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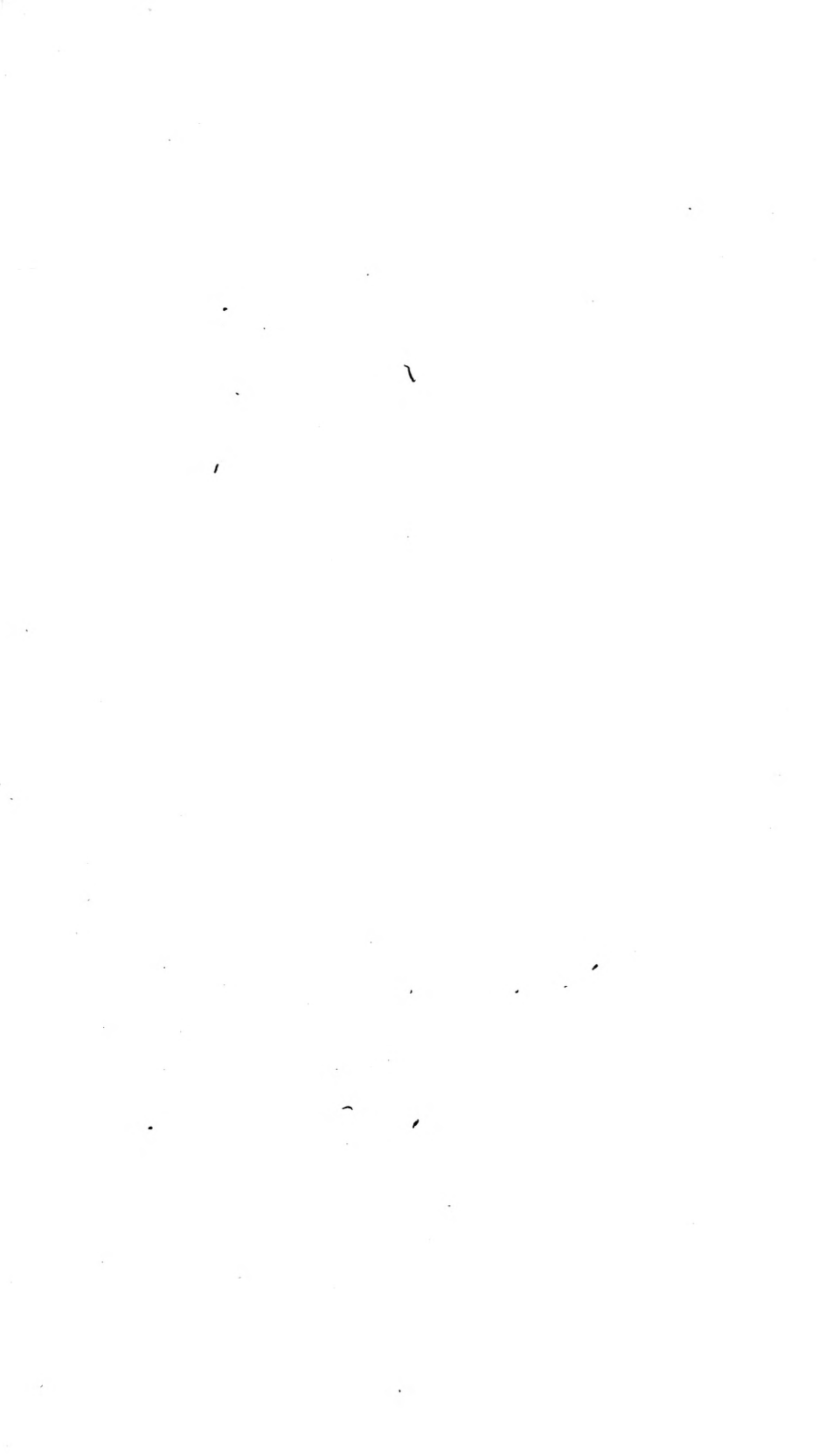
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# PULPIT STUDIES:

OR,

AIDS TO

PREACHING AND MEDITATION.

BY JOHN STYLES, D.D.

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*First Series.*

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE title of this volume sufficiently explains its object; but, to guard against misapprehension, the Author wishes it to be understood that what he means to convey by the term "Studies" is, that the materials for the use of the pulpit which he has here collected and published, have no higher pretension than the contents of an artist's portfolio, which are usually called his "studies," and which for the most part consist of outlines and unfinished sketches. The truth is, that they are specimens of the ordinary productions of his ministerial life, selected according to the order in which the subjects occur in the Scriptures. Two or three are, indeed, the contributions of friendship; these, alas! are posthumous—not one is elaborated into the completeness of a Sermon, yet it is hoped that all are adapted to promote the end proposed.





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## PULPIT STUDIES.

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### ADAM.

“The first man Adam.”—1 Cor. xv. 45.

IF to mark the origin of nations, the rise and fall of empires, the events which agitate states and overthrow kingdoms, be a pleasant study, must it not yield equal gratification to mark the commencement of time, and to trace all the families of the earth back to their first progenitor, since his life is so intimately connected with the state of the world around us, with our intellectual, moral, and social nature, our eternal destiny, and more especially with that plan of redemption on which all our hopes are founded? His life is full of interest, in comparison of which the achievements of the most illustrious persons, and the events of the most remarkable epochs in history, dwindle into insignificance. Let us, then, consider,

I. His Creation: II. His Glory: III. His Fall.

## I. HIS CREATION.

Here we may reflect,

1. *On the materials with which he was formed, and the grand constituent parts of his nature*—His body, of the earth; his soul, the breath of the living God.

2. *On the wisdom displayed in this combination of the physical with the spiritual, in this wonderful production of creating power.* Adam was the last as well as the best of God's earthly works. The connecting link between heaven and earth. In the creation of the first man Adam there was likewise this peculiarity which distinguishes him from all his posterity, that he did not pass through the period of childhood—that he was not born an infant, but created a man with all his physical and intellectual powers in full maturity. What skill in the structure—what astonishing capacity in his soul for good and for evil, either to glorify or degrade his body so fearfully and wonderfully made!

3. *On the responsibilities which the union of these circumstances cast around him.* They regarded him as a man, as an inhabitant of earth, as the federal head and representative of his posterity. With his creation his career of duty and obligation began. As a test of obedience, his Maker laid on him one and but one command, in its nature positive, but involving every moral principle, every principle of piety and virtue. To obey this law was as easy as it was reasonable. Had no such test been appointed, it would have been only natural in Adam

to have desired one; to have said to his Divine Benefactor, Condescend to lay on me some command—to point out some plan by which I may evince my love. Thou hast laid me under infinite obligations, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do to express my sense of gratitude, and show my love? In appointing him a test of obedience, therefore, God was only gratifying what must have been the spontaneous and ardent wish of man's own grateful heart; and in appointing a test so simple, so easy, requiring him only *not* to do something, to abstain in a single particular, God was showing how easy was the rule, how paternal and kind the government under which he was living. And here let us,

## II. CONTEMPLATE THE FIRST MAN ADAM IN HIS PRIMEVAL GLORY.

The sacred historian informs us that “he was made after the image of God.” But in what did this image consist? Say some, in that power and authority which was given him over the creatures, in that he was viceroy over this lower world. But that this is only a part of the Divine image is plain, otherwise the possessors of greatest power would have the nearest assimilation to God. Thus Nimrod would have been more godlike than Noah, Saul than Samuel, the persecutors than the martyrs. But apostles are the best expositors here: they teach us that the image of God consisted in the happy combination of this power with knowledge, holiness, and happiness. Indeed, the power itself was chiefly *moral* in its nature.

1. *Knowledge.* The first man came into the world a philosopher; his understanding was all light: it was, says South, "the leading, controlling faculty; all the passions wore the colours of reason; it did not so much persuade as command; it was not consul, but dictator. Discourse was then almost as quick as intuition; it was simple in proposing, firm in concluding; it could sooner determine than now it can dispute. Like the sun, it had both light and agility; it knew no rest but in motion, no quiet but in activity. It did not so properly apprehend as irradiate the object; not so much find as make things intelligible. It did arbitrate upon the several reports of sense, and all the varieties of imagination; not like a drowsy judge, only hearing, but also directing their verdict. In sum, it was vegete, quick, and lively; open as the day, untainted as the morning, full of the innocence and sprightliness of youth: it gave the soul a bright and a full view into all things, and was not only a window, but itself the prospect." So great was his knowledge, so clear his understanding, that he could write the nature in the names of things. Knowledge now is only to be obtained by labour; much exertion and perseverance are necessary: but to our first parent, study was not a labour. The volume in which he read was always open, and that volume was nature. His mind was never fatigued, his memory never burdened: we may form some idea of its excellence, if we consider it now in its decay; like some stately building in ruins, traces of its former mag-

nificence still remain. Sir Isaac Newton was but the rubbish of our first parent, as the most beautiful garden is but the ruins of paradise.

2. *Holiness.* Holiness is the brightness, or rather, the moral essence of the Divine glory. The anthems of heaven proclaim this to the universe—the angels cry, “Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts!” This was the beauty of Adam: what his understanding represented as excellent, his will chose as desirable. His affections were rightly placed; God was his chief good: to Him he offered the profoundest homage of his spirit: his service was unconstrained, like the obedience of angels, who are as a flame of fire, all fervent in love and zeal.

3. *Happiness.* Because God is perfectly holy, he is infinitely happy. Creatures, according to their capacity, who are endowed with this sinless purity, are likewise happy. How finely is the happiness of holy Adam in his state of innocence imagined by the writer we have already quoted: “Joy then was not that which now often usurps the name; that trivial, vanishing, superficial thing, which only gilds the apprehension, and plays upon the surface of the soul. It was not the mere crackling of thorns, a sudden blaze of the spirits, the exultation of a tickled fancy or a pleased appetite: joy was then a masculine and a severe thing; the recreation of the judgment, the jubilee of reason. It was the result of a real good suitably applied: it commenced upon the solidities of truth, and the substance of fruition: it did not run out in voice, or indecent eruptions, but filled the soul, as God

does the universe, silently and without noise. It was refreshing, but composed; like the pleasantness of youth, tempered with the gravity of age, or the mirth of a festival managed with the silence of contemplation." But God, out of pure beneficence, proceeded to enlarge his happiness; he placed him in Eden, the garden of the Lord, the paradise of God. There his happiness awakened into social bliss; but when his joy was at the full, the beautiful but fragile vessel containing this pure and unalloyed element of blessedness, was dashed to the ground by an impious though unseen hand; and thus we are to notice,

### III. MAN'S FALL FROM HIS EXCELLENCY.

Our attention is arrested,

1. *By the temptation with which he was assailed.* It came from a mysterious power: it was adapted to his twofold nature; it appealed to his *senses*—to his *reason*, and by deluding the one, and perverting the other, the arch-demon injected into his heart the poison of pride and impiety: sense became sensuality; enjoyment, cupidity. These engendered distrust of the Divine goodness and truth: distrust of God led to credulity, credulity that believed the subtle falsehoods of a demon, while it denied the veracity of the Most High, and thus induced an act of open defiance and rebellion against his authority. This was all along the design of the tempter, and with infernal ingenuity he laid his scheme of seduction, and succeeded. But the malignity of the enemy does not lessen,



2. *The guilt of man's base compliance with his suggestions.* This terrible act involved him in guilt of the most alarming extent. Singly regarded, it was a breach of only one positive precept; but it was in fact a violation of the great principle of all law, and struck at the obligation of all government and the foundation of all order. It was a single act, but it was the act that would have snapped asunder the golden thread on which are strung the beautiful connexion and succession of pearls which form the circle of order and of law round the diadem of God: could it have succeeded, these would have been scattered and dispersed. One sin, as it is levelled against the Divine authority, so would it dethrone the Divine Majesty, and annihilate for ever the moral harmonies of the universe.

The "one sin," which by this "one man entered into the world," combined in itself all the elements of evil. It implied, on the part of Adam, strange and unnatural *omissions*. There was the omission of *prayer* in the instant and article of temptation: *dependence upon God*, which derives from him a sustaining and strengthening influence, was forgotten or withdrawn. *Consideration* was laid asleep, the understanding forgot its function; and *love*, that glowing principle which had been enkindled in his bosom as soon as he awoke to consciousness, which devotion fanned, and which communion with his Maker rendered a source of perpetual and exquisite delight,—at the moment when it should have flamed upward with the ar-

dour of a seraph, grew languid, drooped its wings, and became an easy prey to the tempting fiend.

Then there were *positive* breakings forth of evil; *shameful ingratitude and discontent; pride and arrogancy; an ungovernable spirit, that aspired at independence of God and equality with God; a guilty spirit of unbelief,* which made God a liar, and believed Satan in preference—the *first step towards a league between earth and hell against the Divine government; the seed of all the guilt and rebellion which have since covered the earth.* The sin of Adam was a horrible thing and a wonder.

3. *The consequence of his transgression:* The loss of God's image—of his favour—of paradise—THE CURSE—ON the woman of a sorrow which has no parallel in the history of human suffering, periodical and perpetual through all generations;—on both man and woman, the curse of excessive toil, which has fallen on the latter with tenfold weight; sickness and death, and “all the woes which flesh is heir to;”—of eternal misery;—and on their posterity, of involvement in the same ruin.

What amazing events did the first man witness! How astonishing the change which he experienced in himself! How widely did his end differ from his beginning! In him the perfection of human nature was displayed; and in him our nature received that shock which will continue to be felt to the latest posterity. He saw the world in its bloom and glory, and he lived to see it despoiled of that glory, crowded with guilt and woe, cursed by

the God who made it, and yet placed under a process of Divine restoration.

1. *Let us look at our original, and exonerate God from all participation in the disorders and miseries of our race.*

2. *Let us contrast the glory of man in his primeval condition with the ruin and degradation of his present state with feelings of deepest abasement and contrition.*

3. *What an idea does the curse afford us of the infinite evil which there must be in sin.*

*Fools make a mock at sin.* They make a mock even at this sin, though it was so fearful as the first act of rebellion in this part of God's dominions, blasting a world, and entailing on mankind innumerable and endless evils. But why do this? Because they estimate sin by a false standard, and because it does not appear to be very heinous by that standard, they make a mock of it. Though they are to be reminded that—*the more trifling that first transgression appears, the more kind was God in making the test of obedience so easy*—the more easy must it have been for man to obey it—and consequently the more guilt for disobeying it. But the only true light, we say, in which to contemplate the first sin is in its own nature in relation to God. This is the view in which the first sinner himself regarded it, and hence he trembled at it—he could not treat it lightly. This too is the light in which Satan viewed it: he did not think lightly of it—he hailed it as a prodigious triumph of sin and hell against God. And

this is the light in which the great God regarded it.

Now, if we look at sin in this light, we shall see how true it is that there *are no little sins*, no insignificant transgressions. The least sin we ever committed contained in it the same dreadful elements of guilt as the first sin did; and had that least sin of ours been the first sin in the world, it would have been condemned and attended with the same direful consequences as Adam's was. For, "he that offendeth but in one point is guilty of the whole law"—the spirit of disobedience in which he has indulged is an insult to the spirit of the whole law. In this point of view, the sin of Adam was a representation of every sin that would be committed by his posterity to the end of time. *Every man has had a spiritual fall*; each of us has had his first sin, though probably it was committed so early in life that we do not remember it: yet, in the book of *God's* remembrance, there stands recorded against *us* a first sin. The record of that was the record of our personal fall—"another fall of man."

But behold, "I bring you glad tidings of great joy," which are "to all people!" A blessing greater than the curse was proclaimed at the very moment it was announced. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

## DEATH OF ABEL.

“And Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass when they were in the field that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”—Gen. iv. 28.

So true is it that “lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is perfected bringeth forth death.” How fearful! And how soon was realized the curse denounced against the apostate spirit—“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel!” Here was the commencement of that conflict which still continues between infidelity and faith, between the world and the church, between the enemies and friends of God. At the head of the noble army of martyrs stands the righteous Abel, the second son of fallen Adam. So early was that severe but salutary lesson inculcated, that we must “through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” Let us consider the death of Abel,

I. In the immediate causes which produced it;  
 II. In the various aspects under which it may be contemplated.

I. IN THE IMMEDIATE CAUSES WHICH PRODUCED IT.

Among the immediate causes which produced this tragical event may be noticed,

1. *The predominance of wicked, violent, and un-*

*governable passions.* The depravity in which all this disorder originated, was not an evil that gradually rose to maturity with the progress of society and the lapse of ages. No sooner had man become a transgressor of the Divine law, than his heart became “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” The first-born of the world was a murderer, and the victim was a brother.

2. *These wicked, violent, and ungovernable passions were excited into fearful and malignant energy by the exhibition of their opposites—by goodness, by piety, by humble faith.* The evil hate the good, the impious the devout, the unbelievers in revelation those who sincerely embrace its doctrines, obey its precepts, and display its spirit.

3. *These passions, so fearful and malignant in their energy, were hurried into the perpetration of the first crime that stained the earth with a brother’s blood—by most guilty and rebellious dissatisfaction with the principles and the procedure of the Divine government as displayed in,*

The exercise of the Divine sovereignty :

The nature of the Divine requirement, recognising and approving the grand principle of particular sacrifice :

The peculiar manifestation of the Divine favour.

These have produced, under various circumstances, all the persecutions that have raged against the church from the beginning until now.

II. THE VARIOUS ASPECTS UNDER WHICH THE DEATH OF ABEL MAY BE CONTEMPLATED.

1. *As an instance of glorious martyrdom.*

2. *As a dismission from the world of faith to the world of vision.*

3. *As displaying the enormity of sin and the misery which it entails even in the present world.* Abel was the victim. But God was the object, and impiety the essence of the crime. How affecting the anguish of the surviving parents, and the sorrow of an amazed and afflicted church—who can trace the progress and the consequences of one sin?

4. *As a mysterious occurrence in the history of Divine Providence, showing the necessity of a future judgment and an after state of retribution.*

Cain indeed was punished, and he exclaimed “that his punishment was greater than he could bear.” But the whole must undergo the inspection of the universe. The interests involved in this dire transaction cannot be adjusted without a solemn reference to the tribunal of the Judge of quick and dead, and the judicial compensations of eternity.

5. *As a type of the great sacrifice which was offered by violence in the person of the Incarnate Son of God—the Redeemer of our guilty race.*

6. *As monitory and instructive.*

1. *Cain slew Abel.* A striking specimen of the morality of an infidel.

2. *The blood of Abel cried from the ground for vengeance against Cain.* No cry pierceth the heavens like that of blood—a brother’s blood more especially. How long has the blood of *that Just One* been crying, and they who shed it will not yet acknowledge, as the brethren of Joseph were made to do in the day of their calamity, that they

“*are verily guilty concerning their brother.*” As the crime of the Jews bears so near an affinity to that of Cain, the stubborn sullenness and inveterate hardness of heart which it has produced in them seem to be in an extraordinary manner portrayed in his character.

3. *An apostle tells us, that “Abel being dead yet speaketh.”* Yes, from the height of heaven he addresses us. From thence he declares to us the efficacy of the blood of Jesus by which he has obtained salvation. He shows us the duty of following the Redeemer through affliction, through persecution, through death itself. He teaches us the necessity of a constant and lively faith to support us in our trials; and render our duties acceptable. He calls to you, young people, and reminds you that youth and health, that the tendernesses and desires, the prayers and tears of parents, cannot shield you from the stroke of death. He bids us all remember that we may suddenly sink into the tomb, that there is not a moment of our lives in which we may not be summoned to the bar of God.

4. “*The blood of Christ speaketh better things than that of Abel.*” It attracts not, but repels the thunder of Divine indignation. It cries not for vengeance, but its language is—Grace, grace, to the guilty penitent, the believing sinner. Let us seek to be sprinkled with this precious blood; let us, with this plea in our mouths, draw near to God for pardon; let us continually look for grace and glory, for forgiveness and salvation, to that great Shepherd of the flock, who was offered as a sacrifice



to God, who was hated, persecuted, and murdered by his brethren; though for shedding this blood they were accursed, scattered, and made a monument of Divine justice: yet, let our souls be washed in it, and they shall be purified, forgiven, and prepared for heaven.

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### ENOCK.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”—Heb. xi. 5.

IN this remarkable passage concerning Enoch, the subject of celebration and encomium is *his faith*. This, indeed, is the grand distinction of all the holy heroes and martyrs that illustrated religion and glorified God in their day and generation, and who have long since been invested with a twofold immortality—a deathless name in the volume of revelation, and eternal felicity in the world of glory. Enoch was the Elijah of his day; a reformer of the antediluvian church from a widely-spreading corruption which threatened the extinction of all true religion. It was he who determined to separate the precious from the vile, and to draw a strong and broad line of demarcation between the Church and the world. Till Enoch appeared, soon after the excision of Cain, true piety at first gradually decayed, till, error and evil gaining a complete ascendancy, it was found impossible to cast out the

offenders from the pale of communion: the Church could not expel the world from her fellowship; she therefore retired, and led by Enoch, to make a visible demonstration in favour of the true worship of the one God, we are informed by the sacred historian, "Then began men first to call upon the name of the Lord." The faith of Enoch was the energetic principle that raised him to the perilous renown of being the first to restore to its primitive purity the revelation which Adam received immediately from God, and the simplicity of the worship originally founded upon it.

The faith of Enoch, then, is to form the subject of our meditation; and we may consider it in its,

I. Nature: II. Its Fruits: III. The Testimony with which it was honoured; and, IV. Its glorious Termination.

#### I. THE NATURE OF ENOCH'S FAITH.

Founded on the testimony of nature and the voice of tradition, it was,

1. *A firm persuasion of the existence, perfections, and government of God.*

2. *Of the accountableness of all reasonable creatures to him, and their entire dependence on his goodness.*

It looked beyond all present administrations of Divine providence, and regarded a life to come. Enoch, we learn from the apostle Jude, (ver. 14, 15,) had a clear foresight of the great day of final judgment, and of the important eternal results of it, in the endless happiness of the righteous, and misery of the wicked. But Enoch's faith was,

3. *Evangelical in its object, in the ground of its*

*dependence, and in the worship which it recognised.* The object was that revealed in the first promise, and the worship that which presented sacrifice as the appropriate and significant type of vicarious atonement to be offered by the seed of the woman. In this promise Christ is “the lamb slain from the beginning of the world;” futurely slain in respect of the event—presently, or at that time, slain in respect of the effect.

The covenant of works, abrogated and destroyed by the sin of man, was graciously superseded by the covenant of grace, founded not in man himself, but in his surety; not in the first Adam, in his federal capacity, but in the Mediator, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, who is described in the promise as the seed of the woman bruising the serpent’s head, in a conflict which would subject him to death, or to the bruising of his heel. The faith of Enoch, therefore, was specially directed to this promise, in which he recognised righteousness, and gracious acceptance with God, by virtue of that righteousness which was no more to be sought in ourselves, in our personal obedience, but to be received as free grace from another, who was to ward off the danger of death from us; that righteousness to be wrought and consummated by one who was to be brought into the world by incarnation, to be made of a woman, and in human nature, to become a perfect Redeemer by suffering death in his victorious conflict with the serpent. Both the nature of the thing, and the manner of the revelation, required that it should be apprehended by faith;

for when the salvation of lost sinners is declared to them to be placed in another, and to be expected and sought in him, and in him alone, nothing is absolutely required of them but that they put their trust in him, place all their hope in him, wholly renouncing themselves, that they may be made partakers of his salvation. The manner of the revelation is by a promise, and this demands faith; for the thing promised surely cannot be obtained except faith be applied to the promise itself.

## II. THE FRUITS OF ENOCH'S FAITH.

He walked so as to please God: he walked with God. This denotes duty and privilege.

1. *To please God was the great study and business of his life.* He kept up a daily intercourse and communion with him by all the exercises of piety and devotion, whether private, domestic, or public.

2. *He set God always before him as a witness and Judge of his thoughts and actions.*

3. *A dutiful care to obey his holy commandments.*

4. *Proposing him as his great exemplar and pattern.*

5. *He thus walked with God, surrounded with all the perils of persecution from infuriated idolaters and infidels, and amidst general and growing defection.* Such were the fruits of Enoch's faith.

## III. THE TESTIMONY WITH WHICH IT WAS HONOURED.

1. *He enjoyed it in himself.* He had this testimony, that he pleased God,—a consciousness of Divine approbation,—the smile of Heaven,—a perpetual sunshine in his breast.

2. *His name is recorded on the sacred page with high commendation.*

3. *He is proposed as an example of faith to all generations.*

#### IV. ITS GLORIOUS TERMINATION.

The end of faith in every believer is always glorious. But Enoch's was distinguished with peculiar glory—he was translated. He was not found. This does not invalidate the general truth, that “it is appointed unto man once to die,” and that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven.” Enoch was translated—not without change.

Our own poet, James Montgomery, in his “World before the Flood,” has finely described an imaginary, but by no means improbable scene, in which the translation of Enoch is the triumph over infidel and impious rage. He represents the venerable preacher of righteousness admonishing and warning the scoffers, who were tauntingly crying, where is the promise of his coming? Their malice becomes fury under the awful but intolerable rebuke—they rush forward to execute their long threatened vengeance—but they strike on vacancy, and fall headlong on the spot, where, but a moment before, the majestic patriarch stood. This is the moment seized by the poet for his beautiful description of the unearthly change which was preparing Enoch for his translation.

“ Sublime, ineffable, angelic grace  
 Beam'd in his meek and venerable face,  
 And sudden glory streaming round his head  
 O'er all his robes with lambent lustre spread,

His earthly features grew divinely bright,  
His essence seem'd transforming into light."

Thus "Enoch walked with God, and was not found."

1. *This extraordinary dispensation seems designed to give the world an early document and pledge of that entire glorious immortality that shall be the final reward of all that walk with God.*

2. *That as there is a blessed immortality reserved as a reward of persevering faith and piety—so it is not to be enjoyed on earth but in heaven.*

3. *To convince the world that where the instances of piety have been extraordinary, so shall be the degree of their reward.*

To these reasons we subjoin some observations that cannot be deemed wholly improbable. Abel's death was typical: so Enoch's translation was a type of our Lord's ascension to heaven, and entrance on a state of glorious immortality there.

Some have observed, that as the Scriptures seem to give emphasis to the fact that Enoch was the *seventh* from Adam, and that all who had preceded him were subject to death, while he was a signal exception: that thus Divine Providence has darkly shadowed out to us the time in general when the blessed resurrection might be expected, namely, that death should reign over the race of Adam for six thousand years, and, at the expiration of that time, the general resurrection should restore all the spiritual seed of the second Adam to a glorious state of happiness, by an entire abolition of that sentence of death, that had, upon Adam's transgression, passed upon all.

## REMARKS.

1. We may hence learn the necessity of a firm belief of the great principles of religion, in order to the acceptable practice of it.

2. To improve our faith in order to our walking with God so as to please him.

3. That the prevalence of infidelity and irreligion should not abate our faith and piety, but rather increase them.

From hence the Christian believer may derive strong encouragement,

1. To walk with God in a perverse age is not impossible.

2. How acceptable faith and piety are to God.

3. How liberally a gracious God will reward our sincere faith and piety.

## THE DELUGE.

“ And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days.”—Gen. vii. 24.

“ SOME have believed the deluge never was.” The appearances of the earth—innumerable corroborating but otherwise inexplicable facts—the organic remains of a former world—the discoveries of philosophical inquirers—these seem to prove not one deluge only, but many, of which the comparatively tranquil flood of Noah was the last. To this may be added,

The general testimony of all nations, and the ex-

press declarations of Holy Scripture. But the Scriptures not merely relate the circumstances of this awful and tremendous event: they connect it with the moral government of God: they trace it to his Divine and terrible agency: they tell us of,

I. ITS EXCITING CAUSE.

“The wickedness of man was great”—great in degree, great in extent, universal. They describe it,

II. AS A DREADFUL EXPEDIENT OF THE DIVINE VENGEANCE TO DISPLAY THE HEINOUSNESS OF SIN IN THE ESTIMATION OF HEAVEN.

It was an universal destruction, sparing neither age nor sex, infancy nor decrepitude. It came after many warnings, after long and ominous preparations. It came amid universal infatuation; and the state of the universal mind increased the terror when the judgment poured down its fury in tempests which seemed to break up and exhaust the fountains of the great deep. It is dreadful indeed, when conviction and punishment arrive at one and the same moment,—when the first apprehension of danger only reveals the impossibility of escape, and when the scoffing infidel becomes a believer at the instant that he is seized by a stern and fatal necessity of which he never dreamed. How terrible, when Almighty wrath rolls in the distance, and every moment brings it nearer,—when, like an ocean that overleaps its bounds, it threatens to sweep away the habitations of men, and scares them to the highest mountains, only that they may look, and despair, and perish!



“ Upon the mountains now were seen  
 Gaunt men and women, bringing with them babes,  
 Eyeing each other, or with marble looks  
 Measuring the swiftly lessening space between.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pale mothers then  
 Wept without hope, and aged heads, struck cold  
 By agues, trembled like red autumn leaves ;  
 And infants moan'd, and young boys shriek'd with fear :  
 Stout men grew white with famine ; beautiful girls  
 Whom once the day long wish'd to look on, lay  
 On the wet earth, and wrung their drenched hair ;  
 And fathers saw them there dying, and stole  
 Their scanty fare, and, while they perished, thrived.  
 Higher and higher fled the wasted throngs,  
 And still they look'd for life, and still they died.

The last who liv'd was one  
 Who clung to life because a frail child lay  
 Upon her heart : weary, and gaunt, and worn,  
 From point to point she sped with mangled feet,  
 Bearing for aye her little load of love :—  
 Both died—last martyrs of another's sins—  
 Last children they of earth's sad family.

\* \* \* \* \*

The intolerable flood prevail'd—

That watery massacre—  
 One monotonous dreary waste of waves,  
 Tumbling in monstrous eddies, and a light  
 Like an eclipse complete, when day is hid.”

III. THOUGH THIS CALAMITY WAS UNIVERSAL,  
 IT WAS A JUDGMENT ON THE GUILTY ONLY.

To the innocent sufferers, who had not sinned  
 according to the similitude of Adam's transgres-  
 sion, it was a terrible emancipation which placed  
 them beyond the power of evil, and transported  
 them to that blessed mount of immortality where  
 their angels constantly behold the face of their  
 Father in heaven.

IV. IT WAS A PUNISHMENT FROM THE APPALING EFFECTS OF WHICH THE THEN EXISTING CHURCH WAS PRESERVED.

How sad and rapid the declension of religion ! The visible church consisted only of eight souls ; but as they were the only depositories of the truth and the glory of God upon earth, their lives must be spared, though by a miracle.

The ark was not only a miracle in itself, but it was preserved by miracle : it was, however, a miracle which, whilst it inspired confidence, did not altogether allay the fears and apprehensions of the saved. The people of God are often afflicted by the instruments employed in the destruction of the wicked. Here was enough to terrify and alarm !

V. THE WITHDRAWING OF THE FLOOD WAS A PROOF OF THE DIVINE FAITHFULNESS, AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE DIVINE MERCY, AND A DISPLAY OF THE DIVINE POWER.

It was gradual ; it was complete ; it was a signal testimony to the faith of Noah. They are delivered ; they are delivered by the intervention of means ; but the means neither lessen nor obscure the glory of Divine interposition.

Noah stepped from the ark followed by all his precious charge. Oh ! what a scene broke gently upon his enraptured view !

“ A new-born world

Opened upon his sense,—a paradise  
Of flowers and fruits, sweet winds and cloudless skies,  
And azure waters winding to the main ;  
And forest walks, and far off sounds which break

The sweet silence ; and the songs of birds  
 Chanting melodious mirth :—vernal delights  
 Haunted the air ; and youth which knew no pang  
 Ran through all living veins, and touch'd all eyes  
 With beauty : the tall branches waved their plumes,  
 The water trembled, and the amorous sun  
 Came darting from his orb ; eagles and doves  
 Pair'd in the ether ; and the branching stag  
 Fled from his shadow on the grass-green plain."

In conclusion,

1. We are all looking forward to a still greater and more fearful calamity. God has provided an ark for our reception and our safety. The mighty torrents of Omnipotent wrath shall finally subside ; the righteous shall escape. The period of the world's destruction is the moment when the happiness of the saints shall be completed.

2. Learn hence the inconceivable value of knowledge, of faith, of diligence, and of hope.

3. Let us form a just estimate of the world, of the wicked, and of the righteous. Let us flee from the former, and take refuge with the latter.

" Adieu, ye scenes of visionary bliss ;  
 Your charms fallacious touch my heart no more :  
 Vain are the pleasures of a world like this ;  
 I seek another and a happier shore.  
 Its distant glories, how sublimely grand !  
 Its matchless beauties, how surpassing fair !  
 Its music steals e'en now upon mine ear :  
 Oh, how my spirit faints to reach the strand !  
 But this frail bark how can it brave the main ?  
 How can it live when Jordan's rolling tide  
 Shall o'er its shrouds in haughty triumph ride ?  
 Thy mighty arm, O Saviour, can sustain,  
 And I shall safe arrive where seas nor storms annoy,  
 And in the haven rest of ever-blooming joy."

## ABRAHAM.

“ Now the Lord said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee.”—Gen. xii. 1.

IN the records of inspiration the name of Abraham is peculiarly distinguished. The holy Scripture seems to hasten in the representation of every other person, that it may do justice to the character of the father of the faithful. Nimrod is briefly dismissed, and the vain-glorious builders of Babel; while as many pages are taken up in the life of Abraham as in giving the history of the world down to the period in which he lived. In the firmament of revelation, Abraham is a star of the first magnitude: in his life the Almighty gave a striking confirmation of his own words—“ Those that honour me I will honour; whilst those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” But remember, he found the path to glory steep and rugged: his faith was tried; the most costly sacrifices were demanded as the proof of his sincerity; but every trial proved his character to be like gold—“ It was found unto praise, and glory, and honour.” Let us meditate on those circumstances of his history which were connected with and rose out of his obedience to this command of Heaven.

I. The Call of God to Abraham: II. The Promise with which it was accompanied: III. The Obedience which promptly followed both.

I. THE CALL OF GOD TO ABRAHAM.

1. *To renounce all connexion with his idolatrous relatives.*

They had lost almost every trace of the true religion, and paid that homage to an idol of wood or of stone which was due only to the great Supreme. Idolatry appears to us the most senseless thing imaginable; but the greatest men in the world, “professing to be wise, have become fools,” in changing “the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man.” God called Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees: he now calls the sons and daughters of men, who hear his Gospel, saying, “Come out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty.”

2. *To leave his native country.* Who is there but feels an attachment to the place where he spent his earliest hours?—who has not felt, who does not feel, the charm of home? The venerable patriarch whose life we are considering, was called to leave that spot which a thousand circumstances had combined to endear to his heart.

3. *To travel to a land that was unknown to him.* Had the God who called him to leave his native country pointed out the place whither he should go, its situation, and the advantages which it afforded, it might have compensated for what he had left behind; but we are expressly told “he went out, not knowing whither he went.” When the pilgrim fathers with their families fled to America

to avoid the cruelty of persecution, they seem to have been placed in circumstances similar to those of the aged patriarch when he heard this call from Heaven: they resolved, in religion, to acknowledge no authority but the authority of Christ. With the word of God as their warrant, and the conduct of the pious in every age for their example, they left the dwelling-place of intolerance, and found an asylum in the woods and wilds of America. Perhaps some may be anxious to know *how* Abraham received the call, and in what manner the Divine will was intimated. The Scriptures tell us that "God spake in times past in divers manners unto our fathers:" in dreams, in visions of the night: perhaps he assumed a human voice and appearance.

## II. THE DIVINE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM.

Reflect here on what the promise contained.

1. *The direction of his providence.* He was commanded to go to a land which the Lord should show him; for "the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord, and he delighteth in his way." How often have we reason to pray, "Teach me the way in which I should go; lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies." Indeed, if left to ourselves, one mistake will lead to another, and the end may prove fatal. Sensible of his danger, it is the privilege of the believer to say, "Thou shalt guide me with thine eye." The country through which Abraham passed was dangerous: he was exposed to a thousand snares and perils; but he who called him condescended to be his guide,

and “led him by a right way to a city of habitation.” It is delightful to trace the conduct of Providence, and to follow where it leads, and in the exercise of faith to sing, “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.”

2. *The enjoyment of his favour.* If asked what constitutes human bliss, we might very probably mistake in our answer: we might include in our catalogue health of body, a cultivated mind, an agreeable circle of friends, the comforts of this life; but we have forgotten the key-stone of the arch; we have been building the superstructure, whilst we have neglected the foundation. The streams of worldly felicity are shallow, though they make a noise as they flow. The painted trifles of time cannot satisfy the vast desires of the human soul: they allure, but they repay not the anxiety of the pursuit. After having exhausted the world of all its boasted pleasures, we may sit down and weep for vexation. As we hunt one after another to death, we may inscribe upon its tomb, “And this also is vanity!” But, enlightened from above, we shall unite with David, saying, “Thy favour is life, and thy loving-kindness is better than life. Lord, lift thou up upon me the light of thy countenance.” The late Mr. Pearce says in one of his letters, “I enjoy so much of God, that if I were in the deserts of Arabia, or there were no other being but God and my soul, I should be happy.” We may sing with the poet,

“ With thee conversing, I forget  
 All time, all toil, and care ;  
 Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,  
 If thou, my God, art near.”

3. *Temporal prosperity.* “ Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.” Temporal prosperity is no mark by which we are to judge of our state : it is an evidence of his goodness, but not of his special favour. The Christian enjoys the fruits of prosperity increased and sweetened by the delightful consideration that they are the gift of his Father, and the pledge of eternal felicity. In such happy circumstances did Abraham dwell in the plains of Mamre—blessed in the present, but more blessed in the prospects of the future ; possessing an abundance of this world’s goods, but possessing, too, what is infinitely more valuable, His friendship “ who sticketh closer than a brother.”

4. *Of making him a blessing to others.* This was a promise ; hence it is our privilege as well as our duty : it is the proof that God has blessed us indeed.

5. *Of protection.* “ Who shall harm you if you be followers of that which is good ?” God enters into a covenant with Abraham, and this is the tenure of it : “ I will bless him that blesseth thee, and I will curse him that curseth thee.” He could not remove far from home, who had made the Most High his habitation. He knows that he shall awake in peace and in safety, because he sleeps reposing in the arms of his Father. Wherever he



is, he is at home; for the world is the Lord's. The desert is a place of safety; for the wild beasts of the forest hear the voice of God: "Touch not mine anointed, and do my people no harm." The Christian is all composure, even when tossed upon the tempestuous billows of the sea; his Father controls its rage, and cries, "Peace, be still." The malice of the wicked cannot hurt him: "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." "Blessed is the man whose God is the Lord, whose help is in him who made heaven and earth."

6. *The coming of the Messiah.* This is the blessing that crowned all the rest, and shed its glory over all. Without this the patriarch would have been poor in the midst of all his abundance, and wretched with all his means of felicity. Every thing is lovely and delightful with Christ, but dark and gloomy without him. The apostle says, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not *with him* also freely give us all things?" What avails my food, if I must perish for hunger without Jesus? What are riches, if I must be eternally poor? What is a spacious habitation, if I have no mansion in the skies? What are all my friends, if I have no friend in the hour of dissolving nature to support my spirit, and carry me beyond the grave? My prosperity is a burden, my being is a curse. Better had it been for me if I had never been born. But how delightful the prospect when the Sun of Righteousness gilds my horizon with his rays! I bask myself in his beams,

and am in raptures with the objects by which I am surrounded. All nature is beauty to my eye, and music to my ear. Abraham rejoiced to see his day, the dawn of which filled him with gladness. What should we feel who see the meridian?

### III. ABRAHAM'S PROMPT OBEDIENCE.

1. *It discovers the strength of his faith.* This is the grace for which he was renowned: it is discovered in his temper and in his conduct. To leave his native country at the Divine command, required faith which few possess. Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees at a time when the generality of men are leaving this world. There is something peculiarly affecting in the idea of an old man giving up the scenes of his youthful days—scenes endeared by the fond recollection of past joys—foregoing his kindred and friends, and becoming an exile and a wanderer at a period when nature seeks repose, and the heart clings to those objects to which it has been long accustomed; but he goes cheerfully, because he is following his God. We are expressly told that it was by faith. “When he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, he obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” He believed in the being and providence of God—was firmly persuaded of the truth of his word, and with the greatest alacrity he obeyed the Divine call.

2. *The ground of his dependence.* There is nothing so liable to mislead us as the principles by which we act. It is very easy to think we are

depending upon God when our wishes are fulfilled, and every thing appears according to our desires, but at the same time we may be making flesh our arm. It is the season of difficulty that proves whether we are founding our dependence on the sand, or building upon a rock. With every thing adverse the Christian maintains his confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, 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.” Abraham leaves his native country, leaning upon the promise of his God. He felt no disquietude, no tormenting fears; he saw the hand that directs all things pointing out his path, and teaching him the way in which he should go.

3. *The purity and energy of his love.* Abraham thought not of his worldly relatives whilst he enjoyed the friendship of his Father; he thought not of the horrors of the desert, for heaven was his home. Now, it appears that his professions were sincere: he only waited for an opportunity of proving that he should obey God as well as believe in him. “Faith without works is dead.” You are to judge of the tree by its fruits: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” “A certain man had two sons; he said to the first son, Go work to-day in my vineyard; and he said, I go, sir, but went not. He said to the other son, Go work to-day in

my vineyard; he refused, but afterwards repented and went. Which of these two did the will of his father?"

1. See here an example for your imitation. Do you hear God speaking to you in his word? Do you obey the revealed will of your heavenly Father?

2. Have you made the same sacrifices?—the same in kind, though not in degree.

3. Have you the same prospects?

4. How different is the conduct, and how different will be the end, of the sinner?

## ABRAHAM OFFERING UP ISAAC.

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”—Heb. xi. 17.

THE Bible is as remarkable for the facts which it records, as for the doctrines it inculcates; and these facts and doctrines mutually elucidate each other. The fact so impressively introduced in my text is one of the most wonderful in the history of religion, and it illustrates one of the most stupendous of its doctrines, a doctrine which is the chief corner-stone in the mighty fabric of our salvation, and which is announced in the sacred page in language as simple as it is sublime. “God spared not his own

Son, but delivered him up for us all." " Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." A sacrificial atonement is the great characteristic feature of the Scriptures, and in this they stand or fall as a Divine record of mercy to mankind. But sacrifice, human sacrifice, does it not revolt the best feelings of the heart? Is it not repugnant to all the notions we can entertain of God as a being of infinite justice and benevolence? On this stumbling-block thousands have wrecked their everlasting hopes, and have passed into eternity "unanointed, unannealed" with the precious blood of sprinkling, and therefore exposed to all the unimaginable horrors of infinite wrath! They have presumed to arraign, at the bar of their own reason, the acknowledged mysteries of that Book which was only vouchsafed to man as his guide and directory where reason failed, and was insufficient to instruct and uphold him. But, to the law and to the testimony: our reason must bow to Scripture; our faith must believe a speaking God. Once satisfied that the holy Book bears out its pretensions as a revelation from heaven, we are bound to receive its communications with implicit and adoring acquiescence. It was worthy of God to require from Abraham this test of his obedience: it was equally worthy of him to commend his love towards us, in appointing his own, his only begotten Son, to become incarnate, and to die, the just instead of the unjust, to bring us unto God.

Abraham triumphed in the agonizing hour

through "the dear might" of him whose death was shadowed forth by the action he had undertaken to perform, and he received in a figure, in the type, and symbol of his restored and beloved Isaac, the confirmation of the promises he had believed, and of the hopes with which those promises had cheered and animated his heart. God had indeed provided for himself a lamb for a burnt-offering, whose blood was of infinite efficacy to atone for his sins, and to sanctify his obedience.

The nature and design of animal sacrifices were from this time more clearly understood than before. The forfeiture of life by sin—its restoration by the death of an appointed victim, and that victim a son, an only son, were truths impressively conveyed to the mind of Abraham, and indelibly imprinted on his heart. These truths he taught to his family, and thus the way was prepared for the economy of the law by Moses, which became a shadow, or a symbol, of good things to come.

With these observations borne in mind, let us now proceed to develop the facts and circumstances referred to and recorded in the text; and, in furtherance of the object we have specially in view, permit me to invite your attention,

I. To the Trial which Abraham was called to endure: II. To the Principle by which he was sustained and actuated: III. To the gracious reward which consummated and crowned his deliverance.

I. THE TRIAL WHICH ABRAHAM WAS CALLED TO ENDURE.

The narrative is peculiarly touching: we will present it to you in the inimitable language of the sacred historian, Gen. xxii., commenting upon its different parts as we proceed. The severity of this trial, which is unparalleled in the history of human suffering, arose from the sacrifice which it implied,

1. *Of his interests as a man.* Children are the most valuable of our possessions: they furnish a motive and a zest to all the great pursuits of life; they augment our personal enjoyments, and are the solace and support of our declining age. On the life of this child depended not merely the comfort of his aged parents, but the fair prospect of the increasing wealth, and power, and grandeur, nay, the very existence of their family. What was there that Abraham would not rather have relinquished than Isaac? With him all his interests in the world must perish.

2. *His sensibilities as a parent.* How are the sensibilities of the father wounded, lacerated, and torn!—those sensibilities that are at once the most tender and the most powerful in our hearts. Isaac was not merely his son, but his *only son*; Ishmael was very recently lost to him. Nor was this all: he was a son so tender in years, so amiable in person, so gentle in manners, so wise in decision, so virtuous in action, so pious and devout in heart, that he not only justified, but heightened, strengthened, and refined the fondness of paternal love and tenderness. But this son, this only son, this son endeared to his father more even by character than

relation, is not merely to die suddenly. This pleasing gourd is not to wither, it is to be cut down, and the father is to be the executioner; he is commissioned to strike the fatal blow, but not immediately—three long, miserable days, and two agonizing and terrible nights, are to intervene. At length they are alone—that father and that innocent child; and here a touching, overpowering incident occurs—that the death of this lovely, virtuous, and most beloved one, is not only to be inflicted under these sufficiently appalling and dreadful circumstances, but the victim is to be offered up in sacrifice—he is to be a whole burnt-offering. See to what this tender father is doomed: after a three days' journey, he is to ascend a lofty mountain—to prepare an altar—on this he was to lay the wood, and probably assisted in both by his only companion—then he is to kindle the fire—to bind the victim—to shed its blood by an incision in one of the principal arteries—to divide the veins—to disembowel and dismember the body—to place the mangled pieces on the fire—to reduce them to ashes—to give them to the four winds of heaven; and all this he was to accompany with solemn thought, with pious language, with fervent prayer, and grateful praise.

3. *His hopes as a saint.* Under the weight of these accumulated trials, the amazed patriarch could not seek the support of those hopes and consolations which his knowledge and experience of religion might otherwise have inspired; for the promises which he had received, and the consolations



and joys they had been accustomed to impart to him, were directly at variance with the performance of the duty now required at his hands. Among these promises, no doubt, was included the promise of *atonement* by the *death* of a Redeemer; but here it seems to be repealed, and Abraham must give the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul. Another promise was, that his seed should become numerous as the drops of morning dew, or be as the stars of heaven for multitude; that from them should arise a splendid race of kings, yea, the Prince, the Messiah, the King of kings and Lord of lords. This promise had express reference to Isaac: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Another sacrifice involved in this action was,

4. *The character of the patriarch among men.*

To all this array of interest, &c., he simply opposed the principle and reasonings of a divine faith; which leads us to the second division of our subject, namely, to contemplate,

II. THE PRINCIPLE BY WHICH THE PATRIARCH WAS SUSTAINED AND ACTUATED.

Faith, a divine principle.

1. *Faith taught him that the claims of God were paramount to every other.*

2. *He believed the promises, notwithstanding they were in direct opposition to his present duty.*

3. *He intrusted God with the care of his own glory in this transaction.*

4. *He confided in the ability as well as in the faithfulness of God.*

5. *He realized the Divine favour and approbation.*

6. *Faith carried his views and contemplations far above this world, its possessions, its relative comforts and enjoyments, its approbation, or its censure.*

7. *He acted under the influence of faith as an all-absorbing, heavenly principle.*

III. THE GRACIOUS REWARD WHICH CONSUMMATED AND CROWNED HIS DELIVERANCE, THE TRIUMPH OF HIS FAITH.

It was not in vain that the holy and faithful patriarch was carried by a three days' tedious and agonizing journey to the summit of Mount Moriah.

This reward was,

1. *Immediate.* It consisted in a reiterated and enlarged confirmation of all the promises he had previously received, Gen. xxii. 15. At this juncture he turned round and beheld a ram caught in a thicket: this was the destined victim: it was presented as a whole burnt-offering, and thus he received his beloved son, in a figure, with himself, delivered from the curse and consequences of sin.

2. *It was social.* In this sacrifice Isaac was permitted to unite. With what holy, what pure and sublime rapture was this commemorative sacrifice offered by the patriarch and his beloved son! "The lamb slain from before the foundation of the world" was prefigured to their imagination and their hearts; the infinite love of God in not sparing but freely giving up his only Son for their redemption, and the redemption of the world, must have deeply impressed their devout spirits under circumstances so peculiar and affecting. How solemn their thoughts! how exquisite their feelings!—

what mingling of hearts and joys ! Life restored, life preserved ! How, in future years, would they revolve in memory the unparalleled circumstances of Mount Moriah ! Never before had they been so near to heaven ! Then it was that " Abraham saw the day of Christ and was glad : " and his son, doubtless, participated in the joy. Here a new and striking memorial was afforded of the death introduced by sin, and of that death which was to be suffered by the Redeemer.

3. *It was complete.* By the intervention of this sacrifice he received his son, as the text declares ; he received him even from the dead. Morally he was dead ; legally he was dead ; and in the mind of Abraham, he was, by all the awful ceremonies accompanying sacrifices and burnt-offerings, dead ; and his ashes had, in his imagination, become the sport of the winds of heaven. But he received him from the dead ; yes, he received him from the dead, as it is said in our text, *in a figure.*

4. *Thus it was prophetic.* A figure of what ? A figure, that as Abraham spared not his only begotten son at the command of God : so God would not spare his only begotten Son, for the sake of Abraham and all his faithful children. A figure ! that as Isaac rose from the dead, and from a sacrificial death : so the Son of God should rise from the sacrificial death of the cross. A figure ! just as when Isaac rose from the dead, he came back fully fraught with blessings temporal, spiritual, and eternal : so the Son of God should bring from his cross and tomb, salvation, life and immortality.

A figure ! that as the scattered ashes of Isaac, as it were, had again collected and re-united, and become a living body, and returned to life and to happiness : so should the scattered remains of all the spiritual children of Abraham, in truth, be gathered together, and be re-united, and become living bodies at the resurrection of the just, and return to sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of their heavenly Father.

#### IMPROVEMENT.

1. Remember, that religion requires a full surrender of the soul, and of all we have, to God.

2. We are instructed in the nature, necessity, and benefit of trial.

3. How light the trials of men of the present generation are in comparison with those of saints in patriarchal and in former times.

4. We are taught that faith ought to be the regulating principle of all our reasonings and of all our actions.

5. We are taught to reflect on the importance of enduring and improving trial.

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#### JACOB.

“ I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.”—Gen. xlix. 18.

THE actions and conduct of a man *form* the history of his life : his principles and motives, as developed by these, *constitute* his character.

But the principles by which an individual is actuated, and which are really the elements of his moral being, are not to be determined by insulated facts of rare occurrence, by a solitary incident, or by an occasional diversion from his general course.

Balaam's exclaiming once in his life, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," was no proof of his piety or rectitude. His habit was to love the wages of unrighteousness. Peter's denying his Master once did not fix upon him the general stigma of cowardice and ingratitude; while the base treachery of Judas, being in perfect accordance with his general character, as a covetous hypocrite, brands him with an everlasting infamy.

Moses was not a passionate man, because he was on a solitary occasion angry; nor Elijah pusillanimous, though, under the influence of a momentary panic, he fled from Jezebel, and took refuge in the wilderness.

The vibrations of the needle in a storm do not establish its tendency to diverge from the pole. They rather illustrate the immutable and irreversible order which holds them in a state of perpetual attraction.

So, if in our investigations into any particular character, we can discern the great master-spring by which it is governed and impelled, the very occasional aberrations, which may seem to militate against its existence, become the most striking confirmations of its power.

In the words of the text, it seems to us that the patriarch Jacob has disclosed the great criterion by which we may form an accurate judgment of his character; the pervading influence which guided, controlled, and sustained him through the whole of his earthly pilgrimage. On the verge of eternity, and engaged in the last solemn duty, in which he appears in all the majesty of an inspired prophet, and in all the devout anticipations of a dying saint, he reveals a principle which sheds a light equally cheering on the past and on the future; on his life and on his death: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

This exclamation, which is personal to himself, and an abrupt parenthesis in the high discourse on providence and futurity, which he was delivering in the presence of his assembled family, and which mysteriously marked the character and destiny of each in his posterity, was probably suggested by the metaphor which the Divine Spirit employs as the appropriate description of Dan.

"Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse-heels, so that his rider shall fall backward."

How natural that the first promise which was the life and joy of patriarchal faith, should, under such circumstances, present itself with peculiar force and vividness to the mind of the holy seer; and that while the words, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," struck powerfully upon his memory, he should devoutly exclaim, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!"

“Jacob,” we are told, “was a plain man, dwelling in tents.” And what can there be so remarkable (it may be asked) in the description of such a character as to deserve a particular attention? “A plain man, dwelling in tents,” seems not very likely to attract the notice of an ambitious world, full of pretension, and fond of outward show and grandeur. But whatever notions may now prevail, some of the most eminent persons of antiquity, at least of those who have been dearest to God, and the most illustrious instruments of his glory, have been, like Jacob, “plain men,” *such as* by their manners and deportment would be *now* unnoticed and despised.

We read that “they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy;) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.” It pleased God to exercise and display the faith of this holy man, as well as that of his progenitors, Abraham and Isaac, by calling them to a pilgrim’s life. “By faith they sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles; for they looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

The text describes Jacob,

I. AS A MAN OF RELIGION; and that from the period of his conversion he began to wait for the salvation of God. That change probably occurred at Bethel. From that time he appeared to have been impressed with a knowledge of his own lost

and ruined state by nature; his utter inability either to devise the plan, or to execute the purpose of his own salvation. The true Messiah is revealed to his faith as the hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble. And he is favoured with satisfactory and heart-cheering views of his own interest in the blessings of the great mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh; his religion displays its vital power in regulating his passions. He becomes the subject of a virtuous attachment, and is devoted to his relative duties; promotes by his laborious industry the prosperity of Laban, in whose dwelling he becomes an inmate. Like his father Abraham, God blesses him, and he becomes a blessing. His diligence and activity are remarkable; his devotion is warm and elevated; he is patient under severe provocations, and waits with holy resignation the guidance of Providence, and moves according to its dictates.

II. AS ANOTHER GREAT PRINCIPLE ILLUSTRATIVE OF HIS CHARACTER, WE OBSERVE THAT HIS RELIGION, BOTH ITS EFFICACY AND COMFORT, WERE DERIVED FROM THE PROMISES OF DIVINE MERCY.

These were the great stimulus to active duty: these sustained him amidst the great privations and heavy afflictions which he was doomed to suffer.

III. THAT FINAL AND COMPLETE SALVATION WAS THE PERPETUAL OBJECT OF HIS SOLICITUDE AND EXPECTATION. This is strikingly visible in his truly simple and pathetic reply to Pharaoh, when the King of Egypt proposed the question



suggested by a wonder at his advanced age; the venerable patriarch reminded him that his fathers had lived to a longer period, and that his own days had been few, and full of trouble. "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an HUNDRED AND THIRTY YEARS; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been; and I have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." This is not the language of discontent or of unthankfulness, but the serious reflection of one looking back on his past years; who felt the vanity of the world, and saw nothing in life to make him desirous of retaining it beyond the period allotted to him by a gracious and covenant God.

IV. THAT THIS SOLICITUDE AND EXPECTATION WERE CONSTANTLY MAINTAINED AND INCREASED BY DIVINE COMMUNICATIONS VOUCHSAFED TO HIM. Several were remarkable for fulness, their endearing circumstances, and the manner in which they were granted. There were others that arose out of the devotional frame of his own spirit, and the habitual fervency of his supplications at the throne of grace. Of the former, was the constant recurrence of the scene at Padan-aram; the Bethel of his life; the birth-day of his religious experience, hopes and joys. The appearance made to him when he was commanded to return to this interesting spot, and abandon for ever his residence with Laban; the wrestling at Mahanaim; and the consolation imparted to him at

Beersheba, in his way to Egypt—"Fear not, *I will go down with thee into Egypt.*" Of the latter, instances are not recorded, except that he built altars, and maintained the worship of the true God wherever he sojourned.

V. THIS SOLICITUDE AND EXPECTATION IS FURTHER MAINTAINED AND KEPT ALIVE BY HIS PERSONAL AND DOMESTIC TROUBLES. Those which were the *immediate* consequences of his own sins and infirmities, and those which appear to have been *the sovereign appointments* of Heaven, to estrange him from the world, and to ripen his soul for glory. He served FOURTEEN years for Rachel; was harassed during the greater part of the time by the fraud, the churlishness, and avarice of Laban, "who changed his wages ten times; while in the day the drought consumed him, and the frost by night; and the sleep departed from his eyes."

Laban's disappointed rage; the vengeance of Esau, which Jacob deprecates by prayer; the moral death of Dinah, his daughter.

The deception and murder of the Shechemites by his sons; his abandonment of his residence; the death of his beloved Rachel,—*and in what circumstances!!* the profligacy of Reuben; the abduction of Joseph; the detention of Simeon and Benjamin; his own long and painful journey into Egypt.

VI. THAT THIS SOLICITUDE AND EXPECTATION WAS MOST ENERGETIC AND VIVID IN THE IMME-

DIATE PROSPECT OF DEATH. "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." In these devout expressions, the good man makes it appear, that

1. *He looks upon death as the period of all his sufferings.*

2. *As the door which was to admit him to the enjoyment of a complete salvation.*

3. *As that grand ingathering season, when all his graces should be fully ripe, and himself lodged safe with his God for eternity.*

It is in this view that the righteous man is said to "come to his grave like a shock of corn fully ripe." After being exposed to many a storm; beset and entangled with many a weed; subsisting under many a dark and lowering sky; and weighed down under many a heavy shower, at length it is ripened, is gathered and housed, safe from every danger. Hence observe,

1. That religion is essentially the same under every dispensation.

2. That the sins and imperfections of good men, while they are employed as the instruments of the Divine Providence, are always regarded as the objects of the Divine disapprobation.

"God," says Bishop Hall, "does frequently accomplish his righteous will by our weaknesses; yet neither thereby justifying our infirmities, nor blemishing his own actions."

3. That it is consistent with the purity, wisdom, and mercy of the Divine character, to use an evil instrument, and yet to punish the evil-doer.

4. That afflictions and sorrows open the heart to

receive the divinest consolation, and, under the blessing of Heaven, reconcile it to death, and prepare it for that world where sorrow and sighing for ever flee away.

“ Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
 And scan his work in vain ;  
 God is his own interpreter,  
 And he will make it plain.”

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### JACOB'S DREAM.

“ And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven : and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”—Gen. xxviii. 12.

It is not my intention to enter into the philosophy of dreams. We know so little of the nature of spirit, especially of its operations as united to matter, that it becomes us to speak of it with diffidence suited to the imperfection of our knowledge. Man is a mystery to himself. He can no more account for some of the most obvious effects of his own volition, than an infant or an idiot : and a man whose mind is disciplined, is obliged to suspend his judgment in a multitude of cases, by the too well-grounded fear of taking a shadow for the substance ; a phantom for the reality. We might mention the names of Aristotle, of Locke, of Hartley, of Bishop Newton, and of Stewart, who have explained on different principles the phenomena of dreams. Professor Dugald Stewart has, with his usual acuteness, discussed the subject of dreaming in the elements of his “*Philosophy of the Human Mind.*” He says dreams appear to be

produced by the suspension of all our mental operations which are dependent on the will; that during sleep the train of thoughts in the mind does not depend *immediately* on the will, but is regulated by certain general laws of association. He remarks, that dreams are frequently influenced by bodily sensation, by the peculiar temper of the mind. Various diseases, too, give a character to dreams; but as it has been hinted already, I shall not forget that I fill the pulpit, and not the chair of philosophy. We know from the testimony of the Scriptures, that the Governor of the world has employed dreams to reveal his will, and to afford instruction to mankind, although the insensibility and perverseness of human nature have disregarded them. "For God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not: in a dream, in a vision of the night when deep sleep falleth upon man in slumberings upon the bed. Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man." In the history of Jacob we meet with one of these remarkable dreams of Scripture. To escape the fury of his brother Esau, Jacob, at the suggestion of his mother, goes to Padan-aram, to the house of his uncle Laban.

On the first night of his journey, he dreamed that he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven—angels ascending and descending on it, and God above it in a posture of attention, standing and viewing a poor pilgrim below. He also

spake, and assured him of the relation in which he stood to his pious ancestors ; promised to give the land of Canaan to his seed ; to render his progeny illustrious, and innumerable ; and, eventually, in one of his descendants, to bless all the families of the earth. To accommodate *himself* still more to the exigencies of his condition, he added, “ Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest.” How consolatory these promises to the poor, desolate, lonely wanderer ! But the righteous are never forsaken.

Let us consider Jacob's dream as

I. Unfolding the care of Divine Providence :  
 II. As it throws light on this Providence as administered by angels : III. And as it shadows forth the incarnation of Deity in the person of the Christian Redeemer.

I. AS UNFOLDING THE CARE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE ; as exercised,

1. *Not only over communities, but over individuals.* And who shall dare to say that it is inconsistent with the infinite greatness of the Divine character to superintend those beings whom he originally formed, and with the benignant eyes of a tender parent to watch over all, promoting the universal happiness, while the good of each individual is not forgotten. Away with the cheerless doctrine that excludes a particular providence from human affairs ; that leaves each one in his own particular case in darkness and distress, robbing his mind of its chief consolation, leaving it comfortless in the day of misfortune, and friend-

less in the hour of calamity. If a general providence do not of necessity include that which is particular, as the whole is made up of parts, it may be said that nations are too inconsiderable for his notice, who created and governs worlds; and a world may be beneath his care, if we think of an entire system of connected systems—of the whole universe. Let us appeal to the infallible interpreter, one of a thousand, Luke xii. 22 and 28.

Let us remember Jacob. He had left his father's house, and was beyond his father's care; yet he dreamed: and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and Jehovah standing above it.

2. *It describes Divine Providence as embracing and distinguishing the most minute, as well as the vast, and the most important things.*

It is only to us that things are great or little—insignificant or unimportant. To Him with whom we have to do,

“ There is no high, no low, no great, no small ;  
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.”

There is a sense in which every creature, the crawling reptile, the flitting insect, and the throned archangel, are alike the children and the instruments of his providence. The raven and the lion are fed by his hand; and under his attention and care the lilies grow; a sparrow falls not to the ground, nor a hair from the head, without his knowledge. He has numbered all these things, and he sustains them according to his pleasure.

3. *In the season of adversity as well as prosperity.*

Indeed, generally speaking, it is the poor that he makes rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. He himself declares, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. How frequently has the bitterest enemy been clothed with purple, and a beloved child in rags ! Observe the footsteps of his flock. How did Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and Job, and David, and the rest of the cloud of witnesses make their way ? They advanced only on the ground of the Divine promises : and they were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. One of them thus described the nature of the Divine regard, and the season of its exercise : “Thou hast known my soul in adversity.”

But we consider this dream as,

## II. THROWING LIGHT ON THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE AS ADMINISTERED BY ANGELS.

“Behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven : and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”

That man is under the influence of an invisible agency, I dare no more to deny than I dare deny the being of God ; for God is a spirit. Reasoning from analogy, it appears more probable that he should create beings purely spiritual than that he should create mankind ; but all we know of any other race of intelligent beings we learn alone from revelation, and here they are described as wise, powerful, holy, and benevolent. There is no doubt but they have much to perform both in



heaven and in earth, and that they are employed as instruments in those great events which are comprehended in the system of Divine Providence. But we are led to contemplate their engagements as relating more immediately to the saints during their minority, until they come to the full enjoyment of that salvation of which they are the heirs according to the promise of eternal life. It is in the church where the angels pursue their studies, and make fresh discoveries of the manifold wisdom of God, and the heirs of glory are the peculiar objects of their care; and,

1. *They instruct them.* We are all, more or less, under the influence of good and bad men, and there appears nothing incongruous in the idea that we may be under the influence of good or bad angels.

2. *They protect the saints.* This is their office and their delight. Hear the promise of their Creator and Lord, and remember, it is made to the meanest of his children: "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

3. *They are their conductors to the world of glory.* This, to them, is the most delightful part of their ministry; and oh, the exquisite sympathy and delight with which they look on dying saints! It is sometimes the apprehension of their foreboding spirit, and of a gloomy hour, "I shall die alone, far from friends and home; I shall be

'By strangers honour'd, and by strangers mourn'd.'"

And, were Affection in her gentlest spirit and in

loveliest form beside the bed of death, she could not accompany us through the darkened vale; but angels are ever near, and always kind; and well they know the road that leads to our Father's house above. Nor will they relax in attention or in pity until the troubles of life are ended, and the bitterness of death is past; and how often has the spirit sung in the final struggle, when heart and flesh are failing,

“ Lend, lend your wings—I mount—I fly  
O Grave! where is thy victory?  
O Death! where is thy sting?”

But we must consider the subject of this dream,  
III. AS IT SHADOWS FORTH THE INCARNATION OF DEITY IN THE PERSON OF THE CHRISTIAN REDEEMER.

Our Lord himself has thrown the true light upon this passage: in his conversation with Nathaniel, he tells him that he should one day see that realized in him which had been shadowed forth in Jacob's dream: accordingly we find, that, as from the first conception of Christ to that very hour the angels had deeply interested themselves in every thing that related to him, so they continued on all occasions to wait on him, to soothe his sorrows, to fulfil his will, and to bear testimony on his behalf. More than twelve legions of them would have flown to his succour if he had commanded their aid: and this emblematical representation may point out,

1. *The union of the Divine with the human nature.*  
The ladder was set up on the earth, but the top

reached to heaven. In Christ's human nature he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh: "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." In his Divine nature, he is "God over all, blessed for evermore;" and such a High Priest became us. Thus he is qualified to appreciate and to prefer all the claims of Deity, and successfully to advance and to plead a brother's cause.

2. *That he is the only medium of communion between heaven and earth:* "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

3. *That the ministry of angels is the result of his mediation.* "Because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, &c.; angels, principalities, and powers being made subject to him." The vast universe is put under his control.

The mightiest spirits receive their commands from him: they are only the fellow-servants of those who keep the Saviour's testimony: they see on what his heart is fixed, and there they place their own. The saints are precious to them, as the purchase of his blood. They sing in new and lofty measures, and Calvary is the theme: they delight to honour Jesus in ministering to his people.

4. *That through him believers will reach the skies.* "Faith climbs the ladder Jacob saw." He came from heaven to conduct his people thither: He told them, "Whither I go ye know, and the way

ye know. Let not your hearts be troubled: I will come again and receive you to myself."

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Adore the grace and compassion of the Divine Redeemer.
2. Seek an interest in his love.
3. Never forget the wisdom and kindness of Divine Providence.
4. Be thankful for the ministry of angels.

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JOSEPH'S DREAMS.

"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to me."—Gen. xxxvii. 5—9.

THERE is something peculiarly instructive in this portion of the sacred history. From the circumstances under which Joseph is introduced to our attention, a powerful interest is excited towards him. He had now attained his seventeenth year: his mother was dead, and he was the object of his father's fondest love; but, notwithstanding

the partiality of a father's affection, he does not bring him up in idleness. Yet is this ill-judged preference on the part of Jacob, surely, reprehensible: the garish coat—the silliest of all distinctions—dress, and yet very likely to excite envy. What a foundation of mischief was here laid!

It is very probable that the dreams of Joseph originated in his fancied superiority to his brethren, cherished by the garb he wore, and by the renewed instances of his father's doating affection. It is admitted they were intimations from heaven of his future greatness; but the dreams themselves are the natural workings of a young mind inflated by indulgence; and if we unite the cause with the effect, the prophecy with the event, they form a wonderful contrast between the weakness of man and the power of God—the meanness of the materials and the magnificence of the fabric—of the feebleness of the instrument and the force of the hand which employed it.

Mr. Henry remarks, “Joseph dreamed of his advancement, but not of his affliction; of the throne, but not of the dungeon which must first be occupied.” Indeed, his was the very period of life when he was not likely to dream of suffering or danger. I am not, however, convinced that the first dream was not designed to point out to him first an abasement, and then advancement. Joseph's sheaf rose while the sheaves of his brethren stood. I consider both these dreams as predicting the same events under different similitudes. Let us notice them,

I. As predicting the future advancement of Joseph: II. And through him, as a type, shadowing forth the exaltation of Christ, and the glorious extension of his kingdom.

I. AS PREDICTING THE FUTURE ADVANCEMENT OF JOSEPH, let us notice,

1. *The event itself.* The dreams were rightly interpreted by his brethren and his father. "They said, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" His father said, "Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" But this superiority they were destined to feel, and to acknowledge this dominion. This shepherd boy was to become great, and a mighty ruler over a powerful empire. And though Egypt gloried that she was not like other countries, dependent on the clouds of heaven for the fertility of her soil and the abundance of her crops, but that she derived her rich harvests from her own river, she is not so much indebted for seven years to the overflowing of the Nile, as to the prophetic foresight of Joseph, and to his provision for the seven years of famine.

Behold, then, Joseph exalted to the right hand of Pharaoh, and made lord over all the land of Egypt. The lives, the conduct, the liberties, and the property of millions intrusted to his care, and subjected to his authority. See him arrayed in fine linen and purple; the chain of gold around his neck, the royal signet on his hand, riding in the second chariot, whilst an admiring nation bows the

knee before him. The interests of his father's family, and the welfare of the land of Egypt, are alike intrusted to his care. It will also be proper to remark,

2. *The mysterious method by which it was accomplished.* He whom a grateful country idolized and honoured, was hated by his brethren, and sold as a slave. Tempted to the commission of evil, and resisting, he was condemned for his fidelity. He came from a dungeon to fill a throne; and from the greatest possible obscurity to stand in the presence of Pharaoh. But all was under the direction and appointment of Him whose counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. The swelling of the wave, the rolling of the ship, nay, the finger of a child, may for a moment derange the compass; but after trembling for an instant or two from point to point, immediately the needle resumes its steady direction to the pole.

Who would not wish to lend a helping hand to rescue this helpless boy from the grasp of his unnatural brothers—to deliver him from the pit, and to restore him to his father? Who, that had the means, would not have willingly redeemed him from slavery? Who, that possessed the knowledge of the fact, but would have vindicated him from the foul calumnies of his infamous mistress? Who would not have importuned the king for his enlargement from the prison-house? But all these would have been precipitate, rash, and absurd. Not the father, that loved him as his own soul, could have conducted him to the honours which

he attained, by a way so certain, so safe, and so honourable. The envy of Jacob's sons; the licentiousness of Potiphar's wife; the disobedience of Pharaoh's servants; the anger of the king himself; all, all meet in one point—the elevation of Joseph to the right hand of the throne. Remove but one link, and the chain is broken asunder. Take away but one stone, and the building falls. But the whole is his arrangement, “who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.”\*

3. *Its influence upon himself.* We have seen Joseph severely tried; but the trial of his faith, which is much more precious than gold that perisheth, was found to praise, and honour, and glory. Wherever he is, in Potiphar's house, in a dungeon, or at court, we find him invariably honoured, esteemed, and confided in by all who knew him. Let a man be inflexibly honest and true, and he will never have reason to accuse the world of want of confidence. It does not, however, unfrequently happen, that persons who appeared amiable and excellent under adverse circumstances, have changed greatly for the worse under the influence of prosperity. The sunshine has weakened, where the storm had braced; and the heart which suffering could not appal, has been corrupted by wealth and ease. It was not so with Joseph.

4. *The influence of his prosperity upon others.* There have been many who have possessed distinction, wealth, and power, but these have only rendered them a more extensive curse to man-

\* Hunter's Lectures.



kind. It had been far better for the world if they had never been born. The path which they trod is marked with crimson hues; and every page of their history is written in blood. They lived without esteem, and died without being desired. Tears, indeed, were shed, but they were shed by the widows and orphans whom their swords had made. Had their epitaph been faithful, it would have described them as the enemies of their species. But Joseph was blessed and made a blessing. He became the saviour of his house, and the benefactor of a mighty nation. And there is no part of his history which reflects so great a lustre on his character, as his conduct towards his guilty brethren. When they were completely in his power, and vengeance was in his hand, every injury was forgiven: and he weeps, he cherishes, and saves. He prepares an asylum for his aged and beloved father, and his own enjoyments acquire a tenfold sweetness, because the good old man is alive to share them. He traces the hand of Heaven in all that has befallen him. He is satisfied that he has been led by a right way, and that all would be well. It is delightful when the cup of prosperity is mingled by the hand of mercy, and when it is shared with those we love. But all the land of Egypt is benefited by his wisdom and benevolence. For a good man sheds his light afar, and, like the sun, scatters life and blessings with every beam.

But it is time to consider him,

II. AS A TYPE OF CHRIST, AND HIS DREAMS AS PREDICTING THE GLORIOUS EXTENSION OF HIS KINGDOM. The sacred Scriptures have not declared that Joseph was a type of Christ; but there are so many points of resemblance, that we cannot but look on him as prefiguring the glorious Redeemer of the world.

1. *Joseph was the best beloved of his father.* Can this fail to remind us of him of whom the voice from the excellent glory testified, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" This was the testimony borne on several remarkable occasions, on the banks of Jordan, and on the holy mount.

2. *Joseph wore a garment curiously wrought, and his brethren brought it to their father stained with blood.* This may bring to our recollection the Saviour's seamless robe, for which the soldiers cast lots.

3. *Joseph was hated of his brethren.* But his heart knew no resentment: he returned their enmity with more than a brother's love. Think of his antitype. "He came to his own, but his own received him not." "He was despised and rejected of men." This is his sorrowful complaint, "They hated me without a cause." Yet he prayed for his murderers, and saved his defamer in the last expiring hour.

4. *Joseph was sold into the hands of others.* And you remember Judas, who went to the chief priests, and said, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver

him into your hands? and they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver." This was the price of the Lord of life and glory.

5. *Joseph was tempted, and the temptation was strong.* "Jesus was also led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." Tempted to blasphemy, to presumption, and to idolatry. "But he was more than conqueror."

6. *The afflictions of Joseph were in order to his triumph.* The scene of peril was preparatory to safety; and the house of bondage was in the way to freedom and a throne. And "Jesus, the captain of our salvation, was made perfect through sufferings." By the steps of sorrow he ascended to the glory of the skies.

" His cross a sure foundation laid  
For glory and renown,  
When through the regions of the dead  
He passed to reach the crown."

7. *Joseph supplied his brethren with bread in the midst of famine.* The disciples of Jesus are fed with the bread of life. "His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed." The constant prayer of his family is, "Evermore give us this bread." And the declaration of the Saviour is, "I am the bread of life, that came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die." "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

8. *The exaltation and dominion of Joseph were predicted and attained.* His brethren acknowledged his power and his superiority; and throughout the land of Egypt he was inferior only to Pharaoh. Humiliation raised him to his greatness. And behold a greater than Joseph, highly exalted, distinguished by a "name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." It is true, "as yet we see not all things put under him:" but the promise is made, and the covenant sealed; and the inheritance of the Messiah must be restored. "He must reign until all his enemies are made his footstool."

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### THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH.

"And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."—1 Kings xvii. 24.

THE doctrines of Divine Providence, and of a divine faith, are most impressively taught through the medium of illustrative facts and events, which God has purposely decreed and arranged for their development and confirmation. In this view we are especially to regard the biographical and his-

torical records of the sacred Scriptures: they are intended to shed the light of heaven upon the dark path of man below, by unfolding to us such a discovery of the character of the Most High, and the principles of his moral government, as to afford us support and consolation during our sojourn in a vale of tears. The marvellous and the miraculous in which these narratives abound, so far from placing them above the sphere of our common passions and interests, seem designed, on the contrary, to adapt themselves to our every-day necessities, and to the meanest condition of ordinary life. A prophet fed by ravens in the deep recesses of a wilderness, and refreshed by the waters of a brook in its immediate vicinity, and thus protected from the violence of an enraged tyrant whom his faithfulness had incensed against him—a poor widow, surrounded with heathen darkness, receiving the prophet of the true God at the moment of her utmost extremity, when she was preparing for herself and her only child the last morsel that famine had left them, and yielding to him her all; and the miraculous preservation both of her, her guest, and her little son—the death and restoration of the child, producing the alternation of anguish and delight, keen distress, and adoring gratitude; and the result of the whole upon the widow's mind and heart, expressed in the text, are all beautiful and impressive illustrations of the ways of God to his children—of the manner in which he leads them, step by step, through the rugged and often perplexing paths of experience to a growing

acquaintance with their own hearts, and a more intimate knowledge of himself as the God of salvation—his people's help and refuge in every time of trouble, their rock and their strong habitation in every hour, when foes pursue and dangers threaten—their consolation and support when friends depart and comforts fail. The first thing that strikes us is,

I. THE STATE TO WHICH HE SUFFERS THE ONLY REPRESENTATIVES OF HIMSELF UPON EARTH TO BE REDUCED, AND HIS ESTIMATE OF THE WORLD AS THE REWARD OF THEIR FIDELITY TO HIM AND THEIR DEVOTEDNESS TO THE CAUSE OF TRUE RELIGION.

In a worldly point of view, what is the reward of Elijah, the greatest of his prophets? Banishment from the society of men—a dreary solitude—his daily wants supplied by the ministry of birds of prey, and the visibly-diminishing stream of a rivulet hourly becoming dry by the drought, which rapidly increases the horrors of famine throughout the living world; while the idolatrous and guilty monarch, who defies his authority and tramples on all laws human and divine, riots in the luxuries of his court, is clothed in fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day: for famine, however it may spread disease, and death, and desolation among the myriads of their subjects, never reaches the palaces of kings. The Lord God of Elijah could have reversed this scene, and, by one act of his sovereign will, have surrounded the prophet with all the splendour and riches of the earth, and have

humbled his royal adversary in the dust; but, while Ahab revels on his throne, Elijah is directed to "hide himself by the brook Cherith that is before Jordan." How less than nothing, then, ought the world to appear in our esteem, when the greatest favourite of Heaven is totally divested of all the comforts it can yield, and its most malignant enemy has more of its possessions than can gratify the cravings of his satiated cupidity! Behold the recluse in his solitude, and the monarch on his throne: contrast their characters and their prospects, and envy no more the falsely great. The Divine favour alone outweighs a world; and a world without it may be possessed, and its possessor be a wretch, equally abhorred of God and man.

But, in a worldly sense, the next step which the prophet is directed to take is even more humiliating than the first: he is commanded to seek an asylum in the mean dwelling of a poor destitute widow in the land of idolatry, among strangers and foreigners to his God and to his people. "Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there." But here there is one mitigating circumstance: he is to be no longer the solitary inhabitant of a wilderness, where he has none to bless as an instructor and benefactor: he finds a refuge, but he goes as a messenger of mercy—as the bread of life to the famished and the dying.

Miracle interposes again, and the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil were neither to waste nor fail

till the day that the Lord should rain upon the earth, and the famine should be succeeded by plenty in the natural course of things. So that, in the eye of the world, poverty and hourly dependence for his support are the only portion of Elijah, and the prophet is contented to live from day to day on meal and oil—bare necessaries, without a single ingredient of luxury; which suggests another observation,

II. THAT WHEN GOD CONDESCENDS TO WORK MIRACLES TO SUPPORT THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE BOUNDLESS RESOURCES OF HIS INFINITE LOVE, HE DOES NOT CHANGE THEIR WORLDLY CONDITION.

He supplies only what poverty requires and humble dependence receives with gratitude. See, then, what those accustomed to live upon Providence are entitled to expect: "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." And is this all? In mercy it is. If you had more than an answer to your daily prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," it might impair the great moral lesson the supreme Ruler by this arrangement is teaching to the world; it might corrupt your principles and obscure your hopes, if not defeat the very end to which those hopes are directed. If you possess these principles and these hopes, depend upon it, with food and raiment, you have all things, and abound: you are greater and richer than Ahab—you have the Lord for your portion! Is not this enough? In directing the prophet to take up his abode with the widow at Zarephath, we perceive,



III. AN EXERCISE OF THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY, AND AN INSTANCE OF HIS SPECIAL PROVIDENCE EXTENDED BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF HIS VISIBLE CHURCH.

Two texts of Scripture will illustrate this: Luke iv. 25, 26—"I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of these was Elias sent save unto Zarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow." The other scripture is Peter's introductory address to Cornelius, Acts x. 34, 35: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." Thus early did God intimate that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and that to the gentiles, in due time, he would "grant repentance unto life." That this widow was one of the Lord's hidden ones, may be fairly conjectured, if we consider her reply to the prophet—"As the Lord thy God liveth!" It was not the language of an idolater; she acknowledged Jehovah.

IV. THE TWOFOLD DESIGN OF GOD IN THIS MYSTERIOUS DISPENSATION, TO PRESERVE HIS SERVANT ELIJAH FROM THE MALICE OF HIS GREAT ENEMY; AND THAT HE MIGHT INSTRUCT THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH IN THE WAY OF GOD MORE PERFECTLY, AND BRING HER INTO THE TRUE FOLD, AS A DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM.

Hence he had determined that his providence

should concur with the mission of the prophet: and now the drama begins to open.

1. *Her heart is prepared by former impressions.* Her knowledge probably was very indistinct.

2. *Providential mercy interposes, and the prophet of God becomes her guest, that he may gradually expand her views, and lead her to an experimental acquaintance with the truth.*

3. *Providential severity is mingled with the merciful visitation, to awaken her faculties, and to wound her heart, in order to bring her to a deep sense of her unworthiness and guilt.*

4. *A miraculous power to save succeeds this exercise of apparent severity.* The prophet is the instrument who restores her son; his restoration is in answer to prayer: and thus it is effected by the direct agency of Heaven. All this is peculiarly instructive; it sheds light upon the principles and methods of the Divine procedure.

5. *Special grace crowns the whole with the Divine blessing;* and she exclaims, in the language of the text, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."

1. Here we learn what does not, and what does constitute a proof of the Divine regard.

2. What powers and influences are in reserve and in operation, for the purpose of sanctifying and blessing the favourites of Heaven.

3. We are also taught in what light to regard the privations, bereavements, and sorrows of life.

## ELIJAH UNDER THE JUNIPER TREE.

“But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.”—1 Kings xix. 4.

THIS is a very singular passage in the life of that prophet who, above all others, is distinguished by his spirit and his power. He that could prevail with Heaven, under the influence of a sudden panic, forgets the throne that in every trial and exigency had been his refuge; and, threatened by a tyranny he had courageously braved on former occasions, he flies first to Beersheba, where he leaves his servant, and then to the wilderness, where alone, in solitude and in sadness, he vents his unbelieving despondency, and betrays a spirit alike unworthy of his character and derogatory to the cause in which he had so recently and so gloriously triumphed. “The very words of the sacred narrative intimate to us the state of his mind at this juncture; for the words are, ‘When he saw *that*.’ What did Elijah see? Not God’s promises, and power, and faithfulness: these at least only dawned upon him in the background with broken and feeble rays; but in the foreground very different things did he see, namely, the infuriated Jezebel threatening his life, and all the horrors of a cruel death. Instead of soaring above these on eagles’ wings, and looking down upon them with sublime composure as heretofore, the pressure of human terror seems to have been too strong for his mind, espe-

cially as backed by the disappointment of his public spirit on Israel's account. So "he arose and went *for his life*;" or, as others have rendered it, "he arose and went *whither he would*;" which serves further to intimate the obscurity of his course and the uncertainty of his steps. He had at this time no express Divine direction as to whither he should go. Hitherto his way had always been marked out for him most distinctly by his Lord; but not so now. There was no particular Divine word to serve him as a staff on this journey—no commission, Remove hither or thither, Do this or that, shining before him like a lamp, giving wings to his feet and firmness to his steps: he went forth into the wide world in uncertainty, distracted by doubts and unaccompanied by the consoling consciousness that he was taking this road for God, since he went it only for himself, and for the sake of his own life." Hence the strange incident recorded in the text, on which, and on the particular history of which it forms a part, we would offer a few pertinent and practical general observations.

I. THAT THE MOST EMINENT SAINTS ARE BUT IMPERFECT CREATURES, AND FAIL IN THOSE VERY GRACES FOR WHICH THEY ARE MOST EMINENT.

Moses was the meekest man that ever lived; yet he suffered his equanimity to be disturbed, and he spake unadvisedly with his lips; Job's patience yielded to the pressure of accumulating sorrows, and he cursed the day of his birth; and Peter, the boldest of the apostles, who one moment wielded the sword in the defence of his Master, on a less perilous occasion denied that he ever knew him.

The name of Elijah stands in this list of human infirmity and weakness: he that could retort on Ahab and denounce Jezebel, charging one with being the troubler of Israel, and the other with being the corrupter and destroyer of the people's principles and morals, is alarmed at an empty threat, and flies for his life, and does not rest till he finds himself, after a day's journey through its devious wilds, in the very depth of the wilderness. We gather, however, from the context, that fear for himself was not the only cause of his flight, and of the impatient and pusillanimous request, "Now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers." His gloomy despondency pictured in his imagination the total prostration of the true religion before the triumphant altars of Baal. "Perplexed with regard to his vocation, nay, even with respect to God and his government, his soul lies in the midst of a thousand doubts and distressing thoughts: it seems tossed on a sea of troubles, without bottom or shore, and there appears but one step between him and utter despair. Behold him under the juniper tree: there he sits like an exile, in the midst of the fearful solitude, as cast out by God and the world, with his eyes fixed, full of gloomy and painful reflections. In spirit he is in the land of Israel, and in the midst of idolaters, the children of better forefathers. Oh, the melancholy images which pass before him! the heart-rending scenes which are pourtrayed upon the tablet of his memory! He sees the people reeling on Mount Carmel in their idolatrous orgies—in Samaria one idol temple rises up before him after another—the streets of Jezreel

resound with blasphemies against the living God and his only remaining servant; and Jezebel is drunk with the blood of the few believers, sole remnants of the faithful who had fallen victims to her revenge. Such are the images which vividly and dreadfully present themselves to his mind; and wherever he turns his eyes amidst the horrible scene, there is no herald of God; no voice of a single prophet is lifted up against it. Perhaps now he thinks, Why did I not remain? why did I flee, and forsake my charge? And if the distress of his spirit had not been already excited to the utmost, surely such thoughts as these must have tended to that effect. The pious servant of God has had enough of this vale of tears; he is heartily weary of painful conflicts and fruitless labours; his soul longs for its rest—"It is enough," sighs he to heaven, his eyes glistening with tears; "it is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.'" Ah, who would have thought that Elijah could ever have become so weak and faint-hearted—the man who seemed invincible in the armour of his faith, and superior to every storm! But to us it is consoling, that even such an one as Elijah sat under the juniper tree, and thought, in his despondency, that he was unable any longer to bear the burden of life."

II. THAT THE FRAILTIES AND INFIRMITIES INTO WHICH EMINENT SAINTS ARE SOMETIMES BETRAYED, ARE STRIKING ATTESTATIONS TO THEIR SUPERIOR EXCELLENCE.

The spots in the sun rather increase than obscure his glory. It may seem strange, but it is not

less true, that this solitary aberration on the part of Elijah serves only to brighten the piety and holiness that shine forth in his general character: it is the shade of humanity moderating the effulgence of what might otherwise have been deemed angelic splendour. That the full glory of religion in the perfection of its undimmed radiance should not too much dazzle us, even Elijah appears as a man subject to like passions with ourselves. Yet may we further remark, that,

III. WHILE THIS CONSIDERATION RENDERS THE EXCELLENCE OF EMINENT CHARACTERS MORE CONSPICUOUS, IT MAY LIKEWISE BE DESIGNED TO MODERATE OUR ADMIRATION, AND TO RESTRAIN IT WITHIN PROPER BOUNDS.

The KING of saints is alone the object of our worship. Because his perfection is sinless and divine, he may be adored as well as imitated; and the saints are exhibited in their state of imperfection and frailty, to show us that their attainments are not beyond our reach, and that as they sometimes stumbled and fell, we are not to be discouraged as we emulate their virtues, and strive, by the grace of God, to follow them in the way to heaven.

IV. THAT THE IMPERFECTIONS AND INFIRMITIES OF GOOD MEN SOMETIMES AFFECT THEIR PRAYERS, WHICH ARE NOT ALWAYS GOOD.

Often are they dictated by ignorance; by impatience; by disappointment; by gloomy dread; by wounded pride; by a misdirected faith; by erroneous views of the Divine purpose, as beheld through the medium of his providential dispensa-

tions; and by a stange mixture of unbelief and confidence, of hope and despondency. And the observation applies equally to the *spirit* and the *matter* of prayer, and sometimes to *both*. "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss." As it was revealed to Simeon that "he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ," so it is not improbable that Elijah had, at some former period of his life, received the Divine assurance that a destiny awaited him far more glorious than that of any of his fathers, the holy prophets who had gone before him, and that he should not die as they had died. To this his prayer in the text seems despondingly to allude. The fair vision no longer gladdened his spirit, he began to fear it had been a delusion, which stern and painful circumstances, annihilating all his hopes for the church and his own further usefulness in it, had banished from his mind. As, like his fathers, he now felt himself doomed to the common lot, he passionately cries, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life." Out of this momentary weakness springs the pure energy of a holy and lively faith; for it has been well observed of Elijah's prayer in the text, that it exhibits "the elements of the natural life and of the spiritual life fermenting together in strange intermixture; the sparks of nature and of grace, mutually opposing each other, blaze up together in one flame."

V. THAT WHEN THE SAINTS PRAY, GOD ALWAYS HEARS AND ANSWERS THEM.

The prayer of the heart, though tainted by its



corruptions, never fails to reach the throne of the heavenly grace. We indeed, ask, in our way, and God answers in his. We say it is enough; but he tells us that we have much more to do and to endure. We pray for death, not because we are prepared for it, but because we are tired of life, or think we are so. God spreads our table in the wilderness; prepares us to ascend to him on the mount of communion; and instead of allowing us to steal out of life in the solitude of the desert, he sends his angels, his horses of fire, and his chariots of fire, to bear us to the regions of immortal life and happiness.

Men ought always to pray; it is not only their duty, but their privilege. They ought to pray, whether they are in a right frame or not; and whatever be their spirit and the state of their feelings. God is the safest and the best depository of whatever agitates, burdens, wounds, or oppresses the heart. "Prayers, however, which ascend towards heaven more in the wild bursts of carnal passion, than in the sacred fire of Divine love, and which are not borne upwards to God upon the wings of faith and hope, but upon the gusts of natural excitement, such prayers the Lord is not wont to hear; yet he does hear, so merciful is he, the breathings of spiritual devotion, ascending through all this clamour of carnal feeling, and in spite of it."

VI. THAT WHEN WE THINK OURSELVES MOST DESTITUTE AND FRIENDLESS, WE ARE SURROUNDED STILL WITH GOD.

"The man of God lay and slept under the

juniper tree," to all outward appearance as one forsaken, and, like the disciples in Gethsemane, "sleeping for sorrow." Yet a Divine watch is kept over him. Grace, mercy, and peace are with him. Here we have a sensible demonstration given of the ministry of the elect angels about them that fear God, sent forth "to minister to the heirs of salvation." "Behold in this gloomy wilderness the ministry of an angel of God, *specially commissioned for the purpose*, who finds an addition to his happiness in preparing help and refreshment for a servant of God in his distress and sorrow." "Indeed it may be adopted as a general remark, that where the world closes against any servant of God, there heaven opens to him." If the prospect of threatening evil is before you, let this encourage you. If you are already in the depths of affliction, exposed to the frowns and neglect of the world, and destitute of human sympathy, let this console you—the angels of the Lord encamp around you, and the Lord of angels declares, "I am with you."

VII. THAT GOD NEVER CALLS US TO GREAT AND EXTRAORDINARY EXERTIONS WITHOUT AFFORDING US STRENGTH ACCORDING TO OUR DAY.

Little did Elijah imagine, as he sat under the juniper tree, what an arduous journey was before him, and how he was yet to be employed in the service of God, and distinguished by his special favour. All this was in the purpose of the Divine mind, and provision is made for the exigencies of the occasion, while all the intimation the prophet receives from the angel is expressed in these words,

“ Arise, and eat, because the journey is too great for thee.” Though God allows his servants to be tried beyond their own *inherent strength*, he never suffers them to be tried beyond what he himself *enables* them to undergo: “ and he went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb, the mount of God.” He travels through the sandy desert alone; yet not alone, for God is with him. Forty days and forty nights he journeys on without rest or intermission, through the silent wilderness, a miraculous task, which was performed in the strength of the food with which God, by his angel, had refreshed him. To help by many means or by few, or with no means at all, is one and the same thing to Him who upholdeth all by the word of his power.

This it becomes us to cherish in our hearts as a settled principle; and always to be assured that if we possess the faith of the prophet, so “ the Lord God of Elijah ” will still glorify his character by providing for our wants, and sustaining us, not according to the falsely magnificent notions of the world, but with the simple grandeur of his providence, constituting poverty, with his grace, a richer dower than the mere wealth of the universe. It may be with the cake baken on the coals, and the cruse of water; and these may prove greater dainties, and more nourishing and supporting than stalled oxen and rivers of wine and oil. Let us never shrink from apparently super-human labours and sufferings, if we find them in the path of duty. He that requires them of our weakness, will supply us from the resources of his own omni-

potence. "He can add wings when he commands to fly." "As thy day is, so thy strength shall be."

VIII. THAT IT IS THE CHARACTER OF FAITH TO BE SATISFIED WITH GOD'S PROVISION, AND TO ACQUIESCE IN HIS WILL.

Faith gives dignity to the character; a dignity which the Divine Redeemer so beautifully and impressively illustrated, when he passed by all the wealth and glory of the world, and assumed the garb of poverty and the form of a servant. The haughty sons of pride cannot appreciate such greatness: they understand nothing of the moral sublimity displayed in the conduct of Elijah, when without a murmur, or even the feeling of regret, he accepted meat every morning and evening from the ravens by the brook Cherith, became a pensioner on the slender hospitalities of a poor widow at Zarephath, and was satisfied with the simplest fare in the wilderness; and that too when a solitary meal was to be his only sustenance during the long period of forty days and forty nights.

The great cure of pride and worldliness, and of all the moral evils they engender in the individual bosom, and propagate in society, is the faith which shone so conspicuously in this holy prophet; it was because his faith raised him so much above the world, that it became a matter of indifference to him how little of it he possessed; and while he seemed by his state of dependence to sink below poverty, it was this which assured him that his condition was more enviable, because infinitely more elevated, than that of the wealthiest votary of the mammon of unrighteousness. And what a

principle of holy obedience is this faith, which overcometh the world! and that, too, when its path leads through a dreary and desolate wilderness! Elijah did not shrink from the horrors of the desert, as they gathered around him at every step. The hot wind during the day did not exhaust him, nor the difficulties of the night fatigue him. Thus he bore about with him, in the renewed courage of his spirit, and in the unexhausted strength of his limbs, an abiding seal and pledge that the Lord was with him, and that the hand of the Almighty sustained him.

Faith teaches contentment and duty to go hand in hand; it assures adequate support, but demands the most simple dependence upon the Divine faithfulness, and an un murmuring acquiescence, however scanty the provision, however rugged the path. For it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

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## ELIJAH AND ELISHA.

"And it came to pass when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."—2 Kings ii. 9.

It is interesting to contemplate a human spirit on the eve of its departure into an unseen world. It is in the hour of death that hypocrites throw off their mask, bad men change their vanity for vexation of spirit, and good men exhibit the nature and the efficacy of their principles. Elijah is about to

be removed, and the church and the world to be deprived of his prayers, his instructions, and his example: heaven opens to his enraptured view, and its chariots of fire are in attendance to bear him to his reward. But what is it that still lives in his heart? what is it that abates his eagerness for immortality? He is anxious to have a successor, and a successor that will more than fill up the void that would be occasioned by his translation. He would not leave the church unprovided. The religious spirit is generously prospective, is superior to all personal considerations, and is most earnest in its vocation of usefulness as it draws near to the termination of its earthly course: then it is most abundant in its desires of doing good; all graces are then most pregnant; the box of ointment, when it is broken, fills the house with fragrance. The text records the circumstances which led to the transfer of the gift and spirit of prophecy from Elijah to Elisha, which were conferred upon him, not suddenly and unexpectedly, but by the interposition of some mutual intercourse between Elijah and himself. We shall divide it into two parts.

I. Elijah's generous proposal; and, II. Elisha's wise and devout request.

#### I. ELIJAH'S GENEROUS PROPOSAL.

1. *It is spontaneous and free.* True charity stays not for entreaties, expects not importunity, but freely offers itself.

2. *It is full and comprehensive.* What cannot the prayer of an Elijah obtain? He can open and shut heaven—bring down flame or flood. God gives a kind of omnipotence to the prayers of his

saints. The King cannot deny his favoured, holy servants. The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Prayer is a key that opens all God's storehouses; and he gives this key to his children upon earth. But was it safe, so to speak, thus to lay all the treasures of heaven at the feet of Elisha? Though large and liberal, the offer is necessarily circumscribed.

It is limited by the Divine wisdom, honour, and goodness. Nothing can be granted that is contrary to these. Even the promises of God, exceeding great and precious as they are; and containing, as they do, the fulness that is treasured up in Christ, are bounded within this golden zone. We are warranted to ask only what is agreeable to the Divine will—what is conducive to the Divine glory.

Our prayers must be limited by a consideration of what is answerable and fitting to our state and calling. Elisha is a prophet and a man of God. Elijah could only offer what became him in his official character, and as a servant of the Most High; and the views of Elisha must be bounded by this necessity. The Spirit that prompted Elijah to offer, doubtless prompted Elisha to ask.

3. *This proposed donation of Elijah had a special reference to the prophetic office.* He spoke ministerially, and as the appointed agent of heaven; and devoutly, conscious that he had power, and could prevail. A fervent prayer, offered in faith, and with a sufficient warrant, is an actual donation.

In this offer, Elijah especially regarded Elisha as his successor.

4. *This proposal was distinguished by its wisdom and order.* He will have him ask before he bestows. This is God's method. There is one blessing that God gives unasked, and that is the grace of asking.

II. ELISHA'S WISE AND DEVOUT REQUEST:—  
 “ I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.”

1. *What it implies.*

It supposes an identity of spirit in the church, continuing through all successions of dispensations, offices, and individuals. Elijah is taken away, but his spirit shall remain. When Moses died, his spirit rested upon Joshua; when Aaron slept with his fathers, Eleazar succeeded to the high priesthood, and was endued with all its necessary gifts and qualifications. So when Jesus ascended up on high, the Spirit, by which he had been immeasurably enriched, he poured down upon the apostles and evangelists, and pastors and teachers, whom he appointed for the conversion of the world, and the edification of his body, the church.

It implies, also, that the Spirit is apportioned to different men in different degrees, suited to the economy under which they live, the natural capacity with which they are endowed, and the peculiar stations they are appointed to occupy.

2. *What it implores.*

Elisha desires Elijah's spirit, and in a twofold measure. What influenced him to single out this



one especial boon, when the boundless stores of heaven were open to him? *He desires the spirit of Elijah.* He was anxious to be eminently qualified for the office, whose high and solemn responsibilities he already began to feel. He was impressed with the parting scene, and affected with the elevation of the prophet's mind; the sublime tranquillity of his demeanour; and the grace that not only comforted and sustained him, but which beamed from his countenance in all the radiance of celestial glory: he would possess the same. He asks that he may be endowed with all the gifts and graces that would qualify him to be an able, faithful prophet, and a holy man of God.

But he prays for a *double portion of Elijah's spirit.* In itself it was so transcendently excellent, whether he regarded his qualifications as a prophet, or his example as a devout believer; that he not only prays that he may possess it, but possess it in a twofold degree. In this he was not actuated either by ambition or pride. His request breathed the humility of his heart, under a weighty sense of his own unworthiness, and his insufficiency to meet the then exigencies of the church, amidst the gross idolatries of the people, and the bitter malice and persecuting rage of their rulers. The times were unpropitious, requiring even a mightier than Elijah, great as he was in power and in prayer. With this also he felt the loss that the nation was about to sustain in the departure of his "father," himself a host, "the chariot of Israel,

and the horsemen thereof." The idea that *he*, the inconsiderable husbandman of Abel Meholah, could fill up such a breach, or carry on the work of Elijah to its complete accomplishment, was overwhelming to him. Therefore, if Elijah must depart, his successor would humbly implore sufficient help for his conscious inability.

#### IMPROVEMENT.

1. Does Elisha entreat of Elijah?—if he draws from the *channel*, how should we have recourse to the fountain? Christ is not only the obtainer, but the sovereign dispenser of all grace. Elijah's intercession availed only while he was on earth; Christ intercedes in heaven; and he says, from his glorious throne to every child of prayer, "Ask what thou wilt:" there *he* is the only intercessor.

2. If Elisha prays chiefly for prophetic endowments, which are variously bestowed, then may we with greater confidence pray for the necessary and sanctifying graces of the Holy Spirit.

3. Following the example of the prophet, let it be our prayer and endeavour to obtain the gifts and qualifications which will enable us to serve the church and the world.

4. Elisha desires to imitate and exceed Elijah. Elisha, a prophet, sets Elijah before him as a pattern: so, in all callings and professions, select the best and worthiest examples. Let the magistrate remember Nehemiah; and the head of a family, Cornelius; the afflicted sufferer, Job; the rich man, Abraham; the pious woman, Dorcas; the

child, Isaac; and the servant, Eleazar; and let each seek, in reference to their peculiar station and condition, for a double portion of that spirit so gracefully illustrated in these several distinguished and honoured individuals, whose names are worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance.

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## THE ADDRESS OF MOSES TO THE PARENTS OF ISRAEL.

“These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine 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.”—Deut. vi. 6, 7.

FROM this important portion of the impressive valedictory address of Moses to Israel, we remark,

I. THAT THE SYSTEM OF RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE WHICH IT IS INCUMBENT UPON MEN TO EMBRACE AND OBEY, MUST BE RECEIVED THROUGH THE MEDIUM AND UPON THE AUTHORITY OF DIVINE REVELATION; “These words which I command thee.”

II. THAT A DIVINE SYSTEM OF DOCTRINE REVEALED FROM HEAVEN, IN ORDER TO BE EFFICACIOUS AND USEFUL, MUST BE PERSONAL: IT MUST BE ADMITTED “INTO THE HEART”—every man must be religious, and religious for himself. It therefore must take possession of the heart as the seat of feeling and sentiment, as

the spring of action ; here it must be paramount, abiding, and in constant operation.

III. THAT A SYSTEM OF DOCTRINE, WHEN IT IS EFFICACIOUS AND BENEFICIAL TO THE INDIVIDUAL, LAYS HIM UNDER OBLIGATIONS, AND FURNISHES HIM WITH A DISPOSITION TO MAINTAIN ITS CHARACTER AND TO DIFFUSE ITS INFLUENCE THROUGH EVERY RELATION OF LIFE WHICH HE SUSTAINS.

It gives him correct views of the nature and importance of every relation in life—of its claims, and his responsibility in reference to these claims. The moment he becomes the head of a family, family religion becomes a duty in reference to GOD. To him it has a threefold relation—that of responsibility, of gratitude, of dependence.

In reference to HIMSELF—to his spiritual welfare, his tranquillity of mind.

To his FAMILY—it furnishes the principle as well as the rule of duty : it refines and exalts the natural affections, which Providence has wisely associated and almost identified with the various relations of life. It holds out the strongest encouragements of success to sincere and persevering effort. The very command implies encouragement : our own experience gives it additional force : the promise of Divine aid, and of the Divine blessing, renders despondency impious. But parents without religion cannot teach it to their children : many parents who possess it cannot do all they wish ; but all are bound to do what they can.

## GOD DWELLING WITH MEN.

“ But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth ?”  
2 Chron. vi. 11.

WHAT an imposing scene of awful grandeur rises before the imagination as we endeavour to realize the situation of Solomon when he uttered these words? And could such a scene be favourable to the abstraction and spirituality of the most elevated devotion?

Large assemblies either damp and depress the ardours of piety, or invigorate and sustain them; but this depends altogether upon their character and object. The object had been often revolved as one of the utmost importance to their well-being and happiness: the people were prepared for a day of high and solemn enjoyment, such as they had never known, by the long and unreserved concentration of all their resources for the purpose of its attainment. To this was directed a profuse liberality which spared no cost, which shrunk from no sacrifice: labours, personal, arduous, and unremitting—fervent, united, and persevering supplications, anticipating the event as one peculiarly hallowed and fraught with divine and spiritual communications.

The text is the lowliest and loftiest expression of devotion that is probably to be found in all the records of religion. Let us endeavour,

I. To trace the sentiments and feelings in which it originated: II. To exhibit the delightful ideas which it conveys; and, III. To state the grounds which may induce us to conclude that God in very deed thus dwells with men upon earth. And,

I. LET US TRACE THE SENTIMENTS AND FEELINGS IN WHICH THE QUESTION IN THE TEXT ORIGINATED.

1. *Enlarged and comprehensive views, with a deep impression of the majesty and glory of God.* At a superficial glance, the question would seem to imply notions of the Divine nature and attributes the very opposite of these views and these impressions; as if God, the infinite and the omnipresent, could be essentially in one place more than another; and though the heavens, and the heaven of heavens, could not contain him, yet that he might be invited to and dwell in a house upon earth, or a temple made with hands; thus attaching to his presence the idea of limitation and locality. But Solomon had not to learn what was the common faith of the nation and the doctrines of the Scriptures concerning the infinite fulness of Him who filleth all in all, and who is in the Hebrew language described by a name (*Hammakom*) conveying the very idea of the universality and infinitude of his being.

All things are full of God, and he is every where: "If I climb up into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also!" Nay, we may go beyond these positive realities, and maintain that he dwells in the imaginary regions of

immeasurable space—that he is there where nothing else is, and nothing else is there where he is not.

The king of Israel, at this solemn moment, when the cloud of ineffable glory filled the temple, spoke under the powerful influence of the *gracious* presence of the Divine Majesty, well assured that it was no derogation of the immensity of his being to suppose that he could be differently present in some places or alike in all—that at one and the same moment he was filling heaven, earth, and hell; but conveying to each very different impressions of his presence.

“If God,” says an acute and learned dialectician of a former age, “is equally present on earth and in hell, in the church and in the prison of Tophet, wherein consists the difference which in the one makes it desirable and in the other intolerable? Are we to think,” he asks, “that we men have his company but as the devils have, to tremble at? No. The cry in Tophet is, ‘What have we to do with thee, thou Son of the Most High?’ Not so here on earth; but, ‘Why art thou so far from me, O my God!’ The finger of God is there (in hell) as in the plagues of Egypt; but his right hand is here, that right hand with which he doeth gloriously. With them, that is, with the evil spirits, God is almighty—with us he is God all-sufficient: there he is a consuming fire—here, Immanuel, God with us. Therefore it is, that, though he were here before, yet is he said to bow the heavens and come down.”

The king of Israel was awe-struck with the amazing condescension which had so visibly chosen a building on earth as the medium through which to display to the guilty sons and daughters of Adam the glories of his infinite perfections;—that every where he should be God, the Creator and the upholder of all things, the Source of being and of bliss, through innumerable worlds and systems of worlds; but that for the earth and its human inhabitants he should reserve such a manifestation of himself as should give both the pre-eminence over an entire and boundless universe—this it was that filled the royal mind with that adoring amazement which breaks forth in the exclamation, “ Will God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth !”

2. This devout interrogatory may be traced, secondly, *to lofty ideas of the extent and grandeur of the universe as contrasted with the insignificance of man, and the degradation of his state and character.*

3. *But the whole scene was typical;* and as the shadows of good things to come, on this sublime occasion assumed a distinctness approaching to substantial reality—as the incarnation of God was revealed by the glory between the cherubim with a vividness which almost turned faith into vision, we doubt not that the sainted monarch caught a glimpse of the mystery, and, realizing the period when God should be manifest in the flesh, he saw the illustrious stranger, He that was greater than the temple, standing in the midst of it; and, unable to suppress his emotion, broke forth in the



language of grateful astonishment, "Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth!" But we come now,

II. TO CONTEMPLATE THE DELIGHTFUL IDEAS WHICH THE QUESTION CONVEYS.

It is not so much a question as an affirmation—God will in very deed *dwell* with men on earth, and his dwelling-place is the sanctuary: it was once, and for a long succession of ages and generations, the temple, and now it is every edifice where his name is recorded, where his people assemble. "Where two or three meet together in my name," says he who alone has realized the hypostatical union, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

To *dwell* with men on earth. This implies,

1. *Presence*; or, the manifestation of power and glory. The Essence is invisible, but the attributes are displayed.

2. It also implies *influence*. Presence, not only for the purpose of unveiling the moral glories of his nature, but influence as an operating agency, and a spiritual communication.

3. It also conveys the idea of *residence*. Here he *dwells* with man; a resident, not a guest. One always at home; not as a wayfaring man, or a stranger, that turneth aside for a night: therefore the sanctuary is the dwelling-place of a perfect and infinite spirit of knowledge, of wisdom, of purity, of consolation, of love, of joy, of heaven.

4. But it implies more; it implies *association, or communion*. He not only dwells with, but in and among men upon earth. Here children come to meet a father; disciples to listen to the Master's voice; patients to experience the physician's skill.

5. *Infinite condescension and grace*:—illustrated in the objects of its regard; the perpetual flow of the blessings by which they are enriched; the patience which bears with them; and the mercy which admits them to the privilege of intercourse, notwithstanding their guilt and unworthiness.

III. BUT WHAT ARE THE GROUNDS WHICH MAY INDUCE US TO CONCLUDE THAT GOD IN VERY DEED THUS DWELLS WITH MEN UPON EARTH?

1. *Facts which cannot be controverted*. The mercy-seat; the temple; the incarnation; the descent and communication of the Spirit.

2. *Corresponding effects, the most unequivocal in their character, and unaccountable on every other principle*.

3. *Testimonies the most numerous and unquestionable*.

4. *Promises that cannot be violated*.

5. *The accomplishment of a scheme of mercy and of glory, which cannot otherwise be realized*.

1. Hence appears the reasonableness and necessity of public worship—nothing else can raise the human mind to its proper elevation; nothing, without this, can prepare the world for its greatest social improvement. This is necessary also to form the human character for its immortal destiny.

2. The dispositions and sentiments which distinguish the true worshippers of the Most High.

3. Here is matter of congratulation to Christians in the superiority of their worship to that of the temple, when conducted even by Solomon. A greater than Solomon is here.

4. Happy the people that are in such a case, for they shall in very deed dwell with God in heaven.

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## DIVINE CONDESCENSION.

“Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high; who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth!”—Psalm cxiii. 5, 6.

SOME of the most magnificent expressions of Scripture are those which relate to the Divine condescension. The doctrine that the infinite God, who inhabits immensity and eternity, enters minutely into all the affairs of his creatures, presented to the mind of the psalmist an image of condescension so overwhelming, that he exclaimed, “Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!” Observe, he couples together the things that are in heaven and earth, without distinction. Now, to our apprehension, the things of heaven are inconceivably greater, more important, more worthy of the Divine attention, than the things of earth. But in the eye of God the difference is

only a difference in minute degrees—a difference in degrees of littleness—and therefore, in itself, a very little difference.

Were you, from the top of some lofty eminence, some dizzy height, to look down upon two objects—the one a man and the other a child—though they would doubtless consider the difference between themselves to be very great, to you it would appear to be very little, if any. This, indeed, would arise from the necessary imperfection of your organs of sight—but the idea may serve for an illustration. For while to our apprehension the things of heaven are unspeakably greater than the things of earth, we are to bear in mind that the Almighty is infinitely higher than the highest created intelligence in heaven; that while the difference between the highest and the lowest of his creatures can be measured, the difference between him and the highest creature which he has formed cannot be measured; so that he has to look down—(if we may say so)—he has to look down from an infinite height upon the highest as well as upon the lowest, upon the things that are in heaven, as well as upon the things that are in the earth. The wonder is, that he condescends to regard the things that are in heaven; but having stooped thus far, we are prepared to hear that he stoops a little farther, and regards the things that are on earth. For though there *is* a difference between them, and though his eye measures that difference in all its proportions, yet is it really so

insignificant to Him whom heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain, that it is an act of infinite condescension in him to notice either.

Looking at the history of this condescension toward man, there appear to have been four remarkable stages in it, at each of which we behold him carrying it a degree farther than before, until he has reached the very lowest point to which it could be carried. We say nothing of the benignity which he displayed towards our first parents, while yet they retained their original purity,—benignity which showed itself in symbolically walking with them in paradise, in visible manifestations, in frequent and familiar converse. *That* belonged to a state which soon passed away, and of which we know little more than this—that it once existed. But we have to contemplate the Divine conduct in a subsequent and far different state—a state which was commenced by an act of disobedience and rebellion against God—a state in which man has outraged every attribute of the Divine character, in which he has lost all love and likeness to God, and has joined in league with his enemies; in which the prevailing habit of his mind is that of enmity against God; and a state, therefore, in which his holy and insulted Maker might justly have left him to perish, and have withdrawn and inclosed himself for ever within the depths of his everlasting dwelling-place.

Now it was towards man in this state that the Almighty took the first step in his career of condescension,

## I. BY SPEAKING TO HIM.

He broke the fearful silence which sin had produced, and which might have lasted for ever, and spoke to us. And every accent he uttered was an accent of love. For the sentence which consigned our bodies to the stroke of death, was only the application of what had been *previously* threatened; while every *additional* word was intended to mitigate that doom, by inspiring us with the hope of being finally delivered from it. And having broken the silence, he proceeded to address us at sundry times and in divers manners. He prescribed the way by which we might hope to regain his favour; he added promise after promise, to encourage our obedience; and though it did not comport with the majesty of his holiness to maintain, as before, familiar intercourse with our polluted race, yet every time he spoke to us he opened a fresh view of his excellence, and furnished an additional proof of his condescension.

Another stage in his Divine condescension to man was,

II. WHEN HE APPOINTED A PLACE FOR THE SYMBOL OF HIS PRESENCE TO DWELL IN, AND WHERE MAN MIGHT BE ALWAYS WELCOME TO APPROACH AND COMMUNE WITH HIM.

That Presence, indeed, was concealed from the public eye, and could be approached only in a prescribed manner. But still it was a vast advance in the Divine condescension: it seemed to say that his benignity knew no limits; it seemed to place earth in close proximity to heaven. When

Solomon offered up the first prayer at the dedication of that hallowed edifice, he appears to have been almost overwhelmed with the idea:—"Will God," said he, "in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have built!" Will the Divine Omnipresence take up his dwelling here? Is not the expectation too great to be realized? Will he do so "in very deed?" To this appeal of his servant, which showed a mind labouring and staggering under the amazing conception, the Almighty replied, "I have chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." And through a long succession of ages he continued to meet with his people there, and to commune with them from off the mercy-seat.

But all this, astonishing as it was, was only preliminary. The next stage in the condescension of God to man threw all his past history into the shade.

### III. THE "WORD" BECAME FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US.

Great, indeed, is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest "*in the flesh*"—came and tabernacled among us in our own nature. By a mysterious act he took our nature into union with his own, actually walked the earth, conversed with us, instructed us, pitied and wept over us, and by all the arts of a Divine compassion commended his love to us. This was a stoop of condescension immeasurably

deep. Beyond *this* (we might have said) he cannot go—even *he* cannot go. He has now reached the lowest point to which he can descend, for he has reached the low basement of earth, he has placed himself on a perfect level with ourselves. We have now seen the utmost limits of his condescending grace.

“But my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.” Look at that cross—at him who hangs upon it. Look at that bleeding form—that is a lower point of condescension.

IV. HE IS DYING—DYING FOR US—DYING FOR US THE ACCURSED DEATH OF THE CROSS.

“He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” *That* was, indeed, the lowest point to which he could descend. The sun shrunk back, amazed at that sight; angels hung over it perplexed, unable to comprehend it. All nature sympathized and wondered. And shall we, for whom all this voluntary humiliation was endured, be the only beings who are unmoved by it?

Let us glance at the ground over which we have passed. We have seen that man had reduced himself to the condition of an enemy against God; and that with this condition he was in love, when



God, who is rich in mercy, resumed the intercourse which sin had interrupted, by speaking to him. This was the commencing act of his condescension : and it was amazing. When any thing of a similar kind takes place among men—when a party injured is known to have spoken first to the party which injured him, especially, too, if he be his superior in rank, the act is spoken of with unfeigned admiration. But that the Creator should have thus acted towards his creature—that the infinite God should have first spoken, and have spoken amicably, to the poor, alienated, debased children of men, surpasses unspeakably the utmost condescension which man can show to his fellow-man. And still more, that he should appoint a place for his presence to dwell in, where we might go and commune with him ; that he should hide from our sight the glories of his throne, lest they should overwhelm our feeble spirits ; that he should conceal from us the ministries of his celestial court, and, dismissing that train which filleth the temple above, should stoop to visit the lowly abodes of those that fear him, and dwell as a Father in the homes of earth : this was a lower stage in his condescension still. That he should have left the high and holy place which he had inhabited from eternity, and have assumed the nature of his creature man, and have become a resident on earth, was another and a far lower stage in his condescension still. But that while here he should have submitted to suffer death—“the death of the cross”—by the hand of those he came to redeem—

was a depth of condescension never before imagined, never after to be surpassed. If he humbles himself when he only deigns "to behold the things that are in heaven and earth," then what shall we say of his condescension in becoming flesh, and dying for us? It is the everlasting wonder of the universe.

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### THE EXALTATION OF MAN.

"What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?"—Job vii. 17.

THE condescension of God,<sup>1</sup> as already traced in its downward stages, was not ostentation and display. It could not fail to be productive of certain effects; for as surely as the natural operation of his justice would have tended to destroy, so certainly the operation of his love would have a tendency to save. And it could not be otherwise than that these restorative effects should be commensurate with the *degree* of condescension which he exercised; they would correspond in measure as well as in kind. Accordingly we find that this exact correspondence obtains: He stooped to earth that we might be raised to heaven; he partook of our human nature that we might be made partakers of his divine; he died an ignominious death that we might live a glorified and eternal life.

In glancing at the pinnacle of distinction to which man is raised, let us mark two or three of the more elevated stages in the ascending scale.

I. THE LOWEST TO WHICH WE SHALL ALLUDE IS THAT OF A SERVANT OF THE MOST HIGH GOD.

From being the slaves of sin, he advances us into his high and holy service. He has no *need* of our services, for he is self-sufficient, and could accomplish every thing by the word of his power; or if he chose to surround himself with obedient servants, as a thing becoming his majesty and state, he might have taken them all from the inhabitants of the heavenly world. *They* have never revolted from him, never abused his goodness, nor renounced his authority, as we have done; but have ever counted it their highest honour to adore and serve him. How astonishing is it, then, that he should come to seek for servants *in this sinful world!*—that he should call any into his service from among *our apostate and guilty race!* And yet he does this; and he does it in a MANNER as though he were really dependent on our services—as though he were unable to conduct the affairs of his government without us; for he not only calls us, he urges, and entreats, and even offers to reward us, though we can never be otherwise than unprofitable servants. If we *neglect* his first invitations, he repeats them; if we *faint* in his service, he supports and encourages us; if we *revolt* from his service, he actually follows, and brings us back to it again: he stoops to do that which *we* should count it a degradation to

do to our fellow-servants. He reminds us that *angels* are our fellow-creatures; he calls us *co-workers* together with himself; he even engages to *applaud* us at last in the face of the universe, by saying, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

But if it be an honour to be advanced into the service of God,

II. HOW SURPASSING THE DISTINCTION OF BEING RAISED INTO HIS FRIENDSHIP!

And yet this is his language—"Ye are my friends; henceforth I call you not servants, but friends." Had he only regarded his people in the light of his servants, he would only have laid his commands upon them; and even this would have been conferring on them an honour which angels are emulous and happy to enjoy. But he not only intrusts them with his commands, he shares with *them his secrets, and honours them with his confidence.* He gives them the utmost *freedom of access* to him, permitting them to come even to his seat, and to enter the secret of his pavilion. They share *HIS sympathy, his counsel, and his aid*; and, in return, they feel a *growing congeniality* with his character, make his *CAUSE* their own, and rejoice when it is promoted, as though their *own interests* were advanced. They are conscious of a *holy jealousy* for the *honour* of his name, as if it were committed entirely to their custody, or as if their own life and happiness were bound up with it. Oh, how exalted and how ennobling is this relation to God! and yet it is their privilege

to sustain it: they are known in heaven, though they may not be on earth, as the *friends of God*.

But they sustain a relation still higher, if possible, than this:

III. THEY ARE ADOPTED INTO THE FAMILY OF God.

“Beloved,” says an apostle, “now are we the sons of God.” “Ye are all the children of God,” says another apostle, “by faith in Christ Jesus.” “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” “Oh,” said one of the Malabarian converts appointed by the Danish missionaries to translate a catechism, in which believers are called “sons” of God,—“oh, it is too much! let me rather render it, ‘they shall be permitted to kiss his feet.’” But no, it is not too much: “It is just like him,” said a converted negro woman, with sublime moral simplicity, when speaking of his unutterable gift of Christ for our redemption. Inconceivably great as the gift is, “it is just like him;” and unspeakably great as the privilege is of constituting believers his children, “it is just like him.” It is no figment of the imagination; the honour is realized to the fullest extent: they are renewed after his likeness, and by the special operation of his own Spirit. They are clothed with the robes of his righteousness, are sustained with manna from heaven, and enjoy the training and tuition of a Divine Teacher; while every step they take brings them nearer to an inheritance worthy of those whom he has adopted as his children and heirs. “Behold, now are we the sons of

God;" and when we look down to the depth from which he has raised us, we may well be astonished at the height of our present elevation : but when we look up towards the summits which we are yet destined to attain, we feel that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Great as the honour is which he has already conferred upon us, it is only the beginning, the pledge of what he purposes to bestow on us in heaven.

The last ascending step in this scale of wonders is,

#### IV. OUR EXALTATION TO THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.

Looking at the history of this exaltation, we may observe, that, like that Divine condescension to which it is owing, it is marked BY DISTINCT AND SUCCESSIVE STAGES, BY WHICH THE CHRISTIAN IS CARRIED FROM GLORY TO GLORY, TILL HE HAS REACHED THE SUMMIT OF PERFECT BLISS.

The first important moment in his history is, when the *voice of God first calls him, and induces him to consider his ways.*

The period of *conversion* comes, and he arrives at another stage; he now cordially believes and embraces the Gospel; his sins are forgiven; he draws the first breath of a new life, and aims at heaven. Henceforth his course may be marked by numerous vicissitudes; but they all form so many steps by which he rises towards heaven.

The period of *death* comes, and he arrives at another and a most important point—he escapes from the state in which he had been walking by

faith, and finds himself standing in the brightness of the throne of God: he quits his conflicts and temptations, and finds himself in a world where all is security, holiness, and bliss; he rises, as by one mighty bound, from earth to heaven. Nor is this the summit of his dignity.

The morning of the *resurrection* will dawn, and he will reach a higher point of glory still: his body will be raised from the low chambers of the grave, and be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body.

The hour of *judgment* will arrive, and constitute another stage in his advancing career: he will then be acquitted from every charge, welcomed as an heir of heaven, and confirmed in his title to eternal life. And do you think that even then he will have reached the limits of his glory? That glory is an ocean, and he will only then be just launched forth on its shoreless expanse! Even then he will be heard saying, as he surveys the interminable prospect of blessedness that stretches before him, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know, that we are like him; for now we see him as he is:" And this we believe, that in proportion to the depth to which he stooped in order to raise us, in that proportion will be the height of our exaltation, for ever advancing in endless progression.

To this advanced stage of their exaltation, however, Christians have not yet attained. Some of them are only just emerging into spiritual light and life: others are in the midst of their career toward

heaven: others have just arrived at the point at which their spirits pass to the throne of God; and others have long been familiar with the scenes and society of heaven. Were the operations of the grace of God to terminate at this moment, were the affairs of his kingdom to be wound up at once, how astonishing the effects which his condescension has already produced! How many has it raised to the enjoyment of eternal life!—what a tide of happiness has it poured through the world, bearing on its bosom to the haven of rest an innumerable multitude, every one of whom would else have perished in the blackness of darkness for ever! But it shall not cease to operate till it has compassed the salvation of all his people; and then, and not till then, will it be adequately appreciated and adored. But then, when all the objects of his love, the fruits of his condescension, shall stand upon the mount of God—when they shall look up and gaze upon the glories of him who sits upon the throne, and then look back and down upon the cross, and remember that he once hung upon it, and trace the various stages through which he passed till he reached it, what an amazing impression of his condescension will they have, and what a theme for praise! And when they shall contrast their divine exaltation with their former depression—when they shall find that they are without fault before the throne of God—that they are walking in the society of angels—are raised to the enjoyment of all that heaven contains, and then look down at the state in which his condescension found them, and,



still lower, at the state of perdition from which his grace has saved them, what a view will they have of their high exaltation, and what a subject for gratitude to him who “raiseth up the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes,” even the princes of heaven.

But the adoration and praise of heaven must begin on earth. Christians are not strangers to these emotions now. It is by these, and the influence which these have upon their life, that they are distinguished from an ungodly world. The Saviour has spoken to them, and they have listened, wondered, and obeyed. He has raised them from the dust, and they have followed him. He has shown them his cross, and they feel that they are not their own. He has pointed them to the open gate of heaven, and they are hastening and ascending to reach it. He has constituted them his friends and his children, and they are advancing to take possession of their inheritance, and to share his glory. But how many here afford no evidence that the Divine condescension has ever awakened their attention?—how many show that their ambition is to sink? They are not the servants, the friends, the sons of the Lord God Almighty, the heirs of glory: they are the servants of Satan and of sin, the friends of God’s greatest enemies—the heirs of death: the depths of guilt and woe into which they are ready to plunge are unfathomable.

## THE ASCENDED CHRIST.

“Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.”—Psalm lxxviii. 18.

I SHALL not detain you with many remarks on the occasion on which this passage was composed; on the predictions which it contains; and the correspondence between these and the types under which they are presented to our view. Nor is it necessary to present you with the different translations which biblical critics have adopted in preference to our own. Of this passage we have, in the apostle Paul, an infallible interpreter. Its application to Christ is determined in his epistle to the Ephesians, chap. iv., ver. 8, “Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

Let us consider the words as descriptive,

I. OF THE REDEEMER’S EXALTATION; and it implies,

1. *That his humiliation is terminated; that he has finished transgression, and made an end of sin.* When the Son of God undertook the glorious work of our redemption, it was a necessary stipulation that he should form an immediate and intimate alliance with our sinful nature; and he said, “Lo, I come, to do thy will, O my God; in the volume of the book it is written of me. A body hast

thou prepared for me." He took not on him the nature of angels, but was made man in all points like as we are. He was made under the law, that it might be magnified and made honourable. He fulfilled its precepts, endured its penalty, and sustained its curse. He made such a display of the perfections of the Divine nature, that the first archangel never saw so much of God before. In him "mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace embraced each other." The voluntary obedience of Jesus, Jehovah's servant, and his people's surety, was infinitely more pleasing to the eternal Father than the sinless, united obedience of a perfect world; and in his sufferings unto death there is a fulness of merit. His blood is the propitiation; by it justice is appeased, and the trembling conscience lulled to rest. The proof of this we have in the resurrection of Christ, and in his ascension to glory. Hear his own appeal while he lived, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Hear his dying testimony, "It is finished." What more convincing or delightful proof that the debt is paid, than the liberation of the surety? The eternal Father, who had forsaken him when he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, now smiles on him with infinite complacency, because the guilt is borne away. The atoning sacrifice is accepted; for our High Priest has entered within the veil, there to appear in the presence of God for us. "He hath ascended up on high." It implies,

2. *His love and care for his church, now he fills the throne.* The personal absence of Christ from the earth is no less necessary to his character as Mediator, than that he should dwell amongst us for a season. Hence he said to his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away." The Spirit must be poured out from on high to render his mediation effectual. And he said, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come." The cause of his people required an advocate within the veil; and for them was to be prepared the mansions of glory. They themselves are to be separated from the world, which lieth in wickedness, and to be sanctified as well as redeemed. "He was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows." As the anointing of Aaron, which descended from his head unto the skirts of his garments; so the Holy Spirit, given to him without measure, descends from him, as the head of the body, to the humblest member; and is the source of sanctity, and the living spring of comfort.

3. *It announces his victory.* "Thou hast led captivity captive." The expression seems to have been proverbially employed among the Hebrews, to denote the entire discomfiture of their enemies, in which they were not only taken captive, but those were set at liberty who had worn their chains. Thus Deborah sings, "Arise, Barak; lead thy captivity captive, son of Abinoam." Respecting the foes whom Messiah led captive, some suppose the psalmist meant the powers of darkness, and that the expression is equivalent to that of the

apostle—"Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross." Others think that rebellious men, whom he saves, and who were the slaves of divers lusts and pleasures, and were led captive by Satan at his will, are intended. Perhaps we shall not dishonour the Scriptures by viewing the passage as including both.

In order to obtain over all these a complete victory, the champion of our race must be humbled and exalted; he must descend from heaven to earth, and ascend from earth to heaven: he must suffer in order to save. He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. He made a complete atonement for sin, as our surety and our substitute. On him was laid the iniquity of us all. "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." By his cross he removes the guilt of sin, and by his grace he destroys its dominion. He reigns in his people, and he does not rule over slaves. He releases every captive whose ransom he has paid. He has spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. He has overcome the world. He despised its most flattering temptations, and braved its utmost hostility and scorn. He makes his people conquerors too, and they triumph like their Master. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." He

has already reversed the curse, and changed it to a blessing. The dominion of death is altered. It extends only to the bodies of those who believe, and that but for a season. "He is the resurrection and the life." "He shall change this vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

This will complete his victory, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

4. *It proclaims his triumph.* Perhaps this is an allusion to the procession of victorious conquerors, in which they were splendidly arrayed, while the spoils of vanquished nations, and the captives which they had taken in battle, were led in their train to adorn the magnificence of their triumph. It must have been an imposing spectacle to have seen one of the Cæsars, when Rome was in her glory, attired in gold, and borne at the head of the legions in a splendid chariot to the capitol. The choirs celebrated his victories, and hundreds of thousands hailed him as the saviour of his country. But all worldly pomp and glory fade, and become like the dust on the balance, when compared with the honours which await him "who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame."

To his disciples he showed himself alive by many infallible proofs, and that death had no more dominion over him. The angels who watched his sepulchre saw him rise, and celebrated his victory over the grave. His conflict with the powers of

darkness terminates in their complete overthrow, and he derives from this work his most glorious title. His name is the memorial of his triumph, and he will be known throughout all worlds, and throughout all ages, not as the Creator, but as the Saviour of the lost. In this his name is above every name, and the achievement of Calvary will be sung whilst there is a redeemed spirit, and a golden harp before the throne. "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

The first-born sons of light sing, in lofty strains, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," whilst the nations that are saved extol him as their deliverer. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

We are led to contemplate,

## II. THE MESSIAH'S LIBERALITY.

In his ascension he not only displays his own personal glory, but dispenses the rich blessings of his grace. "Thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also."

The quotation of the apostle seems to differ from the original text. In the psalm it is said, "Thou hast received gifts." In Paul's quotation from the Septuagint it is, "He gave gifts." The meaning is the same. Our translators have given the verse literally. The Septuagint, and the apostle from it, have given the sense of the words according to the idiom of the Hebrew; to give, is expressed by, to take with a view to give. Bring me a sword, is in the Hebrew, take me a sword; that is, take it with a view to give it me, 1 Kings iii. 24. I will fetch you a morsel of bread, is, literally, I will take a morsel of bread to give to you, Gen. xviii. 5. Thus Christ is said by the apostle to have given, and by the psalmist to have received, "gifts for men," because he received them, in order to give them. As the Mediator of the everlasting covenant, and as the head of the body, the church, all the blessings of grace, all the institutions of the Gospel, and all the treasures of glory, were intrusted to him, and are given by him to his redeemed. "For it hath pleased the Father, that in him shall all fulness dwell, and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

1. *Reflect on the gifts themselves, and consider their value.* Kings at their coronation, conquerors in their triumph, have scattered silver and gold. The pretended successor of Peter at Rome, scatters copper money among the people when he obtains the popedom, because the apostle had said, "Silver and gold have I none;" but "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who



hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." We ought to be grateful for temporal things, and to propose to ourselves the question, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits done unto me?" Ingratitude is monstrous. Praise is almost the only return that we can make, and this is acceptable to him: "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me."

But it is spiritual blessings that should be most highly prized—they are most needed. They only are suited to our spiritual nature. They enrich, they satisfy, they abide. They who are without them, whatever they may possess besides, are really poor and miserable, and blind and naked. It is only in their own vain imaginations that they are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.

Think of their variety and abundance. "He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." Is pardon desirable to the guilty? "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins." Is it good for us to draw nigh to God? "We have boldness of access through him." Is faith precious? "It is the gift of God." Are the promises valuable? "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises." Is hope cheering, and the possession of a good hope our greatest treasure? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Is the gift of the Holy Spirit essential to our sanctity and our comfort? This is the fruit of

his death, and the gift from his throne. "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ: that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Are our holy things our pleasant things? Do we go with delight to the sanctuary? our holy and beautiful house where our fathers worshipped. It is his presence that fills it with glory, and there he has promised to dwell. "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Is a gospel ministry important and valuable? It is the result of his appointment. "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ." The angels of the churches are sent by him; he qualifies them for their work, and renders them successful. Is there any worth in the inheritance of the saints in light? The mansions and the crowns of heaven are purchased and prepared by him, and by him they will be bestowed. "Henceforth," says the apostle, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." And it should never be forgotten, that there is not a blessing that his hand bestows, but cost his heart a groan.

2. *The persons on whom they are bestowed.* "For men, even for the rebellious." The angels were

the eldest offsprings of creating love. In the spirituality of their nature, and in the dignity of their station, they were highest in the scale of created intelligences. Sin found a place in heaven, and angels fell: they, in one instance, transgressed the law of their being, and were not spared to repeat their crime. In proportion to the magnitude of their powers would have been their capacity for promoting their Redeemer's glory, had it pleased him to save them: but he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. These ruined sons of the morning were left involved in the glooms of the pit, and wearing the chains of everlasting darkness; while we, who had sinned after their example and by their temptation,—we, whose iniquities equalled the stars in number, and surpassed the mountains in magnitude, were chosen to drink of the rivers of pleasure which they had forsaken, and to fill the thrones from which they are banished for ever. Who does not say, “This is not the manner of man, O Lord! As the heavens are high above the earth, so are thy ways higher than our ways, and thy thoughts than our thoughts.” But the treasures of heaven are bestowed on the rebellious also; and shall I attempt to prove it? Shall I point you to the weeping Mary, bending over the Redeemer's feet, and bathing them with the tears of gratitude and of penitential sorrow, wiping them with the hairs of her head, and imprinting on them the kiss of love? Shall I point you to the Man of sorrows, with mercy beaming on his brow, pity kindling in his

eye, and his lips about to pronounce forgiveness; for she was a sinner. Go to Calvary, and, amidst its horrid scenes, behold the last glance of the malefactor's dim, languid eye, as it swims in death, resting on the Saviour dying at his side. Listen to that faintly-uttered prayer of a strong and lively faith, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" Hear the soft answer of peace flowing from his lips, which death was turning pale, and from a heart convulsed with agony, "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." It was for the rebellious also. Remember Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee, a bigot, a persecutor, and a blasphemer; yet he obtained mercy: and ye, disciples of Jesus, you shall be my next proof. You were guilty, and you felt it; you cried for mercy, and it was granted; you looked on the Lamb of God, and your sins are washed away. His Spirit has descended as the dew of heaven upon your heart, and filled you with all joy and peace in believing. You run in the way of his commandments, and delight to do his will. You are called to suffer with him, but you can rejoice in tribulation also. Amidst the sorrows of the present world, you are cheered with the delightful visions of the future, and anticipate the "rest that remaineth for the people of God." This is the burden of your song—

" Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrain'd to be!"

You must acknowledge it was for the rebellious also.

3. *Their design.* It is that the Holy Spirit may sanctify the believing soul, and make it the temple of the living God; for he hath said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." It is that, as the shekinah rested over the mercy-seat in the temple of Solomon, and was the symbol and pledge of Jehovah's presence with his ancient people, so his gracious presence may abide in the church called out of the world that lieth in wickedness, into the fellowship of his Son. And it will be consummated when the mystery of God is finished, when the Gospel shall have been preached in all the world—when the last fetter of slavery shall be broken—when the last pagan temple and the last idol shall be destroyed—when every vestige of superstition and imposture is dispelled by heaven's own light—when the Saviour's dominion shall be universal, and he shall reign over a holy, a grateful, and a happy world, and it shall be proclaimed by the returning angels, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men!" When the great multitude which no man can number shall be gathered out of every land, of all nations, and kindreds and people and tongues, and assembled in the heavenly sanctuary—when the family in heaven shall be complete, and every saint be there, then shall the God of glory dwell in the church of the first-born through all the revolving ages of eternity.

This subject ought to excite,

1. Adoration. 2. Gratitude. 3. Co-operation.
  4. Desire.
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## SYMPATHY FOR SAILORS.

“ They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters ; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths : their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit’s end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet ; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men ! ”—Psalm cvii. 23—31.

FIRM belief in the doctrine of a universal providence is a source of devout and constant gratitude. The universe is full of God : we are surrounded with the works and wonders of the Most High. But some men, so to speak, have a nearer view of the Divine Providence than others ; the invisible Majesty flashes upon their minds repeated and appalling proofs of his immediate presence. Infidelity is always inexcusable, irreligion is uniformly a reproach ; but infidelity among those to whom the Almighty frequently speaks in the wide extremes of terror and of mercy—irreligion, where the hand

of God is every moment stretched forth to destroy or to save, must be considered as the very extravagance of moral depravation. The government of God, exercised over the great world of waters, is here exhibited and urged as a cause of adoring gratitude and praise. Let us for a few minutes glance at the various topics which the text brings under our consideration.

I. THE FIRST OBJECT WHICH ATTRACTS OUR NOTICE IS THE SEA,

One of the most sublime spectacles in nature, denominated "the great waters," and "the deep." We behold it in this description under one of its most magnificent and appalling aspects.

On the shore, we can form no just, no adequate conception of the vast extent and unfathomable profundity of this mysterious and astonishing world. A map of the globe shows us what a proportion it bears to the land; yet it never transgresses its bounds: its foundations are as stable and as firm as the more solid earth. Yet it exhibits wonders peculiar to itself. The forms and properties of matter it possesses in common with other material substances; but it is acted upon by the other elements in a surprising manner.

One of the most awful things in the universe is a storm at sea: it is not possible to realize, much less to exaggerate, its horrors: the whole scene is terrible. Destruction is the stern monarch of the storm, and Nature herself seems to heave with her last convulsion. To these tremendous vicissitudes

the sea is incessantly exposed. The fairest morning smiles but to tempt the demon of the storm—the cloudless beauty of the most tranquil day is suddenly overcast with tempest, and the furious hurricane carries desolation in its course. Yet on this sea, on these deep and great waters, we are invited to behold the wonderful exhibition,

## II. OF HUMAN INGENUITY AND POWER.

What is man? An insect!—an angel! The construction of ships and the art of navigation reveal the powers of the human intellect, and fill us with astonishment as we contemplate its resources. This being of insignificance, that is crushed before the moth, yokes the winds to his car; and that very ocean that proclaims his littleness, makes known his greatness too. In a sense, the winds and the seas obey him: he renders them subservient to his skill and prowess; he does his “business in the great waters.”

But the text presents us at the same time with a view of that hardy, bold, and intrepid

III. CLASS OF MEN to whom this description is applicable, whose *employment* is arduous, whose *perils* are always imminent, whose *occasional sufferings* are beyond imagination great; who are yet the *peculiar care* of Providence, and who ought especially to be distinguished by a spirit of piety.

IV. THE TEXT NOT ONLY RECOGNIZES, BUT BRINGS FORWARD, ONE OF THE GREATEST DOCTRINES OF RELIGION, AND AT THE SAME TIME ENFORCES ONE OF ITS MOST IMPORTANT DUTIES.



1. *Divine Providence is in all dispensations, occurrences, events, and what are called, most improperly, accidents and casualties.*

2. *Divine mercy and goodness are the grand elementary principles on which Providence proceeds ; and these are conspicuously displayed, as well in the adverse as in the more favourable occurrences of life. It is he that commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind ; it is he that, in answer to the earnest cries of the suffering mariner, makes the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. One view of the case of seamen amid their perils, and the storms and deaths that threaten them, we would impress upon the friends of their well-being and happiness. Prayer is their safeguard and their sheet-anchor ; but the prayer of danger is not always the prayer of faith. To be able to pray, they must be taught the knowledge, the fear, and the love of God—the necessity of a Saviour, and the value of reliance on his infinite merits. But how are they to obtain this ? how can they call on him of whom they have not heard ? Christians of all communions, seamen are your special charge : it is yours, by your liberality and kindness to them when they sustain loss,*

(1.) *To connect labour with hope, by your pious instructions and pecuniary efforts to enlighten and to save them. Also, to connect*

(2.) *Danger with devotion.*

(3.) *Deliverance with gratitude.*

(4.) *Death with eternal felicity.*

I plead the cause of millions of our fellow-men

and fellow-subjects, to whose profession, whether they man the navy of our country, or unfurl the sails of our commerce, we are, under God, mainly indebted for our safety and prosperity.

Religion is all they want. I plead for a whole class of social existence, whose moral culture has been cruelly neglected; who are peculiarly exposed to the contagion of depravity; who are reckless of danger, though continually in peril; and who are more reckless still of their highest interests as accountable and immortal beings, whose souls are in greater jeopardy than their bodies, and who are in greater danger of sinking into hell than of being swallowed by the merciless deep.

I plead for the sea-boy—that he may go and return on his first voyage uncontaminated. “Poor child of danger! nursling of the storm!” For the poor wrecked mariner—that his spirit may soar when his body sinks; and if thousands must perish every year in our service, for our security and enjoyment, that the sepulchres of ocean may be peopled with the dead that die in the Lord.

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### THE RULE, PRINCIPLE, AND PRIVILEGES OF OBEDIENCE.

“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.”—Psalm cxix. 165.

THE great secret of all true felicity is obedience to the will of God. It is therefore of infinite moment that we should be acquainted with the rule and principle of obedience, and that its delightful

effect in promoting our happiness should be so exhibited to our view, and impressed upon our hearts, as to induce and secure the performance of it. This is one great end of an evangelical ministry: and the Scriptures furnish us with an almost infinite variety of topics, which rightly understood and enforced, cannot fail, under the Divine blessing, to conduct us to it. This object is brought directly before us in the text. It presents us with,

I. The Rule: II. The Principle: and III. The Privileges of Obedience.

“Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.”

I. THE RULE OF OBEDIENCE IS THE LAW OF GOD: or, in other words, his whole revealed will, as it embraces the obligations of universal holiness.

Of this law we may observe,

1. *That it is Divine in its origin.*

2. *Spiritual and extensive in its requirements.* It is the law of a sovereign with whom are the treasures of knowledge and wisdom, and who prescribes a reasonable and just law for the government of the mind and heart, as well as the outward deportment. The laws of men respect actions only; but God demands an inward and spiritual homage. He must likewise be obeyed, through the medium of every duty which we owe to ourselves, our families, and society at large.

3. *This law, as it is unquestionable in its authority, is perpetual in its obligation.* It is sufficient for us to know that it is the law of God, and that

it is suited to man as a rational and accountable creature, to satisfy us of the truth of this observation. It is the will of Him who is the greatest, the wisest, and the best of beings ; who is our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. These considerations must establish its authority ; and no possible circumstances in which we can be placed have power to relax its obligations. It is not abrogated by the fall of man. It is not abrogated by his recovery. It is not peculiar to any dispensation of religion. It was essential to Judaism, but not peculiar to it. Christianity recognises and establishes it. Christians are not their own masters, at liberty to follow their own ungoverned inclinations ; they are the servants of Christ, and must yield obedience to his commandments. These commandments are in substance the same with the moral law of God. The servants of Christ, though free from the condemning power of the law, are not discharged from their obedience to the precepts of the law. Though no longer depending for acceptance with God on their own moral performances, they are not without law to God, “but under the law to Christ.” They receive the law from the hands of Christ, as the rule to which all their actions, thoughts, and tempers must be conformed ; as the rule, by their conformity to which their final state will be adjudged, and their future rewards proportioned.

“Do we then make void the law through faith ? God forbid : yea, we establish the law.” The doctrine of salvation by grace, through faith, far from weakening the obligations to morality, increases

them tenfold. Our unceasing endeavour to fulfil the whole law of God, is the most unequivocal proof of love to Christ, and an indispensable evidence of an interest in his merits. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." Such, then, is the rule of obedience. Let me now,

II. DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION TO ITS PRINCIPLE, WHICH IS LOVE.

"Great peace have they which love thy law."

Love is said to be the fulfilling of the law. "Oh how I love thy law!" is the devout aspiration of every pious mind. There can be no acceptable obedience without love. Where it exists it must govern; and there is nothing which it cannot accomplish and endure. What makes sin stronger than conscience, and more alluring than the joys of heaven?—love. It is loved; therefore conscience is silenced, and heaven is relinquished. What makes obedience and the most painful self-denial mightier than the passions, and successful in spite of the temptations of the world?—love. Observe its power, my brethren, in the instance of the Son of God. It brought him from heaven: under its influence he humbled himself, became incarnate, and appeared upon earth in a bodily shape, in the form and fashion of a man. Impelled by love, he obeyed the law, magnified it, and made it honourable: love

constrained him to die the death. Behold him, “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Behold him, without guilt, condemned for an impostor; without sin, sustaining the punishment due to all the sin that ever was committed. “He was wounded,” but it was “for our transgressions:” he was bruised, but our iniquities bruised him. He carried our sorrows, because he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Observe the first promulgators of the Gospel. Oh what will not love enable us to do, and to endure! They followed in their Master’s steps. His love constrained them. The lamp kindled in their hearts by the celestial fire of charity, never went out. The many waters of affliction could not drown it; and when the fury of the oppressor broke the earthen vessel that contained it, then was their victory, like that of Gideon, complete.

“Great peace have they which love thy law.”

This unfolds the character of obedience.

1. *As free*, distinguishing it from the enforced submission of a slave.

2. *As generous*, opposing it to the mercenary servitude of a Pharisee.

3. *As affectionate*, distinguishing it from the cold homage of reason and the reluctant service of natural conscience.

The law is loved for its own sake, and the sake of its Author. This evinces that the heart is renewed, and that it rightly appreciates, and gratefully acknowledges the change. But we come now to notice,

### III. TO NOTICE THE PRIVILEGES OF OBEDIENCE.

“Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.” These are described by what obedience supposes, by what it directly procures, and by what Divine Providence has inseparably connected with it.

1. *By what it supposes*—That we are at peace with God through the blood of reconciliation.

2. *By what it directly procures*—Peace with *ourselves*, by the answer of a good conscience and the subjection of those desires which war against the soul. Happiness which flows from affectionate obedience. That which we love we pursue with delight; love makes the law of God congenial with the soul. Hence our highest enjoyments proceed from obeying it—peace *with all men* by the spirit of charity.

3. *By what the Providence of God inseparably connects with it*—“Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.” The whole creation is so at peace with them, that all things work together for their good.

No external trouble can rob them of this peace; no offence or stumbling-block which is thrown in their way by persecution or temptation, by the malice of enemies or the apostacy of friends, by any thing they see, hear, or feel, can detain or divert them from their course. Heavenly love surmounts every obstacle, and they run with delight in the way of God’s commandments.

## IMPROVEMENT.

1. This subject furnishes us with a test of character; and,

2. Points out the only source of happiness. Obedience is joy. The men of the world say, To enjoy is to obey. They mean by this the gratification of their depraved desires. How much more refined, exalted, and durable the happiness of a sincere Christian! He knows that the present is a state of discipline; he knows that duty and enjoyment are blended together—that to OBEY IS TO ENJOY.

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 THE BALANCES.

“Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.”  
Dan. v. 27.

AMONG the guilty children of men there are a few who are placed above public opinion, and who, being accountable to none of their fellow-creatures, audaciously usurp the mountain of the Divine Presence, and exalt themselves above the God of heaven. These have generally been monsters in crime, and the world's masters have usually proved its greatest curse.

We are not in Belshazzar's circumstances, nor can we be: we cannot, as he did, profane the sacred vessels of the sanctuary; but we can dishonour the sacred name of God; we can despise



his ordinances, violate his laws, neglect his great salvation, and incur a degree of guilt even more heinous than that of the Babylonian monarch. The handwriting may not be seen on the walls of our houses; but the condemnation of God is still written in his book against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men; and unless we attend to the warnings and instructions of that blessed volume, it will be one day said to each of us, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."

Give me your attention while I endeavour to show,

I. That the justice and mercy of God will be without impeachment in the final sentence that will be pronounced upon the children of men; for they will be weighed in the balances of Divine equity: II. When the examination takes place, on which this sentence will depend, some will be found wanting: III. The consequences resulting from this discovery will be tremendously dreadful.

I. THAT THE JUSTICE AND MERCY OF GOD WILL BE WITHOUT IMPEACHMENT IN THE FINAL SENTENCE THAT WILL BE PRONOUNCED UPON ALL MEN.

I shall not now dwell upon their case who are in circumstances essentially different from our own. We live under a dispensation,

1. *Of law*, which law we have violated, but which is in its nature holy, just, and good—which is of perpetual obligation, and which condemns us to eternal death.

2. *Provision is made for our salvation in the Gos-*

*pel, and which provision is offered to all whom the law consigns to everlasting perdition.*

3. *On the acceptance or rejection of this salvation our sentence will depend.* We shall either be acquitted, justified, redeemed, or we shall fall under the *curse of the law*, and under the infinitely severer *curse of the Gospel*. Our condemnation is not to be referred to a divine, irresistible decree, nor to any want of efficacy in the provision and in the means, but simply upon our non-acceptance, our own refusal. If you entertain false views of the Divine decrees, the blame is yours: God has neither misled you, nor in any way influenced you to adopt such views. “If I am to be saved, I shall be saved, and nothing can hinder it. If I am to perish, no efforts of my own can avail: it is in vain for me to strive. Besides, how am I to accept or to strive? Am I not dead? and can the dead perform the functions of the living?” You may think all this very ingenious and very conclusive; but if it be the sole cause of your everlasting destruction, the very thought of it will ere long fill you with horror. Turn, or die!—turn, and live!

Let us inquire what it is to accept or reject this salvation. Not merely a cold assent to the great doctrines of the Gospel; not a partial acceptance of it, uniting his merits with our own, and thus making heaven partly a gift, partly a purchase: we cannot accept of it till we have utterly renounced ourselves. In humility the soul is brought to acknowledge its entire helplessness and ruined condition, and to depend only on him. Under this

consideration of our own state, and of the all-sufficiency of Christ as a Saviour, a principle of love to him is produced in our hearts. This is to accept of salvation, when we see we are lost and undone without it, and can receive it at the hands of God as the gift of his free grace.

And what is it to refuse this salvation? It is not necessary you should deny the divinity of the Gospel, question the truth of its doctrines, or enter upon a course of open rebellion against its precepts. If we have not faith in Christ as a living principle in our hearts, then we reject this salvation. If we do not love the Saviour, we reject him.

II. WHEN THE EXAMINATION TAKES PLACE AT THE GREAT ASSIZE, SOME WILL BE WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE OF DIVINE EQUITY, AND FOUND WANTING.

That we may know whether we shall exhibit this fatal deficiency, let us ask of ourselves three things:—

1. *Are we conscious that we have broken the law of God?*

2. *Have we applied to God for the salvation he has offered?*

3. *Have we good reason to believe that our supplication has been heard, and our request granted?*

You feel in your hearts the greatest hatred of sin; the greatest dread of a self-righteous spirit; you are sensible of the infinite value of your soul; you have learned to know and love the will of God; to obey is your delight; all your hopes are in God's mercy; all your strength is in God's grace; all

your anticipations centre in the holiness and glory of heaven ; and Christ is the object you supremely love ; in his presence you look for fulness of joy. The opposites of these prove a state of condemnation.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES RESULTING FROM THIS FEARFUL DISCOVERY.

“ The wicked shall be turned into hell. For Tophet is ordained of old : yea, for all sinners it is prepared. God hath made it deep and large ; the pile thereof is fire and much wood ; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.”

1. *Eternal banishment from the presence of God.*
2. *The reproaches of a guilty conscience.*
3. *A constant reflection, that what others enjoy might have been yours, had it not been for your determined and obstinate perseverance in the ways of sin.*

And now I leave you to make your own reflections on the consequences of being “ weighed in the balances, and found wanting.”

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## THE GREAT MYSTERY.

“ Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh.”—1 Tim. iii. 16.

If we would be reconciled to all the mysteries of Divine revelation, even to those that are not only humbling to reason, but almost repulsive to faith, we should begin with the greatest, which happily is all attractive, which draws the heart and

wins the affections. This is the mystery of infinite love; and though we labour with all saints to comprehend it, the labour is delightful. It satisfies, yet it fails. But we believe it to be true; and this belief makes every other difficulty easy. Embracing this, and embracing it to our inmost heart, its very incomprehensibleness shows that it is the mystery of God; and this mystery once believed, justifies and secures our faith in every other. If this be true, and its truth comes home to the heart, no others can be false; we cannot understand, but we feel their truth.

The wonderful, the amazing fact, which is the brightest disclosure of the infinite that even Divine love has to offer, and which is to us obscure, because its radiance overpowers our faculties, now claims our attention. This is the great mystery of godliness—"God manifest in the flesh." Of this fact the apostle favours us with a declaration and a description: the one is plain—the other is unsearchable. Let us briefly examine both. Let us endeavour to ascertain,

I. THE NATURE OF THE FACT WHICH IS HERE AFFIRMED—"God was manifest in the flesh."

The universe is a manifestation of Deity as a whole, and so is every one of its distinct and separate parts; whether an archangel or a worm—whether a world or an atom. These are diversified manifestations of Deity, with which we are in some degree familiar.

1. *God is manifest in the visible heavens and the earth, as the architect is manifest in his works.*

2. *His nature as an intelligent and spiritual essence, invested with moral glory, appeared in the first parents of the human race in Paradise.*

3. *Manifestations of another kind, after the destruction of this bright and beautiful reflection of the Deity, have appeared to instruct, to awe, to reprove, and to bless mankind; such as have eminently displayed his omniscience, his omnipresence, his holiness, his justice, his truth, his majesty, his power, his goodness and love;—by immediate revelations to the minds of patriarchs and prophets;—by symbolical exhibitions through an economy reared with his own hand;—by the agency of nature, supernaturally directed and called into requisition; and by the spiritual renovation of man, to be again the image of his Maker below.*

But these are not the manifestations referred to in the text. This wonderful fact stands out from all others in its own character of unparalleled majesty. Here is affirmed THE TRUE AND PROPER INCARNATION OF DEITY. “Flesh” is not in this passage to be considered merely in the light of a revealing medium, through which the Divine attributes are made to shine, but as that in which the Divinity inheres: not by a simple indwelling, as some affirm, but by an absolute union of the Divine with the human nature.

This great fact was early predicted to our first mother. The exclusion of human instrumentality in its production is intimated in the first promise. “*The seed of the woman;*” figuratively represented in vision to the patriarch Jacob; unveiled to Moses in the burning, but unconsumed bush; displayed

under a variety of striking symbols in the tabernacle and temple worship; affirmed by all the prophets, especially by Isaiah, who saw his glory, and spake of him, and who foretold that "a virgin should conceive, and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel." In the fulness of time it was realized in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. An angel announced his Divine nature to the virgin mother: "The Holy Ghost shall overshadow thee, and therefore that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Celestial beings attended on his birth, and sung an anthem to his praise. Simeon and Anna hailed their infant, yet glorious Lord, when he came suddenly to his temple.

As the incarnation of the Almighty God, he continually manifested HIMSELF. Those who knew him best discerned the mysterious glory which he revealed, and exclaimed, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." His doctrines, his miracles, his life, his DEATH, all attested that he was the Son of God. How wonderful that death should reveal Divinity! that the greatest extremes in the universe should not only meet in the same person, but unite in the same scene!

If God had not been in the midst of that dreadful conflict which decided the fate of man's world, a cry such as never wind brought from the fierce-peopled forest when night had locked up the black wilderness, beyond all din of battle, more than the echo of falling thrones, would have been the cry of

human nature in that bewildered hour. What preternatural horrors proclaimed the presence and the anguish of Him in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead! Watchman, what of the night? O watchman, what of the night? Terrific is the conflict—strange the eclipse which now falls upon the Sun of righteousness! Oh, the intolerable burden of a guilty world! how it crushes the humanity, which dies at the very moment when Omnipotence is putting forth its mightiest energy! The God exclaims with a loud voice, in token of victory,—the man bows his illustrious head, and gives up the ghost.

But some of you are ready to exclaim, All this is incomprehensible, and is therefore incredible. But observe, my brethren, we do not exhibit an ordinary occurrence, a fact within the usual range of common events: we tell you at the outset that it is a mystery, a great mystery of godliness. If, indeed, you commence by refusing to believe more than you can comprehend—if you proscribe mystery as an article of faith, you have to settle the questions of the being of a God, your own being, and the existence of the atoms around you; and it is evident that you place yourselves in an attitude of defiance and contradiction to the inspired author of the text, who affirms that, “*without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.*”

This is the second branch of our subject, namely,



## II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE FACT WHICH OUR TEXT AFFIRMS.

What is a mystery? Something purposely obscured; a secret, of the existence of which we are convinced, but which is not revealed to us, which requires more light before we can decide upon its character; something that was once a secret, but which is now communicated to us; something revealed, but not fully known, the perfect revelation of which is incompatible with the present state of trial, or the revelation of which, in all its grandeur, is impossible to a created mind. All these definitions apply to the subject before us. While it was the subject of prophecy, it was *purposely* obscured: when it became *fact*, it was *disclosed* in all the amplitude of a clear and perfect revelation. But, notwithstanding the clear and manifold revelation, it is still a mystery, and the apostle affirms that it is a great mystery.

1. *It is so when compared, when contrasted rather, with the inventions of men.* Superstition has had its mysteries from the beginning, and it purposely clothed them in darkness and in terror; but they have been dragged into the light, and have become mere spectres and shadows, delusions and absurdities.

2. It is a great mystery, *when we consider the utter incompetency of the human mind to originate a single idea or conception that could possibly lead to its discovery, or comprehend it as a doctrine after it was made known.* As it relates to subjects each incomprehensible in itself, more incomprehensible in their

union, and still more incomprehensible in their perfect distinction and separate identity; two natures in one person, with all the distinct peculiarities of their respective attributes. This forms a mystery, which must defy the powers of created intelligence.

3. It is a great mystery, when we consider *the kind of relation it bears to all other Divine mysteries*. They are all inferior, all dependent upon this. This is the pillar, this is the ground of the truth. Here the enigmas of former economies are inscribed and deciphered; here prophecies are explained; types are unravelled; and truths revealed in their own light. This, too, is the foundation of the entire system of a heavenly religion. The superstructure rests on this—the knowledge, the purity, the happiness, the salvation of a world.

4. This is a great mystery, *because more than any other it makes its exclusive appeal to faith*. It leaves reason at an infinite distance below its own sublime and unapproachable regions; yet it is not contrary to reason, but perfectly consistent with all its rules of judging, and with all its modes of inquiry. Faith is a capacity beyond reason, as vision is a higher attainment than faith. Some have affirmed that the doctrine of the Trinity and this great mystery of godliness are not above reason, but contrary to it, and, therefore, unworthy of credence. Undoubtedly, if it could be proved, against any alleged truth of revelation, that reason could clearly demonstrate its falsehood or its absurdity, we should be bound to reject it; but it is evident

that the mysteries of the holy Scriptures are not of this class. Before a doctrine is treated as opposed to the dictates of reason, it must be shown that reason is in possession of all the necessary data on which to form a judgment: it must know the modes of the Divine existence, and be able to show a palpable disagreement between that and union with an inferior nature; which nature it must also understand in all its capacities and possible relations, ere it can determine that it is contrary to the nature and fitness of things that God, by an incarnation, should be made manifest in the flesh. Now, separate from the testimony of revelation, I know nothing with certainty respecting the Divine nature, and very little, almost nothing, of my own; and if I admit that testimony to be true and authoritative, (and it must be authoritative if it be true,) then the only way by which I can prove the position in question to be contrary to reason is to prove it contrary to that revealed testimony. Another point of immense importance for us to establish concerning this great mystery is, that it is,

### III. A MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

To the mysteries of Paganism allusion has been made already; but they never were, and they never can become, mysteries of godliness: they are rather the allies of atheism and the panders to iniquity.

“ Away with such divinities !—their birth  
 Man’s brain-sick superstition, and their mirth  
 Lust, rapine, cruelty ; their fell employ  
 God’s works and their own votaries to destroy.”

A great mystery of godliness,

1. *Removing all the penal obstacles to our acceptance with God.* The atonement of Christ for sin derives all its efficacy from his Divinity; but as God simply, without a participation of human nature, he could neither have magnified the law which we had broken by his perfect and meritorious obedience, nor could he have paid by his suffering and death the price of our redemption. Two natures, the Divine and human, are requisite to this marvellous undertaking, and by these two natures in one person it could alone have been accomplished: the combinations of other natures must have been utterly unavailing.

A mystery of godliness,

2. *Furnishing us with the most powerful incentives to the adoration, love, and worship of the Godhead.* These are derived from the manifestation itself—the harmony and united splendour of all the Divine attributes, the grand design of this manifestation, and the astonishing glory and majesty with which it has invested our fallen nature, as illustrating the divinity and omnipotence of infinite Love.

A mystery of godliness,

3. *Exhibiting, in all its attractive and most powerful charms, the brightest pattern of Divine excellence, softened and yet sublimed by its humanity.* Infinite perfection of character shining in the glories of the Divine nature, through the medium of humanity, is revealed not only to excite our admiration, but to induce our *imitation*. Nor is it raised so far above

us as to render the attempt either presumptuous or hopeless. The excellence of the Divine law is its perfection. The law is the transcript: in the incarnation of Christ we are permitted to contemplate the original. The Divine excellence of our Lord's character is the very circumstance, exemplified as it is in a series of human scenes and transactions, which render it a pattern of universal rectitude, being enforced by its unattainable perfection, as well as by the sanction of a nature ineffably superior to our own. When the mind and heart are both intensely fixed in admiring and adoring contemplation of incarnate goodness, the following apostrophe, conceived in the very spirit of devout enthusiasm, ceases to be rhapsody: "Thou mysterious inhabitant on our earth! incalculable Spirit enshrined in the form of our mortality! Jesus of Nazareth! who shall declare the simple but sublime glory of thy life!—the perfect adaptation of thy spirit to the infirmities of our nature, yet above their control to sin! With the countenance of a little child, what was in thy heart? The wisdom of age was thy praise of youth. Modest in thy earnest devotions, doing good unto men, doing the will of thy heavenly Father. Why did thine eye lighten against the Scribes and Pharisees? why didst thou not condemn the poor woman taken in adultery? why did the weeping Magdalene wash thy feet with penitential tears, and wipe them with her long dishevelled hair? The wandering lunatic, with his new and steady eye and economical motions of

reason, was left in thy modesty to the tears of a happy and grateful surprisal. When didst thou disregard the cry, or not anticipate the wish, of exposed and upturned blindness? That thou didst weep for thy friend Lazarus, and bring him back from dissolution and the investiture of the grave; that thou didst the same for the stranger youth at the gate of Nain, and heal every manner of inveterate disease in a thousand instances: are they not written in the unostentatious but impressive records of thy life? Who hath not seen thy countenance in the sore-smitten lazar-house, more benignantly radiant beneath the dark wing of Azrael, the angel of death? Beneath thy glance of benevolence and power, see the crowd of pale and restless human faces, a map of uncertain light and a thousand changing expressions, gathering into the staid and thankful brightness of health and reason. The praise of conquerors is a distempered flush of blood through the sad tears of bereavement; but thine, holy Jesus of Nazareth, were triumphs on earth celebrated by other tears, the tears of joy. Who sees not the glory of thy character, nor tries to imitate, knows not the best nobility of our nature, seeks not to be truly ennobled, is mean, is worthy of condemnation, is condemned already."

A mystery of godliness,

4. *Supplying us from its mysterious source with a principle of divine and heavenly life.* John xvii. 21—23.

A mystery of godliness,

5. *Drawing us onward by a mighty, irresistible,*

*and perpetual attraction to all that is ineffable and sublime, till we feel ourselves absorbed in Deity.*

“ Let Jews on their own law rely,  
 And Greeks of wisdom boast ;  
 I love the incarnate mystery,  
 And there I fix my trust.”

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### THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON ALONE ABLE TO REVEAL THE FATHER.

“ No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”—  
 John i. 18.

THE dignity of the Son of God, and his qualifications for his mediatorial work, are the interesting subjects which attract the peculiar regard of the evangelists and apostles. The writings of John, the beloved disciple, abound in descriptions and declarations of the divinity and inherent glory of Immanuel, whom, by way of eminence, he has called, *the Word that was with God, and that was God*, and whom in our text he styles “ *the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father ;*” and that the evidence of his being truly and properly a Divine person may not rest merely on these expressions and his own testimony, the evangelist is anxious to convince us that it arises out of the very nature of the work which he had undertaken, which was to declare God ; to make him known by displaying those attributes with which not any creature, not even the highest archangel, was acquainted, and by unfolding those counsels which

none but him who was "in the bosom of the Father" could possibly reveal.

As St. John, in the former part of this chapter, labours to exalt the Saviour in the minds of his readers by referring to his pre-existent state, by producing the testimony of the Baptist, and also by drawing a comparison between Christ the Saviour and Moses the lawgiver, and showing the infinite superiority of the one to the other; in our text he fixes on the revelation which the Redeemer had made of God his Father, both as to the effect and the evidence of his divine nature and his divine mission. "No man hath seen God at any time;" and it was in the power of no creature to reveal the Divine attributes and counsels; but "the only begotten Son," that eternal Word to which every knee in heaven and in earth should bow, and "who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

Two things, therefore, are asserted in the text, which we shall endeavour to illustrate, namely,

I. The utter inability of man, independently of Jesus Christ, to attain a true and saving knowledge of God: II. The peculiar fitness of Jesus Christ to communicate this knowledge, and which justifies our implicit confidence in him as a Divine Instructor.

I. THE UTTER INABILITY OF MAN, INDEPENDENTLY OF JESUS CHRIST, TO ATTAIN A TRUE AND SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

"No man hath seen God at any time;" and this is no reflection either upon the goodness or the



justice of our Creator. This inability is the sad consequence of the fall, and not of our original constitution; for once we were formed in the image of God: but sin has defaced his likeness, obliterated all traces of that heavenly knowledge by which we were once distinguished, and no human effort, before God himself interposed, could possibly have restored what we so basely forfeited and lost.

Of man's incompetency to discover that knowledge of God which would secure his happiness, we have sufficient proofs,

1. *In the infinite greatness of God, and the infinite distance there is between God and us.* Who among the sons of men have known the mind of the Lord? It is higher than heaven. God is great; infinitely great. It is impossible for an insect to understand the nature and extent of the globe on which it crawls: it is equally impossible for the limited, shrivelled faculties of the human mind to find out the Almighty to perfection, or even to attain that knowledge of him, which is necessary to our peace. The distance between the Creator and the fallen creature is so immensely great, that nothing *certainly* can be known of him by any of the works of his hands, and, accordingly, we find the world lost in ignorance, till it pleased God to give a revelation of himself "in the face of Jesus Christ;" for, after "that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."

2. *As an additional barrier against the attainment*

*of this knowledge by the efforts of men, we notice the depravity of the human heart.* If we suppose a power inherent in human reason, which it does not, which it never did possess, namely, that, unprejudiced and undepraved, it could discover God; yet, considering it vitiated and perverted by sin, it instantly becomes weak, and, with the utmost stretch of its powers it falls infinitely below the eternal throne; an immense weight presses it down, and it cannot stretch a thought half way to God. By the depravity of the heart reason is beclouded; man, fallen from original rectitude and purity, conceived of a God like himself, hence one fatal error became the parent of a thousand more, and reason, bewildered in the beginning, continued erring farther and farther from the truth, till unintelligible polytheism possessed the world, and men became adorers of four-footed beasts, reptiles, and creeping things, and even bowed down before stocks and stones, dumb idols of their own making. And amidst this universal ignorance of the true God, there was not one human mind that could extricate itself; the learned and the rude, in this respect, shared the same fate; and till the coming of Christ and the diffusion of the Gospel, all men “were without hope and without God in the world,” ignorant and impotent, depraved and miserable. “No man had seen God at any time.”

But who is this that comes in his Father's name and power, that claims the attention of the world, who offers to dissipate the darkness in which we are sunk? Let us examine his pretensions: a person

capable of making such a discovery—one able to reveal the eternal God in his mind and will—must possess rare qualifications; must have a character peculiar to himself, and which no other being can claim. This is no other than “the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father.”

II. HIS ABILITY AND PECULIAR FITNESS TO UNFOLD THE SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, is our second head of discourse.

Three things, and they are included in the text, eminently qualify the Lord Jesus Christ for the important office of revealing the Father;—these are—*Deity, intimate converse, humanity*. He is the Son of God, and is therefore possessed of the Divine nature; he is in the bosom of the Father, and therefore is intimately acquainted with the secrets of the Divine counsels; he is the *only begotten Son*, and therefore possessing a human nature, he knows how to convey to human beings Divine knowledge, and to reveal to them those counsels with which he was intrusted.

1. *Deity*. If we contemplate for a moment the wonderful scheme of man’s redemption which is unfolded in the Gospel, and the perfections of God, which therein harmonize and shine to the comfort of miserable sinful creatures, and to the admiration of all the universe besides, we shall readily conclude that the *first* qualification, namely, *a participation of the Divine nature*, was essential to the office of making such a discovery, and that the wonderful person who could thus declare God, must be God himself. It is plain that none of the angels could have

performed the task, for the whole is an astonishing contrivance, which they desire to look into; and one of the persons of the adorable Trinity could only be equal to such an undertaking. Had it been merely to declare that God was great, or that he was good, or had it been only to reveal the Divine justice, and to execute punishment on rebels, a prophet or an angel might have easily performed it all; but it was to collect the scattered rays of the various perfections of Jehovah into one focus; it was to exhibit all his moral attributes in one scene, in a manner in which they had never been displayed before. This required the arm of Omnipotence, and the sagacity of a wisdom that is infinite; and who, amongst all the ranks of spirits, was there fit for such a work?—the eyes of all are instantly directly to the Son of God, who, partaking of the Divine nature, knows what it is fit for God to do, and who could do it all with a God-like dignity. And in order to satisfy the anxious minds of men, that each person in the Godhead has an equal concern in this important affair of human happiness; in order to prove their union and harmony in the scheme, that as they are one in essence, they are one in their views and pursuits—not only is Jesus Christ revealed in his Divine nature, but,

2. *His intimate converse with the eternal Father is mentioned as another circumstance to indicate his fitness for the all-important work of revealing the Divine counsels.* He is not only the Son of God, but he is in the bosom of his Father, and there-

fore he reveals nothing but what was previously settled in the councils of eternity: and his revelation, coming with the visible and Divine sanction of the Father, clearly proves that the Father, as well as the Son, is infinitely placable towards sinners; and that the humiliation, sufferings, and death of Christ, in which he so eminently reveals the counsels of Heaven, did not purchase the good will of God to sinners, but opened the only way for the exercise of it.

Jesus Christ, from eternity, was in the bosom of his Father, and he has so declared him, that we see his heart yearning with concern for the salvation of sinners, and devising the expedient of his Son's sacrifice to gratify his desire for their felicity. "God is love." This applies equally to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The constitution of Immanuel is the most glorious display of this love; for he is in the bosom of his Father, and being thus intimately and ineffably conversant with him, must have been the person the best qualified to make this revelation to a guilty world. But how was this to be done? How is he, who is irradiated with all the glory of the Godhead, and before whom angels veil their faces with their wings—how is he to hold converse with sinners? who can behold him, and live? If an angel was so glorious in his appearance, that an inspired apostle fell down in confusion before him, who is to look upon the Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person? But the counsels of eternity anticipate the difficulty—it vanishes

—the God descends clothed in a body like our own.

3. *Humanity.* This is the third qualification which he possesses, and one that should infinitely endear him to us. “He knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust;” he therefore condescends to take our nature. He is the only *begotten* Son in a human form.

He appears as the model of Jehovah. Before him terror flees away; and that which would otherwise confound, now allures; we can look upon the bright refulgent Sun, but it is through the veil of humanity; we can learn of him the most sublime and necessary truths, for he has not only all the fulness of the Godhead, but as man he is of a meek and lowly mind. What constitution could be devised better adapted to the design of making a revelation of God to sinners, than that of Immanuel God with us? What a mercy that he is thus qualified! Let doubt and anxiety vanish into air; for, “though no man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him.”

What practical influence ought this important truth to produce in us?

1. The first principle in our hearts should be the most lively gratitude to him who, pitying our forlorn condition, revealed himself as a God of love, in the person and work of his eternal Son.

2. We should adore the Godhead as revealed through the humanity of the only begotten Son.

3. How imperatively do the considerations here

presented to our minds, enforce the Divine command of the Eternal Father, "Hear ye him."

4. With what zeal and assiduity should we labour to make him known, who alone can reveal to mankind the character of God, as our reconciled Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier—as our present and everlasting portion!

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### THE TEMPLE OF HIS BODY.

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body."—John ii. 19—21.

THE passion of our Saviour, and his resurrection, his violent and ignominious death, and his mighty and glorious rising to life, are the most mysterious facts in his history. They are the two fundamental articles of our faith, the main pillars on which the sacred edifice of the church is built. Christ reduces the Scriptures to these two heads—"He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures," and said unto them, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." He makes these the sum of that commission which he received from the Father: "I lay down my life that I may take it again: this commandment have I received of my Father." St. Paul makes the belief of these two truths the matter of our righteousness and justification: "It shall be imputed to us

for righteousness, to believe that he was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." He likewise declares that it should be the aim and argument of the Christian ministry, that Christ died for our sins, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures. If we preach not this, our preaching is vain; if you believe not this, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. These are also the fountains of grace and holiness, the two powerful principles of all sanctification, from whence the new life of a Christian must spring and arise. The life of Christianity is thus described: "a planting into the death of Christ," and a participation "of his resurrection." The text, in relation to these, presents us with three things:—

I. The dignity of our Saviour's body: "It is a temple." II. The violence and dishonour which it was doomed to suffer at the hands of his enemies: "Destruction." III. The glory to which it was to be raised by his own almighty power: "In three days I will raise it up."

#### I. THE DIGNITY OF OUR LORD'S BODY.

"It is a temple." The bodies of believers are called temples, and the church of Christ is thus designated. St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" and again, "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." The apostle John calls the church the tabernacle of God: Peter describes the materials of this holy fabric—



“Ye as lively stones are built up a spiritual house.” But the body of Christ is in a more eminent manner called a temple. Christians are so designated because God dwells in them by communication of grace: the Holy Ghost takes possession of them by inspiring and working in them those gracious and heavenly qualities and endowments by which they are sanctified; but the humanity of Christ is God’s temple by a substantial inhabitation; the Godhead of the Saviour dwells in his humanity immediately and personally, not only by the infusion of grace and holy inspiration. Thus St. Paul writes: “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;” that is, really, fully, substantially, by the nearest union, as the soul dwells in the body by an intimate conjunction. This holy body was the true antitype of the temple at Jerusalem, and pre-figured by it. The apostle, in writing to the Hebrews, makes Christ to be the mystery that was shadowed forth by that material tabernacle and outward sanctuary: and the similitude will appear, if we consider,

1. *They are alike in the building: both under the immediate and special direction of God.* The pattern and model of the tabernacle was given by God to Moses in the mount; and the outline of that magnificent and splendid temple which Solomon built, was given by David under the immediate inspiration and superintendence of Jehovah. The builders were human; but the great Architect, under whose directions they wrought, was the invisible and ever-

lasting God. The resemblance holds in all points : the sacred body of the Son of God was framed in the womb of a virgin—he was brought into the world as the only begotten of the Father : the time, place, and circumstances of his birth were all regulated by the arrangements of infinite wisdom ; and of him it was eminently true, that he was “ born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

2. *Christ's body was like that goodly temple, in the ornaments by which it was beautified.* That temple was overlaid with gold : and the humanity of Christ was adorned with that which is more precious than the gold of Ophir—the glorious endowment of all heavenly graces, and these in the fullest manner and the highest perfection. On the hill of Zion Jesus appears in perfect beauty ; the glories of his character admit neither of diminution nor increase ; there is an admirable correspondence and proportion of those parts which unite to form that person, in which he appears as the “ fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.”

3. *In him the import of the sacred vessels and mysterious utensils, with which the temple was furnished, is fulfilled and accomplished.* He was the true propitiatory and mercy-seat ; the laws of God, inscribed on tables of stone, received from him a full and entire performance, without the loss of a jot or tittle. In him was that pot of manna—that food of angels—that bread of life—which came down

from heaven; in him was Aaron's rod with ripe almonds, the seal of his high priesthood, not fading, but flourishing and continuing for ever.

4. *Christ's holy body was like that sacred temple as it regards those religious services which were performed in it.* In the temple was a standing oracle, from whence the Israelites received all their directions; from between the cherubims of glory which shadowed the mercy-seat, God uttered his voice, and acquainted them with his counsels on all occasions. In Christ's humanity dwelt the true and living oracle of heaven; he is the great counsellor; all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in him; he makes us "wise unto salvation."

In the temple was the altar of sacrifice for expiation, and the atonement of sin. Both derived their efficacy and value from him, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" who, "not with the blood of goats or calves, but by his own blood, entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us;" and "we have now an altar whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle." The temple, too, was the house of prayer: in it, or looking towards it, all prayers were to be presented: for there only was the altar of incense, with whose sacred odours they were to ascend with acceptance to the throne of God. How admirably does this type receive its accomplishment in that temple, which is the body of Christ! The Jewish temple, with its visible glory, has passed away for ever; but the glory of the Christian temple far exceedeth that of the former:

“ Whatsoever we ask the Father in the name of Jesus, he will give, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

II. THE VIOLENCE AND DISHONOUR WHICH THE TEMPLE WAS DOOMED TO SUFFER AT THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMIES—“ DESTRUCTION.”

Three points demand our notice : The nature of Christ’s passion ; its limited extent ; and some aggravating circumstances which accompanied the event.

1. *The nature of his passion.* It was a dissolution—a full and complete death and destruction. Death is a separation of soul and body ; not an extinction or annihilation of either. The spirit returns to God who gave it, and the body is conveyed to its proper receptacle, the earth, from whence it was taken, there to await the sounding of the last trumpet, and the rising of the dead : but the body of our blessed Lord saw not corruption ; he loosed the chains of death, because it was *not possible* he should be holden of it. He gave up the ghost. The reality of his dissolution was unquestionable, and has never been doubted ; his soul was in Paradise, and his sacred remains were deposited in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, till the third, the appointed day.

2. *The limited extent of this destruction must be noticed.* Death did indeed separate soul and body, but this was all ; there was a union which no violence of death could dissolve—the union of his Godhead with his manhood : that was indestructible. His incarnation as God forbid it ; and his

Deity was mysteriously, indeed, but really, united to his soul and body, when by death they were parted from each other: what he had once assumed he never laid down; his Godhead supported his soul in the agony of death, and embalmed his body when it slumbered in the tomb. Thus, although crucified through weakness, he yet lived by the power of God: and in the very dominions of the king of terrors, wrested from him the victory, and despoiled the sepulchre of its boasted triumph.

3. *What are the circumstances by which this event was accomplished, and wherein consists their aggravation?* “Destroy this temple.” This implies that he was to die by violence: he was to be taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain; not to fall gradually by the decays of nature, but to be defaced and pulled down as a temple in the very zenith of his glory. The death of Christ was to be a sacrifice: the sacrifice must be violently destroyed; so Jesus was delivered into the hands of men, and died as a malefactor. He was slain by the law, wickedly, if we consider the immediate agents; but according to the counsel and foreknowledge of God, he thus suffered, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God.” Destroy: it sounds like concession, but it amounts to no more than voluntary permission. When he uttered the words of the text, they implied no more than a voluntary and cheerful resignation of himself to the undeserved fury and cruelty of those who hated him without a cause, a prediction of the approaching crisis, and a Divine determination to

make the very wrath of man to praise him. Christ had assured his disciples that no man could take away his life against his will. Till his hour was come, he disappointed all their efforts: sometimes, as it would seem, by miracle; but when his hour arrived, he put himself into their hands, yielded to their fury, and submitted to his death.

“ He gave his soul up to the stroke  
Without a murmuring word.”

We read, in the story of his passion, of whips and thorns, and nails and spears: instruments of cruelty surrounded him; “ they pierced his hands and his feet; they might tell all his bones.” Wonderful indeed was the spectacle of this glorious temple in the hour of its destruction. The pillars of it wept like the marble—the beams of it bled like the vine—streams of blood flowed from this sanctuary, and cries of sanguinary ferocity resounded through the air, “ Rase it, rase it, even to the ground !” It was indeed their hour and the power of darkness.

Let us now mark,

III. THE GLORY TO WHICH IT WAS TO BE RAISED BY HIS OWN ALMIGHTY POWER.

1. *The agent, the subject, and the state.* “ In three days I will raise it up.” Mysterious and wonderful promise! he himself will revive his own body, and, by virtue of his inherent power, return again from the silent recesses of yonder sepulchre! To raise the dead to life is a work unknown through all the regions of nature: in every instance it is an exertion of miraculous power. The Scriptures tell us of dead men raised by *others*; but none but Christ ever raised himself. This clearly

shows that he was more than man. It was in the power of his Godhead to raise himself from the grave; he had power to lay down his life, and he had power to take it again: this is his prerogative.

2. *The subject—the self-same temple.* He does not say, Destroy this, and I will erect another on its ruins; but, “I will raise *it* up.” This, indeed, is properly a resurrection, when the same thing is set up again, not another in its stead. Had our Lord assumed *another* body, it had been a second incarnation, not a resurrection. The propriety of all this is apparent: that body, which was a temple for God’s grace, must be the temple and habitation of his glory; that body, which had been the sanctified medium and instrument of so many good works, must be raised into the fellowship of reward; that body, which was pierced and wounded, crucified and slain, must appear before the presence of his Father’s glory, be clothed in robes of celestial light, and exalted far above all principalities and powers and might and dominion, and every name that is named, as an eternal memento of the infinite price of human redemption.

3. *The state.* “I will raise it up.” This holy and beautiful temple had been laid even with the ground, and every vestige of its former glory had passed away; those who came to that sight, smote on their breasts and returned to their several homes. The disciples gave up all hope, and sought the shelter of a private dwelling to talk over the things

which had happened. The Scribes and Pharisees, and rulers of the Jews, having accomplished their diabolical design, withdrew from the scene of slaughter. The body of the crucified Galilean was taken down from the cross, and deposited in the silent sepulchre; guards were placed, to prevent imposition by the removal of the body; and the triumph of Satan and his agents, for aught that appeared, was complete and entire. The shadows of evening fell upon the grave of Christ, and the solemn stillness of death reigned around, unbroken but by the slow pacing of the Roman sentinel at the door of his tomb. It was night, and such a night as the world had never known; for the light of the world was in total eclipse, and the life thereof slumbering on the lap of death. Our friend slept, but he was only sleeping: the eye which is ever watchful was upon him, and the life which never dies was around him. The promise on which the hopes of a world were suspended, failed not a moment of its effect. On the third day, ere the morning dawned, it was accomplished, and Jesus arose from the bed of death like a giant refreshed with wine, no more to return to corruption. Then were the words of our text fulfilled, and this temple, which malignity had made a heap of ruins, is restored to more than primeval beauty. The glory of this latter house far exceedeth that of the former: the resurrection body of the Son of God is a substantial, an entire, and a glorious repair of the former edifice.

*Substantial.* In proof of this, he appeals to the



senses of his disciples, saying, “ Handle me, and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have :”—the very body in which he had suffered ; for to Thomas he said, “ Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side ; and be not faithless, but believing.”

*Entire.* Nothing is here wanting to the perfection of this raised temple. They raised the temple of Solomon after its demolition ; but the cherubim and the ark, and many other precious things, could never be renewed ; but here is all in our risen Lord ; no excellency is wanting to him.

*Glorious.* The Jews wept to see Zerubbabel’s temple come so far short of the former ; but the body of Christ far exceeds its former state—it is raised in power, immortality, and glory.

We close the subject with a general application. Is Christ’s body a temple ? So are ours—the dwelling-places of the Most High. “ Know ye not,” saith St. Paul, “ that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost ?” He that understandeth not this, is ignorant of the elementary principles of Christianity. As temples, they are sanctified by Divine influence, cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, beautified and adorned with heavenly graces and dispositions, and thus become habitations of God through the Spirit. If thus consecrated, let them be temples by actual dedication to his service and glory : “ As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity ; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness ; for

whoso defileth the temple of God, him shall God destroy.”

Was this magnificent temple destroyed? All these houses of clay shall ere long be taken down and mingled with the dust.

Was this sacred temple raised again? Yes; and “though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” These, brethren, are the consolations which Christianity offers to our hearts while bleeding at the sepulchres of our friends, or anticipating our own descent into the chambers of the grave: these temples shall be raised again.

Thoughtless, careless, reckless sinner, what is this to you? The destruction in the text is chargeable upon you: your sins struck the fatal blow, and levelled this temple in the dust. The temple is restored, and at every portal stands an ambassador to invite, to entreat your approach. Flee to the altar of sacrifice, ere the avenger of blood overtake you; for here alone can safety be found: he yet lives whose life you sought, and the blood you shed without remorse, speaketh better things than that of Abel; it speaks, and proclaims pardon for the chief of sinners. Your body is a temple; but it is the residence of the god of this world. It is employed in the drudgery of sin; its sacrifices are numerous and costly, but they are made to devils,

and not to God. You are hastening to the house appointed for all living. There may be—there is, but a step between you and death; from that bed you will, you *must* arise: it is not annihilation; it is a prison where sinners must await the righteous indignation of God; and they that have done evil and died in their sins, will arise to shame and everlasting contempt.

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## THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

“Light is come into the world.”—John iii. 19.

THIS is our blessed Lord’s description of himself. He employs the most glorious and beautiful object in nature as an emblem of his perfections, and its rising upon the world as pointing out the design and effects of his incarnation.

We are here invited to view the Saviour

I. As the Sun of Righteousness: II. As the Sun of Righteousness descending from his heavenly sphere: III. As the Sun of Righteousness diffusing the light and glory of his salvation through this benighted and miserable world. Let us contemplate,

I. THE OBJECT WHICH IS HERE PRESENTED TO OUR VIEW.

It is “light;” not a cold, glimmering, distant star, but the light of day—the sun, the brightest glory of the heavens. But this, admirable as it is, approaches not the ineffable splendours of Immanuel.

The Redeemer is "light" in his

1. *Nature and essence.* In himself, in his Divine nature, he is perfect light: Clear, without the least shadow, or darkness of error: Pure, without any taint of evil, or possibility of corruption: Enrobed with beams of light and majesty. Light is the tabernacle of Deity—the place of his habitation. He dwells in that light which no man can approach unto; it is his vesture. He clothes himself with light as with a garment. Nay, it is his substantial perfection. "God is light: and in him is no darkness at all."

But the light of the Saviour's Divinity dazzles and overwhelms our understandings. When we look for light, it turnsto darkness; our most sublime meditations enter into the cloud with Moses. The beams he sheds forth as God *incarnate* are more easily conceivable. Let us then view him

2. *In his office and employment as Mediator.* He is not only a light in himself, but a light to others. All the benefits of light are in Christ. We may comprehend them in the following particulars.

(1.) As light he dispels moral darkness, that he may shine forth in all the splendours of a supernatural and saving knowledge. The world lay under a twofold darkness; and to remove them both our Saviour brought with him a double light. There was external darkness: no natural means that could shine upon us, to show us our way. There was internal darkness: not only darkness, but blindness, with regard to supernatural truths. We are destitute of both our eyes.

(2.) A second property of light is to purify: it sheds pureness and beauty wherever it shines. Darkness and uncleanness go together—loathsome darkness—but light casts lustre upon every thing: it is the varnish of the world, the verdure and beauty of all the creation. “Thy beauty was perfect through my comeliness that I put upon thee.”

(3.) A third property of light is that it cheers, exhilarates, and refreshes; and thus Christ is the true light, which dispels a threefold sad and sorrowful darkness. The darkness of misery and affliction: The darkness of God’s frowning and beclouded countenance: The darkness of death. But we are invited to behold this glorious light,

II. DESCENDING FROM ITS HEAVENLY SPHERE  
—“Light is come.”

1. *Here we are reminded of this light—that it is foreign, not bred or breaking forth out of this lower region.* It is not an irradiation of nature, nor the invention of human art or contrivance; it is not the lustre of any creature.

2. *It shows the anticipating freeness of this light.* It is not said that we first sought or discovered it; but it broke forth, and shone upon us graciously and freely: the people that were in darkness have seen a great light, beyond all hope and expectation.

3. *It points out the time.* The period of our Lord’s incarnation—when he began his life on earth, this light commenced its progress.

We are therefore,

III. TO BEHOLD THIS LIGHT DIFFUSING THE GLORY OF HIS SALVATION THROUGH THIS BENIGHTED AND MISERABLE WORLD.

He is come to us. This world is its centre and its circumference. Let us receive it; let us gratefully acknowledge it; let us diffuse it.

The birth of a Saviour inflicted a mortal wound on the genius of Paganism; and the infernal spirits that had long maintained a horrid dominion over their deluded worshippers, were driven to their abode of darkness. Since that happy day,

“The old dragon under ground,  
In straiter limits bound,  
Not half so fast casts his usurped sway,  
And wrath to see his kingdom fail,  
Swindges the scaly horror of his folded tail.  
He feels from Judah’s land  
The dreaded infant’s hand:  
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn.”

Satan is justly denominated “the prince of darkness.” This character, while it points out the debasing nature of his authority, at the same time discovers its weakness. He dare not contend with the light. The glorious Gospel of the blessed God must finally triumph over him. Already has it gained innumerable victories: it has banished idolatry from Europe. Superstition is struggling with dying pangs. This Western world is enlightened; and the bright and morning star is once more rising in the East. The empire of the apostate seraph moves like the dense cloud of a gloomy atmosphere. Though it seems to cover a great

space, yet it has neither foundation nor stability: it melts and smooths away before the influence of heavenly truth. Even now the twilight vanishes; the morning dawns: that which in its manifestation has hitherto appeared only as a bright star, shall, ere long, break in all the splendours of a meridian sun, enlightening the whole globe at one and the same moment. The earth shall be full of his glory; and it shall be a glory of grace and truth, of righteousness and peace.

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## HIS SUN SHINING ON THE EVIL AND THE GOOD.

“ He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.”

Matt. v. 45.

OUR blessed Lord utters the most sublime truths, and on subjects the most dark and abstruse to the human understanding, not only without effort, but with the ease and familiarity of perfect knowledge. He speaks of God as one who had indeed dwelt in his bosom from eternity; of heaven as his home, with every mansion and inhabitant of which he is intimately acquainted; and of the operations of nature and the dispensations of Providence, as if all their springs, motions, and results, originated in his own mind, and were at his absolute disposal.

There is an unlaboured, spontaneous, and natural majesty in the sentence which I have now

read to you; and yet can language be more simple, more unadorned and unpretending?

I. THREE THINGS WHICH INFIDELITY DENIES, AND PHILOSOPHY COULD NOT DISCOVER, ARE HERE ASSUMED.

1. *That there is a Being superior to nature—in whom she originates, from whom she derives her existence, and whose creature she is : this Being is God.*

2. *That the uniformity, invariableness, and constancy of her operations is not the result of any inherent powers she possesses, or of independent laws by which she is governed, but the immediate effect of that intelligent and conscious agency by which she was created.\**

3. *That the material universe is subordinate to the intellectual, and governed for the express purpose of subserving the interests of virtue and happiness.*

But we are now brought to the direct

II. ASSERTION OF MY TEXT, WHICH INFIDELS AND PHILOSOPHERS PROUDLY TELL US IS SUBVERSIVE OF THE VERY DOCTRINES WHICH IT ASSUMES, NAMELY, THE INDISCRIMINATE POSSESSION OF ALL THE BENEFITS OF NATURE, BY “THE EVIL AND THE GOOD, THE JUST AND THE UNJUST.”

The fact, indeed, is evident; and our blessed Lord introduces it for the purpose of impressing upon his disciples a lesson very repugnant to the proud reason, and the prouder feelings of our corrupt nature. His sun does shine equally on the

\* For the illustration of this branch of the subject, see Dr. Chalmers's Sermons preached at St. John's, and Dr. Dick's Celestial Scenery.



evil and the good—the just and the unjust are equally blessed with his refreshing showers; and all the benefits which sun and rain instrumentally confer upon the world.

He maketh his sun to rise on other planets—on the good—nor does he withhold his beams from ours, the evil: and among us the blessings are indiscriminate and universal. Does this imply that there is no moral government? On the contrary, it affords us one of the most illustrious proofs of it. In order to establish this assertion, it must be proved that the conduct in question

1. *Advances the best interests of virtue.*

2. *That it is introductory to a higher and nobler state of things.*

3. *That it illustrates certain perfections of Deity that would be otherwise unknown and inconceivable.*

4. *That it does no violence either to the character or claims of eternal justice.*

And we may observe,

III. THAT IT IS CAPABLE OF THE HIGHEST MORAL IMPROVEMENT. — IT IS INTRODUCED BY OUR LORD WITH THIS VIEW.

We are to learn a very important lesson from this procedure of our heavenly Father. This is not only forgiveness, but positive kindness, to *our* enemies and to *his*. We are to benefit the evil and the good. But the improvement of the subject takes a wide range.

1. *It will increase and perpetuate devout and kindly sentiments towards God and our fellow-creatures, if we acknowledge him in all his works, and discern his*

*purpose of beneficence in the operations of nature and Providence.*

2. *We are especially called upon to imitate him in the principle of our benevolence.* We have not the sun in the heavens at our disposal; but the Sun of Righteousness condescends to shine at our bidding. We can send through our neighbourhood and through the world the light of the glorious Gospel. This is a provision especially made for the evil. Natural light brings with it a thousand other blessings: so does spiritual light.

“ Lord, on this clouded soul of mine  
 Oh let the living lustre fall!  
 Fill me with love as wide as thine,  
 Wide as the wants and woes of all.”

3. *Let the good be thankful.*

4. *The evil penitent.*

## SILOAM'S TOWER.

“ And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”— Luke xiii. 2—5.

THE world is a volume of God's works, which all Christians ought studiously to peruse: it is full of instruction. Every event has a voice; and the most trivial circumstance an important meaning.

Among the numerous occurrences around us, and which we are daily witnessing, there are not any that speak so impressively, and have so great a claim to be heard, as those which in a moment arrest and annihilate human hope, which hurry, as with the terror of a whirlwind, our fellow-creatures into the dread abyss of eternity. These are the most powerful coadjutors of our ministry, and give energy and effect to truths which too often fall cold and powerless upon your hearts.\*

Before I enter upon the illustration of the subject, I beg leave to premise, that in nothing that I may advance, shall I presume to offer an opinion favourable or unfavourable respecting the unhappy individuals whose shocking death has recalled to my mind the train of thought I shall now endeavour to open to you. My intention is simply to view the coincidence between their fate and that of the persons referred to in my text.

It is with death, with sin, with calamity and judgment, that I have now to do; and to these I shall strictly confine myself.

In discoursing from the text, I mean to call your attention

I. To the awful facts assumed: II. To the popular prejudices which are entertained in reference to such facts, which our Lord condemns: III. To the practical improvement which such facts are intended to produce.

\* Delivered the Sunday after the fearful catastrophe, the sudden destruction of so many lives by the fall of the Brunswick Theatre.

## I. TO THE AWFUL FACTS ASSUMED,

1. *That sinners perish.*
2. *That all sinners, without repentance, must perish.*
3. *That sinners sometimes perish by sudden and fearful calamity.*

## II. TO THE POPULAR PREJUDICES WHICH ARE ENTERTAINED ON THE SUBJECT OF SUCH EVENTS.

1. *That those who escape such calamities, and merely die according to the common course of nature, are in a safe condition.*

2. *That individuals thus signally marked out by Providence are therefore more guilty than others; that their calamities are penal.*

3. *Self-complacency, arising from a flattering comparison of their own character with that of the sufferers.*

Now, these prejudices our Lord corrects by calling their attention,

(1.) *To their own individual guilt.*

(2.) *By absolutely reprobating the notion that the accidents and evils of life are any test of character.*

“The same thing happeneth alike to all. All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in wickedness.”

(3.) *By alarming their fears with regard to the inevitable doom which awaits the impenitent.*

## III. TO THE PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT WHICH SUCH SOLEMN EVENTS AS THESE ARE INTENDED TO PRODUCE.

Whatever may be their character, whether vindicative or merciful to their victims, they are designed for the instruction of survivors. If the sufferers be in a state of preparation for eternity, sudden death is sudden glory: if in a state of guilt and condemnation, the wicked are driven away in their wickedness. But, instead of scruti- nizing the characters of those who perish by acci- dents and casualties, we ought rather to examine our own, and to awaken to the reflections and purposes which their death is calculated and in- tended to excite. Such events are permitted to happen occasionally,

1. *To arrest the thoughtless in their career of im- piety and sin.* They are sometimes necessary, as they are the most impressive preachers of mortality, and force conviction when every other method to produce it fails. What is the reason that the voice from the pulpit is so often ineffectual?—that we are allowed to dwell on death and judgment with- out awakening conscience or rousing one painful salutary emotion in the heart? It is because the subject, though the most awful on which one hu- man being can address another, is universally the most neglected, shunned in silence, or trifled with in talk, or shut up in a secret recess of the soul, like Paul in Felix's prison, to be examined at a more convenient season—a season that never ar- rives. It is too common to excite interest. A sermon on death is like a funeral passing through the streets; we pause to mark the trappings, but we think not of the corpse beneath. The subject

is so worn out by perpetual recurrence, or by exhausted sensibility or artificial insensibility in those who hear, that we may speak on for ever without the hope that what we say gives one thought to the mind, one sting to the conscience, one feeling to the heart; and yet that subject is death!—almost the only idea that all men have in common—certainly the only idea that all men seem determined to exclude. God, his inspired word, the course of nature, the events of human existence, all seem (if I may dare to say so) sworn together to force it on our minds; yet we stop our ears and harden our hearts, as if, fools and blind that we are, *forgetting* we are to die could make us immortal. How alive is the grave!—this is the desert, this the solitude! Millions, countless millions more than are now alive, are gone before us; and the generations that are yet to be born, will be born to people the tomb.

Reflection teaches these awful lessons to *a few*, and well for those who are taught by her. If we refuse her, we shall have a sterner teacher, even Experience, whose trembling pupils we must all become, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear. But it is not the lesson we so much need to know; we know it, though we are callous to it: it is its application we require: we want something to bring it to our hearts by a terrible, a penetrating, an afflicting dispensation—something that will force open our eyes, which we resolutely close—that will make the ear tingle, which we stop—that will sink into the heart, which we harden in

vain against its power. Such has not been wanted: we have, within the last few awful days, been taught what death is, in the surprise, the terror, and the anguish of his coming. Myriads die every day, myriads are dying every moment; and of multitudes of them it must be allowed that those who wish them best, who, perhaps, love them most, have reason to wish them dead many years before they die; perhaps the very best wish they can give them.

The afflicted die, and their death is an end of suffering: the diseased perish, and their dissolution is an end of pain. We may well behold with patience that release which we have often seen the sufferer himself pray for in agony. All this constant lesson of daily mortality we receive without instruction: the event is ordinary, often welcome: we see them pass away, and forget we are to follow them. Some tears, but they are rather the tears of recollection than of conviction, are dropped on the graves of the dead, instead of sinking into our own hearts. From whatever source they are drawn, we dry them soon; we turn away our eyes from the handwriting on the wall, and rush back to the banquet, readily persuaded that the summons was intended for our companions, not for us. But the human heart is not always suffered to slumber in security; its sleep is sometimes broken by a voice that will be heard; a hand commissioned by Heaven rends open our curtains, and a terrible light flashes on the eyes of the dreamer

through the opening. At times the dispensations of the Almighty exceed in strength and terror all that could be imaged out in the dreams of fancy or the visions of delirium.

Such calamitous events as that which has so recently occurred that with the tidings of it our ears still tingle, are designed,

2. *To impress survivors with a just estimate of the present life.* How vain, how uncertain, and how awfully does it terminate!

3. *To teach the necessity of instant and earnest preparation for eternity.* Repentance is a change of mind, of heart, of character. It means religion, which is not born with us, to which we feel a natural antipathy, but which must be deliberately chosen and heartily obeyed. Unless we thus repent, we must all perish: in one way or other our destruction will come upon us to the uttermost. It may surprise us in the moment of fancied safety, without affording us the slightest opportunity for reflection. Amidst the sudden, unexpected, relentless terror, we may find ourselves in eternity; the soul violently wrenched out of the body; the body a ghastly spectacle, and the soul a naked, shivering, despairing culprit, without a friend, a hiding-place, or a God!

Let any of us realize to himself the shocking scene of Thursday last. Had this been your destiny—had it been mine—where should we have been at this moment? What is the testimony of conscience? Warnings neglected become aggravations



of guilt. If we now refuse to repent, we shall emphatically deserve to perish. Be assured that if we wish either to live with the dignity of accountable beings, or die with the peace of immortal ones, we must place all our trust, our confidence, our strength, our hope in God and religion alone: it is this alone can give us exaltation, it is this alone can give us peace.

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## THE CENTURION WHO BUILT A SYNAGOGUE.\*

“For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.”

Luke vii. 5.

THAT is a fine metaphor which describes the Scriptures as a well-head of life. Come to them whenever we may, the salient fountain is always bright and pure, and ever presenting what is fresh: it is water always flowing, always satisfying. In this respect it is of little consequence where we open the sacred page, or how often we have read it; we are sure to meet in the most familiar passages, if not a new thought, a new aspect of thought, or a new impression, which it had never conveyed to us before. The Scriptures, too, are adapted to all circumstances, and the ever-varying conditions and events of human life are therefore

\* For the opening of a new place of worship.

frequently the means of drawing them out under these hitherto unthought-of aspects, and preparing our minds for these new and unanticipated impressions.

How often have we read the narrative of which my text is a touching incident, and what various emotions has it awakened in our bosoms! Sometimes the character of the centurion has interested us, and we have dwelt upon its singularity, as displayed in his munificence to the Jewish nation; his benevolence, as it appeared in his deep and earnest concern for the welfare of his servant; and in his faith, as it ascribed unlimited authority and power to him who was despised and rejected of men. At other times we have wondered at the conduct of the elders of the Jews, and the homage they paid to one whose pretensions to the Messiahship they on other occasions treated with contempt and scorn. But more frequently the great subject, the prominent Personage, the theme and the glory of the entire record, has passed before us in majesty and love, exhibiting his matchless condescension and grace in speaking the word which healed the servant, and relieved the deep anxiety of a suffering family. But, numerous and instructive as have been the reflections which this narrative has suggested, and diversified as have been the impressions it has produced, I think we must this morning feel conscious that it is not exhausted: it wanted the precise circumstances in which we are at this moment placed. This new sanctuary,

and these grateful hearts—the present scene, with its peculiar associations, enable us to derive from it new feelings and new impressions; especially as that which has generally been regarded as a subordinate becomes on the present occasion its principal feature, namely, the building of a synagogue: “He loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.” And that we may give order and something like a consecutive relation to our thoughts, let us consider,

I. What the centurion did for the Jews: II. What the Jews did for the centurion: and, III. What Jesus Christ did for both.

I. WHAT THE CENTURION DID FOR THE JEWS.

In every view which we can take of this munificent act of the centurion, it excites our astonishment. We cannot account for it on principles common to our apostate nature; we must seek its solution in something above and beyond them. This will appear if we consider it in relation to his profession as a soldier, his prejudices as a heathen, and his antipathies as a Roman.

1. *The military profession is not favourable to religion.* The attention of military men is occupied by the world: they have little time for reflection: they are animated by ambition, the love of glory: their scenes are ever changing; their artificial union is injurious to the delicacy, the expansion, and the benevolence of the social principle of humanity, and, therefore, diametrically opposed to the influence of the religious spirit.

2. *Then this man was a heathen.* If he worshipped at all, it was in the Pantheon, among the gods of the nations: he paid those of his own country supreme reverence. Paganism and Judaism were antagonist powers. Paganism is tolerant of all things but *revealed* religion. It is an alliance with superstition and idolatry: it wars with the light which comes from heaven, and Jehovah is the only deity it will not suffer to occupy a throne, or to which it denies religious homage. Yet to the honour of Jehovah this heathen centurion erects a temple—for him and his worship he builds a synagogue.

This may well excite our wonder; but our surprise is greatly increased, when we regard,

3. *His antipathies as a Roman.* Yet say the rulers of the Jews, "He loveth our nation." To what, then, are we to ascribe this splendid instance of munificence on the part of one from whom, judging according to the common principles of the world, it might have been least of all expected?

(1.) *To the favourableness of his position.* The providence of God had placed him in the conquered province of Judea.

(2.) *Partial illumination, which promised better things.*

(3.) *His thorough and entire surrendering himself to his convictions as far as they could carry him.*

But let us now turn to the act itself.

(1.) *He took upon himself individually a burden which is usually divided among many.* This develops the energy and self-denial which marked his piety. His was a piety in alliance with generosity

and gratitude: it asked not for precedents; it wanted not examples; he measured his obligations by the worth of his principles. Just in proportion as we appreciate the value of religion to our own souls, and just in proportion to the place it occupies in our hearts, will be our zeal and liberality in advancing its influence among men.

(2.) *This act was the best proof he could possibly give of his sincere attachment to the people for whose benefit he performed it.* The synagogues of the Jews were the first approximation to the simplicity of Christian worship, under a gorgeous and typical dispensation. They were erected in all the cities and large towns of the Holy Land, and wherever the Jews and Jewish proselytes found a habitation. They began with Ezra. In them the law, Moses and the prophets, were periodically read; prayers offered; and exhortations and sermons addressed to the people. To the prevalence and salutary effects of the synagogue institution, after their return from captivity, have been attributed the rooted aversion of the Jews to idolatry.

To build a sanctuary in any neighbourhood is to confer upon it the greatest possible good: whether we regard the manners and habits of individuals; the well-being of families; the improvement of the social condition; and the eternal happiness of all within the sphere of its influence.

Yes, my brethren, religion claims a great interest in the world; even as great as its object, God, and the souls of men.

Well: this was what the Roman centurion did for the Jews. Let us now consider,

## II. WHAT THE JEWS DID FOR THE CENTURION.

*Their* conduct in going to Jesus in his behalf is even more extraordinary than *his* building them a synagogue. It displays the great and amazing power of God over the minds of men. These rulers of the synagogue, these influential inhabitants of Capernaum are, on this memorable occasion, to be the unconscious instruments of establishing the Divine mission, which they were in the habit of rejecting. Their errand is to obtain a miraculous favour from Christ. But this, with the views of the men of that age and country, would not have been alone sufficient to establish from their testimony, that he who wrought it was indeed the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world; for they sometimes ascribed miraculous agency to Beelzebub. But the argument which they urge on this occasion, when coupled with the exertion of power they required, indisputably established the Divine character of him to whom their application was made.

The appeal is not only to his *power*, but

1. *To his patriotism.*

2. *To his piety.*

3. *His universal benevolence.* There was that in the plea itself most acceptable to God, and which at once made its way to the heart of the Redeemer.

Thus we have seen what the centurion did for the Jews, and what the Jews did for the centurion.

We are now

III. TO CONSIDER WHAT JESUS CHRIST DID FOR BOTH. And

1. We notice *his readiness to comply with their request*. Here is no apparent indifference; no repulsive objection, that he is sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He immediately bends his steps towards the house of the centurion.

Our Lord's conduct when putting forth his miraculous agency, was always to confirm the truth of his mission, and in the most effective manner to benefit the *souls* as well as the bodies of those on whose account it was exercised. Thus in the case of the Syrophenician woman, assumed severity and reluctance to admit her earnest and repeated solicitations were necessary, in order to draw out the whole force of her faith, and to impress the bystanders and his disciples with just views of the nature and extent of his mission.

In the case of the centurion he adopts as most appropriate and as well calculated to produce the same results, a course directly opposite. In this instance promptitude accomplishes the very same ends which delay effected in the other.

In his readiness to comply with these requests,

2. *He honoured the sacred institutions of the religious economy under which he had placed himself*. This he did for the instruction of the Jews. Thus, too, he gave his authoritative sanction to public worship, and the exercise of the voluntary principle in erecting sanctuaries for its perpetuity and maintenance: and this was done for the mutual benefit

of Jews and Gentiles. Thus also he drew forth into active power and audible expression the incipient and anticipated Christianity of a devout heathen; and this he did to prepare his disciples and the world at large to receive him as “a light to lighten the Gentiles,” as well as the glory of his people Israel.

3. *He realized and justified their expectation*; and thus furnished his ministers with an all-powerful argument when recommending him as the hope and confidence of lost and ruined man.

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## CHRIST PRAYING.

“And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.”—Luke ix. 29.

THE Saviour, about to be invested for a brief season with his coronation robes of light, in the presence of three of his disciples, in order to inspire them with hope, and confidence, and joy, and thus prepare them for all the horrors and ignominy of the death he was so soon to accomplish at Jerusalem, ascends to the height and seclusion of Tabor, that he might pray unto his Father that seeth in secret, who, while he was praying, rewarded him openly, not only by celestial messengers and bright tokens of his love, but by a voice from the excellent glory, saying, “This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.”



The subject of our discourse is,

I. The general fact of the Saviour's praying in high and secret places: II. The particular fact of his praying on Mount Tabor, with the accompanying splendour of his transfiguration.

I. THE GENERAL FACT OF THE SAVIOUR'S PRAYING IN HIGH AND SECRET PLACES.

This we shall consider as illustrative of his character, and especially instructive to us. Mountains are not more sacred than other places: in all places prayers are alike acceptable; as naturally, so spiritually, all localities are alike distant from heaven. Olivet, Moriah, Sinai, Pisgah, and Carmel are hills of the Lord—the mountains of God, where he was most signally glorified; but they are no more distinguished by the Almighty hearer of prayer than David's depths, Jeremiah's dungeon, and Jonah's whale: all lie equally open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

The mountain was preferred by our Lord as a place of the greatest privacy; and this was from necessity rather than choice. As the Son of man, he had not where to lay his head—no home, no oratory. It was devotional solitude he sought and loved; and in seeking it so frequently, and under circumstances so peculiarly disadvantageous, and in seasons of infinite fatigue and exhaustion in the active service of God and mankind, his example teaches us that inconvenience must not prevent secret prayer, nor labour nor lassitude;—that deeds of charity, and great exertions for the poor and afflicted, must not set aside secret prayer;—

that no strength of character, or of grace, may render devotional solitude unnecessary, or excuse, much less justify, its neglect. But here an important question presses itself upon the mind: Why did the Saviour pray? Does not this fact derogate from his proper Deity as the Son of God? Certainly not; it only proves the reality of his human nature, as distinguished from his Divine nature—the *man* Christ Jesus. In his human nature our Lord was the first-born of every creature; and the constitution of his person as Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature, linked to our humanity, is the most wonderful product of infinite wisdom and power that has ever been exhibited to the universe. He could, indeed, have drawn on the resources of his own personal Godhead; but as the Father and the Eternal Spirit were equally engaged in the glorious design which brought him into the world, and clothed him in the garb of frail humanity, it was necessary that their co-operation in it should be made to appear; and therefore did Jesus seek the immeasurable communications of the Spirit from the good will and ineffable love of the Father. The noblest idea we can form of prayer, and especially of secret prayer, is that of *communion*. Now, what is more natural, and consistent, and becoming than that the Son should retire to commune with the Father; for, having dwelt in his bosom from eternity, it might be expected that he would maintain the original intimacy, both for its own sake, and that it might be known that neither distance nor incarnation had interrupted their fellowship. In-

stead, therefore, of derogating from his Divinity, such prayer harmonizes with the highest ideas of Godhead, being in fact a specimen of devout communion.

But if we regard prayer in its more usual character of supplication to God, whose favour we would conciliate, whose attributes we adore, whose providence we recognize, and to whose goodness, wisdom, power, and love we appeal for guidance, support, protection, and consolation, we may well anticipate that the man Christ Jesus would be eminently distinguished by frequent and fervent exercises of devotion; and it is gratifying for us to learn, that, as he *prayed*, the fashion of his countenance altered, and that his face did shine as the sun.

By prayer our blessed Lord,

1. *Paid homage and honour to God his Father.* Adoration is due from the most glorious creatures to God: prayer is a moral, real, and spiritual sacrifice, required not only by religion, but by the law of nature.

2. *Prayer offered by the Saviour of men was to his Father a most welcome and acceptable sacrifice*—such as no creature had ever, or could ever, present to him.

Christ was not sanctified by prayer, but prayer was sanctified by Christ. Ordinances convey holiness in other cases; they are the means of grace to us; they draw sanctity from Christ: in him the altar sanctifies the gift, and all duties are the holier for his performing them.

Our Lord was conversant with prayer,

3. *That he might thus call forth into exercise all the graces of his lovely character.* He prayed not out of absolute necessity, as we do, but to beautify himself with all the graces of holiness.

But prayer was the employment of the Saviour's life,

4. *That he might thus testify his state of humiliation*; thus acknowledging his proper humanity, his continual subjection and dependence as a creature, and as a creature partaking of flesh and blood with all their sinless infirmities; and to show, also, how he had voluntarily humbled himself to a condition of want and deficiency.

Prayer also was with our Lord,

5. *A special performance of his mediatorial office.* He prayed as our High Priest, and his prayers were infinitely meritorious: the sacrifice and the incense are both required.

6. *Prayer was the solace and the consolation of the man of sorrows amidst all his weariness, grief, and suffering.* He went up to a mountain to pray, as the most ravishing refreshment he had.

And here let me pause while I make my solemn appeal to your hearts and consciences on this great subject and business of the Christian life. Did Christ, the *natural Son* of God, carefully and religiously tender up this honour to his adorable Father,—how assiduous, in this homage, ought we to be, who are the lowest, and meanest, and unworthiest of his creatures? Did Christ, though

full of all graces, and out of the reach of temptation, abound in this blessed exercise of prayer,—how then should we, who are borne down by temptations and beset by corruptions, how vigilantly ought we, to seek every opportunity to implore the influence and the aid of Heaven? Did Christ *sue* by prayer for every thing that he needed, and for the mercies of every day and of every hour, when they were his by native right, and when he could have procured them from the resources of his own Divinity,—what a reflection is this upon us the children of dependence, who have forfeited every mercy, and who deserve only wrath?—what a reflection is it upon us, that we presume to expect supplies without so much as asking for them, and that we should minister to our own desires without the craving of importunate prayer? Did Christ, who was certain of the event of every thing—to whom nothing was contingent, but whose eye glanced in a moment through the whole course of time,—did he pray? This should teach us that earnest prayer may be made for those things, of which we have the fullest assurance. It is asked, If grace and glory be certain, why are they to be sought by prayer? Certainty, on the part of God, does not weaken, but strengthen the force of prayer: Elijah was sure of rain, yet he prayed for it: David was sure that his throne would be established in Solomon, yet he prayed for it; Christ was sure of all, yet he abounds in this blessed exercise of devotion.

And now let us contemplate,

II. THE SAVIOUR'S PRAYING ON THIS OCCASION  
AS CONNECTED WITH HIS TRANSFIGURATION.

While he was praying he was transfigured. What does this teach us? Why, that devout prayer is able to transport the soul, to ravish the spirit, to lift up the heart into a heavenly rapture, and to fill soul and body with ineffable glory. To some this may be a strange doctrine: but what was the experience of David? and what is the testimony of eminent believers of every age?

Prayer hath this power,

1. *Because it bears up the soul to heaven, though mortality, and sin, and darkness, and clouds, and the storms of the world conspire to repress its ascent, and to keep it grovelling on the earth.* Prayer rises majestically into tranquil regions, far beyond the agitations and tempests of wintry time. Oh that more of us would essay the mighty undertaking! With the moon beneath our feet, like the woman in the Revelations, we should feel ourselves clothed with the sun.

2. *Prayer has this beautifying and glorifying power, because it brings us into communion with the fountain of joy and glory.* (Moses.) Let a man recline on a couch of spices, and his very clothes will breathe perfume and fragrance.

3. *Prayer unveils the countenance of our heavenly Father*—that countenance, all smiling with benignity and love. In his face—in his smile—is life itself: it gladdened the heart of the Psalmist more than oil and wine. If he be angry, his frown is the

message of death. Prayer brings us into his immediate presence. It is thus, that “with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

4. *Prayer often produces in us this holy delight, because it brings with it the joyful assurance that our prayers are accepted.* Want of this made Cain’s countenance fall; this honoured and encouraged Abel.

5. *Prayer inspires these glorious joys, because it disburdens all our griefs and sorrows into the bosom of God.*

6. *He that prays has an inward satisfaction, when he feels, that as a holy service he has presented it to God.* As every sin leaves a sting after it, so the duties of piety and devotion calm the soul, and fill it with joy and glory, even as though we heard the approving voice of Heaven.

Now that this glorious effect may follow our prayers, three conditions are required:—

They must be frequent.

They must be cheerful.

They must be fervent.

Cold, feeble, heartless prayers,—what are they worth?

Here our Saviour prays himself into heaven. In the garden he prays himself into an agony. Paul praying, was carried up to the third heaven. Peter was cast into a trance. John was wrapt in spirit. Fervour is the wing of prayer, the ladder of heaven, like Elijah’s fiery chariot; whereas our cold,

slumbering petitions, like meteors in the air, vanish into nothing.

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### JESUS REJOICING IN SPIRIT.

“ In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”—Luke x. 21.

THESE words are interesting, as they present our Lord to us under a new and singular aspect. The man of sorrows abandons his grief, and yields himself to the delights of heartfelt joy. The dark cloud that usually settled on his brow is gilded with the beams of an unwonted rapture, and the countenance, so marred more than any man's, brightens into the celestial beauty of an angel. We gaze with sympathetic emotion on the wondrous change, until we ascertain its nature and trace its cause. Then, in spite of ourselves, we experience a revulsion of feeling, and we ask, with a mixture of awe and dismay, Can the eternal destruction of the souls of men afford satisfaction to him whose errand into this world was to save them from the wrath to come? and especially can the tracing this destruction, not to their guilt and obstinacy, but to the sovereign act of Almighty God, the Father of mercies, be the chief cause of that satisfaction, and afford him the only interval of enjoyment that he experienced during his wretched sojourn upon earth?



My brethren, the simple perusal of the text naturally suggests this question, together with a mournful train of uneasy thoughts and reflections. But a close attention to its meaning and its spirit, in connexion with the genius and general scope of evangelical doctrine, as revealed in the New Testament, will not fail to relieve us from the distressing apprehensions which in the first instance it excited, and at the same time impress us with the conviction that the Saviour's joy on this occasion was as benevolent as it was holy; and though mysterious, merciful; a joy worthy of that spirit that espoused the cause of a perishing world, and for this purpose endured the cross, despising the shame.

That the first impression cannot be the true one, namely, that our Lord rejoiced in the miseries of souls, and in his Father's hiding from them, in order to their condemnation, the grace of his Son's redemption, is sufficiently evident from

His general character.

The very object of his mission. And

From those regrets which, on several occasions, he felt and expressed when he contemplated the final perdition of the impenitent. The Scriptures exhibit no contradictions.

What, then, are we to understand our Lord as meaning, when he exclaims, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes?" You will observe, that in these words he assumes two facts,

of a very opposite nature, to which he assigns the same cause; and viewed in relation to this cause, he considers them both as affording matter for grateful and adoring acknowledgment to his Father, the Lord of heaven and earth.

The facts on which this exulting thanksgiving is founded, are the hiding from the wise and prudent, from men of transcendent abilities, of worldly wisdom, and of high literary attainments, the Divine mysteries of salvation; and the revealing of these very mysteries to the comparatively weak, the unideal, the unlearned, and the undistinguished—the unknowing and unknown. These facts, as originating in the will of the great Lord of the universe, are both and equally the source of the Saviour's joy, and the theme of his gratitude. We ought to view them in the same light, and to regard them with similar feelings. As all the perfections of God are equally glorious, and deserve equal degrees of admiration and praise, so the different manifestations of these perfections are regarded by all wise and holy beings with equal complacency and delight. The judgments of the Almighty are as worthy of his character as the most distinguished acts of his goodness and clemency. The inhabitants of heaven feel this, and their adorations and praises incessantly recognise the principle: one moment redemption swells their anthems, and the celestial temple resounds with the chorus, “Blessing and honour, and glory and majesty, and dominion and praise, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for

ever. Amen." The triumphs of justice and vengeance are anticipated, and in solemn strains the hymn proceeds, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the *power of his Christ*; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night: therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. And again they said, Hallelujah; and her smoke rose up for ever and ever."

Our Lord was distinguished upon earth by the spirit and temper of heaven, and therefore all the dispensations of his Father afforded him satisfaction. He recognised the principles of the Divine procedure, and regarded the consequences only so far as they illustrated these. Whether, therefore, his Gospel were a judicial instrument, a "savour of death unto death," or whether it were the medium of mercy, "a savour of life unto life," in both his Father was glorified: and in both he rejoiced. In the one he acquiesced with adoring reverence, and in the other he delighted—for "he saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied."

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD WERE HIDDEN FROM THE WISE AND PRUDENT.

But how were they hidden? Let us endeavour to answer this question, and then we shall be prepared to listen to the reasons of that solemn gladness of spirit with which the consideration of it inspired the Redeemer.

"The wise and prudent," to whom our Lord here refers, were the principal men of his own age and nation, and therefore they were not destitute of an external revelation. They possessed the

sacred oracles—Moses and the prophets, and the Psalms. The doctrines of Christ had been preached to them, and some of his mightiest works had been performed in their presence: and from the beginning until now, so far are Divine things from being hid from “the wise and prudent,” that they are more fully understood by them than by the weak and illiterate. Daily experience shows us there are many of the disputers of this world that have a more exact scheme of Divine truths in their heads than thousands who powerfully feel their influence in their hearts. They understand these truths as they apprehend human arts and sciences: can talk accurately and learnedly about them, to the reviving the hearts of some, and stopping the mouths of others. But, alas! to all spiritual and saving purposes, the Divine realities of which they speak and write and think, are hidden from them. And though a few of the great, and the honoured, and the learned have submitted to the humility of faith, yet the fact remains undisputed, that where the external light of Revelation has shone with the brightest radiance, there it has been disregarded and contemned by a vast majority of the world’s oracles and masters. One would have thought, that as the light of the morning strikes first on the tops of the high mountains, so the dawning of the day of Christ should have been first perceived by the high priests. That the Sanhedrim should have had the most early notice of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, as they used to have of the *phasis* of the new moon; but on the contrary, the first tidings of an approaching Mes-

siah were given to an ordinary priest of the course of Abias, to Elizabeth his wife, to the babe in her womb, to Joseph the carpenter, and Mary, a despised and humble virgin. During his life, the great and mighty ones turned from him with disdain; at his death there was not a greater darkness on the face of the earth than there was upon the understandings of Pilate, the chief priests, and the elders. Thus likewise it was in the apostles' days, and the succeeding ages to the present: "Not many mighty, not many noble are called;" and though they cannot complain that light has not been imparted to them, yet our Lord, in addressing his Father says, that the glories of his kingdom have been hidden from the wise and prudent; and this he considers to be an act of the Divine will. "Thou hast hid these things." This concealment, therefore, signifies the withholding from those who neglect and despise the Gospel, that internal revelation which would enable them, in a spiritual and practical manner, to apprehend those Divine truths that are outwardly proposed to them; in the denying them that special grace which might open their minds to the glories of Divine mysteries, and their hearts to feel their transforming power, leaving them to their own obstinate, wilful ignorance, to the lusts of their own minds, and the power of Satan to blind and harden them.

You perceive, therefore, that what the Saviour means by the expression, "hid," is not an actual interposition of the Almighty, nor a procedure of absolute sovereignty; but that it is

NEGATIVE AND JUDICIAL.

He bestows a succession of means : the light of nature — conscience — revelation : and because neither are regarded nor improved, he therefore withholds the crowning blessing. But are the “ wise and prudent,” the philosophers, the statesmen, and the master spirits of the world, peculiarly opposed to Christianity? Why is this?

1. *Because their intellectual pride sets them in their own consciousness above the necessity of Revelation.*

2. *Because their mental and moral tastes are peculiarly at variance with the genius and spirit of Christianity.* They despise its mysteries; refuse its grand condition; and hate the great duties of holiness.

3. *Because they have so much to unlearn and relinquish before they can become genuine disciples of Christ.*

4. *Because their minds and hearts are totally pre-occupied with principles, prejudices, and pleasures, diametrically opposed to the Gospel.* Thus they provoke the Almighty to withdraw his influences, to leave the outward dispensation of his mercy to make its own way, unassisted and alone. In this judicial procedure the holy and blessed Jesus acquiesces,

1. *Because of the justice of God, which it illustrates and confirms;* as we have seen in the case of “ the wise and prudent,” especially referred to by our Lord, there is an inexcusable abuse of pre-eminent advantages. There is also, let it be remembered, the greatest inconsistency between their general conduct on other subjects, and their treatment of the Gospel. Their opposition, too, is of the most heinous description : it is direct. Other

offenders break the laws of God to gratify their appetites and passions; these men directly assail the Lawgiver. It is peculiarly the opposition of the intellectual and spiritual nature. It is therefore in near alliance with that of the powers of darkness. It is deliberate—it is malignant. If examples of vengeance must be selected, these seem to be the most proper. In cases of rebellion, the chiefs and leaders are the guiltiest, and are, as they deserve to be, the first victims of retributive justice.

It is a delightful reflection, when the awful prerogative of sovereignty is exercised in selecting the objects of Divine mercy, to know that the Judge of all the earth must do right—that no injustice is implied towards those who are condemned to perish. The holy and blessed Jesus joyfully acquiesces in this procedure of his Father, the Lord of heaven and earth,

2. *On account of his own religion, the progress of which, in spite of the opposition of the learned, the prudent, the powerful, and the wise, is an evidence of its divinity.*

3. He rejoices in it *because the sovereignty of God is thus essentially connected with his goodness: "It seemeth GOOD in thy sight."*

The unrenewed heart of man revolts from this doctrine. It is remarkable, that for preaching the sovereignty of God in the free distribution of his special favours, without any regard to human worth or excellency, Christ himself was exposed to the fury of his hearers.

This subject ministers to us solemn instruction.

1. Let us not be satisfied with any wisdom or knowledge, while we do not savingly understand the great things of God.

2. Let us guard against the common error of the world, that of confiding our immortal interests to those whom we deem our superiors in wisdom, rank, and station. They may be profound philosophers, politic statesmen, fascinating poets, but sorry divines, and any thing but true Christians. We must seek Divine illumination, not from man, but from the Father of lights. Therefore,

3. It becomes us seriously to watch against the influence of the science and the literature of the day, poisoned as they are by infidelity and error, lest they beguile us of our salvation.

4. See the grand qualification for understanding and receiving the blessed truths of religion—the docility of children; the perfect and absolute surrender of ourselves to Divine teaching.

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## THE GOSPEL REVEALED TO BABES.

“ In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”—Luke x. 21.

LET us now briefly direct our attention to the latter clause of the text, and show that the things hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes, and that this ought to inspire our



hearts with the liveliest emotions of adoring thanksgiving.

In prosecuting this, we shall,

I. Show you what that revelation is which the Redeemer affirms was made to babes: II. Prove the truth of the assertion: III. Account for the joy with which the consideration inspired his devout and holy bosom.

I. TO BABES THE LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH REVEALS THE MYSTERIES OF SALVATION.

The revelation here intended is not what is usually understood by that term when generally applied to the Scriptures, but what is elsewhere called "the opening of the understanding and the heart." Thus it is revelation by spiritual illumination and influence, through the instrumentality of the doctrines and truths of Christianity. When our Lord, therefore, says that his Father reveals these things to babes, he means that he communicates, by his Spirit, the saving knowledge of the truth.

1. *Spiritual illumination begins by making a discovery to the sinner of his character and state.* The consequence of this is alarm, inquiry, deep and painful anxiety. When this preliminary is gained,

2. *The Gospel assumes a new aspect, and appears worthy of all acceptance to the guilty, the polluted, the poor, the afflicted, the dying.*

3. This knowledge of himself and the Saviour gradually conducts the humble inquirer to more extensive views, till, through the blessing of God, *he obtains an acquaintance, vivid and experimental, with the whole system of evangelical truth.*

## II. THAT THEY ARE BABES TO WHOM GOD REVEALS THE MYSTERIES OF SALVATION.

Though after another manner—a manner suited to their peculiar condition as the subjects of moral government—this is literally true as it regards the myriads of the human race who die in infancy. It also is literally true as it regards children who are advanced beyond the stage of infancy, and out of whose mouths, even in this world, the Saviour has perfected praise. We have all read of children, touched by a light from heaven, meditating, with a power seemingly far beyond their infant years, upon a world to come. Thoughts and feelings, of which we cannot know the full holy virtue, change them into saints, and make them sigh for heaven. How sweetly have their little voices been heard in hymns, when they knew that they were lying on the bed of death! They have told their parents not to weep for them; and, having kissed their brothers and sisters with such smiles as pass between those who love one another when one of them is about to go away on a visit from which in a few weeks he is to return, they have laid down their heads, never to be lifted again till the judgment day. Oh! scoff not at the wonderful piety you may not understand. Look into the eyes of your own daughter of seven years as she is saying her prayers, and disbelieve not the truth told of creatures young and innocent as she, whom God took unto himself, and, ere he stretched out his hand to waft them from earth, showed them a glimpse of heaven. Others, again, have been thus

spiritualized almost in the cradle, who have been destined to sojourn with us through a long, useful, and blessed pilgrimage. With multitudes of these it is probable the millennium will commence—"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." Even now I see its dawn: I hear indications of its approach in those infant hosannahs to the Son of David which rise in strains so simple and so holy from the congregated thousands in our Sabbath-schools!

But we are to understand the description as metaphorical. Babes signify persons of weak and uncultivated minds, or the lower classes of mankind, who have not enjoyed the advantages of education, and are not distinguished by mental acquirements. "These are denominated babes, because, in relation to the wise and prudent, they are such as children are in comparison of men, whose faculties study has polished and matured; confined in their views, and incapable of vigorous exertion of intellect. Of science they know nothing, and of history they are acquainted with only a few common facts; they understand no language but their own; can pursue no train of reasoning, and are unqualified for any higher employment than manual labour. Such is the character of the greater part of those who have given evidence, by their pious and holy lives, that they had received the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ."

"By babes, some understand the humble and docile, in contradistinction to the proud and self-willed, who are wise in their own eyes. It is evi-

dent, however, that this is a false view of their character, because it is inconsistent with the scope of the passage, which is to illustrate the sovereignty of God in the dispensation of grace."

This declaration is not to be understood as *altogether exclusive*, nor as *perfectly comprehensive*. Our Lord does not affirm that the Gospel is hidden from all the wise; but it appears from the history of religion, that, in general, they are not the learned and the mighty who have been called, but, to use the words of an apostle, "foolish things, and weak things, and things which are despised." Neither are we to understand that all the ignorant and all the common people receive the Gospel. Alas! there are myriads of unhappy exceptions; yet that from among these chiefly the followers of the Redeemer are selected is a matter of undoubted notoriety. So palpable is the fact, that it has been made the foundation of an argument against Christianity, as if its evidences were defective, because it has been rejected by men of cultivated minds, and embraced chiefly by the vulgar. But those who employ this argument are not aware how completely it defeats their object, and establishes the divinity of that religion which they are so anxious it should impugn: the wise, the prudent, the learned, the great reject this religion: they not only regard it with contempt, but, at its commencement especially, they laboured to overthrow it; yet has it triumphed, triumphed in spite of their arguments, and in contempt of their authority! It is one great argument that our re-

ligion is of God, that it was promulgated by such feeble instruments, against such mighty enemies as the philosophers and princes of this world, and that the sweet savour of the knowledge of a crucified Jesus was diffused every where, not like the spices of Arabia, upon the wings of the wind, but against a furious hurricane raised by the mightiest spirits of earth and hell!

Bad as the argument is, however, it takes the fact for granted, nor can it be denied, that, while the wise and prudent have been, for the most part, atheists and infidels, cold speculatists and men of the world, thousands of the babes, the weak and the unlearned, have demonstrated the sincerity of their faith by the fervour of their devotion and the purity of their lives, their patience in adversity, and their triumphant hope in the hour of dissolution. Under the humble roof of the peasant and the mechanic, piety has taken up its abode, and diffused its regenerating and consoling influence; while the halls of schools and colleges have resounded with empty delamations upon virtue, rarely practised there, and with the noise of disputes about words and things which to a being made for immortality are lighter than vanity. How mortifying was the exclamation of a learned man upon witnessing the devout emotions of a rustic: "These illiterate men will rise to heaven, while we with all our knowledge, are cast down into hell."

Having thus explained the nature of the revela-

tion and character of the persons to whom it is made, I proceed, briefly, and lastly, to notice,

III. THE JOY WITH WHICH A CONSIDERATION OF BOTH INSPIRED THE HOLY BOSOM OF THE SAVIOUR.

1. *It was most gratifying to his benevolence.* So great a blessing could not fail to awaken the liveliest emotions of gratitude in the affectionate and generous heart of our Redeemer. His unspeakable love to man made him take a deep interest in their happiness: the display of grace was rendered more impressive by a comparison of the objects of it with those from whom it was withheld.

The Saviour rejoiced in this dispensation,

2. *Because it illustrated the efficacy, and displayed the peculiar glory of his religion.*

3. *Because it poured contempt upon those principles and pursuits which are the greatest banes to the souls of men.* The pride of wisdom, and the prudence which defies the world, and makes it every thing, are the more destructive because they are the most attractive things that can tempt men.

4. *He rejoiced in the final result, when these babes should rise to the dignity of immortality, and shine with a glory which will render the wisdom and the grandeur of this world less than nothing and vanity.*

1. The text administers a solemn warning to the wise men of the world.

2. Those who are not wise and learned may find an argument in the text for contentment with their condition.

3. How thankful should they be whom God has been pleased to illuminate by his Spirit.

4. Let sinners be excited to a diligent use of the means by which divine illumination is enjoyed.

5. Let us learn to bow with humble acquiescence to the awful and mysterious doctrine of the Divine sovereignty as displayed in fixing the destinies of sinful men.

## CHRIST WEeping OVER JERUSALEM.

“ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”—Luke xix. 41, 42.

THUS the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, yields to emotions it was impossible for him to suppress. He was habitually and profoundly affected by “ thoughts too deep for tears.” But here a scene opened to his view, which, like the rod of Moses, smote upon his heart, and the waters gushed forth. He wept, and gave audible expression to his woe, in an exclamation which, for solemn pathos, has no parallel, except in that which he uttered on a similar occasion, when the amplification shows how entirely Jerusalem occupied his mind, interested his feelings, and awakened his solicitude even to agony. “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth

gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not !”

In discoursing from this passage in our Lord's affecting history, we shall

I. Trace the sources of his tears as indicated by the pathetic lamentation with which they were accompanied: and, II. Deduce from both, those doctrinal and practical lessons, which they seem intended to suggest. We proceed to

I. TRACE THE SOURCES OF THE SAVIOUR'S TEARS.

Tears spring from various sources: they sometimes indicate weakness and want of self-control: they are frequently expressions of a transient, superficial sorrow: they are for the most part selfish, and are excited by the personal sufferings of the individuals by whom they are shed. But the tears of Jesus were those of a superior nature; they were free from every selfish alloy; and indicated a grief more profound and agonizing than ever preyed upon a human heart before or since.

Jesus beheld the city, “and wept over it.”

1. *His tears were those of a refined and exalted humanity*, whose every sensibility was touched by the scene of human desolation with which Divine prescience surrounded him. The noblest natures are always the most susceptible: but their grief corresponds with the occasion, and is justified by it. Here was a whole city of human beings, doomed to temporal destruction—to be the prey of famine, rapine, anarchy, and murder.

His was not the lament of heartless taste; it was



not the grief which the son of Vespasian betrayed, when he is represented by the poet, on a fine summer's evening, just before his victorious arms levelled the city in ruins, exclaiming to his companions as he beheld it,

“ It moves me, Romans ! it confounds  
 The counsels of my firm philosophy,  
 That Ruin's merciless ploughshare must pass o'er,  
 And barren salt be sown on yon proud city.  
 How boldly doth it front us ! how majestically !  
 Like a luxurious vineyard, the hill side  
 Is hung with marble fabrics, line o'er line,  
 Terrace o'er terrace, nearer still, and nearer  
 To the blue heavens. Here bright and sumptuous palaces,  
 With cool and verdant gardens interspers'd ;  
 Here towers of war that frown in massy strength ;  
 While over all hangs the rich purple eve,  
 As conscious of its being her last farewell  
 Of light and glory to that fated city.  
 . . . Behold the Temple !  
 In undisturb'd and lone serenity,  
 Finding itself a solemn sanctuary  
 In the profound of heaven ! It stands before us  
 A mount of snow, fretted with golden pinnacles !  
 The very sun, as though he worshipp'd there,  
 Lingers upon the gilded cedar roofs ;  
 And down the long and branching porticoes,  
 On every flowery sculptured capital,  
 Glitters the homage of his parting beams.”

This is finely conceived. But what are tears shed over the violations of taste, and the ruins of art ? More than once, our Redeemer referred with the utmost calmness to the conflagration of the temple, and predicted, with apparent indifference, that one stone should not be left upon another ;

but when he realized the misery which awaited the guilty population, he wept.

2. *He wept over it. They were the tears of patriotism shed over the expiring glories of the country which gave him birth.*

3. *They were generous tears, wept over the miseries of those that hated and persecuted him, discovering the sublimest magnanimity, and the greatest tenderness.*

4. *His tears flowed from a devout sympathy with all the great and good, the long succession of holy martyrs that had preceded him on the errand of compassion and mercy.*

5. *They were the tears of the Son of God, wept over the dishonour which, by the obstinacy and rebellion of this unhappy people, had been cast upon the moral character and government of his adorable Father.*

6. *They were the tears of the Saviour of men.*

7. *These tears of the Redeemer were, lastly, excited by a clear perception of the certainty and extent of the ruin which unexampled guilt would bring upon such an immense multitude of souls. The guilt of the past, which this generation had made all its own; the guilt of the present, which no generation of men had ever been able to accumulate; the guilt of rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory; the guilt of obstinate and determined impenitence, amidst the greatest wonders of redeeming mercy, and the most stupendous terrors of temporal judgments. This grief, this tender anguish, accompanied him to Calvary.*

“ Ere the cross was rais'd,  
 He look'd around him, even in that last anguish,  
 With such a majesty of calm compassion,  
 Such solemn adjuration to their souls ;  
 But yet 'twas not reproachful, only sad,  
 As though their guilt had been the bitterest pang  
 Of suffering——.”

II. THE DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL LESSONS WHICH THIS INTERESTING SUBJECT SUGGESTS, FORM THE SECOND PART OF OUR DISCOURSE.

1. *The truths of the Gospel, faith and salvation, are the things which belong to our peace.*

2. *That the guilt of those who possess the Gospel, but deny its power, is proportioned to the light and mercy which they neglect or despise.*

3. *That great privileges, unregarded and misimproved, are avenged by a termination of our day—a day of grace.*

4. *That the fearful evidence of this termination, is growing indifference or hostility to the things which belong to our peace.*

5. *That the greatest calamity that can befall unconverted sinners, is the end of their day of grace: either removing from them the means of salvation, or visiting them with judicial blindness and hardness of heart.*

6. *That the blessed Redeemer is desirous that we should not, by our criminal neglect of the present season of grace, bring upon ourselves this dreadful calamity.*

## WHO MAKETH THEE TO DIFFER?

“ For who maketh thee to differ from another ? and what hast thou, that thou didst not receive ? ”—1 Cor. iv. 7.

THE persons, the characters, and the conditions of men, are infinitely diversified. Variety individualizes the entire species. There have never been two persons who have been precisely similar, even in those qualities which are essential to the possession of one common nature. Things the most exactly assimilated, yet greatly differ in very important particulars. In the most part this variety is strongly marked, and strikingly apparent.

We may employ the interrogations in the text for the purpose of correcting some of the worst evils that infect the social principle, and are the most destructive of social happiness.

I. To abase pride : II. To shame ingratitude : III. To remove selfishness : and, IV. To banish discontent.

## I. TO SHAME PRIDE.

Distinctions, whether personal or relative, nourish pride. Superiority, whether it be in talent, wealth, station, or influence, awakens our self-importance, and we are apt to treat our God with indifference, to regard ourselves with complacency, and to look upon all that are beneath us with contempt. We are proud of what we have received, as if it were our own, the creature of our own power ; and in proportion as it raises us above our

fellow-creatures, in that proportion we consider that we are entitled to their homage and vassalage. We are, perhaps, not prepared to avow this in so many words, but we declare it by our spirit and our general deportment. How is this pride abased by the consideration suggested in the text?

1. *We have nothing which we have not received.*

2. *God bestowed it upon us irrespective of any claim or merit of our own.*

3. *He has withheld these very distinctions from his greatest favourites and most devoted servants.*

4. *They accumulate upon us an awful aggregate of responsibility.*

## II. TO SILENCE INGRATITUDE.

The most favoured and the most distinguished of the sons of men are the most ungrateful, the least sensible of what they owe to their bountiful Creator and benefactor. The same causes that invigorate pride, foster ingratitude; but remember, the original bestowment, and the perpetual continuance, are both from God—the arrangement of his providence, his special design, the result of his incessant and peculiar care. The more we are distinguished, the greater is our dependence; the greater your stake in the Divine government, the greater, of course, is your obligation to the Divine mercy. Our gratitude should regard the peculiar and specific distinctions which confer superiority: it should rise with the proportion of that superiority, and take its measure of obligation from the lowest of our inferiors in those respects in which we are placed above them. There is no sufferer

in this vale of tears, no creature, however insignificant he may be, among the infinite varieties of our species, that does not owe a debt of gratitude to the Almighty. How great, then, must be yours!

III. TO REPROVE SELFISHNESS, OR TO STIMULATE TO BENEVOLENT EXERTION.

Why does the great Ruler of the universe confer distinctions upon any of his creatures?

1. *That they may be consecrated to his own glory, and that, in pursuance of this great object, they should be completely developed and wholly occupied.*

But how can his glory be advanced by these distinctions?

2. *By incessantly employing them, according to their degree of superiority, to the good of society; by diffusing Divine truth, upholding the interests of holiness, and advancing the cause of universal happiness.* Pride and ingratitude engender selfishness, or are the fruit of it. They are all and each at war with piety and humanity.

IV. TO BANISH DISCONTENT.

We have been speaking hitherto of those distinctions and possessions which confer superiority, and place men on an elevation above their fellows; but the doctrine of the text is equally applicable to all the varieties and differences which exist. When we contrast our meanness, poverty, afflictions, and disappointments with the greatness, prosperity, and success of others, we are often apt to murmur and to express our discontent with the allotments of Providence; but reflect for a moment—"Who hath made thee to differ?" God, the righteous go-

vernor of the universe; God, the gracious Father of all that trust in him; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who sent his Son to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; a God in covenant, who has arranged that all things shall work together for your good, and that your light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. But before you can receive the comfort of all this, you must know your demerit as sinners, your glorious privileges as believers, and be living in hope of the glory of God.

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## CHRIST'S APPEAL TO HIS RIGHTEOUS FATHER.

“ O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.”  
John xvii. 25.

THAT God should be unknown by any of his intelligent creatures, is the most perplexing fact in the history of his moral government; that men, especially, should be strangers to his character is most inexcusable, and proves how deeply they are fallen: probably this is the only part of the universe where the fact exists.

That the Divine Majesty can never be fully known, even by the most exalted beings, is indeed admitted; but that ignorance should prevail to the extent of excluding him from the consciousness

of an entire race of creatures naturally capable of knowing, loving, and adoring him, and who are surrounded with the most magnificent and infinitely-varied proofs of his existence and providence, is the most affecting and appalling consideration that can possibly be entertained.

This is a fact which brings the Saviour upon his knees, and draws from him the most touching and pathetic expressions of regret and sorrow. What a different scene is here exhibited from that which inspired the high anthem of praise when “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.” The temple is desecrated—the glory is departed—“darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people”—sounds, but not of gladness, are heard in the habitations of cruelty, where Moloch reigns and Superstition immolates on every altar, raised by ignorance of the true God, her myriads of victims. The song of creation is exchanged for the groans of despair, and earth, without the knowledge of God, is the darkened theatre where crimes of deepest horror are perpetrated without either compassion or remorse. The tears and groans of suffering humanity, the moral degradation, the fearful guilt, and the eternal ruin of the whole species, so far as it applies, are all comprehended in this one short appeal to Heaven—“The world hath not known thee.”

That this subject may awaken in our bosoms all those emotions which will impart tenderness and



energy to our principles as Christians, in reference to that world for whose ignorance we are to a certain extent responsible, and for the removal of which we should daily labour and pray, let us,

I. Consider this assertion of the Saviour with a view to illustrate and establish its truth: II. Let us inquire into the various springs of principle and sentiment which induced him thus to give it utterance: and, III. Let us apply both to our character and duties as Christians who are living and dying among the multitudes in whose behalf the Saviour makes this affecting appeal—"O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee."

Let us consider this assertion of the Saviour,

I. WITH A VIEW TO ILLUSTRATE AND ESTABLISH ITS TRUTH.

It will be observed that our Lord draws a strong line of demarcation between the world and his followers; and the grand point of distinction is precisely this—the world is destitute of all saving knowledge of God, while his true disciples possess it, and exemplify its value in bringing forth its fruits. "I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me; and I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

The censure of the text, therefore, falls on all those who, possessing a Divine revelation, remain ignorant of God as the only object of religious worship, and the only source of true felicity.

Thus it applies to those who remain ignorant of God within the verge of Christian illumination,

and to those who are millions of leagues beyond its reach, but on whom the light of nature shines, without leading them up to its infinite and eternal Source. The world hath not known God.

1. *The world is ignorant of God, of his nature, his government, his laws, and his Gospel.*

But may not this ignorance be in a great degree venial? Have not mankind from age to age been compelled to grope their way in the dark? *God is not known, because he hath not clearly revealed himself to the world.* It is very easy for superficial minds to assume this gross reflection upon the Divine character, judging only from the universality and the depth of the ignorance with which they are surrounded: but the blame is not in any way imputable to God. He is clear when he is judged. For what is the fact? This ignorance has prevailed most where men have had the clearest light, and on that part of the Divine character where this light has shone with the brightest radiance.

This has been true of every nation—of every age. It is as true at this moment, as when the assertion was first made.

1. *The light of nature has not led men to God.* It cannot be affirmed that of this light there was ever any deficiency. Does not the apostle Paul affirm, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, what no reasonable mind can for a moment question?—and do we not see in his statement a confirmation of what we have just advanced,—that on those points where the light has been clearest, it has been most abused?

Verse 20: "For the *invisible* things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his *eternal* power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."

2. *The revelation and system of symbolical truths embodied in the Jewish Scriptures and worship, were abused also precisely on those great subjects on which they shed the purest light.* Nor, when the light increased and set forth all the splendours of the Deity in the person, discourses, miracles, and wonders of the Redeemer, was the truth of this statement at all shaken: on the contrary, it was most signally confirmed.

3. *And it has been increasingly established ever since then down to the present moment.* The light of salvation, so far from making the great multitude of mankind wise or happy, has aggravated the guilt of their ignorance, and thus augmented

the weight of their condemnation. It has provoked the most determined enmity, called forth every form of depravity, and been a savour of death unto death. There is nothing so little understood as the way to heaven, though God has poured all his radiance upon it.

The progress of light has been chiefly to reveal the horrible prevailing darkness; and how dreadful its extent! But this fact stands not alone as one of simple ignorance. How ought such a fact to affect the hearts of enlightened and holy beings?—with what feelings and purposes ought Christians to receive its announcement? This question is answered when we consider the impression which it made upon the Son of God. It led him to prayer, and through this medium he breathes out his spirit to God his righteous Father, “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.”

Let us, then, inquire into,

## II. THE VARIOUS SPRINGS OF PRINCIPLE AND SENTIMENT IN WHICH THIS LANGUAGE ORIGINATES.

The language is that of the Mediator between God and men—the man Christ Jesus, in the high act of solemn intercession—of one who possessed all human sympathies, who felt as we feel, but all whose sensibilities, though human, were perfectly pure. It is the perfection, the unsullied perfection of humanity, that offers this tender appeal to his almighty Father.

1. *It expresses the regret of an intellectual being, conscious of the supreme worth of divine knowledge as the noblest attainment of the faculties of mind and*

*reason.* Intelligence capable of ascending high as the throne, the being, the attributes of the Eternal, the uncreated Mind, is the distinguishing power of man. But the mere capacity sinks while it elevates: unemployed, it becomes imbruted with the body; the very soul is sensualized, and presents the strange phenomenon of an animal without his instincts. When the intellectual faculty is misemployed, perverted, and rendered active only to expend its energies on what is unworthy of its high destination, the man becomes a fiend, or the immortal sinks down into the mere creature of a day, and lives to learn and diffuse that science which begins in vanity and ends in vexation of spirit.

2. *It is the language of a devout being powerfully impressed with the Divine perfections, and most anxious for the universal acknowledgment of the Divine glory.*

3. *Of a benevolent being most deeply interested for the moral welfare of the children of men.*

4. *Of a sorrowful and agonized spirit, whose tender and passionate grief is excited by the miseries of others, and which seeks a refuge from evils which are not to be averted, in the rectitude of the Divine character, and its sweetest consolations in the fervent aspirations of devotion.*

It is consistent with this character that these evils should exist in an indefinite progression, and through a succession of ages. It is consistent with the rectitude of the Divine character to remove them in mercy, and to triumph over them in the

exercise of a Divine compassion. It is an appeal to God, as the righteous Governor of the universe, to restore the reign of purity and love in a world of rebellion, sin, and misery, the effect of malignant and destructive power usurped by the prince of darkness.

5. *It is the language of one convinced that the moral evils of the world are to be removed by divine agency, through the intervention of human efforts ; and who therefore uses prayer as a powerful instrument with Heaven, and a mighty and sustaining stimulus to his own heart, to enable him to make the greatest sacrifice for the attainment of this glorious object.*

Having thus considered this assertion of the Saviour, with a view to illustrate and establish its truth ; and having inquired into the various springs of principle and sentiment which induced him to give it utterance ; I come now,

### III. TO APPLY BOTH TO OUR OWN CHARACTER AND DUTIES AS CHRISTIANS.

1. *We should trace all the errors, crimes, and miseries of the world to their proper source—ignorance of God.*

2. *We should feel our mighty obligations to impart to our perishing fellow-creatures that knowledge of which they are destitute, and which we possess.*

3. *In doing this, we should seek to be imbued with the principles and spirit of the Saviour.* This is a spirit of prayer: that the world may believe; of union, that the world may be impressed and awakened in order to believe—the moral beauty of union; the moral strength of union; of labour, and

of sacrifice, that the necessary instrumentality may be supplied for the accomplishment of this object.

It is the highest honour of our nature to be identified with this glorious spirit of enlightened philanthropy; for what is there of great, illustrious, and Divine, that it has not achieved? What mighty embankments has it not raised against the inundations of misery! I see it every where like a presiding Deity, a guardian God, disarming the powers of evil of their deadly weapons, seizing the vials of wrath, arresting them in their descent, and opening in their stead fountains overflowing with mercy, and diffusing their salient streams through ten thousand channels, refreshing the moral wilderness, and converting a desert of vice and wretchedness into a garden of purity, peace, and joy.

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## THE CRUCIFIXION.

“ And there they crucified him.”—Luke xxiii. 33.

WE are this day to call your attention to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ—the most extraordinary event in the annals of the universe—in which the greatest possible extremes meet, and the circumstances and consequences of which are of a character the most awful, instructive, and impressive. If we

I. CONTEMPLATE IT SIMPLY AS A FACT—IT IS ESTABLISHED BY INDUBITABLE EVIDENCE.

The testimony of enemies, the concurrence of friends, and the universal belief grounded on that testimony, from the period of its accomplishment to the present.

Considered also simply as a capital punishment inflicted upon an imputed malefactor, two things are remarkable.

1. *The nature of the punishment*—Roman, savage, and barbarous.

2. *The means by which it was procured.* It fully accords with the truth of history as it regards the exercise of the Roman power over its conquered provinces, while it proves the utter degradation of the Jews as a people. They were despicable in character: and all their national glory had vanished.

This marks the period of the transaction, and shows its perfect accordance with the ancient prediction concerning Shiloh, “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, till Shiloh come.” But crucifixion, barbarous and savage as was the punishment, was of frequent occurrence. It was the usual mode of putting slaves and criminals to death. But the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, as it regards

II. THE PERSON ON WHOM IT WAS INFLICTED, RENDERED IT AN EVENT ALTOGETHER UNPARALLELED IN THE HISTORY OF CRIMINAL JURISPRUDENCE.

Never had such a being stood before a tribunal, or been awarded to death. Greater than all the Cæsars; wiser than all the philosophers; more benevolent than all the good; more virtuous than all the just; more devout than all the holiest teachers of theology. He was the glory of the human nature; the express image of the Divine. He claimed the prerogatives of the Godhead; sustained his claims by his deeds and words; announced a mission from heaven; and



proclaimed himself the Saviour of the world. Now if all these had been pretension, the raving of madness, or the cunning of imposture, as he was poor, and destitute, and friendless, it was not necessary to call in the aid of the Roman power to crush him in his weakness; and if he confirmed his pretensions by miracles, and the discovery of wonderful power, and avoided all offence against existing authorities, by refusing to exercise their functions, he ought to have been hailed, honoured, and adored. The nearer Christ approached in his revealed character—a Divine nature—the greater of course were the obligations of mankind to receive him, and the more atrocious their guilt in rejecting him.

And thus I observe,

III. THAT THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST IS AN UNPARALLELED EVENT—AS IT COMPREHENDS, AND IN THE MOST HEINOUS DEGREE, EVERY SPECIES OF HUMAN WICKEDNESS.

On the part of the Jews it was a base betrayal of their country to a foreign power; it involved the guilt of perjury, of injustice, ingratitude, hypocrisy, (*our law,*) impiety, and treason against the Almighty Ruler of heaven and earth; and this against light and knowledge; in spite of warning; no motive but malice. On the part of the Roman governor a base dereliction of duty; the love of popularity; pusillanimous weakness: despicable avarice. In *all* the sin of *murder*, and “murder most *foul*, as in the best it is.”

IV. AS IT REGARDS THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS CRUCIFIXION, IT WAS AN EVENT UNPRECEDENTED,

AND NEVER CAN HAVE A PARALLEL, ON ACCOUNT OF THE PECULIAR AGONIES AND HORRORS WHICH IN THIS CASE WERE EXCLUSIVELY ENDURED.

Innocence bearing the imputation of the most atrocious guilt—kindness visited with barbarous ingratitude—philanthropy suffering in apprehension of the penal consequences which would fall on the guilty perpetrators, (“Father, forgive them!”)—a lacerated, wounded body, a body most perfect in all its senses, and every sense wounded—most susceptible in all its nerves, and every nerve racked with throbbing, piercing, unendurable pain—all his sympathies assailed at the same moment—his mother—the agonies of his suffering companions—the sufferings of his soul—withdrawment of the Divine favour—infliction of vengeance—*expiation*, the victim of human guilt.

V. THE CRUCIFIXION OF OUR BLESSED LORD HAS NO PARALLEL, IF WE CONSIDER THE FEARFUL AND PRETERNATURAL CONCOMITANTS WHICH MARKED ITS CHARACTER, BOTH AS THE RESULT AND THE EXPIATION OF HUMAN TRANSGRESSION.

Darkness was over all the land—the graves opened, and their dead arose—the veil of the temple was rent by a mysterious hand—the earth was shook to its foundations, and the rocks were cloven asunder. One malefactor cursed, another prayed—hell was appalled at the work which sin—which human sin, had done—it was nature’s crisis, and the sympathy was felt through the utmost extent of universal being. The only one that felt not, cared not, and that was ready to brave the worst, was he that did it all, and to whom it seemed neither a

matter of sympathy nor of peril. And on whom does this censure fall? what impious hand achieved this dismal tragedy?

“ I ask’d the heavens, ‘ What foe to God hath done  
 This unexampled deed?’ The heavens exclaim,  
 ‘ ’Twas man! and we in horror snatch’d the sun  
 From such a spectacle of guilt and shame.’ ✓  
 I ask’d the Sea;—the sea in fury boil’d,  
 And answer’d with his voice of storms, ‘ ’Twas man!  
 My waves in panic at his crime recoil’d,  
 Disclos’d the abyss, and from the centre ran.’  
 I ask’d the Earth;—the earth replied aghast.  
 ‘ ’Twas man! and such strange pangs my bosom rent,  
 That still I groan and shudder at the past.’  
 To Man, gay, thoughtless Man, I went,  
 And ask’d him next:—He turn’d a scornful eye,  
 Shook his proud head, and deign’d me no reply.”

VI. ANOTHER WONDER THAT DISTINGUISHES THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST IS, THAT IT WAS ON HIS PART PERFECTLY VOLUNTARY, AND AN EXPRESSION THE STRONGEST HE COULD GIVE OF HIS INFINITE LOVE.

VII. THAT IT DISPLAYS THE MOST ASTONISHING VIRTUES; THAT IT IS IN TRUTH INVESTED WITH ALL THE MORAL GLORIES OF CHRISTIANITY.

This is true whether we regard its design to harmonize all the Divine attributes in the salvation of man, or whether we regard what it immediately exhibited of the personal character of the Divine Sufferer.

VIII. IT PRODUCES THE MOST WONDERFUL MORAL TRANSFORMATIONS.

IX. IT IS THE SOLE MERITORIOUS CAUSE OF HUMAN ENJOYMENT, THROUGH WHATEVER MEDIUM IT IS CONVEYED UPON EARTH: AND ESPE-

CIALLY THE CAUSE AND THE SPRING OF ALL THE FELICITY THAT SAINTS ARE TO POSSESS THROUGH ETERNITY IN HEAVEN.

“ It is for the sake of the transactions of this hour that this beauteous world is kept up, and that the sun shines on the just and on the unjust. Every sweet tone in nature comes forth from thy responsibility, O Jesus of Nazareth ! Every little singing bird has in thee more than a double Creator. Thou art Alpha and Omega in the strangely-wrought song of Time and its spheres : every thing of affection which gladdens our earth is held fast to us in the same interference of thine, under which our souls are finally redeemed.”

But through this mysterious event the guilty is not only pardoned, and the depraved transformed, but immortal hopes and joys spring up in the bosom : on earth an antepast of heaven is enjoyed ; and beyond the regions of time, and the glories and felicities of eternity, the cross is recognised as the foundation of the whole. The awful wonders of Calvary, that shrouded the earth with preternatural darkness, are mingled with all the moral splendours which irradiate the throne of God and the Lamb. Nor, after the consummation of all things, will there be a creature in the universe that will not be indebted for the bliss of its being to this mystery of infinite love, which, in the act of saving guilty and ruined man, in its infinite exuberance of blessings, augments the happiness of the universe.







