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SERMONS.



SERMONS

BY

JOHN B. ROMEYN, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CEDAR-STREET.
NEW-YORK.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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(L. S.) **B**E it Remembered, That on the thirteenth day of May, in the fortieth year of the Independence of the United States of America, Jonathan Scymour of the said district, hath deposited in this Office the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words and figures following, to wit:

Sermons, by John B. Romeyn, D. D. Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Cedar-street New-York. In two volumes. Vol. I.

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THERON RUDD,

Clerk of the Southern District of New-York

TO
THE CONGREGATION
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN
CEDAR-STREET.



To whom can I inscribe these volumes with more propriety than to you? Neither individuals, who have honoured me with their friendship, nor the Congregations among whom I have laboured, before the providence of God placed me over you in the Lord, have claims upon my esteem and affection comparable to your's! I came to you at your invitation, an entire stranger, and you received me with open arms. I have laboured among you in much weakness, and with great imperfection, but you have uniformly encouraged me when I

halted, and over my defects have cast the mantle of charity. Your treatment of me is the more grateful to the best feelings of my heart, and the more honourable to your character, because it has been purchased by no sacrifice of independence on my part, either as it respects the doctrines which have been preached; the discipline which has been introduced into the Church; or the line of conduct pursued in my intercourse with you. In that treatment, I have found the most powerful of all temporal motives to spend and be spent for your spiritual welfare. God has been pleased, however, to afford me a higher motive for discharging my duty toward you. Whilst you have contributed munificently to my temporal enjoyment, it has pleased the Father of mercies to make me, as I trust, an instrument of dispensing eter-

nal benefits to many among you. My desire is to leave some memorial, when we shall be gathered to our fathers, to the praise of God's grace displayed to us, and to your honour, for the manner in which you have acted towards your pastor. May God grant his own blessing to these volumes, that this desire may be accomplished in their publication! Thus your children, and your children's children, with emotions of pleasure, will be enabled to dwell upon your memory, as having, in a distinguished manner, cherished the ministry of reconciliation, and relieved, by your uniform attention and kindness, the cares and perplexities, the fatigues and disappointments, inseparably connected with an upright discharge of the duties of that responsible office.

JOHN B. ROMEYN.

PREFACE.

IN the selection of the following Discourses, the author has endeavoured, so far as he was able, to afford a specimen of the manner in which Calvinistic principles can be applied to the illustration and enforcement of the duties belonging to the various relations of life.

Though the discourses are upon various subjects, there will no doubt be perceived by the reader, in some of them, a recurrence of the same thoughts, and often of the same manner of expression. It was not deemed of sufficient importance to endeavour to avoid this. Great and general principles are closely connected, and so incorporated with the results of these principles, that it is not possible for a person, whose opinions on these principles and their results are definite and unwavering, to conceal, or dissemble his views or feelings. And in the publication of these views and feelings, either in conversation or print, there must ne-

cessarily be a similarity in the manner of expressing them. Besides this, the reader will recollect, that these discourses were delivered not in succession, but at intervals; that they are intended not to illustrate or enforce doctrines and precepts in a systematic, connected form, but merely as they presented themselves to view, in the discussion of the different subjects which, from time to time, had been selected for ministerial instruction.

Two of the discourses owe their publication in these volumes to personal feelings. The author wished to render a just tribute of affection to an excellent Father, still remembered with the tenderest emotions, and a dear, estimable Friend. To have his name coupled with their names, is to him a pleasing reflection, which will more than overbalance the severity of criticism. He loved them for their merit whilst they lived, and hopes to be united with them in immortality and glory beyond the grave.

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SERMON I.



CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.



JOHN VIII. 12.

I am the Light of the world.

CONDORCET, Godwin, and other skeptics, in their writings, dwell largely upon what they call human perfectability. By this they mean the inherent power which mankind possess of improving themselves, so as ultimately to obtain a state of moral, physical, and political perfection. It is a remarkable fact that this state, which they consider as the consummation of human wishes, resembles, in the outlines of character which they have given to it, the prophetic descriptions of the Millennial period. One of them says, "Our hopes as to the future condition of the human species may be reduced to three points: the destruction

“ of inequality between different nations ;
“ the progress of equality in one and the
“ same nation ; and, lastly, the real im-
“ provement of man^a.” These hopes will
be realized, but not in the sense of the writ-
ter, in that day “ when the Mountain of the
“ Lord’s house shall be established in the top
“ of the mountains, and shall be exalted
“ above the hills, and all nations shall flow
“ unto it^b.” Then the kingdoms of this world
will belong to Christ, and therefore consti-
tute one empire: the distinctions which pride,
ambition, and oppression have introduced
among mankind, will be annihilated ; and
our race, in their intellectual and moral qua-
lities, as also in their temporal condition,
will be exalted to the highest state of im-
provement of which they are capable on this
side of the grave.

From the representations which God has
given us in his word of the glory of the lat-
ter days, we perceive that infidels, in their
theory of the perfectability of our species,
have not even the credit of originality : nay
more ; having borrowed the idea directly or

a Condorcet’s Philos. Outlines, p. 251. Phil. ed.

b Isai. ii. 2.

indirectly from the Scriptures, with their usual ingratitude, they wish to conceal their obligations to that very volume whose authority they deny, and whose credit they seek to destroy. Though they are thus indebted for their theory to the word of God, the means by which they suppose this ultimate perfection of man will certainly be obtained, are all of their own invention. Without following them in their detail of these means, let it suffice to say, that they have endeavoured to account for effects without adequate causes. With the celebrated Gibbon, in his insidious attempt to account for the rapid spread of the Gospel by secondary causes, they, in their rage against the Lord and his Anointed, have ascribed to human exertions the omnipotence of the first cause. Leaving them to their own imaginations, let us recur to the sure word of truth, which is able to remove all doubts, and to lead us in the way of righteousness. Therein we find the original, the present, and the future state of man clearly unfolded. At first, he was upright; then, he fell. To him as fallen, divine mercy revealed a way of escape from the righteous judgment of God.

The evolution of the whole plan, and its success in meliorating the nature and the condition of man, we find, from the information of the Scriptures and the records of profane history, have both been progressive. The progress has indeed, we grant, met with interruptions, some shorter and some longer in duration. Each interruption, however, has been succeeded by a clearer manifestation of mercy, and a fuller display of its power in the world. As Christ the Saviour is the substance of every such manifestation; as without him, so far as we know, there would have been no mercy for us; so it is by the knowledge of Christ which God has progressively imparted, that mankind have progressively improved thus far, and will continue to do so until the end of time.

Of this truth Christ himself gives us information and proof in the text, when he calls himself the Light of the world. He is that in the spiritual, which the material light or sun is in the natural, world. And as the material light shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day, so “the Light of the world” has increased in splendour from

his appearance in the first promise, and will continue to increase until the glorious day shall come, when “at evening time it shall be light^a.” In this enlarged view of the Light of the world, we perceive his progress from the beginning to the end of his shining; a shining sometimes obscured by clouds, which hid him from the world, and then breaking forth with additional resplendency; but always communicating some benefit, shedding abroad invigorating and healthful influence in proportion to its clearness. He is thus “as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from his heat^b.” Let us for our improvement now,

I. Inquire how he is the Light of the world.

And,

II. Follow his course, from his first appearance, till he shall reach the meridian, the latter-day glory, shining brighter and brighter, and imparting corresponding blessings as far as his rays extend.

^a Zech. xiv. 11.

^b Ps. xix. 5, 6.

The consideration of these topics will prepare us for an application appropriate to this first day of the year ^a.

I. Our first subject of examination is the inquiry, How is Christ the Light of the world?

In this inquiry the world is taken in its largest sense, as meaning the whole race of Adam, from the creation to the day when the heavens and the earth shall pass away with a great noise. Of the world, thus understood, Christ, according to his own declaration, is the Light, that is, the source of light, the Sun of righteousness. To understand fully the beauty and propriety of our Lord's figurative language, we must for a moment resort to natural science. Without entering into any thing even like a general view of her instructions on this subject, suffice it to say, merely for the purposes of present illustration, she teaches that the sun is the great fountain from whence flows the light of day, which enables us to see objects and pursue occupations necessary to our comfort and support; that his rays always produce heat, which change the bulk, state,

^a Preached Jan. 1, 1813.

and combinations of bodies; and that, by means of light and heat, he imparts life to various forms of matter. Analogous to the place which he occupies in the constitution of the material world, and the mechanical power which he exercises over its various parts, is the place which Christ occupies in the constitution of mercy under which God has placed men ever since the fall, and the spiritual power which he exercises among them. He is the Source from whence they derive the knowledge of those truths which are essential to their present comfort and eternal happiness; the Agent who makes the exhibition of this knowledge effectual by his grace to a renovation of the whole soul, in its intellectual and active powers; the Author and Supporter of a walk and conversation corresponding with the nature of this renovation. Each of these particulars will be distinctly but briefly illustrated in order.

I. Christ is the Light of the world, inasmuch as he is the Source from whence mankind derive the knowledge of those truths which are essential to their present comfort and eternal happiness.

For these truths we are indebted entirely to revelation, since the fall has so impaired the intellectual faculties of man, as to disable him from discovering them by his utmost exertions. In that eventful day when our first parents disobeyed God, they became darkened in their understandings, and mistook evil for good and good for evil. In this miserable condition they would have remained, without the least hope of deliverance, had not the Seed of the woman been revealed to them. He covenanted with the Father from eternity to die for sinful men, and the Father promised him, on condition of *his* dying, to bless *them*.

Of this transaction the first promise gave notice to man; and in subsequent revelations its nature was more fully unfolded, until “the fulness of the time was come, when God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” He came “to deliver a world from ruin, to abolish sin and death, to purify and immortalize human nature; and thus, in the

“ most exalted sense of the words, to be the
“ Saviour of all men, and the blessing of all
“ nations^a.”

As the testimony of Jesus is the great burden of prophecy, and He who indited prophecy is the Spirit of Christ^b, it follows, that to Christ we are indebted for our knowledge of all those truths which constitute our chief good. He, by revealing to mankind his great work of redemption, has originated in their breasts the hope of acceptance here, and eternal life hereafter. To such a hope, discriminating the state of fallen man from that of fallen angels, we must ascribe the existence of religious worship throughout our world. A principal part of this worship among all nations, before the birth of Christ, was the practice of sacrifices, which, being appointed by God^c, were designed to typify the great sacrifice of the Redeemer for sin. It was therefore necessary, on the part of those who offer-

a Hurd's True Idea of Prophecy.

b Rev. xix. 10. 1 Pet. i. 11.

c Shuckford's Connect. vol. i. book 2. Magee on the Atonement, Disc. 2. note, 41, &c. Delany's Revelat. exam. with candour, vol. i. Disc. 8.

ed them acceptably, to believe and acknowledge the doctrines of the depravity of human nature, the divinity of the Lord Jesus, justification by faith in his righteousness, the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Ghost, personal holiness, and a future state of retribution.

These doctrines, flowing from, and inseparably connected with, the sacrifice of Christ for sin, not only constitute the substance of revelation, but are also the foundation of all useful and excellent knowledge. They are admirably calculated to produce the evolution of human faculties, and to direct their energies to the acquisition of sound learning and true philosophy. Hence, wherever "the word of Christ" is circulated and understood, there we find a general acquaintance with all the duties belonging to our social, domestic, literary, religious, and political relations in life. So true it is, that Jesus Christ the Redeemer, by revealing the knowledge of salvation through his blood, has also imparted to our fallen race the knowledge of those truths which are essential to our improvement and enjoyment of present scenes for our happiness, in whatever state God may please to place us.

2. Christ is the Light of the world, inasmuch as he is the Agent who makes the exhibition of this knowledge effectual to a complete renovation of the whole soul, in its intellectual and active powers.

He shines in the hearts of men, “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ^a.” This he does by his Spirit, who enlightens the eyes of their understanding, so that they perceive the excellency and necessity of the truths which he has revealed. The effect of such a perception, is the choice of these truths by the affections. Thus the whole soul is renovated in all its powers, both intellectual and active. Those truths which before were unknown, are now understood; which before were considered of no importance, are now loved and cherished.

The change which the Spirit of Christ produces in sinful men, through the illumination of their understandings, is as great as that which the heat of the sun produces in the bulk, state, and combinations of bodies. “Old things literally are passed away; behold all things are become new^b.” The

a 2 Cor. iv. 6.

b 2 Cor. v. 17.

dominion of sin is destroyed, and the reign of grace, which is the reign of Christ the Redeemer, has commenced in the soul. This reign, triumphing over every opposition, produces constant and increasing conformity to God.

The great design of Christ in dying for sin, was to “purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.” The truths which he has revealed, referring directly or indirectly to his death as the central point of the whole system, are embraced by those in whom he reigns, with a distinct knowledge, that their effects are mortifying to the flesh, with its affections and lusts. They completely annihilate our pride, by unfolding our real character as rebels against an infinitely good and holy God; and our degraded, miserable condition, in consequence of this rebellion. They proscribe, without exception, every thing which the carnal mind loves, or to which it looks for comfort. They declare the wisdom of man to be foolishness, and his moral power weakness. They ascribe all the glory of our recovery to the sovereign mercy of God, and do not

allow unto us the least particle of merit, or of ability to restore ourselves to his favour. The uniform language which they speak is this: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast."

All these truths are approved by the understanding; cherished by the affections; and used by the intellectual and active powers of the soul, enlightened by the Spirit of Christ, so as to enable the "law of the mind" to obtain new and important victories over the "law of sin in the members." Every such victory is a blessing to society, not only by diminishing the influence of corruption in individuals, and thus purifying social intercourse, but also by stimulating and sanctifying the intellectual powers of men in their pursuit after the acquisition of general knowledge. Such is the renovation of the "inner man," which Christ by his Spirit achieves: a renovation which evidently is the work of God. His is the glory of the work; the benefit belongs to sinful man!

3. Christ is the Light of the world, inasmuch as he is the Author and Supporter of a walk and conversation corresponding with this renovation of the soul which he produces.

Such a walk and conversation, which constitute the outward manifestation of inward grace, have a necessary relation to a rule or standard, according to which they are regulated. This is the law of God, which was broken by man when he sinned; and of which “Christ is the end for righteousness^a.” He obeyed it in his life; honoured it by his death; and, having fulfilled its conditions as a covenant of works, he publishes it as a rule of conduct for all his redeemed people. Being made willing in the day of his power, they obey it sincerely; with affection; universally. They are convinced that it is holy, just, and good; suited to their dependent nature, and calculated to make them happy. Therefore, “denying “ungodliness and worldly lusts, they live “soberly, righteously, and godly in this “present world^b.” The two great duties of the law, piety towards God and bene-

^a Rom. x. 4.

^b Tit. ii. 12.

volence towards men, they seek to perform wherever and whenever they can. They are strictly religious and exemplarily moral in their whole deportment. In all the relations of life, domestic, social, literary, political, ecclesiastical, they study to make their “light so shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven^a.” By these good works, they afford the public evidences of the reign of grace in their souls. The inner man being subject to the authority and influence of Christ, the outward man displays the effects of that authority and influence, by doing all things which Christ has commanded.

Thus it is that Christ is the Light of the world; originally communicating to mankind the great truth of his death, and with it the knowledge of all necessary truths connected with, and subordinate to, this truth; constraining multitudes among them by his Spirit cordially to embrace the great truth of his death, being planted in the likeness of it; and leading those whose hearts are thus warmed by the Sun of righteousness,

^a Matt. v. 16.

in the ways of righteousness, holiness, and peace.

II. Let us now follow the course of this Light of the world, from his first appearance, till he shall reach the latter-day glory, shining brighter and brighter, and imparting corresponding benefits so far as his rays extend.

The corresponding benefits to which we refer, are those exertions of intellect, or habits of moral deportment, which, originating in, and fostered by, the death of Christ, promote the chief good of men. These benefits are essential to civilization in society, and indeed constitute the peculiar nature of civilization. For in what consists the difference between a civilized and savage state of society? Generally in this, that the principles of social intercourse in civilized life, are ascertained with the utmost precision. Nothing which affects the interests of the community, if it be practicable to bring every thing of this nature within the control of laws, either enacted by authority or adopted by general consent, is left to the capricious feelings, or to the passions of individuals. Hence the more civilized a peo-

ple are, the more definite are the laws regulating intercourse between man and man, that thus the sources of discord or social unhappiness may be annihilated, so far as laws can effect this desirable object.

It may here naturally be asked, can the standard of right and wrong, by which human laws are regulated, be discovered by the reason of men, or has it been revealed to them? We have already asserted the latter, and now add, that the former is disproved by the history of mankind. What the reason of one person in one country dictates to be right, that of another person in another country proscribes as wrong. There must therefore be a rule independent of the conclusions of human reason. This rule is revelation. God made known to Adam, then to Noah, afterward to Abraham, and to others, the doctrine of redemption by Jesus Christ. Each subsequent revelation was more minute and specific than the previous one. These revelations afforded matter on which the faculties of the mind could exert themselves.

From these premises inferences could be drawn; from these propositions new ones could be deduced, which more widely extended the sphere of the knowledge of the truth in all its details.

To these revelations, therefore, men are indebted for the fundamental principles of civilization; and, as these revelations had respect to Christ, nay, originated in his great work, so he is the author of civilization, because he has procured and made known redemption through his blood. Hence the first societies were not savage, as many writers have maintained^a, but strictly civilized, because formed directly under the influence of the first promise. The traces of civilization which exist among the Heathen, are owing to the remains of traditionary knowledge derived from the original revelation of Christ, the promised seed^b. Wherever the information afforded on this subject, directly, or through the medium of tradition, was disregarded or corrupted, the social state became more or less barbarous. In the

a Kaims' Sketches, Volney's Ruins, Dunbar, and others.

b Riccaltoun's Attempt. Ellis' Inquiry.

knowledge of, and obedience to, Christ the propitiation for sin, consists the superiority of one people over another, or of one age above another. As this knowledge was gradually communicated, so the improvement of individuals and of the world was gradual: the latter always, however, bearing a striking proportion to the former.

A volume would hardly suffice to illustrate this single point. A brief and imperfect outline will only be given. Let the following remarks be remembered while the outline is sketching:

(1.) That real civilization can only exist where Christ the Mediator is known.

(2.) That the degree of civilization will be in proportion to the degree of the knowledge of Christ as Mediator.

(3.) That, as this knowledge has been imparted at intervals, so civilization has had its interruptions.

(4.) That, with the increase and spread of this knowledge, civilization will increase.

(5.) That, as real civilization necessarily includes the greatest improvement of our race in social intercourse, so it will be at its highest state when "the earth shall be fill-

“ ed with the knowledge of the glory of the
“ Lord, as the waters cover the sea^a.”

With these remarks, intended not only to explain my design, but to prevent mistakes about its execution, I proceed to sketch out the progress of Christ the Light of the world, and the interruptions which that progress has experienced from age to age.

1. We shall briefly review the state of society from the deluge to the call of Abraham^b.

It will be necessary here to take a retrospective glance at the state of the antediluvian world: for, although the human race, with the exception of Noah and his family, had perished, yet their knowledge and improvements survived. The Word of God, our only guide to any correct information on this part of our subject, furnishes us with few materials: but, few as they are, they demand attention, for they constitute the elementary principles of religion, morals, and general science in the new world.

The Sabbath, instituted whilst man was in a state of innocence, we have abundant

^a Habak. ii. 14.

^b From an. 2348 before Christ, to 1921.

reason to believe, was kept holy by the Saints of the old world, and the knowledge of its nature and duties familiar' to Noah and his family. On it sacrifices were offered, which typifying the death of Christ, forcibly reminded men of their duty and best interests^a. In these sacrifices, to the institution of which you have already been referred, the first promise received a great and satisfactory illustration. Additional illustrations we find in the formation of public religious societies in the days of Enos, when "men began to call upon the name of the Lord^b;" the selection and inspiration of prophets, as Enoch^c, Noah^d, and Lamech^e; the degree of spirituality and conformity to God displayed in Enoch, "who walked with God and was not, for God took him;" and in Noah, a just man, and perfect in his generation, who walked with God^f. Under the influence of this increase

a Camp. Vitringæ Aphor. curante Martino Vitringa, pars 4. cap. 20. See also Owen on the Sabbath, and West on the same subject.

b Gen. iv. 26.

c Jude xiv.

d 2 Pet. ii. 5. comp. with Gen. vi. 13—22.

e Gen. v. 29.

f Gen. v. 24. & vi. 9. comp. with Heb. xi. 5. & 7.

of light, in relation to the way of acceptance with God, many discoveries were made in the useful and ornamental arts. Thus we find that Abel was “a keeper of sheep,” Cain “a tiller of the ground;” Jabal “was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle;” Jubal invented “the harp and the organ;” Tubal-cain, “an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron^a;” Noah was acquainted with the distinction between clean and unclean beasts, as also with the principles of ship-building^b. The method of measuring time must have been known in the very first ages, as appears from the calculation which Moses gives us of the length of the antediluvian patriarchs’ lives, and the manner in which he describes the circumstances of the deluge. In addition to this, let it be remembered, that the sanctity and duties of the married state were likewise understood, and the principles of subordination which this state necessarily

^a Gen. iv. 2. 20, 21, 22. Cain and his descendants had intercourse with those who walked by faith. The first promise, therefore, still had influence over their intellectual powers, in calling them into exercise for the invention of useful and ornamental arts.

^b Gen. vi. xiv. 6. & vii. 2.

includes; principles which involve in them the foundations of all social intercourse and civil order^a.

Combining all these materials of information with their natural connexions, we are constrained to conclude, that the ages from the creation down to the deluge, though notorious for the depravity of their morals, were also distinguished by their extensive acquisitions in the different branches of useful knowledge, and by the developement of the forms and conditions of social life. With this knowledge in its various kinds, possessed by the antediluvian world, Noah must have been acquainted; for he was six hundred years old when he entered into the ark^b. Nor can we suppose that his sons were ignorant of

^a In Davies' Celtic Researches, much information will be found on this subject. It is a matter not yet decided, whether writing was known to the antediluvian world, or not. Winder, in his History of Knowledge, endeavours to prove that there was no writing previous to the giving of the law at Sinai, vol. ii. Shuckford considers it as known to the antediluvians, and so does the author of *Fragments and Scripture Illustrated*, Frag. 136. *Scrip. Illust.* p. 198. Calmet's *Dict. Charls.* edit. Magee on the Atonement, in his remarks on the book of Job, gives his opinion that it was written previous to the time when Moses was in Midian.

^b Gen. vii. 11.

the same, as the oldest at that time had reached his hundredth year^a. Both the patriarch and his family were thus qualified to become the instructors of the new world.

They had, moreover, additional revelations from God, containing some more light concerning the promised seed, and granting an increase of privileges to the human family. Immediately after they left the ark, the first care of Noah was to return thanks to him who had delivered them from the devouring flood. In the burnt-offerings of the patriarch on this occasion, “the Lord smelled a sweet savour;” he had respect to the sacrifice of Christ typified by these offerings, upon whose account the “few, that is, eight persons, were saved by water^b.” In consequence of this, God gave to him and his seed after him, “a new grant of the earth, founded on that covenant of grace which is by the sacrifice of Christ, with a promise annexed, that now the earth should no more be destroyed, till the consummation of all things.^c” The covenant upon which

^a Gen. v. 32.

^b Gen. viii. 21. comp. with Eph. v. 2. & 1 Pet. iii. 2.

^c Edwards’ History of Redemption, part 2. Gen. ix. 9, 10.

this grant is founded was renewed with them, and confirmed “by the bow in the “clouds,” as “the token” thereof^a. The use of animal food, which was a new privilege, God gave unto them, but at the same time prohibited the eating of blood, because it referred to the blood of atonement. He also commanded that murder in future should be punished with death; thus teaching the value of human life and the dignity of our nature even in its fallen state.

In a subsequent period, on a memorable occasion, by the Spirit of prophecy the patriarch announced that the Messiah, the promised seed, should spring from Shem, and that in his blessings the descendants of Japhet would be largely interested^b.

With such information and privileges, the parents of the new world commenced their

^a Gen. ix. 12—17.

^b Witsii Œcon. lib. 4. c. 2. Sherlock on Prophecy, dis. 4. This writer says, p. 99, of the 3d edit. “I find no “new prophecy given to Noah after the flood:” And yet, p. 103, he considers “Noah’s blessing like unto Lamech’s “prophecy,” and speaks of Noah’s *foreseeing* that “the covenant which should restore man to himself, and to his Maker, should be restored through the posterity of Shem.”

social state in that country where they left the ark. Here, whether in Armenia or Bactria^a, before the descendants of Noah separated, “the earth was divided^b” among them by him, according to the divine command. As their numbers increased, it became necessary for them to emigrate in search of their allotted habitations. Some appear, however, to have been unwilling to part with each other, or to divide into distinct communities. On the plains of Shinar, to which their journeyings had been extended, they halted, and formed the project of building a tower, to prevent their dispersion, and to make them a name. They commenced their undertaking when they were of *one language* and of *one speech*; an undertaking designed to oppose the determination of God, and to establish one great empire^c. In

^a Shuckford's *Connect.* vol. i. p. 36—38. Bryant's *Analysis*, vol. iii. p. 362—413. Calmet's *Dic.* by Taylor, 4th vol. Charles. edit.

^b Gen. x. 5—10. 32. Dent. xxxii. 7. Acts xvii. 26. Eusebius states, that, in the 930th year of Noah's life, he, by divine appointment, divided the world between his three sons. Bryant's *Anal.* vol. iv. p. 19. 8vo ed. Winder's *Hist. of Knowl.* chap. vi. sect. 4. vol. 1.

^c Delany's *Rev. Exam. &c.* vol. ii. Dissert. 3.

the prosecution of it, God was pleased to baffle their design, by confounding their language^b. They no longer understood each other, and were constrained to yield to God's determination, who "scattered them abroad upon the face of all the earth." By this ultimate accomplishment of the division of the nations, which took place "in the days of Peleg^c," all the knowledge of truth, divine and human, which they possessed, was disseminated in the different countries where they settled^d.

The improvement of mankind under the influence of this knowledge was, however, retarded in many places, and in others ar-

b Delany's Rev. Exam. &c. vol. ii. Dissert. 3. Winder's Hist. chap. vi. sect. 5, 6. vol. i. Goguet's Orig. of Laws, vol. i. Introd. p. 2, 3. It must not be concealed, that writers of established reputation have endeavoured to prove it was a confusion in their councils which took place at this time. Vitring. Obser. Sacr. tom. 1. b. 1. chap. ix.

c Gen. x. 25. He was born 101 years after the flood, and lived 239 years. The text does not require any more particular time for this division, than during Peleg's life-time.

d The names of these countries are given in Genesis x. Whoever wishes information on this subject, will find it in Cumberland's First Planting of Nations, Tract 4. Winder's Hist. of Knowl. vol. i. Calmet's Dict. under the article Peleg.

rested. The very fact of their dispersion, by removing the greater part from under the eye and instruction of Noah; the increase of numbers in the different families, and the liability of traditional knowledge becoming more and more corrupted, by passing through so many hands: but chiefly the confusion of language, that great medium of conveying knowledge; all contributed to produce this effect. The progress of improvement being once impeded, from the constitution of human nature in its fallen state, a deterioration in religion, morals, and useful knowledge, necessarily succeeded. Idolatry was introduced, at what precise time is not known, and soon spread its deleterious effects far and wide. Its rise, we have every reason to suppose, was in Babylon or Chaldea, in which country the plains of Shinar were situated^a. From hence that awful corruption of the worship of God was

^a Young's *Idol. of Religion*, vol. i. chap. i. The first corruption of the worship of God, appears to have been the worship of the heavenly bodies. Leland's *Adv. and Necess. of the Christian Revelation*, vol. i. p. 1. chap. iii. Riccaltoun's *Attempt*, p. 3.

communicated to the Egyptians and Phenicians, who again in their turn transmitted it to other people. These nations, living nearer to the centre of original revelation, retained more traces of that revelation than others, which had a corresponding effect upon their conduct. Of this we have a remarkable instance in the treatment of Abram by Pharaoh, when he found that Sarai was his wife^a.

Irreligion, immorality and idolatry combined, however, began to produce a state of things in society at large, which threatened to issue in universal barbarity. To this, profane historians with one voice attest, in the descriptions which they give of the ancient state of mankind^b. And from Scripture we learn, that even the ancestors of Abraham were not exempt from the general corruption^c. There were, it is true, persons still to be found, who exhibited the noble spectacle of firm and pre-eminent piety. Among these, mention is made especially of Melchizedec, king of Salem,

^a Gen. xii. 14—20.

^b Goguet's Origin. vol. i. Introduction.

^c Josh. xxiv. 2. Ezek. xvi. 3.

and priest of the most high God^a. As far as the authority and influence of such men extended, so far we may well suppose God was acknowledged, and his truth obeyed. But the shades of night were descending, and rapidly spreading over the world, when it pleased God to cause light to shine anew in the midst of the darkness.

2. With the call of Abraham commenced a new period, which terminated when Messiah appeared in the flesh. The review of it must necessarily be more brief than that of the preceding one, for it embraces a greater number of years^b and variety of particulars.

During this period the canon of the Old Testament was completed. Full and circumstantial information was communicated to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their posterity, from time to time, concerning Christ the promised seed. God informed them that he should descend from Abraham^c; afterward from Isaac^d; then from Jacob^e; then

^a Gen. xiv. 18—20. An excellent article on Melchizedec will be found in Scrip. Illust. p. 203.

^b 1921 years.

^c Gen. xviii. 18. ^d Gen. xxi. 12. ^e Num. xxiv. 17.

from Judah^a; then from the family of David^b; then from a virgin of that family^c. The time of his birth was designated to be before the sceptre should depart from Judah, and the Lawgiver from between his feet^d; when the family of David, though still known, was in a low estate^e; in the days of the fourth kingdom of Daniel^f; within seventy weeks “from the going forth of the
“commandment to restore and to build Je-
“rusalem^g,” and whilst the second temple was standing^h. The very place where he was to be born, was also particularly named in prophecyⁱ; so minutely did God specify every fact connected with Messiah. His ministry was to be ushered in by “the
“voice of *him* that crieth in the wilderness,
“Prepare ye the way of the Lord^k,” *who*, acting the part of Elijah the prophet, should
“turn the heart of the fathers to the chil-
“dren, and the heart of the children to the

a Gen. xlix. 8—10. *b* Jer. xxiii. 5. *c* Isai. vii. 14.

d Gen. xlix. 10. *e* Isai. xi. 1. *f* Dan. ii. 44, 45.

g Dan. ix. 24—26. On this subject full information will be found in Prideaux's *Connex.* vol. ii. ch. v. p. 1. and Calmet's *Diet.* under the word *Week*.

h Hag. ii. 3—10. *i* Mic. v. 1. *k* Is. xl. 3.

“ fathers^a.” Of his appearance it was said,
 “ He hath no form nor comeliness: and
 “ when we shall see him, there is no beauty
 “ that we should desire him. He is despised
 “ and rejected of men; a man of sorrows,
 “ and acquainted with grief: and we hid as
 “ it were our faces from him; he was des-
 “ pised, and we esteemed him not^b.” And
 yet he was anointed as a prophet like unto
 Moses, in whose mouth God promised that
 he would put his words, and declared that
 whosoever would not hearken unto him, must
 expect to be judged righteously^c: as “ a
 “ Priest for ever after the order of Melchi-
 “ zedek^d,” as Jehovah’s King upon his holy
 hill of Zion^e. He was called the Son of God^f,
 Jehovah^g, the Lord God^h, the Lordⁱ; and also
 the Son of man^k, the Servant of Jehovah^l,
 the Man that is Jehovah’s fellow^m, the Mes-
 senger of the covenantⁿ; by which titles the
 Holy Spirit clearly taught the wonderful
 constitution of Messiah’s person, as being

a Mal. iv. 5, 6.

f Ps. ii. 7.

k Is. xl. 10.

b Is. liii. 2, 3.

g Jer. xxii. 6.

l Is. xlii. 1.

c Deut. xviii. 15—19. *h* Mal. iii. 1.

m Zech. xiii. 7.

d Ps. cx. 4.

i Dan. vii. 13.

n Mal. iii. 1.

e Ps. ii. 6.

“ a Child born, a Son given,” and yet “ the
“ mighty God, the everlasting Father.”
His sufferings, reproaches, death, and burial,
were all predicted. “ He was oppressed and
“ he was afflicted,” said the prophet: “ he
“ is brought as a lamb to the slaughter: he
“ was taken from prison and from judg-
“ ment; and who shall declare his genera-
“ tion? for he was cut off out of the land
“ of the living: And he made his grave
“ with the wicked and with the rich in his
“ death^b.” The great object of this humili-
ation was definitely specified. “ He was
“ wounded for our transgressions, he was
“ bruised for our iniquities: the chastise-
“ ment of our peace was upon him; and
“ with his stripes we are healed. The Lord
“ hath laid on him the iniquity of us all:
“ for the transgression of my people,” de-
clares the prophet, “ was he stricken^c.” He
was revealed as God’s covenant^d: the mer-
cies of this covenant were unfolded to be his
mercies^e; by the blood of this covenant pri-
soners were to be brought “ out of the pit in

a Is. liii. 7—9.

c Is. liii. 5, 6. 8.

e Is. lv. 3.

b Is. liii. 7—9. *

d Is. xlii. 6.

“ which there is no water.” He was “ to
 “ finish the transgression, to make an end
 “ of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity,
 “ and to bring in everlasting righteousness^b.”
 Assurances were given, that the object of
 his mission should be certainly and perfect-
 ly accomplished. “ When thou shalt make
 “ his soul,” *i. e.* Messiah’s, “ an offering for
 “ sin,” says the prophet, addressing God,
 “ he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his
 “ days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall
 “ prosper in his hand. He shall see of the
 “ travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied :
 “ by his knowledge shall my righteous ser-
 “ vant justify many ; for he shall bear their
 “ iniquities.” The blessings of his great
 work of redemption were to be extended to
 all the nations of the earth^d; to all the fa-
 milies of the earth^e; to the Gentiles as well
 as to the Jews^f. To him “ there was given
 “ dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that
 “ all people, nations, and languages should
 “ serve him : his dominion is an everlasting
 “ dominion, which shall not pass away, and

a Zech. ix. 11.

c Is. liii. 11.

e Gen. xxviii. 14.

b Dan. ix. 24.

d Gen. xxii. 13.

f Is. xlii. 6.

“ his kingdom which shall not be destroyed^a.”

During this period, thus distinguished by a constant increase of knowledge concerning Christ and salvation through his blood, God was pleased to give directions about the manner of worshipping him. In the covenant which he made with Abraham, he confined the visible Church to the posterity of that patriarch, appointing circumcision as the seal of this covenant^b. Afterwards, by Moses, he directed the keeping of the passover^c; and, at a still later period, gave to Israel the ceremonial law, which regulated the whole of their religious worship^d. By his command the ark of the covenant was made, which was deposited in the tabernacle afterward built^e: and, finally, the temple was erected by Solomon^f, where the ark abode until the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. An order of priesthood was established in the family of Levi, who performed the

a Dan. vii. 14. A full and satisfactory account of the prophecies concerning Messiah, is contained in Maclaurin's Essay on the subject.

b Gen. xvii. 1—14.

c Ex. xii. 1—28.

d Ex. xxi. and onward. Lev. throughout.

e Ex. xxv. 27.

f 1 Kings vi—viii.

various ceremonies of worship; and a succession of prophets raised up, who, besides predicting future events, in conjunction with the priests instructed the people.

Under the influence of the light which shone upon them, enlightening them in the knowledge of the truth, the posterity of Abraham made great improvements. As they were sojourners in the land which God gave them, and in neighbouring countries, until the days of Joshua, we must look to the different people among whom they sojourned for these improvements. From the testimonies of heathen writers, there is abundant evidence, that to them the Egyptians and Phœnicians were indebted for their knowledge of arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and the use of letters^a. We have also reason to believe, that many of the great works of architecture, whose remains still attract the wonder of travellers, were erected by Joseph, after he was made ruler over the land of Egypt^b. From his days that country became “the parent of literature, and

^a Gale's Court of the Gentiles, p. 2. b. i. chap. i. Delany Rev. Exam. &c. vol. iii ch. ii.

^b Delany Rev. Exam. &c. vol. 3. ch. 7, 8. 10.

“ fountain-head of wisdom and science to
“ all the known world ; the mart to which
“ all men of penetration and curiosity dai-
“ ly resorted to purchase wisdom at the
“ highest rate ; to purchase it at the ex-
“ pense of their time and treasure ; at the
“ expense of their best years, and most in-
“ tense and continued study : which is well
“ known to have been the case with Plato,
“ Pythagoras, and almost all the most re-
“ nowned sages, legislators, and mathema-
“ ticians of antiquity .”

Moses, the illustrious leader and lawgiver of the Jews, himself taught in *all the wisdom* of the Egyptians, *that wisdom* for which they were indebted to his ancestors, contributed to the increase not only of the truth as it is in Jesus, but also to the promotion of the useful arts. His laws, enacted by divine authority, contain an immense mass of knowledge relative to social intercourse, political science, domestic life, and religious duty. On these topics he has furnished a rich storehouse, from whence, even in this day,

^a Delany's Rev. &c. vol. iii. chap. ix. p. 196.

the soundest and most extensive information is derived^a.

After the establishment of Israel in Canaan, particularly under the administration of Samuel, and subsequently, during the reigns of David and Solomon, they were greatly exalted above other nations. David made them great and wealthy, and under Solomon they became conspicuous in the arts and sciences. In the days of the latter, foreigners distinguished for learning and rank resorted to Jerusalem^b. The number of strangers at this time in the land of Israel, was one hundred and fifty-three thousand and six hundred^c. The king himself excelled all his cotemporaries in philosophical disquisitions and poetical compositions. He was acquainted with elegant architecture, sculpture, music, gardening, and agriculture^d. The temple which he erected, was a noble and magnificent monument of his genius and taste, as well as of the im-

^a Lowman's Civil Polity of the Jews. Levi's Answer to Paine. Graves on the Pentateuch. Michaelis' Commentary on the Laws of Moses.

^b 1 Kings x. 1—13.

^c 2 Chr. ii. 17.

^d 1 Kings iv. 29—34. Eccles. ii.

provement to which the arts had attained. He built a number of cities^a, engaged extensively in commerce^b, and “exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom^c.” From the history of his reign, as recorded in the Scriptures, it is evident that society had reached a high and commanding state of civilization, so as to make the people of God not only the object of attention to other nations, but the model which they imitated.

From the period that their illustrious ancestor left Ur of the Chaldees, to this consummation of their national greatness, God made use of his covenant people to spread abroad, in the countries that had either entirely apostatized from the true religion, or were verging fast to such a state, the revelation of his mercy, with all its blessed effects upon society. The great events in their history did not fail of attracting public notice from time to time, and promoting the general good^d.

a 1 Kings ix. 17—19.

b 1 Kings ix 26. & x. 22.

c 1 Kings x. 23.

d Much historical information on this subject is contained in Law's 'Theory of Religion, Horne's Sermon on the Epiphany, and Leland's Ad. and Necess. of Div. Rev. p. 1. c. xix.

Besides the travels of the patriarchs, the settlement of their posterity in Egypt, the march of Israel through the wilderness, their final establishment in the promised land, and the commerce of Solomon, God sent prophets to the heathen, as in the case of Jonah to Nineveh, to make known his will among them. Nay, he made use of his very judgments upon the nation, to bring their teachers into situations among the heathen favourable to the dissemination of saving truth. Of this we have a striking instance in the Babylonish captivity, by which Daniel was introduced into the court of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius the Mede, and afterwards Nehemiah, into that of Artaxerxes king of Persia.

From their return out of captivity, the Jews were subject to Alexander the Great, the kings of Syria and Egypt alternately, and finally to the Romans. Mixing with these different nations, they carried with them their religion and knowledge of the arts and sciences. Under the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, their scriptures were translated into the Greek

language, and thus became accessible to the nations of the world in that day^a.

This period, of which a rapid and cursory survey has been given, includes in it the most splendid times of ancient history, both sacred and profane: times in which Christ the Light of the world shed directly upon his people his enlightening and civilizing influences; and, through their instrumentality, originated among the other nations all the intellectual, moral, and political excellence which they displayed^b.

During this period there were many sad and gloomy interruptions: such as the bondage of Israel under Pharaoh; their rebellions in the wilderness; their apostacies under their judges and kings, and their captivity in Babylon. All these interruptions were, however, over-ruled for good, both to Israel and the Gentile world. On their return from captivity, the former no more relapsed into idolatry, and, in the different places to which they travelled for business or information, were witnesses against

^a Prideaux's Connections, vol. 4.

^b The reader will find this subject more fully treated in the two following Sermons.

the polytheism of the latter. But though thus cured of their rage for idols, they grossly perverted the design of their economy, adhering rigidly to the letter of the law, whilst they utterly disregarded, nay, contravened its spirit. Hence they became notoriously profligate and abandoned in their conversation and conduct. As they declined in piety and morality, the corruption of the Gentiles increased more and more^a. The world exhibited a scene of greater moral darkness, wickedness, and abominations, than had been witnessed since the flood. In this deplorable state, whilst Jews and Gentiles were adding iniquity to iniquity, and drinking in sin like water, God pitied the nations, and caused the Sun of righteousness to arise and shine upon them.

3. With the birth of our Lord commenced a new period, in which there was an increase of spiritual light and of general improvement granted unto mankind.

Of this period the prophets had given the most splendid descriptions. In the loftiest

^a Rom. i. 11. Mosheim, in his *Eccles. Hist.* vol. 1, gives a full account of the state of Jews and Gentiles before the birth of Christ.

strains (of imagination they announced its arrival as the jubilee of the world. Corresponding with these intimations of its nature and effects, was the manner in which it was ushered in by holy angels. They sung, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men^b.” Now it was that the believing expectations of the pious Israelites were answered^c. The mystery which had been hid from ages and generations was made manifest. Christ, the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, was revealed^d. The Jewish dispensation gave place to the Christian. The former being typical in its nature, received its accomplishment by the establishment of the latter. Jerusalem was no longer the place of God’s peculiar presence, but in every place incense was henceforth to be offered up unto God, and a pure offering^e. As the Christian dispensation was the last which God gave unto men, so it was the most perfect, and intended to continue until the end of time. It is admirably calculated for the varieties of human wants, and adapted

^b Luke ii. 14.

^c Luke ii. 25—28.

^d Col. i. 26, 27.

^e Mal. i. 11.

to the progress of intellectual improvement in the human family. Under this dispensation the canon of revealed truth was closed by the “ holy men of God, who spake as “ they were moved by the Holy Ghost ^d.”

In the writings of the New Testament we have full and satisfactory information concerning the “ Seed of the woman,” the Messiah. He is proved to be Jesus of Nazareth, who, according to the angel’s declaration, is Emmanuel, God with us^e. His divine and human nature; his states of humiliation and exaltation; his offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; the work of redemption through his blood; the forgiveness of sins through the riches of his grace, are satisfactorily explained, so as to agree with the information which God gave under the law. The obscurity of ancient oracles is dispelled, the ambiguity of types is removed, and the design of sacrifices published. The fulfilment of the prophecies, types, and sacrifices, in his work of redemption, is established beyond a doubt^f. The character and condition of mankind; the way of becoming

^d 2 Pet. i. 21.

^e Matt. i. 23.

^f This is abundantly proved in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

interested in the great salvation; the nature of faith in our Lord Jesus, and repentance towards God; the duties of holy living; the means of dying in peace and hope; the glories of heaven and the miseries of hell, are all unfolded in minute detail, and with admirable perspicuity, so that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot mistake their meaning and importance. Directions are given about the form of external worship, rendering it more spiritual than it was. The priesthood was abolished; the ministry of reconciliation appointed; baptism and the Lord's supper introduced in place of circumcision and the passover.

The Sun of righteousness rising in his strength, scattered the shadows of the Jewish economy, and poured light upon the darkness of pagan delusions. Enlightened by his rays, the apostles went forth, proclaiming peace through the blood of the cross, exhorting all men every where to repent, and offering eternal life to as many as believed on the name of the Lord Jesus. Their success was great: so great indeed as to prove that God was with them, and that their cause was his own. Within seventy years from

the commencement of the Christian æra, the Gospel had been so extensively propagated, as to warrant the apostle of the Gentiles to say, that it was “come in all the world^g ;” that is, in all the Roman empire^h. They who embraced it had to contend with every opposition and persecution. Jew and Gentile were arrayed in arms against Christ and his followers. But the Lord was with them and they prospered, by faith subduing nations. In the reign of Constantine, the then civilized world owned the authority of Messiah: and beyond it, many barbarous people afterwards did homage to him, by calling themselves by his nameⁱ.

The effects of Christianity upon the morals, the customs, and the happiness of society at large, were astonishing. So far as its power was experienced in any degree, changes were produced of the most pleasing kind. The apologists for the word of God to pagan emperors, and those who in Christian times wrote concerning the Church, ap-

^g Col. i. 6.

^h Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. vol. 1.

ⁱ Mosheim, Milner, Millar, Fox, and others, give abundant information on this subject.

pealed to these changes with confidence and triumph, as evidences that their faith was divine^k. Under its influence illiberal prejudices were abated; humility together with justice and honesty, firmness under persecution, patience under worldly afflictions, and calmness in the approach of death, were produced. It gave dignity and consequence to the female sex, prohibiting all breaches of the marriage contract, and reclaiming dissolute men. It abolished human sacrifices; checked infanticide and cruel sports; discouraged suicide; imparted comparative mildness to war; restrained the violence of rulers; encouraged hospitality to strangers; originated charitable institutions; abated the rigours of servitude; relieved prisoners, and procured protection for the weak and oppressed^l.

The increase of spiritual knowledge and moral habits, produced improvement in the arts and sciences. Literature found in Christianity a sincere and powerful patron. Magic, and such knowledge as only gratifies

^k Justin, Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Origen, Lactantius, Eusebius, and others.

^l Ryan's *Effects of Religion*, 3d edit. ch. iii. sec. 1, 2, 3, 4.

curiosity without meliorating our condition, were discouraged^m, whilst true learning was promoted. The barbarous nations, who had been checked or subdued by Roman prowess, felt the influence of Christian principles. Among them was diffused the love of letters, which increasing, produced the happiest effects. “Who,” says Jerome, “would believe that the barbarous Getæ should seek for truth from the Hebrew tongue; or that the Germans should seek for the eloquence of the Holy Spirit, while the Greeks should be engaged in idle contentions; that the hand long callous with the sword or bow, should apply to the pen; or that ferocious hearts should turn to Christian mildnessⁿ?” Even to the Saracens, those fierce followers of Mahomet, the light of revelation communicated a taste for science and the arts. Rejecting, as they did, Messiah, no new discoveries could be expected among them, nor any improvements in social happiness. But as *their prophet* recognized the Saviour and

^m Acts xix. 19. This passage is merely quoted as an authentic fact, to prove the above remark. Many such facts are furnished by ecclesiastical historians.

ⁿ Hieron. Opusc. vol. 11. p. 262, ed. Par. 1706, quoted by Ryan, in his History of the Effects of Religion, ch. iii. p. 51.

his divine mission, and as he was indebted to an apostate Christian for a large proportion of his Koran, we need not be surprised at the cultivation of science in the courts of the caliphs of Bagdad, and the Mahometan sovereigns of Spain^o. At best, however, the Mahometan disciples can hardly be considered inventors of new arts, and were by no means great improvers of those already known. The stores of their information were translations from the works of Christians or Pagans^p. When the empire passed from the Saracens to the Turks, all attention to literature ceased for ever among the Mahometans. The capture of Constantinople by the latter, scattered abroad throughout Europe the learned Greeks. These introduced the philosophy of Plato into Italy, which soon destroyed the authority of Aristotle. They also carried with them the knowledge and love of the classic authors of Greece and Rome. Thus the study of ancient literature, which commenced in the days of Petrarch, and was patronized by the Medici, became fashionable throughout the western empire, so as to be considered an essential

^o Gibbon's Dec. and Fall of the Roman Empire.

^p This subject is examined more particularly in Ser. 3.

ingredient in the character of a scholar. This event, connected as it was with the discovery of printing, an art which, by means equally effectual and unexpected, secured to the world the result of the labours of men of genius and erudition, effected the restoration of letters in modern times⁷.

In the mean while, from the close of the second century, the purity of doctrine and discipline in the Church began to be corrupted. As the defection increased, the light of the world was gradually obscured by clouds. The mind became weakened in its powers, and the sphere of information was circumscribed. Men, by wasting their intellect upon subtle trifles, unfitted themselves for high attainments in knowledge. Ere long the barbarians pouring in upon the Roman empire, in succession became its masters. From this period true religion, sound science, and the arts of civilized life, rapidly deteriorated. Amidst the darkness and barbarism of the times, Antichrist arose to consequence and power, consummating, by his superstitions, immoralities, and blasphemies, the degradation of the Christian world.

⁷ Roscoe's Lorenzo de Medici, vol. 1.

With his reign commenced the dark ages; ages in which ignorance, vice, ferocity, impiety, and atheism, prevailed universally, contaminating society at large, and making intercourse between men the source both of misery and of crimes. The benevolent mind, in reading the history of this period, is filled with disgust or with horror^r. God, however, was preparing the way for a new, a more pure and happy state of things. Whilst darkness rested upon the earth, he said, "Let there be light," and Luther arose.

4. The reformation from popery, constitutes another æra of light and improvement, more brilliant than any preceding^s. No new revelations were then given; but the Scriptures were better understood, and more extensively used than before. Under their quickening influence, a new impulse was given to the human mind in its researches after knowledge, and the application of its discoveries to the benefit and happiness of society.

This revolution was produced by a multitude of causes, which had long silently ope-

^r Gibbon's Rom. Emp. Mosheim's Ecc. Hist.

^s This event took place in the 16th century.

rated and prepared the minds of men for important changes. Wickliff, John Huss, Jerome of Prague, and others, failed in their attempts to introduce some reform in the Church, because in their time ignorance was too general, and the influence of the Roman See, supported by the clergy, sufficiently powerful to crush all who opposed them. The restoration of letters, however, by exciting among all classes of men the desire of information, and affording them the means of gratifying that desire, opened their eyes. The utter inconsistency of the papal superstition with the word of God, and its fearful effects upon society, were clearly perceived. The spell by which it had bound the multitude for so many years was dissolved, and leaders only were wanting to produce a revolution^a. These God raised up in the course of his providence, and qualified them for the great and arduous work. They were men of extraordinary intellectual powers, and of profound as well as general learning. To no class of men in the civilized world are we more indebted for all that is valuable in letters and excellent in religion, than to

^a Hess's Life of Zuingle, p. 95—100.

Zuingle, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Cranmer, Knox, with their associates. So long as talents, integrity, patriotism, piety, and usefulness are esteemed, their memory will be revered and blessed. They have laid the foundation of that superiority which Christendom displays, not only above the rest of the world now, but above the state of society at large in any preceding period.

From this day the human mind, casting off the shackles of a debasing and demoralizing superstition, advanced with a steady but rapid progress in the acquisition of knowledge, both human and divine. New discoveries were made, and old ones improved, so that the civilized world, like the fabled phoenix, arose out of its darkness and wickedness, with the vigour and beauty of light, truth, and purity. To enter into a detail of all the effects of the reformation upon the arts and sciences, as well as upon the profession and practice of piety, and, through these, upon the habits and condition of men, would require volumes. A few particulars can only be named, without even enlarging on them.

To the reformation from popery the Chris-

✓ tian world is indebted for civil liberty, that inestimable temporal blessing; the emancipation of the mind from subjection to every restraint but that which common sense and truth imposes; the diffusion of knowledge among all classes and descriptions of men, the poor as well as the rich, subjects as well as rulers; the enlargement of the sphere of knowledge in its different branches by new discoveries; the melioration of the morals of society and the condition of individuals; the excitement given to ingenuity and industry in the various departments of life, by securing the possession of their rewards; and, in fine, all that ease, comfort, decorum, polish, order, and civilization, which make it a model to the rest of the world^s.

The principal mean by which, under the blessing of God, the reformers and their followers were enabled to produce these effects, was the press. By it the Scriptures have been circulated extensively, together with commentaries upon the whole or parts of the volume of inspiration. The writings of learned men, shedding light upon the vari-

^s Villar's *Essay on the Reformation*, by Luther, contains abundant information on this subject.

ous subjects of human knowledge, have been from time to time communicated to the public. The multiplication of the copies of different works, so as to supply the demand of them at a reasonable price, has made the treasures of knowledge accessible to the middling and lower, as well as to the higher classes of society.

In the sketch which I am endeavouring to give of this period, the settlement of these United States, is an event of too much importance to be omitted. It has so greatly enlarged the boundaries of the civilized world, especially that part of it which is protestant, given such an accelerated progress to improvement, afforded so many and increasing encouragements to individual enterprize, opened to view so many bright prospects both in the Church and the State, of future happiness and comfort to the human family, as deservedly to be considered one of the most brilliant and important æras in the history of the world.

In our day, the formation of societies in this country and in Europe, for the purpose of spreading abroad the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, constitutes a novel and re-

markable event. At no time have so much talent, respectability of character, dignity of station, and fervent piety, been enlisted under the banners of the cross, with the avowed design of subduing, not merely individuals, but nations, to the obedience of faith. By the united exertions of the Christian world, a death-blow has been given to the slave-trade, that disgrace of the Christian name. The word of God is translating in all the languages of the earth, and the message of peace through the blood of Christ, sent to the various tribes of men. To the poorest and most helpless, yea, to the deaf and the dumb, the blessings of education are dispensed, and means are adopting to extend them still further among these unfortunate members of the human family^t.

The progress of truth and improvement during this period, has been interrupted by the revocation of the edict of Nantz; the introduction of fatal errors in the visible Church, which have demoralized those who embraced them; the atheism of republican

^t Accounts of these different societies will be found in their respective annual reports.

France, and the terrible wars which have originated in the revolution of that country.

These wars threaten the most disastrous consequences to the best interests of men: and, in all human probability, will terminate in throwing the Latin earth, the old Roman Empire, back again into greater moral darkness and misery than ever. That such an event will happen, and have a lamentable effect upon the rest of mankind, I am constrained to apprehend. Then the witnesses will be slain, and “be unburied
“ in the street of the great city, which is
“ spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, for
“ three days and a half.” The state of society will be awful beyond conception: far more corrupted and miserable than at any time since the flood. Its duration, however, will be short: and then,

5. The last period will commence, in which the prayers and the wishes of believers will be consummated.

This is commonly called the Millennium, and is described in the most elevated strains by the prophets. Then the new heavens and the new earth will be created, in which dwell-

u Rev. xi. 7—9.

eth righteousness. Christ “ shall come down
 “ like rain upon the mown grass; as the
 “ showers that water the earth. In his days
 “ shall the righteous flourish; and abundance
 “ of peace so long as the moon endureth. He
 “ shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and
 “ from the river unto the ends of the earth.
 “ His name shall endure for ever: his name
 “ shall be continued as long as the sun; and
 “ men shall be blessed in him: all nations
 “ shall call him blessed.” Wars will cease,
 and rumours of wars be no longer heard.
 Our world, cursed by reason of sin, and so
 long the theatre of misery, will become like
 unto the paradise of God, the abode of hap-
 piness and joy”.

Such, Christian friends, is the prospect
 before us; a prospect which is warranted
 by the review of God’s providential dispen-
 sations in past ages, and ensured to us by
 the word of his grace. The improvements
 made in one period, have constituted the
 foundation of still greater improvements in
 a subsequent period. Though society de-
 teriorated towards the close of each period,

x Ps. lxxii. 6—3. 17.

y This subject is illustrated in a subsequent discourse.

yet the materials for improvement which had been accumulated in that period, were formerly preserved through the medium of writing; and in future will be preserved by the art of printing, if any retrocession such as is anticipated should occur^z. In every period the sphere of knowledge, divine and human, has not merely been enlarged, but the addition has been applied to the melioration of the state of mankind in their various relations.

Everlasting thanks to God! the Light which arose in the east has shined to the west, and is still shining, extending his beams far and wide. From his last eclipse he will burst forth with infinite beauty and majesty, to transport and bless our guilty world.

To contemplate such an event in prospective, is not only pleasing but profitable. In a day like this, when the eye is pained by scenes of desolation, and the heart agonized by tales of real misery, it is delightful to think that a day is coming

^z A very interesting and eloquent speculation upon the future improvement of mankind, will be found in Stewart's *Philos. of the Hum. Mind*, vol. 1. chap. iv. sect. 3. p. 264—277. 2d edit. Lond.

when the only contest will be who shall be most virtuous, and do the most good. Then there will be no triumphs but over sin, and no conquests, save of human passions and appetites". In these triumphs not a heart will feel sad. From these conquests no sorrow will ever spring. To be warriors in such a cause, how honourable! to achieve such victories, how godlike!

And why can not we in our place strive to obtain such a good report among our companions? He who is the Light of the world shines upon our path and in our hearts, Christians.

a The following eloquent passages, extracted from the close of Condorcet's Outlines, are more peculiarly descriptive of the feelings of a believer looking in faith for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ upon earth, than of the philosopher: "How admirably calculated is this view of the human race, emancipated from its chains, released alike from the dominion of chance, as well as from that of the enemies of its progress, and advancing with a firm and indeviate step in the paths of truth, to console the philosopher lamenting the errors, the flagrant acts of injustice, the crimes with which the earth is still polluted!——He unites himself in imagination with man restored to his rights, delivered from oppression, and proceeding with rapid strides in the path of happiness; he forgets his own misfortunes while his thoughts are thus employed; he lives no longer in adversity, calumny, and malice, but becomes the associate of these wiser and more fortunate beings whose enviable condition he so earnestly contributed to produce."

He has guided us through the past year, and must guide us through this, and following years, even unto death, or we perish.

May He arise in your hearts, brethren, on this first day of the new year; enlighten the darkness of your understanding as you journey onward; keep you from falling into the snares of your spiritual enemies; guide you unto the end, in the way of peace; cheer you in the hour of your dissolution; irradiate the tomb in which your flesh shall rest in hope; and, on the morning of the resurrection, rise to your enraptured view in the eternal world, pouring the health of immortal youth through all your frame, and shedding around you the glories and blessings of heaven. AMEN.

SERMON II.



THE GLORY OF A NATION.



PROVERBS XIV. 34.

Righteousness exalteth a nation.

SIN extends its influence over all the relations of life. It injures social enjoyment, domestic felicity, and national glory. By it a child is made to display the grossest ingratitude to his father; variance is produced between man and man, kindred of the same family; and a people are degraded to the character of rebels against their Sovereign. And yet sin prevails every where throughout our world. “The Lord looked down
“ from heaven upon the children of men, to
“ see if there were any that did understand
“ and seek God. They are all gone aside.
“ They are altogether become filthy: there
“ is none that doeth good; no, not one.”

a Ps. xiv. 2, 3.

To this general corruption of mankind, the miseries of individuals, of families, and of nations are owing. The chief good, the true interest of each of these, is to be found only in the victory of truth over error, of holiness over sin. To assist men in gaining such a victory, and thus acquiring their chief good, we have “a sure word of prophecy^b,” by which we can discriminate the one from the other in the first instance, and in the last, find the object which we desire. We have, moreover, men especially commissioned to declare from this word, in the name of the Lord, that it shall be well with the righteous, but ill with the wicked^c. And as the word which they are commanded to explain and defend, extends its directions so far as sin has extended its contaminations and injuries, they are under the most solemn obligations to apply this word to the various relations of life. Under the full impression of this truth, the text has been selected as suitable to this occasion.

We are assembled^d according to the recommendation of the General Assembly of our Church, to offer up “special prayer to the

^b 2 Pet. i. 19. ^c Isai. iii. 10, 11 ^d Nov 14, 1811.

“ Great Head of the Church, that he would
“ grant a plentiful effusion of his Spirit upon
“ our churches, and upon our country ; that
“ he would accompany with his blessing his
“ word and ordinances where they are en-
“ joyed ; that he would raise up and send
“ forth a sufficient number of able and faith-
“ ful ministers, to supply those destitute re-
“ gions which are famishing for want of the
“ bread of life ; and that he would prosper
“ all endeavours to extend the knowledge
“ and blessings of the Gospel to the Heathen
“ and the Jews, and fill the world with the
“ glory of God^e.” Unless it can be proved
that these various objects are of importance
to our families and to our country, as well as
to ourselves individually, a grand motive to
the observance of a day like this will be
wanting. We utterly reject the principle,
however fashionable, that the Church and
State have no connexion. Believing that
the latter needs the aid of the former, we
cheerfully engage in the exercises of the
day, because we know that if God answers
our prayers for Zion, he will remember our
nation and bless us. Your attention is there-

^e The Resolution of the General Assembly.

fore solicited to the following topics of discourse :

- I. An explanation of the words “righteousness” and “exalteth,” which are used in the text.
- II. An illustration of the manner in which “righteousness exalteth a nation.”
- III. The proofs which history affords of the truth, that “righteousness exalteth a nation.”
- IV. An application of the subject suited to the present occasion.

May He who is the hearer of prayer meet with us and bless us, that his glory and the welfare of our country, the place of our “fathers’ sepulchres,” may be promoted.

I. The words “righteousness” and “exalteth,” which are used in the text, require explanation.

1. Righteousness signifies, according to its primitive idea, full weight or measure^f. We are thus necessarily referred to a beam from which balances are suspended to ascertain weights, and a rule of proportion by which

^c Neh. ii. 3.

^f See Bate’s *Hebraea Critica*, and Parkhurst’s *Heb. Lex.* on the words צדק and צדקה; and also Schleusner’s *Lex.* on the word δικαιοσυνη.

measures are regulated. When the word is applied to men, we readily perceive that by it is meant such a conformity to some law which they are bound to obey, as answers all its demands. As human laws possess no authority any further than they agree with the law of God, it follows that we can in no other way be righteous, than by obeying that law. What then saith it? “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” This is the only standard of right and wrong for intelligent creatures, in all the relations which they sustain, both towards each other and God. Conformity to this standard, in the discharge of the duties of these relations, constitutes them righteous. Hence we find, not only that they who comply with the great command of God in the Gospel^h, to believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, are righteousⁱ; but it is said, “He that speaketh truth sheweth forth right-

^g Mat. xxii. 37—40. ^h 1 John iii. 23. ⁱ Rom. iii. 22.

“eousness^k :” also, “the lips of the righteous feed many^l ;” which means that a part of righteousness is wise instruction : and “the righteous sheweth mercy and givethⁿ .” Moreover, we are informed that David was more righteous than Saul ; for says Saul, “Thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evilⁿ .” These passages, and others which might be adduced, if necessary, satisfactorily prove that he who renders “to all their dues : tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour^o :” he, in a word, who oweth “no man any thing but to love one another^p ,” is righteous, because conformed to the law : for “love is the fulfilling of the law^q .”

As this law is infinitely holy, just, and good, it never can be abrogated, or altered. The obligations to obey it remain still in force, and will continue so eternally. A want of conformity ~~to, or obedience of,~~ this law, is sin. All mankind having sinned, are therefore destitute of righteousness. How then shall

k Prov. xii. 17. xiii. 5.

l Prov. x. 21.

m Ps. xxxvii. 21. Prov. xxi. 26. xxix. 7.

n 1 Sam. xxiv. 17. *o* Rom. xiii. 7. *p* Rom. xiii. 8.

q Rom. xiii. 10.

sinful man be just with God? How can he be made conformable to the standard of right and wrong? These are questions which neither men nor angels could have answered, had not God revealed the way, the truth, and the life. He "sent forth his Son," our Lord Jesus Christ, "made of a woman, made " under the law, to redeem those that were " under the law, that we might receive " the adoption of sons^k." Jesus Christ became our substitute, by assuming our nature into a personal union with his divine nature, and paying the price of redemption by shedding ~~ff~~ his blood for our deliverance and salvation. All they who believe in him, become one with him, by an intimate, inseparable, everlasting union, " members of his " body, of his flesh, and of his bonesⁱ." He, as their covenant head, fulfilled the law in its penalty and precept for them: so that he is the *Lord their Righteousness*^k, the end of the law for righteousness to them^l; one who, being himself of full weight and measure, perfectly conformable to the law, makes them just, or of full weight before God, by clothing them with his righteousness and washing them in his blood.

^h Gal. iv. 4, 5. ⁱ Eph. v. 30. ^k Jer. xxiii. 6. ^l Rom. x. 4.

This doctrine of righteousness through a Redeemer, otherwise called the righteousness of faith, is the radical principle of revealed religion from Genesis to Revelation. “Other ^{the} foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Through his grace only can we do any thing acceptable to God. This was the thing signified by the shadows of the law, especially its sacrifices, to the origin and design of which your attention will be more particularly directed this afternoon. This is the substance of the Gospel.

With this doctrine of righteousness through a Redeemer, are inseparably connected all those doctrines which regard the nature and perfections of God, the state and character of man, the duties arising from his various relations, and his responsibility to God: in short, all those doctrines which constitute the essentials of salvation. For the Redeemer, being of full weight himself, satisfying perfectly the law, must be divine, since none but God could make adequate reparation for an infinite offence. The offence, for the satisfaction of which the shedding of the blood of the Redeemer was deemed necessary, must be awfully malignant, deserving the

most fearful punishment. The power requisite to change the character of those who were under the guilt and pollution of such an offence, must be almighty. The change which this power produces, so that the guilt is cancelled and the pollution washed away, must be radical and thorough. The life which follows upon such a thorough change, must be essentially a new one, in which old things are done away, because the understanding is enlightened, the heart is purified, and a deep and abiding sense of God's presence in this world, and his judgment in that which is to come, are cherished. Thus all those principles which lay at the foundation of a sinner's hope; which constitute the cement of society; which make a man happy in his own bosom, and useful as well as happy in all his relations, originate in, are inseparably connected with, and receive their power to affect the heart and regulate the life from, the doctrine of righteousness through a Redeemer.

In this enlarged sense, as including the whole system of revealed truth, both what "man is to believe concerning God, and "what duty God requires of man," the word righteousness is here used. These two divisions of revealed truth cannot be sepa-

rated; for as no man can perform the latter without embracing the former, so no man can embrace the former without performing the latter. Hence it is impossible for individuals, and of course for nations, to be righteous in their intercourse with each other, or among themselves, if they are not righteous towards God.

2. Exaltation, means advancement or promotion to a state of dignity and honour, usefulness and happiness. The exaltation of a nation does not therefore consist in their territorial acquisitions, their splendid victories, or their universal authority; for in each of these particulars it may originate in fraud, be established by oppression, and connected with human misery. It consists in their intellectual, moral, political, social, and physical excellence. These particulars cannot be separated in any correct views of national exaltation.

II. We proceed now to an illustration of the manner in which revealed religion, the essence of which is righteousness through the blood of a Redeemer, exalteth a nation.

1. Righteousness exalteth the intellectual state of a nation.

Man when he fell did not cease to be an intelligent creature. The revelation of God's will to our rebellious race is, therefore, necessarily suited to our nature, not merely as rebellious, but as intelligent. Hence we find that righteousness encourages the cultivation of our mind, by commanding each one "to take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her: for she is thy life;" by constraining us "to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom and the reason of things^m;" by exhibiting to our view "wisdom as a defenceⁿ," and folly as ruinous: for "he that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul." Moreover, it enlightens our reason, being "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path^p;" affording information upon subjects, in the knowledge of which our present happiness and our eternal salvation are involved. The perfections of Jehovah, the character of man, the state of the world, creation, divine providence, redemption by the blood of the cross, the mediatorial kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead, a general judgment,

l Prov. iv. 13. *m* Eccles. vii. 25, *n* Eccles. vii. 12.

o Prov. xv. 32. *p* Ps. cxix. 105.

future rewards and punishments: these are the subjects unfolded to us by righteousness. Nobler subjects, or more interesting to us as men and sinners, cannot be presented to our minds. They are directly calculated to produce the evolution of human faculties to a degree and in a manner which nothing else can do. Here we find all that is sublime in power and magnanimous in condescension; fearful in justice and attractive in grace; infinite in wisdom, and adorable in the stoopings of that wisdom to our ignorance: in a word, all that is calculated to excite in our bosoms the liveliest fears and the most animating hopes. Here the understanding finds aliment suited to its nature, which not only satisfies it, but invigorates its powers; the imagination has a field as boundless as her desires, through which she may wing her flight, and for ever find new matter for admiration and delight. Here that thirst after knowledge, which is so natural to us, is cherished with care, and directed towards proper objects. These objects are to be found in the various departments of science, as well as in the subjects of revealed religion: for let it be remembered, that this religion not

only promotes the cultivation of science, but furnishes information in many of its branches. It is true that we do not find systems of science in revelation ; but it is as true that the scientific notices which it contains are all correct. Assuredly He who “ moved upon “ the face of the waters,” who “ garnished “ the heavens,” who gives life universally^s, cannot be mistaken himself, or be capable of misleading us, (in the work of his own inditing,) concerning any, even the most minute part of the constitution of nature^t.

This righteousness produces the improvement of our minds by the cultivation of knowledge. Like the sun, who gives light and life to creation, it calls (forth) into exercise our faculties, and guides them in the paths of usefulness. It forbids the gratification of mere curiosity, or of feverish ambition, prescribing love to God and man, as the motive and limit for the exercise of mental faculties. Hence they who act under its influence, whilst they ardently and perseveringly seek after knowledge, never will seek for it by methods which give useless pain to any creatures, or in speculations

^q Gen. i. 2. ^r Job xxvi. 13. ^s Ps. civ. 29, 30.

^t See Scripture Illustrated by means of Natural Science.

which are frivolous or pernicious. Revealed religion forbids many experiments that some of the most celebrated naturalists have performed, and frowns indignant upon the mass of novels and romances. It suffers not the vigour of the faculties to be wasted in acts of cruelty, or upon uncertainties and trifles.

2. Righteousness exalteth the moral state of a nation.

Mankind are by nature the children of wrath and heirs of destruction, dead in trespasses and sins. Hence they are the slaves of unrighteousness, and the victims of a tormenting conscience. Destitute of the favour of God, they are also destitute of peace of mind, because without hope in the world. Righteousness, however, by its power, whenever that is experienced, changes the heart, and transforms men into the glory of the Lord. It unfolds the foundation of genuine morality, and affords the ability of conforming to its precepts. Without the righteousness of faith there is no obedience to the divine law, (such as it requires.) Sinners, as such, are immoral in a strict sense, because unrighteous, *i. e.* disobedient to God's law. Through an interest in Christ

the Redeemer, they become obedient. They are taught the nature of holiness, and its extensive requirements, including the heart, the motives for conduct, and the manner of life. They are enabled to love God supremely, and their fellow men as themselves. This love, like an ocean, swallows up the selfish feelings of men, and paralyzes revenge, malice, hatred, and all the baleful passions which render us miserable. They who experience its power, are constrained to the observance of truth and the practice of honesty, humanity, patience, humility. Their appetites are subdued; intemperance yields to sobriety, wantonness to chastity, self-indulgence to self-denial; and mortification of inordinate desires is cherished. Their pride is humbled; they recognize all men as brethren, and do good to all men. Their natural indolence is followed by industry and application. The reign of sin has ended; that of holiness has commenced. Civilization, with all its blessings, is introduced among men, and happiness prevails.

Thus it is that righteousness, by drawing forth into proper exercise the faculties,

and forming correct habits, exalts the morals of individuals and nations. Society is transformed from immorality to morality; from rudeness to refinement. Duty in all its details is understood and practised. All the efforts of human science and philosophy cannot afford this knowledge, or produce this effect. They cannot reach the heart or reform the life. Nor can they discover the true standard of righteousness. Thus deficient in the meaning of what is right or wrong, and in the power of coercing to that which is right, and restraining from that which is wrong, they are evidently inefficient for human happiness. The mere evolution of faculties, if their exercise be not directed to proper objects, will not form the habits. These result from a deep impression of duty upon the heart, and contemplate the acquisition of real good as their ultimate design. Hence righteousness, by affording to the mind such objects as are worthy of attention, so elicits its various powers as to form the habits, which, having truth for their foundation, are a well-spring of enjoyment to men. Without righteousness, our mental acquirements must and will

prove useless, if not injurious; because they do not relate to that knowledge which God has revealed, and the cultivation of which is ever accompanied with the practice of strict and universal morality: for such knowledge reaches the heart and corrects its depravity. Without righteousness, therefore, it is as impossible for a nation to be moral as to be well informed.

3. Righteousness exalteth the political state of a nation.

Man is a creature evidently formed for social intercourse. For this his bodily powers and mental faculties are admirably fitted: to this his affection for the species irresistibly constrains him. Hence you find, from time immemorial, man every where associating with his fellow man. He never existed in a state of individuality, a solitary, brute-like wretch. But, on the contrary, from the time of the first pair, has been connected with his species in a family, a tribe, or a nation. In all these forms, social intercourse demands laws of one kind or another, more or less simple: and these again must be administered by some and obeyed by others. Government

therefore does not arise from the weakness but from the nature of man'. It is not the offspring of ~~chance or contingency~~, but the appointment of God, to meet the social nature of man. It is not therefore in the abstract a curse, or an imposition, but a blessing. The magistrate is the minister of God for good.

The distinction between governors and governed, is a natural one: we find it in families, in tribes, and in nations. It is coeval with the first society, and absolutely necessary for carrying into effect the design of laws. On this distinction righte-

t Horsley's Sermons, vol. 3. Ser. 43. Dundee ed. In this Sermon, some of the best and most satisfactory views of civil government will be found. In the Appendix, the Bishop has undertaken to vindicate the Genevan Reformer from the charge of being *a leveller*. He has, however, with others, exhibited him as naturally *harsh* in his temper. The chief evidence of such a temper, is the agency of Calvin in the death of Servetus. Granting his agency to the full extent of the charge, it by no means makes him more *harsh* or unfeeling than Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, who prevailed upon King Edward to sign the death-warrant of an Anabaptist, (Burnet's Hist. 2d part, b. 1. p. 111, 112.); or than Socinus, who, for a difference of opinion from Davides, had him cast into prison, where he died. (Fuller's Socin. and Calvin. Schemes Compared, Lett. 8. Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. 4.) Why then do not the Episcopalians and Socinians look at home?

ousness as explained sheds its most benign effects, making governors and governed a mutual blessing (to each other.) It unfolds the essence of all government, as consisting in reasonableness, firmness, and unchangeableness. Magistrates ought never to require any thing but that which is reasonable ; if it be reasonable, nothing ought to divert them from enforcing it. They ought to persist in exacting obedience without changing.

Besides this, righteousness adds its awful sanctions to the authority of government. It teaches and enforces subordination, that fundamental principle necessary in all societies. It establishes parental authority and family discipline, without which civil communities cannot flourish. By thus qualifying men in private, it prepares them for public duties. It teaches magistrates to be just, ruling in the fear of God. It reminds them of their responsibility to the King of kings. It affords them the soundest, purest maxims for government. Its precepts are as binding on subjects as on them. They are exhorted to lead peaceable and quiet lives ; to obey them ; to speak well of them ; to pray for them. Magistrates,

influenced by righteousness, view their subjects as children; and religious subjects view their magistrates as nursing-fathers and mothers. They study to promote each other's prosperity and happiness.

Where righteousness prevails, there civil freedom is enjoyed. I mean not that licentiousness for which irreligious theorists have pled, and which, under the imposing name of freedom, is the most galling and destructive despotism; but the freedom of law; a freedom which originates in efficient faith and sound literature; a faith and literature, the seed of which is only to be found in righteousness. From this source all good, wholesome, mild, humane, and just laws, derive not only their being and spirit, but also their sanctions. By unfolding to view the certainty of future judgment, righteousness operates on the hopes and fears of men. By imparting justice and wisdom to the ruler, by exciting the ruled to cheerful obedience, by stamping on laws its own equity and sanctity, it removes the fruitful source of discord, rebellion, and wars in society, and produces harmony and peace. It connects together the different relations in civil society by the strongest ties; gives sta-

bility to order, dignity to rank, sacredness to property, weight to authority, and cheerfulness to subordination. It is the cement of civil union; the essential support of legislation. It also procures for a nation respect from other nations; for it produces correct principles of national conduct: such as a respect for treaties, and the established law of nations; a spirit of moderation in all their actions, founded upon a strict regard to justice, and an ambition, not of conquest, but of doing good and extending human happiness.

4. Righteousness exalts the social state of a nation.

By this is meant their manners. Under this general term are included the modes of living; the rules of decorum in the intercourse between man and man, and families with families; personal address and accomplishments; together with amusements. All these result from, and are regulated by, the knowledge, morals, and government of a people. In proportion to the soundness and extent of information which a people possess, the purity of morals which they exhibit, and the excellence of the government

which rules them, will be their urbanity, courtesy, affability, candour, uprightness, correctness of deportment in their intercourse with each other. Righteousness influences a people to combine gravity with cheerfulness, being neither dull on the one hand nor frivolous on the other. Their amusements will be innocent, subordinate to God's glory and the public benefit. Righteousness proscribes the theatre as licentious; chance games as profane; pugilistic feats as brute-like; bull-baits as execrable. It forbids every pleasure purchased at the expense of God's glory, or of human feelings, or of moral principle. It utterly condemns that fashionable politeness which clothes the face with smiles, fills the mouth with kindness, whilst the heart cherishes contempt and meditates revenge.

5. Righteousness exalteth a nation by promoting its physical state.

By this is meant its natural resources, such as its population, wealth, and means of defence. Each of these particulars constitute distinct heads of inquiry. My design, however, is merely to take notice of them, without entering into a detail.

Righteousness promotes the population of a people, by promoting contentment of mind and happiness of condition. It discountenances oppression or unnecessary exactions from subjects. Under its genial influence numbers and wealth increase. Righteousness creates habits of industry, and promotes useful inventions. It encourages the cultivation of the mechanic arts, the establishment of manufactures, the prosecution of agricultural and commercial pursuits. Righteousness, whilst it excites to industry, enjoins honesty and forbids covetousness. Wealth must be justly acquired, or it will prove a curse. Thus acquired, it must not be squandered on luxuries, or wasted in revelry. Righteousness, whilst it restrains the extravagance of magistrates, and their consequent oppressions, also forbids dissipation in subjects, requiring simplicity, and sobriety, and frugality.

Thus the wealth which is acquired under the influence of righteousness is, under the same influence, a promoter of national strength. By it all necessary expenses are paid, and improvements made of great public utility. Numbers and wealth are two

great means of defence to a nation; but without courage in these numbers, and a liberal use of that wealth, (if necessary,) they are of no avail. Righteousness is the parent of courage and the guide of liberality. It imparts a spirit of power to individuals and nations, as well as a spirit of wisdom, and of a sound mind, connected with love. Nations may resort to arms in their own defence, if negotiation has been tried to no purpose. Since they exist only in this life, they must, under God, be their own avengers. Righteousness does not forbid a just, but an unjust war. By its influence on a nation, it prevents the latter, and enables them to engage in the former with propriety, humanity, justice, and the most determined and deliberate valour. It creates brave soldiers, as well as good statesmen.

Thus, to proceed no further, righteousness, by improving the intellectual, moral, political, social, and physical state of a nation, truly exalts them. Its influence is as extensive as the influence of sin: it extends to the mind which sin has darkened; to the affections which sin has depraved; to the civil and social relations which sin has mar-

red; to the physical constitution which sin has impaired. In all these particulars over and above the correction of sin, it communicates blessings innumerable, and qualifies men for glory in heaven, by making them holy upon earth. AMEN.

SERMON III.



THE GLORY OF A NATION, CONTINUED.



PROVERBS XIV. 34.

Righteousness exalteth a nation.

HAVING in the forenoon called your attention to the explanation of the words used in the text, and the illustration of the truth which they convey to the mind, I proceed, according to the order proposed,

III. To examine the proofs which history affords of the truth, as it has been illustrated, that “righteousness exalteth a nation.”

That justice may be done to this part of the subject, it will be necessary for a moment distinctly to recollect the meaning of righteousness. It is such a conformity, on the part of sinful men, to the law of God, as is only obtained by an interest in the righteousness of a Redeemer; a righteousness wrought out by his spotless obedience to the law, both

in its penalties and precepts. In this righteousness there are two essential principles, which must not be forgotten. The first is the necessity of a Mediator between sinful men and their offended God, to reconcile them; and the other, that this reconciliation is effected only by the sacrifice of the Mediator, as a satisfaction to their offended God for sinful men, to procure his favour and their salvation. Of this righteousness, in both these particulars, intimation was given to man in the first promise, that “the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head^a;” and in the institution of sacrifices, designed to typify the manner in which the first promise would be fulfilled. As the doctrine of sacrifices involves in it the essence of all revealed religion, a brief account of their origin and design will enable us more easily to prosecute our historical investigation.

The origin of sacrifices can be ascribed only to divine appointment, for we are expressly informed, that “by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain; by which he obtained witness that he

^a Gen. iii. 15.

“ was righteous, God testifying of his gifts^b.” Now, as “ faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen^c,” it must here have respect to God’s own revelation concerning the way in which a sinner becomes righteous in his sight. The declaration of the Holy Spirit is, that God bore testimony to Abel’s sacrifice, as the proof of his righteousness. The conclusion, therefore, is inevitable, that sacrifices are of divine appointment, because the way in which sinful men can become righteous in the sight of God, must be revealed by God. Besides, the faith which God requires and blesses, is such a credit to his revealed will as affects the heart and regulates the life of a man. How then could Abel by faith offer an acceptable sacrifice to God, if God had not appointed sacrifice as a part of acceptable worship?

Here, therefore, it is proper to enter the protest of truth against their theory^d, who suppose that God directed sacrifices to be offered by his people, in imitation of Heathen sacrifices. On the contrary, it is cer-

b Heb. xi. 4.

c Heb. xi. 1.

d Spencer, Warburton, Grotius.

tain, as has been proved, that sacrifices were appointed by God before there was a Heathen in the world. Of this, learned men have given the fullest and most irrefragable proof^f.

But, in what consisted the difference between the sacrifice of Abel and his brother Cain? The answer to this inquiry will enable us to ascertain the design of sacrifice. The sacred historian informs us, “that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof.” It was an animal sacrifice, then, which was accepted. By recurring to the Levitical law, we find that animal sacrifices were sin-offerings; and that these offerings preceded all other offerings^h. Abel thus offered up a sacrifice for his sins, confessing himself a sinner, whilst Cain refused to make the confession, offering up merely a sacrifice of gratitude. The apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, teaches us, that the animal sacrifices of the

^f Magee on the Atonement, vol. ii. N. 47. 3d Lond. ed. Shuckford's Conn. vol. i. p. 288—292. Witsii Egyptiaca.

^g Gen. iv. 3, 4.

^h Lev. throughout.

law, typified the great sacrifice which the Lord Jesus made of himself for the sins of many^f. We may therefore conclude with certainty, that the sacrifices originally appointed were those of brute beasts, and that they were offered up for sin, both as representations of the sufferings and death of Christ, and declarations of the doctrines inseparably connected with, and taught by, that great and important event. To the institution of animal sacrifices as symbolical of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and thus teaching the doctrine of righteousness through a Redeemer, with all the doctrines emanating from, and connected with it, we must look for the source, not only of individual salvation, but of national greatness, before the birth of Christ.

Two remarks we deem necessary to make, to prevent mistakes on this subject. The one will account for the fact, why, among nations destitute of the light of revelation, there is any greatness or exaltation. The other, why the doctrine of righteousness, in

^f Heb. throughout, especially chap. ix. to xxiv. On this subject see Dr. J. P. Smith, on the sacrifice of Christ, p. 16. Magee on the Atonement, vol. ii. No. 52, 60—65. 3d edit. Lond. Delany's Rev. Exam. with Candour, vol. i. diss. 8.

its most obscure, as well as in its clearest exhibitions, produces such great or exalting effects.

The first remark we make is this, that so far as the principles of righteousness are known among a nation, so far that nation is exalted. These principles were originally known by all men, for “ at
“ first, there was a general agreement about
“ religion in the world ; and if we look into
“ the particulars of the Heathen religion,
“ even after they were much corrupted, we
“ may evidently find several practices as
“ well as principles, sufficient to convince
“ us that the ancient religion in all parts of
“ the world was originally the same. Sa-
“ crifices were used in every country, and
“ though by degrees they were disfigured
“ by many human ceremonies and inven-
“ tions in the way and method of using them ;
“ yet I might say, the Heathens generally
“ offered the same sorts of sacrifices as were
“ appointed to Noah, to Abraham, and to
“ the other servants of the true God. They
“ offered expiatory sacrifices to make atone-
“ ment for their sins, and precatory sacrifices

“ to obtain extraordinary favours^g.” These sacrifices, previous to the Mosaic economy, appear to have been offered up by any one who was called to perform any part of religious worship^h.

Through the medium of traditionary information, the original design of sacrifices, as referring to a righteousness by a Redeemer, was kept alive among the Heathen. They by this practice confessed guilt and sought pardon by expiatory sacrifices, which, while they taught the guilt of the offerer, also exhibited the hope of the offerer, that God could pardon through the shedding of blood.

The second remark we make is, that every system of religion will influence its followers according to the interest which it excites in their feelings. As the system which represents us as poor sinners, and entirely dependent on the unmerited mercy of our Sovereign for pardon, which is the doctrine of righteousness as explained, interests our hopes and fears, our gratitude and love, more than any other; so it

^g Shuckford's *Connex.* vol. i. p. 280.

^h Owen on the *Hebrews*, vol. ii. exer. 1 & 10.

influences the conduct of its followers more than any other. What gives it this peculiar force is the assent of reason, and the evidence of experience, that we are sinners, and as such exposed to the righteous indignation of our offended God. That system, therefore, which provides for the remission of our sins, must most powerfully affect our hearts. Every system which is not founded upon the great truth of our fearful corruption, and our deliverance from the ruinous effects of that corruption by an Almighty Redeemer, who bore our sins in his own body as a sacrifice for us, is destitute of internal power to overawe our sinful propensities, or to excite our desires after conformity to Godⁱ.

However much the doctrine of animal sacrifices was corrupted among the Heathen, the practice of offering them up as an expiation for personal or national transgressions, operated to a certain degree upon their hopes and fears, so as to produce all the improvements which they made in every thing which belongs to personal or national exaltation.

ⁱ Fuller in his letters, contrasting Socinianism and Calvinism, has admirably illustrated this truth.

With these preliminary remarks, we proceed to those proofs which history affords of the truth of the text. They must necessarily in a single discourse be few, and those few ought to be prominent.

The doctrine of righteousness through a Redeemer, as exhibited by animal sacrifices, for a considerable time remained unadulterated among a great part of the descendants of Noah, even after the dispersion. As late as the days of Abraham, though the corruption of the true religion was widely extended and rapidly gaining ground, we have authentic information, that many illustrious witnesses for the truth still existed in different parts. Noah died only two years before the birth of Abraham^k, and Shem, his son, more than fifty years after the birth of Isaac, Abraham's son by Sarah^l. In addition to these patriarchs, we read of Melchizedek, whom many suppose to have been a person distinct from Shem. Now, it is utterly incredible, that the authority and influence of these men, the Fathers and Legislators of the New World, should not

^k Noah died, 1998, before Christ. Abraham was born, 1996.

^l Shem died, 1846. Isaac was born, 1396. Blair's Chron.

have had an extensive influence upon their posterity. As these witnesses for the truth were one after the other going the way of their fathers, and decreasing in numbers, God raised up Abraham and his posterity to be the depository of his oracles, and the preservers of his truth. Such was the intercourse of this friend of God, and his family after him, with the surrounding nations of the Canaanites, Assyrians, and Egyptians, and their reception by these nations, down to the time of Joseph's deathⁿ, that we cannot mistake in ascribing their greatness to the influence of the people of God. During the administration of Joseph, Egypt was at the pinnacle of its glory^o. From this period she declined, until she became base and contemptible by her vile and degrading superstition. And it is worthy of remark, that as she declined, she corrupted more and more the doctrine of animal sacrifices, by making the victims which ought to have been offered up, the objects of their adoration.

ⁿ 1635 before Christ.

^o For an account of the glory of Egypt, when it was highest, see Bossuet's *Univer. Hist.* part 3, and Rollin's *Ancient Hist.* vol. i. See also, on the state of Egypt during Joseph's

The Syrians and the Phœnicians, together with the Assyrians, are indebted to the same cause for the greatness which they displayed. The confusion in which the chronology of all these nations is involved, prevents us from enlarging on their character and condition^p. Suffice it to say, that the period of their highest exaltation is between the call of Abraham and the time when the Judges had the supreme authority in Israel^q. During this interval, those emigrations from Egypt and Phœnicia, which gave character and importance to Greece, took place^r. The Phœnicians pushed their maritime discoveries and settlements to Africa, and Spain^s. Greece, in her turn, sent forth colonies to Sicily and Italy^t, who founded the flourishing republics of Syra-

administration, Delany's Rev. Exam. with Candour, vol. 3. chap. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

p Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. book 1.

q Abraham left Haran, 1921, before Christ. The Judges ruled from 1405 to 1095, before Christ.

r 1556, A. C. Cecrops in Athens, 1485, Danaus in Argos, 1493, Cadmus in Thebes. Gillies' Greece, vol. i. chap. 1.

s Calmet's Dictionary, articles Phœnicians, Africa, Canaan.

t About the eighth century before Christ.

cuse, Sybaris, Crotona, and others, which in time yielded to the superior power of the Romans, and were lost in their mighty empire.

Of all the Heathen nations subsequent to this period, the Greeks and the Romans attained the greatest exaltation. Among them the principles of civilization were better understood; the powers of the human mind displayed in a much higher degree; and the various relations of life made productive of superior personal enjoyment, and more permanent and extensive public benefit, than among the others. Who that is the least read in history, has not heard of the fame and grandeur of these celebrated nations; nations, immortalized by their statesmen, their philosophers, their poets, their historians, their warriors. To this day, their writings are considered as models of composition, and fountains of erudition. In their intercourse with each other they appear to have made many and great advances towards that state, which is now considered as the most improved and best calculated to make such intercourse a

blessing". In the discharge of their duties as members of political society; in their national conduct towards other nations, they displayed virtues, which justly entitle them to our admiration and respect^x. Among them, we find that civil liberty flourished; the arts and sciences were cultivated; and numerous examples of private as well as public worth, were constantly presenting themselves to view, and spreading around them their salutary influence. Let me not be misunderstood. I am speaking of Heathen nations, and endeavouring to do that justice to them which they merit. Comparing them with the word of God, they were awfully deficient in morals^y; many imperfections existed in the administration of their governments; and they cultivated the infamous science of magic. Yet the contrast between them and the other Heathen nations is striking; so much

^u Potter's Antiquities of Greece, and Adams' Roman Antiquities, under the different heads of information belonging to social intercourse. Anacharsis's Travels. Ferguson's Roman Republic.

^x An interesting paragraph on this subject, will be found in Saurin's Sermons, Eng. Trans. vol. iv. Serm. 6.

^y Rom. i.

so, that no one who does not delight in singularity, will withhold from them the crown of reward for their superiority.

These nations, through the medium of tradition, were acquainted with many of the truths which God had from time to time revealed to his people. Besides the information which had been handed down from one generation to another, they enjoyed the instruction of their Sages, who travelled to Egypt and elsewhere, to enlarge their knowledge^r. From these sources they derived their religious systems, and their forms of worship. Without entering into any detail of their theology or ceremonies, I desire you to fix your attention simply on the animal sacrifices which they offered to their idols.

By examining the accounts which are given of these sacrifices, their nature, the state of the victims, the ceremonies accompanying their death, the design of the offerers, and every thing which was considered as essential to their acceptance on the part of Heaven, and their benefit to men, there will be found a very close, and in many respects, surprising similitude be-

^r Gillies' Greece. Rollin's Anc. Hist.

tween them, and those appointed by God^a. These sacrifices taught them the necessity of redemption by blood; not that they understood the doctrine of (such) redemption as revealed, but by these sacrifices they confessed themselves sinners, and sought forgiveness from their offended Sovereign. To this the apostle refers, when he says, "The Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile, accusing or else excusing one another^b." The law of which he speaks, is the Mosaic law, which throughout taught the necessity of our redemption by Christ, and purification by blood. The "things contained in this law," of which sacrifices were the chief, giving meaning and efficacy to all the rest, the Gentiles, he says, did by nature. "Nature," therefore, "was not that which discovered

^a Potter's Grec. Antiq. vol. i. b. 2. chap. 4. Adams' Rom. Antiq. Religion of the Rom. sect. 3.

^b Rom. ii. 14, 15.

“ the action, but it was the motive to act :
 “ it was the authority upon which the Gen-
 “ tiles did, and not the faculty or power by
 “ which they learnt, the things of the law.
 “ And this distinction shows, that the apos-
 “ tle neither means the light nor the law of
 “ nature, but he uses the word^c, as indeed
 “ its derivation imports^d, for that which
 “ grows up with us, our frame and consti-
 “ tution ; and such habit or custom is even
 “ to a proverb. And in this sense it is al-
 “ ways used either for nature, as the frame
 “ and constitution of any thing, or what by
 “ habit becomes such^e.” This custom of
 sacrificing, testified against them that they
 were sinners, that they wanted redemp-
 tion, and that this redemption could be pro-
 cured only by blood. The conviction of these
 truths, was “ the work of the law written in
 “ their hearts,” the necessary result of their
 habit of sacrificing, which they had derived
 by tradition from God’s own appointment.
 Their conscience bore them witness, whe-
 ther they conformed to this law, whose

^c ΟυσΙΑ.

^d From φως, (*nascor.*)

^e Romaine’s Works, vol. i. Sermon. entitled, “ No Justification by the law of Nature,” where the reader will find much information on this subject.

“works were written in their hearts,” and “their thoughts,” through this medium, “the meanwhile,” were “accusing, or else excusing, one another.” Thus then we see, that the great truth which constitutes the essence of revelation, righteousness through the blood of a Redeemer^f, though grossly corrupted and obscured, still operated through their sacrifices, upon the hopes and fears of these Heathen, and by its influence produced their exaltation.

Further proof in support of the text as explained, might be adduced, in comparing the Persians and other nations, who did not pay this attention to animal sacrifices, nor consider them of such importance, with the Greeks and Romans. But it is time to proceed to the historical evidence which those nations, who have enjoyed the light of revelation, afford, on this subject. We will, therefore, dismiss the Heathen with the

f A history of animal sacrifices among the Heathen nations, showing their conformity to divine appointment, and the character and state of the nations most conformable, contrasted with those who were the furthest removed from the original pattern, is a *desideratum* in theology. If the learned Dr. Magee would turn his attention to the subject, he would do a real benefit to religion.

remark, that wherever Atheism, or a species of refined Theism, superseded, in whole or part, the sacrifices of animals, there we find political degradation, and a deterioration in intellectual and moral worth. The former has but few, and those few, feeble supporters, whose speculations are absurd, and who have the mass of evidence which facts afford, opposed to them. The latter, as it does not include in it the incontrovertible truth of our fearful apostacy, and the necessity of a Redeemer, cannot affect our hearts or regulate our lives.

Let us now for a moment attend to the state of the Jewish nation. A mere sketch will be attempted. Whilst I am offering it to your consideration, let it be remembered, that it is information of the actual state of this people, furnished by authentic writers.

We shall first examine their laws, confining ourselves, however, to a few general notices.

In these laws, the great principles of moral duty are promulgated with a solemnity suited to their high pre-eminence.

Love to God with the most unceasing solicitude, and love to our neighbour, as extensively and forcibly as the peculiar design of the Jewish economy, and the peculiar character of the Jewish people would permit, are enjoined. They studiously inculcate the truth, that God requires not merely external observances, but heartfelt piety, well regulated desires, and active benevolence. They teach that sacrifice could not obtain pardon without a genuine and universal repentance for all sin; that circumcision itself, and by necessary consequence, every other legal rite, was designed to typify and require internal holiness, which alone could render men acceptable to God. They represent the love of God as designed to act as a practical principle, stimulating to the constant and sincere cultivation of purity, mercy, and truth.

In these laws, we find idolatry, with its train of profanations and crimes; adultery and impurity in all its pollutions; murder; obstinate disobedience to parents; presumptuous defiance of the law; and resistance to

the supreme authority of the state, capitally punished. While they allowed no asylum for atrocious criminals, they provided with admirable wisdom for the fair trial of those who were guilty only of manslaughter. They punished inferior offences, whether against the person or property, with mildness and equity. They protected the slave as well as the freeman. In a word, in the judges who held their authority under these laws, the form of the trials appointed by them, and their regulations as to witnesses, they were admirably calculated to promote justice, and to guard innocence.

These laws, moreover, “ provided for the
“ settlement of 600,000 freeholders, with
“ independent properties, derived not from
“ any human superior, but held in fee from
“ the Sovereign of the Jewish state, even
“ God himself. This distribution of pro-
“ perty was guarded by preventing the
“ accumulation of debt, and, if alienated
“ for a time, securing its reversion to the
“ family of the original proprietor, at regu-
“ lar periods. The distribution of this body
“ of freeholders through the land, by their

“ tribes and families, forms an additional
“ provision for their union and happiness.
“ They are employed in agriculture, at-
“ tached to domestic life, estranged from
“ war, but bound to assemble for their
“ country’s defence, and thus forming a
“ secure barrier against hostile violence or
“ insidious ambition. They are governed
“ by a nobility, by magistrates and by
“ elders, possessing properties suited to
“ their several ranks, respected for their
“ patriarchal descent, uniting in their per-
“ sons civil and military authority, by an
“ hereditary right, which precluded jealousy
“ and discord. The whole tribe of Levi is
“ set apart to attend to the religious and
“ moral instruction of the nation, for which
“ they have the fullest leisure, and to which
“ they are bound by the strongest interests;
“ dispersed over the whole, and forming a
“ cement and bond of union between the
“ remaining tribes. In this domestic and
“ family government, as it has been justly
“ termed, population is encouraged, free-
“ dom secured, agriculture and residence in
“ the country, and, by consequence, purity

“ and simplicity of manners provided for ;
 “ domestic virtue, reverence to the aged,
 “ kindness to the stranger, bounty to the
 “ fatherless and the widow, justice to all,
 “ are inculcated in the most forcible man-
 “ ner, and with the most awful sanctions,
 “ even the favour or the displeasure of the
 “ Lord Jehovah, who is the immediate
 “ Sovereign under whom this government
 “ is exercised, by whom its Laws are form-
 “ ed, from whom all property is held, to
 “ whose powerful interposition the nation
 “ owed this settlement, and on whose pro-
 “ tection it depended for its continuance^g.”

On a comparison of these laws with those of other nations, we may confidently maintain their immense superiority, in every particular which relates to morality, jurisprudence, or social intercourse. In them, virtue and vice were accurately discriminated, the duties of magistrates and subjects minutely specified, and every person directed in what manner he should conduct

^g Graves on the Pentateuch, p. 2. lect. 2. p. 325. lect. 3. p. 363. vol. i. lect. 4. vol. ii. p. 30—32. See also Michaelis Commentaries on the Laws of Moses, and Lowman's Civil Polity of the Hebrews.

himself in his family and with his neighbours.

If we pass on from the laws of this people, to their works handed down to us in the Scriptures, we find the same exaltation above other nations. Where can we find history so grave, dignified, faithful, simple, and affecting? Where do we meet with poetry so lofty, sublime, ennobling, elevating? Where is instruction in the various branches of moral and political knowledge, to be found so profound and extensive, accompanied with such irresistibility of argument, and such power of persuasion? The justly celebrated Grecian and Roman authors must yield the palm to the despised Hebrews, both in the style and matter of their works.

From different parts of the Jewish writings, it is evident, that this people were acquainted with natural history, botany, geometry, chemistry, and other branches of science. Solomon “ spake of trees, from
“ the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even
“ unto the hyssop that springeth out of the
“ wall; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl,

“and of creeping things, and of fishes^h.” In the description given of the tabernacle erected by Moses; of the temple by Solomon; and of Ezekiel’s vision of the temple, we have proof that the principles of geometry were known. The Jewish calendar, together with notices of the stars and the seasons, discover an acquaintance with astronomy; and in the dissolution of the golden calf, we discern some of the elementary principles of chemistry.

Under David’s victorious, and Solomon’s peaceful and polished reign, this nation reached the height of exaltation. Their fame was spread abroad throughout the world, and attracted the attention and admiration of all their cotemporaries. Whoever reads with care the history of Israel under Solomon, will perceive, that ancient times does not furnish an example of equal splendour and real greatness.

I have enlarged the more upon the state of the Jewish nation, because they have been misrepresented, ridiculed, and abused, by ancient Heathen writers, and modern

h 1 Kings iv. 33.

skepticsⁱ, as a base and degraded people—with what reason you may judge.

The Christian dispensation succeeding to the Jewish, we shall proceed to examine the proofs, which the nations who profess obedience to this dispensation, afford of the truth, that righteousness exalteth a nation. Time will not permit a minute detail of the effects which Christianity produced among them. Generally, it changed their character, conduct, and state, in a most astonishing manner. They no longer thought, felt, and acted as they had done before; but, on the contrary, they made it evident to the most thoughtless, that “old things were passed away, and all things had become new.” On this transformation, not of one individual, but of multitudes; not of one sex, but of both; not of a particular age, but of all ages; not of persons in one situation, but of every situa-

ⁱ Tacitus among the former, in b. 5, of his *History*, and Voltaire among the latter, in the *Philosophy of History*, c. 49, afford examples of the manner in which philosophers have treated this people. Whoever wishes to know the truth on this subject, in contradiction to these philosophers, will find it in Findlay's *Vindication, Jews' Letters to Voltaire, Graves on the Pentateuch*.

tion ; a transformation displayed not merely in health, but in sickness ; not in prosperity, but also in adversity ; not in life, but in the agonies of a cruel and excruciating death, Christian writers in the primitive church dwell with enlargement, with delight, with triumph. Between Christians and Pagans, those who embraced the gospel, and those who rejected it, the difference in every thing which constitutes individual or social excellence, was as great as between the children of Israel and of Ham, when there was light in the land of Goshen, and midnight darkness in the rest of Egypt^k.

Within four hundred years after the birth of our Saviour, the Roman empire publicly owned the authority of Christ. It was not, however, until Theodosius ascended the throne, that idolatry was suppressed, and the finishing stroke given to the public worship of Heathen gods among his subjects. His reign was glorious, and the empire, considering the condition in which it was

^k In Ryan's History of the Effects of Religion, chap. 3, sect. 1—6, 3d ed. the reader will find satisfactory information on this subject.

brought in the providence of God, highly exalted. I know, that the Pagans charged Christianity with the decline of Roman grandeur, and in this they have been supported by modern infidels. But it ought to be remembered, that before the reign of Constantine, who first established Christianity, the irruption of the Goths and other nations had taken place, and a general licentiousness among all classes, had deteriorated the virtues and the prowess of these haughty lords of the world^l. Christianity alone arrested the progress of their political decay, and made them still respected and feared. There was nothing in the spirit of Paganism which could have saved the empire from destruction. On the contrary, by cherishing the most abominable vices in its votaries, by corrupting the public morals, it prepared the way for the inroads, and the final dominancy of the northern barbarians. We see, in the midst of the fearful struggles between the Romans and Barbarians, the spirit of the gospel animating the former, and overawing the latter. To that spirit, the former were indebted for

^l Ireland's Paganism and Christianity Contrasted, ch. 3.

the literature, the laws, the manners, the social enjoyments which rendered them superior to the latter, and which ultimately made the latter, though conquerors in arms, subjects in fact. They were, indeed, in the possession of the government, but, at the same time adopted the religion, cultivated the knowledge, and emulated the morals of those whom they had subdued. When they finally succeeded, it is true, that the purity of the gospel was greatly corrupted, and that its effects upon the lives of men were lamentably circumscribed. But, whatever was left of real Christianity they embraced, and by it regulated their conduct.

To what cause can we ascribe all these effects? Unquestionably to the doctrine of righteousness through a Redeemer. This was taught in its purity by the apostles, and their immediate successors. We find it distinctly recognised, though much obscured, in the writings of the Christian Fathers, so late as the fifth century^m, which comprehends the whole period, of which a brief account has been attempted. By examin-

^m Milner's Church History to the fifth century.

ing the history of the Church, we shall find that as this doctrine was taught and believed, in proportion to its purity and its legitimate influence, was the glory of the civilized world. Under its auspices the foundation for the civil law of Europe, was laid by Theodosius first, and afterwards by Justinianⁿ, and all that was valuable in domestic, useful in social, and ennobling in political life, preserved from utter extinction.

Let us descend to a period still later, and survey the nations who threw off the degrading yoke of Papal power. Among them, you are particularly invited to examine the state of England before the civil wars, when puritanism, as soundness of faith and holiness of life was called by those who hated both, had spread its influence over the whole land. A living writer, in a work by no means friendly to real scriptural godliness, but, on the contrary, its enemy, pronounces that period to be in every respect the most learned, moral, and polished in the history of England. “Undoubtedly,” such are his concluding remarks in reviewing the annals of those times, by a

ⁿ Cooper's Justinian's Institutes. Butler's *Horæ Juridicæ*.

cotemporary author, “ we are struck with a
“ loftier air of manhood than presents itself
“ in any after era ; and recognise the same
“ characters of deep thought and steady
“ enthusiasm, and the same principles of
“ fidelity and self-command which enno-
“ bled the better days of the Roman Re-
“ public, and have made every thing else
“ appear childish and frivolous in the com-
“ parison’.” During this period, the doc-
trine of righteousness through a Redeemer
was taught and enforced more faithfully and
generally, than in any preceding or subse-
quent period. Nor did the friends of this
doctrine corrupt it under the administration
of Cromwell. Some of the ablest, the clear-
est, the most successful defenders of “ the
“ faith once delivered to the saints,” that
the world has ever seen, lived, and preached,
and wrote at this time. They, at the resto-
ration of the infatuated family of Stuart, were
deprived of their worldly support, forbidden
under heavy penalties to preach the gos-
pel, because they could not conform to the
Episcopal Church, and hunted like beasts of
prey, though men “ of whom the world was

“not worthy.” Nevertheless, they, like Elijah, left their mantles behind them to succeeding Elishas. To them and their descendants, the English nation, according to the acknowledgment of Hume himself, are indebted for its civil privileges^p. Nay more, they have had a salutary influence upon the English Church established by law, by exciting her clergy and members to greater diligence in the discharge of their respective duties^q.

The Republic of Holland, in her purest days, affords another historical proof of the truth of the text. Though feeble when she threw off the yoke of Spanish tyranny, yet she secured her independence spite of the

^p Hume's History, vol. 5. p. 154. See also Neil's History of the Puritans. Bogue and Bennet's History of Dissenters.

^q “The existence of the Dissenters in England, has most assuredly operated to the amelioration of the English Church, by compelling her clergy to sustain a comparison with the zeal, the activity, the piety, the frugality, the morals, and talents of the Dissenting pastors, and (which has perhaps been still more efficient,) by compelling her to consider the magnitude and increase of the dissenting portion of the community.” Edinburgh Review, No. 43, Art. 7, Blaquiére's Sicily.

The whole of this review, published since the above Sermon was preached, as well as that of Hutchinson's life, before referred to, is worthy of particular attention.

gigantic power whom she opposed. A great part of her soil, her hardy sons wrested from the ocean, and improved either for the pursuits of agriculture, or the prosecution of commercial enterprise. She grew in prowess, in influence, in fame, in grandeur, so as to rank with the first nations who adorn the annals of time. Her armies triumphed over the best soldiers of the day; her navy successfully supported her maritime rights. Her universities, especially that of Leyden, was the resort of students from all quarters. Her statesmen, her scholars, and her divines; her De Witts, her Boerhaves, and Vitringas, attracted universal notice, and stamped imperishable renown upon her name. Her citizens exhibited a high degree of purity in their morals, honesty in their occupations, and temperance in their enjoyments. And to her eternal honour be it said, she respected the rights of conscience when they were respected no where else^r, and allowed all to wor-

^r Great Britain first tolerated religion, under William 3d, Prince of Orange; for, though under the administration of Cromwell, than whom, spite of his hypocrisy, the English never have produced a more able statesman, or a more

ship God in their own way, unmolested, so long as they did not disturb the peace of society.

When we reflect upon the origin of this Republic, the circumscribed territory which she possessed, the great and fearful difficulties she had to encounter; and then find, that the greatness of the United Provinces who constituted this Republic, “made them “the envy of some, the fear of others, and “the wonder of all their neighbours,” we cannot hesitate to say, that history furnishes no parallel case.

The Hollanders, as well as the Puritans of England, embraced and maintained the great scriptural doctrine of the righteousness of faith. In defence and illustration of this doctrine, no country has produced abler and more victorious defenders. *champions. †*

A third historical proof of the truth of the text, is furnished by the descendants of the pilgrims of Leyden, that noble band of confessors, who settled in this Western World

vigorous chief magistrate, all religious opinions and worship, were tolerated, yet it was not until the reign of Williams that *toleration* became a part of the established privileges by law, of Englishmen themselves!

s Sir W. Temple's Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands, preface and work, *passim*.

† In defence &c, no country has produced abler defenders —

Among them, especially, those who inhabit Connecticut, there is a degree of knowledge, of personal improvement, and of social order, which is not to be found in the same compass of territory, in the habitable globe. The religious creed which they have embraced, is that which is called Calvinistic, and is the legitimate offspring of righteousness through a Redeemer.

To the proofs already adduced, I only add the fact, that in Scotland and Holland, extensive plans for the education of youth, plans incorporated in their religious establishments, have been adopted and carried into effect. In this one important particular, they stand alone. Other countries have left the education of youth to the State: these, being Calvinistic in their faith, have made it, what it ought ever to be among Christians, the business of the Church. I refer not now to the endowment of Colleges, but the formation of Parish Schools, in which the children of the poor are instructed equally with those of the rich^t.

^t In consequence of an imperial decree, by Napoleon, October, 18, 1810, Cuvier and Noel visited Holland, then annexed to the French empire, to inspect the state of the colleges and lower schools. In their report, they state, that

Did time permit, it might be proved by a course of reasoning, the correctness of which could not be disputed, that these principles directly lead to the improvement both of the mind and heart, more than any other religious principles. I only refer to facts; facts as they exist in Scotland, Holland, and Connecticut. To these may be added, the formation and success of Sunday Schools in England; schools which originated among, and have been chiefly patronised by, the friends and supporters of the righteousness of God by faith, both in the established Church and among Dissenters^u.

The truth of the text will be fully and finally established, when the promise of God, relative to the latter-day glory, shall be fulfilled. Then Christ will “have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth^x.” According to

out of a population of 1,900,000 souls, the number when Holland was annexed, there were in the lower schools, consisting of 4451, 190,000 pupils. The whole report is highly interesting, and deserves to be translated and published for general information. Whoever takes the pains to read the Constitution of the Churches of Scotland and Holland, and the School-law of Connecticut, will see what care they have taken, and do take, for the education of their youth.

^u An account of these schools is contained in the *Sunday School Repository*.

^x Ps. lxxii. 8.

the predictions of this event, there will be universally an astonishing degree of knowledge, combined with a delightful purity of morals. The civil government will then be christian; the manners will be formed upon the model of the gospel; and the physical advantages of nations will be greatly increased. Perhaps the population of the world during the thousand years' reign of the Lord Jesus, will equal the whole population of the world previously^v.

Before we proceed to the last head of this discourse, justice requires that some prominent objections to the position laid down in the text, should be stated and obviated.

The first objection is that which the state of Europe presents to our view, from the time when the Bishop of Rome began his career to universal dominion, until the Reformation took place. During this period, although Christianity was the nominal religion of the nations, yet it is a mournful fact, that they were grossly ignorant, immoral, and debased. Their history for the greatest part of this time is nothing more than a detail of atrocious crimes, of incessant bloody

^v See Sermon iv.

wars, of social impurity, and ecclesiastical profligacy. The Christianity which was professed, however, it must be acknowledged even by those who reject the Scriptures, was very unlike to the gospel of Jesus Christ. One of its great characteristic features, was a contravention to the very essence of the plan of redemption. In the words of inspiration, we are taught that “without shedding of blood there is no remission;” but the man of sin, the son of perdition, maintained, that the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass was truly propitiatory^a. With this he connected the intercession of saints, and justification by works, both of which derogate directly from the honour of the Redeemer, and in a most unblushing manner give the lie to the scriptural doctrine of righteousness. This corruption of what is the very marrow of revealed religion, constitutes the man of sin (to be) Antichrist, denying both the Father and the Son; for when taken in connexion with all its legitimate consequences, it goes to the full extent of

^z Heb. ix. 22.

^a The doctrine of the Mass is fairly unfolded in the 22d session of the Council of Trent, chap. 2. Dupin's Eccles. Hist. of the 16th century, b. 3. ch. 18.

substituting another God as the object of adoration and obedience than the Jehovah of the Scriptures. Though this corruption did not reach its highest degree until the thirteenth century, yet its foundation was early laid by the unscriptural views which were entertained of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The mere participation of these ordinances were considered as procuring the pardon of sin. From the close of the fifth century, superstition and will-worship rapidly gained ground, and with their growth detached the attention and affections of men from the Redeemer, and salvation through his blood. No wonder then that society at large exhibited so sad, debased, and horrible a scene, as the writers of the middle ages describe. Yet even in the midst of this darkness, the reign of Charlemagne and Alfred afford strong and irrefutable evidence of the truth of the text. Whoever reads the capitularies of the former^b, and the history and character of the latter^c, will see what efforts were

b Dupin's *Eccles. Hist.* vol. 6. cent. 3. gives a summary of these Capitularies. Mosheim's *Eccles. Hist.* vol. 2. p. 270.

c A full account of Alfred's character, laws, and reign, will be found in Turner's *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. 2. 3vo, Lond. ed. Milner's *Church Hist.* chap. 1. cent. 9.

made to stem the torrent of corruption, which was desolating the church.

The second objection arises from the prosperity and grandeur of the Saracen empires in Asia and Spain. It is hardly possible to form an adequate conception of the magnificence of the Caliphs, their immense wealth, and the profusion with which they expended it for personal gratification. The prodigality of sovereigns, however, as it can only be supported by their subjects, must in the end oppress and ruin them. Amidst all the glare which history casts around the Moslems in the zenith of their power, we find no vestige of rational liberty among the people; no real enjoyment in domestic life; no substantial benefits springing from social intercourse. The government was an absolute despotism; females were considered as the mere instruments of (promoting) sensual pleasure; and men, instead of attending as a duty to that which is good, wasted their intellectual faculties and bodily powers in the gratification of dark and revengeful, or of voluptuous and effeminate passions. The arts and sciences, it must however be granted, were cultivat-

ed by these followers of Mahomet with great assiduity and success. And it is worthy of our notice, that the age of Arabian learning, “was coeval with the darkest and “most slothful period of European annals^d.” As the religion of Mahomet utterly excludes the doctrine of righteousness by a Redeemer, this fact seems to contradict the position we have assumed. But the following remarks will show the real nature and extent of the pretensions of the Moslems to literary reputation.

They paid no attention to learning, until after they had become acquainted with the Roman Empire, by their wars with the emperors of Constantinople in the first instance, and afterwards with the Christians of Spain. It was Christianity, though greatly corrupted, that excited in them a thirst for intellectual improvement.

This improvement, however great or small, was of brief duration, and preceded, as well as followed, by most deplorable ignorance and stupidity. It was merely the result of the exertions made by a few of their enlightened Caliphs, which exertions

^d Gibbon.

were constantly opposed by the genius of the Mahometan faith.

The improvement itself, which they made, was not great. Too much prodigality of praise has been lavished upon the literature of the Saracens. The munificence and splendour of the Caliphate have operated as a charm to bewitch and mislead the readers of their history. The celebrated Gibbon confesses, that they were copyists, or imitators, and invented nothing, excepting the *science* of chemistry^e. His testimony on this subject is conclusive, as it respects the literary glory of the Saracen empire; for he was more friendly to the claims of Mahomet than to those of Christ; not because he believed the pretensions of the former, but because he hated the religion of the latter. With respect to his statement about chemistry, if he means by *science* merely the arrangements of a system, it is true; but, if he includes elementary principles as constituting a part of the

^e Gibbon Decl. and Fall of the Rom. Hist. vol. 6. chap. 52. Americ. ed. See also on the literature of the Arabs, Berrington's *Literary History of the Middle Ages*. Harris's *Philological Inquiries*.

system, he is incorrect: for some of these principles were unquestionably known to the Jews. The Saracens, therefore, merely made some improvements of previous inventions, and these improvements themselves were only transient. Their prophet, in his Koran, acknowledges the authority of Christ, but rejects the atonement through his blood. These two things satisfactorily account for the improvement on the one hand, and the short time in which this improvement existed.

Another objection springs from the learning and excellence of Socinians, and other nominal Christians, who reject the doctrine of righteousness by a Redeemer. But we must not forget, that these persons, being born in countries where the doctrine of righteousness by a Redeemer is inculcated, received their first impressions from this doctrine^f; and spite of their exertions, they have never been able to counteract the impulse given to them by these impressions. Besides this, give these persons a place and a sphere in which the influence of right-

^f This was the case with Dr. Priestley. Mr. Belsham was educated a Calvinist.

eousness as explained, shall not operate, and they will soon be like the Mahometans, with whom in the reign of Charles II. those in England claimed affinity, in a letter addressed to the ambassador of the Emperor of Morocco^g. As yet they never have given a peculiar religious character to any nation, because no nation has embraced their tenets. They flourished for a while in Poland and Transylvania, and furnished some highly respectable specimens of literary excellence^h. In the present day, however, much of the learning of these men is pretence. They lay down a proposition, but do not prove it; and uniformly praise their own writers, whilst they as uniformly condemn and abuse writers of another faithⁱ. Boldness

^g Magee on the Atonement, vol. i. p. 133. note 3d. Lond. ed. See also Reflections on Mahometanism and Socinianism, in a work entitled, "Four Treatises concerning the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Mahometans," printed in London, 1712, for B. Liutot. The Reflections deserve to be reprinted, together with Leibnitz's letter to the author.

^h The Fratres Poloni in particular, to whom, Doddridge says, Tillotson and Clarke are largely indebted. Besides these Polish Socinians, Crellius, Grotius, and Locke, ought not to be forgotten, as supporters of Socinianism.

ⁱ Dr. Ryland's Reply to the Rev. Mr. Rowe's Letter, Belsham's Sermon on the Death of Priestley, and Letters, Am. ed. Magee on the Atonement, vol. ii. Appendix.

passes current with them for talent, assertion for argument, metaphysical speculation for fact.

The last objection demanding our notice, is that which skepticism makes. She arrogates to herself the exclusive patronage of science. Her pretensions, however, are contradicted by facts. It is under the auspices of revealed religion, that the most important discoveries have been made in the different departments of human knowledge. To whom are we indebted for a correct view of the solar system, demonstrated upon geometrical principles? To Copernicus, a believer in revelation. Who established the present system of philosophising by induction? It was Bacon, a believer. Did not Newton carry the science of natural philosophy to its greatest perfection, demonstrating the motions and figures of the planets, the paths of comets, and the causes of tides, discovering the origin of colours to be in the refrangibility of the rays of light? And yet Newton was a believer. What was our knowledge of the human mind, till Locke arose? a man of superior understanding, yet a believer. Need I enlarge? Time

would fail me to enumerate the believers who have added to the information of mankind, by their talents and erudition. And though such men as Newton and Locke have denied the doctrine of righteousness, as has been explained; yet it ought to be recollected, that they were formed under the influence of this doctrine. The literature of skeptics, whatever it may be, owes its greatness to the labours of these men. How base then in them to brand revealed religion as the foster-mother of ignorance! Examine their works, and see what improvements they have made in science. One has discovered that we are mere ideas. Another, that we are of the same nature with brutes, only prouder. Another, that man originally was a mass of matter formed as we are, but without any power or faculty in exercise; that weariness of lying impelled him to rise; hunger, to seek for food; that thus his different powers and faculties unfolded, and in this manner he will go on unfolding them, till he attains perfection. Such, brethren, is the erudition of skeptics, when they deviate from the principles of those who believe in the Scriptures. It is in

the very genius of irreligion to originate such preposterous and ridiculous theories, for it proposes to itself no higher objects of gratification than curiosity and personal ambition. On the contrary, it is in the very genius of true religion to originate sound principles in all the sciences, and to encourage every species of useful knowledge. To it, under all the corruptions of Antichrist, we are indebted for the preservation of the classics, of the Roman law, and the codes of Justinian and Theodosius; in short, for the preservation of whatever of ancient literature yet remains.

IV. We proceed, in the fourth and last place, to apply the subject to the present occasion.

We are assembled, as you have heard, to supplicate the blessing of God upon his church, so that her want of ministers may be supplied, and her borders may be enlarged. This church owes her existence to the doctrine of righteousness through a Redeemer, and relies upon the same doctrine for her perpetuity and prosperity. She is a community gathered out of the world, from among the heirs of destruction, the

children of disobedience. On her account the world is preserved; for when she shall be completed, when the redeemed shall be gathered together in one, then cometh the end. We therefore learn from this subject,

1. The importance of the Church of Jesus Christ, in this world. The truths which she espouses, are necessary for the welfare of men. Nations can only thrive and prosper by the prevalence of these truths. Wherever they are despised, misfortune, calamity, and ruin will ensue.

It has been supposed that a nation of Atheists can exist. Let France speak, and she will tell you, that the position is false. She has been obliged to resort to her old superstition, as preferable to irreligion. The latter necessarily produces anarchy, with all its consequences. No nation can exist without religion, and revealed religion is the only one which can promote the real welfare of any people.

Value then, Men and Brethren, the Church of God as the sheet-anchor of the world.

+ Rally round her standard; reverence her ordinances; believe the doctrines which she

+ Rally round y^e Standard of an Anchor?

has embraced; and love those who belong to her fellowship, and walk worthy of their high vocation.

2. We learn the importance of a religious magistracy. Without righteousness as explained, men cannot be just, ruling in the fear of God. You may as well attempt “to bind up an hungry tyger with a cobweb^l,” as to keep the irreligious magistrate within the bounds of that duty which he owes to God and to his subjects. He will, unless restrained by more powerful motives, sport with truth, with humanity, with every thing sacred and holy. I would as soon trust to the ferocious savage, as I would to the skeptical and irreligious ruler, if he acts under the influence of his irreligion and skepticism without control.

Let no man mistake my meaning. I desire not the establishment of any denomination of Christians; but in the name of my Master, I say, that the magistrate must be a subject of the dispensation of mercy, an avowed believer in Jesus Christ, or he cannot fulfil the duties of his office aright. A skeptical magistrate is a traitor to the God of

Heaven, and therefore must be a curse to his subjects. God will never suffer a perversion of any of his own appointments, without manifesting his indignation, and causing the perverters deeply to feel the effects of their ungodliness.

3. We see how important is the design of such a day as this. It contemplates the spread of truth, the influence of righteousness, the increase of the kingdom of Christ among all flesh. How large a proportion of the world is without God, and without hope, because without the knowledge of the way of salvation! Mahometans, Jews, and Gentiles, are in open revolt against the Lord and his Anointed; whilst the greatest part of those who profess Christianity, have corrupted the truth. How are all these aliens from the family of God, to be brought within the bonds of the covenant? By sending to them the ministry of reconciliation, to proclaim the righteousness of God which is by faith. Who but God can raise up men qualified to undertake this great labour of love, and work of faith? And must he not be inquired of for this, as well as for all other blessings. In a word, can we expect that he

will arise to bless the nations, if he does not pour out his Spirit upon his Church? It is from her members that the messengers of peace must be selected. And so long as she is in want of pastors, so long no great and effective plans for the conversion of the Heathen and others, can be adopted.

4. What powerful arguments does the subject suggest for importunity and perseverance in prayer. God is not confined to means, but he has been pleased to make it the duty of his people to ask, to seek, and to knock, and with their obedience to these commands, to connect the promise, that what is asked, shall be given; what is sought, shall be found; and the door at which we knock, shall be opened. Contemplate now the objects embraced in the special supplications of this day, and tell me, are there any more interesting, or more glorious to be found? Every thing that belongs to the honour of God, and the happiness of man in his various relations, is included in our prayers. Who, then, that loves the Redeemer, or the salvation of men, can be cold or indifferent? Let the language of our desires, and of our reso-

lutions unto God, now, be that which Jacob used, “we will not let thee go, except thou “bless us’.”

Finally, whilst we are importunate in prayer, for the prevalence of the doctrine of righteousness, let us beware that none of us be found at last destitute of its power in our own hearts. There is a gross inconsistency in observing such a day as this, without being ourselves actually interested in the redemption of our Lord. We mock God, in our approaches to his throne ; for we ask with the mouth that which the heart does not desire.

See, then, brethren, that none of you be deceived about your own state. Whatsoever we sow, that shall we reap. We have to deal with Him who knoweth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. Be deeply humbled under a sense of your own corruption and transgressions. Flee to the city of refuge, and lay hold on eternal life, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth “not shall be damned’.” Trifle not with

n Gen. xxxii. 26.

o Mark xvi. 16.

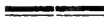
your souls, under pretence of attending to the souls of others. “ Seek first the kingdom of God” for yourselves; then you will be prevalent intercessors in your seeking it for others; for “ the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”
AMEN.

p James v. 16.

SERMON IV.



THE MILLENNIUM.



ISAIAH LXVI. 10—24.

Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the Lord

shall be known towards his servants, and his indignation towards his enemies. For behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens, behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord. For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all

nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcuses of the men that have transgressed against me. For their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

THE Church of God constitutes the salt of the world, preserving it from entire corruption and that ruin which would inevitably result from such corruption. She is the perfection of beauty^a in the earth, for whose

^a Ps. 1. 2.

preservation, glory, and prosperity, the Lord Jesus Christ, in his mediatorial character, exercises the government of the universe. He directs all the movements of his providence to the accomplishment of this grand, this sublime purpose, making the wrath of man to praise him, and restraining the remainder of wrath. Such is the consolatory and animating information which we find upon record, in the sure word of prophecy. Amidst all the darkness, which to human reason envelopes the divine government, both in relation to the World and the Church, this word of prophecy shines like a light to the eye of faith, unfolding the path of duty, and the springs of comfort. What though “the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing:” what though “the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore

“ displeasure. Yet have I set my king
“ upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare
“ the decree: the Lord hath said unto me,
“ Thou art my Son; this day have I be-
“ gotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give
“ thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and
“ the uttermost parts of the earth for thy
“ possession. Thou shalt break them with
“ a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in
“ pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

Since such is the decree of God, the Church is safe in the midst of a hostile world, a world in arms against its Sovereign. Her borders will continue to enlarge, though with many interruptions, through fearful apostacies and bitter persecutions, until they extend “ from sea to sea, and from the river
“ to the ends of the earth.” To her final establishment over all opposition; to her tranquillity in all her borders; to her security from all enemies; to her purity, and to her glory, “ looking forth as the morning, fair
“ as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible
“ as an army with banners^d,” the prophet attests in the text. No subject, therefore, can be more suitable to our present meet-

b Ps. ii. 2—9. *c* Ps. lxxii. 3. *d* Solomon’s Song, vi. 10.

ing^e, since Missionary Institutions are founded upon the prospects of the Church according to prophecy. Let us then, without attempting a critical analysis of the words, examine,

I. The future state of the Church as here predicted.

II. The means by which this state will be produced.

III. The circumstances which will precede and usher in this state.

The first will excite our desires for the accomplishment of prophecy; the second will exhibit our duty to engage as workers with God for this accomplishment, and the third directs our faith as to the aspect of present circumstances, and their ultimate issue.

1. Let us first attend to the future state of the Church as here predicted.

This is unfolded to us under the figurative expressions of “New heavens and “a new earth,” whose creation you find announced in the preceding chapter^f. They

^e The annual meeting of the New-York Missionary Society, April 7, 1812.

^f v. 17.

evidently refer to a great and universal change in the Church, which in its effects, when they are accomplished, will produce a great and universal change in the world; for heaven is the symbol for the Church of Christ, and the earth for the kingdoms of this world. This change commenced with the coming of Christ in the flesh, and the establishment of a new and more spiritual economy. The consummation and perfection of this change, will take place in the Millennial period, or that period when Christ shall reign with his saints upon earth, and Satan shall be bound for the space of one thousand years^f. To this period especially, the text refers our attention, and of the state of the Church then it affords us some important and interesting information. This information will be unfolded in very brief detail, for our improvement.

First, the Church will constitute one visible body, united in name, doctrine, and discipline; for then the prophet says, “the glory of the Gentiles shall extend to Jerusalem; brethren shall be brought as an

f Rev. xx. 2—6.

“ offering unto the Lord out of all nations,
 “ to God’s holy mountain Jerusalem ; where
 “ all flesh shall come to worship before the
 “ Lord’.”

“ The glory of the Gentiles,” is the same with the glory of Jerusalem. As the latter consists in the gracious presence of Jehovah, and his blessings resulting from that presence, so the former unquestionably must be the accession of the Gentiles to Jehovah’s visible Church, the spiritual Jerusalem.

The brethren, of whom mention is made, are called, “ your brethren,” that is, the brethren of the Church of whom the prophet speaks, “ Zion, whose gates Jehovah
 “ of old loved more than all the dwellings
 “ of Jacob’.”

These brethren are to be brought “ out
 “ of all nations” to Jerusalem, and there all flesh shall come to worship before the Lord.

From these passages, as well as others of the same import, we are assured that the divisions which now exist in the Church shall be done away. They did not exist in the primitive Church, (though extensively diffused over the earth.) They originate not

in the genius of the Gospel, but in the depravity of human nature, in the corruption of true religion, and in those distinctions which the separations of civil society produce. To these causes, we can satisfactorily trace the various denominations existing in the Christian Church. The real Church of God, the Spiritual Jerusalem, is but one, and never has been more than one. Thus she existed visibly under the law; thus she was actually in the commencement of the Christian æra; and thus she will be throughout the earth in the Millennial period. Then the Jew will belong to her communion as well as the Gentile.

The distinctions of names, of countries, of doctrines, and of government, will be done away. There will be but one fold as there is but one Shepherd; but one body as there is but one Head; but one spiritual community as there is but one Lord. The Reformed Dutch Church, the Church of Scotland, the Church of England, the Reformed Church of France, and the like, will not then be known; nor will believers be called by names derived from forms of government; for all division on this subject

will then be terminated. The terms Arminian, Calvinist, Methodist, Lutheran, and others of the same nature, will be forgotten or lost in the term *Christian*, the only name which the members of the Church ought to bear.

Then the great principles of the Gospel will be received and defended by *all* within the Church, and that discipline which is best calculated to promote holiness of life, will be universally enforced. Believers will see, eye to eye and face to face, throughout the whole Church. As they will bear but one name, so they will avow but one system of truth, and yield obedience to but one form of government. Then the contest existing at present between the different parts of the Church will be brought to issue: and it will be proved to the satisfaction of all, which scheme is correct, or in other words, which accords with the Scriptures. The strife of ages will terminate, and they who have kept apart will unite. It will be delightful to see the descendant of Abraham acknowledging a Gentile as a brother, an Episcopalian taking a Presbyterian by the hand and vowing to walk with him. No liturgy or ceremo-

nies, no clerical dresses or ecclesiastical formalities will be allowed, save those which accord with the simplicity of faith and the character of *saved sinners*. The distractions of party will not be witnessed, inasmuch as there will be no place for the leaders of party. The pride of system will be unknown; for there will be no diversity of opinion on the subjects which constitute the system.

Believers will speak one language; not that of unfledged Christian Sciologists, but that of experience; not that which the experience of one, two, or three years, but of many, will dictate. Children will then keep their place as children, and *novices* their places as *novices*. The visible unity of doctrine and discipline will not be touched by unhallowed hands, or impaired under the shallow pretext of maintaining it, whilst a language is used, which admits of disagreement, or opposition to established principles.

Nor will this unity be affected by the national prejudices of Church members; those prejudices which now so often blind and mislead good men. As all the nations of the earth will be Christian, so all

national feeling will be lost in the feelings which the truth produces. The human race will constitute one family, united in principles and in practice. They will regard each other as fellow-members, and as such, walk together in the bond of friendship and of love.

Secondly, The beauty and power of the Gospel will be displayed conspicuously in the conduct of those who are members of the Millennial Church; for we are told, “The
“ hand of the Lord shall be known towards
“ his servants, and his indignation towards
“ his enemies; all nations and tongues shall
“ come and see the Lord’s glory; brethren
“ shall be brought as an offering unto the
“ Lord, to his holy mountain, as the chil-
“ dren of Israel bring an offering in a clean
“ vessel into the house of the Lord. And
“ of them will the Lord take for priests and
“ for Levites. All flesh shall worship be-
“ fore the Lord.”

As the hand of man is the chief instrument of his power and operations, so the hand of the Lord denotes his almighty power. The exercise of this power, saith the prophet, shall be *known*.

The glory of the Lord is his righteousness and grace combined, as manifested in the wonderful work of redemption through our Lord Jesus Christ; a work which illustrates the perfections of Jehovah more than his works of creation and providence. This glory shall be *seen by the nations*.

The brethren brought to the Lord as an offering from all nations, are converts. "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God^k." These in their moral and spiritual state, when presented in the holy mountain, will be *acceptable* as the oblations under the Mosaic economy, which were offered according to God's direction.

Of them God will take for teachers, as the priests and Levites were of old, to *instruct the people*.

The worship which will be offered up to the Lord, will be such as *he has commanded and approves*.

The different parts of this prediction, show that in the Millennial Church there will be among her members,

1. An universal light in the understanding. The knowledge which will then be

^k 1 Thess. i. 9.

enjoyed, will not be confined to a few, but extended to all. “The earth,” saith the prophet, “shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea;” nay, “the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days’.” The Church will then be blessed with teachers abundantly qualified to instruct in all those matters which pertain to God’s glory and human happiness. Men will then be well and thoroughly acquainted with the principles of human conduct. That miserable class, who now are “ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth;” will then be extinct. The truth will be known, for “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased;” even knowledge of every thing which pertains to God’s glory and the benefit of sinners. The Spirit of God will, to an extraordinary degree, enlighten the minds of the members of the Millennial Church; so that they will understand their duty and privilege, in all the relations of life, social as well as religious, and civil

or political as well as social. In a word, “they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.”

2. Light in the understanding, according to the correct philosophy of the human mind, produces excitement in the affections. The intellectual powers of the soul being called into exercise and directed in a proper channel, the active powers obey. As the sun by his light imparts heat, so the saving knowledge of the truth, is connected with the influence of that truth over the heart. The will following the conclusions of the understanding, that which is spiritually discerned to be right and good, is chosen.

In the Millennial period, this will be especially the case. Then the members of the Church will be universally holy in their desires and in the objects of their love. The power of the Gospel will be felt more generally than at any preceding period. Sin, even all sin will be hated, avoided, and resisted, and its opposite will be loved.

m Jer. xxxi. 34.

The affections of those who have named the name of Christ, will be placed on things above. Their hearts will peculiarly be kept with all diligence. They will constantly be stirring up their graces, cherishing the warmest and liveliest emotions of love to him who loved them and gave himself for them.

3. The holiness of life will be more general and striking, than at any former period. Luxury and excess will then be corrected. Persons of rank and affluence will not abuse their blessings to gratify pride and vanity; nor the abundance of their tables, to promote gluttony, drunkenness, and lust^m. For we are told by the prophet Zechariah, that “in that day shall there be upon the
“bells of the horses, Holiness unto the
“Lord: and the pots in the Lord’s house
“shall be like the bowls before the altar.
“Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah
“shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts:
“and all they that sacrifice shall come and
“take of them, and seethe therein: and in
“that day there shall be no more the Ca-
“naanite in the house of the Lord of hostsⁿ.”
The members of the Church will then be

^m Fraser’s Key.

ⁿ xiv. 20, 21.

emphatically “shining lights.” Their walk and conversation will display the power of religion over their hearts. They will “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;” “be steadfast, unmoveable, all ways abounding in the work of the Lord.” Those fearful falls, those sad failures in duty, which now so often occur, to the reproach of the gospel, will then be, if not unknown, at least scarcely known. Believers then will visibly walk with God, displaying the fruits of the Spirit in public and private, in all the relations of life.

Thirdly, The spiritual enjoyments of the members of the Church, will then be overflowing; for they will “suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; they will milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory; they shall be borne upon her sides, and dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so the Lord will comfort them. And their hearts shall rejoice, and their bones shall flourish like an herb.”

This language of the prophet, which needs no explanation, directs our view to the pri-

privileges of the Church, and the effects which those privileges will have upon her members. These privileges are her glory, and may be summed up in a sense of pardoning mercy, the enjoyment of covenant mercy, the aid of the Holy Spirit, and the hope of eternal happiness. These impart to the members of the Church solid and permanent pleasure.

In the Millennial period, as spiritual knowledge will be universally diffused, so the privileges of believers will be universally understood; and as the knowledge thus diffused will be thorough and intimate, so the consolations arising from this knowledge will be abundant, overflowing; yea, more than abundant and overflowing. All that is delightful, tender, joyful, sweet, encouraging, exhilarating, transporting, will then be experienced; not in a small measure, or only now and then, but in full measure, from day to day. Their very bodies will feel the influence of these consolations to an astonishing degree. No wasting sicknesses, nor corroding cares, such as are now experienced, will then harass and diminish the human family. “No more shall there be there an infant
“short-lived: nor an old man who hath not

“ fulfilled his days ; for he that dieth at an
“ hundred years, shall die a boy’.” “ The
“ voice of weeping shall no more be heard
“ in Jerusalem, nor the voice of crying :”
for “ the days of her mourning shall be
“ ended’.”

Fourthly, There will be in this period
universal peace. The Lord “ will extend
“ peace to the Church like a river, and the
“ members thereof will go forth and look
“ upon the carcasses of the men that have
“ transgressed against the Lord. Their
“ worm shall not die, neither shall their fire
“ be quenched ; and they shall be an ab-
“ horring to all flesh’.”

We have already said, that there will be
no parties in the Millennial Church ; men
then will not say, “ one, I am of Paul, another,
“ I of Apollos, and another, I of Cephas.”
There will, therefore, be peace among her
members ; for altar will not be erected
against altar, throughout her borders. And
as her borders shall extend from sea to
sea, and from the river to the ends of the
earth, so the peace she shall enjoy will be
universal.

r Isaiah lxx. 20. Lowth's translation.

s Isaiah lxx. 19. and lx. 20.

t v. 12. 24.

In fact, the nations and kingdoms of this world, will then be the nations and kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. A complete and thorough change will then take place in the governments of nations. The magistrate will then be, what he ought ever to be, according to the design of his office, a minister of God for good. The kings and judges of the earth will then do, what they now ought to do, "kiss the Son," that is, acknowledge the mediatorial authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. The State will then be the handmaid of the Church. The officers of the one will co-operate with those of the other, for the promotion of God's glory, and the happiness of men. Hence, there will be no wars during this period, nor rumours of wars. The nations, with their rulers, being obedient to the faith once delivered to the saints, the influence of that faith will preserve them from variance, jealousies, or wars. The confused noise of the battle will no more be heard, and the garments rolled in blood will not be seen. All the enemies of the Church will be slain, and their memory be an abhorrence to all flesh.

Thus delivered from the hands of those who are her enemies; protected and nursed by the magistracy; united in her members, peace will indeed be extended to her as a river. There will be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain. The very beasts of the field will be at peace with men, as well as with each other. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, " and the leopard shall lie down with the " kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and " the fatling together; and a little child shall " lead them. And the cow and the bear " shall feed; their young ones shall lie down " together; and the lion shall eat straw like " the ox. And the sucking child shall play " on the hole of the asp, and the weaned " child shall put his hand on the cockatrice- " den?" Such is the glowing language in which the peace of the Millennial period is predicted by the prophet.

Fifthly and lastly, This state of the Church will be permanent, not transient; " for as the new heavens and the new earth " which I will make, shall remain before " me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and " your name remain?"

q Is. xi. 6—8.

r v. 22, 23.

The duration of this period, we are informed, is one thousand years'. As in a few instances, attempts have been made to explain these years as prophetic, making 360.000 civil years, it may be proper to mention, that those writers who have paid most attention to the symbolical language of prophecy, and are best acquainted with it, do with one voice reject this construction. It does not come within the scope of my design to detail their reasons. For the space then of 1000 years the Church shall enjoy all that happiness, peace, holiness, knowledge, prosperity, and blessedness, which have merely been sketched in a few prominent particulars.

“ Let it be observed, however,” I use the words of another, “ that the Church of Christ
“ shall not be oppressed nor overcome by her
“ enemies, when those thousand years shall
“ expire. She shall continue triumphant to
“ the end of the world, and for ever in a
“ future state. By the Millennium is meant,
“ that for these 1000 years, no attempt
“ whatever shall be made to disturb the
“ peace and interrupt the prosperity of the

“ Church of Christ, and of the world ; that
 “ there shall be no persecutions nor wars
 “ on the whole earth : but at the end of
 “ these 1000 years, certain persons, styled
 “ Gog and Magog, instigated by the Devil,
 “ shall attack the Church of Christ, and by
 “ bloody wars shall disturb the peace of the
 “ whole world for a time : but that they
 “ shall be disappointed in their wicked at-
 “ tempts, and totally destroyed : and that
 “ by their destruction, the Church of Christ,
 “ and the world, shall be left in a state of
 “ complete and final triumph and peace.”
 So permanently, then, will the new heavens
 and new earth remain ; so long will be
 the continuance of the Church, both of her
 seed, and of her name.

Let us now pass on,

II. To the means by which this great
 event will be produced. This is exhibited
 to us in these words, “ I will set a sign
 “ among them, and I will send those that
 “ escape out of them unto the nations ; and
 “ they shall declare my glory among the
 “ Gentiles. And they shall bring all your
 “ brethren for an offering.” We have

r Johnston on the Revelation.

s v. 19, 20.

here the instrument used, and the agents by whom it is employed. Let us briefly attend to each in order.

1. The instrument, is “the declaration of God’s glory.”

We have already explained the meaning of God’s glory, under the first head, as referring to the display of God’s perfections in the plan of redemption through Christ. In this view, the gospel is God’s glory, and to declare this glory, is to preach the gospel. By this gospel, and in no other way, are sinners converted. The law is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ; but the law alone does not convert. The Spirit of God uses the gospel to create sinners anew, and not the law. Does the preaching of the gospel, then, make void the law? God forbid! It establishes the law; for it exhibits “Christ as the end of the law for righteousness’.” He magnified the law by his obedience; he satisfied it by his death. In him is life, and in him alone. He is “the image of the invisible God^u,” and in him God is reconciling the

s Gal. iii. 24.

t Rom. x. 4.

u Col. i. 15.

world unto himself. In this character, He constitutes the sum and substance of the gospel. To him the eye of faith must be directed; and from his grace sinful men must obtain ability to glorify God. To exhibit these truths, is to preach the gospel; for preaching the gospel is not preaching morals, or the law, but Christ. In him, and in him only, there is “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace^y.” He came “to save that which was lost^z”: his blood cleanses from all sin^a: he saves his people from their sins^b.

These truths, which are gospel truths, make the gospel the instrument in the hand of the Spirit to awaken dead sinners, and give them life. Though under the condemnation of the law, yet pardon is freely offered through Christ. God, though he is righteous and holy, manifests himself as gracious and merciful. In this view, as able to forgive without violating his justice, he has made himself known to us. The gospel knows of no God but God in Christ,

^x 1 Cor. v. 19.

^y Ephes. i. 7.

^z Matt. xvii. 11.

^a 1 John i. 7.

^b Matt. i. 21.

As such, we are commanded to fear, love, obey, and trust him. The glory of God consists pre-eminently in his being just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly who believe in Christ. And this exhibition of God as a God in Christ, was that, which the Apostles and primitive Christian teachers gave. This same exhibition you find in the writings of the first Reformers, as also of the most eminent ministers of the gospel in Europe, who succeeded them. This is the exhibition which breaks the hard heart, and captivates the wandering affections. What wonderful success crowned the labours of the Apostles, and in later days, the labours of the Reformers; and in still later days, the labours of Whitfield, Tennant, and a host of worthies. They preached the Lord, the Lord God gracious and merciful, through Christ. They preached Christ crucified, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. They exhorted sinners to flee to the city of refuge; to accept of salvation as a gift. Thus is Christ now preached by Vanderkemp, Carey, and others, whom God hath blessed. Thus is the glory of the Lord declared with success among the Hottentots and Hindoos,

and other Pagans; and thus will it be declared to all the nations before their conversion. The gospel, the glad tidings of a Redeemer, a Surety, through whom sinners can be restored to the favour of God, and enjoyment of heaven; this is the instrument by which the world will be converted to the faith.

2. The agents who will use this instrument, are described as "those that escape," viz. from the corruptions of their brethren. These God will "set as a sign" among the nations. They will be Gentiles and Jews.

The Church at present, as you know, is composed of Gentiles. Very few of the descendants of faithful Abraham have, since the apostolic period, united themselves to her. She is divided into parties, between whom there is much disagreement, to say the least, and but little friendship or harmony. The different denominations who belong to her, are all more or less corrupted. It is from those who escape these corruptions, that God will raise up Missionaries to declare his glory to the nations. Missionaries must be men such as the apostles and martyrs were. Those whose labours

God will own, must be pre-eminently holy men, men who like Caleb follow the Lord fully^c. Until such men appear to undertake the work, success need not to be expected. Such men God will raise up when he is about making the new heavens and the new earth.

Previous to that period, the Gentile Churches will fall far short of their primitive glory. They will become more and more worldly and corrupt, so as to draw down upon them the displeasure of God. From those who then shall escape the corruption, God will send forth his messengers. But more particularly are the Jews meant. They will be converted before the Heathen shall be universally subdued to Christ. Though we have reason to expect that the whole nation will return to the promised land, yet previous to such restoration, God will snatch many of them from the midst of their countrymen, and make them monuments of his grace. As the casting of them off was the reconciling of the world, so the receiving of them shall be life from the dead^d. From a variety of

^c Num. xiv. 24.

^d Rom. xi. 15.

considerations which the prophecies have originated, I have little doubt but the converted Jews will be the chief agents in carrying the gospel to the nations, and in subduing them to the faith. Let one passage suffice: “In those days, it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you^e.”

Until, therefore, the Jews be converted, we need not look for the Millennium; for, from among them chiefly, messengers will be sent to declare the glory of the Lord. Their character as Jews, the mercy they have experienced, the recollection of God's dealings with their fathers, his care of their nation, and a thousand similar circumstances, will all conspire to make them pre-eminently qualified to act as agents to make known the graciousness of the Lord to the remotest ends of the earth.

III. Let us, lastly, attend to the circumstances which shall precede and usher in the Millennial period. These are unfolded

^e Zech. viii. 23.

to us as follows: “ For behold, the Lord
“ will come with fire, and with his cha-
“ riots like a whirlwind, to render his
“ anger with fury, and his rebuke with
“ flames of fire. For by fire and by his
“ sword will the Lord plead with all flesh :
“ and the slain of the Lord shall be many.
“ They that sanctify themselves, and purify
“ themselves in the gardens, behind one
“ tree in the midst, eating swine’s flesh, and
“ the abomination, and the mouse, shall be
“ consumed together, saith the Lord^d.”

The subjects of the Lord’s indignation are open, or concealed enemies. Open enemies are Pagans and Mahometans; concealed enemies are the adherents of the man of sin, and false Christians among the different protestant denominations. By some, it is supposed that the prophet here refers to the battle of Armageddon, of which mention is made in the book of Revelation^e. He does not, however, according to the most correct opinion I have been able to form on this subject, refer to this one event; but rather, to a series of awful judgments, including this event, and ter-

^d v. 15, 16, 17.

^e xvi. 16.

minated by it, which will precede the latter-day glory. By such judgments God established his Church in Canaan, driving out the Heathen before her. By such judgments he established his Church in the Roman empire, after Christ's incarnation. And by such judgments he will establish his Church in the world.

These judgments in the establishment of his Church in Canaan, were not confined to the Heathen. Before the Church entered the promised land, she herself was purged of her rebellious members by fire and sword. Before she made her footing sure in the Roman empire, she was purified by fire and sword. Thus also before the Millennial day, the Church must be tried, and pass through the waters of affliction.

The Lord will previously plead with flesh, even all flesh, by his fire and sword. The particular judgments he will inflict, can not all be designated. But, among them are bloody and long continued wars, earthquakes, the eruptions of volcanoes, thunder and lightning, hail, tornadoes, and that long, fearful catalogue of diseases, which waste the spirits and terminate the lives of men.

In these different ways, the Lord will plead with all flesh, before he brings in his ancient people together with the fulness of the Gentiles. Having done so in time past, when he was about appearing in behalf of Zion, we must expect that he will do so before the latter-day glory. Many passages from the prophets might be adduced, to establish this truth, but time forbids. Let one or two suffice. "Proclaim ye this," saith Joel, "among the Gentiles. Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plow-shares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, get ye down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the val-

“ day of decision : for the day of the Lord
“ is near in the valley of decision. The
“ sun and the moon shall be darkened, and
“ the stars shall withdraw their shining.
“ The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and
“ utter his voice from Jerusalem ; and the
“ heavens and the earth shall shake^d.” “ I
“ will turn my hand,” saith God by Isaiah,
to the Church, “ upon thee, and purely
“ purge away thy dross, and take away all
“ thy tin : And I will restore thy judges as
“ at the first, and thy counsellors as at the
“ beginning : afterward thou shalt be called,
“ The city of righteousness, The faithful
“ city. Zion shall be redeemed with judg-
“ ment, and her converts with righteousness.
“ And the destruction of the transgressors
“ and of the sinners shall be together, and
“ they that forsake the Lord shall be con-
“ sumed^e.”

In this way, by pouring out his indignation upon his enemies, will he usher in the Millennium. In these judgments, though his people will share, yet they will be supported by his grace. They will be enabled to enter into their chambers, to shut their

^d Joel iii. 9—16.

^e Isaiah i. 25—28.

doors about them, and to hide themselves as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast^f. “The Lord will
“ be the hope of his people, and the strength
“ of the children of Israel^g.”

Is this, then, you may ask, the prospect before us?

Such is the conclusion I am compelled to draw from the prophecies of Scripture. Would that I could believe with those who think that the Church has seen her worst days. Certainly it would gladden my heart, and remove present anxiety. For in a day like this, who that loves the Lord Jesus, does not feel anxiety for the ark of God? It is the sheet-anchor of the world. He that forsakes this ark, or is ignorant of it, must be overwhelmed in that flood of calamity which is let loose upon the nations of the earth. The Lord indeed has come with fire and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. The Lord indeed is pleading with all flesh by his fire and his sword. I need not advert to facts, they are well known. And he who cannot in them

^f Is. xxvi. 20.

^g Joel iii. 16.

see the judgments of God, is blind indeed. Every where, here and abroad, we see these judgments, written in letters of blood. In terrible indignation, with marks of desolation, the Lord is purging his Church, and punishing the world.

Before the Millennial period, there will be a general and thorough destruction of civil and ecclesiastical establishments throughout the earth. The former things must be done away before the new heavens and the new earth will be created. Not to warn of the approaching storm, therefore, would be cruelty to the generation now starting up around us. Men are dreaming that the evil days are past, and thus neglecting preparation for meeting them in time to come. A day of darkness and calamity is unquestionably coming upon the Church and the world, before the latter-day glory.

What then is the use of missionary exertions? you may ask. In reply, I ask you, when you expect a storm, or any severe attack, why do you strive to secure that which you consider most valuable? It is our duty, the duty of the Gentile Church, to deposit

the seed of the gospel in commanding stations, that during the approaching storm, it may silently and secretly vegetate, and presently spring up and bear fruits. Duty is ours, and consequences are the Lord's. We therefore are bound to go forward in this work, as the Israelites were commanded to go forward when they had reached the Red Sea^f; but in the discharge of this duty, we are bound to exercise discretion. One class of men have been too long neglected, that is, the Jews. You have already heard what agency they will have in introducing the new heavens and the new earth. Our chief efforts ought to be directed to them.

Next to them, the Heathen in our own land claim our immediate attention^g. They are dependant upon us, and we are responsible for them. For their benefit this Society was formed, and to them, so far as opportunity permits, we have sent the messengers of peace. Our success has not indeed equalled our wishes, but we will not despair.

f Exodus xiv. 15.

g To neglect these Heathen, whilst we are spending money and exerting talent for the Hindoos, &c. discovers but little of Christian discretion, in the use which we make of our money and our talent.

With other societies of the same nature, we wish to be found doing. We wish to deposit the treasure of the gospel in the earth, that at the appointed time it may bring forth fruit to God's glory. We want means and we want labourers.

We stand before you this night, as Moses stood in the camp of Israel, and inquire, Who is on the Lord's side^h? Ye who desire the glory of Zion; who pray for it, and look for it; we solicit your aid. Ye who wish to be workers with God in the promotion of his cause, turn us not away from your presence. On all who call themselves Christians, we have a strong, a powerful claim. Reject us not; for you then, so far as we have an opportunity of advancing the interests of Christ's kingdom, by rejecting us, oppose our Master. In aiding Missionary exertions upon proper principles, you are promoting your own benefit. They who are on the Lord's side, when he shall plead with all flesh, shall experience his gracious support; but they who are on the side of his enemies, will be slain.

The day is hastening which will terminate

^h Exodus xxxii. 26.

all doubt. The clouds have been gathering, and are still thickening. The thunder has been rolling, and grows deeper, and more awful. The tempest has from afar been approaching, and is drawing nigher. Presently the Lord shall “ come with fire, and with his
“ chariots like a whirlwind, to render his
“ anger with fury, and his rebuke with
“ flames of fire. For by fire and sword will
“ the Lord plead with all flesh: and the
“ slain of the Lord shall be many.” AMEN.



NOTE.

As in the preceding Sermon, together with the first in this volume, the author has expressed his belief, that the Church in the Roman Empire, the Latin earth, has not seen her darkest days; he takes the liberty of introducing in this place, the grounds of his belief, in an extract from two Sermons, preached September 8, 1808, a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, appointed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. This subject is the more important, because, if the belief prove to be cor-

rect in the issue, the Church out of the Latin earth, on account of the commercial and political connexions subsisting between different parts of the civilized world, will necessarily be greatly affected.

“By the witnesses are meant, faithful christians in general; all the true followers of Jesus Christ, as distinct from apostates and false professors. This is evident, from the name given them of “the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks. standing before the God of the earth^a” in which allusion is made to a prophetic vision of Zechariah. He saw a candlestick of gold, with two olive trees by it; one on each side: which the angel explained to be the “two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth^b.” These were Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high-priest; so called because they were set apart to their respective offices by the anointing of oil^c. They had the superintendence and management of re-building the temple, and restoring the city of Jerusalem; both which had been trodden under foot of the Gentiles. As such they are symbols of all true believers, who are kings and priests unto God and his Christ, by the anointing of the Holy Ghost. In this character they are represented to us, as witnesses for the truth, who, by their exertions, seek to preserve the church of God, the spiritual temple, from utter destruction by her enemies. These are described as a new race of Gentiles, who had succeeded in gaining possession of the outer court, which they had trodden under foot. The

^a Rev. xi. 4.

^b Zechar. iv. throughout.

^c Johnston on the Rev. vol. i. p. 373.

witnesses are retired to the inner court in the temple, or “holy place,” as it was called; which, under the Jewish economy, was typical of the true church on earth, under the new testament. Here they prophesy in sackcloth; not literally predict; but full of the Spirit of God, they preach God’s word, and bear witness to the truth, against prevailing apostacy, under the greatest discouragements, and the heaviest persecutions of their enemies. They are said to be two in number, because that is the number required in the law, and approved by the gospel. Upon former occasions, two were joined together in commission; as Moses and Aaron, in Egypt; Elijah and Elisha, in the apostacy of the ten tribes; Zerubbabel and Joshua, after the Babylonish captivity. “As the testimony of the witnesses is to be of equal duration with the apostacy itself, it cannot well be meant of any two particular persons: nor is there any reason to understand it of any two particular churches, or bodies of men in perpetual succession^d.” “The spirit of prophecy,” in the words of bishop Newton, “teaches us, that certain persons should appear in every age, during the reign of Antichrist (the grand apostacy,) few indeed in number, but sufficient to establish the truth, and clearly attest the corruptions of the Church of Rome, and the anti-christian supremacy of her head^e.”—This appears to be the general opinion of the best writers upon the subject.

“Neither my plan, nor my time, will permit me to enter into further particulars concerning their character and work, as exhibited in prophecy. Their death and resurrection, by many worthy persons of former as well as pre-

^d Lowman, p. 103. Note.

^e Vol. 3. p. 134. 3d ed. Lon. The bishop gives a very particular account of these witnesses in different periods; so also does Lowman

sent times, are supposed to be past. Some refer these events to the murder of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, by order of the council of Constance, and the subsequent triumph of their followers in Bohemia, over the imperial forces. Others, to the poor protestants in the valleys of Piedmont, who were expelled in 1686, at the instigation of the French, by the duke of Savoy; but who afterwards regained possession of the same, sword in hand. Others to the destruction of the league of Smalcald, by Charles V. and the restoration of their cause afterwards, by Maurice, elector of Saxony. Others again to the revocation of the edict of Nantz, by Louis XIV. and the French revolution, which introduced religious liberty into that country. *f* An attentive examination of the subject, however, has led me to conclude the event is still to come. For,

“ 1. No calamity has yet befallen the true Church by the hands of THE MAN OF SIN, THE SON OF PERDITION, which answers, in a satisfactory manner, to the symbolical representation of slaying the two witnesses. The faithful followers of Jesus, who are meant by them, have never yet generally, throughout the western empire, at any one period, ceased from their testimony against the grand apostacy. They have visibly existed, as witnesses for the truth, in one part, if they have been destroyed in another; as the history of their persecutions fully proves. And yet, an universal destruction of them seems to be meant. This cannot be a destruction of their civil privileges, nor a deprivation of the existence which they formerly had, as members of society: for their character of witnesses, and their work of prophesying relates, not to political, but spiritual mat-

f This latter is the opinion of Mr. Bicheno in his Signs of the Times,

ters. When they were butchered in scores before the Reformation, in many parts of Europe, and treated like beasts of prey, they still prophesied—prophesied in spite of danger and death. As civil privileges, therefore, and the protection of the magistracy, were not necessary for them to fulfil their work, the termination of that work by external violence, cannot be the destruction of these privileges. It must rather refer to some awful persecution of them—some universal slaughter, far exceeding any of former times; by which, within the bounds of the western empire, the church, to all human appearance, will be exterminated. Not that all true believers will be slain; many will yet remain; but they will be silent—they will not be known. They will sigh for abounding iniquity, but will not dare to appear as witnesses, and prophesy, even in sackcloth. In this character, they will cease to exist; and from this work they will completely withdraw themselves. Thus, in the days of Ahab, Jezebel thought she had cut off all the true prophets of the Lord but Elijah. No more were publicly known, as witnesses for the truth; and yet there were seven thousand hidden ones, who had never bowed the knee to Baal^g.

“ 2. The witnesses still prophesy in sackcloth: that is, the true church is still in a suffering, depressed state. Even where protestant principles are professed, the ways of Zion mourn, through the universal prevalence of essential errors, of studied indifference to the truth as it is in Jesus, and of gross immorality. The very spirit of the man of sin too much pervades and animates the communities, which have visibly separated from him. Many of his superstitious rites are retained with pertinacity by some of them, and he himself is no longer viewed as the

^g 1 Kings, xviii. and xix. chapters.

“SON OF PERDITION, even that WICKED ONE, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” He still reigns dominant over a great part of Europe, as the Vicar of God, and, until very recently, his followers oppressed and persecuted the protestants in Austria, Hungary, Poland, and Germany. In Spain, Portugal, and Naples, heresy, by which is meant protestant principles, is, by the laws, still punishable with death. The true church is evidently, therefore, still held in bondage; the witnesses still, therefore, prophesy in sackcloth. If they have been slain, they have not yet been raised; for their death will be, not only the last persecution of protestants, but the last stage of their depression, which will be followed by a glorious day for the true church. The spirit of life from God will enter into the witnesses, and they will stand upon their feet. They will be miraculously raised, in their character of witnesses, to the terror and confusion of their enemies. They will testify anew to the truth, but not in sackcloth: for they will ascend up to heaven in a cloud. The faithful followers of Christ—the true church, will become dominant over her adversaries throughout their own territories. The tenth part of the Roman city will fall by an earthquake, which will destroy seven thousand men: and the remnant, being affrighted, will give glory to the God of heaven. Then will follow the proclamation of the angel, that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ.

“3. The witnesses, it is expressly said, will be slain, not when they shall have finished their testimony, as we read, but when they shall draw near the close of it^h. As

they commenced their testimony with the grand apostacy, so they run parallel to it, in time, and will be brought to a violent end, three prophetic days and a half before its termination. As many years, in all probability, will elapse before this—half a century at least—with moral certainty we may conclude, that the witnesses are still prophesying in sackcloth. But as these years constitute a very small proportion of the whole number 1260, the witnesses are, strictly, drawing near the close of their testimony.

“ 4. I add the opinion of the great archbishop Usher, and other eminent and godly men of an early day, who, on many occasions, displayed a spirit not unlike that of prophecy. These characters, from the predictions of scripture, especially that of the death of the witnesses, looked with certainty for the revival of popery at some future day. Usher, in particular, was deeply affected with the prospect before the church, and repeatedly made known his impressions. Other names might be mentioned, were it necessary, but time forbids.

“ Such are the chief grounds on which the opinion rests, that the prophetic period of which we have been speaking is yet to come. It will be a period of calamity, distress, impiety, ferocity, tyranny, superstition, and gross ignorance: a period darker than the middle ages, for even then, the witnesses prophesied, though in sackcloth: but now they will be dead, and their dead bodies will lie unburied, to feast the malice of their foes: a period in which the principles of civilization will be destroyed by those of barbarian rudeness. The state of society will be deplorable, both as it respects intercourse between man and man, and nation with nation. The bonds of union

will be dissevered; the foundations of order torn up; and a lawless, unprincipled, and superstitious tyranny, in church and state, will prevail; not in one nation, but throughout the spiritual Sodom and Egypt—the mystical Babylon, among all the ten kingdoms, which have given their power to the beast.”

S E R M O N V.



GOD'S MERCY TO THE FATHERLESS.



HOSEA XIV. 3.

For in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

“THIS chapter,” says the eminently pious Mr. Hervey, “is one of those which, for their peculiar importance and excellency, deserve not only to have a turn in our reading, but a place in our memory^a.” Though it literally refers to the ultimate restoration of Israel to the favour of God; yet as that restoration will be effected through the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the power of his Spirit, it unfolds to us, in a most affecting and lively manner, the genuine expression of evangelical penitence, and the motives for its exercise.

Having exhibited in detail, in the previous chapters, an account of the Jewish nation,

^a Hervey's Dialogues, Dialog. 2.

which is sad and disgusting to an extreme, the prophet, here, after reminding them of their miserable and degraded state, as fallen by their iniquity, exhorts them to return unto God. The way of return he teaches them, is not that of self-righteousness, but of grace, even the free grace of God through a Saviour. "Take with you words," says he, and not works. Being bankrupts, destitute of all good in yourselves, go to God as such, confessing your wants, and supplicating his mercy. Say, "Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously," or as we read in the margin, "give us good: so will we render the calves of our lips." Plead for a free and full pardon, such an acquittal from the demands of justice, as will utterly cancel your guilt; and seek that good which, consequent upon the taking away of all iniquity, will qualify you for the enjoyment of God's favour. Thus you can without fear engage to offer unto God, for calves or bullocks as a sacrifice, your praise and thanksgivings. With this application for mercy, and this promise of honouring God, the prophet directs them to connect a re-

nunciation of every refuge of lies and all confidence in gods of human creation. Confess, "Ashur," i. e. the Assyrian, "shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods." Then follow the words of the text, which exhibit the ground on which the whole exhortation rests, "for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

Had not God revealed himself to our fallen race as merciful, we never would have been commanded to repent, or return unto him^b. A real return unto him can only be effected through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Evangelical, that is, gospel repentance, springs from the publication of divine mercy, and is solely matured into a saving grace, by a believing apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ.

Without adverting further to the connexion between the fact of God's exercising mercy towards sinners, and the duty of gospel penitence, I design at this time from the text, to direct your attention,

^b Owen on the 130th Psalm, v. 4. sect. iii. Discovery of Forgiveness.

I. To the characters described, “the fatherless.”

II. To the divine benignity exercised towards these characters, “in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.”

The consideration of these two subjects of discourse, will prepare the way for an application appropriate to the occasion for which we are convened.

I. The characters described, are “the fatherless,” that is, those who are utterly destitute both of counsel and ability to defend and govern themselves and whatever belongs to them; who want the prudence and aid of a father to sustain them. But as such unfortunate persons are exposed to injury from all quarters, without the necessary support of life, either from themselves or their parents, the name by which they are designated, is used as descriptive of men involved in misery, and without help to rescue themselves from this misery^d. Such are all mankind by nature, friendless and forlorn, without a guide to direct them; without a Father to provide for them. Thus the cha-

b For the benefit of the Orphan Asylum.

c יהום. Parkhurst's Lex.

d Riveti Com. in Hoseam.

racters described may be ranged under two great classes, viz. such as are destitute in a spiritual, and in a temporal sense. We shall examine each in detail.

I. The fatherless are such as are destitute in a spiritual sense.

Such is the condition of all mankind by nature, without any exception. Once it was not so with them, for God made man upright, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Then he wanted no good thing, for all his desires were gratified. The garden of the Lord was his abode, and the favour of God his enjoyment. He had a Father in heaven who smiled on him with complacency; and in that Father's family he was acknowledged and blessed as a member. But soon the scene was changed! "Man being in honour abideth not^d." He disobeyed the divine commands, and became obnoxious to the divine displeasure. In an eventful moment he did eat of the forbidden fruit, and became "fatherless," an alien from the family of God. He lost the favour of his best friend, and conscious of his guilt, fled from the presence of the Lord. He was banished from

^d Ps. xlix. 12.

Eden, and became a wanderer in a wide world cursed for his sake. To him children were born after his image, sinners by nature, and heirs of the curse. Such was the constitution of the covenant of works, of which our common Parent was the head. Had he remained innocent, we would have been born innocent; but as he fell, we fell in him. To deny this doctrine, is to deny facts which occur daily. We are conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity. The word of God declares, that “we are dead in trespasses
“and sins, children of wrath^e,” and heirs of destruction. Our consciences testify that the declaration of God is true. All mankind without exception, “have sinned and come
“short of the glory of God^f.” “They are
“all gone out of the way^g,” whether Jew or Gentile, Christian or Antichristian, “they
“are together become unprofitable: there
“is none that doeth good, no not one^h.” As such we are all “fatherless,” destitute of that instruction, protection, and support which we need for our happiness.

Naturally, we are estranged from our heavenly Father, and with the prodigal

^e Ephes. ii. 1. 3.

^f Rom. iii. 23.

^g Rom. iii. 12.

^h Rom. iii. 12.

son feed on the husks which are given to swineⁱ. We dare not to approach the Majesty of heaven on account of our offences; feeling that our offences have separated between God and us. There is darkness in our understanding, restlessness in our feelings, and misery in our prospects. We ask, "Who will shew us any good^k," so destitute are we, robbed of our happiness, and separated from God. We are enemies of our heavenly Father, and put under the ban of his empire. As such we are emphatically "fatherless." We have forfeited the care and kindness of our Creator; we deserve not the watchfulness of our Preserver; and have no right to look for the mercy of our Redeemer.

We are "fatherless," because we have left the family of God. Our separation from him is our own act. He must necessarily disown us; and whilst we remain sinners, threaten us with his displeasure. If we die in our sins, he will disinherit us for ever for our misconduct and crimes. Our situation by nature, therefore, is deplorable, because he who made us, and who

ⁱ Luke xv. 16.

^k Ps. iv. 6.

alone can bless us, is estranged from us, by reason of our rebellion; so that we cannot receive from him, whilst we remain rebels, the affection or the tender guardianship of a Father, which are indispensably necessary for our welfare.

2. The fatherless are such as are destitute in a temporal sense.

With these, our miserable world is filled. Go where we will, we meet with them; whether in the palaces of the rich, or in the huts of the poor. In the former is found want of health, as also in the latter want of food. Among all classes we hear the complaint of disappointed expectations, of blasted comforts. Men are fatherless in a temporal as well as spiritual sense, because they are destitute of that happiness, for which they look to the things of time and sense. No man can be considered in this respect as full and wanting nothing. There is something deficient in his family, in his friends, in his business, in his enjoyments. He must confess with a sigh, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Could he obtain the whole world, with the Macedonian hero, he would

weep if there were no more worlds to be enjoyed.

Not merely, however, of imaginary good, is man destitute: oft times he is destitute of real good. Thus we find some of our race robbed by disease of their strength; others by misfortune of their property; not a few left literally orphans, without father and without mother. The varieties of human want are numerous indeed; almost as numerous as the varieties of human character. Who is there that does not seek after some good? Who does not hope for better days, or for higher enjoyments?

Some feel more deeply than others that they are "fatherless." To them the heavens are covered with sackcloth; the verdure of the earth scorched, so as to look sickly and disgusting; the scenes of life tasteless and loathsome. The most insensible feel a want of something amidst temporal blessings.

How many are there who meet with nothing but temporal sufferings! In the midst of health they are brought low; in the midst of affluence they are made to eat the bread of indigence; in the midst of tempo-

ral happiness, they suddenly drink the cup of affliction to its dregs. Both young and old are called to meet these reverses of providence. They both, under the government of God, become in a temporal sense “fatherless.”

Especially is this the case with children deprived of one or both of their parents. Though they may not be conscious of their loss, and therefore not feel it, yet they are not the less destitute. Their situation is peculiarly distressing to every humane mind. To be removed from a father’s house, for a short season, is painful to the child. His imagination is continually dwelling on the charms of the paternal abode, and on the delights of paternal smiles.

Never shall I forget the emotions which filled this bosom, when I first left the fire-side where, day by day, the salutations of a father and mother greeted mine ears; and became a sojourner in this place, where my lot now is cast. Never shall I forget the pangs which this bosom felt, when I found myself “fatherless.” With the prophet of Israel, I exclaimed, “My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen

“thereof.” My counsellor, my friend, my guardian, was no more! I felt “fatherless.”

Forgive the introduction of my own feelings to your notice. The tribute of respect which they thus pay to departed worth, is feeble, but abundantly merited! I add no more.

If under circumstances of comparative comfort to be literally fatherless, be thus

m 2 Kings ii. 12.

n The author hopes that he will be forgiven for introducing the following sketch of his father's character as a man, and as a minister of the gospel, extracted from the funeral sermon preached on the occasion of his death, by his colleague and successor, the late Rev. John H. Meier.

“The reverend Dr. Romeyn possessed a mind strong and energetic, and more than ordinarily comprehensive, capable of viewing things in their natures, their connexions, their dependencies, and ends. His apprehension was quick, his understanding clear and informed. His judgment was sound and mature, and his memory remarkably retentive. In the application of these powers of mind he was chiefly bent upon his professional studies. In these he most delighted, and laboured most of all to excel. He was versed in the circles of general science, well read in history, and had made no mean attainments in the philosophy of the human mind.

“In the discharge of his ministerial functions, he proved himself an able minister of the New Testament, a watchman that needed not to be ashamed. As he had loved the doctrines of grace, and had experienced their power and influence on his own heart, so also he insisted upon them in his public ministrations. His theme uniformly was Christ and him crucified. His manner was bold, intrepid, and daring.

painful, how much more so where these circumstances are wanting! Well has the father of epic poetry sung,

The day, that to the shades the father sends,
 Robs the sad orphan of his father's friends ;
 He, wretched outcast of mankind ! appears
 For ever sad, for ever bath'd in tears !
 Amongst the happy, unregarded, he
 Hangs on the robe, or trembles at the knee,
 While those his father's former bounty fed,
 Nor reach the goblet, nor divide the bread ;
 The kindest, but his present wants allay,
 To leave him wretched the succeeding day.

In the execution of his duties he was neither daunted nor moved. He was the Boanerges of the day. When he reproved, the sinner trembled. When he pronounced Ebal's curses against the wicked, it was like the thunders of Sinai. He, however, was not incapable of the pathetic. He could, at times, move the heart and melt the audience into tears. His discourses were solid and interesting, oft-times enlivened by historical anecdotes. In the introduction of these he was peculiarly happy. He always entered deep into his subject. His delivery was animated and unaffected, without ostentation, and becoming his subject. He aimed at nothing but what was perfectly natural.

“ In his intercourse with the world he supported a becoming dignity. Independence of sentiment marked his path through its busy rounds. He knew not how to dissemble. He was polite to all, familiar with few. This rendered the circle of his intimates contracted, and the number of his confidential friends small. In his conversation he was interesting, always instructing. His family in him have lost an affectionate relative, a watchful guardian, and a great example ; the church a pillar, and society an ornament.”

Frugal compassion! Heedless, they who boast
 Both parents still, nor feel what he has lost,
 Shall cry, " Begone! thy father feasts not here:"
 The wretch obeys, retiring with a tear^a.

Few characters are more wretched than orphans, particularly they who are deprived of father and mother. The tender accents of parental affection never greet their ears, nor can they cherish the satisfaction which arises from the contemplation of home. They are cast upon the charity of the world, and find *their home* in a stranger's house! Let us now proceed,

II. To unfold the divine benignity which is exercised towards the fatherless; " in God they find mercy." This mercy is twofold, suited to the two classes of those persons who are designated by the term fatherless.

I. In God they who are spiritually destitute, find mercy.

Of this blessed truth, intimation was given in the first promise. Our parents having become " fatherless," were informed, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head^b. Afterwards, the father of

^a Homer's Iliad, by Pope, book xxii. 628—642.

^b Gen. iii. 15.

the faithful was told, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed". Hence, we find God proclaiming himself "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful, and "gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in "goodness and truth, keeping mercy for "thousands, forgiving iniquity and trans- "gression and sin, and that will by no "means clear the guilty". He thus exhibits himself to our fallen race, in that most wonderful of all combinations of character, "A JUST GOD and A SAVIOUR". Such is his name, or that by which he has made himself known to us in his own word. This is the great and glorious Being, whom we are commanded to adore and love; to adore and love for his mercy as well as for his righteousness. He has laid our help, whilst we were perishing in our blood, upon One who is both able and willing to save us; even upon "the Man that is his fellow^s," his well-beloved Son, "in whom we have "redemption through his blood, the for- "givenness of sins, according to the riches of "his grace^t." In this amazing, stupendous

p Gen. xxii. 18.

q Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. *r* Is. xlv. 21.

s Zech. xiii. 7.

t Ephes. i. 7.

plan, "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Before mercy could be exercised, justice demanded satisfaction. This satisfaction related not to the offence abstractedly, but to the person committing the offence. The law levelled its curse not at the crime, for that is not a substance, but at the criminal, on account of the crime. He is required to make satisfaction to the law that is broken, either in his own person, or in the person of a surety, who must be so united to him as to be one with him in law. Such a Surety is the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the constitution of God, is "head over all things to the Church, which is his body." In the covenant of grace, He represents his spiritual posterity, as in the covenant of works Adam represented his natural posterity. Hence, "as in Adam all" whom he represented "die, even so in Christ shall all" whom he represented, "be made alive." Through Adam we became "fatherless;" through Christ we find mercy in God. He "spared

u Rom. v. 21.

x Ephes. i. 22, 23.

y 1 Cor. xv. 22.

“not his own Son, but delivered him up for
“us all^z,” that we through him might live.

This then is the record of God, “that he
“hath given to us,” guilty and condemned
sinners, “eternal life: and this life is in his
“Son^a.” And he commands all sinners
who hear the record, to believe in this Son
for salvation. If they do not believe, they
will be punished for disobeying a positive
command of God. He exercises mercy
only through Christ; “for there is none
“other name under heaven given among
“men whereby we must be saved^b.” The
Father hath declared him King upon his
holy hill of Zion, and hath proclaimed by his
Spirit, that whoever believeth not in Christ
shall be damned. The faith thus necessary
is the gift of God, and as such, part of the
mercy which the “fatherless” find in God.
He works in them, both to will and do, of
his good pleasure, and is the author of every
good thought, desire, word, and work, on their
part. He thus not only provides for them
a supply of their wants, through the riches
of his grace, but by his Spirit constrains
them to accept of the supply.

^z Rom. viii. 32.

^a 1 John v. 11.

^b Acts iv. 12.

The exhibition of this mercy in his word, first inspires hope in the hearts of the fatherless. The display he has given of his love, in not sparing his Son, excites their love. Their affections are placed upon God as he is revealed in the Scriptures, and therefore upon God who in those Scriptures is declared to be reconciled unto them through the death of his Son. He has given his Son to be a propitiation for the sins of those who believe in his name. Christ is able and willing to save unto the uttermost all that come unto the Father through him. In him, therefore, "the fatherless," poor sinners, "find mercy." He hath never said to "the seed of Jacob," "Seek ye me in vain^b." No sinner, who returned to him through the blood of the covenant, has ever been refused admittance into God's presence.

2. In God, they who are temporally destitute, find mercy.

This world is a region of hope, because a region in which mercy is exercised. No sooner were the effects of the fall experienced, but the first promise assuaged the fears of our parents, and dispelled the darkness of

^b Is. xlv. 19.

despair, which began to envelope them. The heavens above were already clothed in black; the clouds wore a fearfully portentous aspect; the storm was beginning to descend, which would have swept them by its force into utter ruin; when suddenly the voice of mercy cried, Deliver them from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom. The storm passed by, and the heavens once more wore the aspect of peace. Though driven from paradise into the world, our first parents found favour at the hand of God. He began by virtue of the first promise to fulfil his gracious designs towards their posterity. Had it not been for this his mercy, our world would at once have been converted into a region of despair; for the curse would at once have been executed upon our guilty race. But the promise arrested the curse, and by the belief of the promise, the disobedient are saved.

Of this promise, there are traditionary hints among all nations; for among all nations there is an impression that God is placable. Hence have originated the various forms of worship and systems of religion,

which we find in different parts of the earth. Did we not live under a constitution of mercy, and had not some traces of the original revelation of that mercy remained among the nations, there would have been no more appearance of religious worship in our world, than there is in the place of the damned. Nor, I add, would there be any more virtue, or happiness, or order, in our world. Let the hope of mercy be obliterated from the breast of man, and man will become a devil. He will feel the malignity of a devil towards his God, and towards his fellow men.

This hope gilds our world, and like the sun, shines upon some parts dimly, and on others with greater brightness. From this, under God's merciful constitution, emanate parental affection, filial obedience, the feelings and exercises of friendship, the displays of generosity, of magnanimity, of gratitude; in a word, from the influence of this hope of acceptance with God, emanates whatever virtue, or happiness, or order, we have in our world. This constitutes the connecting bond of society, making the re-

lations of life so many sources of enjoyment. This gives rise to the principles which civilize and humanize men.

The rudeness and barbarism of nations, are owing to the little knowledge which they possess of God's mercy as originally revealed, and the consequently feeble restraint which that knowledge has over their passions and appetites. The first societies which existed in the world were civilized, because formed under the immediate influence of the first promise; so widely have those theorists departed from fact, who describe the first society as savage. Savageness in man and in nations is caused either by ignorance, or rejection of the mercy of God as revealed in his word. The direct effects of this mercy, where it is known and acknowledged, are to soften the heart and to control the passions. In proportion to the degree of knowledge of this mercy, and the acknowledgment of it by individuals or nations, will be these effects. The least as well as the greatest display of these effects is owing to the same cause, the mercy of God, which he extends to the fatherless in

a temporal as well as in a spiritual sense. Nay, the former is the consequence of the latter. If God had not revealed himself as ready to forgive, we never would have enjoyed temporal comforts. The very fact of our having these comforts, proves, that we live under a dispensation of mercy, a constitution of grace. Under this constitution, God, by operating in his providence universally, and in his grace particularly, upon the hopes and fears which he by the first promise has originated in the human family, causes the "fatherless" to meet with that mercy from their fellow men which is suited to their case. We find among all classes of men traces of humanity, of pity, of compassion. By means of these principles, he raises up protectors of the defenceless, guardians of the feeble, helpers of the sick, patrons of the destitute. To these principles, we are indebted for every plan to meliorate human misery; for every exercise of tenderness in war; for the display of hospitality; for the very existence of benevolent persons.

As these principles, which produce such

happy consequences, spring from the revelation of mercy; so where that revelation is best known, these principles produce their natural consequences in the greatest number and to the highest degree. This accounts for the fact, why the Jews formerly, and the Christians now, pay more attention to the "fatherless" than the Heathen did, or do. True religion, the religion of the Scriptures, which, in other words, is the belief of "the first promise," and the influence of that belief over the heart and the life, is the sole and the exclusive parent of benevolence. To this also, we are indebted for our superiority over the wandering Indian, or the superstitious Hindoo. It is this, which has made Christendom, eminently, a theatre on which the human mind displays its powers and resources, and the human heart its feelings and sympathies. This has given rise to the numerous institutions, which do honour to our name and profession in various parts of the world. All humane and charitable establishments originate in the mercy of God; for the benevolence which erected them, owes its very existence in the human

heart to the revelation of God's mercy. Had not God first loved us, we never, never would have loved either Him or our fellow men. Many speculations and reasonings on this subject, would suit well with the situation of the prisoners of justice, who are confined in the region of despair; but are not adapted to the case of prisoners of hope, dwelling in the land of hope.

Blessed be God, we who enjoy the gospel, do fully know the mercy of God, because we have his word in our hands. And therefore, amongst us, amongst Christians, "the fatherless" do pre-eminently find mercy in God. He disposes the hearts of men by the power of his word, to aid the destitute in all the varieties of their distresses. Provision is thus made for the poor, the sick, the maimed, the deranged, and orphans.

The houses which have been erected in different places for the latter, strikingly prove and illustrate the truth of the text. God has been pleased on more occasions than one, wonderfully to attest his approbation of them. Especially was this the

case with the celebrated orphan house which professor Franck established at Hall in Germany. He began with a trifling sum the erection of buildings, and was prospered in the undertaking. Oft times, according to his own account, he had nothing at the end of the week, to defray the expenses incurred. But by faith he obtained the assistance he needed. In his necessities he resorted to God, his covenant Father, and found relief, the relief he desired. As the establishment was completed by the interposition of providence in an extraordinary manner, so was it continued. The means of support, like the manna on which Israel fed, was the immediate work of God.

Not unlike the motive which prompted the godly Franck to venture on his good work, was that which produced the establishment of the Orphan Asylum Society of New-York. With its history you cannot but be acquainted, since the Board of Direction have, from time to time, published their proceedings. They now solicit your aid to carry on their purposes of mercy, to the orphans whom God shall cast upon their

care. “ Though no circumstance of special
“ importance,” (such is the language of their
last Report,) “ has marked the last year,
“ they cannot deny themselves the pleasure
“ of declaring, that, during its course, a kind
“ Providence has led them through many
“ difficulties occasioned by the want of
“ funds, and brought assistance to them in
“ ways entirely unlooked for. Often in the
“ past winter, when the Board were uncer-
“ tain where the next dollar was to be found,
“ some generous and unexpected friend has
“ risen to furnish comfort to the little father-
“ less group under their care, who are now
“ clothed in garments thus procured. Their
“ present circumstances,” thus they con-
clude, “ are so embarrassed, that the Trus-
“ tees would sink into despondency, were
“ not their trust firmly fixed in that Almight-
“ ty Friend, who has made it a part of his
“ glory, that ‘ he relieveth the fatherless.’
“ Under the influence of this trust, they cast
“ themselves upon the bounty of the public
“ for the support of their fatherless chil-
“ dren.” That public which has so gene-
rously assisted them in past years, will not
now forsake them.

The aspect of the times, though apparently unfriendly to their petition, is really favourable to it. They ask of your bounty, for helpless children ; for orphans.

Parents, in the course of Providence, *your* children may become orphans, and from the state of the world, orphans dependant upon the mercy of others. You know not the issues of events ; but the Lord makes known to you your duty, whatever these issues may be. He calls himself “ a father of the “ fatherless,” and has left upon record this precious truth, that “ in Him the fatherless “ findeth mercy.” Do you not desire to imitate his example, and by your aid to become, in your sphere, “ fathers of the “ fatherless?”

Stronger claims, Men and Brethren, there cannot be upon your benevolence, than those of children deprived of both parents, and left in a wide world without food to eat, and raiment to wear. They cannot be considered as vagrants or idlers, until the trial to fit them for usefulness has been made. But how shall they be fitted, if such institutions

c Ps. lxxviii. 5.

as the Orphan Asylum do not meet with encouragement? The estimable members of this society, could they dispense with such applications as the present, would cheerfully do it. Their character is the pledge, both for the necessity of the application, and the proper distribution of your alms. Benevolence in any form is delightful; in a female form peculiarly so; but most of all, in a female form soliciting aid for friendless infancy. In that form she appears before you, and asks of you to give something of your worldly substance, to help her in feeding and clothing orphans. Shall she return empty-handed? Shall she say to her orphans, I applied to those who live under a dispensation of mercy, in your behalf, but they would not be merciful to you? I trust in God, who has revealed his grace to you, that you will not suffer her to make such a report.

Have any of you, being fatherless as sinners, felt the influence of divine mercy in your souls? Remember, that you are bound to prove it, by extending your compassion and relief to the fatherless among your fellow men. Have any of you, in temporal

matters, being fatherless yourselves, found mercy in God, by the supply of your wants? Extend your care and compassion to the fatherless around you. Since God has manifested mercy to you in the word of his grace, and through that, in the dealings of his providence, display your gratitude, by relieving the fatherless.

Suffer me to introduce Orphans themselves to your notice, that they may state their own case. They were found, by female benevolence, ragged, and seated on a grave with grass scarce overgrown.

“ A piece of bread between them lay,
Which neither seem'd inclin'd to take;
And yet they looked so much a prey
To want, it made the heart to ache.

“ Before my father went away—

Such is their tale of wo, told by a boy—

“ Before my father went away,
Entic'd by bad men o'er the sea,
Sister and I did nought but play;
We liv'd beside you great ash tree.

“ And then poor mother did so cry,
And look'd so chang'd, I cannot tell;
She told us, that she soon should die,
And bade us love each other well.

“ She said, that when the war is o'er,
Perhaps we might our father see ;
But if we never saw him more,
That God our Father then would be.

“ She kiss'd us both, and then she died :
And we no more a mother have.
Here many a day we sat and cried,
Together on poor mother's grave.

“ But when our father came not here,
I thought if we could find the sea,
We should be sure to meet him there.
And once again should happy be.

“ We hand in hand went many a mile,
And ask'd our way of all we met ;
And some did sigh, and some did smile,
And we of some did victuals get.

“ But when we reach'd the sea, and found
'Twas one great water round us spread,
We thought that father sure was drown'd,
And cried, and wish'd we both were dead.

“ So we return'd to mother's grave,
And only long with her to be ;
For our friend, when this bread she gave,
Said, father died beyond the sea.

“ Then since no parents have we here,
We'll go and seek for God around ;
Lady, pray can you tell us where
That God our Father may be found.”

Yes, interesting orphans ! He is every
where present ; present as the Father of the

fatherless! You will not plead in vain, for here in the sanctuary of mercy, the fatherless assuredly will find mercy. Not a heart but approves of the conduct and responds the language of female benevolence, in relation to such objects.

“ I clasp’d the prattlers to my breast,
And said, Come both and live with me;
I’ll clothe ye, feed ye, give ye rest,
And will a second mother be.

“ And God will be your Father still;
’Twas he in mercy sent me here,
To teach you to obey his will,
Your steps to guide, your hearts to cheer.”

Thus speak and thus act the Orphan Asylum Society, to fatherless and motherless children, whom they meet in our streets. Like an affectionate parent, this Institution receives such within its embrace, to save them from misery, and train them up for God. And they now ask you to aid them in the blessed work. Surely you will not. you cannot refuse! AMEN.

SERMON VI.



THE BENEVOLENT EUNUCH.



JEREMIAH XXXVIII. 7—13. and XXXIX. 16—18.

Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin: Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon: and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city. Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he die. So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts, and old rotten rags, and let them

down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine arm-holes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him out of the dungeon. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Go, and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee. But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord; and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid. For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord.

POLITICAL sovereignty does not spring from the weakness of individuals, nor is it the result of what is called the social compact. They

who embrace the former theory, make muscular strength the source of moral power, which is absurd. The supporters of the latter, claim for man such a power over his own life, as is inconsistent with his dependence upon God, which is impious. “There is no power but of God,” saith the Holy Spirit. Civil government is his ordinance, for we are expressly told, “The magistrate is His minister for good^b.” It is therefore not an evil, as theoretic maniacs wish to make us believe, but a blessing, and a blessing of the highest kind. The forms in which it may be administered, are left to the choice of men, for they are of little consequence. Let the magistrate only act as the minister of God for good, and it is immaterial whether he possesses despotic or limited authority.

They who contend for forms of government, about which God has given no positive directions in his word, whilst they neglect the qualifications of those who administer the government, which God in his infinite wisdom has thought proper to specify again and again, and that in the plainest

^a Rom. xiii. 1.

^b Rom. xiii. 4.

manner, do manifest the extreme of folly. For let it be granted, that they have secured the most perfect form, what benefit will it afford, if the men who rule them fear not God, nor keep his commandment? They will break through every restriction, violate every obligation, whenever an opportunity offers, and make the people over whom they are elevated, to suffer both in their moral and in their temporal welfare. The history of all nations, but especially that of God's ancient people, proves this mournful truth beyond a doubt. He condescended to give them a form of government, which was admirable, because of divine origin; and called for their warmest gratitude, because pre-eminently calculated for their prosperity and happiness. And yet, of what avail was even this form, when the sons of Eli, the sons of Samuel, Ahaz, Manasseh, and Zedekiah were in possession of the sovereign power? Did the form coerce these rulers to discharge their duties faithfully? No. They did evil in the sight of the Lord, in spite of this form. Under the administration of these ungodly rulers the wicked triumphed, and the righteous suffered. Not

even the prophets of the Lord escaped persecution in those times. “They were,” says the apostle to the Hebrews, “stoned, they
 “were sawn asunder, were tempted, were
 “slain with the sword: they wandered
 “about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being
 “desitute, afflicted, tormented: they wan-
 “dered in deserts and in mountains, and in
 “dens and caves of the earth.”

For proof of the correctness of this mournful account, suffice it to direct your attention for a moment to the case of Jeremiah. He lived during the reign of Josiah, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, kings of Judah. From the three last of these kings, he suffered much for his faithfulness, and was more than once in danger of his life, but God was with him. The instance recorded in the text, was one of the many in which he was grievously persecuted. His imprisonment, which was unrighteous, whilst it evinced the wickedness of Zedekiah, afforded a happy opportunity for Ebed-melech, a eunuch of his court, to exhibit an illustrious example of moral worth. Though an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, he dis-

played a noble humanity toward the suffering prisoner, which, while it most severely but justly reprov'd the deprav'd king of Judah, with his deprav'd princes and people, calls for imitation from all who have heard of him or his treatment of the prophet. Were civil governments perfectly administered, such calls would be needless; but since they are not, compliance with such calls is a duty, because calculated to remedy in some measure their defects. We shall,

I. Illustrate its nature, its source, and its reward, as exhibited in the text, all of which are appropriate to the design of our present meeting^d. And

II. Urge on you the duty to go and do likewise, (following the example of this excellent eunuch.)

I. The nature, the source, and the reward of humanity, are to be illustrated from the text.

By humanity, I understand, a fellow-feeling for the distresses of others, display-

^d A Charity Sermon for the benefit of the Humane Society, organised for the relief of prisoners confined in the Debtors' Jail.

+ The nature, source & reward of what?

ing itself in corresponding actions. It thus includes almsgiving to the poor, assistance to the sick, comfort to the afflicted, protection to the oppressed, an asylum to the orphan, hospitality to the stranger, and to add no more, relief to the prisoner. In this last way the humanity of Ebed-melech the Ethiopian eunuch was manifested. By exhibiting in brief detail the particulars of his conduct toward the prophet,

1. The nature of humanity will be sufficiently illustrated for our improvement.

First. His interposition on behalf of the prophet was unsolicited. The moment he heard of his imprisonment, he went, of his own accord, in search of the king.

Thus the humane person will ever act. No sooner does the tale of distress reach his ears, than he flies to assist the sufferers, if higher duties or necessity does not prevent. Nay, he waits not for information on this subject, but as his situation and avocations will permit, he searches for the miserable. He delights in taking them by surprise, and enjoys with peculiar satisfaction their relief. It makes his heart thrill with gladness to perceive the workings of their gratitude, or

to hear the acknowledgments of their obligation.

He who will not bestir himself in behalf of the unfortunate, until he is asked and wooed, discovers a deplorable ignorance of his duty, and an awful want of those benevolent affections which are essential to a man and to a Christian. We read of an unjust judge, who by dint of importunity finally listened to the prayer of a poor widow, and avenged her of her enemy: but he still remained unjust^e. Thus he who, merely to avoid weariness, or from any other motive of the same kind, displays a transient act of humanity, remains in the strictest sense of the term an inhuman person, in spite of this act. Though he is not cruel, by the infliction of pain, yet is he cruel, by withholding that cheerful aid, that prompt relief, which like the messenger of peace soothes the agonized soul of the dis- *tr*
tressed.

This aid, this relief, thus spontaneously afforded, is the result of principle and feeling combined; the latter regulated and excited by the former. Hence it is extended

^e Luke xviii. 1—6.

to the stranger, as well as the acquaintance or the relative; to the profligate as well as the virtuous; for its legitimate objects are the distressed, to whatever that distress is owing. Like Him from whose mercy it springs, and by whose grace it is matured, it regards the unjust as well as the just, the evil as well as the good. Over the crimes of a wretch who is ready to perish, it casts a mantle of sorrow, whilst it bids him live to retrieve his character, and redeem his standing in society. To the innocent and good it administers the balm of honest approbation, the tear of affectionate sympathy, and the delightful salute of "God speed." Its manner may be different to different objects; but to all who suffer, without discrimination, he who possesses this fellow-feeling of which we are speaking, approaches without delay to impart comfort to their souls and relief to their bodies; to meliorate their state, so that their latter day may be blessed as well as the former, and that once more the voice of rejoicing may be heard in their tabernacles.

Secondly. Ebed-melech's interposition in behalf of the prophet, was disinterested.

He had a place in the king's court, which secured him ease and competence. His situation was calculated directly to produce in him a selfishness of disposition, which is utterly hostile to humanity or fellow-feeling for the distresses of others. But he was not corrupted by prosperity, nor degraded by his unhappy condition. He did not shrink from the trouble of attempting to relieve a fellow mortal in distress. He was not so wrapped up in the enjoyments of a palace, as to forget the miseries of those who were in a dungeon.

Thus it is, that the humane person foregoes his convenience, sacrifices his time, and loses sight of himself, that he may assist the unfortunate. When occasion requires, he sits up all night with the dying; wipes off the cold sweat from the forehead; moistens the parched lip; removes the phlegm; turns the pained, restless body; bears with peevishness, and tries numberless expedients to afford comfort. He visits rooms small and close, cellars damp and cold, and huts which scarcely protect their inmates from the pelting storm. He enters into the pri-

son, whose grated windows, whilst they admit light, teach the affecting fact, that it is the house of bondage. He encounters rude speech, squalid looks, nauseous smells, every species of misery, and all the varieties of want, of carelessness, and of profligacy, however offensive to taste, repelling to delicacy, or shocking to moral sensibility. And all this he does, and all this he endures, denying self, that he may administer to the wants of the afflicted. Their claims in his estimation are of more, infinitely more importance, than those of his personal indulgence. His understanding in this respect perceives clearly his duty, and his feelings cannot be silenced until the duty is performed. His food is tasteless so long as he knows there are any within his reach suffering hunger. His raiment gives him no pleasure, if any naked whom he can assist remain unclothed. His hearth blazing with fire affords but little comfort, if there are poor perishing with cold, to whom he can convey fuel.

Thirdly. Ebed-melech displayed a noble courage in applying to the king in behalf of the prophet. This will appear evi-

dent, when for a moment we recollect by what means Jeremiah was cast into prison, and then attend to the manner in which the eunuch applied to the king for his release. The most powerful princes of the court, perhaps all of them, (at least we find no mention made of any one to the contrary,) were the enemies of the prophet. His faithfulness in reproving them, and warning the city and nation of their impending ruin, irritated their pride, and provoked their enmity. They were greatly corrupted; they had grossly perverted their ways, and departed widely from the truth.

One memorable instance is on record. They had violated the law of Moses concerning the servitude of their fellow-citizens. Alarmed by the approach of the Babylonish army, the king proclaimed liberty unto these servants, and the princes obeyed. A covenant was entered into and ratified with the utmost solemnity. The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, passed between the parts of a calf cut in twain; by which rite they imprecated

~~at least we find~~ ^{for} no exception is stated,

the vengeance of God upon them if they did not fulfil the covenant. When the pressure of calamity was removed, they broke the covenant, and forcibly constrained their fellow-citizens, free by the Mosaic law and free by the recent covenant, to become anew their servants^g.

Such were the men who hated Jeremiah, and who sought his life. Their influence was great, and the risk of incurring their displeasure imminent. From such perfidious wretches, from such profane rulers, what could the advocate of suffering innocence expect? He could not look for protection from the throne, for the monarch himself was as perfidious and as profane as his princes. And yet, spite of this combination of power and of wealth, such an advocate appeared, in the person of a foreigner, and that foreigner a eunuch. He was in the king's house, the palace, when he heard of Jeremiah's imprisonment, and the king was in the gate of Benjamin, one of the places where justice was publicly administered. This gate was at the south-east part of the city, and if the king's house was

^g Jer. xxxiv. 8—20.

where David's house was situated, it was in the north-west part of the city. Be this as it may, the manner of expression used, denotes that there was a considerable space between the two. This space the eunuch traversed, impatient to relieve the prophet. Perhaps, as Jerusalem was now besieged, the greater part of this space was occupied by armed men. He passed through their ranks, reached the gate of Benjamin, and with dauntless courage presents himself before the king, seated on the bench of justice, surrounded by his nobles and his guards. Addressing the monarch with respect, he charges the princes with evil; acknowledges Jeremiah to be a prophet, and claims for him as an innocent sufferer, that relief which the throne was bound to afford. In this address are combined simplicity with energy, honesty with courtesy. He renders to Zedekiah his due as a king; but administers, though with respect, reproof to him as a transgressor; for, had he not consented, the princes could never have touched Jeremiah. Had he exerted his power, with the suppleness of courtiers and the meanness of cowards, they would have yielded to his

will. But he himself was ungodly. He hated the truth, and therefore without reluctance consented to the solicitations of his princes. Now, however, he bowed before the majesty of truth, though hating it. Now the humble eunuch has more power over the monarch than the princes, to whom he had just before said, with lying lips, "Behold, he is in your hands; for the king is not he that can do any thing against you^h." A command is given to Ebedmelech to take thirty men, and release Jeremiah from the dungeon before he die.

What a contrast between the king and the eunuch; the descendant of Abraham and the Ethiopian; the circumcised and the uncircumcised! How ignoble as well as wicked, how unstable as well as feeble, the king! How noble as well as good, how persevering in his purpose as well as firm, the eunuch! Considering his condition, the character of the court, the profligacy of the nation, and the state of the city, an instance of more exalted and sublime courage is hardly found in the pages of history.

^h Jer. xxxviii. 5.

A courage of the same kind, though it may not be of the same degree, the humane person will exhibit, as circumstances require. The objects needing his aid may be the objects of public hatred. No matter, if they are in distress; public hatred ought not to chill individual benevolence, or arrest the hand which is spontaneously raised in behalf of the sufferer.

In the exercise of humanity, more firmness and resolution are required, than is generally supposed. Strange to tell, there is not unfrequently a fashion in this matter, as well as in others. Certain objects will meet with general assistance, whilst others are neglected. To speak in behalf of the latter, excites a smile in some, and meets with a cold look in others; causes some to shun you, and others to speak evil of you. All this must be borne by the humane person, and not unfrequently more too, especially in times of general and dreadful corruption. As the misery of individuals is then increased, so greater difficulties exist in the way of those who, like Ebed-melech, exert themselves to remedy the misery.

+ *that he should suffer as little pain as possible. —*

Fourthly. Ebed-melech, in raising Jeremiah from the dungeon, took care that the cords should not hurt him.

Thus the humane person will always be tender in his attentions to the afflicted. He will never upbraid or censure, unless there be a call for it; unless there be a necessity. His wish, his study, and his exertion, are to relieve distress in as pleasant and acceptable a manner as possible. “An action good in itself,” says an elegant preacher, “is greatly recommended by an agreeable manner of doing it; an agreeable manner being to actions what a lively manner of expression is to our sense; it beautifies and adorns it, and gives it all the advantage whereof it is capable. There is the same difference between a beneficial deed when endeared by an easy, affable deportment, and when destitute of that circumstance, as between a beautiful object when enlivened by the cheerful light of the sun, and when exhibited in a dim, sickly light. A gift may be great in itself, but if it is dispensed with several ungracious circumstances, in an overbearing way, or without the appearance of a wil-

“ling mind, it is like an ungainly building,
“admirable only for its magnitude; which
“does not affect or strike us half so much as
“one of smaller dimensions, adjusted with
“symmetry and harmony of parts, and set
“off with the additional beauty of decent
“ornamentsⁱ.”

I make this quotation the more readily and cheerfully, because the sentiment which it so finely illustrates, is directly opposed to certain exhibitions of benevolent characters in fashionable novels^k. The exhibitions are calculated either to mislead or disgust, either to produce an affectation of hardships in the exercise of humanity, or to excite in the youthful, unfledged reader, a dislike to the duty itself. He may be induced to connect in his ideas the uncouthness of a savage, the asperity of a cynic, or the revolting barbarity of a misanthrope, with the exercise of a fellow-feeling for distress.

The characters thus exhibited can only be produced by an unusual series of cutting desertions on the part of friends, and blasting providences on the part of God; or in

ⁱ Seed's Sermons, vol. iv. ser. 1.

^k Such as Albany in Cecilia.

a state of society rendered perplexed and degraded; splendid in the exterior, but feeble and polluted in all its internal departments by the excesses of luxury, and the wasteful contributions which those excesses levy upon the best feelings, the noblest affections of men.

To warn against the influence of such characters, drawn with the magic pencil of genius and of taste, cannot be improper for him who is an ambassador of God. Harshness and tenderness are inconsistent the one with the other. What though the hand gives a pittance to the beggar? the voice reproaches him as if for a crime. What though the man who conceals the kindest emotions under a rough exterior, treads the floors of a prison? the wretches whom he comes to relieve shrink from his frown and flee from his presence; or if encouraged to draw nigh, accept the offered donation without thankfulness, because given with an ill grace.

Lastly. Ebed-melech left Jeremiah in the court of the prison, after he had raised him up from the dungeon. This no doubt was done from motives of prudence, as in

this court the prophet enjoyed some liberty, and was fed with bread out of the bakers' street; but more particularly as here he was under the king's protection (more immediately,) than he would have been had he been at once discharged.

*if he
been*

Thus a humane person exercises a considerate discretion, in relation to those whom duty and feeling prompt him to assist. Relief he does and will afford them; but it is in such a way as is best calculated to answer his ends and their wants. He strives in this respect so to act, as ultimately amidst difficulties and discouragements to promote their real good, their true benefit. His humanity demands from him attention to the distressed as such, who have no other claim upon him, but merely their distress. His judgment, however, is to be exercised, as to the mode in which relief is to be administered, and the degree of assistance necessary. Without this necessary discretion his humanity, though he mean not so, becomes like the tender mercies of the wicked, cruelty.

In the spontaneous, the disinterested, the courageous, the tender, and the prudent interposition of Ebed-melech in behalf of Jere-

miah, we discern some of the principal features of humanity ; features which mark its nature with such a discrimination as must forever prevent mistake. We proceed,

2. To the source of humanity, as illustrated in the case of Ebed-melech. This we find unfolded to us in these words, " Because thou hast put thy trust in me, " saith the Lord¹;" referring to the conduct of this Ethiopian to the prophet, of which we have already spoken.

Though he was excluded by the Mosaic law from civil offices among the Jews, yet it appears, that he was by faith a true son of Abraham. He trusted in God, that he would own him, and stand by him in all his difficulties. This shows that he was a pious man, though not circumcised ; and in the manifestation of grace to him, was clearly pre-signified the extension of such grace in a future period to others beside him, who were not descendants from the father of the faithful. His humanity was without doubt the fruit of God's mercy to him. Much had been forgiven him, and he therefore loved much. The grace of God felt in his

¹ Chap. xxxix. 18.

heart, was the motive which prompted him to this act of kindness. And from the same source, though it is not known universally, and acknowledged but by few who enjoy the blessings of the gospel, every trace of humanity among men proceeds. Did we not live under a dispensation of mercy, we would not witness or experience any acts of benevolence or good-will. The grace of God, as displayed in the Redeemer, separates mankind from the devils and damned spirits in hell^m.

We are indebted to the revelation of a Redeemer for all the civilization, the refined feeling, and the wonderful exertions for human happiness, which men have made. The traces of this revelation, the traditional information which men possess, and the influence which this knowledge has upon the understanding and the heart, are the true sources from whence humanity, or fellow-feeling for the distresses of others, does spring. In proportion to the degree of purity in which this knowledge is possessed, and the power which it exercises over the heart, will be a person's humanity. Hence

m See Sermon v.

real Christians display the fairest and brightest models of benevolence. In Christian lands the tendency of mercy through Christ can be seen in a greater or less degree. This mercy keeps mankind from becoming tormentors of each other, and gives rise to all the comforts and enjoyments of social life.

3. The reward of Ebed-melech's humanity to the prophet, was his life for a prey. The Lord assured him that he should not perish, when the Babylonians conqueredⁿ.

Godliness is thus profitable to the life which now is, as well as that which is to come^o. Jehovah will not leave any unrewarded who have done aught for him. His rewards are temporal and spiritual; those of the body and of the soul; of a day, and of eternity. No man serves God for nought. Those who without meaning it, promote God's purposes, he will reward with temporal benefits. To Jehu, though he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, yet because he fulfilled God's pleasure upon the house of Ahab, he gave the throne of Israel, and to his children of the

ⁿ Chap. xxxix. 17, 18.

^o 1 Tim. iv. 8.

fourth generation^p. To Nebuchadnezzar he gave the land of Egypt, as a reward for his work in doing God's righteous and holy will^q.

More especially does God reward works which, like the humanity of Ebed-melech, spring from trust in him. The Egyptian midwives who saved the men children of the Jews, contrary to the king's commandment, met with his favour. He dealt well with them, and he made them houses^r. He not merely gives to those who perform such works, blessings now, but ensures them blessings hereafter. He not only protects them from those calamities which are transient, but from those which are eternal. By their humanity his people approve themselves to him, and prove to the world the reality of their faith. And He who is faithful, regards them in mercy, and will ultimately give them the heavenly inheritance, if he does not here reward.

With a reward in prospect, thus sure, because promised by God, who cannot lie; thus ample and satisfactory, because extending to the life which now is, and that which

p 2 Kings x. 30. *q* Ez. xxix. 17—20. *r* Ex. i. 17—21.

is to come, how great the encouragement to imitate the good Ethiopian of Zedekiah's court!

II. Need I then, as was proposed in the commencement of this discourse, to urge you, my hearers, to go and do likewise? Do you require a course of reasoning to excite you to perform a duty which God recommends, and which he will accompany with a blessing? It cannot be. Your hearts tell you it is superfluous labour. I will therefore, with full confidence in your humanity, proceed to exhibit to you the objects for whose relief your aid is now solicited. They are prisoners, confined in the common jail of this city and county, for debts. Their case, though pitiable, is not a new one.

We read early in the pages of history of prisons. The book of Genesis informs us of one, in which the patriarch Joseph was cast^s; and from the account, we are taught that the practice of imprisonment among the Egyptians, was not novel. It is the result of human corruption; an evil which sin has introduced in our world. The establishment of prisons appears to have originated in the

^s Gen. xxxix. 20.

necessity of guarding those who were guilty of crimes, and securing them until they could be tried and punished. Thus the children of Israel put the blasphemer, and the man that was found gathering sticks on the sabbath-day, in ward until their punishment should be determined'.

Neither reason nor Scripture warrant the conclusion, that imprisonment simply is a punishment. It may be, and it is a hardship; but a penalty inflicted for guilt, such as the majesty of law may require, and the criminality of the offenders may deserve, it certainly is not.[†] This will appear evident, if we for a moment attend to the threefold design of punishment". As it is the fruit of sin, its first design is to show the holiness of God. He has imparted to the magistrate the power of inflicting punishment, and the magistrate is bound to inflict it upon the same principles on which God inflicts it. God's first object in punishing, is to show his eternal and inflexible hatred to sin. His next is to reform the offender, and the third to warn mankind that they may escape.

[†] Lev. xxiv. 12. Numb. xv. 34.

^u Grotius, de jure belli ac pacis.

+ Is not confinement in the State prison a punishment?

Transgressions, therefore, are punished according to their nature. Some must be punished in the most terrible manner, such as unbelief in spiritual, and murder in temporal, concerns. Thus he who rejects Christ unto the end shall be damned^x, and he who sheds innocent blood, must pay the forfeit of his crime with his life^y. These punishments are the necessary consequences of God's holiness, and contemplate merely the divine abhorrence of all sin as expressed either by his own act, or through the medium of a magistrate and of civil law.

Other transgressions admit of every expedient which can reform the guilty or benefit society. Simple imprisonment cannot be said to produce either of these objects; for it is connected with idleness, the want of employment, and the mischiefs which such a state produces. It moreover gives no warning to the thoughtless, the gay, and the profligate. The example does not excite attention, and therefore produces no effect. It cannot then be considered as a punishment, but is a proper security to ensure the infliction of punishment in due time on the

^x Mark xvi. 16.

^y Gen. ix. 6.

guilty. Let him who is honest be liberated; but he who is criminal be consigned to hard labour, to bodily pains, or to death, as his offence may require.

The history of prisons among those who know not God and his Christ, is a history of human misery. Nor need we exclude from the view the conduct of Jews and Christians, who have abandoned the true faith, and provoked God by their crimes. The case of Jeremiah is a proof of the truth of what is said; and the case of thousands in Christian lands might be added. Especially in the dark ages, the ages of superstition and credulity, did instances abound. The feudal system was calculated not to promote, but to injure human happiness. Under its blighting influence human misery met with little relief. The prisoner, above all other sufferers, in ordinary circumstances, was made to drink to its very dregs the cup of affliction. The tales and poems which we have read in early life describing these times, do not exhibit to us correct views. The writers are not faithful narrators of facts and of manners.

The Castle of the Baron, filled with troops, its hall resounding with the voice of joy, and its battlements bidding defiance to an enemy, pictured by the imagination of a Radcliffe and a Scott, dazzle our view, blind our understanding, and deceive our hearts. The exterior is splendid. We see banners waving in the air, spears gleaming in the sun,

“ Warriors arm’d from head to heel,
In mail and plate of temper’d steel :”

We hear shouts echoing from the hills, and resounding through the forests; the voice of victory rushing along the corridors, and communicating its gladsome meaning to the very apartments of the servants. But we forget the dungeons; the captives confined in them, the cruelty they experienced, and the iron studded gates, the ponderous portcullis, the uplifted drawbridge; which all banished hope from their minds, and made them the prey of despondence. We hear not the voice of misery which they sent forth from their confinement: It is lost in the acclamations of triumph;

in the congratulations of victors. Whilst the trumpet sounds, and the Baron with his captains join in chorus; whilst the minstrel, the poet of his exploits, and the musician of his house, celebrates the fame of his lord, and excites to new energies; the crashing fall of the trap door, the harsh grating of the hinges of the prison gate, the sighs of the prisoner, and his cries for liberation, are not heard. We see not the interior of the castle, we are not aware of the misery it contains.

But the age of chivalry is past, the dominion of feudal lords is no more. Prisoners are treated with more clemency now than they were formerly. In producing this happy change in their state, in our day, the celebrated Mr. Howard has been chiefly instrumental. "I cannot name this gentleman," says a distinguished orator in his speech at Bristol, a man not more memorable for his eloquence than for his sagacity as a statesman, "I cannot name this gentleman," says he, "without remarking, that his labours and writings have done much to open the eyes and hearts of mankind. He has visited all Europe. not to survey the

“ sumptuousness of palaces, or the stateli-
“ ness of temples; not to make accurate
“ measurements of the remains of ancient
“ grandeur, nor to form a scale of the curi-
“ osity of modern art; not to collect medals,
“ or collate manuscripts; but to dive into
“ the depths of dungeons; to plunge into
“ the infection of hospitals; to survey the
“ mansions of sorrow and of pain; to take
“ the gage and dimensions of misery, de-
“ pression, and contempt; to remember the
“ forgotten, to attend to the neglected, to
“ visit the forsaken, and to compare and
“ collate the distresses of all men in all
“ countries. His plan is original; and it is
“ as full of genius as it is of humanity. It
“ was a voyage of discovery, a circumnavi-
“ gation of charity. Already,” adds the
British statesman and orator, “ already the
“ benefit of his labour is felt more or less in
“ every country. I hope he will anticipate
“ his final reward, by seeing all its effects
“ fully realized in his own. He will re-
“ ceive not in retail, but in gross, the reward
“ of those who visit the prisoner^a.” He is

^a Burke's Speech to the Electors in Bristol, 1780, vol. ii. p. 238. Am. ed. of his Works.

gone to receive that reward; and in the honours which were paid to his remains in Cherson in ^{the} Crimea, as detailed by a late traveller^b, we see, that the “memory of the just is blessed^c,” and that God will reward acts of humanity even in this life.

Though the treatment of prisoners is meliorated, yet much remains to be done; especially in regard to those who are imprisoned for debt. Such imprisonment as you have heard, was unknown in the Jewish dispensation. And under the Gospel dispensation, we may ask, if the insolvent debtor is honest, why is he deprived of his liberty? And if dishonest, why not punished^d?

I know and gladly embrace this opportunity of stating, that though the case of the imprisoned debtor in our day is distressing, yet it is pleasant, when compared with that of those who were debtors in ancient times, among the heathen. Among the Romans, their treatment was cruel. Creditors might, according to the twelve tables, cut their debtors in pieces. Such is the construction which Gibbon himself, who admired the

^b Clarke.

^c Prov. x. 7.

^d Burke's Speech at Bristol.

polytheism of Pagans, and was disposed to praise the Romans whenever he could, gives of the law^d.

The introduction of Christianity put a stop to this savage law. The institutions of Justinian, which are the basis of what is called the civil law in modern Europe, made express provision for debtors^e. And the spirit of the Gospel has gradually produced for them more mildness and attention.

We have to regret, that in this land, and in this State, so much is wanting in regard

^d "The cruelty of the twelve tables against insolvent debtors still remains to be told; and I shall dare to prefer the literal sense of antiquity, to the specious refinements of modern criticism. After the judicial proof or confession of the debt, thirty days of grace were allowed before a Roman was delivered into the power of his fellow-citizen. In this private prison, twelve ounces of rice were his daily food; he might be bound with a chain of fifteen pounds weight; and his misery was thrice exposed in the market-place, to solicit the compassion of his friends and countrymen. At the expiration of sixty days, the debt was discharged by the loss of liberty or life: the insolvent debtor was either put to death, or sold in foreign slavery beyond the Tyber: but if several creditors were alike obstinate and unrelenting, they might legally dismember his body, and satiate their revenge by this horrid partition."—*Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. v. p. 365. Am. ed.

^e Justinian's Institutes, by Cooper, l. 4. t. 6. sect. 40.

to them. They are confined with no provision whatever made for them by law. The creditor does not support them, and the law gives them no relief. Thus in a Christian country individuals are exposed to famine, and death in consequence of that famine, in the midst of their fellow-citizens, and of temporal blessings.

This most shocking neglect, a neglect which does not even disgrace the castle of a feudal Baron, or of Pagan nations, who have the establishments of a prison, constrained a number of individuals to combine in an association for the purpose of administering to the wants of the debtors in our Jail. In their union, and the efforts which they have made for these many years, we see the wisdom of God. In this way he has made use of the benevolence of subjects to counteract the imperfections or wickedness of rulers. He raised up an Ebed-melech, in the days of Zedekiah, thus to relieve his prophet; and he has raised up the Humane Society to relieve those for whom the State has made no provision, and whom creditors are not bound to support. From them the application now comes for your assistance.

They ask not of the miser, for he has no heart, no feeling for the afflicted. He is greedy as death, and as destitute of kindness as the sand on the sea-shore is barren of fruit.

They ask not of the selfish man. He, poor wretch, thinks only of himself; measures all wants by his own, and makes his own satisfaction and relief, the standard according to which others shall be assisted.

They ask not of the rich man, who, though he fares sumptuously every day, and is clothed in linen, suffers a Lazarus to lie at his gate and perish for want.

All such characters, being strangers to the influence of divine mercy, can extend no mercy to their fellow-men. None such, I trust, have passed the threshold of this house of mercy; for I might as well supplicate the winds, nay, the grave, as them. They are dead; dead to feeling, dead to real happiness, dead to God.

But to those who feel pity for the unfortunate, such as are ready to give to the destitute as God has given to them, I now apply for the destitute, the miserable, the confined. None of you can tell, so inscrutable

are the providences of God: none of you can tell, whether the fate of those for whom I plead, may not be your fate ere long. The most prosperous are in danger as well as others. The times in which we live, you know, are shifting, and the changes which they produce unexpected and distressing. None of you can tell, in a day like this, whether you are safe from imprisonment for debt. Your prospects may be good; your character fair; but for want of money, you may be consigned to the house of bondage. As ye do now to others in that situation, ye may hope for a recompense if trouble and distress overtake you.

Besides this, remember the state of these prisoners. They are deprived of liberty; prevented from exercising the faculties of their minds and powers of their bodies, for their own benefit, or the good of others. They cannot visit; their feet are confined within the four walls, which bounds their exercise and their enjoyment.

You who value freedom, who think much of its blessings, assist in affording relief to those who are captives; captives confined

in prison; captives for whom the laws of your land make no provision, and who therefore naturally look to you for food and relief.

They are moreover deprived of the advantages and comforts of religious ordinances. They hear not the voice of mercy and of pardon, for no provision is made to administer spiritual comfort to their temporal sorrow. They are alike destitute of the means of grace, and of the legal support of the State. To you, who value the Gospel, and who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, this is, it cannot but be, a powerful plea in their behalf. Will you withhold your charity from those who have not the opportunity of serving God, and who do not stand in the liberty of the children of God? “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich^e.” Ye dare not refuse to imitate your Master. His example has a paramount authority over your consciences. Remember what he has said, “I was in prison, and ye visited me not^f.”

^e 2 Cor. viii. 9.

^f Matt. xxv. 43.

Those for whom we plead, are torn from their homes.

“ Home ! word delightful to the heart of man,
And bird and beast ! small word, yet not the less
Significant : comprising all !
Whatever to affection is most dear,
Is all included in that little word,—
Wife, children, father, mother, brother, friends.”

Fathers ! Mothers ! Parents ! Children ! you may be separated from each other. You may be called to encounter the sadness, the dreariness, the bereavements, the sorrows of a prison ! God is overturning, overturning, overturning, not only the monarchs of the day, but their subjects. In this country and in this city, instances of the vicissitudes of his providence are daily occurring. Improve the lesson which they teach you. Do good to the afflicted, that if you are called to suffer, good may be done to you. The duty is plain ; the reward is certain. Imitate Ebed-melech, who trusted in God’s mercy, and displayed the fruits of that mercy, in his humanity to the prophet. Remember that the sighs of the prisoner are heard by Him who shall judge us. Be merciful as he is merciful, and God will bless you. AMEN.

SERMON VII.



THE RIGHT USE OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.



ECCLESIASTES IX. 7—10.

Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart: for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of the life of thy vanity which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

THOUGH “righteousness and judgment are
“the habitation of Jehovah’s throne,” yet
“clouds and darkness are round about

“him^a.” The dispensations of his providence are oftentimes mysterious, and to us incomprehensible.

Our understanding traces them in vain,
 Lost and bewilder'd in the fruitless search;
 Nor sees with how much art the windings run,
 Nor where the regular confusion ends^b.”

Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain it. Our duty is to exercise a cheerful and unqualified confidence in the moral government of God at all times, and under all circumstances.

“Since the days of our life are but vanity, we ought cheerfully to partake of all the sweet contentments of this life, without omitting the duties of our calling, this being the entire portion which we can here possess of all our labours^c.”

To this line of conduct, the wise man in the text, exhorts the righteous, that is, those who trust that God has already^d accepted their works, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He gives particular directions

^a Ps. xcvi. 2.

^b Addison.

^c Bishop Reynolds' Com. on Eccles. on the text.

^d כִּנְרָה. Parkhurst's Lex.

to them, in what ways they must manifest this confidence, and assigns important reasons to enforce the duty. These directions and reasons, as suggested by the text, will be unfolded to your view, in order.

I. The manifestation of a righteous man's confidence in the moral government of God, as directed by the wise man, does not consist in a slothful indifference to the events of providence, or in the absence of sensibility, either as it respects pleasure or pain.

Man was formed for activity, and endowed with feeling. His nature, his make, his faculties, are all social. Religion does not counteract or destroy this social constitution, but gives a proper direction to its exercise. We are situated in a wide world, dependent on others as well as on ourselves. To obtain necessary comforts and allowable enjoyments, we must labour. To fulfil the design of our creation, we must also rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Sensibility is as necessary to our well-being as activity. As without activity, we would suffer, if not perish, so without sensibility we would sink to the level of the beasts.

Hence you find, that the wise man enjoins cheerfulness of heart in the performance of personal duty, and a participation with others in lawful enjoyments; whilst, at the same time, he exhorts to earnestness and diligence in all that our hands find to do.

1. The first direction he gives to a believer to manifest his confidence in the government of God, is this, “ *Go thy way; eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart.*”

Under the terms bread and wine, are included those necessaries and conveniences which support and enliven animal life. By directing the one to be eaten with joy, and the other to be drank with a merry heart, the wise man clearly intended that these necessaries and conveniences should be acquired honestly and reputably.

Every man ought to be engaged in some lawful calling. No calling, if it be lawful, is disreputable. The sober and useful mechanic, is as honourable in his employment, as a professional man; and infinitely more so than he who, without any employment, scatters the poison of slothfulness throughout society. No man lives for himself alone.

He lives also for his friends, his family, the community to which he belongs, and God who made him. All these have therefore a claim upon his exertions. They have a right to demand from him the exercise of a lawful employment, that is, of an employment which, whilst it is calculated to promote human happiness, directly or indirectly, does directly or indirectly promote the glory of God. Employments which do not answer these purposes are unlawful, and therefore condemnable. They operate as so many drains to exhaust the coffers of society, to prevent the support of the poor, and the comfort of the unfortunate. If every man was to give what he ought in honour and conscience to these objects, he would have no superfluous means to cast away on useless characters, who only minister fuel to the fire of unhallowed passions. These characters do not “eat their bread with joy, or drink their wine with a merry heart.” They consume their gain in feasting and rioting; in pampering their appetites, or otherwise gratifying their vices. Can joy or a merry heart consist with all this conduct? The excesses of these persons ex-

hilarate their spirits; but as the delirium of a fever, when over, leaves the patient weaker than he was before; so these excesses, when their immediate effects are over, leave the subject a prey to lassitude, which nothing but the same excesses will remove. Real joy and a merry heart are more steady; more durable; more dignified.

The labourer who has toiled all day in his occupation, on his return home at night, sits down with his family to taste God's bounties. They are bounties which he has obtained by his exertions. What though his frame be wearied, yet he eats his bread with joy. His heart is light; for honesty abides in it. Industry has provided his repast, and it is sweet. He is repaid by the hearty welcome of his family.

Industry is absolutely necessary for a merry heart. A continued round of indolent enjoyments, not merely weakens the body, but destroys liveliness of spirits. Pleasures obtained at the expense of honesty or reputation, give a mortal blow to our happiness. The stage players, the gambler, the usurer, the parasite, and all other

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its pl

persons who minister to the lusts of others, or prey upon their vices, cannot eat their bread with joy, or drink their wine with a merry heart. They labour indeed, but they labour disreputably. Who that regards his moral character, would willingly degrade himself to a level with any of the above-mentioned descriptions of persons?

But it is not merely industry in a lawful calling, which the wise man inculcates in this place; it is also temperance in eating bread and in drinking wine. A moderate use of the necessaries and comforts of life is indispensable to real happiness. The abuse of these blessings engenders bodily disease and spiritual misery. And yet nothing is more common for sinful man than to abuse God's bounty. "Hast thou found honey?" says the wise man, "eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it." This is an excellent precept, which in a striking manner inculcates moderation in our participation of God's bounty. We need not go far, to find out the propriety and necessity of this precept. "Who hath wo? who hath

“ sorrow ? who hath contentions ? who
 “ hath babbling ? who hath wounds without
 “ cause ? who hath redness of eyes ? They
 “ that tarry long at the wine, they that go
 “ to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon
 “ the wine when it is red, when it giveth his
 “ colour in the cup, when it moveth itself
 “ aright. At the last it biteth like a ser-
 “ pent, and stingeth like an adder^f.” Such
 is the picture of excess in drinking, which
 the Scriptures afford. Is this drinking wine
 with a merry heart ?

Not better in his enjoyments than the
 drunkard, is the glutton, or the dainty epi-
 curean. Each of these impair their health,
 and debilitate their minds. Man wants but
 little food to support nature. Luxurious
 livers, like green house plants, enjoy a
forced health ; a limited existence. To fare
 sumptuously every day, affords no real
 pleasure. Nor do the enjoyments which
 the world calls pleasures, deserve the name.
 They are abuses of God’s goodness, per-
 versions of his gifts ; and as such, prevent
 those who indulge in them from eating their
 bread and drinking their wine with a merry

f Prov. xxiii. 29—32.

heart. Fond anticipation of these pleasures, when they are yet to be enjoyed; galling disappointment or yawning lassitude when they have been enjoyed, destroy cheerfulness. There is too much bustle and noise in worldly pleasures, for real cheerfulness. They hurry the spirits, they jade the mind.

“ Whom call we gay ? That honour has been long
 The boast of mere pretenders to the name.
 The innocent are gay ! the lark is gay,
 That dries his feathers, saturate with dew,
 Beneath the rosy cloud, while yet the beams
 Of dayspring overshoot his humble nest.
 The peasant too, a witness of his song,
 Himself a songster, is as gay as he.
 But save me from the gayety of those,
 Whose head-aches nail them to a noon-day bed ;
 And save me too from their’s, whose haggard eyes
 Flash desperation, and betray their pangs
 For property, stripp’d off by cruel chance ;
 From gayety that fills the bones with pain,
 The mouth with blasphemy, the heart with wo_g.”

The wise man’s first direction, therefore, to believers, to manifest their confidence in God’s government, can only be fulfilled in their prosecution of a lawful calling, and in the temperate use of God’s bounties ; using the world as not abusing it ; letting their

moderation be visible to all. This is to eat their bread with joy, and drink their wine with a merry heart.

2. The next direction which the wise man gives to a believer, to manifest his confidence in the government of God, is, “ Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.”

As the former direction related to the support and comfort of animal life, so this relates to the dress and ornaments of the body. They must be of such a nature as comport with the character and temper of a believer, who has confidence in God's providence. *relate*

White garments and ointment were both used in ancient times, on occasions of rejoicing. They are here recommended for general use, in opposition to sorrowful or indecorous clothing, because both are inconsistent with the duty of a believer. A proper attention to dress is his duty; but he ought not to make it his idol at any time. Dress is a standing badge of our subjection to sin; a sad memorial of our apostacy from God. They who trust that they have tasted the graciousness of the

Lord, ought especially to guard against a love of dress. They ought to be moderate and decorous in this respect. Slovenliness, singularity, pomp, and a dress disproportionate to our circumstances, ought ever to be avoided. Cleanliness of attire is a duty, as also a decent respect to the customs of that part of society, who fear God and keep his commandments. The direction of the wise man is, “Let thy garments be always white.”

White is emblematic of innocence, and of propriety. Both these ought to govern the conduct of believers, in relation to dress and ornament. Whatever tends to make them an object of remark or of censure in this respect, ought to be avoided. Propriety of conduct in this, as well as in every other matter, is inexpressibly beautiful. It is the offspring of modesty, and intimately connected with purity, as well as a regard to our condition.

The wise man adds, “Let thy head lack no ointment.” From the use of oil formerly, to refresh and restore to health those who were weary, together with those who were sick, as also to invigorate the healthy,

the direction comprehends the care of our health, as well as of our persons. It is not sufficient to wear decent and suitable garments; garments such as suit us in our stations, both in quality and in ornament, but we must also guard over the state of our bodies, that they be not unnecessarily injured. Health is a talent committed to our trust, as well as riches, or any other gift of God; for the use or abuse of which we are answerable. It qualifies us for attending to our duties, and discharging them aright. We ought, therefore, carefully to keep the body clean, and to guard against every thing which might impair its powers; and whenever we are attacked by disease, diligently to use such means as are calculated to restore our health. With this carefulness, however, must be connected an entire resignation to the will of God; otherwise it is no proof of acquiescence in his government.

The second direction of the wise man to believers, to manifest their confidence in providence, requires then propriety in dress, and watchfulness over health. This is to

have the garments always white, and the head lacking no ointment.

3. The third direction which the wise man gives to a believer, to manifest his confidence in God's government, is, "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of the life of thy vanity which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity." The former directions were of a personal nature. This relates to domestic life, and exhibits the manner in which it ought to be enjoyed by him whose works the Lord hath blessed.

That the husband and wife may live joyfully with each other, each ought to know ~~their~~ respective duties. The apostle, in specifying the duties of husbands, says, "Love your wives^b." In this command, protection of them from violence; cherishing them as their own flesh; comforting them under their trials, and affording them temporal support, are all included. The duties of wives, the same apostle sums up in this, "Let—the wife see that she reverence her husband^c." This teaches them to pay deference to the

^b Eph. v. 25.

^c Eph. v. 33

opinions of their husbands; to counsel with them in all things, and to cheer them in discharging their duties, by their smiles. Another apostle is more specific, and I quote his words, however discordant they may be with those used in novels and romances.

“ Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to
“ your own husbands; that if any obey not
“ the word, they also may without the word
“ be won by the conversation of the wives,
“ while they behold your chaste conversa-
“ tion coupled with fear: whose adorning,
“ let it not be that outward adorning of
“ plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold,
“ or of putting on of apparel; but let it be
“ the hidden man of the heart, in that which
“ is not corruptible, even the ornament of a
“ meek and quiet spirit, which is in the
“ sight of God of great price. For after
“ this manner in the old time the holy
“ women also who trusted in God adorned
“ themselves, being in subjection unto their
“ own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed
“ Abraham, calling him lord: whose daugh-
“ ters ye are as long as ye do well, and are
“ not afraid with any amazement. Likewise,

“ ye husbands, dwell with them, according
“ to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife
“ as unto the weaker vessel, and as being
“ heirs together of the grace of life, that your
“ prayers be not hindered^k.” On these words
comments are useless. They definitely de-
scribe the duties of the married state. Such
a state ought ever, by all who know the
truth, to be entered into in the fear of God ;
and the parties ought mutually to bear
each other’s burdens, and forbear with each
other’s weaknesses. Without understand-
ing the duties of this state, the believer can-
not live joyfully with the wife whom he
loves. These duties are precisely stated in
the Scriptures, and neither the one nor the
other can possibly mistake them. If a con-
scientious and scrupulous regard was paid
in every instance to the Scriptures, there
never would occur difficulties between a be-
lieving husband and his believing wife. As
this relation is calculated to produce the
greatest temporal happiness, the duties of it
ought to be well understood, that ignorance
does not produce any obstacle to the con-
tinuance of affection.

^k 1 Pet. iii. 1—7

The direction of the wise man to live joyfully with the wife who is loved, teaches us, that marriage is honourable in all. Hence, they who sin against it, God shall judge. The husband and wife must cultivate mutual cheerfulness, and discountenance every thing calculated to destroy this. Home must, therefore, be to both the most desirable place, and the enjoyment of each other's company the (highest and) greatest delight. They ought to assimilate to each other's sentiments and habits as much as possible, and strive to keep out of view, or conquer each other's foibles. Nothing is so unfriendly to domestic happiness as idle visits incessantly repeated, or the bustle and parade of company; not for social happiness, but for social folly. Where is the time or opportunity amidst all this for mutual improvement? where for reflection, or for enjoying each other's company?

This direction of the wise man is hostile to fashionable life, as it is called, which by its magic influence makes the husband and wife comparatively strangers to each other when they appear in public. It teaches the persons connected in marriage, to consult

each other's happiness by understanding each other's duty, and seeking the enjoyment of each other's company with care. This is to live joyfully with the wives whom we love, all the days of our vanity.

4. The fourth and last direction the wise man gives to the believer to manifest his confidence in God's government, is, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

The two first directions were personal, and the other relative. All three of them relate to time. This, more particularly to eternity.

There is no such thing in our world as chance. What is contingent to us, is part of God's settled plan of conduct. When the wise man therefore says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," he does not mean to insinuate that duty, or what must be done, is contingent or accidental, so that we may find or not find it. But whatsoever God in his providence clearly determines to, we must perform.

Duty, God has plainly and largely defined in his word. He who runs may read and understand the same. It is threefold in

its nature, relating to God, our fellow-men, and ourselves. To find out duty, or to ascertain what must be done, pre-supposes a search ~~to be made~~ after it. This search must be conducted with sincerity and a docile disposition; with fidelity and perseverance. The word of God is the only rule of duty, revealing to us either directly or by induction, the grand system which ought to regulate human conduct. It ought therefore to be studied with care and diligence, that we ~~do~~ not mistake truth for error; for it denounces a wo upon him who does. They who suppose it equally countenances all kinds of religious principles, display consummate ignorance of its contents, or an insulting indifference about its divine authority. They never give themselves any pains to learn their duty from the Scriptures, but adopt the fashionable sentiment of the country in which they live (as their guide.) Such conduct is radically and essentially infidel, and therefore to be shunned by Christians. To the written word we must resort for information. It contains a fixed and immutable law, fitted for all climates and suited to all descriptions of men. Whatever, upon

ma
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examination, we find it teaches to be our duty, that we must do with all our might. Earnestness and vigour are as necessary in religion, as in our daily callings. They are marks of sincerity. Hence we must be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, according to the wise man's direction. We must not faint nor be weary in well-doing; but must continue instant in prayer; walk circumspectly, redeeming the time; increase in faith, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We must press with eagerness towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus. We must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (for worship) and that frequently. We must cease to do evil and learn to do well. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," we must "think on these things," and "do them^l." We must "live soberly,

^l Phil. iv. 8, 9.

“righteously, and godly in this present world^m.” In fine, whatever tends to glorify God, edify man, and save ourselves, must be done with all our might.

Such are the directions which Solomon gives believers, to manifest their confidence in the government of God. The meaning of his exhortation, in a few words, is, Trouble not yourselves, ye righteous, with the perplexities and apparent inconsistencies of providence. Cherish cheerfulness of disposition, and display cheerfulness of conduct. Labour with diligence in your calling, and enjoy present comforts without indulging gloomy anticipations. Be not cast down at any time with what you see or hear; for all is safe, since God reigns, and you have made your peace with him through Jesus Christ.

I pass on now,

II. To the important reasons which the wise man assigns for the duty to which he exhorts.

1. The first is the vanity of life. It is an empty show, fleeting in its duration, and checkered with sorrows and disappoint-

m Tit. ii. 12.

ments. Vain, however, as it is, it is our portion under the sun. Reason, therefore, suggests the propriety of wisely improving it to our own comfort. The only way in which this can be done, is to acquiesce in the providence of God; enjoying what he gives, and permits us to enjoy, with cheerfulness, and attending diligently to what he commands us to perform. Discontent, idle hopes, false alarms, foolish curiosity about the future, only increase the vanity of life, and make our portion sad indeed. These feelings, and the conduct which they originate, believers must shun. Their privilege, as well as their duty, is to be contented at all times. Why should they be troubled at the scenes which occur in the world? Trusting as they do that they are accepted in the Beloved, they must leave every issue with God, who does all things right. Let them not fear, amidst the storms of life, for their covenant God, their heavenly Father, is at the helm of the universe. Amidst the vanities of time, the disappointments of the world, let the believer be cheerful. These vanities are not the objects of his affection; these disappointments cannot reach his ark of safety.

It is in character for him who knows not God and his Christ, to murmur, fret, and rage under the adverse dispensations of providence; for these dispensations rob him of his god. But Jehovah, the portion of the righteous, is at all times a sufficient good, of which the vicissitudes of time cannot deprive his people. They can each adopt the language of Moses, "Their rock is not as
" our Rock, even our enemies themselves
" being judges." Be not then cast down believers, when clouds are gathering around and threatening to burst upon you.

2. The second and last reason which the wise man assigns, is, that "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither we go."

Life is the season for action—the period in which we must serve the Lord. What we must do—what we ought to do, must be now done. What is left undone at death, will remain undone for ever. As death leaves us, eternity will find us. How solemn the consideration! Oh, that it more suitably impressed our hearts and influenced our lives!

n Deut. xxxii. 31.

Then would we do with our might what our hands find to do.

This day adds its sanction to the wise man's arguments. It reminds us of the vanity of life, and of the necessity of doing what must be done without delay, as the grave will presently receive us. We are one year nearer to our end; one year nearer to the day of judgment. The past we cannot recall. The future we cannot anticipate. The present is all upon which we can calculate. How idly is the present consumed by many! They live in sin, and therefore live unhappy; for, "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." Oh, that they were wise; that they considered their latter end!

In too many respects do believers live as if they had not made their peace with God. The text admonishes them. The season enforces the admonition. The future lies before us, covered with impenetrable obscurity; we may survive this year, or we may not; we may be called to suffer, or we may not: let the issue be as it will, the Lord will do what is right; he will reign

through this year, as through the last. His kingdom is everlasting, and his government the source of joy to all holy beings. Our duty and privilege, fellow-christians, are to rejoice in him at all times; to confide, under all circumstances, in his wisdom, justice, and love. Whether he afflict or prosper us, we must be contented, resigned, and diligent in promoting his glory. Thus to feel and thus to act, constitute happiness. It is the only real enjoyment we can possess in this vain world. To this happiness, I desire to direct the attention of you all, on this day.

You who are yet strangers to God—may he enable you this year to make your peace with him, that you may taste of his graciousness in the acceptance of your works.

You who hope in his mercy, having been made willing in the day of his power—may you this year eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart. May your garments always be white, and your heads lack no ointment. May you who are married live joyfully with the wives whom you love. May you

all do what your hands find to do with all your might. Such is the fondest wish of my heart for you, Brethren; such my prayer to God in your behalf. May he hear it in mercy, and answer it in peace. through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

SERMON VIII.



THE INESTIMABLE VALUE OF THE SCRIPTURES.



ROMANS XV. 4.

*For whatsoever things were written afore-
time were written for our learning, that
we through patience and comfort of the
Scriptures might have hope.*

IN the original constitution of man, we find that intelligence and uprightness were combined. By the fall he lost his uprightness, whilst he retained his intelligent nature. The effect of this loss was, that his understanding became darkened, his will perverse, and his affections polluted. Hence it was necessary for his happiness, that God should reveal to him, in a way adapted to his intelligent nature, the manner in which he might recover his uprightness. This revelation was made at first by God himself in

an audible manner, when he promised him, that “the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head^a.” In this first promise was contained the substance of all subsequent revelations. God afterward gave clearer and fuller information of the nature, extent, and effects of this promise. These revelations, whilst the number of mankind was comparatively small, and the lives of men prolonged to several centuries, were safely handed down from one generation to another through the medium of tradition.

The first command which was given to reduce any of them to writing, was to Moses, the great legislator of the Jews^b. From the creation to the time when Moses received this command, was about 2513 years. The following chronological facts will enable you to judge of the perfect safety of tradition, during this interval. Methuselah was 243 years old when Adam died, and Noah 599 when Methuselah died. From the creation to the flood, therefore, a period of 1655 years, but one person was necessary between Adam and Noah to convey the revelations of God down to others. Abraham

^a Gen. iii. 15.

^b Ex. xvii. 14. and xxxiv. 27.

was 150 years, and his son Isaac 50, when Shem, the son of Noah, who was 97 years at the time of the flood, died. The year after Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream, and was promoted in Egypt, Isaac died. Moses was born 64 years after the death of Joseph, and lived to the age of 120 years. Thus, in a period of 858 years, from the flood to the first command for committing the revelations of God to writing, four persons only, namely, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, and the father of Moses, were necessary to preserve and convey to their generations respectively, God's revealed will. But as now the life of man was shortened, and the number of the race was increased, tradition became dangerous, and therefore God's revelations were, in future, committed to writing.

Of these written revelations, or as they are called by the apostle, "oracles of God," the Jewish nation became the preservers. They are comprised in that part of our Bibles which are called the Old Testament, beginning with Genesis, and ending with the prophecies of Malachi. These are call-

ed in the text, "The Scriptures," that is, the writings, namely, of God; or those works which were written by men inspired by his Spirit. The same name the Lord Jesus gave to them, when, in one of his addresses, he exhorted the Jews, "Search the Scriptures^c." Though the apostle thus refers to the writings of the Old Testament in the text, yet Peter^d calls the writings of this apostle by the appropriate name of "Scriptures." Following his example, we cannot err in assuming this as a truth, that the New Testament, being composed by men divinely inspired, constitutes equally with the Old, the writings of God.

These Scriptures, in the enlarged sense, were written for the learning, that is, the instruction of the children of men in those matters which pertain to their best and eternal interest, their chief good. Here they are taught the way in which they can regain the original uprightness of their nature, in which consists their chief good. After this they have in all ages eagerly and perseveringly sought, cherishing the secret hope that they would ultimately find it. Hence, in all ages, and

John v. 39.

d 2 Pet. iii. 16.

among all men, you find forms of religious worship established, and pretensions to revelation from heaven, believed and honoured by a prompt obedience to their requisitions. But though hope has been cherished in the human breast, and its promised good sought for by the human race, none know what it is, or have ever experienced its enjoyment, save they who have embraced the seed of the woman, Christ the Saviour. He is the chief among ten thousand, and the hope of glory to all who know him. Such characters the apostle is addressing in the text, assuring them, that in a particular manner, "whatsoever was written afore-
" time, was written for their learning, that
" they through patience and comfort of the
" Scriptures might have hope." Though the text thus has a special reference to believers, yet it may be used as affording instruction to unbelievers also. Thus extensively understood, without adverting to the connexion, it unfolds to our attention these two truths :

I. That in the Scriptures alone man can find real hope, a hope that shall not make him ashamed.

II. That in the Scriptures alone, man, when he has found real hope, can find the means requisite for preserving and invigorating it unto the end.

The consideration of these topics will not only prove that the Scriptures are for our learning, but also prepare the way for introducing to your attention the design of our present meeting.

1. In the Scriptures alone man can find real hope, a hope which “maketh not “ashamed.”

Hope is the [†] expectation of some future good, ~~real or supposed.~~ To be such, so as to prevent disappointment, the nature of that which is really good, must be understood. Nothing deserves to be called a real good, to an intelligent being, which does not accord with his original constitution. It must, therefore, first of all, restore to him his uprightness, and then aid him in preserving that uprightness. In no other way can his intelligent nature be made a blessing to him; for intellect of the highest kind, abstracted from uprightness, only qualifies a being for greater wickedness, and there-

fore prepares him for greater misery. Devils are standing monuments of this truth in its full extent. Sinful men experience only a part of its truth; for during life they cherish a hope which the first promise originated in the human family. Still, amidst all the delusive charms of the hope which animates their bosoms, anxious and fearful doubts arise, which break the enchantment. The understanding, so long as it is darkened, cannot by all its powers, however gigantic, quiet the heart which is oppressed with a consciousness of guilt.

Man's intellectual faculties may devise a thousand expedients for obtaining the chief good, but all prove abortive. They may, with all the triumph which accompanies success, say to the heart, Lo! here is your hope! or, Lo! there is your hope! But the heart, knowing its own sorrows, replies, "Miserable comforters are ye!" In all earthly objects, it finds not the ^{all} good after which it pants. That good the heart can never enjoy till the understanding becomes acquainted with it. After examining the pretensions of numerous pursuits and numerous enjoyments, that noble and leading

all"

faculty of man is compelled to acknowledge that all is vanity, because none of them can impart peace or joy to the heart. In the Scriptures alone the good desired and hoped for is to be found. There its nature is explained; the manner in which it has been procured for sinful man is unfolded; and the offer of it as a free gift is made to all who hear the glad tidings.

This good is an interest in the promised Messiah, including deliverance from sin, both in its power and punishment; the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, and restoration to the favour and fellowship of God. Through Christ the ruins of the fall are rebuilt, and sinners renewed in their minds. In him there is “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace^f.” They who embrace him as the Lord their righteousness, are justified freely by his grace, and being justified, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

By the power of Christ's grace man thus becomes upright. His intellectual as well as his moral nature is completely revolu-

f Ephes. i. 7.

tionized. The faculties of his mind, having examined the Scriptural view of Christ, the hope of glory, approve of him entirely. The affections of the heart centre in him as one altogether lovely. His salvation is that good which suits man's original constitution. By means of it he is made upright, and thus once more qualified to use his intelligent nature to the glory of God. Restored to the favour of God, he looks forward with desire and anticipation of joy to the period when he shall be ever with the Lord. To him death is no object of terror; for death is a minister of Christ, the Saviour. By death Christ will purify his body from all sin, and prepare it for immortal beauty and glory in heaven.

Such is the hope which the Scriptures reveal to sinful man; a hope of eternal happiness, springing from faith in Jesus Christ, who hath endured the curse for sinful men. This hope thus rests on Christ, inasmuch as he hath purchased it by his death, and imparts it by the operations of his Spirit, regenerating and sanctifying sinners. It is a good, a real good, not delusive; and the more the heart tastes of its

excellence, the more it desires to taste. On this it can perpetually feast, without the appetite being cloyed. The understanding, the more it examines this good, the more it is satisfied and delighted with its infinite beauty. Overwhelmed at the sight which bursts upon the view, it

“————— Wanders up and down
For ever; and for ever finds new charms.”

Thus real, thus blessed in its influence, this good is permanent. Relating to the soul and body, no changes of time can destroy it, or deprive the possessor of its enjoyment. Amidst all the varieties of his state; in adversity and prosperity; in sickness and health; in death as well as life, the hope of everlasting rest fills his heart with joy and gladness. It enables him to use the bounties of providence with a proper temper, and to devote them to a proper purpose. It converts afflictions into blessings, and the world itself into a region of enjoyment, preparatory to the blessedness and glory of heaven. This is the hope of the Scriptures; a hope which maketh

not ashamed, and which is offered to all, without exception, who receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and walk in him by faith. I pass on to show, that,

II. In the Scriptures alone, man, when he has found real hope, can find the means requisite for preserving and invigorating it.

Such is the condition of man, such the difficulties and temptations from within and without, to which he is exposed in this world, that his hope is oft-times assailed, and needs to be defended. The consummation of his hope is future; his trials are present. How then shall he sustain his hope, thus deferred and thus assailed? The answer to this question is given, and can be given, only in the Scriptures. As the hope itself to which the question refers is only revealed in the Scriptures, so the Scriptures alone can make known to us the way in which it is preserved and invigorated. By examining them, we find that patience and comfort are necessary supports of hope, before its consummation takes place. Of these the apostle makes mention, as the instruments by which hope is to be consummated. He designates his meaning, particu-

larly when he calls them “the patience and comfort of the Scriptures,” that is, which they unfold. The mere revelation of them in the Scriptures, however, is not sufficient to confirm hope. They must be possessed, and their influence experienced, as much as the hope with which they are connected must be possessed and its influence experienced. And as the hope is enjoyed only by those who believe in Christ, so none but these know what patience and comfort are. Let us for a moment explain each separately.

1. Patience is that disposition of mind which believers, by the grace of God, display in enduring injuries from their fellow-men with meekness; in bearing providential afflictions with a calm acquiescence of temper in the divine will; and in waiting with humble submission for the accomplishment of God’s promises, in the attainment of the object of their hope, eternal salvation. It is not an insensibility to present evils, or an indifference about future and expected good. But it secures to a believer the possession of his soul, under the various sufferings and dangers to which he may be

exposed, giving him the mastery over his unruly passions. It prevents him from forming a precipitate judgment, concerning the degree of his trials, or the fidelity of God to his cause; causing him to say to his misgivings, fears, and his sinful unbelief, as Job did to his wife, “Thou speakest as one
 “ of the foolish women speaketh. What!
 “ shall we receive good at the hand of God,
 “ and shall we not receive evil^h?” It urges him to perseverance in the discharge of duty, notwithstanding every vexatious delay in receiving the promised reward; reminding him of the declaration of “the first
 “ and the last, which was dead, and is
 “ aliveⁱ;” “Be thou faithful unto death,
 “ and I will give thee a crown of life^k.” Thus, in opposition to angry and querulous repinings, it is a dutiful silence; to a despairing dejection of mind, it is confidence in God; to immoderate sorrow for deferred felicity, it is complacency in the dispensations of divine providence.

According to the admirable description of a beautiful writer, “patience is the guardian
 “ of faith, the preserver of peace, the cher-

k Job ii. 10.*i* Rev. ii. 8.*k* Rev. ii. 10.

“isher of love, the teacher of humility.
 “Patience governs the flesh, strengthens
 “the spirit, sweetens the temper, stifles
 “anger, extinguishes envy, subdues pride ;
 “she bridles the tongue, refrains the hand,
 “tramples upon temptation, endures perse-
 “cution, consummates martyrdom.” “Be-
 “hold her appearance and her attire. Her
 “countenance is calm and serene as the
 “face of heaven, unspotted by the shadow
 “of a cloud, and no wrinkle of grief or
 “anger is seen in her forehead. Her eyes
 “are the eyes of doves for meekness, and
 “on her eyebrows sit cheerfulness and joy.
 “Her mouth is lovely in silence ; her com-
 “plexion and colour that of innocence and
 “security.” “She is clothed in the robes
 “of the martyrs, and in her hand she holds
 “for a sceptre the cross’.”

The usefulness of patience, from what has
 been said, in sustaining and confirming
 hope, cannot but appear obvious to every
 one. As hope is journeying onwards to the

l Horne’s Sermon on Patience. A part of a sentence in
 the above quotation has been omitted. It certainly is no
 part of the patience of the saints to despise and laugh the
 adversary to scorn.

place of her consummation, patience supports her, amidst the length and difficulties of the way. The consummation is future; and from year to year still future, impeded by the attacks of enemies and the dispensations of providence. Patience waits for it with unshaken constancy; and in the mean time bears the interruptions which cause delay, without murmuring. Her language is this: It is the Lord that orders me to bear and wait so long, “ that overawes
“ my soul, and brings it down to a peaceful
“ and dutiful acquiescence in his good pleasure; peaceful to myself, dutiful towards
“ him. Let him do what seems him good.
“ Since it is his pleasure that I should wait
“ so long before I shall become a blessed
“ creature, I shall admire and praise him,
“ that I hope I shall be so at last; but with
“ profound submission unto his purpose,
“ and determination herein, wait till he shall
“ think fit to fulfil this good pleasure of his
“ goodness towards me, in accomplishing
“ my desires, and in answering my expectations fully, at last, when I shall be
“ brought into that state, where there is
“ fulness of joy, and be placed at thy right

“ hand, O Lord, where are rivers of pleasure for evermore^m.”

Secondly. Comfort is the rest and satisfaction of heart which the believer enjoys under real or anticipated evils. Its tendency is at present, in the proper season to afford a remedy, which not only prevents the mischievous effects of these evils, but actually imparts blessings.

The evils which encompass the believer's path, in his journey through life, are physical and moral, temporal and spiritual. In their nature they are calculated to impair hope, to darken her views, and cripple her power over his soul. How necessary, then, for him, that he should be internally strengthened from on high. Patience itself would be exhausted under the multiplied trials of life. It is indeed the shield of hope, to ward off and repel the evil effects of these trials. But hope, like a warrior worn out by the fatigues of a long and severe conflict, would faint and perish, did not He who originated hope and imparted patience, grant his own most refreshing grace, “ to

^m Howe's Discourse on the Expectation of Future Blessedness.

“revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

The sources ~~from~~ whence the believer derives this comfort, are chiefly the exceeding great and precious promises of God, which in Christ are yea, and in him amen; the person and mediatorial work of Christ himself; the presence and influence of his most Holy Spirit, who is emphatically called the Comforter; and the prospect of being ever with the Lord, beyond the grave. To these I add, as one of the principal subordinate sources, the society of Christians, and the mutual offices of kindness which they perform according to the grace given them.

The comfort thus produced, prevents hope from stumbling in the way by reason of the evils she is called to encounter. And as this comfort is a part of eternal life, being the first fruits or beginning of that fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore at God's right hand, to which hope aspires, so the aid which it affords will last unto the end.

With comfort on the one side, and patience on the other, hope maintains her hold in the heart of the believer, and in the end

proves his salvation, supporting him under trials, preserving him from despair, communicating refreshing pleasures, and conducting him to the delectable land—the Canaan above, where she will lose her distinctive character in the enjoyment of heavenly rest and glory.

How thankful then, Brethren, ought we to be that we enjoy the Scriptures, which were written for our learning on both these great points; the nature and object of hope, and the means by which hope is supported and confirmed. Though originally written, the Old Testament in Hebrew and Chaldaic, and the New in Greek, yet by the blessing of God we read them in our own language.

During the principal part of the reign of Antichrist, they were studiously kept from common use, being locked up in the Latin language. The Vulgate translation, as it is commonly called, was originally made about the middle of the second century. Afterwards, being modelled and amended from Jerome's translation, so as to make the greater part of it his work, it was used in the western churches, and in Africa^o. This version, including in it the apocryphal books.

^o Macknight's General Preface.

was by the Council of Trent declared to be an authentic copy, and therefore of equal authority with the original". The Church of Rome opposed, with bitterness and cruelty, every attempt to translate this version into the common languages of Europe. In this, however, she could not succeed, for God had his witnesses, who insisted upon the necessity of the common people being enabled to use the Scriptures. In the year 1160, Peter Waldus succeeded in procuring a translation of the gospels and some other books of Scripture into the French language. About the year 1367, the celebrated Wickliffe, the morning-star of the Reformation, finished his translation of the New Testa-ment. In 1526, William Tyndal published another translation of it.† In 1535 the whole Bible was translated into English, by Miles Coverdale. In the year 1611 our common translation was published? +?

The same attention which was paid to the translation of the Scriptures by the

p Sess. 4. 1st and 2d decree. Dupin's Eccles. Hist. of the 16th century.

q Maeknight's Gen. Pref. and Johnson's Historical Account of the English translations of the Bible.

+ Wickliffe translated 3^d whole Bible
 # & also of 3^d historical parts of 1st

English, was manifested among the Reformers in other nations. After the spell of Antichrist was broken, the Scriptures were speedily translated into the French, the German, the Low Dutch, and other languages. As the religion of the Protestants is, to their glory, to be found only in the Scriptures^r, so they have uniformly promoted the knowledge of them among all classes. So ardent was the love which the Reformers felt for the Scriptures, that rather than forego the delight of reading them, they deprived themselves of the comforts and necessities of life. It could not but be, therefore, that these persons, when they were freed from the power of their adversaries, would adopt every measure calculated to promote the circulation of the Scriptures. They did much; but very soon the fervour of their love abated, and their exertions in this laudable work relaxed. In this state of comparative torpor they remained, with little variation, until it pleased God to pour out upon his Church in Europe a missionary spirit. Previous to this

^r "The BIBLE, I say, the BIBLE only, is the religion of Protestants!" Chillingworth's Religion of Protestants, a safe way to Salvation. Chap. v. sect. 56. See his Works, p. 271 7th ed. Lond.

period, the Moravians or *Unitas Fratrum* were almost the only body of Protestants who engaged in the missionary field. But now others hastened to emulate them in this noble work of faith and labour of love. In 1792 the particular or Calvinistic Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the Heathen, was formed; and in 1795 the London Missionary Society, composed chiefly of Dissenters from the established Church of England. At a later period, similar societies in Scotland and England made their appearance. Indeed, there appeared a general movement in the Church.

As the great design of these societies was to send the preaching of the Gospel to the Heathen, so it became necessary for them to countenance and support attempts for translating the Scriptures into the languages of the Heathen, whither they sent the Gospel. Immediately after his arrival in Hindostan, Mr. Carey, one of the Missionaries sent out by the Baptist Society, commenced the arduous work of acquiring the Bengalee language, with a view to translate the Scriptures into it. His success in acquiring this, excited him to new attempts in the same

way. God has remarkably qualified him for this great undertaking; and he has associates who emulate his industry and rival his success.

These men, and others like them, are among the most excellent of the earth. The honour which God has conferred upon them, is greater than that of nobles or of princes. The good which they are enabled to do, elevates them to a height of moral glory, which the great men and wise men of this world cannot reach. Highly as I prize—warmly as I love the memory of the man who was God's honoured instrument in liberating us from British bondage, I hesitate not to place him second in point of usefulness, and therefore of real glory, to such a man as Carey! His usefulness will be felt by multitudes in another world, as well as this. It is for this man and his brethren, that you are called upon this day to contribute of your worldly substance. They have now been engaged in the work of translation for several years. God has literally made crooked things strait before them. He has disposed the hearts of men in different places to give their aid to the

undertaking. In Britain, by private contributions, great sums have been raised and forwarded. The British and Foreign Bible Society, that pre-eminently excellent Institution, unrivalled in the felicity of its plan, and the grandeur of its efforts, has particularly aided them from time to time. Nor have our countrymen been idle or careless, but have contributed of their worldly substance, to promote this great object. Encouraged by the blessing of God, and the benevolence of Europe and America, they were prosecuting their labours, both in translating and printing the translations, when it pleased God in his adorable providence to visit them with a most destructive fire^s, which interrupted their progress. How trying is this providence to the faith of these good and worthy men, thus to see, in a most solemn and affecting manner, their course impeded, and their labour arrested! No doubt it is for wise purposes, or God would not have suffered it. Among these purposes, we can discern two. One is, for the exercise of their trust in the promise of God, as a God of truth; the other, for the trial of the beneve-

^s March 11, 1812.

lence of those who call themselves his people. Viewing it in this light, whilst I commend the Missionaries to the blessing of God for support and comfort, I proceed to unfold God's claim upon your liberality—I say, God's claim! for recollect, the providence is considered as intended for the trial of Christian benevolence. To this sublime work you have never given your aid. You are not called upon merely to relieve a transient want, a want exclusively temporal. It is to relieve the spiritual wants of millions—wants which, without the Scriptures, can never be relieved. God now pleads with you for the souls of men who are perishing for lack of knowledge. The number of those immediately concerned is immense. The languages into which the Scriptures are translating, spread over an extent of territory which contains an immense population^t. Remember that all this

^t At the time this sermon was preached, the number of languages was 14. In the fifth memoir of the Serampore translation, dated Aug. 1813, the number was 13, viz. Sungskrit, Hindee, Brij-Chassa, Mahratta, Bengalee, Orissa, Telinga, Kurnata, Maldivian, Gujrattee, Bulochee, Pushtoo, Punjabee, Kashmeerian, Assam, Burman, Pali or Magudha,

territory is covered with Pagan darkness, or cursed with Mahometan superstition. Throughout its whole extent you find the grossest excesses of idolatry combined with cruelty, and the most degrading cases of ignorance. By the labours of the men in whose behalf I now plead, the Sun of righteousness may soon, through God's blessing, rise upon the inhabitants thereof; Jesus Christ may be experimentally known to multitudes among them. The Hindoo, the Persian, the Chinese, the Burman, may, before you and I go down to the grave, unite with us, each in his own tongue and in his own habitation, in praising God and glorifying him through Jesus Christ.

Oh, think of the delightful change which the Word of God, if accompanied by his grace, will make in their state, and feelings, and conduct! The wilderness, and the solitary place, will truly be glad—the desert will rejoice and blossom as the rose. The

Chinese. Since the publication of this memoir, Dr. Carey, in a letter to Mr. Fuller, Dec. 14, 1813, says, "We are at this time engaged in translating the Bible into twenty-one languages, including the Bengalee, which is finished." No. 27, of Period. Acc. p. 400.

praises of the living God will silence for ever the awful shouts of the mad worshippers of Juggernaut, the Hindoo Moloch; and, instead of human victims and human tortures, the offerings of broken hearts and contrite spirits, be every where made to the Father of mercies. The gross impositions of the Brahmins; the senseless rites of the Mahometans; the blasphemous worship of the Grand Lama, will all be annihilated by pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father. Instead of the washings in the Ganges for purification, the blood of Jesus Christ will be applied to the heart for cleansing. The deluded Pagan torturing himself, according to the rites of his religion, to obtain peace, hearing the grace of Jesus Christ, will cast his former faith to the winds, and with transport exclaim, This is what my soul desires^t. Blessed with peace in believing, and joy in the Holy Ghost, the grace of the Gospel will spread its benign influence over his domestic and public relations; whilst the whole aspect of

^t Mr. Thomas, one of the first Baptist Missionaries, relates a circumstance of this kind. *Bapt. Per. Acc.* vol. i. p. 29.*

society throughout that extensive region, will be changed.

In contemplating these triumphs of religion, whose heart does not burn with desire to behold them? They are triumphs unaccompanied with sorrow; pure, unmingled happiness is their constant companion. If we are in the least instrumental in promoting them, we shall partake in the happiness which they will impart unto others.

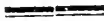
My hearers, is it necessary for me to dilate more on this theme, so congenial to benevolent feelings—so gratifying to the heart which pants to be useful? You enjoy the Bible in your own tongue—thanks to the providence of God! Our ancestors have bequeathed it to us as a precious legacy, sealed with their blood. Do we love the legacy? We will ardently desire that others may enjoy it with us. It is sufficient for the happiness of the whole world! Will you not then contribute your proportion, in promoting the great object of translating the Scriptures into the languages of Asia? Will you not join with other Christians in your exertions to repair the loss which the Missionaries have sustained by fire?

God can supply that loss without you, but he calls on you to be workers with him. He honours you by the call; for in so doing he calls you his stewards. Think of the pleasure you will give the Missionaries by your benevolence. They will bless God on your behalf! Think of the happiness you will enjoy, if you hear that through your means the Bible has been made known and blessed to the Heathen sitting in darkness. They will also join with the Missionaries in blessing God on your behalf. But, above all, think how exquisite will be your joy, if through grace, you are enabled to triumph over death, and before the throne of God meet with those who through your instrumentality have been supplied with the Word of life, and unite with them in praising and serving God! AMEN.

SERMON IX.



THE DUTY OF SEEKING THE LORD, ENFORCED FROM
HIS POWER IN THE NATURAL WORLD.



AMOS V. 8.

Seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that culleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is his name.

No subject of consideration is calculated so completely to humble the pride of man, as the nature of God. It has a length and a breadth, a height and a depth, which utterly exceed the utmost comprehension of the mightiest intellect. The imagination herself, with all her creative powers, and in spite of the boundless range of her excursive flights, must confess, when God is the object of con-

temptation, in words used in a different connexion originally, but applicable in this,

“ ——— Here forlorn and lost I tread,
 With fainting steps and slow ;
 Where wilds, immeasurably spread,
 Seem length'ning as I go^a.”

We may speculate on other subjects with some success, but on this, speculation is vain. It merely discovers our poverty of comprehension, and the circumscribed limits to which our reason is necessarily confined. All that we can do, and therefore all which true wisdom teaches us to do, is to restrict our inquiries concerning God within the precise bounds he himself has prescribed in his word. Our duty and our privilege are, simply to receive all that which he has revealed of himself, without attempting to penetrate into that which he has concealed. He is infinite ! What then can finite minds comprehend of Him ?

We have reason to thank Him that he has made so much of himself known in creation, in providence, and in the Word of his grace, as is necessary for our pre-

^a Goldsmith's Hermit.

sent benefit and our future happiness. But even with this revelation, we must confess with Job, “ Lo, these are parts of his ways ;
“ but how little a portion is heard of Him !
“ but the thunder of his power who can
“ understand ? ” “ He is infinite and in-
“ comprehensible ; our understandings and
“ capacities are weak and shallow, and the
“ full discoveries of the divine glory are
“ reserved for the future state. Even the
“ thunder of his power, that is, his power-
“ ful thunder, one of the lowest of his ways
“ here in our own region, we cannot under-
“ stand. Much less can we understand the
“ utmost force and extent of his power, the
“ terrible efforts and operations of it, and
“ particularly the power of his anger . ”
Though we cannot understand this power, yet the effects of it are visible, and demand our attention for our own improvement.

To the adoption of this line of conduct, Amos exhorts his countrymen. From being a herdsman of 'Tekoa'^d, he was called to be a prophet, at a time when Israel was sunk in profligacy and ripening for ruin. He

b Job xxvi. 14.

c Henry on Job xxvi. 14.

d Amos i. 1.

reproves them sharply for their sins, warns them of their danger, and exhorts them to repentance. The chapter from whence our text is taken, begins with a fearful lamentation over the house of Israel, predicting their approaching end. He from this takes occasion to exhort them to seek the Lord, that they might live, and not to seek Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, nor pass to Beersheba, that is, not to persist in the idolatries practised in those places; for these idolatries could not save them from God, whose wrath would overwhelm his enemies and annihilate all opposition. He then addresses those in Israel who turned judgment into wormwood and left off righteousness in the earth, in the words of the text, which contains a magnificent description of Jehovah's power, as manifested in the formation and superintendance of the natural world; a power which will be displayed in punishing ungodly persons, especially those who are exalted in civil society, and abuse their stations to the purposes of ungodliness. Reminding them of this important truth, he exhorts them to seek his favour before it be too late, and by timely repentance avert his

wrath. Such is the tenor of the prophet's reasoning. Without attending more to the connexion, I design to use God's power as displayed in the natural world, as an argument for us to seek him in the ways of his gracious appointment.

I. To describe the different displays of Almighty power in the natural world, would be an endless work. The notices of the prophet will both guide and limit our inquiry.

1. He "maketh the seven stars and Orion," that is, he formed the Constellations of heaven.

The names here given to two of these, are taken from the Greek version of the book of Job: for in that version they are totally omitted in the text. What particular constellations they are, is not known with certainty. It is supposed, by some of the best writers, that the names by which they are called, are correct. If so, the seven stars or Pleiades are situated in the neck of the Bull in the Zodiac, and by their rising^d, in the days of Job, announced the return of

^d They appear about the end of March.

the spring. Orion is just before the Bull^e, and by his rising^f, gave intimations of approaching winter.

Consistent with this explanation, sweet influences are ascribed to Pleiades, and bands to Orion. “Canst thou,” says God to Job, “bind the sweet influences of “Pleiades?” that is, stop the fertility of the earth consequent on the rising of this constellation. “Canst thou loosen the bands “of Orion?” or, open the earth hardened at the rising of this constellation. Agreeable to this opinion, the original word of Pleiades, or seven stars, signifies heat, and of Orion, cold^g.

Both these constellations God made; marked out for them their path, and by them the inhabitants of the earth, in the time of Job and of the prophets, were taught the revolutions of the seasons^h.

^e Goguet supposes it to be the constellation Scorpio. Origin of Laws, vol. i. dissert. 2.

^f It appears about the middle of November. Brown's Dict. and Calmet's Dict.

^g כסיר כימה. Parkhurst's Lex. and Bates' Heb. Crit.

^h Newcome calls these constellations ‘Hyades and Arcturus.’ Goode considers our translation as correct. His words on this passage are these: “I have concurred with our common version in following the synonyms of the

As the Israelites were prone to idolatry, and idolatrous homage was paid in those days to the stars of heaven, perhaps to those here named, the prophet very pertinently informs them that the Lord made them. How great must His power be, who called them forth by a word into being, and keeps them in their places! How great His power, who so directs the machine of na-

Septuagint, so far as they go, as believing them to be nearly, if not altogether correct; and under this interpretation of the passage, the Pleiades, (כִּימָה, *chimah*,) are elegantly opposed to Orion, (כֶּסֶל, *chesil*,) as the vernal renovation of nature is opposed to its wintry destruction; the mild and open benignity of spring to the severe and icy inactivity of winter. The Pleiades are a constellation of seven stars in the sign of Taurus, and make their appearance in the spring time; whence they are denominated by Virgil, *Virgilia*, spring signs. The Hebrew term *Chimah*, is peculiarly beautiful in its origin, and implies whatever is desirable, delightful, or lovely; for such is the force of the radical verb כָּמָה. It is probable, that from the term *Chesil*, (Orion,) the Hebrews derived the name of their first winter month, which they denominate Chislu, and which corresponds with a part of our own November. The constellation itself appears towards the end of November, through December, and a part of January, and hence becomes a correct and elegant synecdoche for the winter at large." Goode's Job. Note on the xxxviii. chap. v. 31.

See also the editor of Calmet's Dictionary, in Scripture Illustrated, on Job ix. and xxxviii.

ture, as to afford us regular returns of the seasons!

When we contemplate the intricacies of the universe, and behold all things, notwithstanding, preserved in their order, we cannot but be filled with wonder at His perfections who sits at the helm. In the solar system all is grand; it absolutely beggars description. How much more grand must He be who is its author and preserver!

2. He “turneth the shadow of death into “morning, and maketh the day dark with “night.”

He affords the vicissitudes of day and night. The latter is called the shadow of death, because descriptive of it. Then silence prevails throughout the works of God, and man lies locked in the embrace of sleep, insensible and careless of what passes around him, whether pleasant or otherwise. Thus silence reigns in the grave, and the dead hear not the voice of the charmer. They see not the beauties of creation, nor are conscious of any thing around them. This shadow of death, this night, God turneth into morning; and the day again, in return,

he maketh dark with the night. How great the contrast between these two!

How admirable His power, who stately causes the one to succeed to the other! In the morning he makes his sun to arise and gladden the earth. Then commences the exertions of industry. All nature is alive. It is the time for activity and enjoyment. In the night, dark shades envelope the earth; the noise of life is no more heard. It is the time for rest and sleep. In this arrangement of God, there is infinite wisdom as well as infinite power displayed. Well would it be for men did their manner of life accord with it. But human folly always opposes itself to the wisdom of God. The day, at least the morningⁱ, by many is spent in sleep, and the night in activi-

ⁱ “ I will here record the observation which I have found of great use to myself, and to which I may say, that the production of this work, (Family Expositor) and most of my other writings is owing; viz. that the difference between rising at 5 and at 7 o'clock in the morning, for the space of 40 years, supposing a man to go to bed at the same hour at night, is nearly equivalent to the addition of 10 years to a man's life, of which (supposing the two hours in question to be spent) eight hours every day should be employed in study and devotion.” Doddridge's Fam. Expos. on Rom. xiii. 13.

ty. By this much pleasure is lost, as well as health impaired.

Creation, after shaking off the shades of night, puts on new beauties in the morning. One of the grand spectacles presented to our view in the natural world, is the sun rising in the east, and the darkness rolling off to the west. The effect of contrast in this particular is striking. You saw it recently, in another particular, which equally displays the power of God. In the late eclipse of the sun^k, he turned the day into night, and the night into day. You saw the shadows of the one gradually descending, and the beams of the other as gradually dispersing those shadows. It was a sublime and solemn scene, faintly picturing to the mind that awful period when the sun shall literally be darkened. This will happen to each of us on the day of our death, and to the universe on the day of judgment. This night of death will again be turned into the morning, when we shall be raised from our graves.

All this will be done by the power of God. He orders and directs second causes, as means by which his purposes are ex-

ecuted. He established the ordinances of day and night in the plan by which the heavenly bodies are still directed. And though our day was recently turned into night by the intervention of the moon, coming between our earth and the sun, yet this, as a part of his established plan, displays his power. How often does he occasion darkness by gathering clouds, hanging the heavens as it were in black; thus obscuring the light of day, and reflecting on the earth a melancholy twilight. At those seasons nature seems to mourn; a sad foreboding stillness reigns.

Unconfined, however, to second causes, God often darkens the earth without their aid. Thus it was at the crucifixion of Christ, which happened at a time when the situation of the earth and moon prevented an eclipse^l. It was a preternatural dark-

^l "Christ suffered on the day on which the Passover was eaten by the Jews; on which day it was impossible that the moon's shadow should fall on the earth; for the Jews kept the Passover at the time of full moon: nor does the darkness in total eclipses of the sun, last above four minutes in any place, whereas the darkness at the crucifixion lasted three hours, (Matt. xxvii. 15.) and overspread at least all the land of Judea." Ferguson's Astronomy, sect. 352. "Many of

ness, such as that which covered the land of Egypt in the days of Moses. The Lord can, if he please, break through his plans, and suspend his own laws respecting the vicissitudes of night and day. Thus, he made the light of the sun stand still in Gibeah, and that of the moon, in the valley of Ajalon^m.

In whatever way it is done, by whatever means, he is the grand agent in directing the changes of day and night. He turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night.

3. "He calleth for the waters of the sea,

the Christian Fathers observe, in their writings, that this darkness was taken notice of by the Heathens themselves. To this purpose, we have still remaining the words of Phlegon, the freed-man of Hadrian, the Roman emperor, as quoted by Eusebius in his *Chronic.* and Origin cont. *Celsum*. That heathen author, in treating of the 4th year of 202d Olympiad, which is the 19th of Tiberius, and supposed to be the year in which our Lord was crucified, tells us, "That the greatest eclipse of the sun that ever was known, happened then; for the day was so turned into night, that the stars in the heavens were seen." If Phlegon, as Christians generally suppose, is speaking of the darkness which accompanied our Lord's crucifixion, it was not circumscribed within the land of Judea, but must have been general; for Phlegon says, this eclipse, accompanied with an earthquake, occurred in *Bythinia*." Macknight's *Harmony*, sect. 147. Calmet on the word *Darkness*. Clarke on *Matt.* xxvii. 45.

^m In fragment 154 of *Script. Illust.* this subject is examined. Clarke's *Com.* on *Josh.* x. 12, 13.

“ and poureth them out upon the face of
“ the earth.”

He made the sea as well as the dry land. He has prescribed its limits, and keeps it therein by his power. By his power he calleth for the waters thereof, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth. He causes the vapours to ascend from the sea and moist places, through the action of the sun, to form clouds, and from thence again to precipitate rain upon the earth in such abundance as to swell rivers over their channels, pouring their floods on the dry land. He broke up the fountains of the great deep, in the days of Noah, and overflowed this earth with the deluge, so as to destroy every living creature save those which were in the ark. He gives liberty to the sea, and it makes inroads on the land. How often on the coasts thereof does it spread devastations far and wide. Entering into cities, it overthrows the strongest works and buries in ruins the noblest edificesⁿ. It obeys the call of God in so doing; that call—that word which brought into existence the uni-

ⁿ Alluding to the ravages of a storm on the coast, some time before.

verse and its inhabitants! What must his power be, thus to control and direct the mighty ocean? He bids the waves be still, and they obey. He calls them forth, and like vast mountains they collect and pour forth their whole strength on the face of the earth. This he effects generally by another element, the wind. The force which this possesses, God has given.

“ He rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm^o.”

The tempest he excites, and can easily still. With the wind he agitates the bosom of the sea, and with it he adds to the violence of the falling rain, or overflowing river. The elements being his creatures, are his instruments; so are the planets; so are the day and night. “ The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work^p.” Great is he in power and mighty in deeds. The thunder is his, and the lightning also. When he commands, all nature obeys. Its most stupendous as well as most insignificant parts are subject to his dominion, and under his control.

Such is He whose name is Jehovah, the

^o Addison.

^p Ps. xix. 1.

self-existent Being, the maker and preserver of all things; whose glory he will not give to another, neither his praise to graven images^l. Before Him the Almighty God, heroes and potentates sink into insignificance; the gods of the heathen are despicable, dumb idols. He alone is able to kill or to save, to preserve or to destroy. As such, then, he must be worshipped—his favour must be sought after. He is not, though infinitely powerful, tyrannical in the exercise of his power, with reverence be it spoken—he is infinitely perfect. Love guides his power. He pities us, bears with us, and is ready to receive us in Christ. Therefore the duty is evident, it can admit of no doubt.

II. Seek Him who is thus powerful in the natural world, but whose power is directed in its exercise towards sinful men, by his goodness and love. “Seek him,” says the prophet to Israel, “and not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba.” In these places idols were worshipped, those perishing vanities of the hea-

then, and that by Jehovah's chosen people^q. As idolatry, in some form or other, is the besetting sin of our fallen race, so the direction of the prophet warns us against confidence in ourselves, or in others, or in any of the things of this life. Seek him, and him alone, in whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life.

To seek the Lord is to search his word, that we may know his will; to supplicate his blessing, without which we cannot be happy, and depend upon his grace for ability to glorify him here, and enjoy him hereafter. That this duty may be performed acceptably to him, and successfully by ourselves, our hearts must be properly exercised, as well as our minds correctly informed. These two leading ideas will be kept in view in the following particulars, illustrating the nature of the prophet's direction.

^q In Bethel, Jeroboam set up his golden calves, 1 Kings xii. 28—33. Hence it was called Beth-aven. Gilgal was also a place where idols were worshipped, Hos. iv. 15. Amos iv. 4, 5. Beersheba belonged to Judah, 1 Kings xix. 3. That it was the scene of idolatry, see Amos viii. 14.

1. Seek the Lord as your chief good, the author of all perfection, the overflowing fountain of mercy and love.

He might justly have left us in our perishing condition after the fall, without hope. We had utterly forfeited his favour, and merited his infinite and eternal displeasure. But in wrath he remembered mercy, and revealed the Lord Jesus as the Redeemer of sinful men. Yes, Brethren, the High and the Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, who needs not our praises to promote his glory or his happiness, condescended to regard our rebellious race with an eye of pity, and to provide for us a way of escape from the awful consequences of our apostacy. From the throne of his grace he proclaims, Ye children of men, ye have destroyed yourselves; but in me is your help. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, “all the ends of the earth; for I am God, “and there is none else.” “I, even I, am “he that blotteth out thy transgressions for “mine own sake, and will not remember “thy sins.” Astonishing fact! “God so “loved the world, that he gave his only

r Is. xlv. 22.

s Is. xliii. 25.

“ begotten Son, that whosoever believeth
 “ in him should not perish, but have ever-
 “ lasting life^s.”

Think of his infinite love, in thus giving his Son to redeem a lost world. Oh, what a brightness does the cross shed around the divine character! Here you see wisdom and power, justice and peace, all combined in the utmost harmony. “ Who
 “ indeed is a God like unto” him, “ that
 “ pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the
 “ transgression of the remnant of his heri-
 “ tage? he retaineth not his anger for ever,
 “ because he delighteth in mercy^t.” This
 is “ The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and
 “ gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in
 “ goodness and truth, keeping mercy for
 “ thousands, forgiving iniquity and trans-
 “ gression, and sin, and that will by no
 “ means clear the guilty^u.” He is “ a sun
 “ and shield: The Lord will give grace
 “ and glory: no good thing will he with-
 “ hold from them that walk uprightly^x.”
 “ Every good gift and every perfect gift is
 “ from above, and cometh down from the

^s John iii. 16. ^t Micah vii. 13. ^u Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.

^x Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

“ Father of lights, with whom is no variable-
“ ness, neither shadow of turning^{gr^y}.”

Seek this merciful and gracious Being, whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life; who can make you for ever and infinitely blessed, or for ever and infinitely miserable. Seek him who can open to you the gates of paradise, there to taste of the water of the river of life; or, who can cast you down to hell, there to writhe in torture in the lake of perdition.

2. Seek the Lord in the sincere and earnest use of the means of grace which he hath appointed.

These are channels through which he dispenses his blessings, and of which he has made it our duty to avail ourselves. These you must use as ^{undone} (sinners) in yourselves; unable to please him by your own power; and relying altogether upon his grace to assist and bless you. Thus you must attend on the preaching and reading of his word; thus you must pray to him, and thus you must seek him in all his works and ways. He is a prayer-hearing God, and will be found by all who seek from

him aright, the grace which they need. Go to him as you are; confessing your multiplied offences, enumerating the aggravating circumstances with which they are attended; bewailing your folly, the hardness of your hearts, and the sinfulness of your conduct. Take your places in the dust; be abased before God, and cry mightily to him for mercy. Continue instant in your prayers, never ceasing till you find the Lord. Be not discouraged if you receive no answer; rather be animated to a more lively exercise of this duty. Realize more of its importance, and of the necessity of sincerity, earnestness, and perseverance. Remember it is God whom you address, and salvation for your souls that you seek. Hide nothing from the Lord, stating your case exactly as it is; pleading with him and representing your necessity—your misery—your poverty. Mention his invitations—his calls—his promises. Remind him of his own glory; of the fulness there is in Christ, and of the triumph which grace will obtain in your salvation. Let the temper of your minds be a praying one, and let your desires continually ascend to the throne of

grace. Retire frequently for the express purpose of calling upon God and seeking his favour.

Let your intensesness and engagedness be proportioned to the magnitude of the blessings which you seek to obtain. “ Which of
“ you shall have a friend, and shall go unto
“ him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend,
“ lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine
“ in his journey is come to me, and I have
“ nothing to set before him? And he from
“ within shall answer and say, Trouble me
“ not: the door is now shut, and my chil-
“ dren are with me in bed; I cannot rise
“ and give thee. I say unto you, Though he
“ will not rise and give him, because he is
“ his friend, yet because of his importunity
“ he will rise and give him as many as he
“ needeth. And I say unto you, Ask,
“ and it shall be given you; seek, and ye
“ shall find; knock, and it shall be opened
“ unto you. For every one that asketh,
“ receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth:
“ and to him that knocketh, it shall be
“ opened. If a son shall ask bread of any
“ of you that is a father, will he give him a
“ stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a

“ fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask
 “ an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If
 “ ye then, being evil, know how to give
 “ good gifts unto your children; how much
 “ more shall your heavenly Father give the
 “ Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”
 “ But let him ask in faith, nothing waver-
 “ ing.”

Such are the directions and encouragements which Jesus Christ himself has given unto us on this subject. Reduce these directions as well as those which relate to the other means of grace, to daily and habitual practice. Act upon these ample and these animating encouragements. Be in earnest in what you do, and see that your hearts are right with God. Use every means with that seriousness and engagedness which befit all the institutions of God.

3. Seek the Lord under the deepest impressions of your awful apostacy from him.

Sin is not a trifle; it is a malignant evil. God hath pronounced it an accursed thing. This corrupts the powers of your bodies, and the faculties of your souls. Your hearts are affected by it as well as your lives. It pre-

^y Luke xi. 5—13.

^z James i. 6.

vents you from rendering unto God the tribute of love which you owe him. It disqualifies you for his friendship here, and his enjoyment hereafter. It makes you the sport of casualties—the victim of your passions—the enemy of your own happiness.

In looking back upon your past conduct, and recollecting your motives, have they been such as conscience approves? Do you not perceive pride and a worldly spirit to predominate in your minds? Is it not a lamentable truth that God who made you and blesses you; God who inspects your lives, and will judge you, is far from your thoughts? What are your pursuits? Such as will comfort you in adversity, support you in death, and be a crown of rejoicing in eternity? On the contrary, are they not vain things? I say vain, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. Let them be reputable, or grave, or honourable, what are they in the prospect of futurity? They may benefit your worldly condition; but do they prepare you for your long home? They may make you appear to advantage in the eyes of men; but will they make you acceptable to God? You make provision for

your bodies, but they will soon lie down in the grave and crumble in the dust. Have you secured a haven of rest for your souls which never die? You devote all your attention to that part of you which before long will be as though it had never been; whilst you neglect that part which retains its consciousness and its susceptibility of pleasure or pain, without cessation or end. You serve the world which you must leave behind you, whilst you disobey God before whom you must shortly appear. You have an accumulating mass of transgressions for which you must account, and yet you are indifferent about the great High Priest of sinners.

He has stood for years at the door of your hearts, suing for admittance, and for years you have refused. He has died that you might live, and you will not receive him, but choose death rather than life. He is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance, and you solicit it not at his hand. He opens his bosom pierced by the spear—points to his hands and feet in which are the prints of the nails—and says, This I suffered for you: you close your eyes to

the sight—turn your backs upon the speaker—and stop your ears to his voice. He pursues you, crying, Why will you die, I have no pleasure in your death. You fly from him, chasing the phantoms of a moment, and despising the realities of eternity. He meets you again in your course, and asks, What have I done unto you, ye children of men, that ye avoid me—hate me—and refuse to receive my blessings? You practically reply, What have we to do with thee, thou son of David? Art thou come to torment us before our time? He expostulates on your folly, and bids you look to the end of your way—to the grave—to the bar of judgment—to heaven—and to hell. Stifling your convictions, like Felix, you dismiss him to some more convenient season.

Thus it is that you treat God and Jesus Christ, and salvation through his blood; and thus you have done for days and weeks, and months and years. You have done so in spite of mercies and of judgments; in defiance of warnings and in opposition to entreaties. Realize then your conduct, and seek the Lord under the most solemn and humbling sense of your awful apostacy from him.

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4. Seek the Lord by walking in the ways of his commandments.

“ Let the wicked,” saith God, “ forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” You must alter the whole course of your past lives : they have been contrary to the divine law ; you must now live according to its demands. It is not sufficient for you to shed tears on account of your offences : you must abandon the practice of them. The wrong you have done, you must do no more. “ Thou art more righteous than I :” said Saul to David, “ for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. And he lifted up his voice and wept^b.” But for all this he followed David again and pursued after him. Ahab, when he heard the threatnings of God by the prophet, “ rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly ;” but with all this parade he retained Naboth’s vineyard. Beware of imitating these un-

a Is. lv. 7. b 1 Sam. xxiv. 17. 16. c 1 Kings xxi. 27.

godly men. Not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well. Attend carefully to the import of God's word; reverence all his institutions; and obey all his commandments. Deny self; mortify your members which are upon the earth; govern your passions and appetites. Live in a manner consistent with your obligations, and as become all those who are travelling to an eternal world.

Much is to be done by you. Time lost must be redeemed. The mischief occasioned by your past sins must be remedied by your future obedience. If you are parents, your neglect may have affected your children. Strive to efface from their minds impressions unfavourable to piety. Allure them to the paths of true religion by your good example. Act thus in the different relations which you sustain in life, that all with whom you are connected, may be benefited by you in time to come. Avoid with care and diligence every temptation to sin; even the appearance of it; nay, the very garment spotted with iniquity. Your sinful companions must be forsaken, and new ones must be chosen. Your

pursuits must accord with the nature of penitence and faith in Jesus. You must conduct yourselves as dying mortals ought to do, laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven; looking not at the things which are seen, which are temporal; but at those which are not seen, which are eternal.

Thus then seek the Lord by putting off, “concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;” and by putting on “the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

5. Seek the Lord by submitting to the dispensations of his providence, and improving them to his glory.

He is Sovereign of the universe; whose kingdom is over all. His providence is his preservation and government of all things. Nothing happens by chance. The word ought to be expunged from the Christian’s vocabulary. Whatever is unexpected or accidental to us, is only a part of God’s providence; a part of that plan which he devised in eternity, and which he develops daily in the world. Living as we do, in a

mixed dispensation, we must expect our share of trials as well as mercies. Afflictions spring not from the dust; they happen at the wise disposal of God. None of them are joyous; yet all are calculated for our good, and will assuredly promote it, if we improve them. Submission to Almighty God, in every event, is a duty which reason as well as the Gospel teach us. In the Gospel alone, however, it is placed on its proper basis; for therein alone the doctrine of providence is clearly revealed. This submission is not merely passive, but active; it includes a discharge of duty, as well as suffering of misfortune; and both are to be done with cheerfulness. In this way we must seek God, by glorifying him in all his dealings, and justifying his moral government of the world.

6. Seek the Lord, by believing in his Son Jesus Christ.

No one can come to God, save through the Son. The testimony of God concerning him, as recorded in the Gospel, is, that he is a perfect Saviour, in whom he is well pleased, and through whom he is reconciling sinners to himself. Faith

in Christ is “ saving grace, whereby we “ receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered in the Gospel.” Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, to sinful men. He alone can qualify us by his Spirit, for serving God aright here, and enjoying him hereafter.

Faith in him is the first and most essential duty of the Christian life. We cannot seek God successfully without it, for unbelief, which prevails where faith is wanting, makes God a liar, and dishonours him. How then can any, whilst they believe not in Christ, seek God? How can they perform any moral duty acceptably to God, whilst they contradict his own words, and endeavour to rob him of his veracity? It is an incontrovertible truth, that, “ Whatsoever is not “ of faith is sin^d.”

By faith in Christ, then, and in no other way, can we be enabled to seek God as our chief good; to use the means of grace aright; to be humbled under a sense of our apostacy from God; to walk in the ways of his commandments; and to submit to, and improve the dispensations of his providence.

^c West. Short. Cat.

^d Rom. xiv. 23.

We are all, Men and Brethren, in the hands of an Almighty God, whose power is irresistible, whom none can control. How terrible is this power to guilty sinners—a power which will be exerted for their destruction, if they continue and die impenitent! What cause have they to tremble! They are not left without a witness. They are warned yearly and daily in the natural world as well as in the Gospel. How often do they on any uncommon appearances, such as the late eclipse, give up all for lost! Let them be exhorted to seek the favour of that glorious Being, who is over all, before it be too late. Why should they die? Oh, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!” Reflect for a moment, I beseech you, on his nature. When he uttereth his voice, the earth melteth^d. “He toucheth the hills, and they smoke^e.” What then is man before him? Can you oppose him with success? Will he be mocked or disobeyed with impunity? No. Be assured he will fulfil his pleasure: he will vindicate his authority. Cast yourselves, then, on his

^c Heb. x. 31.

^d Ps. xlvi. 6.

^e Ps. civ. 32.

mercy; a mercy freely tendered to you through Jesus Christ.

Seek the Lord, and live. Let him who hath neglected the grace of God, search after it as hidden treasure. Let all secure an interest in His favour, who made the constellations of heaven, and will destroy them; who affords us day and night, and will by death turn our day into night; who now pours floods of water on the earth, in token of his displeasure, but will pour hereafter floods of wrath on the ungodly. Your season is wearing away. Hasten to improve it. Let it not be your lamentable cry, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved’.”

Let those who are in distress, through afflictive providences, seek Him who disperses them; whose power is infinite; who never acts but for the wisest purposes. He it is who turns the day of prosperity into the night of adversity; who closes the eyes of relations and friends in the darkness of the shadow of death; who, instead of joy, sends wailing and sorrow. Seek him who hath power to reverse all this; who here

raises from the depths of sorrow to the height of happiness; who hereafter will say to the dead, "Arise;" and turn their darkness into the morning of eternity. Seek him by supplicating his grace, that every event may be sanctified. Seek him by laying hold on Christ through faith, and drawing from his fulness all necessary consolations.

Let believers continue seeking the favour of Almighty God, rejoicing in their past enjoyment of it, and striving to retain the same. What unspeakable happiness do they experience from the consideration of Jehovah's power; a power pledged to bear them safe through life! When they look to the heavens and behold its beauties: when they participate in the sweet influences of spring, and the gloom of winter; in the returns of the morning and of the evening: when they see the sky hung with clouds: when they hear the rolling of the thunder above, and the sweeping of the tempest below, in all these things they discern the power of their reconciled Father.

Believers, follow on to know the Lord. Quicken your diligence. Your full salvation draweth nigh. He whose name is Je-

hovah is hastening on the accomplishment of his purposes concerning you and the universe. In a little while your day will be turned into darkness; in a little while Pleiades and Orion will be extinguished. At the appointed period the exterminating angel will proclaim that time shall be no more. Then the sun will be darkened for ever; then the stars will fall from heaven; then the floods will be dried up; then the heavens and the earth will be wrapped in flames, and pass away with a great noise. Then, believers, you will be safe, having sought and found Him who doeth all these things. You will rest on the rock of ages, and look with calmness on the final catastrophe of nature. Comfort one another with this glorious hope; prepare to meet this almighty God. AMEN.

SERMON X.



THE BLESSEDNESS OF A TRIUMPHANT
BELIEVER.



REVELATION III. 12.

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God ; and I will write upon him my new name.

TO believers the journey of life is peculiarly fatiguing. In addition to those troubles which are common to them as men, they experience innumerable temptations unknown to the ungodly. They carry about with them a body of sin and of death, and are surrounded by watchful and malignant enemies, who incessantly harass them.

Satan shoots his fiery darts into their souls, exciting distrust and murmurings. The world insinuates that it is in vain to serve God; and holds out to them the cup of pleasure, urging them to drown all care with its intoxicating delights. Infidelity casts a mantle over the region beyond the grave, and writes on the tomb, "Death is an eternal sleep." Corrupt nature enters with avidity into the schemes of all these, and stimulates the passions and appetites to rebellion against God.

Thus situated, believers must fight the good fight of faith; they must resist even unto blood. They are not their own; they are bought with a price. Jesus, who is their Redeemer, is the Captain of their salvation. Enlisted under his banner, they are soldiers in the best of all causes. They battle for God against the prince of darkness. Hence, though weak in themselves, in their Lord they are strong. Through him they can do all things. He is ever mindful of them, and ever ready to succour them. He will bear them in safety to their journey's end. He is at their right hand and at their left, bidding them to be of good cheer.

“ Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast
“ which thou hast, that no man take thy
“ crown^a,” cries the divine Saviour. Amidst
the trials of life he directs their views to the
harvest of glory. They that sow in tears,
shall reap in joy. Perseverance through
his grace will ensure a mighty victory, deci-
sive and final: after which, the victor will
meet with his reward. “ Him that overcom-
“ eth, will I make a pillar in the temple of
“ my God, and he shall go no more out,
“ and I will write upon him the name of
“ my God, and the name of the city of
“ my God, which is New Jerusalem, which
“ cometh down out of heaven: and I will
“ write upon him my new name.”

By contemplating the reward of him that
overcometh, our faith will be strengthened,
and our graces quickened. We will also
be enabled to pay a suitable tribute of res-
pect to the memory of an eminent servant
of Christ gone to rest. Let us, then,

I. Attend to the promise: and,

II. Apply the subject.

I. Our Lord in the promise, alludes to
the practice of ancient conquerors. When

^a Rev. iii. 11.

they had achieved any important victory, or gained a memorable conquest, they erected pillars near to, or in, the temples of their gods, and in other places, as monuments of the same. On these were inscribed the names of their gods, of the conquerors, of their cities, and of the captains by whose conduct the victory or conquest was obtained^b.

From this allusion, it is evident that our Lord's design in these words, is to represent the triumphant believer, his trials being over, and his contest ended, as a monument of divine grace, immutably fixed by his power in the temple or church above. In the temple below he was also a pillar, but being composed of perishable materials, he is liable to decay. Above, however, mortality has put on immortality; corruption has put on incorruption. As a monument, he will be to the praise of the glory of Almighty grace. He was not made a believer by might or power, but by Jehovah's spirit. The commencement and progress of the divine life in him, was solely of grace. Transplanted into

^b Doddridge on the text.

eternity, he is established amidst the shoutings of grace, grace. On him is written the name of Jehovah, under whose auspices he was erected as a monument thus immutably fixed; also the name of Jehovah's city, in which he is now placed; and the name of the great Captain of salvation, by whose power the victory, of which he is a monument, was gained. The "writing" of these names on him, denotes a public recognition and reception of the believer as a child of God; a citizen of the new Jerusalem; and one of the redeemed of the Lord Jesus.

How glorious, how blessed, then, is the state of the triumphant believer in heaven! How durable, beyond even the possibility of a change! Who sees not at one glance, in the promise of the text, a reward infinitely delightful and interesting to man—a reward calculated to satisfy in the most ample manner the boundless desires of an immortal spirit! The prospect of a haven near at hand is not half so pleasant or comfortable to the tempest-tost mariner, as that of heaven is

to the humble follower of the Lamb. Though for him to live be Christ, yet to die is gain^c. By death he is translated from this earthly temple, the Church militant, to that which is above, the Church triumphant. What a contrast! what an exchange! He has left the earth, which is Jehovah's footstool, and has come to heaven which is his throne.

Though Jehovah fills all space, and is omnipresent, yet in heaven he particularly dwells, and from thence, as from a throne, he governs the world. As a temple built by him, it is not merely declarative of his boundless wisdom and power, but also of his boundless benevolence. It is the temple of Christ's God--that God who in and through Christ is a reconciled Father to all sincere penitents. To him Christ is subordinate as Mediator, and therefore calls him in the text, "My God." Thus this temple, the Church triumphant, though it is the theatre of Jehovah's infinite majesty, also exhibits the mighty effects of Jesus' love. In its construction, therefore, the infinite goodness, as well as the infinite grandeur of

^c Phil. i. 21.

the One Supreme is strikingly visible. John in his visions saw this temple, this glorious Church descending from heaven in the form of a city, even the new Jerusalem; prepared as a bride for her husband; having the glory of God. “ Her light was like unto
“ a stone most precious, even like a jasper
“ stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall
“ great and high, and had twelve gates,
“ and at the gates twelve angels;” “ and
“ the building of the wall of it was of jas-
“ per; and the city was pure gold, like
“ unto clear glass. And the foundations of
“ the wall of the city were garnished with
“ all manner of precious stones.” “ The
“ Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are
“ the temple of it. And the city had no
“ need of the sun, neither of the moon, to
“ shine in it; for the glory of God did
“ lighten it, and the Lamb is the light there-
“ of.” “ And the gates of it shall not be shut
“ at all by day; for there shall be no night
“ there.” “ And there shall in no wise
“ enter into it any thing that defileth, nei-
“ ther whatsoever worketh abomination, or

“maketh a lie : but they which are written
“in the Lamb’s book of life.”

How superb then, how grand, how inconceivably magnificent and unutterably delightful must be this temple above, this Church triumphant! In it, he that overcometh, is fixed as a pillar, as a monument of grace!

1. He is recognized as a child of God :
“Upon him will I write the name of my
“God,” saith the glorious Redeemer.

Here on earth he had been, originally, a rebel against God. To him he owed his being, and from him he derived all his blessings ; yet he disobeyed his law. His carnal mind was enmity against him. He loved what God hated, and hated what God loved. Whilst he was thus rebelliously disposed, in a memorable hour, divine grace made him a new creature. From a rebel he became a friend of God. Thus converted, he was introduced into the family of the Most High, as a son ; and as such experienced his favour which is life, and his loving-kindness which is better than life. He, however, knew

but in part, and he prophesied in part. At best, like the Jewish believers, he was under a species of tutors and governors. He saw through a glass darkly, and enjoyed the communion of God sparingly. His views of the divine glory were oft-times clouded; sometimes too dazzling. He could only meet with God in the use of the means, and experience his favour in and through them. His happiness in God was therefore not complete. He was indeed a son of Jehovah, but was not yet established in this state free from alarms, or from doubts. He was exposed to temptation, liable to backslide, and for a season to fall. His sonship however is consummated, now that he is fixed as a pillar in the temple above. Being established in his Father's household, he participates freely and fully in all the privileges and delights thereof. The faculties of his soul are all of them purified from sin, and continually enlarging in their capacities. The divine nature, together with the mysteries of providence and grace, are the objects of the researches and the discoveries of his understanding. His will is

at all times in an unvaried manner conformed to his Father's will. His affections, which as blossoms budded here, there blow in all the fulness of heavenly beauty, without the least defect. The powers of his body harmonize with the faculties of his soul. Being no longer a vessel of dishonour, it exhibits none of the defilements and distresses to which it was subject in life. His Father has clothed it with a garment of light, bright with the lustre of his own glory. Faith is now swallowed up in vision, and hope in enjoyment. He sees God face to face; he knows even as he is known. He wants no means by which he must meet with his Father: but has direct access to his throne. He has free and unrestrained communion with him, and enjoys his favour in an unclouded and uninterrupted manner. He is put in complete possession of his inheritance, to which his hope was directed in life. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive that happiness of soul and body, which awaits the believer hereafter as the child of God.

2. He is recognized as a citizen of the City of God. "I will write upon him the name of the City of my God which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven." He partakes therefore of all the privileges, mixes in all the social intercourse, and joins in all the employments of the New Jerusalem.

First. The privileges of this city are security from enemies, and the enjoyment of rest in its bosom. Hence the believer, enjoying the privileges of a citizen of heaven, is secure :

(1.) From his spiritual enemies. Here they harrassed him ; but there they cannot disturb him. Satan cannot pour his fiery darts into the soul, nor tempt him to sin. The world cannot influence him to be unfaithful. Its honours, riches, and pleasures are there unknown. Corrupt nature cannot deceive, for the body of sin and death is slain. Over these enemies the believer has triumphed ; yea, he has through Jesus overcome death itself. Through Jesus he is more than conqueror. His victory has been decisive. He is free from their power for ever ; for ever beyond all their attacks. There, where he

is, no spoiler is ever seen. No adversary comes near that blessed abode. Thus secure from enemies,

(2.) He enjoys the rest of heaven. Having no sin, he is without sorrow. He experiences no cares, nor alarms, nor anxieties. Being holy, he remains so without any disturbance of his repose. In that healthful region no evil winds do blow; no tempests or hurricanes are witnessed. The air is ever pure, calm, and pleasant. The day is unclouded. Brilliant light pervades its whole extent. Interposing clouds never appear. God is the sun of this region. His beams, while they dispel sorrow, engender joy. An unruffled quiet reigns around. The river of life laves all its borders. Scorching heats and freezing colds are never felt. “The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: “the people that dwell therein, shall be “forgiven their iniquity^e.” “God shall “wipe away all tears from their eyes; and “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be “any more pain^f.”

^e Is. xxxiii. 24. ^f Rev. xxi. 4.

Second. The triumphant believer mixes in the social intercourse of heaven. This is of the most perfect kind, consisting of “an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and Church of the first-born; God the Judge of all; the spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant.”

Thus you see that the believer mixes with angels, those pure spirits. You have already heard that he was admitted to communion with God. This he actually enjoys. He also finds himself in company with all the good and virtuous, from every nation, kindred, and tongue. These all meet in heaven. How pleasant the train of thought which this idea excites in the mind! The believer in the temple above is joined with the spirits of the just made perfect. In the flesh, he had read of Enoch, Abraham, and David, and other worthies of faith. He had admired and loved their character, while he sought to tread in their footsteps. Now, that he is fixed as a pillar in the temple above, he meets with them all: he sees

them face to face; he rejoices with them. In life good people are oft-times prevented from harmonizing, by providential dispensations, by differences of opinion, and the like; in heaven they will all be joined heart in hand, loving and beloved.

Oh, what a glorious, blessed company abide in heaven! The redeemed of the Lord dwell and reign there, clothed in white raiment, with crowns of glory on their heads, and palms of victory in their hands. Angels are their servants to minister to them. In the midst of this happy assembly towers Jesus their elder Brother, the object of their admiration and of their praise. Could I draw aside the veil, so as to unfold to your view the spectacle which is exhibited in the temple above; could we see how the ransomed of the Lord, with holy angels, crowd around the Saviour, casting their crowns at his feet; could we hear their ascriptions of praise to him in full chorus, and with all the rapture of high, ardent, and indescribable affections, the coldest heart in this assembly would be moved; the most insensible could not but

feel. Christ is their all in all. In his company and fellowship they enjoy supreme happiness.

Third. The triumphant believer joins in all the employments of the blessed.

What these are, may be imagined from different parts of Scripture. They will be engaged in worshipping God day and night. With this will be connected their continual and increasing improvement in every thing excellent and divine. Thus they will show forth the praises of Him who hath called them, and saved them with an holy calling. Seeing, tasting, and feeling *that* fulness of joy, and *those* pleasures for evermore, *which* have been prepared for them, they will continually contemplate, admire, and adore Him who has so signally blessed them. Their hearts, also, will expand with love to each other, which they will constantly display in corresponding actions. Through the wide extent of the temple above, they will range hand in hand, recounting the scenes of the world left behind, in all of which they now distinctly trace the hand of their Father. They com-

pare their past with their present state; and at the contrast their hearts bound with unspeakable delight.

Thus the happiness of heaven, though calm and undisturbed by any spoilers, includes in it activity. Every faculty of the inhabitants of this blessed place is exerted, every power strained, to fulfil the will of God. Their desires being all holy, are all gratified. Continued experience causes them cheerfully to submit to Jehovah's government. Their trust in him is without alloy and imperfection. In body and soul they are engaged and happy. As activity promotes happiness here, so there the employments being all holy, will continually increase their happiness.

3. The triumphant believer is recognized as one of the redeemed of the Lord. "I will write upon him my new name."

This new name is that of Christian—a nobler title than any on earth. To be thus acknowledged, will constitute a distinct source of happiness to the believer. It is the most endearing blessing which he enjoys in heaven. He fought under the banners of

Christ, in the Church militant. In the Church triumphant he is welcomed by the Captain of his salvation as a faithful soldier. He suffered below in the cause of his Master; above he is rewarded by his Master. He recollects his conduct in life; his relapses into sin; his frequent murmurings; his deficiencies in the performance of duty; his cowardice so often displayed in his conflict with the enemies of his Lord. When therefore, unworthy as he is in himself, and conscious that at the best he was but an unprofitable servant, he finds himself received in a distinguished manner by his Captain, his Prince, and that before the inhabitants of heaven, in the most open and public manner—all his imperfections overlooked—all his sins forgotten; his sensibility is excited beyond measure—his feelings of rapturous delight are inconceivable.

A redeemed of the Lord Christ is a character that will be glorious throughout eternity. Angels will view him with admiration. In him God is well pleased; because for him the Son of God became an infant of days, and a sufferer. What an idea! how

vast! how immense! too boundless for the finite mind to grasp.

Thus then, though once a rebel, he will be acknowledged by God as his son; though once a lover of sin and the world, he will be received as a citizen of heaven; though once a poor helpless creature, he will be applauded by his Saviour.

ling of
In this happy state he will continue for ever. As a pillar, "he shall go no more out." He never shall be removed out of the Church in glory. He will be established in knowledge, in love, in zeal, in activity; nay, in all these he will ever be increasing. His susceptibility ~~for~~ happiness will receive no ~~shock~~.
f? On earth, all is change, bustle, and noise. One generation goeth, another cometh. Friends and relatives, brethren in Jesus, oft-times separate through necessity; oft-times through death. No situation is permanent; no enjoyment durable. The sunshine of summer is followed by the cold and frost of winter. Gladness may prevail for a season, but sorrow succeeds. Far different from this is the state of the believer in heaven. There no change, no separa-

tion, nor succession of trouble to ease, will ever take place. In the temple above he shall remain a triumphant monument of grace, among the assembly of the just, emitting the lustre of his bliss all around. He will suffer no satiety, no disgust, but will increase in happiness, in joy, in glory, through the countless ages of eternity.

Such is the Christian's state in heaven.

Who does not, at the contemplation of such a state, exclaim with Balaam, "let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." His hope, like an anchor, is cast within the veil both sure and steadfast. Death to him, is merely the end of time—the commencement of eternity.

Notwithstanding this comfortable truth, how strongly are we disposed to murmur, when Jehovah calls off any of his chosen ones. The feelings of nature are oft-times stubborn and hostile to grace. It is just that we should mourn, but it is unjust that we should repine. Even in our genuine sorrow, there is perhaps more sel-

h Num. xxiii. 10.

i Ps. xxxvii. 37.

fishness than affection. We regret the loss of a friend, probably more than the death of a fellow mortal.

Such have been my reflections ; such the exercises of my mind, on a recent loss which the Church of Christ has sustained. Death has lately called off from this stage of existence, the Rev. Mr. Johnson, a minister belonging to our connexion^k. Though few of you personally knew him, yet his

^k The following notice was taken of his death, in one of the public papers, 1803.

“ Died, at Newtown, (L. I.) on the 29th ult. in the 33d year of his age, Mr. John B. Johnson, formerly one of the ministers of the Reformed Dutch Church in Albany, and last at Brooklyn. In consequence of his impaired health, he had withdrawn himself from the cares of a large congregation, and accepted a call where less exertions were required ; but his disease was too deeply rooted, and the change proved ineffectual to his relief. After the death of Mrs. Johnson, who left him with three infant children, in April last, he rapidly declined, and his complaint terminated in a consumption. Mr. Johnson was distinguished by abilities which marked him for extensive usefulness. His mind was improved by a liberal education, and indefatigable study. In the last days of his ministry, he became peculiarly instructive and acceptable, to discerning and experienced believers. The meekness of his temper, and a cheerful, unassuming deportment, gained him universal esteem. The pious loved him ; he had no enemies but the enemies of religion. His character was without stain. He died in the faith of those doctrines which

general character and standing, but especially the friendship and intimacy which subsisted between him and your pastor, influence me to improve the occasion of his death. In him, I have lost a most charming and edifying companion; a warm, tender, and honest friend. Of him, I can say as David did of Jonathan, "I am distressed for thee my brother: very pleasant hast thou been unto me!" Often have we held sweet communion with each other; often gone up together to the house of our God; often worshipped him in private. He was a man whom I greatly esteemed; a brother in the ministry, whom I sincerely and most tenderly loved. His loss, therefore, I sensibly feel. It has left a vacancy in my heart of the most painful kind.

he had preached to others; looking unto Jesus, he continued in the exercise of a lively hope and triumphant assurance, until he closed his labours and sufferings, and ascended, where joy, and peace, and love, for ever reign. The early removal of such a treasure—such superior talents—so much zeal and fortitude, blended with such amiable manners, and consecrated to the service of the divine Redeemer, is among the unaccountable dispensations of providence, to which it becomes us, with silent adoration, humbly to submit."

l 2 Sam. i. 26.

His mind was rather sprightly than vigorous. His imagination was vivid, though under the control of a sound judgment. His disposition was amiable; his sensibility exquisite. His manners were affable; his feelings refined. The improvement which he had made in literature, was such as entitled him to no ordinary respect among his cotemporaries. To these natural and acquired endowments, grace had given a finish which art can never imitate. He was a Christian. Christ was his hope and his glory. He knew in whom he believed. The exercises of his mind were of that humbling kind which, while they destroy pride, bring the soul nearer to God.

The power of grace added to his natural disposition, fitted him admirably for social intercourse. His cheerfulness, his easy deportment, and his cultivated understanding, gave him a preponderance in social intercourse which falls to the lot of but few. His colloquial talents rendered him a most welcome companion in the circles of piety and intelligence. Whilst his presence lighted up the smile of pleasure in the eye of the aged, the young hailed it with the most un-

disguised satisfaction. Perhaps with these accomplishments he had so much vivacity, in the early part of his ministry as sometimes appeared to approach levity. When occasion, however, required, he was sufficiently grave. Towards the last of his life he became more habitually grave in the whole of his deportment. This, instead of diminishing his social qualities, rather directed them more immediately in their proper channel.

In the composition of his discourses, he displayed both power of mind, and extent of acquirements. At first, he indulged himself too much in the flights of imagination; but for some years before his death, he corrected this mistake, so common among young men of genius, and became peculiarly instructive and edifying, especially to those who knew and loved the truth. It was Christ whom he was desirous of exalting, and the testimony of God concerning him, which he loved to declare, “not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power^l.”

l 1 Cor. ii. 4.

His delivery was greatly admired by many. It, however, at the first, partook too much of the vivacity of his disposition, and the imagination of his style, to be generally approved. As he became more grave in the one, and plain in the other, his eloquence became more and more that of the heart, which communicated its influence to the hearts of his hearers. He was not so much applauded, but the truths which he uttered were more generally felt.

As a member of our judicatories', he was highly respected by his brethren. When he spoke, old and young listened to him with attention and pleasure. His opinions always had weight. He thought and acted for himself, whilst he treated his fathers in the ministry with due deference, and arrogated no superiority over his compeers. Few men of his age have acquired so high a standing in the Church; few have been so universally beloved.

He is gone! But not before the partner of his bosom, the desire of his eyes, had been taken away. Their separation, however.

l At the time this sermon was delivered, the author was a minister of the Reformed Dutch Church.

was of short duration. They have rejoined each other under happier circumstances^m, leaving their orphan children to the care of the Father of the fatherless.

Of the state of his mind under his afflictions, you may judge from the following extracts from some of his letters to me. “ God,
“ my covenant God, supported me in his
“ everlasting arms. My sighs and tears he
“ enabled me to pour into his compassionate
“ bosom. While I mourn and feel great dis-
“ tress under this heavy bereavement, his
“ grace has been and will be sufficient for me.
“ It teaches my soul to be silent and adore ;
“ to bless the hand divine which hath chas-
“ tened me sorely ; to justify all God’s ways
“ to me. Yes, dear brother in the Lord, I feel
“ the sweets of heavenly resignation ; blessed
“ be his name. I can say, with weeping
“ gratitude and unshaken confidence I can
“ say, here am I, and here are the dear
“ children thou hast still left me ; do with
“ me and with them whatsoever seemeth
“ good in thy sight. Thy will is my will ;
“ and if my heart must bleed again, I
“ know everlasting love has made the good

m Mrs. Johnson died in the faith of the Gospel.

“ appointment, and prepared the bitter,
“ though wholesome cup.” In another
place he writes: “ Think you his mercies
“ are clean gone? has he forgotten to be
“ gracious? No: here I feel, I feel the
“ shedding abroad of his love; and when
“ I have been about to write bitter things,
“ his voice has penetrated the gloom, and
“ hushed the tumult of my sorrows and my
“ fears, saying, It is I, be not afraid. Pre-
“ cious Saviour, why should I fear though
“ the king of terrors himself should ap-
“ proach me? Am I not thine? Art thou
“ not my only hope and trust, my rock,
“ my joy, my righteousness, my sanctifica-
“ tion, my salvation, my all and in all?”
In another letter he says: “ In my various
“ afflictions, I trust my soul has been duly
“ exercised and blessed. I have prayed for
“ —I have obtained a good degree of resig-
“ nation.” He states in another, that “ with
“ calmness and the sweet hope of a blissful
“ immortality, he was in the habit of meditat-
“ ing on his own death.”

His inability to preach Christ, whom he loved so ardently, affected him most sensibly. “ It would have been,” such is his language.

“ a sweet, sad duty to speak to my fellow-
“ sinners, and especially to God’s people, on
“ the vicissitudes of our lot, and the sore
“ bereavements which we sometimes sus-
“ tain ; and of the sweet and heavenly
“ satisfaction in a holy and silent resigna-
“ tion to our Father’s will. Above all, it
“ would have strengthened and delighted
“ my soul, to tell my dear flock what a
“ compassionate high-priest we have in our
“ Jesus ; how ready to hear our sighs ; to
“ answer our prayers ; to increase our faith ;
“ and while his wisdom and faithfulness
“ bring chastenings upon his beloved peo-
“ ple ; how tender he is toward them ; does
“ not chasten them above what they are
“ able to bear, but supports, comforts, and
“ sanctifies them. Yes, it seems to me,
“ were strength given, it would be my de-
“ light to speak of him and his ways ; of
“ his fatherly discipline and fatherly love
“ ‘ from morn to noon—from noon to dewy
“ ‘ eve.’ ”

Such is the man who is taken from the Church and his friends.

“ The Lord gave, and the Lord hath
“ taken away : blessed be the name of the

“ Lord’.” He is removed from the temple below to that which is above. Having overcome through grace, he has entered into his rest, and in the assembly of the just, experiences in all its extent, the blessedness of the dead who die in the Lord.

But, though dead, he yet speaketh.

From his grave he warns them who have neglected the great salvation, to hasten to the city of refuge without delay, that they may escape the wrath to come. He admonishes them who have hope toward God through our Lord Jesus, to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, and to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure. He bids his brethren in the ministry to quicken their zeal and increase their efforts for the cause of Christ. He reminds us all that time is short, and eternity at hand. Presently the places which now know us, will know us no more for ever. We shall in our turn become inhabitants of the land of silence.

Let us, then, ask ourselves the solemn questions, Are we prepared to encounter death? Have we the hope of the Gos-

pel, which maketh not ashamed? God knoweth. We may practise a deception upon ourselves, and upon others, but he will detect the same in that day when he cometh to judge the quick and the dead. Be persuaded to examine yourselves, strictly and honestly, whether you are in the faith or not. Rest not satisfied with slight and unsatisfactory evidences of your gracious state. See that you have Christ in you, the hope of glory, and be “followers
“ of them who through faith and patience in-
“ herit the promisesⁿ.” AMEN.

ⁿ Heb. vi. 12.

SERMON XI.



PAUL PREACHING BEFORE FELIX.



ACTS XXIV. 24, 25.

And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.

THE Apostles, like their illustrious Master, experienced the scorn, hatred, and persecution of men and devils. Though they went about doing good, publishing salvation, and working miracles, yet did they suffer afflictions of the sorest kind. They were treated like malefactors, the off-scour-

ing of the earth. They were haled to prisons—dragged before tribunals—calumniated—insulted—reviled—scourged; and all this without cause. Sad, however, as their fate was, it answered many valuable purposes. Their faith was tried in the furnace, and came out of it pure and bright. The divine support which they experienced, thus also became evident to all. Having been taught by their Master to depend solely on Jehovah at all times, they looked to him, and he came to their aid. Prison doors, without human agency, were opened for them, and they let loose from confinement. They rejoiced in tribulation; in being counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. They also bore a noble testimony before princes, and in the halls of judgment, for the truth as it is in Jesus. Though they took no thought what they should say, it was given unto them by the Spirit of their Master, as occasion required. Thus indited, their addresses and exhortations came home with great power to the hearts of those who heard them.

Of this, you have a striking specimen in the text. Paul had already appeared before

Felix to answer to the charges brought against him by Tertullus, the sycophantic orator of the Jews. He then maintained his innocence, testifying that he had exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and man. His defence was so satisfactory as to influence Felix to grant him the privilege of seeing his friends unmolested. Thus he triumphed over his implacable and powerful foes.

But a nobler triumph awaited him ; a triumph of his matchless eloquence over the ungovernable passions of Felix. “ After certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time ; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.” What a spectacle was this ! A poor Jew in chains, a follower of the despised Nazarene, under criminal charges before the tribunal of the Roman governor, by his eloquence makes this governor, who was his judge, to tremble !

From this interesting portion of holy Writ, I purpose to illustrate for our improvement, on this interesting occasion^a, the following particulars :

I. The kind of preaching which is most successful in reaching the heart.

II. The connexion, through divine appointment, existing between this kind of preaching, and the alarms of natural conscience.

III. The reasons why awakened persons do not immediately comply with the dictates of their awakened consciences, but delay their repentance to a more convenient time.

After which, the value of a faithful ministry will be shown, and the absolute necessity of immediate attention to the gospel preached by such a ministry, enforced.

1. To preach the gospel, is the duty of all the ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their commission is so plain, that he who runs may read and understand its import.

Whilst it is granted by all, that the gospel must be preached, there exists a great

^a The installation of the Rev. Dr. Richards to the pastoral office, in the first Presbyterian Church in Newark.

diversity of opinion about its nature. Some suppose that it is merely a code of moral duty; others, that it is a mitigated law, requiring sincere, instead of perfect obedience as the condition of salvation. Some think that the gospel consists entirely of doctrines, to the exclusion of duties. Others restrict it to the peculiar opinions of their own denomination. Without mentioning any other mistaken ideas of the gospel, I feel no hesitation in saying, that it is not in the exclusive possession of any denomination of Christians, inasmuch as its essential features are found among many of them. It embraces duties as well as doctrines, the former flowing from the latter. It maintains and secures the purest morals, but lays the foundation of them in the grace of God.

“The gospel is the revelation which God has given to men of the plan of salvation by a Redeemer.” This revelation is emphatically, “glad tidings” to our fallen race, and demands our attention and obedience. In preaching the gospel, then, the Redeemer, Christ Jesus the Lord, must be preached, including all the great and impor-

tant truths flowing from and connected with his atonement.

Every truth necessarily leads to practice. No doctrine should be explained without pointing out its use, for our walk and conversation. Faith and good works are inseparable. Hence, when faith in Christ is explained, the duties which we owe to our fellow-men and ourselves, as well as those unto God, are also to be explained; the last as grounded on the first, the first as leading to the last. How far the one or the other is to be explained and enforced, depends upon the leadings of providence, and the dictates of an enlightened conscience. In the gospel we have many examples for our instruction, but none so striking as my text. It affords us information full and correct, on this subject, interesting both to pastors and people. For the better understanding of the example of Paul in this instance, let us consider his situation and his manner.

1. His *situation* was trying, both to his courage and faithfulness.

He was in bonds, a prisoner under heavy accusations from his countrymen. His judge was a Heathen, licentious in his principles

and practice. A man, apparently, without any sense of propriety; who, according to the Jewish historian, had been guilty of the grossest partiality, and of the most scandalous violations of justice; nay, of a most inhuman murder, in the case of Jonathan the high-priest^a. At this very time he lived in an infamous commerce with Drusilla, whom he had seduced from her lawful husband. Could Paul expect a favourable hearing from such a man, whilst he adhered to his integrity? Upon principles of human wisdom, he ought to have acted the part of a flatterer like Tertullus, and thus have sought to ingratiate himself in the favour of his judge. Though he had every thing to tempt him to a departure from principle, or to deter him from an adherence to it, he stood fast in the faith once delivered to the saints. His chains did not sink his fortitude. His forlorn state did not engender a compliance with the humours of his judge. He knew in whom he had believed. Neither the smiles of favour nor the frowns of power awed him. In the presence of Felix himself, tyrant as he was, Paul, under the impressions of duty, rose above his situation.

^a Doddridge's Note on the text, and on Acts xxiv. 2. Joseph. Antiq. lib. xx. cap. 8. 7.

2. “He reasoned of righteousness, of temperance, and of judgment to come.” This was his *manner* of preaching the Gospel to Felix. How admirable his courage, to speak of righteousness before an unjust and rapacious ruler; of temperance, before a licentious man; and at the tribunal of an earthly judge, to enforce these duties by the certainty of a future day of reckoning before the great Judge of heaven and earth! How striking his wisdom, in selecting, from the mass of subjects, these, so appropriate to the state and conduct of Felix!

He did not declaim, but he reasoned. He did not reason on these subjects independent of their connexion with faith in Christ, but in close connexion with it. Faith in Christ was his topic; righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, the heads of his application. The great apostle of the Gentiles was no visionary or fanatic; he was a close reasoner; but his reasoning was evangelical. He did not accommodate his manner to the principles and taste of his judge. To meet the ideas of a Heathen, he did not speak as a Heathen. He did not relinquish his ground for that of his go-

vernor. This is thought by some in the present day to be necessary. Hence so many defences of Christianity, in which the peculiarities of religion are kept out of view; and so many sermons on the same subject, in which there is no allusion to the work of Christ. Courtesy has been carried so far, that the Christian has reasoned as an Infidel, in order to make the Infidel think as a Christian. Thus also the gay worldling, who lives in sin, is entertained with the mercy of God, whilst his justice has been kept out of view. The proud and high minded, who hate to be informed of their duty, hear nothing but doctrinal speculations, and general moral essays. In this manner faith in Christ is frittered away to meet the views and feelings of corrupted man.

In stating gospel truths, the servants of Jesus must be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. They must not insult those whom they address, but must speak with moderation and propriety. The truth, however, the whole truth of the gospel, must be unfolded, as circumstances may require, without any accommodation to corrupt principles or feelings. The gospel is given unto us by God for our

guidance through life. All its parts demand our reverence. Its truths, therefore, and not our speculations, must be the burden of preaching. God blesses his own word. He puts his seal to his own institutions. *Where* preaching consists of the truth as it is in Jesus, *there* a blessing may be expected, and *there only* it is granted.

The gospel is a peculiar system of divine doctrines and morals. Its peculiarities must ever be kept in view and brought into public notice. The love of popular applause, the fear of man, personal ease, reputation, or the like, are no excuses for the preacher to omit faithfulness, or to justify a courtesy by which duty is sacrificed to passion or appetite. The peculiar doctrines of the gospel alone lead to good morals here, and salvation hereafter. These alone can rouse the attention of sinful man, and make him mindful of the one thing needful. Mere morality may tickle the ear, but never yet has effectually corrected the corruption of the heart. What is there in mere morality to alarm the careless, or to arrest the obstinate? Paul knew his duty better. He preached Christ. He rea-

soned on the great topics of religion, in close connexion with Christ.

The gospel is reasonable, in the full meaning of the term. Its doctrines correspond with the purest, soundest reason. They are not, indeed, palatable to corrupted reason. But what is this? Dark in itself, because of sin, can it enlighten us in those matters which pertain to our peace? When Paul reasoned, he reasoned as a Christian. His arguments were Christian arguments. His reason was enlightened by God's Spirit, and all his matter drawn from God himself, the fountain of all right reason.

Hence, when he preached before Felix, a proud and licentious heathen, he insisted on a better righteousness than our own, to make us acceptable to God, even the righteousness of Christ, and a consequent holiness of conduct. This unmasked the judge to himself; laid open the source of his iniquitous conduct, and led him to consider his awful state by nature, together with the necessity of a change of heart, in order to be saved. This also brought into view his past profligacy, and the necessity of a righteous and holy life in time to come.

From righteousness the preacher passed on to temperance, or chastity^b. He showed the impurity of the passions, and their ruinous tendency. He exposed to view the corruption of our nature, and demonstrated the necessity of purity in the heart, and in the life and conversation. Thus he swept away every refuge of lies about the powers of man, or the innocence of his passions, as maintained by heathen sages. Having sufficiently enlarged on these important subjects, he unveiled to view the mysteries of eternity. He transported his astonished Judge to the tribunal of that Being, who, knowing the thoughts as well as the actions of men, will assuredly judge them according to that which they have done in the body, and bid him prepare to meet his God!

II. Unhappy Felix! Where is now thy splendour, thy pomp, thy power? Where are thy courtiers? Where thy guards? Where the objects that pleased thy senses, or gratified thine heart: objects for which thou didst wade through a sea of iniquity and baseness? They are vanished from thy sight. Where is Drusilla, thy partner in

b ἐγκρατείας. Schlensner and Parkhurst on the word.

guilt; she who inflames thy passions? She sits indeed at thy side, but thou seest her not. An obscure Jew, a poor despised Christian, has struck the barbed arrow of conviction into thy soul. A gleam of light from above, has for the moment made thee sensible of thy state. Thy conscience has taken the alarm. Thy sins rise to thy view in awful succession. The terrors of the judgment day glare around thee. Thou tremblest! Poor worm of the earth, how wilt thou appear before thy Judge, when *he* summons thee. It is but the voice of a mortal thou hast heard. If this confound thee, how wilt thou stand that voice which will shake all nature, when it bids the dead arise!

Alas! how many, like Felix, in the height of prosperity, and amidst the splendours of power, have been made to experience, for a moment at least, who they were! They have forgotten God, and idolized self, until some extraordinary event or heart-searching word has excited conscience to do its duties.

The most usual manner in which God produces this effect, is by the exhibition of the faith of Christ. This is the axe which he lays at the root of human pride. Where it

is faithfully preached, as Paul preached it, it recommends itself to the consciences of men ; it arrests the sinner in his course, and makes him ponder. Such an effect is invariably, more or less, produced by this cause. This arises from the nature of the truths proposed to view, and the application of what is said, by the Spirit. The peculiar doctrines or truths of the gospel are of the most interesting and humbling nature. They strip man of his imaginary greatness ; they point out the place from whence he is sprung, and the state to which he is hastening. They represent the omniscience of God, his hatred of sin, and the punishment which awaits the ungodly. All men are declared equally condemnable by nature ; the high and low, rich and poor, noble and ignoble, learned and unlearned ; all have fallen short of God's glory, and forfeited his favour. The malady of sin is awful, and its extent universal, tainting soul and body with all the faculties of the first, and the powers of the last. Thus situated, our salvation depends not on our works ; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? Not one. A crucified Jesus is the only rock of salvation ;

and faith in him, a surrender of the heart to him, and trust in his righteousness, the only means of acceptance with Jehovah. This faith is above human reason ; it is “ the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” It does not, however, contradict right reason, but agrees with it perfectly. It produces good works, not meritorious, but declarative of the reality and sincerity of faith.

In the review of these doctrines, what room is there for pride ? It is annihilated. What for lust ? Its dominion is destroyed. Perfect purity of heart is required, as well as of life. Truths are plainly stated ; sin is openly exposed ; unchastity receives its proper name ; withholding any property, however small, while we honestly owe any thing, from creditors, is fraud, base, dishonourable deception ; an unfounded tale told as true, is falsehood, palliate it as we please ; using God’s name irreverently, is swearing ; the gratification of the passions is sin. Crimes are not human frailties ; they are wilful transgressions of God’s holy law. In this way the Gospel traces the deluded sinner through all his

windings, discovers him to himself, and destroys his refuges of lies. These peculiar doctrines of the gospel, though they excite opposition in the heart, awaken alarm. Self-confidence totters, for its base is destroyed. The passions rise in tumult, and convulse the soul. You may see the countenance marked with terror; the body shaken with fearful apprehensions. Eternity in all its fulness crowds on the mind. Conscience, preternaturally enlightened, penetrates the veil which separates it from time. What wonder if he who is thus impressed should tremble? Who is there stout hearted enough, to hear unappalled, a judgment to come proclaimed in his hearing? Who can say, I am clear from sin; I am ready to meet my Judge? These truths, however, all-important and humbling as they are, derive their efficacy solely from the blessing of God's Spirit. He is the great agent who testifies of Jesus, and applies his redemption. He honours only the truth as it is in Jesus, the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. None else will he savingly own. Look around you throughout the Church universal. Where does the Spirit work?

Where is faith evinced by the saving salutary fruits of righteousness? Is it where courtly moral preachers flatter and declaim? These only confirm men in ignorance and sin. It is the despised gospel preacher; he who insists on the peculiar doctrines of salvation, whose labours are crowned with success. What is there in the manner of the first to cause the sinner to tremble? He speaks peace in soft tones and sweetly sounding strains. But the last declares in Jehovah's name, there is no peace to the wicked, but tribulation, wrath, and anguish, to every man who doeth evil. He challenges the hope of the ungodly, and bids him beware. What he says has weight; his words sink in the heart. Alas, how often are they forgotten!

III. Felix, though he trembled, bid Paul go his way this time; adding, when he had a convenient season he would call for him. This season, as it respected his salvation, never came. His passions, momentarily restrained, resumed their power, and hurried him on to ruin. In his situation he met with hinderances. He was a governor. He was lying in sin. Authority and lust had charms too powerful to be resisted.

Thus it is that awakened, alarmed sinners, put off repentance to a more convenient season. In some the charms of honour, in others of riches, in others of pleasures prevail. The great man cannot yet relinquish the advantages of his condition. By repenting he must forego many things, which by habit have become dear. Court chicanery—state policy, are inconsistent with faith in Jesus. To relinquish an honourable station, to abandon the road to preferment, are sacrifices too costly to be made for religion. The man of letters cannot consent to stop short in his pursuit after still greater attainments in knowledge. Curiosity and the love of fame operate as snares to quiet his conscience, and destroy the love of truth upon his heart. Thus also, riches alienate the affections from God and fix them on the creature. Their natural tendency, as well as that of worldly honours, is hostile to religion. The glare of worldly consequence is delightful to the human heart. It feeds our pride, it pampers our propensities, it makes a worm of earth think himself above his fellows. In this glare he finds something to quiet the alarms of his conscience.

and to ease his troubled soul. He thinks the preacher impertinent, perhaps, and thus rouses his angry passions, to divert his fears and his vexations ; or he thinks him unnecessarily rigid, and soothes himself with the recollection, that others are more pliant ; or, he adopts some plausible scheme of truth called Christian, but which, in reality, has nothing Christian in it, save only the name ; or he thinks it will be time enough by and by to attend to this matter. In this, and a thousand other ways, he puts off real, genuine repentance, to a more convenient season.

How many, like Felix, do we thus find among the great, the learned, and wealthy ones of this life ! How many among those whose god is worldly pleasure ! This syren seduces multitudes to her embrace, and ruins them. To the awakened sinner, she is especially dangerous. She lieth in wait to deceive. Her voice is addressed to the unwary : “ Come crown yourselves with rose-buds, “ let no flower of the spring pass away ; eat, “ drink, enjoy life.” She leads her votaries through enchanting scenes ; satiates the appetite with the fulness of her board ; pleases

the eye with the splendour of her equipage; gratifies the ear with the music of her strains; thrills the senses with her exquisite delights. Under her magic influence the blood circulates fiercely; desires engender rapidly; carefulness is banished from the mind; seriousness is annihilated. The voice of the tabret and of the harp is in her feasts, but she regards not the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hand. She adds tenfold strength to the violence of the passions.

Unhappy Felix! pleasure, as well as honour and riches, kept off the convenient season for hearing Paul. Drusilla lay near to thy heart. Thou couldest not relinquish her. Unhappy sons and daughters of pleasure, who put off the time of repentance to a more convenient season! Their passions, with renewed gratification, acquire strength; ere long, like a torrent, they sweep away principle, integrity, and conscience. The young, especially, are the victims of pleasure. Her aspect is so beautiful, her address so bewitching, that resistance seems impossible. With her much fair speech she causes them to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forces them. Whilst young,

we are forgetful of the past, and heedless of the future. The present moment is all that interests us. Our feelings are warm, our desires strong, our susceptibility of delight exquisite. This is the reason why pleasure has enticed so many youth. The preaching of the Gospel oft-times excites their alarms. They see their danger ; they tremble. The deceiver lies in wait for them, and when no friendly voice is near, leads them captive. Oh, how careful ought parents, guardians, teachers, and pastors to be of the young! They are the hopes of State and Church. They may easily be imbued with the love of virtue, and more easily seduced into paths of error.

In these ways, then, not to enlarge more, the convenient season is deferred by awakened sinners. The call of the Gospel has been carried home to them, but its energy has been destroyed by honours, learning, riches, or pleasures. These snares operate peculiarly upon a certain class in society, a class elevated above others in their external condition. Yet the lower classes have snares in their way equally destructive. Our common employments oft-times be-

come so. When the mind is troubled about the one thing needful, some fly to their business and redouble their industry, to drive away thought. They like not to tremble at God's word. Common blessings also prove snares. In short, the pretexts for delaying to the "convenient season," in awakened sinners, are innumerable: all think it time enough, counting upon days and years to come, though a moment may bring them to the grave. We will fly to any thing, sooner than to Jesus, to ease the conscience. 'Tis sovereign grace alone, that constrains a resort to the precious Saviour. Is the minister of the Gospel faithful? We abstain from hearing him, because we do not wish our peace destroyed. Does conscience speak? We bid it go its way; we fly to company, to business, to pleasure: we please ourselves with honours, riches, learning, and the like. All these baits which Satan uses, operate upon our corrupt nature, to destroy the efficacy of Gospel truth.

1. How necessary and valuable, then, is the Gospel ministry to strengthen the me-

mory, and recall the attention to the one thing needful!

He who discharges the duties of this office aright, states the whole truth honestly ; deals conscientiously with souls ; regards their good ; and is above the consideration of perishing vanities. Though he often touches the feelings, and lays open unpleasant failings in a person, yet he speaks the truth. Another minister may speak more learnedly, write more elegantly, and be more eloquent, but he aims at the heart, and desires the happiness of his flock. Like a skilful physician, who probes the wound of a patient to the bottom, he honestly unfolds the character and state of every man, from the word of God. Such fidelity is absolutely necessary for the welfare of sinners. What is the design of the Gospel ministry ? Is it not to enlighten the minds, and reform the lives of men, by leading them to the Lord Jesus for salvation ? And do not men need such care and instruction ? Are we not blinded by sin, prone to evil, and wanderers from the right way ? If they who are appointed by God, to teach and warn, do not perform

their duty, the consequences must be awful. But happy are those who enjoy upright ministers. Such servants of Christ are to be esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake. They may meet with difficulties in the discharge of their commission. Many love to remain in ignorance, and hate to be apprized of their danger. Their opposition, whilst it proves the necessity of faithfulness in the ministers, proves also the value of ministers thus faithful. Verily they are sent, like their Master, for the fall or rising of many in Israel. And they who love their Master, will love his servants also.

2. Immediate attention to, and reception of the Gospel, faithfully preached, is the duty of every man who hears it. Felix, by delaying such attention, ruined himself; and so thousands do in all ages. Awful is their mistake who cry, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber. " a little folding of the hands to sleep^h." Only reflect for a moment upon the uncertainty of life. Who is sure of the next day? nay, of the next hour? What is our life? "It is " even a vapour, which appeareth for a little

h Prov. xxiv. 33.

“time, and then vanisheth away^h.” How many have been cut down in a moment, who looked to many years before them! We are exposed to accidents without number. In the midst of life, we are in death.

But even if life be continued, who can ensure a proper disposition at any future period to attend to religion? Will not delay render attention to this subject more irksome and difficult? Habits grow stronger with years, and become more rooted in our frame. These habits will present barriers insurmountable by human power. They who delay their reconciliation with God, rivet their chains to Satan, and seal their own hardness of heart, if God does not interpose in a sovereign way. The directions of Scripture are all intended to produce an immediate compliance with the call of the Gospel. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvationⁱ.” “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts^k.” There is no promise to those who defer duty to a future period. On the contrary, we have reason to apprehend the divine displeasure. They who slight his mercy when offered, cannot

^h Jam. iv. 4.

ⁱ 2 Cor. vi. 2.

^k Heb. iii. 7, 8.

expect it when they need it. "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh^d." Solemn declaration! Awful truth! The Spirit of God will not always strive. A time will come, when the things belonging to our peace will be hid from the contemners of Christ, and the slights of his salvation. The patience of Jehovah will be exhausted by repeated provocations, and he will swear, "These mine enemies shall not enter into my rest."

Think of these things, ye who have hitherto not improved your enjoyment of a faithful ministry. God has knocked at your hearts for admittance, through the instrumentality of your late pastor^e; but you have denied him. O! let him not still stand without, while he again renews his application through your present pastor. He has manifested the riches of his goodness unto you. Let his goodness lead you to repentance. Cast down your weapons of rebellion, and close with the offered mercy.

^d Prov. i. 24, 26.

^e Dr. Griffin.

3. Are there not some of you who have in time past trembled like Felix at the word? Where now are your impressions of mind, where are your convictions? Have you shipwrecked them amidst the cares or the pleasures of the world? Ye have trembled at the voice of a mere mortal. The time is coming, when the voice of God shall speak to you in thunder. That voice will convulse all nature, start the dead from their graves, and summon the countless nations to Jehovah's bar for judgment. To be prepared for this grand and solemn event, you must be "created in Christ Jesus unto good works^f." Without an interest in "the blood of his cross," you are under the condemnation of the divine law.

Since, then, your state is fearfully perilous, be alarmed. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men^g." Surely it is better to suffer here than hereafter. Let conscience do its duty: you have sought to stifle it once; do so no more. You may indeed succeed for a while; but soon its power will revive. "A wounded spirit who can bear^h?" You are pre-

^f Eph. ii. 10.

^g 2 Cor: v. 11.

^h Prov. xviii. 14.

paring for yourselves an awful period of suffering. Conscience will awake in the hour of dissolution ; or if not then, it will assuredly in eternity. Yes, it will awake amidst the ruins of the world, and the horrors of the judgment-day. What a scene will you then behold ! The heavens and the earth passing away with a great noise, and the elements melting with fervent heat. In that tremendous moment, your hopes perish ; your controversy with God terminates ; your fate is irrevocably fixed in outer darkness ! AMEN.

SERMON XII.



THE PERFECTION OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.



HEBREWS V. 12, 13, 14. and VI. 1, 2.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God: and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God; of

a Preached at the opening of the Presbytery of New-York.
April, 1811.

the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

THE Gospel of Jesus Christ, my brethren, will bear the strictest examination of friends and foes. Resting on irrefragable evidence for its divinity, the more its contents are studied, the more they approve themselves to the mind as just and rational. So far is ignorance from being the mother of devotion, that faith, to be genuine and saving, must be built on knowledge. If it want this, it is mere credulity: and the religion professed, gross superstition. They who profess themselves followers of the blessed Redeemer, the glorious day-spring from on high, must walk before the world as children of light. To do this, they must understand the system which they have embraced, not superficially, but deeply. Their knowledge must not be cramped within narrow bounds, nor confined to a few particulars; it must embrace every thing essential to Christianity; the higher and more noble parts, as well as the lower and more humble.

For a deficiency in this respect, the apostle in the text censures the believing Hebrews, whom he addressed. He had just mentioned Melchisedec, after whose order Christ was a priest; and was proceeding to say many things concerning him, by which Christ's priesthood would be illustrated and confirmed, when he recollects that "they were dull of hearing." He describes them as men hardly acquainted with the first principles of Christianity, although they had grown old in the profession thereof: and then urges them to leave these principles, and go on to perfection; that is, to a thorough and complete understanding of the whole system.

This description does not merely suit those to whom Paul wrote: it is applicable to Christians of every age, but especially of the present. We may then with propriety consider the exhortation as addressed to us, and one more seasonable there cannot be. That we may understand its full import, we shall

I. Show that Christianity is a connected system of divine truth, drawn from the Scriptures:

II. Prove that all Christians are bound to know the higher as well as the lower parts of this system :

III. Unfold some of the causes why Christians are deficient in this knowledge.

I. Christianity is a connected system of divine truth, drawn from the Scriptures.

These are here called “ oracles of God,” to express their inspiration ; and “ the doctrine of Christ,” to teach us who is the sum and substance of the matter which they reveal. Although enemies charge them with a want of order, with inconsistency between the different parts, and disagreement among the writers ; yet the contrary of all this, on examination, is found to be fact. They are not indeed written in a systematical form, but divine truths lie spread and scattered throughout them. These truths, whether they are doctrinal or practical, are all related to each other, as constituent parts of the same system^b.

Thus to begin with doctrinal truths, in support and illustration of the position : Jehovah, the author and pattern of all per-

^b To Saurin and Fuller on the text, I acknowledge myself indebted for many things in this sermon.

fection, made all things for an end worthy of himself. Sin is a transgression of his law, aiming at a defeat of this end, and the consequent dishonour of God. He cannot therefore but hate sin, inasmuch as he must supremely love his own infinite excellence. Man, being a sinner, must necessarily be exposed to his just displeasure, and cannot be received into favour without an adequate satisfaction for the offence committed. This satisfaction must be made by one who possesses infinite dignity, as well as a human nature; and who is so united to those for whom he satisfies, as to be one in law with them. Such a person is Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, Mediator between God and man. He gave his life a ransom for many, and saves his people from their sins. Whoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Faith is the gift of God, wrought in the sinner by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit being thus the Author of spiritual life, applying redemption by Christ to the soul, men without his influences are dead in trespasses and sins. Being made alive to God by these influences, they must walk in newness of life. Spiritual life causes spirit-

ual activity, or good works, as its natural effect. These good works being duties which sin has not destroyed, and performed by ability derived from God, cannot be meritorious. They are the evidences of spiritual life, the fruits of faith, "good and profitable unto men²." In them believers must abound more and more, striving after an increase of usefulness on earth, and a growth of meetness for heaven.

In these different doctrines, without enlarging the detail, you perceive a close union, one flowing from the other, and all mutually defending and explaining each other.

Not less connected are the practical truths of Scripture, or the duties which we are commanded to perform. They regard as their objects, God and our fellow-men, as well as ourselves. We cannot truly serve the first, without benefitting others and ourselves. Neither can we do justice to ourselves and others, without serving God. Religious practice includes in it moral practice; and moral practice cannot be correct, unless flowing from and united with religious prac-

² Tit. iii. 8.

tice. To be more particular, religious practice is the imitation of God in all our conduct. Now, if we imitate God, we will live soberly and righteously, doing unto others as we wish to be done by ourselves. If, on the contrary, we do not thus to others; if we neglect or injure our brethren whom we see, how can we walk humbly before Him who made them and us, being our common Father? In a word, the virtues enjoined in the Scriptures follow one another, and mutually support each other.

But, my brethren, doctrinal truths are also connected with those which are practical. No doctrine is merely speculative, for each leads to a corresponding practice. They all, through the divine blessing, possess a quickening, transforming power, being the seed of regeneration. By them, as means, God creates sinners in Christ Jesus unto good works, causing them to awake from the death of sin to a new and holy life. For instance, the doctrine of God's hating sin, as opposed to his perfection, produces in believers a hatred and consequent avoidance of sin, chiefly for its own sake. The doctrine of man's sinfulness, pro-

duces a holy jealousy and watchfulness against the risings of sin in the heart, and the display of it in the life. The doctrine of salvation through Jesus, produces unwearied exertions to promote his cause in the world. The doctrine of free grace produces universal and increasing holiness. In a word, “the grace of God that bringeth salvation,” teaches “us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world^h.”

Thus then, not to enlarge any more on this subject, the truths of scripture, doctrinal and practical, constitute one body or system of christianity. Remove one link in the chain from another, and you destroy the whole. Separate doctrine from practice, and it degenerates into mere theory; or practice from doctrine, and it becomes vague, inconsistent, and licentious. Annihilate the doctrinal truth of the malignity of sin, and you annihilate the necessity of an atonement, and all the doctrines connected with it; or annihilate the doctrine of the atonement, and you annihilate that of man’s apostacy, and his exposedness to divine

^a Tit. ii. 11, 12.

justice. Reject the practical truth, that you must live in the fear of God, and you in vain seek to do good unto others, or live yourselves as you ought.

This connexion, this harmony of divine truths, constitutes the excellence and glory of the Scriptures. Though consisting of different species of writings, and composed at different periods, by different persons, they present to our view one grand system of redemption from sin, by the blood of Jesus Christ.

In this system, the apostle informs us, there are first principles, and deep things, or higher branches of knowledge, called perfection.

The first principles, here enumerated, are the following :

1. Repentance from dead works, is first named. The sinful actions of unrenewed men are here called dead works, because they are performed by men who are destitute of spiritual life, and thus “dead in trespasses and sins.” As such, instead of being acceptable to a holy God, they are objects of his abhorrence, and must meet with his condemnation. Repentance is a tho-

rough change of mind about the nature of these works; unfeigned and deep sorrow of heart on account of them; a resolute and persevering abandonment of them, with a constant endeavour after new obedience.

2. Faith toward God, is the second principle named, and that in connexion with repentance from dead works. As it would for ever have been impossible for sinful men to repent, though unquestionably their duty, had not God revealed unto them a way in which they could fulfil this duty; so the faith here meant has an especial reference to God, as fulfilling his own promise of sending his Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins^z. It is a full, unwavering assent to the truth of God's revelation concerning Christ, and an embracing of Christ as he is offered unto us in that revelation.

3. The *doctrine* of baptisms^a, is another first principle mentioned by the apostle. By this is meant the nature, institution, and use of baptism, an intelligent profession of which was required in the administration of this ordinance. The plural number is used because there is a baptism of water, which

^z Owen on the text.

^a Βαπτισμων διδαχης.

is outward, and a baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, which is inward; the former being a sign of the latter. The former was administered upon a credible profession of the latter. The connexion between the two, the apostle teaches when he says, “ Let us draw near with a true heart, “ in full assurance of faith, having our “ hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, “ and our bodies washed with pure water.^b”

4. The laying on of hands, which is next in order, is connected with the preceding. Our attention is here also directed to the *doctrine* taught by this ceremony. It was the instituted manner of conferring an office, or a gift. Here it appears more especially to refer to the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, granted by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. “ This, next to the preaching of the word, “ was the great means which the Lord “ Christ made use of in the propagation of “ the Gospel.”

5. The resurrection of the dead is a doctrine of pure revelation, and one of the fundamental principles of Christianity. Our bodies will not be annihilated, but will come

^b Heb. x. 22.

^c Owen on the text.

forth out of their graves, at the voice, and by the command of Jesus Christ, on the last day.

6. Eternal judgment, that is, a judgment which will eternally fix the condition of every man in the world to come.

These first principles, which time permits us merely to mention, are the elements of true religion, the simple truths of the Gospel, which require little or no investigation to be understood. Hence the apostle calls them figuratively “milk;” and the Hebrews, who had not advanced beyond them, “babes;” not on account of their comparative innocence, but because they were “unskilful in the word of righteousness,” and needed to be taught again even these first principles of the oracles of God.

II. The higher and more sublime parts of the Christian system, relate to the person, the offices, but especially the priesthood, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They thus include the constitution of the Covenant of Grace, which was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed; the character which Christ sustains as the Surety,

the Kinsman Redeemer^d of his body the Church; the mystical, but real and spiritual union between Christ the Head, and believers the “members of his body, of his flesh, “and of his bones^e;” so that what he did is put to their account in law: the appearance of Christ in the presence of God, for those for whom he offered up himself once for all: the boldness which this view of Christ, as their Surety who died in their stead, and is gone to heaven as their Advocate, gives his people “to enter into the holiest by “the blood of Jesus, by a new and liv-
 “ing way which he hath consecrated for” them, and for no others, “through the “vail, that is to say, his flesh^f :” the power of that faith, which fastens upon Christ as an High Priest over the House of God, and not over the world, to support the people of

d בֶּן עֵלִי. “A near kinsman, one who by the Mosaic law, had a right to redeem an inheritance, and also was permitted to vindicate or avenge the death of his relation, by killing the slayer, if he found him out of the cities of refuge. (see Num. xxxv. 19. 21, &c.) and so was a type of Him who was to redeem man from death and the grave, to recover for him the eternal inheritance, and to avenge him on Satan, his spiritual enemy and murderer.” Parkhurst’s Lex. ii. See also Goode’s Note on Job, chap. xix. v. 25.

e Eph. v. 30.

f Heb. x. 19, 20.

the Lord, and make them conquerors in the end: and the perpetuity and perfection of that kingdom of grace, of which Christ, as a "Priest upon his throne," hath made them members, and will keep them safe to the end.

These doctrines, flowing from or connected with the priesthood of Christ, which tend to establishment and growth in grace, the apostle calls "perfection." They constitute the strong meat of which mention is made, which belongs to full grown men. They are truths beyond the reach of a superficial and hasty observation, and require close and attentive examination. To understand them, we must know the first principles; for they are both constituent and essential parts of the same system, the one preparatory to the other. The apostle censures the Hebrews for their ignorance of the last, and exhorts them to leave first principles, and go on to perfection. This brings me to the

II. General head of discourse, which is, to prove that all Christians are bound to know the higher as well as the lower parts of the

c Zech. vi. 13.

Christian system. Let us go on to perfection, says the apostle to the Hebrews, after having censured them for halting at the first principles of Christianity; that is, let us seek after—let us reach forth to higher, yea, to the highest attainments in divine knowledge.

This duty is enforced by the other apostles, as well as by Paul. Their Master had repeatedly enjoined it upon them, and reproved them for being fools and slow of heart in fulfilling it. The Gospel, my brethren, does not blunt our natural thirst after intellectual improvement, but increases it by affording more interesting subjects for its gratification. Accordingly, we meet in the Scriptures with many such commands as “grow in the knowledge of our Lord and “Saviour Jesus Christ^d”; many such prayers offered up for believers, as “that ye “might be filled with the knowledge of “God’s will^e”; and many such promises to be accomplished under the New Testament œconomy, as “All of them shall know me “from the least of them unto the greatest of “them, saith the Lord^f.” The duty thus

d 2^d Pet. iii. 18.

e Col. i. 9.

f Jer. xxxi. 34.

strongly and in different ways inculcated by God in his word, is perfectly just and reasonable.

1. This appears from the nature of Christianity.

You have heard that its truths, doctrinal and practical, are intimately and inseparably connected together. Not one of them, however apparently little, is useless; not one but what occupies its proper place; not one which can lawfully be neglected. The conclusion then follows inevitably, that Christians ought to acquire a knowledge of the whole system of Christianity, in its higher as well as lower parts. Some, no doubt, from the diversity of human abilities, will understand it better than others. But all ought to know what is strong meat for men, and what is milk for babes in Christ Jesus. They must know that “first principles” do not constitute the whole of Christianity, but that it includes more sublime truths. To stop at the very threshold of divine revelation, without entering into its recesses, is to cast contempt on the wisdom of God, and defeat his design in making a revelation to men. It is practically to de-

clare that the contents of that revelation are so insignificant, so uninteresting, that a slight, superficial acquaintance with them satisfies us. Thus its authority over the heart and life is destroyed, and its beneficial effects upon our states frustrated.

2. Such attainments in divine knowledge as the apostle contemplates are necessary, to qualify Christians for real usefulness in the world.

They are lights in the midst of a crooked generation. They live not for themselves alone, but for others; and are commanded to do good to all men, more especially to the household of faith. How can they perform this duty, if they only know the rudiments, the mere elements of divine knowledge? How can they be teachers of others, if they are yet scholars themselves? How can they be examples to others in the practice of godliness, when they need an example themselves, to be kept from straying in forbidden ways? The further they are advanced in this knowledge, the more extensive will be their sphere of usefulness. Their views of what is calculated to promote the welfare of their fellow-

men, expand as they progress, and new springs are imparted to their energies, in obtaining for them the desired good. They move on, in their path of usefulness, with increasing vigour and speed, stayed by no barrier, deterred by no difficulties or trials. The virtues necessary to fulfil their high calling are matured by their exertions, so that though their motives may be misrepresented, and their conduct slandered, they still go on. Their active benevolence is not confined to a few objects, but extends through a wide range. They instruct the ignorant, reprove the depraved, and comfort the miserable.

How could they do this with a mere superficial acquaintance of divine truth? Take those Christians who have not left the first principles of their religion, and compare them with those who are going on to perfection: How vast the difference in point of usefulness! They appear like persons who have no affinity to each other. Particularly is this evident in their treatment of enemies. They forgive injuries, suppress resentments, and do good to those who despitefully use them. They resemble God, who causes his light to

shine upon the just and the unjust, and his rain to descend upon the evil and the good. The others, on the contrary, too frequently imitate the world, which is implacable and unmerciful in its spirit. The more, in fine, Christians know of divine truth, the stronger is their disposition to spend and be spent for their fellow-men, as well as the more enlarged is their capacity for benefiting them.

3. Such knowledge is necessary for their enjoyment in religion.

They are not, as the world considers them, a gloomy, melancholy race, but feel a joy with which a stranger intermeddled not. This is not a noisy, clamorous burst of passion; but a calm, self-possessed state of mind—a state in which are found the essentials of happiness. They are not exempted from sufferings, but are supported under them. They have their seasons when their souls are cast down within them, but still they hope in God, that they shall yet praise Him, who is the health of their countenance, and their God. They are filled with sorrow for their corruptions, but rejoice in the Lord,

the rock of their salvation. This Christian enjoyment, they experience in a degree exactly proportionable to the liveliness of their graces ; and their graces depend on a deep knowledge of divine truth, for their liveliness. For instance, our faith in Jesus Christ will necessarily grow stronger and stronger ; the more intimately we become acquainted with him, the more we learn of his fulness, his all-sufficiency. Thus also will our love become more ardent, our penitence more thorough, our holiness and obedience more universal. Now, if our enjoyment in religion depends upon the strength of our graces, it must also depend upon the knowledge we possess, since those graces derive their vigour from this knowledge.

Facts fully establish this truth. Who experience most of the comforts of the Holy Ghost—most peace with God—most hope of eternal life ? Those Christians who have advanced no further than the elements of the Gospel, or those who are built up in knowledge ? The former are destitute of the sources of real happiness, for they are comparatively ignorant of the stability of the covenant of grace ; of the fulness trea-

sured up in Christ; of the height and depth, length and breadth of the knowledge of God, as revealed in the Gospel. They are walking in comparative darkness, perpetually doubting of their own condition, overwhelmed with despondence, and halting in their way. The former walk pleasantly, because they walk surely. For every defect in themselves they know a remedy in the Gospel; in every trial they have a refuge. Their faith founded in knowledge, enables them to overcome the world, repel the temptations of Satan, and suppress the risings of lust in their hearts. Their love arising from their knowledge, banishes hard thoughts from their minds, and makes affliction a blessing. Their obedience regulated by knowledge is steady, and diffuses a satisfaction through their souls which ever accompanies the practice of holiness.

As they advance in this knowledge, new sources of happiness open to their view, and they are enabled to go to them, and draw from them what they need. How indeed can it be otherwise, when we consider the objects of this knowledge? These are, God

as a reconciled Father ; Christ as an able and willing Saviour ; the Spirit as carrying on and finishing the work of redemption ; heaven as a place of eternal rest, and the infinite happiness of the just after death. These objects are grand, sublime, transporting to all who understand them, and make them their daily study.

4. Such attainments in divine knowledge as the apostle contemplates, alone can qualify Christians to remain steadfast in the faith, when iniquity abounds.

Without being rooted and grounded in the Gospel, what is there to prevent heresy, or a denial of fundamental truths ; and apostacy, or a total departure from the truth ? Both these evils in the visible Church, originate in ignorance, or a superficial knowledge of God's revealed will. Children in common life, because they know not how to guard against that which is evil, are seduced from their integrity, being unprepared to meet it. Thus babes in the Christian profession, those who are unskilful in the word of righteousness, readily embrace errors. They see not the body of

truth, in its extensive relations, but only in some few detached parts, and thus are “carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive⁵.”

Error always connects itself with some one or more simple elementary truths. These truths, false teachers explain independent of their connexion with other truths. By many, the *mysteries* of the Gospel, on which the apostle enlarges in this epistle, are kept out of view, or denied. Retaining however in their creed some of the “first principles of the oracles of God,” they deceive superficial professors of Christianity, and mislead them. Being ignorant of the mysteries of religion, and of their connexion with the first principles, these persons are unable to defend them, which inability prepares the way for their rejection. Thus also, in times of persecution, or when religion is unfashionable, not having sufficient root in themselves, they are liable to a criminal dereliction of duty, if not to a complete apostacy. Nothing in such times can

⁵ Eph. iv. 14.

support a Christian, but a well-grounded conviction that he is right in his belief.

A conviction, however, which does not flow from knowledge, is not well-grounded, and of course is not calculated to keep a man straight in the path of duty ; cool and unshaken in maintaining his integrity. It may make him rash, obstinate, and under circumstances fearless of death, like a war-horse ; but this is totally different from the intrepidity of an established Christian in defence of the truth. He is master of himself ; understands his situation ; is aware of consequences, and trusts firmly in Jehovah. His conviction is not the result of prejudice or the creature of superstition ; it is the offspring of Christian knowledge. He knows well in whom he believes. He is not mistaken ; he cannot be deceived on this subject.

This knowledge also is a barrier to the calls of passion and appetite, which are ever hostile to the demands of the Gospel. It furnishes him with remedies against sin, as well as weapons for righteousness. How can he, who is yet halting at first principles, know how to use these remedies, or handle these weapons ? Both the remedies and

weapons are found only in the sublime doctrines, resting on, or flowing from the great propitiation of Christ for sin. These unfold to us our strength to persevere, as well as our sanctification to be comforted, and our wisdom to be useful.

5. A deep and thorough knowledge of divine truth is necessary for glorifying God.

This is the natural consequence of the preceding arguments, offered to establish this general head of discourse. If Christians without such knowledge, cannot remain steadfast in their faith; nor be confirmed in their personal enjoyments; nor be extensively useful to others; nor understand properly the revealed will of God; it is evident, and needs no detail to prove it, that without such knowledge they cannot glorify God as they ought.

Such knowledge, then, it follows, Christians are bound to acquire. And yet how shamefully do they neglect this duty! The principal causes which produce this neglect, constitute an important inquiry, and will now, in the

III. And last place, be unfolded :

1. One cause, and that a fundamental one, is inattention to the spiritual interests of children.

They are taught with care and diligence, almost every thing else, besides the one thing needful. Even when this last is taught them, it is in too many instances, in a careless and superficial manner. When we consider that we imbibe most of our principles, and acquire most of our habits in youth, it is obvious that the consequence of such treatment must be ruinous. Young people grow up but slightly and imperfectly acquainted with that religion, which alone unfolds to us the nature, and can make us partakers of salvation. How can it be otherwise? They have, perhaps, been taught their Catechism when very young. No care, however, has been taken to instruct them further in the truths and evidences of revelation. Their religious education is finished when they have committed to memory the answers to certain questions embracing the mere outlines, the skeleton of Christianity. They are then left to themselves to make such improvement of these outlines, as youthful indiscretion, carelessness, folly, and vanity permit.

Suppose children were thus left to themselves, when they had acquired the mere elements of human learning, could we expect from them in ordinary cases, any good scholars, or any scientific characters? The same causes which would prevent this in them, may be adduced, with justice, why men in years are no further advanced in their knowledge of divine truth, than they were in their youth. When they therefore become the subjects of grace, the system of truth which the Scriptures reveal is a novelty to them; not merely as it respects their spiritual perceptions and gracious exercises, but even as it respects their speculative knowledge.

This deficiency in their speculative knowledge, in many instances, greatly and sadly impedes growth in the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. They remain unskilful in the word of righteousness, being babes, when they ought to be men in Christ Jesus. When for the time they have enjoyed opportunities of improvement, they ought to be teachers, they have need that one teach them again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.

2. Another cause of deficiency in Christian knowledge, is unintelligible, loose, declamatory, general preaching.

The design of this institution is to bring men to the knowledge and reception of the truth. For this purpose truth must be understood in the first instance, by ministers themselves, and then expounded and enforced in the most intelligible, plain, and powerful manner. There is a technical language in theology, especially among churches who have confessions of faith, and catechisms, and who conscientiously esteem and use them, which ought sedulously to be used in preaching. An alteration of phrases, or the explanations given of them in these public instruments, like the alteration of common words, perplexes and confounds people. They will think the minister who makes this alteration is heterodox. Such alterations always retard growth in Christian knowledge.

Besides this intelligibleness, the simplest style is necessary. The ornaments of rhetoric are not to be rejected, but they ought to be objects of subordinate attention. For an ambassador of Jesus Christ to offer

salvation to sinners in metaphors, or plead with them in musical, studied periods, is trifling with his office, and with the misery of sinners. Not so acted the apostle of the Gentiles. He preached not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. His example all ministers ought to follow. But unfortunately they do not. Some are extremely loose in their discourses; they have neither unity, nor connexion, and of course cannot be followed by the hearers with any benefit. Others are perpetually declaiming. They pretend not regularly to explain truth or inform the mind. They study merely to arouse the passions and warm the heart. A third class have neither doctrine nor exhortation. They are so general, that they leave the hearers exactly where they found them, without affording them the least assistance to grow in divine knowledge.

These different modes of preaching, though they may gratify natural indolence, and please a vitiated taste, will never build up Christians in the truth. Their acquaintance with it will remain superficial, and of course inefficient to regulate their lives.

Their pastors keep them unable to discern good and evil, as the apostle expresses it, and they love, like Israel of old, to have it so.

3. Another cause is the daily occupations of life.

These distract the attention of many Christians, and engross an undue proportion of their time. Some are obliged to labour hard for their subsistence, and can only steal an hour occasionally for improving themselves in divine knowledge. Others have more liesure, not being so pressed; but unhappily the cares of the world have crept into their hearts, and obtained an unlawful ascendancy over them. The truth is, with not a few the occupations of life have, in a great degree, superseded the exercises of piety, and the study of Christianity. Rather than relinquish any of the former, they break in upon the latter. The soul, which never dies, is neglected, in order to provide for the body, which soon crumbles into dust. Frequently the duties of the closet are omitted, or slightly performed; frequently those of the family, and frequently even public religious duties; and for what? for the world!

The world must be served at all events, and if there is a clashing between its demands, and those of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ must stand by and see the former first fulfilled.

How can these Christians then grow in divine knowledge, who act thus with the very means by which alone they could grow? They must remain stationary. Stationary, did I say? They have reason to fear that if they go not forward, they are declining. In human knowledge, if we do not improve in our attainments, we are in danger of soon losing what we have acquired. More especially is this the case with the knowledge of the Gospel.

4. A fourth cause is to be sought for in the political struggles of the day.

In these many Christians embark with avidity, and become deeply interested, so as to lose sight for a while of far more important objects. They will study the points in debate between parties, so as to master them. All this time religious truth is treated with a species of indifference. No advances are made in it, and no means used to promote such advancement. The consequence is, a deficiency in divine knowledge. On this

subject a warning cannot be too frequently given, for it is the sin of the day, with which too many Christians are chargeable.

5. A fifth cause is to be sought for in the love of ease, which is natural to every man, and which, in the present period, is strengthened by the customs of the world.

This indisposes some Christians, especially those who mix most with the world, and move in its highest circles, to study, meditate, and pray; without which no progress can be made in divine knowledge. They remain quiet with trifling attainments in it, on account of the trouble which higher attainments would occasion; never reflecting, that the further they advance, the easier and more pleasant the acquisition of such knowledge becomes.

6. Lastly, the divisions which exist in the Christian Church, constitute another cause.

One is of Paul, another of Apollos, another of Cephas, and another of Christ. Each denomination has its standards, its distinguishing peculiarities. In the knowledge and belief of these, the members are educated, long before they know the reasons by which

these peculiarities are supported. They call themselves by the name which distinguishes the body to which they belong. They grow up, under the impression that the temple of the Lord is there, where they are, and that the doctrines which they profess constitute exclusively the Christian system. Insensibly they acquire an undue attachment to their own modes of thinking and expressing themselves on the subjects of religion. It is not in all instances an enlightened preference; in too many, it is a blind prejudice. A spirit of party is thus engendered, which retards their progress in divine knowledge, and prevents them from having an enlarged view of the whole system of truth, as contained in the Scriptures.

These causes I have merely sketched, and that imperfectly too, for time would not permit a further enlargement. Enough has been said to direct your reflections in a profitable channel. The principal causes of a deficiency in knowledge among Christians, have been mentioned for your warning; the importance of such knowledge, proved for your encouragement.

What is now your actual situation, Fel-

low-Christians? Is it necessary to teach you again the elements of religion? or are you so advanced in your knowledge, that you can teach others? At all events, your duty is plain, "to go on to perfection," to make greater attainments in future, whatever you may have made in the past. To do this, you have every inducement which can have weight upon a virtuous mind. Neglect it not, then, on any account; plead no excuse, for none can be admitted. Establish yourselves in the knowledge of the doctrinal and practical truths of the Gospel. View them in their connexion so far as you can, and seek for ability to do this better. You are exposed to trials and temptations. How can you bear the one, and resist the other, without following on to know the Lord? You may meet with enemies of your faith. How will you answer them aught, if your knowledge be only superficial?

Especially, Christian parents, would I press on you the duty which the apostle enforces, not merely for your own sakes, but for the sake of your children, that you may train them up in the way in which they should go. Their souls, no doubt, are pre-

cious in your eyes. You ought, therefore, to spare no pains to teach them the truth. Do you instruct them at home, as you have promised at their baptism? Do you embrace every opportunity of explaining truth to them? Do you set them such examples as correspond with your instructions? Do you accompany your exertions with prayer, fervent and importunate prayer to God, that he would bless your exertions for their good? As they grow up, do you continue your attention to them, that they may grow in the knowledge of divine truth?

Here, I apprehend, not a few are deficient. They consider their work done, when the elementary principles of Christianity are committed to memory from a catechism. This, as you have heard, is a sad mistake; and, if possible, rectify it before it be too late, I entreat you. Strive to teach them more of religion, its evidences, its doctrines and precepts, that they may not be the prey of unbelievers, or false teachers. If you value the truth yourselves, you cannot but desire that they should value it likewise. How can they value it aright, if they know it not aright? You are their natural pre-

ceptors ; teach them when they are lying down, and rising up ; when they are walking by the way, or sitting in the house.

Fathers and Mothers here present, look beyond these scenes, to those which are future. Is it your fond hope and fervent prayer, that you may, on the judgment-day, present yourselves, with your offspring, saying, “ Here are we, and the children thou hast given us ? ” In this life, now, this day, in good earnest, set about the great work of endeavouring to make them wise unto salvation. Who knows but God will bless your labours ?

Ye young people, to you also I recommend the duty of acquiring a deep acquaintance with divine truth. What you have already learned, is not sufficient. Advance further. Improve upon the rudiments you have acquired. Seek to have that knowledge which you possess sanctified. Without this, it will not be eternal life to you. You will soon act your part on the theatre of the world. Are you well armed with integrity ? are your minds stored with divine knowledge, that you may resist temptations, and persevere in duty ? If not, you are in a pe-

rilous condition. You are embarking on a stormy ocean, without a pilot or a chart to guide you. If your parents seek to instruct you, listen to them ; if not, ask them to do so. Wisdom, even this knowledge of which we speak, is the principal thing. It will qualify you for being useful to others, and glorifying God. You will soon be called hence to the eternal world. At the eventful moment of death, what but the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ will support or comfort you ?

Ye careless, thoughtless young people, look forward to the future. Oh, beware of ignorance of divine truth ! It has ruined thousands before you ; it will ruin you if you be not enlightened in the knowledge of the truth, before you leave this world. Your time of life is the proper one for every species of improvement. Religious improvement, a sanctified use of your privileges, will afford you the highest pleasure in time, besides preparing you for eternity. Seek, then, after it with diligence and perseverance. Count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord. Be not diverted in this pursuit

by your pleasures ; be not delayed by your employments. Though young now, you soon will be old. Ere long you will be ripe for the grave. What you ought to do, therefore, now do, for in the grave there is no repentance nor knowledge. Study the word of God with care and constancy. Examine the grounds and evidences of your religion. Be confirmed and established in the faith, whilst young ; for, if you neglect it now, you have reason to fear that you will persevere in the neglect through life. In this accepted time seek the Lord. Seek him while he may be found, and follow on to know him more fully and perfectly.

On you all, my hearers, the duty of knowing the truth, and following on to know more of it, is binding. We exhort you to attend to it with promptness and fidelity, since it is the Lord's will.

Let us, my Reverend Brethren, each in our place strive to promote the interests of our people, in promoting the religious knowledge of old and young. Let us endeavour to feed them with understanding and wisdom, that they may live in the fear of God. The young, especially, demand our care.

Ministers and officers of Churches have a solemn account to give in to God, for their treatment of children, especially those who are baptized. It is time for us to awake and bestir ourselves for God. The enemy is coming in like a flood, and carrying away in his course these children of the Lord. Their parents also need our special attention and vigilance. Let us not be found wanting in our exertions, lest the blood of any of our people be required at our hands. The Lord give us grace to be faithful in the discharge of our duties, that whether we are successful or not, we may meet with a gracious reward from the Judge of quick and of dead. AMEN.

ERRATA

- Page 5, instead of Zech. xiv. 11. read verse 7.
 22, Gen. 6. xiv. read 14, and dele 6.
 23, in the Note *a*, instead of Frag. 136, read 134.
 24, Note *b*, 1 Pet. iii. 2. read v. 21.
 26, do. Deut. xxxii. 7. read v. 3.
 31, *e* Mic. v. 1. read v. 2.
 32, *g* Jer. xxii. 6. read xxiii. 6. &c .
 — for *h* read *i*,
 — *i* — *k*,
 — *k* — *h*.
 35, *c* Ex. xii. 1. 23. read 1---11.
 — *e* Ex. xxv. 7. read 10.
 42, *a* Rom. i. 11.
 79, *t* Ser. 43, read 41.
 163, *x* 1 Cor. read 2 Cor.
 — *e* for Matt. 17. read Matt. 18
 231, line 14, for *hardships* read *harshness*.
 338, 19, for *disperets* read *dispense*.
 392, note *h*, for James iv. 4. read v. 11.

