstanding the temporary suspension of his favour in the drought that marks the season, blessed our basket and our store, and filled our garners with plenty? Oh! while our hearts are refreshed by his comforts, let not our tongue be silent in his praise; for he is our Almighty Benefactor, who satisfies us with good things.

Has he put off from our heritage the blasting mildew and the wasting caterpillar? Has he defended us from that dread enemy who has spread terror and desolation in some parts of our country, the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and whose ravages among us yet live in our recollection, when he came into our windows and entered into our houses, cutting off the partner of our affections or the friend of our bosom, the children from without and the young men from the streets? Has he, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, mercifully preserved us from the terror by night and the arrow that flieth by day; and though the sickness that wasteth at noon-day may have visited us, has he graciously restored us to health and enjoyment? When so many mercies demand the tribute

of gratitude, let not our hearts be insensible to his goodness, let not our tongues be silent in his praise: for he healeth all our diseases, and redeemeth our lives from destruction.

Has he made our dwellings the abodes of peace, of plenty and felicity? In the social and domestic blessings with which he has surrounded us, in the endearing relations of life, do we find those joys that lighten the cares, sooth the sorrows, and brighten the path of our pilgrimage; and can we look forward, in faith and hope, to the consummation of these joys in those heavenly mansions where sin and sorrow never enter? When so many blessings surround us, let us not forget the gracious hand who bestows them: it is God, our heavenly Benefactor, who "crowns us with mercy and loving-kindness."

"Praise then the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely."

The offering of praise, my brethren, has, I trust, this day ascended to God in these courts of his temple. But let us not forget, that (to use the inimitably simple, but expressive language of the church, in one of her collects) "we must show forth his praise not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all our days." Gratitude to God cannot dwell in the heart that disavows his dominion, or disobeys his laws. The praise of the lips is a mockery to God, when the life is marked by rebellion against him. The bounties of his providence, when intemperately enjoyed, or abused to licentiousness, will, by his just judgment, prove a curse to us, if not in

this world, assuredly in that which is to come. The infinite goodness of our God which we thankfully celebrate, should lead us to repentance; the praise which we render to him, must be accompanied with the offering of our bodies and our spirits that are his, and with the solemn devotion of ourselves to his service, in a sober, righteous, and godly life. Then we may enjoy the assurance, that this God who hath hitherto been with us, will be our Guide even unto death, and our God for ever and ever. And then we may look forward with triumphant hope to the period when we shall exchange the praises of earth for the songs of the angels around the throne; ascribing blessing, and honour, and glory, and power to our God for ever and ever.

SERMON XXV.

THE PRAYER OF ST. PAUL FOR THE PHILIPPIANS.

PHILIPPIANS i. 9—11.

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve 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 Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

IN the character of the great apostle of the Gentiles we are called to admire a bright assemblage of the most exalted qualities. Talents bold and commanding were directed by the most ardent love for his divine Master, and by the most prudent, laborious, and persevering zeal in the great and holy cause which he had espoused. The floods of the ungodly could not quench his ardent love, the fires of persecution could not daunt his unconquerable courage. "In labours more abundant, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft; in journeyings often, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea; in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness," we behold the apostle zealous, fearless, ardent in proclaiming the truths of the everlasting Gospel. Added to these sufferings and labours, which would have subdued a spirit less firm and bold than his, he had the care of all the

churches, which, in their infancy, must have demanded the most assiduous and prudent attention. From this multitude of cares and labours that pressed upon him, he yet found time to manifest his apostolic regard for the churches, by addressing to them epistles filled with the most profound and striking illustrations of the plan of salvation, with the most luminous and engaging explanation of its duties, mingled with warnings the most impressive, with exhortations the most serious and tender, and with expressions of attachment the most affecting and consolatory.

As an example of lively and affectionate solicitude for the Christian converts, which cares, labours, and sufferings could not extinguish, we may take the passage which I have read as my text, in which, in the form of an earnest and impressive prayer, he sets before his Philippian converts an admirable summary of Christian principles and duty.

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve 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 Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”

This summary of Christian principles and duties the apostle introduces in the form of a prayer—
“And this I pray.”

A direct command might have carried instruction to the mind with more authority; an earnest exhortation might have conveyed the lessons of duty in terms equally perspicuous and impressive; but

the form of a prayer, not diminishing the force of the sentiments expressed, afforded the apostle an opportunity of evidencing to his Philippian converts the warm affection with which he always bore them in his heart. "I have you," says this great teacher, in another part of his epistle, with inimitable simplicity and tenderness, "I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace." In the language of a prayer he displayed his lively solicitude for them, the constant and ardent affection which, amidst all his labours and sufferings, he cherished for them; and thus he softened and obtained possession of their hearts. Pouring forth his soul in earnest supplication for their advancement in all spiritual graces and virtues, he appeared to them not merely as an apostle, called of God, vested with the authority of the Most High, and therefore with deep reverence to be heard and obeyed; but as an anxious father, as a tender and faithful friend, worthy of their unbounded confidence, gratitude, and love. What force must these emotions have given to his instructions! For, much more lively, and in general more cheerful and sincere, is the attention which is excited towards that instructor who mingles and softens the authority of a superior in the anxious care, in the tender affection of the father and the friend.

This prayer, then, was calculated to open the hearts of the Philippians to the exhortations of the affectionate and anxious apostle. It was also in itself most correct and proper: for when he considered the exalted nature of those holy graces which he was solicitous should be established in

the hearts of his disciples ; when he contemplated also how numerous and powerful were those sinful passions and temptations which they would have to encounter ; when he looked forward to those numerous sorrows, sufferings, and persecutions which would assail them, the deep conviction must have impressed his mind, that God alone, who worketh both to will and to do, could enable them to acquire these graces, to resist and vanquish these temptations, and to sustain with triumphant fortitude the numerous afflictions to which they would be called. The almighty succour, and the inspiration of Divine grace, he therefore implored for them—to the guidance and protection of an Almighty Guardian he commended them: his heart addressed the prayer for their spiritual welfare and consolation, to that heavenly Master whom he served, and from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.

This affecting conduct of the apostle impresses on us an important lesson : that, whether we desire our own spiritual welfare, or the advancement of others in the Christian character and life, the guidance and succours of divine grace must be implored by frequent and fervent prayer. God alone is our strength. To teach us our dependance, and to awaken us to implore his succour, he hath declared, that without him we can do nothing. He alone can sustain the moral powers which he gave, and infuse into the soul the sentiments and affections of a divine and holy nature. Despair we reasonably may of attaining those exalted virtues which are necessary to qualify us for his favour, or of overcoming the temptations that will assail us in the world, without the powerful succours of Divine

grace, strengthening and rendering effectual our own resolutions and endeavours; and, is it not an encouragement sufficiently animating, that if we ask, we shall receive—if we seek, we shall find? Brethren, it behooves us to consider how great will be our guilt, if, when the powerful grace of heaven is promised to our solicitations, we should refuse to ask for the divine gift. He who neglects the sacred duty of prayer, can never expect to advance in the Christian course, to overcome the world and its temptations, or to enjoy the ineffable consolations of the Divine favour.

Professing Christians, can we not trace the decrease of our piety, the relaxation of our zeal, the decay of our spiritual consolations and joys, to the neglect of our accustomed communion with God, the unfrequent, the superficial, or the languid discharge of the sacred duty of prayer? “Watch and pray,” said our blessed Lord, “lest ye fall into temptation.” “Watch and pray, for ye know not the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh.”

The prayer of the apostle for his Philippian converts was, “that their love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.”

He prays for the increase of their love, and for its being guided and controlled by proper principles.

Divine love is ranked first in the exalted scale of the Christian virtues: it is indeed the animating grace which sustains and strengthens the Christian life—which gives ardour, zeal, and constancy to every other virtue: not to be quenched by many waters; not to be overwhelmed by the angry floods of temptation; not to be subdued even by death,

which lays low the vigour of youth and the ripened strength of manhood. Bidding defiance to the grave, which sinks into corruption life and all its joys, the principle of love in the Christian, divine in its origin, almighty in its power, bears him in triumph through all difficulties and temptations, leads him to the perfection of Christian virtue, and finally conducts him to that exalted felicity which in heaven rewards the exertions and toils of the Christian life. Divine love, then, is with propriety ranked as the principle which sways the Christian, the exalted grace which is to guide and animate him.

The apostle prays for the increase of this holy grace in his Christian converts—that it may “abound more and more.” As the Christian turns with more vigorous affection from worldly objects to the contemplation of his God and Saviour—as his love for the divine law, its sacred spirit, its righteous precepts, becomes strengthened in his heart—as his earnest desire to obtain that holiness which, by conforming him to the image, will qualify him for the enjoyment of God, increases in sincerity and fervour, will be his progress in the attainment of all the graces of the Christian character, his alacrity and zeal in the ways of God’s commandments, his qualifications for the bliss of the kingdom of heaven.

This love, so essential to the existence, to the spirit, to the perfection of the Christian life, the apostle prays may be guided and regulated by proper principles: he prays that it “may abound in all *knowledge and in all judgment.*”

When not guided by *knowledge*, the ardent and active sentiment of divine love is in danger of run-

ning into extravagant excesses: its bright flame and pure fervours will be smothered by the rubbish of superstition or enthusiasm. Knowledge alone can direct and restrain its fervour; and by presenting a lively view of the glorious objects on which it should be exercised, preserve it bright, vigorous, and constant.

He prays that this love may “abound more and more in *judgment*, or in a lively perception of the holy power and of the exalted value of this divine principle, in purifying the heart, in raising its affections above the world, and in filling the soul with all joy and peace in believing, with that peace which passeth all understanding, which the world can neither give nor take away.

Brethren, let then this prayer of the apostle be the standard by which to examine and ascertain your spiritual condition. Be excited to pray to God, and to vigorous and frequent prayer to unite your earnest and persevering exertions that your “love may abound yet more and more in all knowledge and in all judgment;” that the sacred principle of love for your God and Saviour may be guided and quickened by views, more and more enlightened, of their glorious attributes, of their exalted character and offices—by perceptions, more and more lively, of the elevated joys which their service bestows. Be assured that, unless your love thus abound more and more, you are in danger of going back in your Christian course; the flame of divine love in your souls is in danger of being extinguished by the rude blasts of temptation; and its lustre will become dim and feeble, instead of shining more and more unto the perfect day.

The prayer of the apostle for his Philippian converts embraces, next, "their approving things that are excellent."

This has reference to that Gospel in which they believed, and contains the supplication, that by an enlightened view of the truths, precepts, promises, and hopes of this Gospel, they may discern its excellence above other systems of religion, and thus be led from the heart to approve and delight in it. The Christian should, indeed, often engage in a serious consideration of the divine excellence of that religion which he will find the power of God unto salvation—an anchor of the soul, keeping it safe amidst the changes and tempests of the world. It is the Gospel of the Son of God alone which reveals the exalted truths so essential to the virtue and happiness of man, and yet so far transcending the discoveries of human reason, that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; that, by his blessed Spirit of truth and grace, he is shedding divine light on our blind and corrupt understandings, healing our spiritual maladies, and strengthening our infirmities. This Gospel alone reveals a system of duty and morals pure in its spirit, universal in its extent, awful in its obligations, eternal in its sanctions. This Gospel alone brings forth from the long night of clouds and darkness, that immortality which cheers the bosom of the wretched, and animates with unconquerable ardour the heart of man in the pursuit of those things which belong to his peace. These are the divine and glorious truths on which the Christian should meditate, these the "excellent things" which he should "approve."

The apostle continues his fervent prayer for his Christian brethren, that "they may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."

It is his prayer that they may be "sincere" in all their principles, in all their motives, and in all their actions. It is *sincerity* only which stamps value—that value which will stand the test of the last scrutiny, that value which will not diminish through the ages of eternity—on the virtues of the Christian. If this essential characteristic be wanting, the lustre of virtues most dazzling in appearance is fallacious—they will not stand the first shock of temptation—they will be driven away before the first rude wind of worldly solicitation. But the sincerity which thus stamps a divine and eternal value on the virtues of the Christian, is not that careless, indolent, undistinguishing principle, which as easily admits error as truth, and almost confounds virtue and vice: it is an enlightened, discriminating, holy sincerity, which never rejects any known truth, nor indolently nor wilfully neglects the means within its power of inquiry and conviction. Holding fast to his integrity, as to an anchor sure and steadfast, the Christian may defy the taunts of his enemies, and, like that rock which rests on everlasting foundations, may quell at his feet the angry billows of persecution. For, while he is sincere in the service of his God, while his conscience bears him witness that he would pluck out his right eye, that he would cut off his right hand, that he would go with his Saviour to prison and to death, rather than offend this best of Masters, this dearest of Friends, who loved him even to the death, he is secure in that promise—"I will never leave you nor forsake you. I am your God." Though the waves of trouble

may rage around him, yet that Lord who sitteth on high is mightier: "God is his strength and refuge; a very present help in time of trouble."

And while the Christian holds fast his *sincerity* as his sure hope and refuge, it is incumbent upon him also to "be without offence."

It is not sufficient that, confiding and firm in the sincerity of his motives, in the purity of his intentions, he disregards and defies the harsh censures and uncharitable judgments of the world: it is his sacred duty, his constant and earnest desire, not only to "avoid evil," but "the appearance of it;" not only to "hold fast his integrity," but to maintain it with such mildness and forbearance, with such meek wisdom and discretion, as may, if possible, disarm ignorance of every pretext for misjudging his motives, or misconstruing his actions.

Powerful are the motives to cherish sincerity, and to preserve himself without offence, in the awful prospect which the apostle holds forth of that "day of Christ," when not only the secret springs of human conduct shall be disclosed, but *actions* traced to their effects, not merely on the individual himself, but on the welfare of others. Then they shall receive praise of God, who, in the sincerity of their souls, have sought to love and to serve him, and who have preserved themselves blameless and without offence in the midst of an evil and corrupting world.

The next qualification of the Christian, and which the apostle implores for his brethren at Philippi, is that they should be "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

It is this which completes, and perfects, and exalts, to the resemblance of the divine image, the Christian character: to abound in every good word and work is the obvious, the indispensable duty of the Christian, which the most sacred obligations bind upon him, to which the most powerful motives urge him. "Hereby we know" (this is an inspired standard) "that the love of God abideth in us, if we keep his commandments." Regard for the honour and glory of that God and Saviour to whom he is bound by the strongest ties of love and gratitude for the inestimable blessings of redeeming mercy—a desire to enjoy the approving testimony of conscience—the hope of attaining that heaven where there is fulness of joy, for which holiness is an indispensable qualification—these are the powerful motives which constantly urge the Christian to be "filled with all the fruits of righteousness." He constantly, indeed, bears in mind that they "are by Jesus Christ;" that they are produced only by those invigorating succours of heavenly grace which his Saviour dispenses; and that they are rendered acceptable to the pure and holy Being who scrutinizes them by those divine merits which only can stand in the judgment.

When contemplating, therefore, the exalted Christian graces which the apostle sets forth in his animated prayer for the Philippians, perhaps you are ready, brethren, to exclaim—"Who is sufficient for these things?" Well may this be the feeling of timidity and despair, if you look solely to your strength, to the succours of your own reason, the efforts of your own will, the constancy of your own affections. Alas! they will fail, they will bend,

they will yield to the seductions of temptation. But you are not thus forsaken: celestial strength awaits you. Your Redeemer is your King, and the Lord of Hosts is his name: and it is a promise which never yet failed in its efficacy—"My grace shall be sufficient for you: my strength shall be made perfect in your weakness."

And yet, Christians, with what imperfection are our best works alloyed! Not, then, on works of righteousness which we have done, must our hopes of acceptance be placed; but on that divine righteousness of the Redeemer, which will shed on our imperfect virtues a celestial lustre that shall render them worthy of immortal glory. Guided by faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and quickened by his grace, you shall be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are "to the glory and praise of God."

"The glory and praise of God," the Fountain of being and perfection, the supreme and righteous Governor of the universe, is set forth in my text as the great object to which all the labours and exertions of your Christian course should be directed. And the glory and praise of God you will advance among men, when they, seeing your good works, the fruits of righteousness, with which you are filled, shall be led to glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Nor will God be unrighteous to forget your work and labour that proceedeth of love. His mercy and grace will reward the imperfect services of time with the glories of eternity. What an animating motive do the glorious rewards which in heaven await the righteous, afford to zeal and perseverance in the favour of God! How loud the call which

they present to those who are occupied with the guilty pursuits and sinful pleasures which expose them to the everlasting wrath of their Almighty Judge, to seek, in the service of their God and Saviour, those joys which are without alloy, and those pleasures which never fade! O that men were wise, that they would reflect how infinitely great the folly which would barter eternal joys for the evanescent pleasures of time, and for years of sinful pleasure incur an eternity of wo! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. It is a fearful thing to enter on that eternal world, where "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, await every soul of man that doeth evil." "Let then the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto the Lord;" and let us all implore him to put a new heart and to create a new spirit within us, that we may abound in those fruits of righteousness which shall be to his praise and glory, and, through his mercy in Jesus Christ, to our eternal felicity.

You are now to partake of that holy supper, which, setting forth the death of the Son of God, is calculated to excite the liveliest emotions of that love which, active in its exercise, will bring forth the fruits of righteousness. Surely we are to love him who first loved us, and that even unto death. Contemplate the infinite and almighty Victim which the symbols of the holy table exhibit: see him making his soul an offering for us—purchasing, by his death, our pardon, our peace, our eternal felicity—assuring to us, by the memorials of his cross and passion, these infinite and immortal blessings. And when you draw near spiritually to feast on his

body and blood, let it be your prayer, that you may love this your divine Redeemer with supreme affection; that this your love may abound more and more; and that, filled with the fruits of righteousness, you may finally be made meet for his everlasting kingdom.

SERMON XXVI.

THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD.

MATTHEW iv. 1.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

THERE are some who suppose that this history of our Lord's temptation is an imaginary, and not a real history. But it is contrary to all the rules of sound interpretation, and would falsify all the records of past events, to assign an allegorical sense to what is susceptible of a literal one. There is no circumstance in our Lord's temptation which may not have actually taken place. There is no adequate reason, therefore, why we should suppose that the representation is fictitious. The literal interpretation of the history involves no impossibilities; it is contained in an inspired record, and partakes of the credibility which that inspired record demands.

When we view in the light of divine truth the important ends which were answered by our Lord's temptation, with that honest, unbiassed, and humble mind with which it becomes frail creatures to investigate the dispensations of their Almighty Creator, we shall be struck with gratitude and adoration at the condescension and power which the Saviour displayed. The subjection of the Son of God, in

his nature as man, to hunger, to suffering, and to the assaults of Satan, were necessary parts of that humiliation and those achievements by which he was to accomplish our redemption. His voluntary submission to a deprivation of the necessaries and comforts of life, is calculated to teach us the necessity and importance of the virtues of humility and self-denial; the temptations to which, as heir of the same nature with ourselves, he was exposed, were designed to encourage and strengthen us under trial; and the repulse which he gave to the assaults of the tempter, was the commencement of that triumphant victory that was to defeat the counsels and to subdue the power of the great adversary.

The dominion of the devil over man was established in that fatal hour when our first parents, yielding to his temptations, transgressed the laws of their Maker; and though the merciful decree of their Almighty Judge assured to the seed of the woman final victory over the great adversary, yet the fallen nature of man was to be subject to his invisible but powerful influence. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

In the present day, unfortunately characterized by bold and unwarrantable speculations concerning the facts and doctrines of the word of God, the existence and the operations of the devil and evil spirits are by some doubted, or ridiculed and denied; and the scoffs of unbelievers and others against the existence and agency of the prince of darkness, have derived support from the false and absurd agency which ignorance and superstition

have frequently ascribed to this enemy of our race. But neither the pride of a false philosophy, nor the dreams nor visionary terrors of a weak superstition, should prevent the enlightened and humble Christian from reverently receiving whatever the word of God reveals concerning the existence and agency of evil spirits, of whom he can derive his knowledge only from revelation. The ignorance and superstition of mankind have multiplied the Deity into a thousand forms, and clothed their gods with the follies and the passions of human nature; but surely we are not, therefore, to renounce the sublime and ennobling truth of the existence and government of an infinite and supreme Author of all things. The unlicensed imagination hath painted a sensual happiness for the blessed in the groves of the pagan Elysium; and hath framed a corporeal torment for the damned in the vultures, and the wheels, and the furies of Tartarus: and shall we therefore relinquish all our hopes of bliss beyond this imperfect, evil scene, and throw off all our fears of future retribution? The representations of the sacred writings concerning the powers and agency of evil spirits, involve no superstition or absurdity; no person will hazard the impious assertion, that the power of the Creator is confined to the formation of only one order of intelligent beings—those who inhabit this earth. That infinite and almighty power which called countless worlds into existence, hath animated his material creation with numberless orders of spiritual intelligences; and it is not unreasonable to believe what is declared in the revelation of this Almighty Creator, that a number of these intelligences, by the abuse of the glorious faculty of free will, for-

feited the purity and happiness of their first estate; that, defeated in their impious rebellion by the power of Jehovah, they are inflamed with deadly hatred against his counsels and his works; that one of these exalted intelligences, distinguished by his high powers, and by his proud contempt for the authority of the Ruler of the universe, and daring opposition to it, became their leader in impious rebellion; and, after their fall, was considered as their chief and prince. Acting according to the impulses of his nature, inveterate hatred and revenge would lead him to defeat, if possible, the counsels and the plans of infinite goodness, and conspiring with a malicious desire to increase the companions of his guilt and torment, would call forth every artifice of cunning, and every exertion of power, to seduce other orders of free intelligences from their allegiance to their Creator. It is not unworthy of the wisdom and goodness of the supreme Lawgiver to suppose that, in order to the trial of his creatures, without which their virtue would not be established, or capable of reward, he should permit the allurements and the assaults of the tempter against them. On the contrary, it redounds to the glory of his mercy and grace, that, while he affords us an opportunity of exalting, establishing, and perfecting our virtue, by triumphing over temptation, he urges the strongest motives to repel it, and furnishes us with that all-powerful grace which enables us to come victorious from the conflict.

The disbelief of what is revealed in Scripture concerning evil spirits, arises from that aspiring pride of the human mind which would confine within its narrow and superficial range the unsearchable wisdom and almighty power of the

eternal God. As well might we compare the taper that sheds a dim and evanescent light on a few surrounding objects, to that glorious orb, that, sending his rays through unexplored space, pours his effulgence on distant worlds. It is the height of human arrogance to limit that power which hath kindled unnumbered suns to give light and life to countless worlds, to the creation of one order of beings inhabiting this little spot of earth. It becomes man, the creature of a day, seated amidst the immeasurable works of God that dazzle and confound his feeble powers, to repress his arrogant pretensions, and in profound self-abasement to adore the unsearchable wisdom and power of him who is from everlasting to everlasting, the incomprehensible Fountain of being and Ruler of the universe.

It does not then transcend the *power* of God to create an order of beings different in their powers and destination from man; and it is not unworthy of his *wisdom* and *goodness* to make this order of beings, fallen and degenerate, the instruments of trying, and confirming, and perfecting our virtue. We are not indeed able to ascertain the mode by which they exercise their influence over our minds; and equally inscrutable is the manner by which external objects produce internal impressions through the instrumentality of our senses. The ingenious conjectures of philosophers on this subject have served only to render it more perplexed and obscure: but we do not doubt the fact because we are unable to account for it; nor should we therefore doubt the truth of the existence and agency of evil spirits, because the mode of their existence and agency is incomprehensible. Their existence

and agency are truths of revelation ; and we know too little of their nature, and of our own, to deny that their influence over us may be possible.

The history of our Saviour's temptation has been assailed by another objection. The Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, it may be said, could not, consistently with the dignity of his divine nature, submit to the temptations of the prince of darkness. But the whole plan of redemption by the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God, cannot be fathomed by human reason. Considering Christ in his divine nature only as the eternal Son of God, the submission would have been degrading and dishonourable : but when we regard him in his complex character, as uniting in his adorable person the divine and the human natures, and constituted the representative of our guilt, the submission was both necessary and proper. In the scene of the temptation the Saviour did not exert the powers of his divinity. As God, he was incapable of suffering ; as God, he could have commanded legions of angels to his defence ; as God, he could, by a word, have repelled the tempter to his seats of darkness : but, as the Saviour of man, he would not then have been tempted like as we are ; nor would he then have afforded us a pledge of our triumph in the spiritual conflict, by subduing, in our nature, the great adversary, to whose temptations we are subject. This was the important and beneficent purpose which was to be answered by his temptation in the wilderness.

“Then was he led by the Spirit :” in his character as our Redeemer, he was under the guidance of that Holy Spirit, the third Person of the myste-

rious Trinity, by whom was conducted the dispensation of grace and mercy to the world: "then was he led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and having fasted forty days and forty nights, submitted to be tempted by the devil."

And important and beneficent were the ends, in reference to us, which were accomplished by our Lord's temptation.

1. He thus exhibited to us an example of humility and self-denial.

In his adorable person dwelt the fulness of the Godhead—the majesty, the glory, and the perfection of the everlasting Jehovah. Infinitely happy from all eternity in the participation of the divine nature, and accustomed to receive the homage of angels and archangels, what a descent did he make, when he assumed a tabernacle of clay, to witness and to be assailed by the crimes and ingratitude of men! He did not choose those elevated stations where luxurious living, and splendid and polished manners, and refined conversation, might have in some measure softened the disgrace of his humiliation: he assumed the most humble character; he chose the most obscure and degraded station; he submitted to the coarse jests, the obscene ribaldry, the vulgar and disgusting habits of publicans and sinners. He carried still further this lesson of humility. When he could have eclipsed the glories of kings and princes, and, summoning thousands and ten thousands of angels, have struck them prostrate by the effulgence of his glory, he concealed himself in the solitude and obscurity of a wilderness. When his spirits were depressed by loneliness and severe fasting, in this moment of

weakness and gloom the prince of evil spirits assailed him with all the arts of diabolical malice and cunning; his human nature was harassed and exhausted by the deprivation of its usual sustenance, and then, in the period when he so much needed refreshment and consolation, instead of angels to invigorate his sorrowing spirit, he was called to bear the loathsome society, to encounter the malicious taunts, and to defeat the artful wiles of the great adversary of God and holiness. How wonderful, how profound the condescension of the Son of God! Here are exhibited to us the most impressive lessons of humility, the most animating excitements to holy self-denial. Do we complain of the occasional seclusion from the world which is necessary to the performance of the exercises of piety? Do we shun religious retirement, as withdrawing too much of our time and attention from worldly pursuits and enjoyments? Let us recollect, that he who enjoyed the ineffable bliss and glory of the Godhead, whose perfections and praises were in heaven exalted in the rapturous hymns of angels, for our sakes shut himself out from human converse in the gloom of a wilderness; and let us not, then, account as rigorous those duties of self-denial which are the natural expressions of penitence, and the most powerful means of subduing our inordinate passions; let us be excited by the example of our Lord, occasionally to intermit even our necessary worldly pursuits and innocent enjoyments, that in holy retirement we may meditate on those spiritual truths in which we are deeply interested—those celestial objects, the perfection and felicity of our nature, that are offered to our acceptance, and devote our thoughts,

our resolutions, our prayers, our efforts, to the attainment of these infinite and eternal blessings.

2. But the most important end answered by our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, was to encourage and to strengthen us to resist and to overcome the numerous temptations to which we are exposed.

Our blessed Redeemer, the great "Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through sufferings:" it would be unreasonable and presumptuous in us to hope to escape them—"The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord." All the temptations which the cunning and malice of the evil spirits could exert, were directed against our suffering Lord, in order to defeat the counsels of God for our salvation: and in an invisible manner the arts and malice of the great adversary are still permitted against us; so that he is characterized, in emphatic language, as "the roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour." But the example of our blessed Redeemer affords us encouragement and support under his assaults. Having in our nature experienced temptations in all the various forms which they could assume, he will be touched with tender sympathy for his suffering brethren: urged by his infinite compassion, he will employ the almighty power which he possesses for their direction, their comfort, their rescue, and their salvation. What encouragement and support to the Christian, assailed by numerous temptations, and distrustful of his own strength, and desponding under a sense of his own weakness, do these divine assurances convey! His blessed Lord, to whom he is invited in the hour of trial to flee for refuge, is "able to succour them that are tempted." It was

to give us the liveliest and strongest evidence of his sympathy, of his gracious disposition to succour us, that he submitted to the assaults of the great adversary of our souls.

The temptations with which our Lord was assailed, were those of *distrust*, of presumption, and of the love of worldly grandeur, pleasure, and dominion. By the same arts the tempter still exercises his power over us. He applies the circumstances of our situation, or some of the objects of the world, to excite in us passions and feelings that will subject us to the displeasure of God, and frustrate our salvation.

1. When our Lord was excited by hunger, "the tempter came to him, and said, If thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread."

He urged him to distrust the providence of God in providing ordinary means for his relief, and persuaded him to call for a miraculous act for his sustenance. It is by the same temptation that he frequently assails us. When our worldly expectations are disappointed, and those plans from which we expected wealth, and honour, and pleasure, are frustrated, we are prompted to murmur against the providence of God, as if, by some particular interposition, he should have prevented the calamities that have overwhelmed us: and when we are involved in perplexity and difficulties, we are often led to distrust the goodness and mercy of our heavenly Father, and to despair of deliverance. This murmuring and distrust it is our duty to repress by the same consideration with which our Lord repelled the assaults of the tempter—"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by

every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." We are not to estimate the favour of God towards us by external circumstances—to consider prosperity as the expression of his love, and adversity as the severe token of his displeasure. We are not solely to depend on any secondary causes, discarding a humble reliance on his good providence; nor are we, through criminal murmuring or distrust, to call for some special interposition of his power in our behalf. This is the practical import of the declaration—"Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." When involved in distress or assailed by calamity, while we neglect not the ordinary means of deliverance, our supreme reliance must be placed on the power and grace of God—on that good "word which proceedeth out of his mouth;" for he hath promised to "make all things work together for good to those that love him." And thus supported by a firm confidence in his gracious purposes towards us, we should wait, in patient resignation, for his blessing on the means which we must employ to extricate ourselves from difficulty and trial. "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

2. The tempter next endeavoured to betray our Saviour into the crime of presumption.

The scene of this temptation was in the holy city, to which our Lord permitted the tempter to lead him, and to place him on a pinnacle of the temple, when the wily fiend said to him—"If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning

thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." The tempter would have persuaded Christ to throw himself into unnecessary and unlawful danger, with a view to claim the promised protection of Almighty God; and are we never urged to this crime of presumption? Do we never carelessly or wilfully rush into indulgences or amusements where our purity and virtue are endangered, presumptuously expecting that we shall escape unstained by the pollution of sin? Are we not disposed to build our hopes of salvation on some special decree of God ranking us among the objects of his immutable favour, and thus become negligent in the use of the appointed means of grace, or careless in our efforts to obtain that holiness without which we cannot see the Lord? Or, are we not disposed to claim the benefits of God's promises, while we neglect to perform the conditions on which they are suspended? These presumptuous expectations that God will save us, though we neglect the means and duties which he enjoins, and rush on the dangers which he warns us to shun, are among the delusions by which the great adversary of souls seeks our destruction; and to guard against them, we should constantly bear in mind the declaration which our Saviour made when the tempter would have led him into this criminal presumption—"It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Our Almighty Sovereign hath enjoined on us obedience to his laws; he hath prescribed to us the mode in which we must receive salvation, the means we must use, the duties we must perform, the sacrifices we must make, the dangers we must shun. To expose ourselves to difficulties and trials

to which we are not called, presuming upon his protection and assistance, arrogantly to assert our claim to his favour, to the blessings of his salvation, while we are indifferent, negligent, or lukewarm in our exertions to obtain them, is to tempt the Lord our God, to disregard his express declarations, and to contemn his power and his justice. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

3. The last temptation with which our Lord was assailed, was the promise of worldly grandeur, pleasure, and dominion.

The scene of this temptation was a high mountain in the vicinity of the wilderness, from which they might be supposed to see, in distant and extensive prospect, the kingdoms of the world—"All these," says the tempter to our Lord, "will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Blasphemous as is his suggestion, to renounce allegiance to the everlasting Jehovah, and to bestow the homage that is due only to his divine perfections on the prince of darkness, the author of all sin; yet, alas! we sometimes yield to the base temptation. The kingdoms of the world, worldly dominion, grandeur, and pleasure, sometimes lure us into forgetfulness of God, or contempt of his authority. Often do the glories, the amusements, the enjoyments of the world seize the imagination, awaken the sinful passions, and obtaining dominion over our hearts, banish the thoughts of God, of our obligations to him, our Maker, Benefactor, and Redeemer—of the account we must render to him, and of that eternity where his insulted justice and contemned authority will be vindicated in the punishment of our transgres-

sions. We doubtless revolt at the insolent proposition of Satan to our Saviour, to fall down and worship him; and if thus solicited, we think we should spurn him from us in the language of our Lord, "Get thee behind me, Satan;" and, like the Jews, who, when our Saviour charged them with doing the works of the devil, would have taken up stones to stone him, we would indignantly resist the imputation of being the submissive subjects and worshippers of the prince of darkness. And yet, unpalatable as it may be to our self-love, the fact is certain, that in proportion as our affections are inordinately fixed on the world—as we are biassed by its false principles, and swayed by its corrupt fashions—as, supremely engaging in the pursuit of its glories, its amusements, and pleasures, we are led to forget God, to neglect his worship, to violate his laws—in proportion as we are thus deluded by the sensual gratifications with which the tempter solicits us, we become his servants and his votaries, and render him homage. It is indeed a most humiliating consideration, that while, in the gratification of our passions, we inordinately pursue the riches, the honours, the pleasures of the world, we are under the dominion of the prince of darkness, and render to him our affections and our service. Yes; our Lord himself, our Almighty Sovereign, our eternal Judge, hath stamped the character of all those who live in a state of sin—"Ye are of your father the devil; and the works of your father ye will do." We cannot urge the strength of the passions by which the adversary holds us in bondage: the same sacred resolution, strengthened by divine grace, with which our blessed Lord repelled the tempter,

will still prove effectual in repelling his assaults, and in shaking off his ignominious chains—"Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Let us, then, habitually bear in mind the perfections and power of the God who made us, and our obligations to serve him, who is the Author of all our mercies, and to whom we must finally render an account: under a sense of our own weakness, let us supplicate the powerful aids of that grace, by which alone we shall be able to resist and overcome the seducing temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow and to serve the only God. Let us, at every opportunity, seek this grace in that holy supper where it is so richly bestowed, where our souls are strengthened and refreshed by the spiritual body and blood of our Lord. Let it be our supreme object and endeavour to fulfil those sacred vows which were made for us in baptism, by which we are pledged to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him. It was in the holy solitude of the wilderness that our Lord and Master prepared himself, by fasting and prayer, for the great work on which he was to enter—the redemption of the world. He left us an example, that we should follow his steps; let us then, during the season which the church universal sets apart for the purpose, devote ourselves to more than ordinary acts and exercises of devotion, that we may be fortified against the assaults of temptation, against the allurements of the world; and as our Saviour Christ died and rose again, so may we die to sin, and live unto righteousness; and

then at the last victorious, in our spiritual conflicts, over death and the grave, we shall ascend with him to those celestial courts where we shall be partakers of his resurrection, of bliss eternal and unspeakable, both in body and soul, in his eternal and glorious kingdom.

SERMON XXVII.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

I CORINTHIANS XV. 29—34.

Else what shall they do, who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die. Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not.

THIS chapter is among the finest passages in the writings of one who—though, in reference to his former opposition to the faith to which he was converted, styled himself the least of the apostles—ranks the foremost among them in all the qualities which constitute an able and eloquent reasoner. In perspicuity and strength of argument, in variety of striking illustration, in strong and felicitous contrast, in pathos and sublimity, both of sentiment and style, it cannot probably be surpassed.

The doctrine of the resurrection is the subject of the apostle's animated reasoning. The fact of Christ's resurrection he proves, by urging the testimony of eye-witnesses, of those who had seen Jesus after his crucifixion and death. From the truth of Christ's resurrection the apostle infers the resurrection of the dead in general. The doctrine of

the resurrection of the body he directly asserts as a truth inseparably connected with the resurrection of Christ: and then he proceeds to enforce it by auxiliary arguments; to prove its probability from analogy; to contrast the natural with the glorified body of the righteous; and he closes his interesting argument in strains of triumph in the highest degree animating and consolatory:—

“ This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

This chapter is selected by our church as the lesson in the burial service; and I am confident, that, on occasions when you have heard it read, your judgment has testified to the wisdom of the church in the selection. For those awful solemnities when we visit the mansions of the dead, to deposit in their gloomy receptacles the bodies of those whom we have known and whom we have loved, it is not in the power of the human mind to furnish sentiments more animating and consolatory; nor can language, in her varied powers, convey these sentiments in a style more simple, and yet more forcible and affecting.

The words which I have chosen as my text, occur in the course of this interesting passage of the apostle; and they are a part of it, where the force of his reasoning seems in some degree impaired by the obscurity of some of the expressions which he employs. It is proper, therefore, to attempt to explain these expressions, and to ascertain their genuine signification, in order that the reasoning of the apostle may strike us with its full force.

In these words he offers two arguments in favour of the resurrection of the dead.

1. The first argument he draws from baptism for the dead. "Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"

2. The second argument is founded on the sufferings and trials which Christians endured. "And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die."

3. A practical exhortation follows. "Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not."

1. The apostle draws his first argument for the resurrection, from *baptism for the dead*. "Else what shall they do, who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"

The obscurity of this passage arises from the equivocal meaning of the phrase, "baptized for the dead."

It is possible that this may have referred to some custom *peculiar to the first age of Christianity*, and of which no knowledge has been handed down to the present day; and then we must be content to remain in ignorance of the force of the reasoning of the apostle. It is much more probable, however, that in a strain of reasoning establishing a fundamental doctrine of Christianity, a doctrine intimately mingled with all the consolations and all the hopes of Christians, the apostle would not have drawn his allusions from temporary customs.

But there is an interpretation of this passage, which has respectable authority for its support:—

In the primitive ages of Christianity, when the sword of persecution was dyed with the blood of the saints, the spiritual birth of Christians in baptism was the prelude to martyrdom; and yet, such was the force of divine truth, such the clear and strong evidence which surrounded the Gospel, and such was the power of the Divine Spirit in impressing this evidence on the understanding, and in fortifying the soul to bear testimony to it, that the hosts of saints who died for the testimony of Jesus, were succeeded by others, who enlisted in baptism under the same banner which had exposed their predecessors to persecution and death. With this fact in view, the phrase, “baptized for the dead,” has been considered as signifying, baptized in the room, in the place of, as successors to those who were dead; and the force of the reasoning of the apostle is—If the dead rise not at all, what shall they do who are baptized in the room, to supply the place of those who, for the name of Jesus, had suffered death? what can be their hope, if there be no life beyond the present? What folly, to take upon them,

by baptism, the name of Christians, and thus to expose themselves to that vengeful persecution which drinks the blood of the saints! What shall they do, who with so much courage and zeal advance in baptism to fill up the places of those who have fallen in defence of the cross of their Saviour, if the dead rise not—if the hope of eternal glory, which has roused within them the spirit of martyrdom, be an illusion? What madness, to lose the life that now is, if there be no resurrection, if there be no life to come!

But this interpretation is liable to the objection of assigning a figurative meaning to a passage, for which, according to the rules of sound interpretation, we ought, in the first instance, to endeavour to find a literal interpretation. It is only in a figurative sense that any persons can be said to be baptized in the room of those who were dead.

The same objection of assigning a *figurative*, where we ought to seek, in the first instance, a *literal* signification, applies to another interpretation of this passage, by that eminently candid and judicious commentator, Macknight:—

It is supposed that the expression “for the dead” is elliptical; and that the phrase, when the words which are understood are supplied, would be, “for the resurrection of the dead.”—(So far the interpretation seems to be correct.)—This elliptical mode of expression is common in all writers, and particularly in writers who, like St. Paul, are distinguished for strength and conciseness. In a verse of this chapter, a very few verses before the one in which the phrase occurs which we are considering, there is an instance of this elliptical mode of expression. “Fallen asleep in Christ,” means,

“dying in testimony of their belief in the divinity and resurrection of Christ.” As the apostle is treating of the resurrection of the dead, and earnestly defending this doctrine from the assaults which are made against it, “baptized for the dead” evidently means, “baptized for the resurrection of the dead.”

Thus far this interpretation is certainly correct. But a doubt may be reasonably entertained whether it is equally correct in the figurative meaning annexed to the word “*baptized*.” It is supposed that this word means “*immersed in suffering*,” agreeably to the sense in which our Saviour applies it to his own sufferings, when, in reference to them, he speaks of the “baptism with which he should be baptized.” To this signification of the word there are two objections. The *first* is, that the word is no where used in this signification but in the discourse of our Saviour, where he is speaking of the intenseness of his own sufferings: the trials and afflictions which Christians should endure, are no where designated in this figurative manner. And the *second* objection is, that there can be no necessity for having recourse to a figurative signification, where the literal meaning will answer.

Applying the word “baptized” *literally* to the Christian sacrament of baptism, we shall arrive at the true meaning of the passage. “Baptized for the dead” refers to those who have received Christian baptism in testimony of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

But how, it may be asked, was this testimony given in baptism? It was denoted in the rite itself; it was given in the profession then made.

The rite itself holds forth the doctrine of the

resurrection. "Buried with him," says the apostle; "by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Here it is evident that the apostle considers baptism as representing the spiritual death and resurrection of Christians in connexion with their temporal death and immortal resurrection to life and glory. In another view, baptism also denotes the doctrine of the resurrection. It is a covenant rite, in which those who receive it engage to serve God as his people, and he graciously promises to be their God. "But God," as our Saviour himself argues, "is not the God of the dead, but of the living." When, therefore, in baptism he graciously promises to be the God of his people, he impliedly engages to raise them from the dead to life and glory, in order that he may be the God, not of the dead, but of the living.

Thus, then, they who were baptized, were "baptized for the resurrection of the dead." They received a rite which most forcibly denoted this fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith.

But further: baptism testifies to the doctrine of the resurrection, on account of the profession of belief in this doctrine which was then made. A profession of faith, personally or by sureties, is essential to baptism. "Believe and be baptized," is the exhortation of Christ and his apostles. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" and of this belief the fundamental article is, that he is, agreeably to his own gracious declaration, "the resurrection and the life; and that whosoever believeth in him

should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is the belief which, in every age of Christianity, has been deemed essential to baptism. They, therefore, who were baptized, were "baptized for the resurrection of the dead;" they bore testimony in baptism to this doctrine, by the profession of belief in it which was then made.

"Baptized for the dead" then means, having received Christian baptism in testimony of the resurrection of the dead. This is an interpretation which gives full force and meaning to the reasoning of the apostle.

On the whole, then, the difficulty of this passage will be removed, if we consider it as elliptical, agreeably to the practice of many writers, and particularly St. Paul, and supply the words which, from the subject of the apostle's reasoning, are evidently understood, and thus render the passage, "baptized for the resurrection of the dead;" "baptized in testimony of the resurrection of the dead;" a doctrine represented by the rite of baptism, and professed by all who have received it.

Forcible, according to this interpretation, is the reasoning of the apostle—"Else what shall they do, who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"

If the dead rise not, what shall they do who receive baptism as an emblem and a pledge of their spiritual death and immortal resurrection? They partake of an unmeaning and illusory rite. Why are they baptized professing their belief in the resurrection of the dead, if the dead rise not? Their profession is vain; the glorious hopes which it inspires are vain. By denying the doctrine of

the resurrection, baptism is thus rendered an unmeaning rite; it is no longer the emblem and the pledge of the spiritual death and immortal resurrection of Christians; for if the dead rise not, Christ is not risen. Vain then is the profession of faith in his resurrection made in baptism; vain all those hopes of immortal life and glory which the belief of the resurrection inspires—so animating in the discharge of duty, so consolatory under the sorrows and trials of the world.

2. “And,” continues the apostle, proceeding to another topic in defence of the resurrection, “why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die.”

Here the apostle forcibly argues in favour of the doctrine of the resurrection, from the animating motives which it affords to Christians to sustain the trials of the world, and from the folly, if there be no resurrection, of foregoing the pleasures of this life, to encounter persecution and death, without any prospect of recompense in the life to come.

Different meanings have been assigned to the declaration of the apostle in this part of the passage—“If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus.”

Some have understood the expression metaphorically, and supposed that the apostle alluded to some contests which he had with his enemies at Ephesus, whom, for their rage and malice, he compares to wild beasts: but a metaphorical sense is

never to be admitted when a literal one will answer ; and there is no reason for supposing that the apostle did not literally fight with wild beasts at Ephesus. Exposure to wild beasts was a severe punishment common in those times and countries : that St. Paul was doomed to this punishment by the malicious arts and power of his adversaries is insinuated where, in recounting his sufferings, he speaks of being “ in deaths oft ;” and is more expressly declared in this epistle, where he speaks of being “ appointed to death, being made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men :” and again, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, he speaks of being “ pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired of life.” St. Paul, then, “ after the manner of men,” after the barbarous customs of those times, was sentenced to fight as a gladiator with the wild beasts at Ephesus ; so that he was “ appointed unto death ;” he was “ made a spectacle ;” he “ despaired of life,” but was providentially preserved.

“ If the dead rise not, why stand we in jeopardy,” is the forcible reasoning of the apostle, “ every hour ?” why do we Christians expose ourselves every hour to the danger of death, in defence of a Master who has never risen from the grave, and in the hope of a resurrection to life which will never be realized ? “ I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord,” by my joy on account of your faith in him, by our common joy in the profession of his name, I am so surrounded with danger that I daily suffer all the apprehensions of death—every day is, as it were, a martyrdom to me—“ I die daily.” Nay, I was exposed, for his sake, to a combat with wild beasts at Ephe-

sus. "What advantageth" all this to me, "if the dead rise not?" The apostle, adopting his own eloquent language on another occasion, might have continued the recital of his trials and exertions for the cause of Jesus—"If the dead rise not," why have I been "in labours abundant, in prisons frequent, in deaths oft?" why then have I been "beaten with rods, have I suffered shipwreck, have I been a night and a day in the deep?" "If the dead rise not," why have I been "in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils among false brethren?" "If the dead rise not," why have I been "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness?" "What advantageth" all this, "if the dead rise not?" What folly to expose myself to suffering, to danger, to death, in the cause of a Master who cannot help me, in the profession of the hope of an immortality which is all an illusion? If, indeed, death is to terminate our existence, then let us live only for the present moment. The maxim of the profane and infidel sensualist is the dictate of selfish wisdom—"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

3. Against a conclusion so impious and gloomy, the apostle, in the close of the passage which I have been illustrating, earnestly warns his Corinthian converts. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not."

The same exhortation, brethren, may be ad-

dressed to you. "Be not deceived" by those who would lead you, for the sake of present gratification, to forego the hope of the glory which shall be revealed—who, in order that you may riot without shame or remorse in sinful pleasure, living only for the flesh, and fulfilling the lusts thereof, would make you believe that there is no resurrection, no judgment, no eternity: let not their "evil communications corrupt your good manners," weaken or destroy your faith in him who has declared that he is the resurrection and the life. "If the dead rise not," vain is your baptism, as the emblem and pledge of a spiritual and immortal resurrection—vain is your profession of faith, at baptism, in this holy doctrine. "If the dead rise not," where is your support under the deprivations and sorrows of life—where the wisdom of suffering affliction, rather than enjoying the pleasures of sin? "If the dead rise not," where is your refuge when the world forsakes you—where your consolation, when you commit to the house of darkness and of silence your departed friends—where will be your hope in the awful hour when you are hurried to the same gloomy habitation? "Be not deceived;" if there be a righteous Governor of all things, a state of retribution hereafter can alone clear up the mysteries of his moral government. All the dictates of reason, all the feelings of nature testify to that voice of inspiration—"The hour is coming, when they that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; they who have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they who have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation."

"Awake then to righteousness, and sin not."

“How indeed can ye, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” Buried with Christ, by baptism, into death, rise, through the power of that Divine Spirit which raised him from the dead, to newness of life. Planted in the likeness of his death, be ye also in the likeness of his resurrection. Risen with him, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. “Awake to righteousness, and sin not.” “Be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven, to take vengeance on his adversaries, on all who deride the purpose of his coming, saying, There is no resurrection, there is no judgment, there is no life to come. Then, faithful Christians, is the day of your redemption. The Judge of quick and dead will wake you from the sleep of the dust; he will call your souls from the paradise of the blessed; he will translate you, in bodies incorruptible and glorious, to the heaven of immortality and bliss. Robed in celestial glory, and bearing the palms of victory, you shall proclaim your conquest over death and the grave in that shout of triumph—“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” O that, in their holy and animating power, we could all say—“Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

SERMON XXVIII.

THE FEAST OF THE GOSPEL.

ISAIAH XXV. 6.

And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people
a feast of fat things.

THE prophecies of the Old Testament have generally a twofold application. In their original and primitive sense, they point out some remarkable events attending the Jewish church, God's chosen people Israel. In their ultimate, perhaps in their principal, but certainly to us, in their most interesting application, they develop all the sublime and affecting events connected with the establishment of the kingdom and church of Jesus Christ.

The portion of the chapter of which my text is part, is a solemn hymn of thanksgiving to God for the glorious victories which had been promised to his people Israel over their numerous and implacable enemies. It evidently, however, leads forward our views to those glorious times which Isaiah in the most glowing terms predicted, when God's people the Jews, with the fulness of the Gentiles, should rejoice in the reign of the long-expected Messiah. We shall therefore be suitably occupied at the commencement of the season sacred to the commemoration of his advent, in attentively considering the various parts of this sublime prediction,

with a view to derive from it the valuable spiritual instruction and consolation which it contains.

“And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things.”

“In this mountain,” Mount Zion, which was the seat of the Jewish temple. This temple was typical of the more glorious Christian temple in which God would delight to dwell. Considering Mount Zion, therefore, as the seat of the Christian church, it may truly be said of it, that “there the Lord promised his blessing, even life for evermore.” In Mount Zion was that “stone” first to be laid, which, though the builders rejected it, was finally to “become a great mountain, and to fill the whole earth.” In Mount Zion was that “tree,” transplanted from heaven and fostered by its divine dews, first to take root, whose shade was to afford “refreshing rest to the weary, and whose leaves were to be for the healing of the nations.” In Mount Zion, in the church of the Redeemer there first established, was the Lord of hosts, agreeably to the prediction in my text, to make “for all people a *feast* of fat things.”

In the sublime spirit of poetry, which enforces truth by allusions to material objects, and thus invests her with charms which, striking the senses and the imagination, captivate the heart—and in accordance with the genius of all the divine revelations which, under impressive and interesting types and figures, convey spiritual instruction—the sacred writers frequently express the blessings of Gospel grace under the appropriate figure of a “*feast*.” Beautiful is the allegory in which Solomon represents wisdom as inviting the children of men to partake of her divine blessings—“She hath

killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.”*

Our blessed Lord, following the same style of figurative revelation, compares that kingdom which he came to establish, to “a certain king, who made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to tell them which were bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.” And the blessed in heaven are represented by St. John as exhibiting their exalted happiness under the same impressive figure—“Let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”

In my text this is the figure which is employed with singular force and beauty. Not, however, under the simple similitude of a “*feast*” are the blessings of the Gospel denoted—“The Lord God will make unto all people a feast of *fat things*,” of the richest and choicest delicacies. Still further to express the value and the fulness of Gospel grace, the prophet, in the words following my text, beautifully exemplifies the figure—“A feast of wines on the lees,” of wines which, having lain long on the lees, have attained the highest strength and the most exquisite flavour; “of fat things full of marrow,” (the similitude is enlarged,) “of wines on the lees well refined,” by this additional de-

* Prov. ix. 2—5.

scription heightening the force of the comparison. Thus, then, is exhibited a feast, of the highest delicacy and richness, in which every luscious viand that can gratify and satiate the most keen and refined appetite is presented.

Most beautifully and forcibly does this similitude express the excellence and fulness of that spiritual banquet which God has prepared in his Gospel for the hungry and thirsty soul. Not more luscious to the sensual appetite are the richest delicacies, than gratifying to the soul the spiritual blessings of the Gospel feast. Here every one that thirsteth may come and freely drink of the living waters of salvation; and he that hath no money may come and buy wine and milk, obtain the blessings of Gospel grace, "without money and without price." In the feast which the Lord hath prepared in his Gospel, he presents every blessing which can console and exalt our nature.

Dost thou hunger and thirst after righteousness? Come to the feast of the Saviour and thou shalt be filled: his Gospel will supply thee with the most perfect rules of morals, and his Spirit will enable thee to model thy life by their exalted standard. Does thy soul pant after the mercy and favour of thy God and Saviour? Come to the feast of the Gospel, and thou shalt be refreshed with the fulness of pardon and redemption. After the most eager pursuit of the things of the world, dost thou still remain a stranger to that durable and satisfying happiness for which thou hast eagerly sought? Come to the feast provided in the Gospel, and there thy soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and thou shalt praise thy God with

joyful lips, constantly feasting on his love and favour, the satisfying blessings of his grace.

The Lord hath prepared this feast of spiritual blessings "for all people." The joyful invitation is given to "every one that will," to "come and drink of the water of life freely." The "poor, the blind, the halt, and the maimed," sinners of every description, whatever may be their spiritual maladies, are invited to receive life, and health, and felicity; for "the Lord hath prepared *for all people*, in this mountain," the Christian church, "a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees; a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."

The prophet proceeds, in the next verse, to display, in highly figurative language, the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom. "And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations."

Of similar import is another sublime prediction of the prophet. "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." The ignorance, error, and corruption which, as a thick cloud, covered the nations, shall be dispersed by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness rising with healing in his wings.

Before the dawn of spiritual day, profound indeed was the night of spiritual darkness in which the nations slumbered. Only faintly discerning the character and attributes of the Maker and Ruler of the universe, and dividing his supreme dominion among divinities, the slaves and the sport of human passions, degrading and corrupt was the worship which they rendered to him: no cheering

beam pointed out the way of access to their offended Maker, no certain ray illumed the path of duty by which they were to advance to his favour, and superstition, and corruption, and sin enveloped them in the darkest shades. Boldly but justly did the apostle delineate their character and state—“There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet is swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

From the depths of this depravity were the nations rescued, when Jehovah, pouring upon them the rays of Gospel light, “destroyed the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.”

Full, clear, and splendid are the disclosures of the Gospel of Christ. Illumined by its glorious light, we behold in celestial lustre the character and attributes of the Almighty Being who formed us; we are taught to worship him who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth; we are excited to love him, the best as well as the greatest of Beings, with all our mind, and all our soul, and all our strength. The doubts that harassed us relative to the terms of acceptance at his holy tribunal are dissipated; for we rejoice in the assurance that “God is in

* Rom. iii. 11—18.

Christ reconciling the world unto himself." The difficulties that obstructed the path of duty are removed by that heavenly light which plainly reveals all those virtues and graces in the practice of which we are to attain the final perfection and happiness of our nature. The vail is not yet, indeed, fully removed from all people; many nations still sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Yet future ages shall hail the full completion of this prediction, shall rejoice in the universal diffusion of the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, removing "the face of the covering that is cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations;" for "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea."

The prophet proceeds, in the next verse, to display still more exalted blessings of the Messiah's kingdom. "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it."

What gratitude and hope was not this gracious prediction calculated to inspire! The vail that concealed the future removed, the prophet displays a Deliverer descending from heaven. Bearing the banner of salvation, having on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords, he enters the domains of the grave and carries captivity captive; an Almighty Conqueror, he leads his faithful people through the dark valley of the shadow of death, loosens from them the garments of corruption, and clothes them with the robes of glory. The host of the redeemed, whom he has translated from the bondage of corruption

into the bliss and immortality of heaven, pour forth the strains of exultation—"Death is swallowed up in victory."—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "The Lord hath wiped" from the children of mortality and sin the "tears" of anguish; "the rebuke of his people," assailed by the reproaches of the ungodly, "hath he taken away from the face of the earth;" for they are come to the courts of the celestial Zion. "Songs and everlasting joy are upon their heads;" "joy and gladness" is their portion. From the seats of the heavenly Jerusalem "sorrow and sighing flee far away." Jehovah by his mighty hand and stretched out arm hath achieved our salvation. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

To our happy lot it has fallen, my brethren, to hail the fulfilment of the glorious prediction which I have laid before you. For *us* hath "the Lord of hosts prepared a feast of fat things." In the Gospel of his Son Jesus Christ, our heavenly Father hath set forth for us every blessing which is necessary to the health, the purity, the peace, and the everlasting salvation of our souls. From us he hath removed the vail which concealed his adorable character, and attributes, and will. For us he hath enlightened the way of access to the throne of his offended majesty. To us "life and immortality are brought to light;" "death is swallowed up in victory;" for we know that "if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Our eyes now see the salvation of God.

Let us gratefully adore him for the manifestation of his mercy, his grace, and salvation, in the Gospel

of his Son; and while divine truth sheds around us its benign lustre, let us not walk in the darkness of sensual ignorance, and in the paths of folly and sin. Called as we are now to commemorate the cheering rising of the Sun of Righteousness, let us use all diligence, as children of the light, to put off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light; and let it not be our condemnation, that "light has come into the world, and that we have chosen darkness rather than light."

The Lord of hosts hath "prepared for us a feast of fat things"—the blessings of celestial truth, mercy, grace, and salvation. He graciously invites us to come unto that spiritual banquet which in his holy mountain he hath prepared for all people. His "oxen and his fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him come and drink of the waters of life freely."

Come, then, guilty and perishing children of men, partake of the salvation of the Gospel; receive the pardon of your sins, which expose you to the just displeasure of your offended Maker; receive grace to purify your disordered natures, and to enable you to^s serve God acceptably; receive the everlasting favour of the Lord in his heavenly kingdom. He requires no other qualifications but a sense of your weakness and your guilt, an earnest desire to be freed from the dominion of your sins, and to partake of his satisfying mercy and favour. Turn not a deaf ear to the invitations of his mercy; despise not the solicitations of your Lord, who descended from heaven to redeem you. You are invited to partake of the rich, the pure, and the

unfading joys of the salvation of your Saviour; choose not as your portion the sensual, the corrupting, and the transitory gratifications of a sinful world. It is in your power to sit down with him at the everlasting festival of love in his kingdom above; and will you choose the doom of those who refuse to come to this heavenly banquet, and whose fearful portion is in outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? Blessed are they who hear the joyful sound, and with grateful, penitent, and obedient hearts, accept the salvation which is offered them; blessed are they in the favour of their God and Saviour here, blessed will they be in the light and glory of his presence hereafter.

SERMON XXIX.

ON THE HOLY GHOST.

I CORINTHIANS xii. 4.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

Who can by searching find out God? Man, vigorous, keen, comprehensive as he is in his researches in human science, finds his aspiring faculties humbled, when he seeks to penetrate the Divine essence. The doctrine which lies at the foundation of all religion, and which even the impugner of the sacred writings, unless sunk into the gloom of atheism, reveres as the only essential principle of natural religion—the existence of an eternal uncaused cause of all things—is utterly beyond the grasp of the human intellect. When, then, even what is called natural religion, the religion which reason emphatically claims as her own, has its incomprehensible truths, it is folly to expect that a revelation which embraces more extensively the Divine counsels and operations, should not contain any thing which surpasses the comprehension of the mind of man.

My brethren, is it not then apparent that the incomprehensible nature of many of the truths of the Gospel does not invalidate their claim to credibility? In every thing that man sees, in every thing that he hears, in every thing within him, in

every thing without him, there is more or less of mystery. The clod on which he erects his proud footstep, the heavens towards which he lifts his aspiring view, his own mind equally with that Divine mind from which it has emanated, are all inscrutable. In the mystery, then, which envelops the truths of the Gospel, there is not any thing which is contrary to the analogy of nature. Every thing which is the object of our sense, our consciousness, our reason, is inscrutable. Would it not be wonderful if the eternal God, who filleth immensity, could be comprehended by the finite creatures whom he has made?

But though the truths of the Gospel surpass, they do not contradict the dictates of human reason; far otherwise: they afford her rest from many anxious inquiries, relief from many perplexing doubts. Where she most felt her impotence, and deplored her darkness—as to the mode by which sin may be pardoned—they point out the certain and cheering way of access unto the offended Sovereign of guilty man: they present a divine Saviour, the Son of God, making atonement for transgression—doing that which the holiness and justice of the Eternal demanded—obeying his law and enduring its penalties; and thus rendering the forgiveness of the penitent sinner consistent with all the attributes of God, and with the righteousness, the honour, and the authority of his government.

The glorious truths which the church this day celebrates—the descent of the Holy Ghost, with his spiritual gifts and graces—transcending, indeed, the comprehension of the human faculties, is still a truth fraught with inestimable blessings,

conveying illumination, sanctification, and comfort to erring, corrupt, and miserable man.

In order that we may understand this fundamental doctrine, and be impressed with its practical tendency, let us consider the following propositions, which embrace every thing that the sacred writings have revealed with respect to that divine Personage, whose gift to the church, to abide with it for ever, the church this day commemorates.

1. The Holy Ghost is one of the divine Persons of the Godhead, proceeding from the Father and the Son.

2. He confers all miraculous and ecclesiastical gifts.

3. He bestows all spiritual graces.

1. The Holy Ghost is the third Person of the Godhead, partaker of the same divine nature with the Father and the Son, and proceeding from them.

In proof that he is a co-equal and co-eternal Person of the Godhead, we adduce the decisive fact, that he is associated with the Father and the Son in that commission from which the apostles derived their authority to promulgate the Gospel, and by which they were to baptize all nations into the faith of the eternal Godhead—"Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The Father, beyond dispute, is God; the Son and the Holy Ghost must be God; for it would be impiety of the grossest description to rank with the eternal Father, without mark of difference or inequality, any but those who incomprehensibly share with him the divine essence.

But still further: the name, the attributes, and

the operations of God are ascribed to the Holy Ghost; and co-ordinate in dignity with the Father and the Son, divine worship and obedience are equally due to him.

The divine name and title are ascribed to the Holy Ghost; for acts said to be performed by God, are also said to be performed by the Holy Ghost. "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils," said our Saviour at one time—"If I by the finger of *God*," said he at another. Christians are styled the temple of God, because the Holy Spirit dwelleth in them. In both these cases the Holy Spirit is styled God.

Again: acts committed against God, are said to be committed against the Holy Ghost. "They tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel."*—"They tempted and provoked the Most High God, and kept not his testimonies," saith the psalmist concerning the Israelites. "They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit," saith the prophet Isaiah of the same people.

The sin for which Ananias was smitten with the vengeance of heaven, is styled *lying unto the Holy Ghost*, and at the same time *lying unto God*. "Ananias," saith St. Peter, "why has Satan filled thy heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." What an incautious, what an impious mode of expression, in the mouth of an inspired apostle, if the Holy Ghost be not God!

And would not only thus the title, but the attributes of God, be ascribed to any but a divine Person? and yet eternity, that incomprehensible

* Psalm lxxviii. 41.

attribute of Deity, is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The apostle, speaking of Jesus Christ, says, that "through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God." Who is omniscient but that Jehovah whose presence pervades the universe, which he made and governs? and yet this divine attribute is possessed by the Holy Ghost. "The Spirit," saith the apostle, "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Who exercises almighty and independent power but the dread Sovereign of heaven and of earth? and yet, saith the apostle, "all these things worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing severally to every man as he *will*."

Who is *good* but one, even *God*? and yet, saith the psalmist, "thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."

Whose *truth* is unerring and unvarying but the unchangeable God? and yet, saith the apostle John, "it is the Spirit which beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."

My brethren, the inspired writers designed to convey clear and precise ideas concerning God and his nature and operations. Is it possible that they could be guilty of the blasphemy of ascribing divine attributes to an agent, distinguished by name from the Father and the Son, if that agent were not God? Is it possible that they could thus incautiously or wilfully use expressions concerning the Holy Ghost, which would lead men to commit the horrible impiety of regarding, and revering, and invoking, as divine, a mere creature?

But we behold divine operations exercised by the Holy Ghost. "He it is," saith the psalmist, "who garnished the heavens;" and yet, saith the

apostle, "he who made all things is God." Who can interrupt or control the course of nature—who can penetrate the darkness of futurity and foretell all things—who can create anew the soul dead in trespasses and sins, but God, omniscient and almighty? But these are considered in Scripture as operations of the Holy Ghost. And that highest act of divine power and benignity, the justification and acceptance of fallen and sinful man, is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. "Ye are justified," saith the apostle, "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Can the force of these testimonies be evaded? May it be supposed that an abstract quality—the power, the efficacy of God, by which he performs these operations—is here meant by the Holy Ghost? This, to say the least, would be an incautious mode of expression, to denote a quality by the title of a person. But the fact is, that personal actions which cannot be ascribed to God the Father, are ascribed unto the Holy Ghost. "The Spirit," saith the apostle Paul, "maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God. Intercession is undoubtedly a personal action; and it is made by the Holy Ghost, one Person, to God the Father, the other. The Holy Ghost cannot therefore be merely the power or efficacy of the Father—he must be a distinct Person.

Again: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is *come*," saith our Saviour, "whom the Father will *send* in my name." To come is a personal action; and the person sent, is distinct from him that sendeth. But, according to the above declaration of our Lord, the Holy Ghost comes; and must be not only a *Person*, but distinct from the Father, by

whom he is sent. Nor only so, but he comes to perform personal actions which cannot be ascribed to God the Father. "He, the Spirit of truth," saith our Saviour to his apostles, "will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak." "He shall receive of mine," continues our Lord, "and shall show it unto you." But, to speak not of himself, and to receive of Christ, and to show it unto others, are acts which it would manifestly be absurd to ascribe unto God the Father. The Holy Ghost, by whom these acts are performed, is not therefore the power or efficacy of the Father, but a distinct Person of the Godhead.

Thus co-ordinate in dignity with the Father and the Son, it is to be considered that like honour and obedience are due unto the Holy Ghost. The name which Christians revere and worship, is that holy name into which they were baptized; but in this name the Holy Ghost is associated with the Father and the Son. When, according to the apostle, we are to invoke the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, we are also to implore the communion of the Holy Ghost. And the apostle declares in my text— "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord," the same Jesus Christ. "And there are diversities of operations, but the same God" the Father. Here is distinctly and forcibly displayed the truth, that the great plan of redemption, in the gifts, the ministrations, and the operations by which that redemption is effected, is the joint work of the three Persons of the Godhead; and therefore equal adoration and praise are to be

rendered to them all. And such is the supreme reverence due to the Holy Ghost, that though every other sin should be forgiven unto men, yet the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which consisted in ascribing his miraculous gifts to the prince and powers of darkness, should never be forgiven.

The Holy Ghost is thus a divine Person. But as there is only one essence in the unity of the Godhead, the next inquiry is, in what mode does the Holy Ghost become a partaker of this essence? On this point, as on every other concerning the divine nature, it is worse than folly to speculate. We know the divine nature only as it is revealed to us. The simple inquiry, then, as to the mode by which the Holy Ghost becomes partaker of the nature of the Godhead—what is revealed? and the Scriptures, the only source of authority on this subject, justify the language used by our church in her creeds and articles, that the *Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son*.

He is said by our Saviour to “go out from the Father.” He is styled by an apostle, “the Spirit that is out of God.” But he is repeatedly spoken of as sent, not only by God the Father, but by Christ the Son; and he is expressly and repeatedly styled, the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Therefore, we are to revere and to worship the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the Godhead, proceeding from the Father and the Son.

What are the operations of this divine Person?

2. He is the Author of all miraculous and ecclesiastical gifts.

The Holy Ghost is the agent by which the Godhead conducts the dispensation of grace to man-

kind. All spiritual light and knowledge proceeds from him; for it is his province to declare the mind and will of God, and therefore he is stiled the "Spirit of revelation," the "Spirit of prophecy," the "Spirit of truth." Prophets and holy men, sent by God from the beginning, to testify of the Messiah that was to come, to reveal the will of this righteous Governor of the universe, to unfold the counsel and to declare the promises of this Father of mercies, and to denounce the threats of this God of justice and of holiness, "all spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

By him especially were the apostles commissioned to promulgate the glad tidings of the redemption. In obedience to the command of their Lord and Master when he left them, they tarried at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. "On the day of Pentecost they were all with one accord in one place," waiting, in awful solicitude, the fulfilment of their Lord's promise—the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Advocate, the Comforter. A rushing mighty wind announced his coming; cloven tongues, as of fire, emblems of his illuminating and penetrating gifts, sat upon the disciples. "The Lord gave the word, great was the company of the preachers;" and great the triumphs of these heralds of salvation. Kings with their armies did flee and were discomfited; the pagan hosts were vanquished; the kingdoms of the world became the kingdoms of God and of his Christ. This mighty revolution, which carried Gospel light into the recesses of pagan darkness, planted the cross in the very temples of idolatrous superstition, and consecrated the altars, on which had been vainly offered "thousands of rams and ten

thousands of rivers of oil," to the commemoration of the body and blood of Christ once offered to take away sin, was effected by those miraculous powers with which the apostles were endued by the Holy Ghost.

Gifted with the "word of wisdom and of knowledge," they unfolded God's counsel and will—the mystery of godliness in Jesus Christ, to whom the law and the prophets bore witness. Endowed with that faith which, as expressive of its singular power, is figuratively said to "remove mountains," they triumphed over the appalling assaults of the powers of earth and hell. The "gift of healing" enabled them to cure the maladies of body and mind; and the gift of miracles made all nature subservient to their word. By the "gift of prophecy" they looked back through the periods of time, and forward through the tract of future ages, and explained the past and foretold the future dispensations of God. By the same "gift of prophecy" they preached and prayed under a divine impulse, establishing the church, the spiritual kingdom of their Lord and Master, and putting all things in order in this divine fold of salvation. By the power of "discerning spirits," they detected all the devices and defeated all the machinations of the powers of darkness. And by "the gift of tongues, and their interpretation," they were enabled to carry Gospel truth into all lands, and the glad sound of Gospel salvation to the ends of the earth.

Not only miraculous, but *ecclesiastical* gifts does the Holy Ghost confer—that gift of office, by which men receive a commission to minister in holy things; for it is the dictate of common sense, it is the principle recognised in all civil institutions,

that the power of office no man taketh unto himself. From the source of power in civil governments are civil offices derived; and from Christ, the Head and Ruler of his church, the mystical body which he redeems and sanctifies, by the agency of the Holy Ghost, through the instrumentality of those originally set apart for the purpose, and perpetuated by a successive transmission of authority, is the commission derived to minister in holy things. "Receive the Holy Ghost for the work of the ministry," are the words of the commission, denoting neither the miraculous nor the ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, but the gift of office—the ministry of the word and sacraments, the discipline of the church. But these miraculous and ecclesiastical gifts were not common to all Christians, nor were they given for the sanctification of individuals. The former were confined to those who acted as the heralds of salvation, and ceased when the ends for which they were bestowed were accomplished in the establishment of the Gospel in the world; and though the latter, the ecclesiastical gift, is still continued in the standing ministry of the church, it is not common to all Christians; it is conferred only on those on whom, after the example of the apostles, those who derive their authority from the apostles lay on hands.

3. Not then with the miraculous or ecclesiastical, but with the less splendid, yet, in the sight of God, infinitely more valuable gifts of the Holy Spirit, are all Christians concerned—those which produce the Christian virtues, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." For "whether there be prophecies, they

shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." But "charity," that divine principle of love, which produces universal obedience to all God's commands, and which is excited in the heart by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "never faileth."

These *ordinary* operations of the Holy Spirit, imperceptible except by their fruits, do not violate that freedom of choice in which consists the essence of the virtue of every moral agent. They are persuasive and monitory, not overwhelming and compulsory.

These influences of the Divine Spirit are obtained by prayer, by pious reading and meditation, and especially by the participation of the ordinances of the church; through them the members of Christ's mystical body receive in due measure of the manifold gifts of grace. The Holy Spirit, thus humbly received and faithfully cherished, becomes the Spirit of *illumination*, enlightening the eyes of our understanding to know what is the hope of our Christian calling, and what the riches of our inheritance in the saints, made manifest in the Gospel. He is the Spirit of *sanctification*, transforming us by the renewing of our minds, rectifying our perverse wills, purifying our corrupt hearts, controlling and regulating our wandering and loose passions, and bringing all the dispositions of our souls into obedience to the will of God. He is the Spirit of *quickening*, exciting our cold and sluggish affections in all devout and holy exercises, and animating us to walk with alacrity and zeal in the ways of God's law, and in the works of God's commandments. He is the Spirit of

comfort and of strength, endowing martyrs with courage in the midst of flames, and patience when convulsed on the rack; and enkindling in the souls of Christians, in every age, that holy love, and faith, and resignation, which enable them, in the severest tribulations, to rejoice in the Lord, and to joy in the God of their salvation: and this he effects by shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts; “by giving us the Spirit of adoption, bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the sons of God: and if sons, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” of eternal glory.

Contemplating these rich and exalted fruits of the operations of divine grace, great cause have we with joy and triumph to bless and praise the name of our God, who has bestowed on us the unspeakable gift of his grace, who has sent to us the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

The third Person of the Godhead, proceeding from the Father and the Son, with the Father and the Son, Christians worship and glorify, God the Holy Ghost. The High and Holy One dwelleth in light which no man can approach unto; withhold not then the homage which is due to his triune Majesty, because ye cannot find him out. Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things which are revealed, to us and to our children. God the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, by whom the whole body of the church is governed and sanctified, let us bless and praise, that by his *miraculous* power the glad tidings of salvation were proclaimed to sinful and lost man, and have reached our ears—let us bless and praise, that the means of grace and the hope of glory are still perpetuated in that *ministry* which he *com-*

missions, and whose ministrations he makes effectual to the salvation of men.

A portion of this ministry, instituted for this divine and exalted purpose, you who are now to be admitted to the order of deacons will receive. Your powers will not extend to the administration of the Lord's supper, nor to the authoritative declaration, on the terms of the Gospel, of the forgiveness of sins, nor to the pronouncing in God's name the solemn form of benediction: these are acts which either Scripture or the primitive and continued usage of the church assign to the office of a presbyter or priest, who is invested with all the powers of the ministry. Scripture and primitive and continued usage restrict the functions of the deacon to the administration of baptism, to reading in the congregation holy scriptures and homilies, to catechetical instruction, and to preaching, if licensed thereto by the bishop. It is evident, that in this limited sphere of power the deacons are properly assistants to the presbyters and bishops, and are supposed to be placed in this capacity in some congregation. But change of circumstances in modern times have necessarily led to the permission, under episcopal sanction, of deacons having charge of congregations, and to the disuse of the primitive duty of the deacon, the particular charge of the poor, sick, and impotent members of the congregation. The Acts of the Apostles record the institution of deacons by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, and of their performing all the functions which have now been enumerated. The Epistles to Timothy and Titus, who were set with episcopal authority over the churches of Ephesus and Crete, contain directions

as to the qualifications of deacons, recognising them as one of the orders of the ministry; and from the apostles' times they, and the two other orders of the ministry, have been perpetuated by God's providence to the present day; and possessed by our church, constitute her claim to apostolic authority, and to union with that catholic or universal church, of which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the Redeemer and Head, which God the Holy Ghost sanctifies, and which will finally, in the day of her complete redemption, be presented to God the Father a glorious church, not having "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

My young friend, you will be commissioned by the Holy Ghost for an humble but important agency in this glorious work. To invite lost and sinful men to come unto Christ, with whom is fulness of mercy, and be saved—to admit them into that body which he purchased with his blood, which he loves and sanctifies, that church where they will enjoy the means and pledges of pardon, and grace, and life—to train up the young to know, and to love, and to serve God the Father who made them, God the Son who redeemed them, and God the Holy Ghost who sanctifies them—to instruct, by sound reading and preaching, the more perfect men in Christ Jesus in the principles and duties of their Christian calling, and to excite them to adorn it by every good word and work—and to carry where you have opportunity, relief and consolation to the children of distress and affliction—these will be the exalted, and interesting, and responsible functions—entitling you to the respect, and confidence, and attention of all Christian people—to which you will now be commissioned by the Holy Spirit,

through that authority which, originally conferred by Christ on his apostles, has been perpetuated in their successors to the present, and will continue, agreeably to the promise of him who is Lord of all, to the end of the world. Contemplating the source of that ministerial commission which you will now receive, you must be impressed with an elevated sense of the dignity of your office; and looking to the account which you must render to the great Head of the church when he sits in final judgment, you must feel the immense and awful responsibility of the ministry you now assume. The sense of the dignity of their offices and of their responsibility, ever present to their minds, should excite all orders of ministers in Christ's church to constant prayer to him, who alone can strengthen us so to act up to the dignity of our functions in the faithful discharge of them, that at the last we may render our account with joy, and receive from our divine Master the glories of an eternal crown. Modest and humble, as especially becomes your inferior station, and constant in your ministrations, having a ready mind and will to observe all spiritual discipline, may you enjoy the testimony of a good conscience, and continue stable and strong in your Lord and Master Jesus Christ; and God grant that, passing through the higher ministry of his church faithful and accepted, you may finally receive that blessed sentence from your divine Master—"Well done, good and faithful servant: enter into the joy of your Lord."

My brethren, by the instrumentality of the ministry of the church, in the word which they preach, and in the ordinances which they celebrate, the Holy Ghost conveys those gifts and graces by

which we are enlightened, sanctified, quickened, comforted, and finally made conquerors over all the enemies of our salvation, and advanced to the glories of God's heavenly kingdom. Yes, Christians, united with the mystical body of Christ in baptism, ye were made the temples of the Holy Ghost. He only is the Author of your spiritual life; he only quickens your pious affections, animates your good works, and gives you victory. It is your business to work out your salvation; for you have the assurance that it is God who, by his Holy Spirit, worketh in you. But remember, you may quench his divine light, you may resist his kind persuasions, you may grieve and vex him by your sins, so that he will leave you (fatal dereliction!) to the fruit of your own way, and to be filled with your own devices. O listen to his gracious admonitions; cherish and obey his godly impulses. Seek now for a renewed supply of his gracious influences, in that holy sacrament, which is the mean and the pledge to the faithful of his life-giving power.—Led by the Spirit of God, how exalted your condition! how holy your course! how splendid its termination! Though your passions be strong, they shall be vanquished; though your temptations be formidable, they shall be overcome; though your spiritual enemies be mighty, they shall flee before you; and finally, ascending the hill of the heavenly Zion, you shall enter its holy courts, and admitted into the presence of the Holy One, see and enjoy for ever the glories of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, the ineffable Trinity of Persons in one Godhead; to whom now then be ascribed all power, might, majesty, &c. &c.

SERMON XXX.

ON THE DANGER OF INDECISION ON THE SUBJECT OF
RELIGION.

NUMBERS xxii. 18.

And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.

THIS resolution of Balaam appears worthy of the highest commendation. We cannot but applaud the conduct of a man who prefers the sacrifice of the highest worldly advantages to the violation of his duty to his God.

But, alas! this resolution was evidently dictated more by the fear of punishment than by a correct sense of duty. Balaam was selected by the Almighty to be one of those prophets by whom the Divine counsels were communicated to mankind; he was therefore urged by the most powerful considerations to render implicit obedience to the commands of God, and to be the passive instrument of his infinitely wise and sovereign purposes. When, therefore, Balak, the king of Moab, sent to him an entreaty to come and curse the chosen people of the Lord, those whom he knew it was the purpose of God to bless, it was his duty to have rejected instantly the impious request; but, loving the wages of unrighteousness, he ran greedily after reward. Allured by the splendid gifts

which Balak sent by his servants, Balaam indulged a secret wish that he would be allowed to curse the people of Israel; but God, who designed to make Balaam the organ of the predictions of the splendid destinies of the Jewish people, and of the advent of the Messiah, the Star which was to come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre that was to arise out of Israel, permitted him to go with the servants of Balak. As, however, the views of Balaam were mercenary and impious, God's anger was kindled because he went, and he was miraculously re-proved. Still we find he persevered in his wicked purposes, and, urged by the tempting offers of Balak, went from place to place, offering sacrifices and practising the superstitious rites of the heathen, in the vain and blasphemous hope that he should at length succeed in prevailing on the Almighty to permit him to curse the enemies of Balak.

Indecision of conduct, arising from the love of the wages of unrighteousness, was the disgrace and the crime of Balaam. His soul was not callous to the fear and reverence of the Almighty; for we find him repeatedly declaring, in the words of my text—"If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Nor was he a stranger to the sentiments of admiration of piety and virtue, since we find him bursting forth in the pious exclamation—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." But these pious sentiments were controlled by the sordid passion of avarice—"He ran greedily," is the record concerning him, "after rewards." Hence we perceive him parleying with the tempting offers of Balak, instead of instantly rejecting them; we

find him in some degree the tool of this impious king, and led by him to practise against Israel the arts of divination, instead of consistently adhering to the counsels of the Lord his God.

Indecision was his disgrace and his crime.

My brethren, is Balaam a singular character? Has succeeding ages wiped off from human nature the stain of irresolution and indecision in the concerns of religion, and in the duties which we owe to God? Do we perceive men, who acknowledge the obligations of piety and virtue, and the infinite importance of conciliating the favour of him who is able to save and to destroy, displaying corresponding resolution and decision in their conduct? Do we behold them decidedly ranking themselves among the disciples of the Lord, professing a sense of their complete dependence upon him, and of their duty to serve him; and in opposition to the sneers of the scoffer, to the persecution of the ungodly, to the allurements of wealth, to the solicitations of pleasure, to all the temptations of a world which lieth in wickedness, preserving their allegiance to their heavenly Sovereign, and uniformly obeying all his commands? On the contrary, observation teaches that the principles of human nature are still the same; and that the same indecision in the concerns of religion which we condemn in the character of Balaam, is still manifested among men. We see numbers hesitating to make that decided choice of the service of God which reason, conscience, and his holy word assure them is their duty, and will prove their felicity. We see numbers who acknowledge the obligations of religion, and whose hearts are interested with her excellence, her consolations, and her joys, still

irresolute in yielding themselves to her sway—unwilling to relinquish that supreme pursuit of the wealth, the pleasures, and honours of the world—that complete subserviency to the dictates of worldly interest which religion forbids, and which is incompatible with her spirit and her precepts. We see some who, to a certain degree, prove themselves the servants of God, who publicly profess his name, attend his worship, and in many respects discharge the obligations of his laws, still cherishing indulgences hostile to virtue and offensive to God; we see them often parleying with temptation, and finally, perhaps, borne down the current. Alas! brethren, that indecision which led Balaam to wish to violate the purposes of the Almighty, and which prevented him from yielding unreserved obedience to the Divine commands, is still the cause why so many, who profess, in general, a reverence for religion and a sense of its obligations, are still found living in neglect of its institutions, and in the violation of its laws—are still found frequently in the ranks of those who consider worldly objects and sensual pursuits as the sources of their highest enjoyment, and who make them the highest objects of pursuit. Many, who, it is to be feared, never attain that consistent and uniform piety which alone can exalt them to the favour of God and the felicity of heaven, owe their failure to that indecision which leads them to balance between the gratification of their passions and the pursuit of the things which belong to their eternal peace.

To what condemnation is not this *indecision* justly liable?

1. Is it not justly subject to *reproach*?
2. Is it not *culpable*?

1. Is it not justly subject to *reproach*?

That self-possession, that deliberation in judgment, that caution in our conduct, which prevent precipitancy in adopting principles, and rashness in acting upon them, are necessary to correctness of principle and conduct, and essential to our usefulness and dignity. But these qualities are perfectly compatible with decision of character, and would be worse than useless without them. He whose judgment is convinced, while he wants energy of mind to follow its guidance—whose conscience clearly points out the course of duty, while he is destitute of resolution to pursue it—whose principles are correct, while he will not summon boldness to profess and to maintain them—evidences an indecision which, in the opinion of the world, would subject him to merited reproach. Of all weaknesses, that would seem among the most disgraceful, which sacrifices judgment, conscience, and principle, to timidity and irresolution; of all misconduct, that seems among the most dishonourable, which, through cowardly indecision, yields to temptation.

In concerns of a temporal nature, indecision, while it defeats the best concerted plans, and frustrates the most correct designs, is always considered an evidence of a weakness of purpose, which exposes its possessor to pity, if not to censure—and of an absence of those dignified and ardent feelings which are the companions and safeguards of virtue, the means and the pledges of success and honour. The reproach with which, in worldly affairs, the judgment of mankind brands indecision, is heightened in matters of religion, in the same proportion that the latter surpass the former in

excellence and duration. If, where worldly objects alone are concerned, indecision betrays censurable weakness and an absence of ardent and real nobleness and elevation of spirit, how much stronger the proofs of the same defects of character, when the infinitely important concerns of religion—when the claims of our Maker, Benefactor, Sovereign, and Judge—when death, judgment, and eternity cannot rouse to energy and decision!

They, then, who acknowledge the obligations of religion, assent to its excellence, and to the exalted value of its hopes and its consolations—who feel the importance of preparing for the certain event of death, and for the awful scenes which are to succeed it—and yet fail to summon resolution to act consistently with the dictates of their judgment and their feelings, to embrace with supreme devotedness of soul the service of God, to attend on all his ordinances, and to endeavour to obey all his commands—ought seriously to reflect on the severe reproach to which this conduct justly exposes them. From whatever cause it proceeds, whether from that timidity which shrinks at the ridicule and frowns of the world, or from those sordid and sensual passions which plead for indulgence, *indecision*, when the interests of their immortal souls and the concerns of eternity are at stake—when God, their Maker, Benefactor, Sovereign, and Judge, demands the reception of his sacred truths, and obedience to his righteous laws, indecision surely must subject them to the severest censure. Our own sober understandings must so pronounce; our own hearts must secretly condemn the weakness which this indecision discovers. What objects more important than those of religion? What

motives more powerful than those of eternity! What greater reproach, then, can be incurred, than by indecision, when these objects are at stake, when these motives urge! If, then, consistency of character is an excellence worth preserving—if energy, ardour, and firmness of mind be qualities highly to be valued—if it be desirable to escape the censure of the reflecting portion of our fellow-men, and the poignant consciousness that this censure is merited—let us shake off that irresolution which is continually balancing between God and the world; which to-day is the worshipper of the one, and to-morrow an idolater of the other. Let us come out boldly on the Lord's side, and defy the hosts of temptation which are set in array against us. Let us act consistently in obeying the dictates of our judgments and conscience, and no longer supremely serve the world, when our judgment and our conscience urge us to serve the Lord—no longer live for time, when our judgment and our conscience testify that we should live for eternity. It is this decisive choice of God, and devotion to his service, which only can secure the approbation of our own minds, and save us from the stigma of reproach and the seal of condemnation.

2. For if *indecision* in religion be *reproachful*, it is also eminently *culpable*.

That to act in any way, and on any subjects, contrary to the enlightened dictates of our judgment and our conscience, is culpable, no one will deny. That to act thus contrary to their dictates, in regard to the duties which we owe to that Almighty Being who made us, and on whom we are dependent for life and all its enjoyments and

hopes, stains the soul with the deepest criminality, is too plain to require proof. And what is the case with the character which we are contemplating? Is not the man who is indecisive in religion, perpetually violating the laws of God? Is there any security that his good desires will ever be carried into effect; that his virtue will stand the shock of temptation; or that he will persevere for any time in a consistent *profession* even of religion? Will not the sneers and scoffs of the thoughtless and ungodly intimidate him, and disarm him of his virtuous purposes? Will not the solicitations of passion and the alluring temptations of the world overpower his best resolutions and his pious desires? Pious desires, virtuous resolutions may rise up momentarily in his soul; but, like transient meteors, they pass away before the first blast of temptation. Virtuous actions may occasionally appear; but these are only feeble rays of light amid the general gloom. And can a heart thus divided between God and the world, and which cherishes so feeble a sense of piety as to be perpetually overpowered by temptation, be acceptable in the sight of that Almighty Being to whom supreme homage is due? Will he pass over violations of his laws and contempt of his authority, because the transgressor will not exert the energy and the resolution which are necessary to a course of consistent piety and uniform virtue? Alas! what pleas can he urge in arrest of the sentence of condemnation, who continues in a course of transgression? Can he plead ignorance of the precepts of religion, or insensibility to their excellence and value? His judgment and his heart will testify against him. Can he plead the want of motives to a religious

life? But reason confirms the assurances of the word of God, that by such a life only can he fulfil his obligations to the Author of his being, his Preserver, Benefactor, and Redeemer; and that by such a life only can he attain true felicity here, and everlasting joy hereafter. Can he plead that the strength was wanting which was necessary to enable him to resist temptation? The word of God would testify against him; for this word assures him, that, had he asked, he should have received; had he sought, he should have found; had he knocked, the door should have been opened. This holy word promised to him a grace which should have been sufficient for him, a strength which should have been made perfect in his weakness. Every plea fails. He is convicted at the tribunal of reason and of conscience, of having contemned the authority of God, of having neglected the interests of his immortal soul, through an indecision that was without excuse, and therefore as criminal as it is disgraceful.

They then, who have not summoned resolution to act as the consistent professors of the name of Christ—who permit the business or the cares of the world, or its scoffs and its sinful solicitations, to overpower the dictates of their judgment and their conscience, and to prevent them from taking a decided stand among the servants of God—if the reproach to which this indecision is justly exposed do not affect them, ought to be alarmed at its criminality. To be undecided on concerns so momentous as those of eternity; perpetually to hesitate, and hesitating, to err and to transgress, when God, their Maker, their Sovereign, their Judge, demands obedience, displays a criminality

surely without excuse. Conscience, if they listen to her voice, must thus pronounce concerning this hesitating, indecisive conduct; and the judgment of the great day will seal its everlasting condemnation before an assembled universe.

In what instance is this criminal and dangerous indecision more strikingly displayed than in regard to the supper of the Lord? The authority of this institution, and the command to receive it, are so explicit; the obligations arising from the divine character and merciful offices of him who instituted it, and which enforce its reception, are so numerous and powerful; the duty of commemorating the love of him who came from heaven, and suffered, and died, to purchase for us eternal life, is so reasonable; and the benefits of an ordinance thus enforced are so numerous—pardon, consolation, hope, joy, everlasting felicity; that every professor of the Christian name must be convinced that he cannot abstain from the reception of it without the imputation of inconsistency, ingratitude, and guilt. And yet *indecision* keeps many from the discharge of this reasonable duty, and burdens their conscience with guilt. Alas! *indecision* may cheat them of immortal felicity. Resolve then to come, penitent and humble, to the altar of him whose infinite love for you, even unto death, you have so long refused to commemorate.

My brethren, the concerns of religion are of supreme importance—the service of God our highest duty—obedience to his laws our perfection and felicity. Surely it ought to be our fixed determination, that, let others act as they may, we will serve the Lord. Let us imitate the worldly prophet in the virtuous purpose which, amidst his general

irresolution, he steadfastly professed—"If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." If I should gain the whole world, I cannot offend my God, and thus lose my own soul. Let this be the settled purpose of our hearts. Let us be earnest in our prayers to him, without whom we can do nothing, to succour our weakness, and to strengthen our pious resolutions—to give us grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow him, the only God. Let us frequently meditate on the shortness of life, (how many circumstances constantly call us to these meditations!) on the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time of its summons. Let us habitually contemplate the awful scenes of eternity—the torments of hell, the joys of heaven. Employed in these meditations, and animated by these pious exercises, the charms of sensual pleasure will fade upon our view; the world, when we recollect that we must soon leave it, and that, at the bar of eternal judgment, its wealth, its honour, its power, its pleasures, can yield us no support—the world will sink in our estimation. No objects will appear worthy of supreme pursuit (however, others necessarily ought to be of subordinate attention) but the favour of God and everlasting felicity in the life to come. We shall view as equally reproachful and criminal, that *indecision* which hesitates to secure, or which puts for a moment in jeopardy, interests so momentous. Our resolution will be to make our Christian calling and election sure, to serve him, whose service is perfect freedom, our highest duty, perfection, and

felicity. Thus resolved, thus decidedly engaging in the service of our God, yet mindful of our weakness and guilt, and imploring, through Jesus Christ, his mercy and grace—this mercy will refresh us, this grace will ever be present with us. He, our Lord and Redeemer, will enable us to overcome the temptations which assail us—amidst all the changes and trials to which we are exposed, will preserve us from falling—amidst all the allurements of the world, will keep our hearts surely there fixed where true joys are to be found—and when, before the breath of his displeasure, coming in majesty to judge the world, the heavens and the earth pass away, he will exalt us to that new heavens and new earth wherein dwell for ever righteousness and joy.

SERMON XXXI.

THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE WORLD ENMITY WITH GOD.

JAMES iv. 4.

The friendship of the world is enmity with God: whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

THIS is a hard saying, my brethren, if literally understood—who can bear it?

But surely it was not the design of the apostle to recommend, as necessary to the friendship of God, entire seclusion from the world, and a life of austerity and constant self-denial. Our connexion with our fellow-men is a foundation of the most important duties, and a source of the highest pleasures. Acts of love, of charity, and of mercy, are imitations of the paternal goodness of God, “whose tender mercies are over all his works.” They are sanctioned by the example and the precepts of Christ, whose life was a constant course of beneficence, and who indulged in the enjoyments of social life. His religion speaks good will to men, and his service is perfect freedom and a reasonable service. Our divine Master surely, who supremely seeks our happiness, cannot forbid those pleasures which unbend the mind without making it effeminate, which gratify the heart without corrupting it. The gentleness and meekness which his Gospel inculcates, will dispose us to enjoy with

superior relish all the innocent relaxations of life, and eminently fit us for the pure and virtuous pleasures of social and domestic intercourse. The commandments of God are not grievous, and in keeping of them there is great reward: the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden is light.

It is an inordinate attachment to the world which the apostle condemns, an attachment which lowers the demands of duty, which nourishes corrupt passions, which dispenses with an entire and holy obedience to the law of God, which enfeebles or extinguishes the supreme and ardent love which we owe to him. If it is our *chief* business and aim to obtain and enjoy the emoluments, the honours, and the pleasures of the world—if we place our *chief* happiness on the gratification of our sensual appetites—if we make religion subordinate to our worldly concerns, and, while strangers to its renovating power, perform its external duties from a principle of interest or fear—we are among the insincere Christians, the self-deceiving formalists, whom the text reproves. It teaches us that the love of God and a regard to his authority should be supreme in our hearts, should be the rule of our conduct, and should direct and moderate all our enjoyments.

Many persons, who have no just ideas of the purity and spirituality of the divine laws, are often excited, from the remonstrances of conscience, and from the apprehensions of death and judgment, to make some sacrifices to avert the displeasure of their Almighty Judge. They will endeavour, therefore, to preserve a deportment in general inoffensive; they will never grossly transgress the law of God; they will, perhaps, with punctuality and ap-

parent devotion, attend to the duty of public worship; but they continue to pursue all the objects of the world with supreme ardour, and to enjoy all its pleasures, as the source of their highest felicity. It is not their desire and endeavour to mortify their inordinate and corrupt affections, and to render the pursuit and enjoyment of the world subordinate and subservient to the higher objects of their Christian calling; they are strangers to the life of God in the soul, to the power of his grace in renewing the heart, and yet it is their hope and expectation to secure his favour. To persons of this character the text is addressed, and it demolishes their hopes and expectations; for it declares—“The friendship of the world is enmity with God: whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

That an inordinate attachment to the world is incompatible with the love of God, will appear from various considerations.

1. An inordinate attachment to the world is contrary to the perfections of God.

2. It is inconsistent with the principles and rules of Christian duty.

3. The friendship of the world and the love of God prepare the soul for opposite states of existence hereafter, and cannot therefore subsist together.

1. An inordinate attachment to the world is contrary to the perfections of God.

God is infinitely holy, and the soul that is impure cannot therefore be acceptable in his sight. His infinite compassion will, indeed, pardon our infirmities; but corrupt passions and the love of sin

are hostile to his holy nature, and he must punish them. Now, an immoderate attachment to the world corrupts the soul, and strengthens the sinful propensities of our nature. The inordinate desire of riches contracts the benevolent affections, and renders the heart covetous and sordid. The soul, elated by honour, forgets its dependent and sinful state, and renounces its trust in God. A devotion to pleasure enervates the mind, destroys its sensibility to virtue, and sometimes leads to the commission of crimes. Can a supreme attachment for these objects exist with the love of a holy God? My brethren, the dominion of worldly passions must be destroyed, and the soul must be conformed to the image of God, before it can bear his holy inspection.

An inordinate attachment to the world is contrary to the justice of God.

In the exercise of infinite justice, he will reward every man according to his works; and he will therefore punish those unfaithful servants who have employed their talents in the service of the world, instead of devoting them to his glory. Those who have rendered him the homage of their lips, while their hearts were far from him; and who have obeyed him from the slavish principle of fear, and not from the love of his perfections, and a grateful sense of his goodness; cannot expect to inherit the rewards of his faithful servants. At the awful day of account, "let him that is unholy, be unholy still," will be the sentence of eternal justice.

An inordinate attachment to the world is contrary also to the goodness of God.

His goodness, displayed in all his works, and especially exercised upon us in our creation, pre-

servation, and redemption, in the countless blessings which he bestows upon us, claims our supreme affection and gratitude. The love of this greatest and best of Beings should animate all the powers of our souls. The obedience with which we should glorify our beneficent Maker should be sincere, cheerful, unreserved. What folly and what guilt, to prefer the vain pleasures of the world to the contemplation and love of his perfections! How ungrateful and impious, to offer him a service corrupted by sensual pursuits! How presumptuous, to set up the world as a rival in our affections with the supreme and ever-blessed Jehovah! "Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

2. An inordinate attachment to the world is incompatible with the love of God, because it is opposed to the principles and precepts of Christian duty.

Faith is prescribed as the principle which is to regulate the Christian life; and this principle, which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, exalts the desires of the Christian to heaven, and directs him to aspire there after those joys which will constitute the perfection and felicity of his nature. How then is it possible for the Christian, under the elevating influence of faith, to confine his thoughts and desires to the earth, or to permit any of the objects which it presents to engross his affections, or to diminish the supreme love and pursuit of those good things which God hath prepared as his portion for ever?

The great business of the Christian, to which his baptismal covenant devoted him, is "continu-

ally to mortify his corrupt affections, and daily to proceed in all virtue and godliness of living." But the world nourishes those passions and presents those temptations that corrupt the soul. A devotion to the pursuits and joys of the world dissipates serious reflection, destroys a taste for virtuous enjoyments, and establishes the dominion of those sinful passions which it should be the great object of the Christian to subdue. Therefore was the declaration of the apostle—"The friendship of the world is enmity with God;" for its spirit is opposed to those holy precepts which his divine Master inculcated.

"Blessed," says this divine Lord, "are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." But can the worldly man, who aspires after honour and fame, who considers all pursuits as unworthy of a moment's regard, but the pursuits of ambition, be the disciple of him who was meek and lowly in heart? or can he, who riots in the joys of wealth and luxury, take up his cross and follow, in the path of holy self-denial, a suffering Saviour?

"Love your enemies," says the blessed Jesus, "bless them which curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." But, by the world, the forgiveness of injuries is ridiculed as mean and pusillanimous: every insult must be resented, even unto blood, or you are doomed to irretrievable disgrace, at the imperious tribunal which the world has erected.

"Take no thought for the morrow," was the exhortation of Christ, "for the morrow will take thought for the things of itself;" that is, the providence of God, which is over all, will provide in that measure and way which to his infinite wisdom

and goodness seem best, for our spiritual wants; and therefore we should not indulge in distressful anxiety, nor be engrossed with providing for our temporal necessities, and with an attention to our worldly advancement. But when the love of the world reigns supreme in the heart, we think only of securing its wealth or its honours, or enjoying its pleasures. Our anxious desires and our unwearied exertions are fixed upon the present life; like the brutes that perish, we are eager only to gratify our sensual appetites; our souls, exalted in their powers and immortal in their destiny, are neglected, or worse than neglected—they are made tributary to the low and brutal passions of our nature.

“Be ye perfect,” says our Lord, “even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” We are constantly to contemplate, to admire, and to seek to imitate the glorious perfections of God; to a resemblance of which our souls should most devoutly and ardently aspire. But the world binds us by a system of principles and rules directly opposed to the perfections and will of God—a system regulated by the varying standard of capricious and corrupt fashion, and whose only object is the gratification of the passions, and the advancement of our temporal prosperity and happiness. A lively love to God, an ardent zeal for his honour and glory, an earnest desire to be conformed to his image of purity, goodness, and love, would be branded as enthusiasm, or hypocritical sanctity, by the disciples of the world. When the Christian carefully governs his passions—when, not sullenly and austere abstracting himself from all social pleasures, he yet strives to be moderate and tem-

perate in his enjoyment of them, lest they assume too great influence over his heart, and weaken his pious affections—when he scrupulously abstains from every indulgence or pursuit, however sanctioned by the world, which the pure spirit of the Gospel condemns—he is in danger of being considered as “righteous overmuch.”

Since the world is thus opposed, in its principles and practice, to the principles and precepts enjoined by Christ as the characteristics of his disciples, is it possible that we can fix our affections supremely upon it, and regulate our conduct by its principles—and at the same time make the will of God the rule of our conduct, his infinite perfections and goodness the object of our fervent love, and his almighty power and providence our steadfast reliance? Ah! my brethren, “no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or cleave to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” “The friendship of the world is enmity with God: whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

3. The love of God and the friendship of the world prepare the soul for opposite states of being hereafter, and cannot therefore exist together.

The man whose soul is renewed after the divine image, and in whom the love of God reigns as the supreme principle of action, is redeemed from the dominion of unholy passions. His delight is in obeying the law of God, in meditating on his perfections, in adoring his goodness, and in offering to him the tribute of lively gratitude for his manifold mercies; and, thus established in all holy affections

and exercises, he is prepared for the felicity of that heaven towards which he constantly presses, and where he will at last be eternally blessed.

But the man who is subject to the dominion of worldly principles and passions, is estranged from God; he extends not a thought or a desire beyond the worldly scenes with which he is engrossed; occupied with sensual gratifications, he has no wish and no relish for the pure and spiritual joys of religion. His Maker he dreads as the capricious Sovereign who delights in his misery by restraining his enjoyments, instead of loving and serving him as that gracious Parent who designs, by the discipline of self-denial, to make us meet for the unspeakable and eternal joys of his presence. The corrupt passions of the votary of the world, gaining strength by indulgence, assume at last complete dominion; and, thus disqualified for the holy presence of God, he is fitted only for the habitation of condemned spirits, with whom he must take up his portion in torment for ever and ever.

For what opposite states of being do the love of God and the love of the world prepare the soul! They cannot therefore exist together—the soul cannot be prepared at the same time for heaven and for hell. “The friendship of the world is enmity with God: whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

This subject, my brethren, leads to some practical reflections.

1. The conduct of those who attempt to connect the supreme love of God with an inordinate attachment to the world is unreasonable.

For surely we cannot expect to gain his favour while we are destitute of those holy affections, or negligent in that spiritual and universal obedience which he requires. How hopeless to expect to *deceive* our Almighty Judge! "He searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men;" and it is his immutable declaration—"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." No longer, then, let us vainly expect the favour of our Maker, while we are supremely devoted to worldly pursuits and pleasures. Let us "choose now whom we will serve, God or the world." Severe will be our disappointment, if the latter be our choice; for the highest happiness which the world, inordinately pursued, can bestow, arising from the gratification of our sensual appetites, in which only we resemble the brutes, is unworthy of a rational being. The innocent enjoyments of social and domestic intercourse, religion exalts, instead of diminishing. But the happiness which the world bestows, of pleasure, of honour, and of wealth, is uncertain as it is vain. If there is any truth which daily experience verifies, it is the uncertainty of worldly prosperity, the precarious tenure by which men hold those gifts of honour and fortune in which they often place the happiness of life. What is the world, with all its pleasures, to the suffering victim of disease? What is it to the sinner, when he is placed on the verge of eternity, and when he realizes, in fearful anticipation, the dread tribunal of his Almighty Judge? O that it could be sounded in the ears of the worldly man, till it sound him from his sinful security—"What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

2. But, secondly, the conduct of those who attempt to connect the love of God and the friendship of the world will occasion their present misery.

Their hearts are supremely fixed on the world and its pursuits and pleasures; but, urged by the apprehension of the indignation of their omniscient and holy Judge, they deem it necessary to renounce many of their favourite enjoyments, but they receive in return none of the comforts of religion. The soul is thus the sport of slavish fear, impelled by the apprehension of the wrath of God to renounce the world, and yet clinging to it with such fond affection that the renunciation cannot be completed. Thus vibrating between the world and God, between a love of its sensual enjoyments and a fear of his displeasure, between the pleasures of sense and the terrors of eternity, the soul loses her resolution, her firmness, and her dignity. Let us condemn, then, a conduct thus irresolute and weak, which keeps us in painful doubt and apprehension, which leads us to the unworthy attempt of appearing to be what in reality we are not, which imposes on us the irksome observance of all the external duties of piety, without any of its spirit, its comforts, its enlivening joys. Let us burst asunder the fetters of the world, and assert the dignity of our calling as the sons of God, and the heirs of a heavenly inheritance. Let us not be discouraged by the strength of our sinful passions, and by the power of the temptations that assail us; for "greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world:" and he hath promised—"My grace shall be sufficient for you; my strength shall be made perfect in your weakness." Let us not be discouraged by the pure and spiritual service which God requires. When

we have escaped from the thralldom of the world, the service of God will appear our reasonable service, and will constitute our supreme joy: and remember, religion forbids only an inordinate attachment to the world, an attachment that renders us independent of God, of his authority and laws; and which thus degrades the soul, destroys her purity and peace, and unfits her for future blessedness. Even the zealous pursuit of wealth and honour, the cheerful indulgence of the pleasures of sense, when in subjection to the laws of God and to the higher concerns of our heavenly calling, religion allows and approves. But still every desire and passion must be subdued, and every amusement and pleasure must be renounced, that would corrupt the purity of our souls, abate our love to God, and destroy our relish for the holy exercises of devotion. And does God require these sacrifices merely because thus it pleaseth him, and he giveth not to us an account of his doings? No; but because these sacrifices are necessary to our perfection and happiness, which consist in the entire subjection of our wills, our desires, and affections, to his holy laws.

And, my brethren, how exalted those consolations and joys of the devoted servants of God, which more than repay them for their self-denial, and their renunciation of the sinful pursuits and pleasures of the world, for their holy, strict, and regular life! No restless desires, no turbulent passions agitate their bosoms: the love of God sheds abroad in their hearts a peace that passeth all understanding. They enjoy the assurance that Jesus Christ is their Redeemer, mighty to save; that his unchangeable word is pledged for their salvation;

that he is ever present with them, redeeming them by his power, renewing them by his grace, consoling them by his promises, and enlivening them by his love. They enjoy the assurance that God is in Christ their reconciled God and Father; that his eye is ever upon them for good, his ear ever open to the words of their complaint; that in the time of trouble he will hide them in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle will he hide them; and that he will finally translate them to his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and where there is pleasure for evermore. In the fruition of these promises and hopes, they break forth in the ejaculations of praise—"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."

To those who attempt to connect the love of God and the friendship of the world, let me urge,

Lastly, The criminal insensibility and ingratitude which this conduct evinces.

God, my brethren, is deserving of our supreme and ardent love. We behold his goodness, in his creating us with powers capable of high attainments, and destined for immortal enjoyments. We trace his kind providence in every event of life—when we have been rescued from danger, when we have been raised from the bed of sickness, when the consolations of his favour have cheered the night of adversity. We discern his gracious hand in every enjoyment of social and domestic life—in every comfort and every blessing which enlivens our lot. Above all, we acknowledge his inestimable love, in the gift of his beloved Son for our salvation, in those means of grace by which our corrupt

nature is purified, in the hope of that glorious destiny in which corruptible shall put on incorruption, and mortal immortality. What ingratitude, then, and insensibility, to withhold the supreme love which is due to our gracious Creator, Benefactor, and Redeemer, and to bestow it upon the world—upon the world, which deludes us with imaginary pleasures, and at the close of life leaves us unprepared to render our account, and unfit to taste the joys of heaven! O let not the world separate our affections from God, and lead us from him, the source of bliss; let us love and serve him with all our mind, and with all our soul, and with all our strength; let us say unto him with undivided affection—“Be thou my portion and my inheritance, my refuge and my hope.” Then shall our souls be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and our mouths shall praise him with joyful lips: God will be our guide, even unto death; and when our strength and our hearts fail, he will be the strength of our hearts, our portion, and our God for ever and ever.

SERMON XXXII.

JESUS CHRIST THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.

JOHN xiv. 6.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

THIS is a most important and interesting declaration, whether we consider its nature, the character of him by whom it was made, or the situation of those to whom it is addressed.

Jesus Christ, the only-begotten and well-beloved Son of the Father, in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, with whom are the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, to whom all the prophets bore witness, and who proved himself to be the Son of God by signs, and wonders, and mighty works, uttered this declaration—"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He was announcing to his disciples his departure into heaven to prepare a place for them, and he delivered this declaration in the first instance to them; but through them it is addressed to all the human race, for whose salvation he came down from heaven. And when we consider our ignorance, our weakness, and our guilt, and our subjection to sin and death, how important and interesting must

appear to us this declaration of the Son of God, in which he exhibits himself to us as a *way* of access to that dread Sovereign whom we have offended, as that eternal *truth* who should make us free from the bondage of error, and as that eternal *life* who should redeem us from death, and ransom us from the power of the grave:

Yes, my brethren, this is a declaration in which we are all interested; for surely no individual present can possibly be indifferent as to the means of his deliverance from error, from sin, and from death: these are topics of infinite moment to us all.

Listen, then, while I endeavour to explain to you in what respects Jesus Christ is the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*, through whom alone we can come unto the Father.

I. Jesus Christ emphatically styles himself the *way*, because he only opens to us the way of access to that God whom we have offended.

What availed thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil? What availed that dreadful refuge of despair, the offering up the first-born, the fruit of the body? The sin of the soul still remained: its guilt was not to be expiated by the merits of the most perfect creature, nor its stain to be washed away by the floods of repentance. No created being, however exalted, possesses even that portion of superabundant merit which can atone for the deficiency of another, much less which can make expiation for the sins of the whole human race; and repentance, when most sincere, is still imperfect, falling far short of the claims of divine justice and holiness, and unavailing to repair the

affront which the transgressor has cast on the power of God and the majesty of his government.

When, then, human nature, excited by the sense of sin, had exhausted every remedy which its guilty imagination could devise, still it could not indulge any certain hope of pardon, nor solve the perplexing mystery, how God could be just, and yet justify the sinner. The way of access to the throne of the Sovereign and Judge of the world was closed; and when conscience pointed to the tribunal where justice would by no means spare the transgressor, the language which its guilty fears prompted, was that of apprehension and despair—"Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?"

When thus there appeared no eye to pity nor arm to save, it pleased the Almighty Father to lay help on one that was mighty. God so loved the world as to send his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into the world, and by him was the *way* opened by which the sinner could have access to the throne of God, could obtain remission of his sins, and be restored to the favour of his offended Maker.

This new and living *way* of access Christ opened,
1. By the shedding of his blood.

It was the inscrutable determination of the divine counsels, that without shedding of blood there should be no remission of sin. This determination first appeared in the institution of sacrifices. In them man was taught to make expiation for his guilt by the shedding of the blood of the victim. But it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin; and these sacrifices derived their efficacy from that one great sacrifice which they prefigured—that of the Son of God in

our nature pouring out his soul unto death as an atonement for sin. The connexion between expiation and the shedding of blood, between satisfaction for sin and the death of an infinitely perfect victim—in other words, the mode by which the death of the Son of God, in the person of man, could atone for transgression—is one of those secret things which belong unto the Lord, one of those mysteries which the Father hath kept in his own power. So it seemed good to God to ordain, that the sufferings and death of his only Son, in the person of man, should atone for man's transgressions. Jesus Christ made his soul an offering for sin, and thus opened the way by which man could obtain pardon and acceptance.

But something further was necessary; the law which man had transgressed, and the authority of the divine government which man had violated, were to be sustained and vindicated.

2. These objects Jesus Christ accomplished, by rendering perfect obedience to the law, and sustaining the penalty which the authority of the Divine government exacted. Without sin himself, and possessed of the glory and perfections of the Godhead, whatever acts he performed were of infinite value; and his obedience to the law being thus full and perfect, it was sustained in all its power and its purity.

Not only did Jesus Christ fulfil all the precepts of the law, but he incurred its penalty. "In the day that thou sinnest thou shalt surely die." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." These were the penalties of the law which man had violated; and incurring these penalties, he became subject

to death and to the curse of God. But Jesus Christ, the divine representative of man, sustained these penalties in his stead, suffering on the cross the bitterness of death, as one forsaken by God. Thus was the divine law sustained, and the authority of the divine government vindicated, in the punishment of transgression. Every barrier that excluded a guilty race from the means of pardon was removed; the darkness that enveloped the throne of God, the righteous Sovereign of the universe, was dispelled; and the voice of mercy was heard issuing from that throne whence before had proceeded the denunciations of justice—"God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; and whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out." Jesus Christ is thus the way of access unto the Father, and no man cometh unto the Father but by him.

II. But Jesus Christ is also the *truth*.

The Word, the wisdom of God, in him dwells the truth of the Godhead, and this truth he has manifested to the children of men. In him was light; and this light hath shone upon us, dispersing the spiritual darkness that overshadowed us, and guiding our feet in the way of peace.

Jesus Christ was the Teacher sent from God: full of grace were his lips, and never man spake like him. He disclosed what reason had sought in vain to discover—the terms on which the offended Sovereign of the universe would admit to his favour man, who had rebelled against him. He renewed in full lustre that light of divine truth which our first parents lost at the fall, and which successive revelations by the prophets could not wholly restore.

All the divine attributes were seen to harmonize in that cross which Jesus Christ displayed, and on which he suffered; mercy and truth there met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other. He divested the Divinity of those corporeal infirmities and passions with which human reason had clothed him, and revealed God as a Spirit, to be worshipped, not with the vain oblations of a corrupted heart and fancy, but in spirit and in truth. Human reason had ineffectually sought to fix the varying rule of duty—Jesus Christ established that rule, so easy to be understood and so easy to be applied—“Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you.” The various duties that result from our social relations, and the faithful discharge of which is necessary to render these relations a source of happiness, are delineated and enforced in the Gospel of this divine Teacher, with unequalled clearness, tenderness, and force. Those duties, which terminate more directly on man himself, and which are more immediately necessary to his individual perfection and happiness, are summed up in the injunctions to be “pure, as God is pure;” to be “perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect.” And to give life and fervour to this holy code of morals, this divine Teacher infused into it the principle of *love*, love to God and man—displaying itself in every relative and social virtue, in the faithful and resolute discharge of every duty.

Thus Jesus Christ proves himself the *truth*, bringing down divine truth from her habitation in the highest heavens, to dwell with man as his companion and his friend; and by the influences of his Holy Spirit, dispensed to all men, but more especially and fully to the members of his church, his

mystical body, which is the mean and pledge of his grace and mercy, he prepares the soul for this celestial visitant, dispelling from the understanding and the heart the errors and the prejudices that would oppose her righteous dominion.

Jesus Christ being thus the way and the truth—

III. He is also the *life*.

He is life to man dead in trespasses and sins, quickening him to the life of holiness and virtue, to the comforts of God's favour, and to the joys of his love. He is life to man cast down and oppressed by the burden of sorrow, animating him by the view of the Divine goodness and compassion, sustaining him by the succours of his Holy Spirit, and, above all, cheering him by the prospect of the bliss that awaits him when his journey is closed, in that region where sorrow and sighing flee far away.

Yes, in this respect, Jesus Christ is emphatically the life, restoring man from the dominion of death to life and immortality. On the scenes beyond the grave, shadows and darkness rested, which no human hopes could penetrate; Jesus Christ shed upon them everlasting light, assuring us that our existence is not confined to a few fleeting years, but is commensurate with the ages of eternity; that the grave is not the boundary of our prospects, nor death the spoiler of our joys; that these prospects extend through scenes of immortality in the presence of God, and that these joys shall flourish in that city of the great King where flow rivers of pleasure for evermore. We tremble not at the stroke of death: our divine Lord hath deprived death of his sting. We shudder not at the darkness

of the grave: he hath illumined it with the light of life, and spoiled it of its victory. Shaking off the bands of death and ascending to heaven, he shows that an immortal life is destined for his servants, where this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality; where they shall shine as the sun, and as the stars, for ever and ever; and where, made kings and priests unto God, they shall sin no more and sorrow no more, but shall reign with him for ever.

These exalted hopes we owe to thee, blessed Jesus, thou life of men! But for thee, death would have gloried in the extinction of our being, and the grave triumphed in his victory over our joys. But thou hast shown us the path of life; and, sustained by thee, we pass through the valley of the grave to the region of peace and immortality, where our nature is perfected, and our joys consummated for ever—thou hast opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

To whom then, brethren, shall we go, but unto Jesus Christ? He only is the way, the truth, and the life.

In regard to the means of restoration to the favour of God, and the terms on which our offended Maker will pardon our transgressions, human reason can gratify us with only uncertain hopes; for she in vain essays to reconcile the attributes of mercy and justice, and to render the pardon of sin compatible with the claims of divine holiness and of the violated authority of God.

On the infinitely important subjects of the nature, the perfections, and will of the Being who made us, what doth reason teach man—rather, into what errors and corruption hath it not plunged him?

For, guided only by its suggestions, men changed the incorruptible God into the image of corruptible things, worshipped the creature instead of the Creator, and almost entirely extinguished the sentiments of virtue in the grossness of their corrupt hearts and imagination.

When we close our eyes upon the world, what is our destiny? Here, too, human reason can do nothing but conjecture; and we want certainty. Certainty, on every subject relative to our spiritual character and immortal hopes, is assured to us only by Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. He only, through the atoning efficacy of his blood and the merit of his obedience, hath opened to us the way of access to the Father. He only, by the instructions of his word and Holy Spirit, enlightens us in divine truth—in the knowledge of God, our duty, and our hopes. And he only hath brought life and immortality to light, and by his resurrection and ascension assured us of victory over the grave, and of a life of glory for ever in the kingdom of heaven.

To whom then shall we go, but unto him? For it is his own unerring declaration—"No man cometh unto the Father but by me." The pardoning efficacy of his blood and the merits of his obedience may indeed extend to many to whom he is not manifested in his written word, and, through him, their sincere but imperfect obedience may be accepted. But we, to whom this Saviour is proclaimed, can come unto the Father, through him, only by a true and living faith. On his merits only we must repose for the pardon of our sins, humbly confessing and renouncing them; to the instructions of his word and the guidance of his

Holy Spirit we must in humility submit, walking in his commandments and ordinances blameless; and then, confiding in him who only hath vanquished death and the grave, we must hope for a triumph over them, and for an entrance into those mansions of glory which he hath prepared for us.

“No man cometh unto the Father but through me,” says the eternal Son of God. What then can be the hopes of acceptance of those who reject Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life? They can have no access unto the Father; and thus cut off from the infinite source of happiness, they can have no solid comfort here, no bliss hereafter. O let them flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel—to Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life—that they may escape the wrath to come.

“No man cometh unto the Father but through me.” Here is your direction, and here will be your solace, you who are wearied with the burden of your sins, oppressed with the sorrows of the world, and agitated with fearful anticipations concerning your future doom. Go in sincerity and in faith to Jesus Christ; by him, the new and living way of access unto God, you shall find pardon, and rest, and peace; by him who is the truth, you shall be established in the knowledge and service of God; and believing in him who is the “*life*,” you shall rejoice in the hope, that when he who is your life shall appear, you also shall appear with him in glory.

Rejoice then, faithful Christians, in these blessed hopes—rejoice in them evermore, you whose faith is stayed upon Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. Coming unto God through him, you

have found peace to your troubled consciences, and light and holiness will beam on your souls; and now the crown of glory awaits you. The redeemed of the Lord, walk worthy of your holy vocation, your high privileges; maintain communion with the church, the mystical body of the Redeemer, through whose ministrations and ordinances his grace and favour are assured to you. Be it your constant study and endeavour to show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light, and to love and serve him who hath loved you, and hath washed you from your sins in his own blood. Having the hope of immortal glory, purify yourselves, even as he who hath called you is pure, that you may be made meet for his presence, for the inheritance of the saints in light. Pray to him that, amidst the sorrows, the sins, and the temptations of the world, your faith may not fail, nor your devotion to his service be relaxed. Comfort yourselves with his unchanging promise—"I will never leave you nor forsake you." When your warfare here is closed, you shall receive the palm of victory—when your pilgrimage on earth is ended, you shall enter on your eternal rest—when the race of life is run, your troubles, your cares, and your toils shall cease, and you shall be for ever with the Lord.

O thou life of our souls! Jesus Christ, the truth—thou only way of access unto the Father! what gratitude do we owe thee for these exalted hopes, that minister such unfailing consolation under our sorrows, and add so much to all our virtuous joys! What tribute shall we render thee? We can but offer thee our souls; and yet they are already thine, for thou hast redeemed them by thy most

precious blood. Fix their inconstant affections, subdue their unhallowed passions, and kindle in them those holy graces which, cherished here by thy power, shall hereafter be rewarded by the enjoyment of thy love. And to thee, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed all honour, power, majesty, and dominion, world without end.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE SCRIPTURES THE SOURCE OF HOPE AND CONSOLATION.

ROMANS XV. 4.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have *hope*.

HOWEVER varied and powerful are the attractions which bind us to the present life, and too often lead us to regard it as our abiding place, our permanent home, there are yet numerous circumstances which, happily for our virtue, force on us the conviction that it is only a transitory state of probation. Oppressed and disgusted with the errors, the sins, the disappointments, and the sorrows which embitter human pursuits and enjoyments, surely every considerate and serious person will indulge the solicitous hope, that this evanescent state may prove but the passage to that heavenly country, where all our powers and virtuous enjoyments will be purified and perfected in the bliss and glory of an immortal existence.

This blessed hope is derived only from the Scriptures of truth. The gracious declarations and dispensations of God recorded in the Old Testament, and the example of pious and holy men, and especially the luminous prophecies of the spiritual and eternal salvation of the Messiah there set forth,

are proposed by the apostle to the imitation and faith of his Christian converts, that they, in the midst of the tribulations and persecutions to which they would be exposed, might enjoy consolation, and cherish patience and hope.

This dispensation of grace and mercy through him who, the hope of his Israel, was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, was shadowed and pre-figured in the Old Testament. Gloriously was it fulfilled in the person of Christ, the end of the law, and of whom the prophets bore witness, and whose advent the church at this season celebrates; and it is proposed to our faith and hope in the record of his life and doctrines by his holy apostles.

Of the *Scriptures of the Old and New Testament*, then, containing, under different dispensations and manifestations, the same gracious scheme of redemption through the eternal Son of the Father made flesh and dwelling among us, it may be affirmed—"Whatsoever things were written afore-time, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

The Scriptures are the source of hope:

Because they exhibit the Maker and Lord of heaven and of earth as our ever-present and almighty Guardian, our tender and compassionate Father and Benefactor:

Because they assure us of his protection and favour by the most affecting *promises* and animating *examples*:

And lastly, Because they exhibit him as ready to confer on us the blessings of that spiritual and eternal salvation in his Son Jesus Christ, which is calculated to gratify every desire, to alleviate

every sorrow, and to perfect for ever our happiness.

We are surely in the highest exercise of hope, when we can regard an Almighty Being as engaged for our welfare, when his grace and mercy are in the strongest manner assured to us, and when infinite and eternal bliss is the glorious prospect to which we may look forward. The illustration, therefore, of the foregoing particulars, will serve to prove that the Scriptures are the ground of the most exalted hope, the animating source of patience and consolation. Briefly to exhibit these views of the sacred writings, agreeably to the design of the apostle, for the day in which my text occurs, and not to enter into a general consideration of their numerous excellencies, is the object of this discourse.

The Scriptures are the ground of hope, the source of patience and consolation—

1. Because they present to us the Maker and Lord of heaven and of earth as our almighty Guardian, our tender and compassionate Father and Benefactor.

Frail and helpless as man is, dependent on the uncertain and capricious course of human events, unable to ward off the shock of disappointment which demolishes his best concerted plans, and exposed to cares, to sorrows, and afflictions, which alloy and blast his enjoyments, how wretched would be his condition, if he could not solace himself with the belief that he is under the discipline, guidance, and protection of an almighty and compassionate Being, whose providence orders and controls all the events of life to subserve some

infinitely wise and gracious purposes! This is the animating and consolatory truth which the sacred Scriptures present to our faith—"The Lord God omnipotent reigneth; and of him, and through him, and to him are all things;" and he reigns in righteousness and mercy. Remove from the world the agency and providence of the Lord who made it, and whose goodness is as unbounded as his power is almighty—what a cloud do you cast over the condition of man! The victim of blind and unpitiful chance, when sinking under care and sorrow, there is no Almighty Guardian whose protection he can implore, and on whose goodness he can rely. In his best estate, he would only flutter a while in the sunshine of prosperity, and then, sinking under the embrace of death, would descend into the darkness of the grave, into the tomb of oblivion: no gleam of consolation would enlighten his passage through the world, and fearful despair would rest upon futurity. Well may the Scriptures be styled the source of hope and consolation; for they unfold to us, sitting on the throne of the universe, an Almighty Being, the Guide of our ways, the superintending Disposer of all that befalls us, our everlasting Father and Friend: of his mercy and favour towards us, they indeed afford us the most animating assurances.

This was the second reason why the Scriptures are the ground of hope—

2. Because they assure us of the mercy and favour of our Almighty Guardian and Father, by the most affecting promises and impressive examples.

There is not a page of the sacred writings which

is not rich in the expressions of God's goodness and mercy: the most tender and interesting comparisons, the most splendid and lively imagery, are used to set forth his infinite compassion and love. Consider his gracious and comforting declarations to the patriarchs; hear his affecting expostulations with his people Israel; listen to the flowing and sublime strains in which the psalmist celebrates the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord; attend to the exhibitions of his infinite grace and compassion which the apostles make the animating theme of their exhortations; and you will not hesitate to acknowledge that the sacred writings are calculated to inspire a strong and unfailing hope in that Almighty Being who is "a strength and refuge, a very present help in time of trouble," and who "makes all things work together for good to those who love him." Even of his judgments it is the gracious purpose to bring us to repentance, and the rod of his anger is guided by the arm of mercy.

The *example* of holy men recorded in Scripture, who have experienced his merciful blessing and protection, powerfully tends to strengthen our hope and to administer to our consolation. Was Noah saved from the destruction which overwhelmed an ungodly world? Was Abraham guided and protected while he sojourned in a strange country? Were the machinations by which the envious brethren of Joseph sought his destruction defeated, and made the means of his advancement and prosperity? Was the whole life of the king of Israel a series of deliverances and mercies? Was the suffering Job, when the hand of God was upon him, inspired with a faith and hope that no sophistry nor taunts could shake, and blessed in his latter

end more than in his beginning? God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; their example, therefore, and the example of all the holy saints recorded in Scripture, serve to support us under the ills of life, to strengthen our faith and patience, to animate our hope in God: he is still the strength of his people. These "things were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

In the Scriptures of truth, then, we thus find God revealed as our Almighty Guardian and Father; and our hope in him is strengthened by the most affecting promises and animating examples. If the sacred writings advanced no further, the pious reader of them might still find consolation and hope. But it is their principal aim to delineate and unfold the spiritual and everlasting salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ; and in this respect especially they raise the exercise of hope to its highest fervour and enjoyment.

This was the third particular which I proposed to illustrate:—

3. In the sacred writings we find God exhibited to our lively faith as ready to confer on us the blessings of that salvation in his Son Jesus Christ, which is calculated to gratify every virtuous desire, to alleviate every sorrow, and to perfect for ever our bliss.

The salvation of Christ, commencing with the gracious promise of God to the fallen parents of our race, is the subject of all the succeeding revelations of the sacred Scriptures, till it was gloriously fulfilled and developed in the writings of the New Testament. Open any page even of the Old Tes-

tament, and you will find this salvation displayed by express delineation, by eminent types, or luminous prophecies.

And in this salvation are contained all that man as a fallen creature can need, all to which man as panting for immortality can aspire. Is he oppressed with a sense of guilt? The Scriptures point to the meritorious sacrifice and death of Christ, which was a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and record the gracious invitation of him who still liveth, and is still mighty to save, to come unto him and receive rest. Does the stain of iniquity rest on his soul? The Scriptures lead him to the fountain which is opened for sin and for uncleanness, and command him—"Wash, and be clean." Is he swayed by the passions of his corrupt nature? The Scriptures unfold to him that divine grace by which he may destroy their dominion, which in every conflict with his spiritual foes can make him conqueror. Contemplating the divine law, are we dismayed at its strictness and purity? The Scriptures assure us that a strength shall be vouchsafed to our diligent use of the appointed means, by which we may fulfil the highest demands of duty. Having experienced the uncertain and unsatisfying nature of terrestrial enjoyments, do our disappointed, but still eager desires, pant after an enduring and satisfying good? The Scriptures display the perfections of the supreme Lord of all, and invite us, wearied and disappointed, to seek, in the favour of him who is the source of infinite goodness and felicity, rest, and peace, and bliss to our souls. Have we to contend with poverty, with persecution, with affliction? The Scriptures, while they hold out to us an Almighty Protector and

Comforter, animate our faith and hope by the inspiring promise—"Blessed is the man who endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life;" and support us in the conflict, by the example of him to whose image we are thus by suffering conformed, and with whom we are thus prepared for participating in the glory of heaven—him who endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now "set down at the right hand of God." Are we dismayed at the terrors of death? Do we shrink from the encounter with that enemy which we must encounter? The Scriptures represent to us an Almighty Conqueror, who hath despoiled death of his dominion, and proclaimed that promise which assures triumph to the believer—"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die." Do we cast an uncertain, and solicitous, and painful look on the dark scenes that stretch into the world beyond the grave? The Scriptures illumine them with the light of eternal day; and there the believer beholds an inheritance reserved for him of glory and bliss, infinite in degree and endless in duration.

This is the glorious salvation, these the exalted sources of hope which the Scriptures afford. He whose conscience is freed from the sense of guilt, whose heart is redeemed from the dominion of unholy passions, whose delight is in the law of God, who through faith in Christ Jesus has a sure claim to the protection and favour of the Lord of heaven and earth, who views as his portion beyond the present life, glory and bliss in the presence of his God and Saviour—surely possesses a source of

joy and consolation that passes all understanding, which the world can neither give nor take away. He whose Saviour is almighty, whose Friend and Protector is God, whose inheritance is secured in heaven, may surely possess his soul in patience, neither ruffled by injuries, perplexed by care, or depressed by sorrow. Embracing by faith that glorious salvation which the oracles of truth promulgate, he, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, possesses that "hope which is an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast."

If the Scriptures are thus a source of exalted hope and consolation, should we not be deeply and constantly impressed with their excellence and value?

In them only are displayed the grace and mercy of the Being who made and who is to judge us, and the means of obtaining his favour. Can reason lead us to a knowledge of the attributes and will of the Eternal? Can it establish the terms on which guilty man may be restored to the favour of his offended Sovereign and Judge? Can its feeble suggestions heal the wounded spirit, or assuage the pangs of a conscience penetrated with a sense of its guilt? Can its empty consolations inspire the soul with peace and confidence when oppressed by trouble, when sunk under the stroke of adversity? Can reason, impotent often to discover truth in many of the objects around it, lift the veil from futurity, and fix our faith firmly on the existence and glories of the heavenly state? Where was the enlightening and penetrating power of human reason, when the most acute and learned among the philosophers of the Gentiles embraced but in a feeble degree, and with dubious hope, the consolations

and triumphs of religion? No; the Scriptures, by the luminous discovery which they make of the perfections and will of the one supreme Lord and Maker of the universe—of the purposes of his mercy, through a Saviour, to a fallen world—of the existence and glories of the future state—are the only source of a hope that maketh not ashamed, a hope that will not be moved by the rudest blasts of adversity. In some enlightened heathen, reason may have cherished a pride and greatness of soul that looked down upon sorrow; but reason never inspired that meek resignation, that triumphant but peaceful joy, which the faith of the Scriptures can excite in the most humble believer.

If such be the value of the sacred writings, let us be impressed with the duty and importance of making them the subject of our constant and devout study and meditation.

They unfold the counsels and will of the Maker and Lord of the universe; they ascertain what, to sinful and immortal creatures, is interesting above all that in the world occupies or attracts us—the means whereby we may be restored to our offended Maker and Judge; they offer to our faith those great and precious promises which will make us partakers of the divine purity, and inspire us with triumphant and unfailling hope. Let not, then, these precious depositaries of the mercy of our Almighty Sovereign, of all that concerns our perfection and happiness in the present life, or the eternal one which is to succeed it, be contemned or slightly regarded. Let not the corrupting reveries of an inflamed imagination, the sallies of unlicensed wit, or the theories of a sceptical philosophy—let not even human wisdom, in her brightest

and purest form, draw forth the ardour of curiosity, and occupy the taste, the feelings, and the understanding; while the Scriptures of truth, the oracles of the living God, the knowledge which makes wise unto salvation, are forgotten or neglected. Let not a fastidious taste, let not a superficial and corrupt fancy, let not a profane pride undervalue what the wisest men in every age have prized as the best gift of God to man. And, my brethren, let not those who receive and acknowledge the worth and importance of the sacred volume, be guilty of the inconsistency of not studying the divine truths and practising the holy lessons which it contains.

Brethren, would you be conducted to the mercy and favour of God, the dread Being who made and is to judge you? Would you be enlightened in the saving knowledge of his will? Would you purify your hearts and establish them in holiness and virtue? Would you fortify them with that faith and hope which will raise you above the sorrows, and the corruptions, and temptations of the world? Would you attain that fulness of divine knowledge and purity which will prepare you for the presence and enjoyment of God in his heavenly kingdom? The sacred writings must be the subjects of your serious and devout study. Read them with that humility, gratitude, and reverence which are due to the messages of mercy from the everlasting Jehovah to his rebellious creatures; but especially read them with earnest prayer that the Divine Spirit, which dictated them, may bless them to your salvation. Keep steadily in view the end for which they were promulgated—to turn you from darkness to light, from the power of sin and Satan unto God—to purify you from all iniquity, to estab-

lish you in every grace and virtue, and thus to prepare you for the glory and bliss of that eternal life which is the gift of God through him whom they set forth as the Saviour of the world. And that this may be the blessed fruits of our perusal of the sacred oracles, let us again address God in the collect for the day. “Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

SERMON XXXIV.

REGENERATION AND RENOVATION.

TITUS iii. 5.

The washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

THE subject of baptismal regeneration is very generally misunderstood. Our church has been exposed to considerable censure for maintaining this doctrine in her offices and formularies. It is deemed expedient, therefore, briefly to explain and defend this scriptural and primitive article of faith. I trust, my brethren, that you will all accompany me seriously and attentively in this inquiry. I might choose subjects perhaps better calculated to gratify your fancy and to warm your feelings; but I can choose none that should be more interesting to you as Christians and as Churchmen. As Christians, it is of the utmost importance that you should understand the nature and the privileges of that holy sacrament in which the name of Christians was imposed upon you; and, as Churchmen, you ought to be able to vindicate the correctness of the terms which your church applies to this holy ordinance.

In order to obtain a perspicuous and comprehensive view of this subject, the following order shall be observed in the discussion of it:—

I. The sense of the Church of England, and of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America, on the subject of baptismal regeneration, shall be exhibited.

II. This sense shall be defended by the authority of Scripture, of the primitive church, of the reformed churches, and of some of the most eminent divines of the English church.

III. The distinction shall be laid down between regeneration and renovation.

IV. The doctrine of regeneration and renovation shall be applied to the case of infants—of adults receiving baptism rightly, on a sincere profession of repentance and faith—of adults receiving baptism unworthily, in impenitence and unbelief—of baptized persons who have violated their baptismal engagements—and of those who are desirous of fulfilling these engagements.

V. The way will then be opened for answering the charges which have been urged against this doctrine, and for an improvement of the whole subject.

This discussion is commenced under the full persuasion that this doctrine is a fundamental and most important part of the Christian scheme, and that a correct understanding of it will remove every objection which prevails against it, and tend to revive this scriptural and primitive article of faith. Your preacher has only to request that no person will admit in his mind a decision against this doctrine, until he has taken a deliberate and dispassionate view of the whole series of these remarks.

I. The sense of the Church of England, and of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America, on the subject of baptismal regeneration, shall be exhibited.

Regeneration, according to the sense of our church, is that change in our spiritual state which takes place in baptism: it is the solemn conveyance to us, by baptism, of the privileges of the Gospel covenant. Baptism, therefore, is regeneration; that is, the instrument of regeneration, the mean to convey to us the privileges of the Gospel covenant, and a pledge to assure them to us; and baptized persons are therefore regenerated. It is of the utmost importance, however, to bear in mind that our church, in her catechism and in her baptismal offices, exacts, as essential qualifications for baptism, repentance and faith. "Why then," it may be asked, "are infants baptized, when, by reason of their tender age, they cannot perform these conditions?" To this question our church answers—"Because they promise them both by their sureties; which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform." Infants, then, entitled to baptism, as those concerning whom our Saviour declared, "of such is the kingdom of God," and needing no repentance for actual sins, and promising both repentance and faith by their sureties, become entitled to all the privileges of baptism, to which adults who are baptized are not fully entitled, except on the conditions of actual repentance and faith.

The privileges of the Gospel covenant are all suspended on the conditions of repentance and faith. But it hath pleased God, in his sovereign will, to appoint external ordinances as the *pledges*

of these blessings, and to make them, by his almighty power, the *means* of conveying them to those who repent and believe. Baptism is one of these divine institutions, and the privileges of baptism are all summed up in the term *regeneration*, which I shall proceed to show is applied by our church to this holy sacrament.

In the introductory exhortation of these offices of baptism, the church applies to baptism the declaration of our Saviour—"None can enter into the kingdom of God" (Christ's visible church on earth) "except he be regenerate and born anew of water and the Holy Ghost," and combines together "baptism with water, and the Holy Ghost." In the prayers immediately following, baptism is spoken of as the instituted mean for "the mystical washing away of sin," for receiving "remission of sins by spiritual regeneration." In the prayer immediately before immersion or sprinkling, the supplication is offered to Almighty God, that he would "sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin." In the prayer immediately following the immersion or sprinkling, in the case of infants, thanks are returned to God, that he hath "regenerated this infant by his Holy Spirit, that he hath received him for his own child by adoption, and incorporated him into his holy church." In the case of adults, this prayer speaks of the baptized persons as "being born again, and made heirs of everlasting salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." In the catechism, the catechumens are taught to declare, that in baptism they were made "members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven;" to "thank their heavenly Father, who hath called them to this state of salvation; and to

profess, that, "being by nature born in sin and the children of wrath, they are by baptism made the children of grace."

In the order for *confirmation* it is said, in reference to baptized persons, that God hath "vouchsafed to regenerate them by water and the Holy Ghost, and to give unto them forgiveness of all their sins."

In the articles of religion, baptism is evidently considered as the mean of our justification, or being received into a state of favour with God, and also as a mean of receiving the Holy Ghost. The sixteenth article states—"Not every deadly sin, committed after baptism, is sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after baptism. After we have received the Holy Ghost," (evidently meaning in baptism,) "we may depart from grace given." The twenty-seventh article, "of baptism," expressly rejects the low and superficial notion of this sacrament as conferring *only* an external privilege of admission into the church; for the article declares—"Baptism is a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened." The article then states the true notion of baptism, as "also a sign of regeneration, or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church: the promises of the forgiveness of sins, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed: faith is confirmed, and grace increased, by virtue of prayer unto God." It is indeed sometimes said, that as the church, in this article, styles

baptism the “sign” of regeneration, it cannot be “regeneration” itself. But the word “sign” this article employs as synonymous with *instrument*. The word “sign” is also thus used, as signifying a *mean* or *instrument*, in the catechism, where a sacrament is defined as “an outward and visible sign of an inward or spiritual grace, which sign is ordained by Christ himself as a *mean* whereby we receive the same.” By baptism, “the sign of regeneration, or new birth,” the article states, “as by an *instrument*, they that receive baptism rightly,” receive certain privileges; and these privileges the article proceeds to enumerate—“they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church: the promises of the forgiveness of sins, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed: faith is confirmed, and grace increased, by virtue of prayer unto God.” These privileges, to which by nature we have no title, are conferred upon us by baptism, which, translating us into a new state, where we enjoy privileges not previously enjoyed, is styled *regeneration*; and a regenerate state is that state in which we are placed by baptism.

It is necessary, however, that I should again remind you, that the full and complete enjoyment of these privileges of baptism are suspended on the conditions of “*repentance*, whereby we forsake sin, and *faith*, whereby we steadfastly believe the promises of God;” infants “promising repentance and faith by their sureties, which promise, when they come of age, themselves are bound to perform.”

From the above detail it appears that our church considers baptism as calling persons into a *state of salvation*; from being children of wrath, that is,

without any covenant title to mercy, making them *children of grace*; conveying to them the Holy Ghost, that is, a certain portion of his divine influences, and the forgiveness of their sins; in fine, making them members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. This new state is very properly considered as a regenerate state; and *baptism*, the *instrument* by which we are brought into this regenerate state, is styled *regeneration*.

II. This doctrine of baptismal regeneration, held by our church, is a doctrine of Scripture, and of the primitive church; and it may be defended by the authorities of the reformed churches, and of various distinguished divines of the Church of England.

The Scripture asserts that baptism is *regeneration*.

The word *regeneration* occurs but *twice* in Scripture. In one of these places,* our Lord applies it to denote that new dispensation of grace and mercy into which he had introduced his disciples; and in the other place,† it most unequivocally denotes baptism, which the apostle styles “the washing of regeneration.” The application of this term to baptism is also warranted by our Lord himself, who declares—“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”‡

The privileges of the Gospel covenant, which are implied in this term *regeneration*, are conferred in baptism. Baptism incorporates us into the

* Matt. xix. 28.

† Titus iii. 5.

‡ John iii. 5.

church, makes us *members of Christ*. “By one Spirit,” saith the apostle,* “we are all baptized into one body.”

Baptism confers the *remission of sins*. “Arise, and be baptized,” said St. Paul to Ananias,† “and wash away thy sins.” “Repent, and be baptized,” said St. Peter to the Jews,‡ “every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.”

Baptism confers the gift of God’s Holy Spirit. “Be baptized,” said St. Peter, “and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost.” “We,” saith the apostle Paul,§ “being baptized into one body, have been made all to drink of one Spirit.” The Spirit of Christ animates his body the church, and of this Spirit the members of his body necessarily partake.

Baptism makes us *children of God* and *heirs of the kingdom of heaven*. “Ye are all the children of God,” saith the apostle, “by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.”|| “And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”¶ Those who, in their natural state, having no title to the favour of God and the happiness of heaven, are styled “aliens,” “strangers,”** “foreigners,”†† when baptized into the body of Christ, are considered as in a state of covenant with God, and styled “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,”‡‡ “children

* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

† Acts xxii. 16.

‡ Acts ii. 38.

§ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

|| Gal. iii. 26, 27.

¶ Rom. viii. 17.

** Eph. ii. 12.

†† Eph. ii. 19.

‡‡ Eph. ii. 19.

of God,"* "sons of God,"† and "joint-heirs with Christ" of "an eternal inheritance."‡

The apostles uniformly address the whole body of believers, in the various churches to which they directed their epistles, as translated by baptism into the kingdom of Christ, and thus entitled to all the privileges of that kingdom—the forgiveness of sins, the favour of God, the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, the heavenly inheritance.

That the primitive church considered baptism as regeneration, and applied to this sacrament the same terms now applied to it by our church, there can be the fullest proof.

Justin Martyr, whose able apologies for Christianity were presented to the emperor and senate of Rome but a few years after the age of the apostles, describing the mode of baptism, observes—
 "We bring them to some place where there is water, and they are *regenerated* by the same way of *regeneration* by which we are *regenerated*; for they are washed with water, in the name of God the Father and Lord of all things, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost."

Irenæus, the bishop of Lyons, in the second century, in the following passage styles the commission of *baptism* which our Lord gave his disciples, the commission of *regeneration*. "And again, when he gave his disciples the commission of *regenerating* unto God, he said unto them, 'Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'"§

Origen, a celebrated father of the second century,

* Gal. iii. 26.

† 1 John iii. 1.

‡ Rom. viii. 17; Heb. ix. 15.

§ Ire. adv. Hær. l. ii. c. 29.

observes*—“ Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins? or when have they sinned?” He then goes on to observe, that by baptism the original corruption of nature in infants is washed away; and in another homily† he had observed—“ Whereas the *baptism of the church is given for forgiveness of sins*, infants also are, by the usage of the church, baptized; when, if there were nothing in infants that wanted forgiveness and mercy, the *grace of baptism* would be needless to them.”

Cyprian, the celebrated bishop of Carthage, in the third century, observes in one of his epistles‡—“ The same spiritual grace which is equally distributed in baptism among believers, may afterwards be either diminished or increased in our acts and conversation.”

St. Basil, of the fourth century, styles baptism “ the regeneration of the soul, the grace of adoption.”§

Theodoret, a celebrated commentator of the same century, observes—“ In our regeneration, the words of God, spoken by the priest, form and *regenerate* him who is *baptized*.”||

St. Chrysostom, the eloquent father of the same century, holds similar language. “ The persons who are to be *baptized* are brought to the water, and there they are *regenerated* in the same manner in which we were regenerated.”¶

In the fifth century, the celebrated St. Austin, in controverting the errors of the Pelagians, who

* Hom. in Lucam. c. xiv.

† In Levit. c. xii.

‡ Ep. lxxvi.

§ Basil in Exhort. ad Bapt.

|| Theodoret on Psalm xviii.

¶ Chrysostom on Gal. iv.

maintained the innocence of man, and denied or weakened the necessity of divine grace, first advanced those opinions, relative to predestination and election, which, in modern times, have assumed the name of Calvinistic; yet his ideas of baptism were totally repugnant to those of the Calvinists, who deny that baptism is regeneration. He styles baptism "spiritual regeneration," and "the sacrament of regeneration."*

The ancient writers of the church uniformly apply the term *regeneration* to baptism, denoting the change, from a state of nature to a state of grace, which takes place in that sacrament. The compilers of the liturgy, following in this, as in other respects, the authority of the primitive church, employed the term *regeneration* in the same sense; neither they nor the primitive fathers ever apply it to signify a change of heart, or a return from sin to holiness; this change of heart and life, and this return to holiness from a state of sin, they denote by the terms *renovation* and *repentance*. Within these two centuries alone there has been a confusion of the terms *regeneration* and *renovation*, being both employed to denote a change of heart and a conversion to holiness from a state of sin. This arose from the introduction of the novel opinion, that grace, once received, can never be forfeited; of course, the advocates of this opinion were led to deny that grace was given in baptism, and refused to apply to it the term *regeneration*.

The divines of the Church of England, however, even many who were not wholly free from the infection of Calvinism, continued to maintain the

* Aug. adver. Jul. lib. vi.

primitive notion of baptism as admitting the recipients of it into a state of grace. Among those, stands most prominent the venerable HOOKER, the author of the "Ecclesiastical Polity," a work written in defence of the Church of England, and which will remain, to the latest ages, a monument of the profound genius and erudition, and of the Christian temper of its author. "By baptism," saith he, "we receive Christ Jesus, and from him that saving grace which is proper unto baptism, 'the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.'"^{*} Where the apostle speaks of the "washing of regeneration," he puts the questions—"Why do the apostles term baptism a bath of regeneration? What purpose had they in giving men advice to receive outward baptism, and in persuading them it did avail to remission of sins?" And he proceeds to observe—"The grace which is given them with their baptism, doth so far depend on the very outward sacrament, that God will have it embraced, *not only as a sign or token what we receive, but also as an instrument or mean whereby we receive grace*, because baptism is a sacrament which God hath instituted in his church, to the end that they which receive the same might thereby be incorporated into Christ; and so, through his most precious merit, obtain, as well that saving grace of imputation which *taketh away all former guiltiness*, as also that *infused divine virtue of the Holy Ghost, which giveth to the powers of the soul their first disposition towards future newness of life.*"[†]

The same views of the efficacy of baptism were

^{*} B. v. sec. 57.

[†] B. v. sec. 60.

entertained by a prelate of the English Church, Bishop Beveridge, who is considered by the Calvinists as friendly to their peculiar tenets, and whose fervent piety is generally acknowledged and celebrated. "As baptism," says he, "necessarily implies the use of water, so our being made thereby disciples of Christ as necessarily implies our partaking of his Spirit: for all that are baptized, and so made the disciples of Christ, are thereby made the members of his body; and are therefore said to be '*baptized into Christ*.'*" But they who are in Christ, members of his body, must needs partake of the Spirit which is in him, their head. Neither doth *the Spirit of Christ only follow upon*, but *certainly accompanies the sacrament of baptism* when duly administered according to his institution. For, as St. Paul saith—'By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.†' So that, in the very act of baptizing, the Spirit unites us unto Christ, and makes us members of his body; and if of his body, then of his church and kingdom, that being all his body. And therefore all who are rightly *baptized with water*, being at the same time *baptized also with the Holy Ghost*, and so born both of water and the Spirit, they are *ipso facto* admitted into the kingdom of God established upon earth; and if it be not their own fault, will as certainly attain to that which is in heaven."‡

It is much to be lamented that many divines of the Church of England have fallen into the modern error, which originated in the Calvinistic school, of applying the word *regeneration* to denote the work of grace on the heart, the operations of the

* Rom. vi. 3; Gal. iii. 27.

† 1 Cor. xii. 13.

‡ Bev. Ser. vol. i. p. 305, fol. ed.

Divine Spirit in forming holy affections in the soul, and in leading us to newness of life. This most important and essential change, which in scriptural and primitive language is termed the *renewing* of the Holy Ghost—renovation—many excellent and orthodox divines of our church, following unfortunately the fashion of the times, style *regeneration*. This want of precision has led to a misapprehension of their sentiments, and has placed them in apparent contrariety to the offices of their church, where the terms *regeneration* and *regenerate* are certainly applied exclusively to *baptism* and to *baptized Christians*.

Among the writers who have fallen into this inaccuracy of language, are the two celebrated and eloquent preachers, Dr. Barrow and Archbishop Tillotson; and yet that these divines entertained the same opinions concerning the efficacy and privileges of baptism with the church of which they were ministers, is evident, from the following quotations from their writings.

Dr. Barrow, in his treatise on baptism, enumerates its benefits as follows:—

“1. The purgation or absolution of us from the guilt of past offences, by a free and full remission of them, (the which, washing by water, cleansing from all stains, doth most appositely represent,) and consequently God’s being reconciled unto us, his receiving us into a state of grace and favour, his freely justifying us—that these privileges are conferred in baptism, many places of Scripture plainly show, and the primitive church, with most firm and unanimous consent, did believe.

“2. In baptism, the gift of God’s Holy Spirit is conferred, qualifying us for the state into which we

then come, and enabling us to perform the duties which we then undertake.

“ 3. With those gifts is connected the benefit of *regeneration*, implying our entrance into a new state and course of life.

“ 4. With these benefits is conjoined that of being inserted into God’s church, his family, the number of his chosen people, the mystical body of Christ, whereby we become entitled to the privileges and immunities of that heavenly corporation.

“ 5. In consequence of these things, there is with baptism conferred a capacity of a title unto, an assurance (under condition of persevering in faith and obedience to our Lord) of eternal life and salvation.”

Archbishop Tillotson, in like manner—though, in compliance with the prevalent language of the times, he uses *regeneration* in a popular sense, to denote that spiritual change of heart and life which is properly signified by the terms *renovation* and *sanctification*—yet, when he writes with more precision, applies *regeneration* to baptism, and forcibly and conclusively vindicates this use of the term.

After proving that the Holy Ghost is conferred in baptism, he observes, in his sermon *on the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit*—“ All which considered, I cannot imagine why so great a scruple should be made of those expressions which our church useth in the office of baptism of children—*being regenerated and born again* by baptism, and *being thereby made the children of God and heirs of eternal life*; that is, by entering into this covenant, they are put into a state and capacity of all the blessings of the Gospel, if they do not neglect the condition which that covenant requireth on

their part: for all this is no other but what the Scripture says of baptism, and ascribes to it, when it calls it *the laver of regeneration*—when it declares the Spirit to be conferred in baptism—and when it says, that *as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God*, and that *the sons of God are heirs of eternal life*. So that I cannot see that our church, in her highest expressions concerning the benefits and effects of baptism, says any thing but what is very agreeable both to the expressions and sense of Scripture. And thus not only the ancient fathers spake of this matter, but so likewise do all the liturgies of the reformed churches, in the offices and forms appointed by them for the administration of baptism; so that it seems a very affected singularity to take exceptions at such expressions as have constantly been, and still are, generally used in all Christian churches.”*

It thus appears, beyond the possibility of cavil, that these two distinguished divines maintained precisely the same ideas of the efficacy of baptism with those who apply to this sacrament the term *regeneration*. From a want of precision, indeed, in the use of terms, these divines, in common with others who entertain the same sentiments with respect to baptism, use the term *regeneration* as synonymous with *sanctification* and *renovation*; and thus afford an opportunity to the adversaries of baptismal regeneration of enlisting them in their cause, by quoting those passages in which the word *regeneration* is used in its popular but erroneous signification.

* Archbish. Tillot. vol. iii. p. 290, fol. ed.

You will now perceive that they who assert the doctrine of baptismal regeneration are supported by the authority of Scripture, of the primitive church, and of the most distinguished divines of the Church of England. But do they therefore deny or undervalue the necessity of the sanctification and renovation of the heart by the influences of the Divine Spirit? God forbid that they should thus undermine the very foundation of the Christian system, and reject or undervalue a doctrine essential to man's establishment in holiness and virtue, and to his present and everlasting peace. I proceed, therefore, to the third topic of discussion.

III. To point out the distinction between regeneration and renovation, and the mutual consistency of these doctrines.

You have seen that baptism is a mean and pledge to those who rightly and worthily receive it, of all the blessings of the Gospel covenant; that it confers on them the forgiveness of their sins, the grace of the Holy Spirit, and a title to everlasting life. This most important change in the spiritual condition of the recipients of baptism, is styled by our church, adhering to the language of Scripture and antiquity, REGENERATION.

But the benefits of baptism and its *final* efficacy are suspended on conditions, which may be all summed up in the two of repentance and faith. All baptized persons, therefore, must exercise repentance and faith, or they forfeit the privileges of baptism. Repentance and faith consist in forsaking all sin, and in believing the promises of the Gospel, so as obediently to keep its holy precepts. Now this renunciation of sin, and this lively faith,

producing holy obedience, constitute that spiritual change which our church enforces, particularly in the baptismal office, when she prays concerning those who are baptized, that "the old Adam may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in them;" that "all sinful affections may die in them, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in them;" that "being dead unto sin and living unto righteousness, and being buried with Christ in his death, they may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin." The necessity of those holy tempers, and that holy life, in which this spiritual renovation consists, is also enforced in the offices of baptism, where the church prays that those who are dedicated to God in baptism may be endued with heavenly virtues; and where, at the signing the baptized person with the sign of the cross, she declares that this marks him to the service of the Lord, and signifies to him his duty, "to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end." Not satisfied with these, she still further urges the necessity of this renovation, in the baptismal exhortation, declaring that "baptism represents unto us our profession, which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him; that as he died and rose again, so should we, who are baptized, die unto sin and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living."

It is worthy of remark how admirably, on this

subject, the church employs and amplifies the language of Scripture in which this spiritual change is denoted, "by being transformed by the renewing of the mind; by crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts; by walking, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;* by putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him; by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and walking soberly, righteously, and godly in the world." This is the change of heart which is called, in Scripture, the "renewing of the Holy Ghost," becoming "a new creature;" and, in the correct language of systematic divinity, *renovation*, or *sanctification*.

The distinction, then, between renovation and regeneration, and their mutual consistency, are apparent.

REGENERATION is the regular *commencement*, in baptism, of that spiritual life of which RENOVATION is the *progress* and *consummation*.

Regeneration is the conferring, in baptism, of certain privileges, on *certain conditions*; in the *fulfilment* of which conditions *renovation* consists.

Regeneration is the *instrument*, renovation the *grace* conveyed; baptism conveying to all who worthily receive it, "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness."

Regeneration confers divine grace *to enable us to work out our salvation*; renovation is the *actual employment of that grace* in this important work.

In regeneration the *quickenning power* of the Holy Ghost is bestowed upon us, by which we

* Rom. viii.

receive the *means* of spiritual life: in renovation this spiritual life is called *into holy energy and activity* by the *sanctifying power* of the Divine Spirit.

Regeneration is a change of our *spiritual condition*, a translation into a state in which our *salvation is rendered possible*: renovation is that *change of heart and life* by which *salvation is finally attained*.

Now there is surely a plain distinction between the *commencement* of the spiritual life and its *progress* and *consummation*—between the reception of spiritual privileges, *on certain conditions*, and securing of these privileges by the *actual fulfilment* of these conditions—between the grace which *enables us to work out our salvation* and the *employment* of this grace in this spiritual work—between that power of the Divine Spirit which merely *quickenes the spiritual life* and that which gives it *full activity and mature vigour*—between an *external state, in which salvation is possible*, and a *moral change* which *secures* that salvation. Thus marked is the distinction between regeneration and renovation. But though distinct, they are perfectly consistent; nay, the latter is powerfully enforced by the former.

Baptism conveys, seals, and enforces, to those who worthily receive it, the renewing of the mind; or as our church, in the answer to the catechism, expresses it, “a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness.” Regeneration is at once the lively excitement and the powerful mean of renovation.

Our *spiritual life* having *commenced* in baptism, we are powerfully impelled to *cherish* and *perfect*

it by the *renewing* influences of the Holy Ghost. The exalted *value* of the *privileges* of the Christian covenant which are conferred on us in the regeneration of baptism, forcibly urges us to *secure* them by fulfilling the conditions on which they are suspended, and thus becoming renewed by the Holy Ghost.

Having *received*, in the regeneration of baptism, *grace to work out our salvation*, we shall be guilty of the most inexcusable and culpable neglect, if this *work is not performed* in the *renewing* of our minds. *Quickened* in baptismal regeneration to a new and spiritual life, awful will be our guilt, and sore our punishment, if, by doing *despite to this Spirit*, we arrest him in his progress to the *sanctification* and *renovation* of our hearts. Yes, Christians, *called* by baptism into a *state of salvation*, how will you answer it to your consciences, to your God, if you do not *improve* the grace which is given to you, so as to make your *calling* and *election sure*, by your *renovation*, and by your establishment in holiness and virtue?

Now deny the doctrine of baptismal regeneration—make baptism, as the adversaries of baptismal regeneration contend, a mere external initiation into the church, a mere mark or sign of difference between Christian men and others—strip this holy sacrament of its grace, its privileges—and where are all these powerful excitements? You have lost them—and in them you have lost the most powerful hold upon the judgment, the heart, and the conscience of the professing Christian. You cannot exhort him to cherish and to perfect his spiritual life—it has not yet commenced. You cannot excite him, by the hopes to which he is entitled, of

pardon, of grace, of heaven, to fulfil his baptismal vows—no such hopes has he received. You cannot urge him to work out his salvation—he will inquire, ‘What grace have I received to accomplish this most serious work?’ You cannot warn him of the awful guilt of quenching the Spirit, and thus frustrating the work of sanctification in his soul—baptism, according to your system, conferred no gift of the Holy Ghost. You cannot say to him, ‘Christian brother, God hath called you, by baptism, out of darkness into his marvellous light; from the kingdom of sin and Satan into the kingdom of his dear Son; from being the child of wrath, to be the child of grace; walk, I beseech you, answerably to your Christian calling, and as becometh a child of light:’ you cannot address to him this exhortation, so elevating, so forcible, so animating—baptism, in your view of it, produced in him no change of spiritual condition; he is still in his natural state, without an interest in Christ, an alien and stranger to the covenant of promise.

Say not, then, that the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is a cold, a formal, a lax, and carnal doctrine. Properly understood and enforced, it lays upon the judgment, the heart, the sensibilities of Christians, obligations and motives to vital piety and true godliness, of the most powerful, awful, and at the same time persuasive nature, and which no other system can present.

Closing here a discourse already unreasonably protracted, and postponing to a future occasion the divisions of the subject which yet remain to be discussed, let me, in a single remark, impress upon you the awakening and animating topic on which I have just now touched.

Look back then, Christians, to the period when, at the regenerating font, you were made members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven! and is it possible that any of you are the slaves of sin—that any of you are fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, and serving him to whose sinful temptations you yield—that any of you are living as if the world were your only home, your only inheritance?

Ah! Christians—resisting your baptismal grace, violating your baptismal vows, despising your baptismal privileges—the day is coming, when it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you.

SERMON XXXV.

REGENERATION AND RENOVATION.

TITUS iii. 5.

The washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

IN a preceding discourse from these words, I called your attention to the doctrines of regeneration and renovation, and to the distinction between them. I was led to this survey, in consequence of the very erroneous notions which prevail on these important subjects, and of the odium to which our church has been exposed for annexing the term *regeneration* to baptism, as if she denied entirely the necessity of that spiritual change which is erroneously denoted by this term in the popular language of Christians of the present day. I presumed to think that this survey would not be uninteresting to you, as it would enable you to understand and to vindicate the doctrines of your church; to see their harmony with Scripture, and with the faith of the primitive and purest ages of Christianity; and, above all, would afford you information on subjects of fundamental and vital importance. In a preceding discourse, I therefore proposed to pursue, in this survey, the following plan:—

I. To exhibit the sense of the Church of England, and of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America, on the subject of baptismal regeneration.

II. To defend this sense by the authority of Scripture, of the primitive church, of the reformed churches, and of some of the most eminent divines of the Church of England.

III. To lay down the distinction between regeneration and renovation.

IV. To apply the doctrine of regeneration and renovation to the case of adults receiving baptism rightly, on a sincere profession of repentance and faith—of adults receiving baptism unworthily, in impenitence and unbelief—of those baptized in infancy—of baptized persons who have violated their baptismal engagements—and of baptized persons who, through the power of divine grace, as far as human infirmity will permit, have fulfilled their baptismal vows.

V. To enforce the means by which spiritual renovation, in those who have been regenerated in baptism, may be obtained, increased, and preserved.

VI. and *lastly*, I proposed to obviate objections, and to make a practical improvement of the whole subject.

In a former discourse, I went through the three first divisions of this plan; and I shall now lay before you a summary of what was then offered, as an introduction to the present discourse.

According to the sense of our church, she applies regeneration to denote that change in our spiritual condition which takes place in baptism, wherein, on the profession of repentance and faith, we re-

ceive a title to all the privileges of the Christian covenant; she therefore styles baptism *regeneration*, and baptized persons *regenerate*. This was proved by a particular appeal to the offices of baptism and confirmation, to the catechism, to the articles of religion, and to other parts of the liturgy. The detail of quotations need not now be repeated, as the application, by our church, of the term *regeneration* to baptism, must have been noticed by the most superficial observer of her offices.

Under the second head, the sense of our church on this subject was sustained by an appeal to Scripture. The term *regeneration* occurs but twice in the sacred volume; one of the passages having no particular bearing on this point; and the other, the passage in Titus recited in my text, styling baptism “the washing of regeneration;” and our Saviour himself, in his conversation with Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, designates baptism by “being born again,” “born of water and of the Spirit.” The primitive church, by the testimony of her early and late fathers, applied the term *regeneration* to baptism only. This application of the term, it is a remarkable fact, continued in the church until about two centuries ago, when the introduction of the novel doctrine of the indefectibility of grace, led to the denial of *baptismal* grace, and of course of baptismal regeneration. The term then became applied, by the Calvinists generally, to that spiritual change of heart and life which is properly styled, not “the washing of regeneration,” but “the renewing of the Holy Ghost,” renovation or sanctification. The scriptural and primitive style and opinions were preserved by some divines of our church who were inclined to Calvinism; and the

scriptural and primitive notion of baptism, as conveying a title to the remission of sins, to the favour of God, to the grace of the Holy Spirit, and to everlasting life, was still maintained by divines decidedly anticalvinistic, but who unfortunately departed from correctness and precision of language, by frequently employing the term *regeneration* in its novel, but popular sense, of a spiritual change of heart and life. This was proved, by reciting to you quotations from their writings.

Under the third division of the subject, I endeavoured to point out, clearly and fully, the distinction between regeneration and renovation; the former being a regular and sacramental commencement of the spiritual life, the latter its progress and consummation—regeneration being the reception of spiritual privileges on certain conditions, and renovation the actual fulfilment of the conditions—regeneration conferring in baptism the grace which enables us to work out our salvation, and renovation being the employment of this grace in this essential work—regeneration being the gift in baptism of that Spirit which *quickens* the spiritual life, and renovation being the exertion of his renewing and sanctifying powers on the soul—regeneration being a change of state, in which our salvation is rendered possible; renovation being that moral change which secures this salvation.

According to this view of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, the spiritual life commencing in baptism, the Christian being in this sacrament called into a state of salvation, receiving the powerful influences of divine grace and the offer of the most exalted privileges, he is possessed of every mean, and is operated upon by every possible ex-

itement, to obtain that holy change of heart, that spiritual renovation, which is the only pledge of God's favour here, and the only passport to his blissful presence hereafter.

The doctrine, then, of baptismal regeneration, so far from being a doctrine which is calculated to relax the efforts of the Christian, and to settle him in dangerous contentment with low degrees of virtue, affords to him the most cogent and animating motives possible to make his calling and election sure.

These were the views presented to you under the three first divisions of the subject, which were discussed in the last discourse. I proceed now to the fourth division of the subject.

IV. To apply the doctrine of regeneration and renovation to the case of adults receiving baptism rightly, on a sincere profession of repentance and faith—of adults receiving baptism unworthily, in impenitence and unbelief—of those who are baptized in infancy—of baptized persons who have violated their baptismal engagements—and lastly, of baptized persons who, through the power of divine grace, as far as human infirmity will permit, have fulfilled their baptismal vows.

1. Let us consider the case of adults who receive baptism rightly, on a sincere profession of repentance and faith.

What was their state before baptism? Drawn and excited by God's preventing grace, that grace which goes before man in every good thought and work, they became sensible of the evil and guilt of sin; they mourned over their transgressions with godly sorrow; they implored God to create a clean

heart and to renew a right spirit within them; they contemplated the all-sufficiency and the fulness of his grace and mercy in Jesus Christ; they thankfully embraced the promises of pardon declared to mankind by their Lord and Saviour; and they resolved, in reliance on his merits and the aids of his grace, to serve God in newness of life. Thus exercising true repentance and faith, they were in a capacity for receiving all the blessings of the Gospel covenant.

This, then, was their condition before baptism. They had received a certain portion of divine grace, by which they were excited to repentance and faith; and thus the work of renovation had, in a certain degree, commenced in their hearts; and they were qualified for the reception of pardon, of a more full measure of grace, of the favour of God, of a title to everlasting glory—they were qualified for being brought into a state of salvation.

But what was the *mean* appointed by God for the reception of these blessings, and for their translation into this state of salvation? What was the pledge to assure to them those blessings, and their title to salvation? Baptism. For we have seen, that, by being born of water and of the Spirit, we enter into the kingdom of God; by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, and receive a title to all the privileges of the church, the mystical body of Christ.

Until, then, true penitents and believers are baptized, they have not, on the Gospel plan, a title to the blessings of salvation; Christ's merits are not applied to them by the external sign; they are not regenerated; they are not born into the kingdom and family of God; nor made members of Christ.

children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Not that salvation is absolutely confined to baptism; for God, as a merciful Judge, will dispense with his own institutions where they cannot be had, and when the rejection of them proceeds from a sincere but misguided judgment. Still, baptism is the *mean* appointed by God by which we must receive a title to salvation; this is the pledge to assure salvation to us; this is the door of admission into the church of Christ, to which, we are told in Scripture, “the Lord added such as should be saved.”

They, therefore, who are baptized in the exercise of true repentance and faith, receive in this holy sacrament the actual remission of their sins, the quickening power of the Divine Spirit, the favour of God, a complete title to the glories of heaven—these are blessings for which their repentance and faith qualified them, but of which they must be put in possession by the mean and pledge which God ordained.

Their spiritual life now commences under the seal of the covenant; that Divine Spirit who, by his previous influences, had been preparing their souls for his presence, now solemnly consecrates them to his service, and takes possession of these sacred temples; to that portion of grace which inspired their good resolutions, and went before them in their good works, is now added that greater measure of quickening power which, cherished and improved by the other ordinances of the church, will be advanced to that degree of renovating and strengthening grace by which all sinful affections will die in them, and all things belonging to the

Spirit will live and grow in them—by which they will have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh. This is the contest to which they are now devoted. They have forsaken the ranks of the ungodly; they have engaged in the service of a heavenly Leader; and, armed with the weapons of his grace, and animated by his presence and power, they are to fight the good fight of faith; children of God and of the light, they are to walk answerably to their Christian calling, and as becometh the children of light. Thus renewed by God's holy Spirit, and endued with heavenly virtues, they will be finally rewarded in the fruition of those immortal glories to which in baptism they received a title.

2. But what is the case of adults who receive baptism unworthily, in a false profession of penitence and faith?

Are they made members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven?

Are they regenerated?

In order to answer these inquiries, we must lay down the principle, that the institutions of God all take effect, except so far as there exist insuperable disqualifications in those who receive them. Now, those adults who come to baptism with faith and repentance, actually receive in this ordinance the forgiveness of their sins, the favour of God, and a title to the happiness of heaven. But those adults who come to baptism without faith and repentance, are disqualified from the actual *enjoyment* of these privileges. Still these defects do not render them incapable of being admitted into the church, and of receiving in baptism a solemn proffer, on the part of God, of all the privileges of this mystical

body, and a title to them, on the conditions of repentance and faith. Thus far, then, they are made members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven; they received in baptism a solemn proffer, on the part of God, of all these privileges, and of his grace to enable them to secure them by true repentance and faith. A conditional grant of all the blessings of the Gospel covenant is made to them in baptism, to take effect when they shall truly repent. Baptism, then, conveying to them a solemn proffer of grace, and pardon, and everlasting life, which, without being again baptized, they may secure by repentance and faith, so far their state is changed; from a state of nature, in which they have no title to the privileges of the Gospel, they are translated into a state of salvation; in which, as soon as they repent and believe, pardon, and mercy, and everlasting life are conferred upon them, not only according to the general promises of God, but by the terms of their baptism. In this sense they are regenerated.

If baptism in no respect takes effect as it regards those who unworthily receive it—if it does not even admit them to the privileges of the church, the mystical body of Christ—we should expect to find commands in Scripture for rebaptizing these hypocritical penitents and false believers; but no such commands appear. Simon Magus received baptism on the profession of a faith which, as he soon afterwards attempted to bribe the apostles to bestow on him the power of conferring the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, is supposed to have been hypocritical; but, admitting this conclusion, it does not appear that his baptism was void, or that he was not regenerated, so far as to give him a right to

divine grace, and to the privileges of the Gospel, on his repentance; for if he had not this conditional right, it would have been mockery to exhort him to repent, in the hope of forgiveness. But the language of the apostle to him was, not to be baptized, not to be regenerated, but to repent of his wickedness, and to pray to God for forgiveness.

The unworthy recipients of baptism are therefore translated by this sacrament into a state of salvation—into the kingdom of heaven, or church of Christ; otherwise they would need a new baptism to admit them into this state. But this state of salvation necessarily implies the conditional grant of pardon, of grace, and a title to everlasting life; these blessings to be actually conferred when the conditions are fulfilled. The regeneration of baptism takes full effect when these unworthy receivers of it repent of their wickedness, and experience the renewing of the Holy Ghost; otherwise the rejection of the privileges thus, by a visible sign and pledge, solemnly proffered and assured to them, will add to the guilt of hypocrisy, and most awfully aggravate the terrors of their condemnation.

3. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration and renovation admits of an easy application to the case of infants.

Infants have no actual sins for which they are to repent; and on account of their freedom from actual transgressions, and of their affections, though liable to excess when assailed by temptation, being as yet uncontaminated by wilful impurity, they are held forth by our blessed Lord as models of innocence. Inherit they do a fallen nature, in which principles and passions that, before the fall, were duly regu-

lated, but now tend to excess, constitute that depravity which Scripture and experience demonstrate is the inheritance of all the posterity of Adam. Thus, as our church expresses it, "far gone from original righteousness, and of their own nature inclined to evil," it is necessary that for those infirmities and sins of which, through "the lusting of the flesh against the spirit," they may be guilty when reason puts forth its powers and the will exerts its energy, they should promise repentance by their sureties. Their sponsors also make for them a profession of faith, a renunciation of sin, and a promise of faithful devotion to God. These promises and professions their heavenly Father is pleased to accept instead of repentance, which they do not need, and of actual faith, of both of which, through their tender age, they are incapable.

Infants, then, are proper subjects for baptism; agreeably to the declaration of our blessed Lord, "of such is the kingdom of God." They are put in the *actual possession* of all the privileges of this holy sacrament.

By nature they are "born in sin and the children of wrath;" not that they are the subjects of eternal wrath on account of the sin of Adam, in which they had no participation, and of that evil nature which, inheriting from their degenerate first parent, is their misfortune, not their crime; for reason teaches, and Scripture confirms the position, that man is not accountable for any sins but those committed in his own person, and contrary to the light and grace received. But they are children of wrath, inasmuch as they are far gone from original righteousness, and subject to death, and all the other effects of Adam's sin. From children of wrath, by

baptism they are made children of grace. They come into the world aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise, members of the apostate family of mankind, and of course possessing no covenant title to the favour of God. By baptism they are made members of that family, that holy society, which Christ hath separated from the world; and in it they enjoy the influences of the Divine Spirit, and all the means of grace which, by the ministry and ordinances which Christ hath established in it, he abundantly furnishes. Their original sin is washed away in the laver of regeneration; this is the mean by which they are interested in the merits of that atonement which Christ made for the sins of the whole world, both original and actual. The justice of God prevents him from inflicting punishment hereafter, except for actual voluntary transgressions: still, all sin being the object of his displeasure, the "fault, or defect and corruption of our nature, considered in itself, deserves God's wrath and damnation;" and therefore he saw fit to appoint an atonement for it; so that it does not subject mankind, except so far as they cherish it, or freely comply with its dictates, to guilt or condemnation. In baptism, the sacrament instituted for this mystical washing away of sin, infants are so far freed from original pollution, that God does not view them, on account of it, with displeasure, but accepts them as his children. In this sense they receive the inward and spiritual grace "of a death unto sin," and they experience a new birth unto righteousness, by receiving the Holy Spirit, which is the principle of this spiritual birth. They come into the world subject to the curse of death:

nature proclaims—"Dust they are, and unto dust they must return;" but nature proclaims no life beyond the grave, where "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality;" this is the voice of him alone who holds the keys of death and hell; and to the immortality which this mighty Deliverer hath purchased, baptism confers on these children of mortality a title, for it makes them heirs of heaven.

Blessed birth! which repairs the defects and ruins of that natural birth, by which sin, and death, and wo are entailed on our race. Well may baptism be styled the laver of regeneration, the new birth. By it our infants are translated from a world which lieth in wickedness, into the church which Christ hath redeemed and sanctified—from being strangers to God's promises, and aliens from his favour, they are made his children, the objects of his covenant-mercy—from being the heirs of mortality, they are made the heirs of heaven. God indeed may confer, he will confer these blessings on infants who die unbaptized; but wo be to those parents who wilfully keep their children from the divinely appointed mean and pledge of pardon, of grace, and of immortality! They rebel against God, by despising his ordinances; and thus deprive their children, not indeed of every degree of future felicity, but that supereminent bliss reserved for those happy spirits who pass into the kingdom of glory in heaven, through the kingdom of grace on earth.

Blessed are they who cherish and improve their baptismal grace, and by fulfilling their baptismal vows, preserve inviolate their title, through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, to their baptismal

privileges! But, alas! this is not the case with the bulk of those who were baptized in infancy. They have neglected their baptismal vows, and forfeited their baptismal privileges.

4. The consideration of their case was another division of this discourse.

“The grant of repentance,” to use the language of our church in one of her articles,* “is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after baptism.” Baptized Christians, who neglect and violate their baptismal engagements, and fall into sin, are therefore to be exhorted, in the language of the church in the same article, to “arise again and amend their lives.” To call on persons to be regenerated, is improper language. They have been *regenerated* in baptism, brought into a state of salvation; but having, through their neglect and sin, never received, or forfeited, the *renewing* of the Holy Ghost, they must obtain this *renovation*, or they are lost. Yes, ungodly men—bringing reproach, by your sinful lives, on that holy name which you received in baptism—rebellious against that God and Father, that Lord and Saviour, that Holy Spirit and Sanctifier, to whose service ye were consecrated in baptism—counting that precious blood of the Son of God, shed on the cross for your redemption, and applied to your souls in baptism, an unholy thing; viewing it with indifference, disregarding your interest in it, or doubting its efficacy—doing despite to that Spirit which took possession of your souls in baptism, and by your sins expelling him from that temple in which he seeks to dwell, and to shed his graces, his consolations, his joys—

* Article xvi.

oh! rejecting, for the transitory, corrupting, unsatisfying, perishing pleasures of sin, your inheritance in heaven, the crown of glory, the bliss of immortality, the joys of God's presence!—Repent; confess, with deep sorrow, your base ingratitude and guilt; renounce your sins; return unto God, relying for acceptance on the merits of his Son; pray to him for the renewing power of the Holy Ghost, to transform your affections, to abolish the body of sin which enslaves you, to endue you with heavenly graces, and to advance you in all virtue and godliness of living. Repent, or you will sink to a condemnation deeper than even the heathen himself will receive, who, though he has violated every dictate of reason, every remonstrance of conscience, and every secret monition of God's Spirit, never sinned against covenanted grace, never trampled under foot the Son of God, never despised the blood of the covenant, never spurned from him a title to heaven. Repent.

From these, who are exposed to God's wrath on account of the violation of their baptismal engagements, we turn—

5. *Lastly*, To the case of those who, through the power of divine grace, have, as far as human infirmity will permit, fulfilled their baptismal vows.

Those in whom the Divine Spirit found no obstacles to his renovating power in their wilful and habitual transgressions—whose souls he has been gradually and daily transforming and enduing with heavenly virtues—whom he has enabled successfully to fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh; to keep God's will and commandments; humbling, repenting of every infirmity, daily dying unto sin and living unto righteousness, and mind-

ful that it is God alone who can keep them from falling; imploring constantly the succours of his grace, and looking steadfastly for acceptance solely to his mercy in Jesus Christ, whose spirit of humility, of meekness, of patience, they seek to possess, whose holy example they strive to follow, and on whose merits is their supreme reliance. Happy souls, who, improving your baptismal grace, have advanced from strength to strength, and from virtue to virtue, by the renewing power of the Holy Ghost! give God the glory, for it is he who hath wrought in you both to will and to do; bless his holy name that ye have been preserved by his grace from the habitual violation of your baptismal vows, and from the forfeiture of your baptismal privileges; yet remember, even ye need repentance, repentance for your sins of infirmity, (Who can understand his errors?) repentance for leaving undone the things that ye ought to have done, and for doing the things that ye ought not to have done. (Save me, O God, from presumptuous sins.) Remember, your spiritual life can be preserved only by a lively and steadfast faith in that Saviour who is made unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Beware, O beware of degenerating into a formal, superficial piety—of resting on any attainments short of the constant renewing of your mind, of affections devoted to God and fixed on heavenly things, and of a life exhibiting the faithful discharge of every pious, relative, and social duty. Preserved thus far from the pollutions of the world, see, O see that you be not at last entangled therein, and lost for ever. Watch, therefore, and pray that your path may shine more and more unto the perfect day.

See, to aid and strengthen you in your course to heaven, and to give you a foretaste of its glories, your Saviour spreads before you his holy supper: come and drink, every one that thirsteth for salvation; come and eat, every one that hungereth for righteousness and life. Come, confirmed Christians, that you may receive the grace of perseverance. Come, ye penitents, that are returning to the fold whence ye had wandered, that ye may receive the grace of pardon. Come, ye doubting, troubled, but humble spirits, that ye may receive consolation from on high. Come, heirs of sin, of sorrow, and mortality, that sin may be changed into holiness, sorrow into joy, mortality into life. O that, by the exhibition of the Saviour crucified among you, I could persuade those to come, who have never yet celebrated the love of him who died for them.

SERMON XXXVI.

REGENERATION AND RENOVATION.

TITUS iii. 5.

The washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

It has pleased God to make outward and visible signs the means and the pledge of conveying and assuring to us inward and spiritual blessings. Baptism is the mean and pledge to those who worthily receive it, of “a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness;” that is, God in this sacrament releases them from the guilt of their past sins, and endues them with that Holy Spirit, whereby they may “die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness.” From being children of wrath, that is, without any title to the forgiveness of sin, the favour of God, or the joys of immortality, they are made the children of grace, entitled to the pardon of sin, to the grace and favour of God, and the joys of heaven. This change in their spiritual state or condition is called *regeneration*. The change in the hearts and lives of those who are the subjects of baptism, which this ordinance sets forth, and which it furnishes them the means of effecting, is called the “renewing of the Holy Ghost,” or *renovation*. This important distinction of terms is sanctioned by the language of Scripture, and of the primitive church; and, derived

from this pure source, has been happily preserved, amidst prevalent error and severe opprobrium, in the articles and offices of our church, and of the church from which we have descended. These views of the doctrine of regeneration and renovation, and the application of these doctrines to persons receiving baptism at different ages, and under different circumstances, were laid before you in two preceding discourses.

From the views which have been offered, I trust, you are impressed with the deep conviction, that it is the indispensable duty of all who have been regenerated in baptism, in order to secure the privileges then solemnly covenanted to them, to obtain the renewing of the Holy Ghost, renovation and sanctification of heart and life.

This renovation consists in the exercise of repentance and faith, producing holy obedience. In the case of adults, therefore, receiving baptism rightly, "truly repenting, and coming unto God by faith," the renewing of the Holy Ghost in a degree precedes and accompanies this holy sacrament. But the regeneration of baptism, while it conveys and assures to them the blessings of the Christian covenant, imposes on them the obligation to increase and to perfect their renovation and sanctification, by "growing in grace, and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; by continually mortifying all their evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living."

In the case of adults receiving baptism unworthily, not exercising true repentance and faith, while they receive in this sacrament a conditional transfer of all the blessings of the Christian cove-

nant; the actual exercise of repentance and faith, producing renovation and sanctification of heart and life, is necessary, in order to render their baptismal regeneration effectual, and to secure to them the blessings conditionally bestowed upon them. And in the case of infants, the regeneration of baptism is the mode which God has appointed for conveying to them the efficacy of that atonement which was made by Jesus Christ for original sin, for the hereditary depravity of human nature; and it is the mode by which they are reinstated in that immortality which their first parent forfeited. But as the powers of their mind unfold, and they become capable of moral action, they must engage in the great Christian work of dying unto sin and living unto righteousness; they must exercise repentance and faith, leading to a renunciation of sin, and to sincere obedience to God's commands; they must thus "daily be renewed by God's Holy Spirit," or they will forfeit their baptismal privileges of being "members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven."

Hence then it appears that baptismal regeneration is designed to set forth and to enforce the renovation and sanctification of the heart; and that this renovation is indispensable, to secure to us the privileges which in baptism were conferred on us.

And hence must appear the importance of the fifth division into which this subject was originally divided, viz.

V. To enforce the means by which spiritual renovation, in those who were regenerated in baptism, may be obtained, increased, and preserved.

My brethren, you should regard this part of the subject with the deepest interest. You have all, I conclude, received the washing of regeneration; you have all received a title to the privileges of being "members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven." Unless, therefore, you are ready, (God forbid the supposition should be justified!) unless you are ready to despise and to reject these privileges, with which the highest temporal objects that engage the ardent affections and pursuits of mankind can be no more compared, than can the evanescent moments of time to the ever-enduring ages of eternity—the inquiry must be of supreme importance as to the means of acquiring and preserving the renovation of the soul, which only can entitle us to the exalted privileges of the baptismal covenant. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." "If a man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." These are the declarations which impress infinite importance on the inquiry on which we now enter, as to the means by which this change of heart and life, this spiritual renovation, may be obtained, increased, and preserved, by which we may become new creatures in Christ Jesus.

And on this point there is a remark of fundamental importance. This renovation, in its commencement, its progress, and its perfection, is the work of the Holy Spirit exciting and aiding, but not irresistibly impelling our own powers and exertions. To establish the agency of the Holy Spirit in our renovation, and our co-operation with his blessed influences, would exceed the limits and be foreign to the design of the present inquiry. But

the Christian who reads his Bible, and finds there the declarations, that we are "saved by the renewing of the Holy Ghost," that we are "sanctified by the Holy Spirit," that we must "work out our salvation, for it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do," and innumerable other declarations to the same effect, will not hesitate humbly to receive, and gladly to cherish a doctrine, the necessity of which results from a sober estimate of the weakness of his nature, and which, without destroying his free agency, endues it with celestial strength, and crowns it with immortal triumphs. And the churchman will be faithless to that church to which it is his boast that he belongs, as well as treacherous to his own virtue, peace, and felicity, if he does not devoutly recognise the same doctrine in the articles, and in the prayers of the liturgy. "We have no power to do good works," says one of these articles, "pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing" (going before) "us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will." "Cleanse therefore the thoughts of our hearts," is the fervent address of the liturgy, "O God, we beseech thee, by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit;" "grant that we, being regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit;" "and for as much as without thee we are not able to please thee, mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts;" "as by thy special grace preventing us, thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by thy continual help may we bring the same to good effect;" and "mercifully grant unto us such a measure of thy grace, that

we, running the way of thy commandments, may obtain thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure.”

This renovation, therefore, is to be produced in us by the agency of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of our own endeavours and exertions.

I. And in order to this renovation, it is requisite that every baptized person should cherish a strong and lively sense of his need of this change of heart and life.

A deficiency in this sensibility is a fundamental and most dangerous defect. He who is insensible that there are propensities within him which lead to evil, unless directed and controlled by grace; that his passions and affections must be sanctified, in order that he may love and pursue spiritual objects; and that the fountain of his heart must be purified, in order that holy and virtuous actions may proceed from it; he who is insensible to the necessity of this spiritual renovation, will not make it the object either of desire or pursuit. In what terminate the ideas of religion cherished by many professing Christians? In freedom from gross vices, in an adherence to the laws of justice and honour, in the exercise of benevolence, and in perhaps only an occasional attendance at the worship of the sanctuary; while their affections are engrossed by the world, and their pursuits eagerly and supremely devoted to its pleasures. Sayest thou, professing Christian, that this negative and practical virtue is all that religion requires, all that is necessary to carry thee to heaven? What becomes of the command of thy God—“My son, give me *thy heart?*” What becomes of the declaration of

the Saviour—"If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me?" What becomes of the precepts of inspired apostles—"Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds"—"Crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts"—"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth"—"Have your conversation in heaven?" Ah! Christians, deceiving yourselves with this empty form of godliness, what becomes of the fervent supplications addressed to God for you in your baptism—"Grant that the old Adam may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in him"—"Grant that all sinful affections may die in him, and all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in him"—"Grant that he may have strength and power to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh?" What are all these but empty sounds, if, as you suppose, religion consists in mere correctness of conduct, neither regulating the heart nor supremely engaging the affections! Fatal delusion! Mark your Christian profession, as enforced in your baptism, "to follow the example of your Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him;" yes, like unto him, who was holy, harmless, undefiled; "to die unto sin, and to rise again unto righteousness; continually to mortify all your evil and corrupt affections, and daily to proceed in all virtue and godliness of living." And these obligations baptism imposes, because reason and Scripture both forcibly teach, that, destitute of these holy tempers and dispositions, and these heavenly virtues, you cannot be the subjects of the favour of God, nor fitted for the joys of heaven. The truth pronounced by the voice of inspiration, is founded

in the eternal and immutable law of reason—
“Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

This renovation, therefore, the adult, who rightly and worthily receives baptism, should make the unceasing object of his prayers and his exertions, that its spirit and its fruits may be displayed in him with increasing vigour. This renovation the unworthy recipient of baptism must be awakened to desire, and with earnestness to seek; he must assail, with strong crying and tears, the mercy-seat of heaven—“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me: wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.” For a new heart and a new spirit he should pray—he should labour; or he will be condemned for resisting baptismal grace, and counting unholy the blood of the covenant.

That their affections must be made holy, that it is their important work to crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin, is the lesson which, with anxious care, should be impressed on those baptized in infancy; as, even before exposed to the temptations of the world, their wayward passions proclaim the power of the enemy within.

Christians, of whatever grade of spiritual attainments, the conviction should never for a moment forsake you, that to be daily renewed by God’s Holy Spirit, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and daily to proceed in all virtue and godliness of living, are the only evidences of the Christian character, the only ground of confidence towards God, the only source of present peace, and the only title to eternal felicity.

2. A deep sense of the necessity of this renovation will lead the baptized Christian, as a mean of obtaining it, to acquire, by pious reading and meditation, correct views of the obligations and privileges of the Christian covenant assumed and conferred in baptism. Until these obligations and privileges are understood and properly estimated, no exertions will be made to discharge the one, and to obtain the other. But when the baptized Christian understands that he is a member of Christ, a child of God, and an heir of heaven, and fully appreciates these glorious titles, that indeed elevate him to a rank little lower than that of the angels; when he understands that these divine privileges are to be the reward only of his victories over the enemies who would wrest them from him—the world, the flesh, and the devil—and of his being endued with heavenly virtues; the powers of his soul will be roused, under the banner and in the strength of his divine Leader, to obtain this triumph, and to acquire these virtues. Yes, Christian parent, this is the first lesson which thou shouldst teach thy child, whom thou hast presented to God in the laver of regeneration. As his faculties open, and his affections expand, seek to occupy them with subjects calculated to afford them full employment and substantial pleasure—the nature and the obligations of that covenant, sealed in the blood of that Saviour who loved him even unto death, whereby, from being a child of wrath, he was made a child of grace.

Baptized Christians, your reflections and meditations must be devout and constant on the obligations and privileges of the baptismal covenant. Why is it that so many, who in baptism were made the

children of light, live as the children of darkness? Why is it that so many, who in baptism were made the heirs of glory, live as if their portion was a perishing world? Why is it that so many, who were marked in baptism as the soldiers and servants of Jesus Christ, forsake this divine Leader for the ranks of that rebellious host which the great adversary is leading to perdition? One principal cause is, their almost utter ignorance, or their inadequate conceptions, of the celestial privileges to which they received a title, and of the duties by which these privileges are to be secured.

Christian, in proportion as, by pious reading and meditation, the duties and the privileges of thy baptism are impressed upon thee, will be the desire and the zeal excited to discharge and to secure them. With greater solicitude and zeal than the richest volume of human science, should the charter of thy immortal hopes be prized and studied. Seek for it in its original lustre in the book of inspiration; behold the divine rays there scattered, concentrated in that office of the church by which you were devoted to God, and which displays, with majestic yet simple and affecting perspicuity, this charter of your hopes; there study your Christian obligations, and learn to prize your Christian privileges; and whenever, according to this inimitable office, you behold a child brought to the Saviour, to be embraced with the arms of his mercy, and to enjoy the everlasting benediction of his heavenly washing, call to mind that you were thus embraced with the arms of the Saviour's mercy, that you received this heavenly washing, and then ask yourself, Shall this washing be in vain? Shall I tear myself from these arms of mercy?

But in vain will be the liveliest sense of the obligations and privileges of baptism, and the most steadfast purpose to discharge and to secure them, unless accompanied—

3. By earnest prayer to God for the continued and increasing aids of that Holy Spirit, a title to which was conferred in baptism.

The necessity of prayer to God for his Holy Spirit, enforced in every page of the sacred volume, to enable us to fulfil our baptismal engagements, is the lesson taught us by the church in the catechism; where, with affectionate simplicity, the catechist addresses the catechuman, who has just stated his baptismal engagements—"My good child, know this, that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the commandments of God, and to serve him, without his special grace, which thou must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer." The conduct of too many seems to authorize the conclusion, that this impressive instruction was calculated only for children, and designed with the age of childhood to pass away and be forgotten. Deluded men! who never, or with occasional and languid supplications, implore that power from on high, which Scripture, which reason, which experience teach you can alone save you from the dominion of sin; you will remain in your present state of sinful security—remain in your *present* state, did I say? alas! there is a path which leads to the chambers of hell, and rapid is the descent; there is a place where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Oh! then, with fervent and reiterated supplications invoke the power of the Holy Ghost to renew and save you.

Nominal Christians, to the infrequency, to the

languor, to the insincerity of your prayers to God for his Holy Spirit, must be attributed your lukewarmness and your declension in the divine life.

Christians, adorning the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things, and rejoicing evermore in the God of your salvation, to the constancy and the holy sincerity of your supplications for the renewing power of the Holy Ghost, must be traced the splendour of your graces and the richness of your joys. Continue to invoke from God his light and his truth, and they will lead you to his holy hill—to the perfection of holiness, the fulness of joy.

4. In order to obtain this spiritual change, which baptism enforces, and which is essential to salvation, baptized persons must, in dependence on divine aid, frequently examine themselves concerning their repentance and faith.

These, in fact, were the engagements of their baptism—the conditions on which all its glorious privileges were suspended. Repentance, which commenced in a conviction of the evil and guilt of sin, and continued by a lively sorrow for it, expressed in humble confession and in earnest prayers for mercy, terminates in renouncing and forsaking it; so that the soul is established in holiness, and the life conformed to the demands of the divine law. Faith, which receiving with humility the Gospel plan of salvation, looks for pardon and acceptance to the promises of mercy declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus the Lord, and excited and warmed by the view of the exalted goodness displayed in the redemption, leads the believer, in the impulses of lively gratitude and love, to praise and to serve God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the divine Agents in this glorious work.

The exercises of repentance vary, comprehending, in the adult who has received baptism unworthily, the highest aggravations of guilt; and requiring in the adult who, since his baptism, has lived in a state of sin, deeper contrition and more particular acknowledgments of guilt than can be expected from those who have sullied, not by habitual sins, but only by occasional transgressions, or by sins of omission and infirmity, the robe of baptismal righteousness. Still, all have sinned—all have actual transgressions to lament—all have a sinful nature to deplore and to subdue; all must therefore repent.

All must exercise faith: it is the principle of the divine life, essential to its preservation and to its vigorous exercise. In proportion to the sincerity and constancy of our belief in God, his attributes, and his laws; in his promises of mercy and salvation, through Jesus Christ, to the humble and penitent, and in his denunciations of wrath against the ungodly; in proportion to the clearness and liveliness of our apprehensions of the character and offices of Jesus Christ, as our Instructor, our Priest, and Intercessor, our Ruler, and King, invested with the glory of the Godhead, will be the fervours of our love and gratitude, and the triumphs of our holy obedience.

Christians! see then how essential to your renovation is your exercise of the holy graces of repentance and faith. Alas! how many, who in baptism were pledged to the exercise of these graces, know little more of them than the name!—thoughtless, careless, immersed in sensual pursuits and pleasures—in their lives, at least, denying God, his attributes and laws, and neither understanding nor valuing that gracious covenant of mercy and life

into which they were admitted at baptism. Ah! these worldly, sensual, nominal Christians have forfeited their baptismal privileges. The guilt of the vows of God broken, of his grace resisted, of his salvation neglected, is upon their souls. O let them, in the exercise of lively faith, repent, and turn to God. Christians! insensible to your duties, insensible to your privileges, there is a wo, a tremendous wo denounced against you—there is mercy, there is life, which you may yet obtain.

5. When those who are baptized are impressed with a deep sense of the necessity of a change of heart and life; when they fully understand and realize the nature of their baptismal engagements, and the value of their baptismal privileges; when, with humility and sincerity, they address their earnest supplications to God for his Holy Spirit; when, by the aids of this Holy Spirit, they exercise true repentance and faith—they are then prepared for receiving that ordinance which is especially appointed for conveying, to those who are baptized, the renewing power of the Holy Ghost. But the prosecution of this subject, which I hope finally to conclude in another discourse, must be reserved for a future opportunity.

Brethren, I will not indulge the apprehension (an apprehension naturally excited) that the length to which the subject has been already prosecuted, has wearied you. Happy shall I be, if, on points involving questions of vital moment, I have succeeded, even in some degree, in dissipating error and establishing truth. Happy shall I be if I have, even in some degree, succeeded in rescuing the scriptural and primitive institutions of our church from the misrepresentations and calumnies which

have assailed them. But cause of gratitude will it be to the Father of mercies, if I have been the instrument of awakening from the sleep of spiritual death one nominal Christian, or of animating and comforting, in his way to glory, one of the humble and holy saints of God.

SERMON XXXVII.

REGENERATION AND RENOVATION.

ROMANS xii. 2.

Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.

THIS is the great object to which the Christian is to devote his exertions. His transformation into that purity and goodness which human nature lost at the fall, is indispensable to his enjoyment of the favour of God and the happiness of heaven. The renovation of the soul consists in an understanding enlightened, in a will rectified, in affections purified and fixed on heavenly things; it consists in the possession of all those virtues which reason approves and admires, but which the grace of Jesus Christ alone can confer. Love to God, the source of all perfection; reliance on his goodness and his power; gratitude for his mercies; submission to his dispensations; a steadfast and uniform desire to obey, in all things, his will; reverence, adoration, hope, fear, trust, love, towards our Maker, Governor, Benefactor, Saviour, Judge; justice, mercy, charity, in our intercourse with our fellow-men; sobriety, temperance, purity, in reference to ourselves—these are the virtues which are essential to his welfare and happiness in his social relations, which advance him to a fellowship with saints and angels, which secure to him the favour of his God,

and the enjoyment of a felicity endless and infinitely exalted. They are fruits of the Divine Spirit aiding and sanctifying man's endeavours, and constitute that renewing of the Holy Ghost, that spiritual renovation which the Gospel represents as the very essence of the Christian character, and which baptism sets forth, and by the most powerful aids and motives enforces.

This spiritual renovation, then—essential to the perfection and happiness of man in this life, and in that life which will have no end; to which he is called by the command of God, by the voice of his Saviour, by the monitions and the strivings of the Holy Spirit; in the attainment of which alone he can fulfil the engagements, secure the inestimable privileges of the baptismal covenant, and escape the condemnation of contemning the blood and resisting the grace of a Saviour—is the object to which all the thoughts, desires, and exertions of the Christian should ultimately be directed.

A change so radical and important is certainly above human power: it is the work of the Divine Spirit. It is not, however, to be attained but by the diligent application of the faculties of the mind in the use of means. As the first step in attaining this renovation, we must cherish a strong and lively sense of our need of it. We shall then be excited to acquire, by pious reading and meditation, correct views of the obligations and privileges of the Christian covenant. To render these means effectual, they must be accompanied by earnest prayer to God for the continued and increasing aids of that Holy Spirit, a title to which was conferred in baptism. By the aids of this Spirit we must exercise repentance and faith—repentance, terminating in

forsaking sin—faith, operating in supreme reliance on Christ's merits, and in holy obedience to his laws.

These are some of the means of obtaining spiritual renovation, and they were urged in a preceding discourse. I proceed now to explain other important and essential means of attaining the same end.

6. The ordinance of confirmation, which is especially appointed and designed to effect this spiritual renovation.

This ordinance operates as a mean of renovation, by the moral effects which it is calculated to produce, and the positive grace which it conveys.

Confirmation requires the baptized Christian to review his baptismal covenant; to understand and deeply to feel the obligation of its holy requisitions; to discern and to apply its powerful aids; to realize with lively solicitude and awe its momentous sanctions. It requires him to exercise genuine repentance and lively faith; to humble himself under a sense of his natural infirmity and corruption; to acknowledge his actual transgressions, his violations of his baptismal vows, and with sincere contrition to implore forgiveness. It requires him with holy purpose of heart to renew these vows; to profess his allegiance and faith in his God, his Maker, his Redeemer, and Sanctifier; to renounce the temptations of the great adversary, the corrupting pomps and vanities of a wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh.

These exercises and resolutions which are required in confirmation, most powerfully tend to fix the sentiments of piety in the soul, and to make the life of the Christian conformable to his holy profession.

But confirmation operates as a renewing and sanctifying ordinance, by the divine grace which for this purpose it conveys. "Then laid they their hands on them," it is recorded of the apostles, "and they," converts who had been regenerated in baptism, "received the Holy Ghost;" not merely his miraculous gifts—for no reason can be given why this dispensation of the Holy Ghost should in this instance be confined to his miraculous gifts—but those moral graces by which all unholy affections are made to die in the Christian, and all things belonging to the Spirit live and grow in him. In the kingdom of nature, its divine Author produces the most powerful effects by the most simple causes; why should it then be a subject of surprise that, in the kingdom of grace, the most important spiritual blessings should be conveyed by the most humble instruments?

When the ordinance of confirmation is not accompanied with this renewing and sanctifying energy, we must impute this, not to the insufficiency of the ordinance, but to the defect of qualifications in those who receive it. Let the baptized person come to this holy rite deeply impressed with his baptismal engagements, sincerely resolving, in the strength of God, to fulfil them, and earnestly imploring that strength without which he can do nothing, and he will find that he will be strengthened by the Holy Ghost in the inner man; and God will increase in him the manifold gifts of grace, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and the spirit of holy fear.

7. But in the great work which baptism imposes

on the Christian, of becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus, a most powerful and essential mean is prayer, public and private.

It is a truth founded in the reason and nature of things, that no man can live in the habitual exercise of prayer, and at the same time in the habitual commission of sin. Transient devotions and occasional sallies of confession and supplication, may consist with a careless, a sinful, and even a profligate life; but it is morally impossible that a man should possess the spirit of true devotion, and yet live in habitual forgetfulness of God and transgression of his laws. It is morally impossible that he should daily and habitually contemplate and adore God as the greatest and best of beings, and yet neither fear the power nor love the goodness of him who is able to save and to destroy. It is morally impossible that he should prostrate himself before his insulted Sovereign, his abused Benefactor, his incensed Judge, and in bitterness of spirit confess his sins, and in fervour of soul supplicate mercy; and habitually rise from the footstool of the Divine Majesty to the commission of the very sins which he has confessed, to the renewal of the very guilt for which he has implored pardon, and to the reiterated insult, abuse, and provocation of the Sovereign, the Benefactor, the Judge before whom he has been prostrate. It is morally impossible (the supposition strikes one with a degree of horror) that a man should feel and acknowledge himself a sinner, should deprecate the wrath of Jehovah, and present, as the powerful and effectual plea for his pardon, the precious blood and intercession of the Son of God; and habitually crucify afresh, by his sins, this Saviour whose merits he

has been pleading, and trample under foot the very blood which he had urged as his suit for mercy.

Ah! Christians, who have been baptized into the name, the merits, and the grace of Jesus Christ; who have even renewed, in the apostolic rite appointed for the purpose, those reasonable and holy vows which in baptism your sureties imposed upon you; why is it that, in regard to so many of you, baptism and confirmation, those means of grace and pledges of mercy, appear destitute of efficacy and of consolation—neither producing what they so powerfully enforced, a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness, nor securing to you the consolations of God's favour and the hope of heaven? Show me the Christian who has been devoted to God in these sacred rites, but whose character and life are very far from exhibiting the spirit and virtues of his holy calling, and you will find that he maintains no intercourse with the Father of his spirit, no communication by prayer with the Fountain of grace and mercy; that he attends the holy temple of his God only when convenience suits and a capricious inclination prompts; that there he is the late, the careless, the indevout attendant; indulging the whisper and the smile in the presence of him before whom angels veil their faces; bending neither his soul nor his body before his Maker, lifting neither his heart nor his voice in homage to the Lord of all. Follow him from the temple to the closet: it is the scene of his worldly, perhaps his criminal projects, but never, or only rarely, of his prayers. Behold him in his family: they are never led by him, as guilty sinners, as grateful dependents, to the footstool of their Judge, to the throne of their Benefactor. Follow him to

the public walks of the world, and the varying scenes of nature: he admires its beauties, he enjoys its bounties, he obtains its treasures and its honours, but is a stranger to that habitual devotion which lifts the soul from the joys of earth to the brighter joys of heaven, from the beauties and bounties of nature to him who made and who bestowed them, and from the temptations of the world to him who only can confer the strength to resist and to overcome.

But show me the professing Christian, the reverse of him whom we have just contemplated, who not merely fulfils all righteousness, but adorns the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things, and that Christian is the *man of prayer*—regularly, and reverently, and devoutly in the temple—statedly and humbly in his closet and his family—constantly and fervently in his spirit, amidst the competitions, the temptations, and the pleasures of the world. Christians, if you would thus be renewed by the Holy Ghost, you must thus invoke his sacred presence.

3. You must do more, my brethren: you must frequently and devoutly partake of that holy sacrament which will strengthen and refresh you by the spiritual body and blood of Christ.

It is by the union of Christians with Christ their head, that they partake of the sanctifying efficacy of the Divine Spirit, and are enabled to bring forth the fruits of righteousness. This union is effected and completed by the participation of the holy supper, which is the communion of the body and blood of Christ; which excites, and nourishes, and strengthens, in those who worthily receive it, all holy graces and virtues.

What shall we say then of those who, devoted to their God and Saviour in baptism, and renewing this devotion in the ordinance of confirmation, are solemnly pledged to obey his commands; and yet neglect that command—"Do this in remembrance of me?" Depriving themselves of the communication of those spiritual graces which flow into the soul of the devout Christian, who in this divine ordinance spiritually partakes of the body and blood of his Redeemer, need we wonder that they fall far short of the Christian character, and of the claims of their holy profession—that they do not perform the great Christian work enforced in their baptism, of daily mortifying their corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living? Is it possible that the Christian virtues will flourish in that soul which, neglecting an ordinance that exhibits the Saviour giving himself a sacrifice for its sins, and presenting him to the eye of its faith in his agony and bloody sweat, in his cross and passion, neglects a divinely instituted mean of grace, most powerfully calculated to nourish and to strengthen its gratitude, its love, its pious devotion?

But does this holy sacrament, instituted and designed for the renovation of the soul, produce this effect in all who receive it? I speak not now of the open and notorious evil livers, who profane the name of God, injure or defraud their neighbour, or violate the laws of sobriety and chastity—such the church enjoins on the guardians of the altar to exclude from the heavenly banquet—such, it is hardly to be supposed, would partake, in this state of habitual sin, of the body and blood of the Redeemer, and thus, by the memorials of his love and

his mercy, deliberately seal their perdition. But, alas! even among professing Christians, whose character and life are unstained by gross vices, and who evidence their reverence for the institutions of their God and Saviour, by partaking of that holy supper which he instituted and commanded, we do not always perceive that vigour of faith, that ardour of piety, that purity of life and conversation, that holy superiority to the world, that earnest desire and pursuit of their heavenly inheritance, which this sacrament is calculated to produce. Alas! strange as it may appear, there are some who can rise from the altar where they have celebrated the love of him who died for them, and vowed, over the memorials of his body and his blood, to live to his glory and obey his commands; and, during the remainder of the sacred day which has witnessed these vows, neither worship him in his temple, nor, it is to be feared, worship him elsewhere. Would it not appear as if there were some who can pass from the altar to the world, where indeed their duty calls them, but there mingle with the gay, the voluptuous, the votaries of mammon, the competitors for honour, and rarely exhibit any marks by which they may be distinguished from the worldly crowd?

Oh! if I could address persons of this description, I would beseech them to reflect what dishonour they do bring on their holy profession, what disgrace on the church which nourishes them in her bosom, what guilt, it is to be feared, on their own souls. At the foot of the altar they acknowledged that the remembrance of their sins was grievous unto them, the burden of them intolerable; over the memorials of the body and blood of their

Saviour, they presented unto God themselves, their souls and bodies, a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice; and yet they can neglect his worship, they can mingle with the world, and be as eagerly and supremely devoted to it, as if not to God, but to the world they had solemnly consecrated themselves. God of mercy! for these things O visit them not in thy wrath!

Christians! it is your duty, for it is the command of your God and Saviour, to receive the communion of the body and the blood of Christ; but it is your duty to receive it with serious reflection, with faithful examination, with the confession of your offences, in steadfast resolutions of new obedience, in faith, in gratitude, in charity, in love. Then it will prove to you a sanctifying ordinance, conveying to you the renewing power of the Holy Ghost, transforming your affections, quickening your virtues and graces, raising you above the world, and inspiring you with the blessed hopes of immortal glory.

9. But, Christians, in order to preserve and to increase that renewing of the mind which the means of grace are designed to produce, you must give them effect by the exercise of constant *diligence* and *watchfulness*.

Watch as well as pray, was the command of him who knew in the midst of how many and great dangers and temptations we are placed—dangers and temptations that will surprise and hurry us into sin, unless watchfulness is our constant safeguard. The world without us is an enemy constantly seeking, by insidious wiles as well as by direct attacks, to gain possession of our hearts; and unless we are constantly on the watch to meet and to repel

this powerful enemy, our virtue will be vanquished. Alas! we must watch against an enemy within; against our own hearts; against their treacherous purpose to betray us to the world; against their fondness for its vanities, its corrupt pomps and pleasures; against their flattery, which would lull us into security because we are free from gross vices, while we are strangers to the transforming power of divine grace, and destitute of holy affections, and of the heavenly hope which triumphs over both the sorrows and the pleasures of the world. We must guard against that delusion of our hearts which mistakes the fires of animal passion for the pure and steady flame of piety, and substitutes the extravagances of enthusiasm, which despises ordinances and depreciates moral virtue, for that pious fervour which walks blameless in all the ordinances of God, and which cherishes all the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; and which seeks to continue in these things, and to abound, that so an entrance may be obtained into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Christians! the renewing power of the Holy Ghost exerts his agency in your exercise of all those powers which make you moral and accountable creatures. You must be *diligent* in the Christian work of dying unto sin and living unto righteousness, and by his power the old man, your corrupt nature, will be buried, and the new man will be raised up in you. You must be *watchful* to resist the enemies, to a constant warfare with which baptism pledged you, and by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost you shall triumph against

the devil, the world, and the flesh. You must devote supreme diligence and constant watchfulness to the great business of your salvation, and through the mercy of God and the agency of his Spirit you shall be endued with heavenly virtues, and everlastingly rewarded. Imitate, Christians, children of the light, imitate the wisdom of the children of this world—O apply to your spiritual concerns that constant diligence and watchfulness with which they prosecute their temporal schemes, and guard against every occurrence which may endanger their temporal interests. We shall then behold you, Christians, no longer cold, formal, indevout, worldly, but displaying a lively, a vigorous, an heavenly piety, such as your holy profession enjoins, such as in her first days constituted the glory of the Christian church, and such only as can secure for you the favour of your God, and make you meet for his presence.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” This is an inspired declaration, supported by the whole tenour of the Gospel, and set forth, with the utmost strength and perspicuity, in all the formularies of our church, and particularly in that baptismal office by which we were regenerated, brought into a state of salvation, and made God’s children by adoption and grace.

How erroneous, then, is the opinion, which, it is to be feared, proves ruinous to the piety of many, that religion consists in the mere regulation of the exterior, and not in the transformation of the heart! and how vain indeed is the attempt to regulate that exterior by the standard of moral duty, unless the principles and springs of action, which are seated in the heart, are corrected and purified! Brand

not as fanatical, the doctrine of the transformation of the soul, of the new birth unto righteousness, until you have consulted, I will not say Scripture, but a guide acknowledged by all—human reason. Surely it will tell you, that the morality of actions depends upon the principle from which they spring; that virtue consists in correct dispositions, as well as moral habits; that, in fact, the connexion between a pure heart and a holy life is intimate and indissoluble. Human reason will advance further; it will lay before you the frailty of your nature, and the evil propensities which find so many temptations in the world that surrounds you; it will tell you that your folly can only be exceeded by your guilt, if you reject that divine power which in the grace of God's Holy Spirit is offered to you, to strengthen your weakness, to subdue your evil propensities, and to vanquish your temptations.

The means of obtaining this renewing power of the Divine Spirit have been laid before you. It is not to be concealed, they are difficult and arduous; but the means are only proportioned to the end, and both infinitely exceeded by the reward. The object at which the baptismal covenant calls the Christian to aim, is to crucify the old man, and utterly to abolish the whole body of sin, so that he may be finally rewarded in inheriting the everlasting kingdom of God. Where the object is so difficult, and the reward so glorious, is it not folly to expect that ardour, exertion, and diligence will not be necessary? Would you obtain the prize without striving for the mastery? Would you reach the goal without struggling in the race? Would you seize the crown of victory without ardour and courage in the fight? Christians! the

mastery at which you strive is greater than that which emblazons the conquerors of nations—mastery over sin; the goal towards which you press is fixed in heaven; the crown which is the object of your ambition, is unfading and immortal. And shall not these command your diligence, engage your exertions, excite your ardour? Rouse, Christians! devote to these glorious objects all your powers, all your exertions, all your ardour. For oh! when a few years have revolved, of how little consequence will those things be which now excite your desires, and to which you are now devoted! When you are entering on an eternal state, how will you deplore that folly which, infatuated with the things of time, prevented you from preparing for your unchanging abode! O God, there will be guilt as well as folly—guilt that will consign us to the mansions of despair!

END OF SECOND VOLUME.





